

## DEPRESSION AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH NUTRITIONAL STATUS, STRESS AND ANXIETY AMONG MALAY WOMEN IN THE RURAL AREA OF SAMARAHAN DISTRICT, SARAWAK

Dr Ainaa Anum Araffin Bakar  
Department of Community Medicine and Public Health  
Faculty of Medicine and Health Science  
University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia  
Email: ainaaanum@gmail.com,

Associate Professor Dr Noorzilawati Sahak  
Department of Community Medicine and Public Health  
Faculty of Medicine and Health Science  
University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia  
Email: snoorzilawati@unimas.my,

Professor Dr. Siti Raudzah Ghazali  
Centre for Student Development  
University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia  
Email: gsraudzah@fmhs.unimas.my,

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### ABSTRACT

*Depression is a significant contributor to mental illness as well as to the overall global burden of disease as it can affect anyone at any time. Research on depression and its association with nutritional status, stress and anxiety among Malay women in the rural area in Malaysia especially in Sarawak is limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the prevalence of depression and its association with nutritional status, stress and anxiety among Malay women in the rural area of Samarahan district. A community-based cross-sectional survey was carried out among 502 Malay women in the rural area of Samarahan district selected using multistage random sampling. A self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Nutritional status was measured using Body Mass Index. Stress and anxiety were measured by Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS), meanwhile Center of Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) scale was used to screen for depression. Multiple logistic regression was conducted to determine the association between studied factors and depression. The prevalence of depression among respondents was 18.1%. The odds of having depression among single women were 0.58 times [adj. OR 0.58; CI 0.34 – 0.99] compared to married women. Women with stress were six times [adj. OR 6.09; CI 2.93 – 12.66] more likely to have depression. The odds of having depression among women with anxiety were 4.15 times [adj. OR 4.15; CI 2.33 – 7.39] compared to women without anxiety. However, there was no significant association between nutritional status and depression. The study findings can be used to help in designing health programmes and healthcare services to tackle mental health issues in community settings, particularly in the rural area of Samarahan district for prevention measures, early detection and early intervention.*

Key words: depression, nutritional status, stress, anxiety

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### INTRODUCTION

Non-communicable disease (NCD) is a type of illness which does not transmit to another individual. Mental health problem is one of the common NCD risk factors which affect millions of people worldwide, especially increases in developing countries, including Malaysia. The National Health Morbidity Survey (NHMS) in 2015 revealed that the prevalence of common mental health problems among adult in Malaysia was 29.2%, where 30.8% of Malaysian adult women suffered from common mental health problems. Depression is one of the common mental health problems as it is highly prevalent in the population. The worldwide prevalence of depression has been increasing in recent decades (Vos *et al.*, 2016).

Depression can affect all ages, and multiple factors can predispose it. Based on a previous study, more women experience depression when compared to men (Stegenga *et al.*, 2012) and depression can be due to various causes such as social, psychological and biological factors (Accortt *et al.*, 2008). Some aspects that may contribute to the higher prevalence of depression among women and rural community may be due to the exposure of women from this area to specific environments, circumstance and behaviour that may make them more susceptible to depression (Winters *et al.*, 2010). To date, the study on the depression and its associated factors among Malay women in the rural area are very scarce in Malaysia, generally in Sarawak and particularly in Samarahan. Although depression is one of the most common mental health problems in Malaysia, depression prevalence among Malay women in the rural area is understudied.

The connection between common mental health problems and abnormal body weight is a significant public health concern (Sachs-Ericsson *et al.*, 2007). Both of these conditions have significant implications for health care systems and intervention strategies for both physical health and mental health of the community should be considered. These strategies need to include