

A03 Association between self-esteem, body mass index (BMI) status and risk of eating disorders among health sciences students of Universiti Sains Malaysia, Health Campus, Kubang Kerian, Kelantan

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Transitioning from adolescents to young adulthood with new environment as a university student may give impact on their self-esteem, body mass index (BMI) and thus increasing the risk of eating disorder. The purpose of this study was to determine the prevalence of self-esteem level, BMI status and risk of eating disorder as well as the association between the variables among health sciences students of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Health campus. In this cross-sectional study, 166 health sciences students of USM health campus were evaluated for risk of eating disorder and self-esteem level using the Eating Attitude Test 26 (EAT-26) questionnaire and Rosenberg's Self Esteem Score respectively. Their height and weight were self-reported and BMI was calculated. Of the 166 participants of the study, 19.9%, appearing to have high risk of eating disorder. Majority of the participants (65.1%) also has normal self-esteem level. Most of the students (57.8%) were found to be in the normal BMI category. There is no association between selected socio-demographic characteristics and risk of eating disorders, and association of BMI status and risk of eating disorders ($p>0.05$). This study shows a significant association between self-esteem level and BMI status ($p=0.006$), and, the association between self-esteem level and risk of eating disorders ($p=0.002$). University students are considered as a vulnerable population that may have high risk of eating disorder. In this study, self-esteem and BMI status plays a significant role in the psychological factors which may result to developing risk of eating disorder. However, several factors such as body perception and body dissatisfaction also should be included in future research. Strategies to reduce prevalence of eating disorders among health sciences students should be implemented such as detecting eating disorders earlier before it imposing further health risk behaviour.