

A survey of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of salt intake, and perception, barriers, and enablers of salt reduction among Sunway University/Sunway College students and staffs

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: High salt consumption in Malaysia poses serious health risks, with out-of-home dishes being a major contributor. **Materials and Methods:** This cross-sectional study assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) related to salt intake and the perceptions, barriers, and enablers (PBE) of salt reduction among students and staff at Sunway University and Sunway College. **Results:** A total of 415 participants (68.8% females; mean age = 25.6) completed an online survey on demographics, KAP of salt intake, and PBE of salt reduction. Most participants demonstrated a good level of knowledge about the health risks associated with excessive salt intake, with a significant association between knowledge and gender ($p = 0.042$). Attitudes towards reducing salt intake were positive, particularly among females, though no significant gender difference was found ($p = 0.059$). Practices were poor, with many participants not controlling their salt intake, especially when eating out, and frequently adding salt when cooking at home. There was no significant association between controlling salt intake and gender ($p = 0.318$). Participants perceived that general salt intake among the Malaysian population is high, and over half did not know about alternatives to salt. Most participants did not look at nutritional labeling or specifically at salt content. However, 83.6% of participants found salt content information on nutritional labels helpful. Key barriers included the lack of salt content information on food packaging, limited availability of low-salt food options, and unmet requests for reducing salt by cooks. Promoting health as ultimate goal, having effective communication, and government action to take part in establishing policy to regulate low-salt food distribution and prices are the key enablers of salt reduction. **Conclusion:** These findings suggest that despite high levels of awareness about the risks of excessive salt intake, this knowledge is not fully reflected in the practice of salt reduction.