



UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION AMONG FEMALE UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS IN RELATION TO BODY MASS INDEX**

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ABSTRACT

Females perceive themselves as overweight more frequently than male of the same BMI. Furthermore, females aged 18 and above have a greater concern on how they look or how others perceive their look. Thus, this study aimed to explore body image perception among female university students in relation to body mass index. N = 428 female respondents from all faculties were involved in the study by the stratified sampling technique. Social Attitude Towards Appearance, an established inventory was employed to measure attitude toward appearance with five factors which are muscular/athletic, thin/low body fat internalization, pressure from family, pressure from media and pressure from family comparison to BMI and ethnicity. The data collected by using an online platform (Google form) and it was found that half of the respondents were in normal weight and some were underweight and overweight. Thin/low body thin internalization showed highest mean score while the lowest mean score was pressure from peers. In comparison, muscular/athletic internalization and thin/low body fat internalization in BMI and ethnicity were no significant difference. On the other hand, pressure from family, pressure from peers and pressure from the media by BMI categories, they showed significant differences. None of the factors contribute to any association on ethnic difference in attitude towards appearance among female university students. Caution needs to be put since significant differences were found in pressure of family, peers and media with overweight females perceived the highest. The use of media among the females warrants extra control as it significantly revealed the highest among the overweight females' pressure on sociocultural appearance. The recommendation like an appropriate preventative strategy should be implemented so the number of overweight and obesity will not increase. Future studies are highly recommended to assess more detail on body image perception in relation to anthropometric such as weight, height and waist circumference.

Keywords: body mass index, body image, female university students

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The prevalence of obesity was higher in Malaysia than in any other country in Southeast, South, or East Asia, and it is greater among females than among males (Ng et al., 2014; NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, 2016). Forty three percent and 48.6% of Malaysian adult males and females, respectively, were estimated to be overweight or obese in 2013 as measured by a body mass index (BMI) of 25 kg/m^2 (Ng et al., 2014). This was rampant after adjustment of age differences for comparison among countries. Since the age standardized obesity prevalence among Malaysians under the age of 20 was 19.1% in the same analysis, it is clear that the risk of obesity increases with age.

In fact, another study found that BMI increased dramatically in Malaysia from the 20 to 24 to the 50 to 54 age group. On average, females gained between 6 and 7 kg while in their 20s, accounting for an average BMI increase of more than 2 (Ismail et al., 2002). Therefore, it is important to investigate obesity risk factors among young females, including college students just entering their adult years, to develop and implement effective preventive strategies (Gopalakrishnan et al., 2012). Female Malaysians have indicated that age, ethnicity, religion, education, and marital status were all factors related to obesity.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review summarizes and synthesizes the existing scholarly research on a particular topic which it was a form of academic writing commonly used in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. There are similar studies of body image perception and it was not a new issue nowadays. Based on the journal and article that were used as a review were discussed more on the literature review.

2.2 OBESITY

2.2.1 Global

Obesity is the outcome of energy imbalance between food intake and energy expenditure. World Health Organization (WHO) reported that about 41 million children under the age of 5 were found overweight in the year 2016 (WHO, 2016). Obesity is considered one of the major health concerns of the 21st century and frequently associated with economic development and income growth. For example, it is often emphasized that recent growth in developing countries has led to a rapid increase in obesity (Misra & Khurana, 2008). Several studies show that obesity levels tend to increase when poor countries become richer, suggesting that the relationship between income and obesity is positive (Popkin, 1998; Wells et al., 2012; Malik et al., 2013).