EATING ATTITUDE, LIFESTYLE PRACTICES AND BODY IMAGE PERCEPTION AMONG MIDDLE EASTERN AND LOCAL STUDENTS IN UCSI UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare the eating attitude, lifestyle habits, nutritional status and body image perception between Malaysian and Middle Eastern female students in UCSI University. A sample of 130 female university students aged 18-25 completed the anthropometric measurements and a self-administered questionnaire, which incorporated questions on demographic data, lifestyle practices which included smoking habit, alcohol consumption, fast food intake, and physical activity level using IPAQ, 24-hour food record, eating attitude using Eating Attitude Test-26 and body image perception using Figure Rating Scale. In the result obtained, eating disorder risk was more prevalent among Middle Eastern students (29.2%) compare to Malaysian (6.2%) with significant difference found (p< 0.001). Significantly (p<0.05) Middle Eastern students (1616kcal) consumed higher calories than Malaysian (1275kcal). Based on the result, 7.7% of Middle Eastern students and no Malaysian student were smoking. Middle Eastern students were found to be more physically active as 50.8% of them involved in moderate physical activity level while 58.5% of Malaysian involved in low physical activity level. Generally, Middle Eastern students had higher BMI (20.9) and larger waist circumference (68cm) compare with Malaysian students (19.0, 63cm) and were at risk for eating disorder. Majority of Middle Eastern students (81.54%) perceived their body image correctly (55.28% for Malaysian). Malaysian students who were at risk of eating disorder tend to have lower energy intake (1087kcal). Smaller waist circumference was associated with lower BMI in both origins. As conclusion, Middle Eastern students have higher prevalence in eating disorder, have bigger body size and tend to perceive their body image correctly than Malaysian students. Educating young people about healthy nutrition will be helpful to prevent eating disorders, which are significant in terms of public health.