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Prevalence and associated factors of eating disorders among university and college students: protocol of a systematic review of Malaysian studies

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - IMU University.

Review Stage at time of this submission - Preliminary searches.

Conflicts of interest - None declared.

INPLASY registration number: INPLASY202520100

Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 21 February 2025 and was last updated on 22 June 2026.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective What is the prevalence of eating disorders among university students in Malaysia, and what are the associated factors of this condition?

Rationale This study aims to document the prevalence of eating disorders and its associated socio-demographic and relevant factors. These data will assist future interventional studies for this health problem in Malaysia.

Condition being studied Eating disorders are defined as the disruption in the eating behaviour with excessive concern about body weight that impairs physical health or psychosocial functioning. The fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) has changed the MESH term from “Eating Disorders” to “Feeding and Eating Disorders,” and include eight categories of this disorders.

METHODS

Search strategy We plan to search bibliographic databases for Malaysian prevalence studies that evaluated eating disorder using the 26-item Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26). The reason for choosing this scale is that it is the most commonly used rating for investigating eating disorder in Malaysia. Bibliographic search using combinations of these terms: eating disorder, Feeding and Eating Disorders, Eating Attitudes Test, EAT-26, university, student and Malaysia. All publications up to 31 December 2025 will be included.

Participant or population Adults who were university or college students in Malaysia.

Intervention None.

Comparator None.

Study designs to be included Cross-sectional studies.

Eligibility criteria (a) Study participants are adults; (b) Studies conducted in Malaysia; (c) Used 26-item Eating Attitudes Test (EAT-26) to measure eating disorder.

Information sources An extensive literature search will be carried out on two electronic databases (PubMed, Scopus), and supplemented by a Google Scholar search.

Main outcome(s) Possible eating disorder based on EAT-26 score ≥ 20 .

Additional outcome(s) Socio-demographic variable, anthropometric measure (e.g., body mass index) and mental health variables.

Data management References retrieved will be processed using citation manager Endnote 20. Relevant data (number of participants with and without eating disorder, mean score of EAT-26 and additional outcomes) in the included studies will be extracted by a pair of investigators independently, to minimize potential bias and error as well as to resolve any disagreements.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis The studies identified will then be assessed for methodological validity using JBI critical appraisal checklist for prevalence studies.

Strategy of data synthesis A meta-analysis of prevalence data on disordered eating was performed using MedCalc Statistical Software version 23.2.6 (Ostend, Belgium: MedCalc Software Ltd; 2025), fixed effect model was selected if study heterogeneity (I^2) was less than 50%, otherwise random effect model was used. We investigated the study heterogeneity using sensitivity analysis, meta-regression and subgroup analysis using JASP (JASP version 0.96, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2026) and MedCalc.

Subgroup analysis For eating disorder: (a) Gender; (b) Study setting.

Sensitivity analysis Sensitivity analysis and meta-regression will be used to investigate the study heterogeneity.

Language restriction None.

Country(ies) involved Malaysia.

Other relevant information This systematic review will be prepared following PRISMA guidelines.

Keywords Adult; Feeding and Eating Disorders; Malaysia; Meta-Analysis; Sex Factors; Students; Universities.

Dissemination plans Publication of manuscript in a journal.

Contributions of each author

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