

Predictors of BMI and WHR among Malaysians of Different Cultural Background

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Abstract

The epidemic of overweight and obesity is encroaching in the world today, irrespective of economic and social status and regions. It is now seen as a public health threat and one that must be taken seriously in all aspects of public health interventions. This study investigates the predictors of overweight and obesity, as measured by body mass index (BMI) and waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) among Malaysians. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 459 samples from those who attended a health screening drive, conducted in three major regions in Peninsular Malaysia. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation as well as multiple regression, with $p < 0.05$ considered significant. Results showed that 56% of the respondents were overweight, the prevalence was highest among Indians (24.6%, 95% CI=20.3, 29.3), followed by Malays (23.2%, 95% CI=21.6, 24.8%) while the lowest prevalence was among the Chinese respondents (8.2%, 95% CI=6.2, 10.6). Smoking (p value of .000) and physical activity (p value of .023) were predictors for BMI while smoking (p value of .000) was a predictor of WHR. Findings showed that the problem of overweight and obesity in Malaysia is real and smoking and physical activity play a strong role and need to be considered in any public health interventions.

Keywords: *overweight, BMI, WHR, smoking, physical activity*