

Public Awareness towards Healthy Lifestyle

Abdul Rauf bin Ridzuan, Rizuwan Abu Karim, Najihah Hanisah
Marmaya, Noraznira Abdul Razak, Noor Khairin Nawwarah
Khalid, Khairun Nizam Muhamad Yusof

Faculty of Communication & Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Melaka, Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the awareness of the public towards living a healthy lifestyle and it focused on food intake, exercising and social life. This study used questionnaire as an approach to collect the data and it involved 425 participants. This study found that people are aware on the importance of practicing a healthy lifestyle. In addition, they also realize on the things that could threaten their health such as misuse of drugs and alcohol consumption. Lastly, from all three factors, social factor is the one that gives greater influence for the public to live a healthy lifestyle ($M=3.25$).

Keywords: Public Awareness, Healthy Lifestyle, Food, Exercise, Social

Introduction

A lot of campaigns about healthy lifestyle has been done to raise awareness among the public to live healthy life style. Despite all of the efforts being done to encourage people to practice a healthy lifestyle, some of them still do not follow the given advises and continue to live in an unhealthy lifestyle. Leaving their old eating and social habits are not easy to do but nothing is impossible. There are many ways people can do to live a healthy lifestyle. To start with, they need to be aware on the importance of living a healthy lifestyle, monitor their food intake, have enough exercise and learn to manage their stress properly (Anusha Thavarajah, 2016). There are a lot of advantages from living a healthy lifestyle. One of the advantages is that it can help to prevent people from having chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes and cancer (Morris, 2017). According to the Habjouqa (2017), an estimate of 35.8 million years of healthy life are lost due to overweight and obesity. Thus, by leading a healthy life, it can help their body to stay in shape and to be in a good condition.

Everyone can practice a healthy lifestyle regardless of their gender, age and wealth. Practicing a healthy lifestyle does not require people to sign up for expensive gymnasium membership to do exercise or to only eat expensive organic food. As mentioned before, the main key for the society to live a healthy lifestyle is to find balance in what they eat and drink and to do exercise or other healthy activities. Although it seems hard to adhere to a new life style, when they get used to the routine they will find it doable.

Literature Review

A healthy lifestyle can be understood as a way of living that lowers the risk of having serious sickness or dying early (Atherton, 2018; Simon, 2014). Nowadays, there are many applications that can be used to help someone to live a healthy life such as food trackers and exercise trackers (Healthy Lifestyle, 2018). In today's world, to live a healthy life is easy for everyone as everything is at their fingertip. However, if they are not sure on how to start even with the help of internet and applications in their gadgets, they can make an appointment with their doctor. By following general good health guidelines prescribed by the doctor, they can start to live a healthier life.

- **Advantages of healthy lifestyle**

Leading a healthy lifestyle can help avoid people from getting serious illnesses. Healthy lifestyle choices such as eating a prudent diet, exercising regularly, and not smoking may substantially reduce coronary heart disease (CHD) risk or any other chronic diseases (Ahmad Taufik, 2017). For example, the recommended daily sugar intake is not more than 10 teaspoons, or 200Kcal, and if people take more than that, it can lead them to have 1kg of weight gain in just one-and-a-half months (Woo, 2018). When people start to exercise, it will increase their insulin sensitivity and improve their blood glucose control. This is important especially to those with diabetes disease and obesity.

Apart from that, exercises can also help to lower their blood pressure. When people start to exercise regularly, it can help them to release their stress level and to strengthen to their body immunity. According to Harvard Medical School (2017), every part of a person's body including his or her immune system functions better when it is being protected from environmental assaults and bolstered by healthy living strategies. The combination of healthy lifestyle can help to lower risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, and total cardiovascular disease. Last but not least, living a healthy lifestyle can also help people to lose weight and to improve their overall wellbeing (Ahmad Taufik, 2018).

- **Ways to have a healthy lifestyle**

People must develop a healthy lifestyle to have a longer and healthier life. Healthy living will make them to be fit, energetic and reduce risk from getting chronic diseases. There are several tips for healthy living such as consume a well-balanced and healthy food, do exercise daily and have adequate sleep. Furthermore, people should manage their stress in positive ways such as by listening to music, exercise and eat nutritious food (Reese, 2016) instead of by smoking or drinking alcohol as it can affect the major organ systems in their body (Chia, 2017).

