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# Prevalence and factors associated with internet addiction among adolescents in Malaysia: a cross-sectional study

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**Original article****Prevalence and factors associated with internet addiction among adolescents in Malaysia: a cross-sectional study**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Internet addiction (IA) among adolescents has become an important health problem due to its association with many negative consequences if not prevented early. However, there were no data on IA among adolescents in Malaysia.

**Aim:** The objective of this study was to determine the prevalence and factors associated with IA among adolescents aged 10 to 19 years of age in Malaysia.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was done in 15 primary care clinics throughout Malaysia using the validated Malay version of the Internet Addiction Test. A standardized, self-administered questionnaire on socio-demographic data and questions assessing IA were given to the participants. Data analyses were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21. The findings were described in terms of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The association between socio-demographic factors and IA was determined by using univariate analysis. Multivariate logistic regressions were used to identify predictors of IA

**Results:** A total of 921 participants were included in this study. The male population was 49.5% (n=456), with a mean age of  $16.38 \pm 2.38$  years. The prevalence of internet addiction was 56.4% (n=519). The significant predictors of internet addiction were age, mother's high education level, and having a smartphone.

**Conclusion:** This study showed that there is a high prevalence of internet addiction among adolescents in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Internet addiction, Adolescents, Prevalence, Primary care, Malaysia

## **Introduction**

Internet addiction (IA) has become a major issue with the availability of the internet. Internet addiction is defined as excessive internet use, which is associated with the preoccupation of internet use, tolerance development, and withdrawal symptoms [1]. This is compounded by the smartphone phenomenon, where smartphones are widely available and allow ease of access to the internet. It is reported that 70% of the world population owns at least one smartphone [2], and 85% of Malaysians own a smartphone [3]. The prevalence of IA varies around the world, ranging from as low as 3.7% to as high as 26.8% [4-8]. Two local studies done showed that the prevalence of IA was 43% [9] and 36.9% [10], respectively.

IA is associated with several negative consequences. People suffering from IA tend to have dietary issues where they skip meals, snack more, and reduce the portion of their meal intake. They also tend to have poorer diets [11]. Other negative consequences of IA are poor academic performance, limited social activities, and a tendency to engage in high-risk behaviours [12]. They have a higher alcoholic intake and smoke more compared to normal individuals [11]. They are more prone to sleeping disorders, emotional problems, and psychiatric conditions like depression [12, 13].