

Living in Lack: How Poverty Affects the Mental Health of Urban Youth

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: In tandem with rapid urbanisation, the figures of Malaysian youths experiencing poor mental health have escalated substantially. This study highlights the incidence of mental distress among youth from urban poor backgrounds, and reviews possible underlying social determinants. **METHODS:** An integrative literature review, using both quantitative and qualitative local and international studies. **RESULTS:** Evidence from three Malaysian public health surveys (NHMS 1996, 2006 and 2011) revealed that mental distress among youths from urban localities almost doubled in prevalence from 1996 to 2006, going from 10.5% to 19.7%. Among other factors, these patterns were found to be strongly correlated with membership of low socioeconomic status (SES) households. Specifically, youths belonging to lowest income quartile SES households registered escalating mental health problems over the years, rising from 17.2% to 19.0% and finally 24.6% in 2011. Research links early exposure to problematic social and environmental factors (e.g. family breakdown, hazardous living conditions, and unstable neighbourhoods with high levels of crime and violence) to the onset of non-specific, longer-term youth mental distress. While not absolute, these factors tend to occur synonymously with poverty. For instance, based on NHMS, mental health problems among children of caregivers with no formal education (a phenomenon typically seen in less affluent households) almost tripled between 2006 and 2011, rising from 12.4% to 33.5%. **CONCLUSION:** Though non-conclusive, these findings should serve as a starting point for urban public health policymakers to discuss effective planning for interventions to reduce mental distress and improve overall outcomes for urban poor youth in Malaysia.

KEYWORDS: youth, urban poverty, mental health, risk, socioeconomic status (SES)

Main Meals Intake and Its Association with Nutritional Status Among Adolescent in Malaysia. Finding from Adolescent Nutrition Survey 2017

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: The main meal is an important ally to ensure optimum nutrition intake obtained by adolescent for their normal growth. Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine the prevalence of main meals intake and its association with nutritional status among adolescent in Malaysia. **METHODS:** Nationwide cross-sectional survey namely National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) was conducted in 2017 and focused on adolescent nutrition. This survey recruited about 40,000 student range of standard-4 to form-5 from selected school in the country. Standard question on meal pattern was asked and anthropometric measurement were taken. **RESULTS:** Descriptive analysis found 30.0%, 47.7% and 52.8% adolescents in Malaysia to practice daily consumption of breakfast, lunch and dinners respectively. There is also 10.1% or 1 in 10 adolescents did not take breakfast at all in a week and it was higher in urban area compared to rural and higher among girls compared to boys. Those who skip breakfast, lunch and dinner also found to have high prevalence of overweight and obesity. Binary logistic regression after adjusted for age, locality, sex and ethnicity found those who skip breakfast tend to 1.168, skip lunch tend to 1.157 and skip dinner tend to 1.329 more likely to become overweight or obese. **DISCUSSION:** Skipping any main meals should be avoided by adolescents as it gives negative result in their growth and development. Family, school and other related agency must play a role and give strong support for adolescents to practice regular main meals consumption.

KEYWORDS: Main meal, nutritional status, adolescent, Malaysia