Prevalence and sociodemographic factors of depression among adults attending primary care clinics in Northern Selangor

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Depression is a leading contributor to the global burden of disease, with substantial social and economic consequences. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 2019, approximately one in eight individuals globally are affected by mental disorders, with depressive and anxiety disorders being the most common. The National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023 revealed a doubling in the prevalence of depressive symptoms among Malaysians aged 16 and above from 2.3% in 2019 to 4.6% in 2023, with higher rates observed among females and younger age groups, highlighting a concerning upward trend. Depression often goes undetected and untreated, especially in primary care settings. Early identification through routine screening is critical to improving mental health outcomes. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of depression and examine associated sociodemographic characteristics among adults attending government primary care clinics in Northern Selangor. **Materials and Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from January to December 2024 involving nine government primary health care clinics in Northern Selangor. A total of 88 adult participants aged 18 years and above were selected using simple random sampling. Depression was screened using the Whooley questions and confirmed using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). Descriptive statistics were calculated using Microsoft Excel. **Results:** Of the 88 participants, the highest percentage or 74 (84.1%) were female and 80 (90.9%) were Malay, with a mean age of 35.2 years (SD = 10.4). Most were married, 57 (64.8%) and had either tertiary (48.9%) or secondary education (48.9%). More than half (58.0%) were employed. Chronic illnesses were reported in 22.7%, while 16.0% had comorbid mental health conditions such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder (8.0%), Psychosis (2.0%), and PTSD (1.0%). The most commonly reported psychosocial stressors were workplace issues 34 (38.6%), followed by marital and family conflicts (28.4% each). Although 86.4% reported having support systems, 13.6% lacked any emotional or social support. **Conclusion:** This study highlights a notable prevalence of depression among women and working-age adults attending primary care clinics. Depression was found to be influenced by a combination of psychosocial stressors, employment status, chronic illnesses, and lack of social support. These findings underscore the critical role of primary health care in screening and managing depression. Integrating mental health assessments into routine primary health care visits, especially for high-risk populations, along with strengthening psychosocial interventions and community support networks, is vital for effective mental health care delivery in Malaysia.

Keywords: Depression, primary care, mental health, sociodemographic factors, Selangor