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## Physical Activity Among Unimas Undergraduates

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** A significant decline in physical activity is seen among young adults during the transition into adulthood.

**Objective:** This study aims to explore the degree of physical activity among undergraduate students in University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and its relationship with five predictors for behavioural change related to participation in physical activity, derived from Health Promotion Model.

**Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted among 440 undergraduate students through multistage random sampling using self-administered questionnaire consists of Global Physical Activity Questionnaire (GPAQ), Exercise Benefit/Barrier Scale (EBBS), Self-rated Abilities for Health Practices Scale (SRAHP), Physical Activity Affect Scale (PAAS) and Physical Activity and Social Support Scale (PASSS).

**Results:** From 409 respondents, 74.1% was physically active. Mean age of physically active was 21 years old, Year-2 students (31.3%) more active than Year-1 (30.8%) and Year-3 (12%), and females (48.7%) than males (25.4%). Males were three times more prone to participate in physical activity than females (OR=3.533). Predictors, namely perceived benefit, perceived barrier, and self-rated ability had a significant relationship with the degree of physical activity, in contrast with social influence and activity-related effect.

**Conclusion:** Majority were physically active. Only self-rated ability likely to predict a student's participation in physical activity.

**Key Words:** Physical activity, Predictors, Public health, Undergraduate students

### INTRODUCTION

Physical activity denotes the movement of any part of the body that require the utilization of energy. Whereas, physical inactivity is the opposite and any physical activity that does not meet the standard of physical activity as recommended.<sup>1-3</sup> It is one of the leading factors of mortality globally.<sup>4</sup> It linked to various chronic diseases (National Health and Morbidity Survey, NHMS) such as ischaemic heart disease, diabetes mellitus, breast cancer, and colon cancer.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, despite knowing the importance of the physical activity to the human body, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that more than half of the global population were physically inactive (60%).<sup>6</sup> Based on the Malaysia Adults Nutrition Survey and the other two studies in Penang most of the Malaysian adults were physically inactive (85-89%).<sup>7,8</sup>

Various studies had found the possible factors that have the potency to affect an individual's participation in physical activity. Often described factors includes gender, family influence the sociocultural status of individuals, and coming of age.<sup>9-12</sup> A study by Sigmundova et al. had shown a decline in physical activity upon entering university as the young adult transition into the early phase of adulthood.<sup>12</sup> Given the low prevalence of participation in physical activity among Malaysian adults, there is a need to study and explore predictors of participation in physical activity as well as sociodemographic backgrounds, namely age, gender, ethnicity, including other related factors for better understanding of the problem.<sup>13,14</sup>

Therefore, the objectives of the study were to ascertain the degree of physical activity among undergraduate students in UNIMAS and its relationship with the five predictors that possibly influence their participation in physical activity to

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