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Siriraj Medical Journal • Open Access • Volume 75, Issue 7, Pages 481 - 487 • 2023

Document type

Article • Gold Open Access

Source type

Journal

ISSN

22288082

DOI

10.33192/smj.v75i7.262003

Publisher

Faculty of Medicine Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University

Original language

English

View less ^

Eating Disorders and their Relation with Emotional Disturbances among Undergraduate Students in Malaysia during COVID-19 Pandemic

Faisal, Ghasak Ghazi^a; Radeef, Ali Sabri^b ; Ibrahim, Omar Emad^c

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^a Department of Fundamental Dental and Medical Sciences, Kulliyah (Faculty) of Dentistry, International Islamic University Malaysia, Indera Mahkota Campus, Pahang, Kuantan, 25200, Malaysia

^b Department of Psychiatry, Kulliyah (Faculty) of Medicine, International Islamic University Malaysia, Indera Mahkota Campus, Pahang, Kuantan, 25200, Malaysia

^c Faculty of Dentistry, University Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

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Abstract

Objective: COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted several aspects of undergraduate students' lives including significant effect on mental wellbeing, physical activity and eating habits which might increase the risk for developing eating disorders as these disorders tend to emerge at university age. This study aimed to assess the prevalence of eating disorders and their associated factors among undergraduate students. **Materials and Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted among 624 undergraduate students from three different universities in Malaysia. Eating disorders was assessed using the Malay version of the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q) while the emotional disturbances was assessed by the Malay version of Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) and perceived social support was assessed by the revised Malay version of The 8-item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). **Results:** The prevalence of eating disorders among students was 14.9%. There were significant differences in terms of gender and other socio-demographic factors. Eating disorders were significantly associated and positively correlated with emotional disturbances level $r = 0.37$. While inverse correlation between social support and eating disorders was also shown $r = -0.13$. Multiple linear regression analysis showed that emotional disturbances level ($\beta = 0.212$, $P = 0.000$) and poor social support ($\beta = -0.126$, $P = 0.002$) were a significantly important risk factor. **Conclusion:** Eating disorders are prevalent among undergraduate students, female students, emotional disturbances and high BMI are significantly associated factors. Emotional disturbances and poor social support are predictive factor for eating disorders. © All material is licensed under terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) license unless otherwise stated.

Author keywords


Eating disorders; Malaysia; psychological distress; social support; undergraduate students

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