- **Healthy eating**

The most important step for a person to have a healthy lifestyle is by taking care of his or her food intake. According to Davis and Stoppler (2018), a person must eat three meals a day which are breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and he or she must control the size of the meal every time he or she wants to eat. The authors further state that people should avoid eating in a larger portion for dinner. Besides, they suggest that people should consume more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat products. People should also choose lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts as it can decrease the cholesterol level and saturated fat in their body. Next, it is also important to consume products that have low amounts of saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars (Davis &

Stoppler, 2018). To make it easier, people can just follow the food pyramid diet as prescribed by their doctor.

- **Exercise regularly**

Another major contributor to a healthy lifestyle is to do physical activity or exercise (Davis & Stoppler, 2018). Exercises such as swimming, yoga, pilates, jogging, aerobics and others are good for the body and mind. People who are not used to exercise should remember to stretch all of their body parts before they do intense physical activities so they will not get hurt during the activity. It is also advisable to have breakfast before exercising so that their body has ample energy to work out. It is suggested that a person can start exercise from 30 to 60 minutes for 3 times a week to live healthily (Davis & Stoppler, 2018). People should make time and motivate themselves to exercise as it can help them to relax and ease their mind.

Moreover, exercises can help to improve a person's body strength, balance and flexibility. It can also help to increase self-esteem and self-confidence, decrease stress and anxiety, enhance mood, and improve general mental health (Robinson, Segal & Smith, 2018). It can also help control weight gain and lose fat. Most importantly, regular exercise can help people to reduce the risks of having coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, and high blood pressure (Atherton, 2018; Ahmad Taufik, 2017).

- **Get enough sleep**

Getting enough sleep is very important to all age and for example, most adults need 7 to 8 hours of deep sleep in order to function optimally and to maintain a healthy lifestyle (Robinson, Segal & Smith, 2018). In addition to that, getting enough sleep has been strongly linked to proper immune system functioning and also cardiovascular health (Woo, 2018). As stated by Sparacino (2018), getting enough sleep is an important part of living a healthy lifestyle as it can help to ease their physical body and mental conditions. When a person gets enough sleep, it can strengthen and improves his or her memory and enables him or her to handle stress and pressure better. Lastly, the author also states if a person only manages to get six hours or less sleep, it will increase the risk of having heart attack. Besides from sleeping at night, taking a nap during the day is also good for a person's body. People should be more aware on the importance of having a good sleep as it can have a positive impact on their life.

- **Avoid stress**

According to Reese (2016), stress is part of life and it is unavoidable. As people grow older, they tend to experience new types of stress as they will have more responsibility such as their job or they have family members to look after. However, it does not mean that they should ignore the stress. When people do not deal with their stress properly, it can lead them to have serious physical and mental health problems. It is also being said that chronic stress can increase the risk of getting heart disease, cancer, and digestive problems, and it can even affect a person's memory (Reese, 2016). There are several ways suggested by the author to cope with stress such as by listening to music, dance, go for a walk, exercise, sleep or watch television. When people able to manage their stress, it can help them to live longer.

- **Stop smoking**

People should quit smoking because a smoke-free lifestyle will help to improve their health. When a person quit smoking, it can decrease the risk of getting lung cancer, heart disease,

stroke, and respiratory diseases (Gordon, 2017). Besides, by quitting from smoking he or she can help others such as their unborn baby, children and other family members from being passive smokers. As stated by Gordon (2017), there are several ways to stop smoking. First, smokers can start by decreasing the quantity of smoking and stop buying cartons of cigarettes. Next, they should try to avoid the temptation to smoke or even getting close to a person who is currently smoking. Moreover, the author also suggests that smokers can also try to distract themselves from smoking by doing activities such as reading, cleaning, jogging, swimming and many more. Lastly, they can also buy nicotine gum or nicotine cigarette filter to help them to quit smoking.

- **Avoid alcohol**

Another step to live a healthy lifestyle is by not consuming alcohol because it can lead a person to get diseases like stroke, high blood pressure, cancers and organ failures (Ducharme, 2018). Furthermore, instead of being a sober, they can enjoy their daily life and able to remember what they had done before. There are several tips to avoid from consuming alcohol which are first, people must avoid their temptations on drinking or at least reduce drinking gradually in time and second they can also avoid from going to the parties or social gatherings where alcohol will be served (Ducharme, 2018). By doing this, they can live a healthier lifestyle.

