

INTRODUCTION

Malaysian undergraduate students are famously known to skip their meals to attend to the many activities, assignments, and datelines. Besides, the food served in the local Malaysian public universities are likely to be directed to a Malay style cuisine, which includes fried dishes fried chicken, fried fish and curry servings. We know that taking an imbalanced meal is often related with the physical and mental health, there is a need to consider the diet quality of adolescents need so that their nutritional status is can be improved.

Unhealthy eating was described as "...eating very large quantities at irregular times, not related to anxiety or stress..." (Martin et al., 1999). Since unhealthy eating is related many risk factors, it might explain the current situation as to why Malaysia is rank the highest obesity prevalence in Southeast Asia (Rashid, 2017). The obesity problem is on the rise in Malaysia and as we all know being overweight or obese has greater risk to develop serious condition such as heart disease, diabetes and joint disease.

OBJECTIVE

- To understand how people view unhealthy eating as
- To see whether people understood the implications of unhealthy eating

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although eating unhealthily is a major concern among university students, most seem to just neglect it and somehow this behaviour persist till they get older in life. Along with the stress overload from examinations, lack of time and expensive food sold, students are just even more prone to not opt for a healthier diet (Ganasegeran et al., 2012). Meal skipping, eating away from home, snacking, and fast food consumption are some of the many unhealthy eating habits among university students (Gan, Mohamad, & Law, 2018). Shopping malls, convenience stores, vending machines and fast food outlets are growing fast and these too play a role in the adoption of unhealthy diets

METHODS

Our team noted the socio-demographic characteristics of participants, using data from 57 Malaysian undergraduates participating in an online survey. Based on the above, several research questions were formulated.

1. What is unhealthy eating to you

This question intends to find out how different people view unhealthy eating as.

2. Normally, how often do you eat per day

This question gives us researcher on whether undergraduates were binge eaters or not (Dingemans, Bruna, & van Furth, 2002). By knowing the number of meals an average undergraduate takes, we can correlate the occurrence of obesity amongst students (Murakami & Livingstone, 2016).

3. Which of the following is a must on your plate

This question investigates what a typical Malaysian undergraduate would opt for if he or she had only to choose between one of the given dishes. This roughly gives the idea of what undergraduates would normally need to survive.

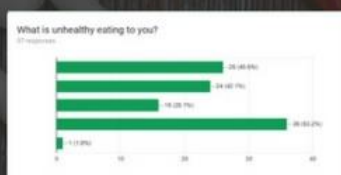
4. Have you ever heard of the Food pyramid?

To understand what whether people knew of the basic guide to healthy eating (Skerrett & Willett, 2010).

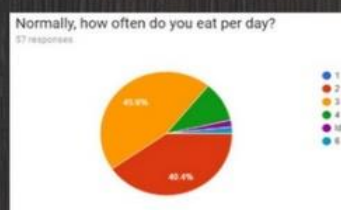
5. Do you realise that eating every 3 hours does help in gaining weight

To create awareness that the Eating Frequency is related to weight gain (Murakami & Livingstone, 2016).

DATA



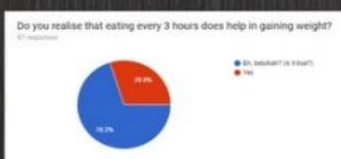
For our first question, most of the participants (36 participants, 63.2%), agreed that eating only rice and fried stuff was a form of unhealthy eating. This was followed by not washing hands before eating (26 participants, 45.6%) and having flies roaming about their food (24 participants, 42.1%). There was however, a participant (1.8%) that highlighted that eating junk food is also part of unhealthy eating.



As for the 2nd question, most undergraduates (26 participants, 45.6%) seemed to have their meals 3 times a day. This was followed closely by having 2 meals a day (23 participants, 40.4%) and 4 meals a day (6 participants, 10.5%).



As for the question on which of the following is a must on your plate, 23 (40.4%) responded that it must be at least a chicken, while 18 (31.6%) responded that vegetables is a must.



All 57 (100%) participants said that they have heard of the food pyramid before.

But apparently, most of the participants 40 (70.2%) did not realise that eating every 3 hours does help in gaining weight (2).

DISCUSSION

From the data collected, we found out that most university students usually make their own food choices depending on the cost and availability without even considering healthy food choices. Thus, it should not be surprising if their deprivation of energy to focus during lecture for an example, was significantly contributed by their unhealthy eating.

Academic achievements could have been better had the students practiced good habits like regular breakfast consumption, higher intake of fruits, vegetables, and certain micronutrients such as folate and iron (Ciotte, 2018). Diets with high calorie will lead student to tiredness, fatigue and irritability as our body need more energy to burn all calories that we consumed

Besides, most undergraduates did not realise that among the factors why they might have an abnormal weight gain was probably their eating frequency. If students had eaten a lot, they needed to do some exercise to burn the calories. Instead, in a typical Malaysian undergraduates scenario after having an eight to five lecture, will tend to go back home taking an afternoon nap. Thus leaving them with only the night time to study and no time left for exercising.

CONCLUSION

In general, we could see how an unhealthy eating is being understood in a Malaysian undergraduate setting. We could also understand whether undergraduates knew the implications of unhealthy eating. Most agreed that eating only rice and fried stuff is unhealthy, meaning they had a better understanding regarding what a balanced diet is based on the recommended food pyramid. However, most of the students did not understand fully the implication of unhealthy eating as in this scenario, they did not realise that eating every 3 hours assisted in gaining weight. Therefore, interventions and research related to unhealthy eating habits and its implication on undergraduates should be advocated so as to create awareness in the Malaysian society.

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