

Sugar Craving and Sugar Intake Pattern among Malay Adults

*Wan Fathin Fariza* \* & *Nik Mazlan Mamat*

Department of Nutrition Sciences, Kulliyah of Allied Health Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia

ABSTRACT

*Objectives/Research Problem:* A total of 6.3% of American adults showed specific craving to sweet foods and this was proven analogous to sweet foods intake. We attempted to measure sweet craving among Malaysians through the development of Sugar Craving Assessment Tool for Malaysians (MySCAT). The aim of this research was to explore the pattern of sugar craving and sugar intake among Malay adults.

*Materials and Method:* Subjects (age 19 to 59 years old) were recruited among Kuantan residents from multiple centres. A total of 219 volunteers were recruited and they completed MySCAT questionnaire, in which the respondents rated their craving for 30 sweet foods and beverages from 0 (Never) to 4 (Always). Body mass index (BMI) was obtained from height and weight measurements.

*Results and Discussion:* Subjects consisted of 58 males and 161 females with mean age  $29.6 \pm 10.7$  y, BMI  $23.5 \pm 4.4$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> total MySCAT score of  $41.1 \pm 14.9$ . Results indicated that the most craved items were sugar sweetened beverages (mean score  $2.46 \pm 1.18$ ), fruit juices ( $2.16 \pm 1.08$ ) and drinks with sweetened condensed milk (median 2.00, IQR = 2.00). A subset of 100 subjects also completed FFQ Sugar (mean age  $21.2 \pm 1.6$  y, BMI  $21.0 \pm 3.1$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>). Sugar intake was 79.5 g/day and contributed the most by sugar-sweetened beverages (56.5%) followed by non-carbonated soft drinks (13.9%) and sweets & chocolates (5.6%). Sugar intake was significantly higher in male (95.4 g/day) than female (54.3 g/day,  $p < 0.001$ ) but no difference was detected for sugar craving score. Sugar craving was significantly associated with sugar intake ( $r = 0.321$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

*Conclusion:* Sugar-sweetened beverages are the most-craved food item and the biggest contributor to sugar intake probably due to their accessibility and rapid calorie supply. This study also agreed to previous finding that sugar craving leads to sugar intake and poses the risk of excessive calorie intake from low-nutritional value food group.

KEYWORDS: Sugar Craving, Sugar Intake, Sugar-Sweetened Beverages, FFQ Sugar, Food Craving

\*CORRESPONDENCE: wfathin@iiium.edu.my