Research Methodology

Explanatory research was used in this research. According to Kowalczyk (2014), explanatory research can be described as an attempt to connect ideas to understand cause and effect. This means that the researchers want to describe what is happening. Explanatory research looks at how things come together and interact (Abdul Rauf Ridzuan, 2015). The researchers used Google form to create the survey. After that, the researchers shared the link to the participants to gather the data and all of the participants' responses being gathered in an online spreadsheet. The first section of the survey welcomes participants to the survey followed by an instruction that all participants need to answer every one of the inquiries. The length of time for answering this survey is between 3-5 minutes per participant. The purpose of doing this survey is to analyse the public's opinion towards healthy lifestyle.

Results and Discussion

Based on the data from Table 1 below, it shows that respondents take a great care of their water intake (M=3.3.6). According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017), when people substitute soda drinks with plain water and reduce caloric intake, it can improve their health and decrease their body weight. Dehydration, kidney stone disease and constipation can be avoided when people drink enough water and when they do this regularly, their body will be healthier and it will also make them to be in a good mood (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017). Moreover, this study found that participants are generally aware on what they consume (M=3.05), they value the importance of having breakfast (M=3.23), control their food portion size (M=2.69) and eat 3 times a day (M=2.84). However, some participants do not follow the food pyramid when they consume their food (M=2.44).

Table 1

Food factor

Food Factors	Mean
I care what I eat	3.05
I consume my food intake according to the food pyramid	2.44
I control my meal portion size	2.69
Breakfast is important	3.23
8 glasses of plain water are important	3.36
I eat 3 times a day	2.84
Overall mean	2.93

Table 2 below shows factors of exercising, and from the data, it can be concluded that most participants like to exercise (M=2.91). Exercising can lead them to have a good mental health as it will reduce the risk of being depressed and help them to deal with current stress. Furthermore, it lets people to control their body and avoid from getting obese ("Benefits of Exercise", n.d.). Next, researchers also found that the participants know the fact that exercise is important (M=3.29). They also agree that one of the reasons they exercise is to be more fit and healthy (M=3.17). It is also reported that the participants exercise regularly (M=2.55). Other than that, the researchers found that when they exercise, they tend to do it with someone (M=2.85). Lastly, many participants reported that they are being influenced to exercise because of the supports they get from their surroundings such as from their friends and families.

Table 2

Exercise factor

Exercise Factors	Mean
I like exercising	2.91
I exercise regularly	2.55
I like exercising with company	2.85
I exercise due to the influence from my surroundings	2.83
I exercise in order to be fit and healthy	3.17
I am aware of the importance of exercising	3.29
Overall mean	2.93

Based on the data from table 3, it is found that that almost all participants are aware that drugs are dangerous to their health (M=3.62). Next, many participants do not smoke (M=3.27). From the findings, it seems that society advise people around them to avoid smoking (M=3.17). Other than that, most participants do not consume alcohol (M=3.41). Lastly, many participants encourage their family members to practice a healthy lifestyle (M=3.13) but only some participants tend to encourage their family members to exercise with them (M=2.87).

Table 3

Social factor

Social Factors	Mean
I do not practice smoking	3.27
I advise my friend to not smoke	3.17
I do not consume alcohol	3.41
I know that drugs are dangerous for health	3.62
I encourage my family members to exercise with me	2.87
I encourage my family members to practice a healthy lifestyle	3.13
Overall mean	3.25

Conclusion

All of the tables in the results and discussion section present the ways to live a healthy lifestyle through food factor, exercise factor and social factor. This study suggests that social factor is the main reason that influences people to lead a healthy lifestyle (M=3.25). In addition, this study also shows that the level of awareness among society towards living a healthy lifestyle has increased as most of the participants take a good care of their health. The results from this research also has proven the fact that it is vital to know the importance of living a healthy lifestyle because it can shape people's awareness to start practicing a healthy living. As suggested by Davis and Stoppler (2018), by consuming healthy meals, exercise regularly and develop a healthy social habits, it can improve people's physical and mental health. To conclude, although there are many different types of illnesses currently encountered, the majority of Malaysians in Malaysia are mostly practicing healthy lifestyles and understanding the importance of healthy living.

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Corresponding Author

Abdul Rauf Ridzuan (PhD), Faculty of Communication & Media Studies, UiTM Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia. Email: abdulrauf@melaka.uitm.edu.my

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