Understanding the landscape of adult ADHD in Malaysia: Prevalence, challenges, and future directions

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, often underdiagnosed in adulthood. ADHD in adults remains an underexplored area in Malaysia, despite its significant impact on daily functioning and mental health. This study aims to examine the prevalence of adult ADHD in Malaysia by reviewing existing epidemiological studies. Additionally, it explores cultural, social, and systemic factors influencing diagnosis and management. The study further identifies gaps in research and proposes future directions for studying adult ADHD in Malaysia. **Materials and Methods:** This study employs a scoping review approach, systematically searching databases including Google Scholar, PubMed, Medscape, and Scopus. Keywords like "Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder," "ADHD", "adult", "prevalence", "challenges" and "Malaysia", were used in the search to find relevant publications. The evaluation only included English-language publications and concentrated on all published research between 2015 and 2025. **Results:** Six journal articles were chosen out of 29 journal articles for further review. The prevalence of adult ADHD in Malaysia varies widely, with figure ranging between 15.8% to 47.2% depending on specific population studied. Findings suggest that lack of clinical knowledge and understanding among healthcare professionals, cultural stigma, high prevalence of psychiatric comorbidities and media representation and legal implications contribute to underdiagnosis and undertreatment. To address these challenges, this study recommends improving clinical training for healthcare providers, integrating ADHD screening into mental health assessments, increasing public awareness campaign to reduce stigma and workplace accommodations and policy changes in working settings. Future research should focus on large scale epidemiological studies, explore culturally sensitive diagnostic and treatment approaches including integration of Islamic psychology in ADHD management. **Conclusion:** The findings indicate that adult ADHD is a significant yet underrecognized issue in Malaysia, with higher prevalence rates compared to global averages. Cultural, social, and systemic factors, including stigma, lack of awareness, and limited healthcare resources, contribute to the underdiagnosis and undertreatment of adult ADHD. Addressing gaps is crucial for better recognition and management of adult ADHD in Malaysia, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for affected individuals.

Keywords: ADHD, adult, stress, Malaysia, prevalence