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Prevalence of alcohol use and mental health status among university and college students in Malaysia

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Introduction: University and college students are often face independent living and academic challenges that may increase the risk of alcohol use and abuse. Evidence shows that people who consume high amounts of alcohol are at risk to higher levels of mental illness and it may contribute to depression, anxiety and stress. The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of alcohol use and mental health status among university and college students.

Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted among 409 university and college students between ages of 18-25 years old. Alcohol use was screened by a validated self-administered questionnaire of the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test - Malaya version (AUDIT-M) and the symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress were assessed by validated Malay version of Depressive Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21).

Results: The sample consisted of 127 males and 282 females respondents from undergraduate students with mean age of 21.01 (1.3). Results showed that 50 (12.2%) of them use alcoholic beverages during last year. Out of the 409 students recruited, 69 (16.9%) were classified as having depression, 163 (39.9%) have anxiety and 61 (14.9%) with symptoms of stress.

Conclusion: The prevalence of anxiety is much higher than either depression or stress. However, this study need to be further explored for development of better intervention programs and appropriate support services targeting this group.

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