

Mechanisms of Obesity Observed in Sabah, Malaysia: In relation to the lifestyle of *Bumiputera* and Chinese populations seen in urban and suburban areas

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1, Research background information

The rapid economic growth of Malaysia has brought about a variety of tremendous changes in peoples' lives—including dietary patterns. Due to both urbanization and Westernization, people are munching on unhealthy foods from fast food chains—like Macdonald's, KFC, and Pizza Hut— that appear to be conveniently located on every corner. The convenient access to fast food chains, combined with new modern comforts, has contributed to increased obesity and an increase in associated risk factors related to arteriosclerosis causing cardiovascular diseases and/or cerebrovascular disorders. This is especially true in Sabah, where poverty has been seen mainly among *Bumiputera* people and illegal immigrants; it is possible that these people are driven to eat excessive amounts of carbohydrates because of their living conditions, which, in turn, results in malnutrition. This study aims to explore mechanisms of these problems based on the lifestyles observed in each ethnic group.



2, Research purpose and aim

The number of patients suffering from obesity, diabetes, and hypertension are increasing in Malaysia; this is likely

because of both the intake of extreme amounts of salt and sugar and the lack of exercise among patients. High intakes of sugar sweetened beverages and syrup is not only contributing to increased obesity, but is also being linked to an increase in oral cavity problems. My plan, therefore, is to determine what, exactly, is going on out there as it relates to the lifestyle of *Kadazan* people—one of the Sabah’s largest Chinese ethnic groups. My main and final goal is to contribute to the local community in terms of improving health awareness and promoting healthy lifestyles at community and national levels.

3, Results and achievements in fieldwork

The research was mainly conducted through observing and interviewing local people. The results suggest that Chinese people are more likely to distribute foods in a well-balanced way than others; for instance, in restaurants serving “*nasi champur*,” which is a local dish, people generally chose between 2 to 4 foods (meats, fishes, eggs, and vegetables) to accompany a cup of rice. In other types of restaurants the portions of vegetables were smaller, often consisting of a couple of slices of cucumber, a slice of cabbage, or something else unsubstantial. Furthermore, it was common for people to not finish these small portions of vegetables and drink highly sugar sweetened juice with them.





4, Implications and impacts on future research

This time, I chose not to conduct more specific research, such as distributing questionnaires and keeping track of food records; consequently, the results of my research lack objectivity. It will, therefore, be necessary to collect exact data. It will be also necessary to compare my data with data collected from Peninsular.

