



DEPRESSION AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN MALAYSIA: A COMPARISON OF FINDINGS BETWEEN NATIONAL HEALTH & MORBIDITY SURVEY (NHMS) 2012 AND 2017



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INTRODUCTION



Mental health problem affected 20% of adolescents worldwide, most commonly depression or anxiety¹. This study aims to compare the prevalence of depression and factors related to depression among adolescents in Malaysia from two surveys

METHODOLOGY

A sub-analysis of data from two nationwide surveys using multistage cluster random sampling design was done among secondary school students aged 13-17 years in Malaysia from 234 (NHMS 2012) and 212 (NHMS 2017) randomly selected schools. We used a validated self-administrated bilingual Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale (DASS-21) questionnaire to evaluate for depression. Descriptive analysis was applied using SPSS.

RESULTS

The prevalence of depression among adolescents was 17.7% (95% CI:16.71,18.67) in 2012 and slightly increased to 18.3% (95% CI:17.20,19.38) in 2017. The state with the highest prevalence of depression was Sarawak (20.9%) in the NHMS 2012 and Selangor (22.6%) in NHMS 2017. In 2012, the prevalence of depression was higher among females (18.5%) whereas in 2017, the prevalence was higher among males (18.9%).

Table 1: Prevalence of Depression among adolescents by Sociodemographic in Malaysia.

Socio-demographic characteristic	Count	NHMS 2012			NHMS 2017			
		Prevalence (%)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Count	Prevalence (%)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
National	4246	17.7	16.7	18.7	4783	18.3	17.2	19.3
Gender								
Male	2032	16.8	15.5	18.2	2333	18.9	17.6	20.2
Female	2214	18.5	17.5	19.7	2450	17.7	16.2	19.2
Ethnic group								
Malay	2481	15.2	14.3	16.1	2898	15.5	14.5	16.5
Chinese	920	20.2	18.1	22.5	841	21.2	18.8	23.8
Indian	397	30.0	26.7	33.6	408	33.1	29.1	37.3
Bumiputera Sabah	175	17.2	13.4	21.7	360	22.1	18.7	26.0
Bumiputera Sarawak	194	20.3	15.3	6.5	154	16.5	14.1	19.24
Others	78	19.7	15.0	25.3	122	22.2	18.0	27.1
Form								
Form 1	990	19.3	17.4	21.4	1146	21.4	19.2	24.0
Form 2	898	17.7	15.3	20.4	941	17.4	15.6	19.3
Form 3	869	16.8	15.2	18.5	913	15.8	16.2	17.7
Form 4	772	17.2	15.6	19.0	1002	19.2	17.4	21.2
Form 5	717	17.2	15.3	19.2	781	17.3	15.4	19.5
Parents' Marital Status								
Married and living together	3357	16.7	15.8	17.7	3670	17.0	16.00	18.1
Married and living apart	149	22.1	18.4	26.2	206	24.2	20.7	28.1
Divorced	245	21.7	18.9	24.8	357	21.8	19.1	24.7
Widower	233	21.3	18.7	24.1	258	21.6	18.5	25.0
Separated	71	28.4	21.9	35.8	109	30.1	24.7	36.3

DISCUSSION

1. The increasing number of 'ever used drugs' among adolescents from the two studies supported by Junette & Trishna (2011) found that the risk for depression may also increase by two - to threefold in the presence of comorbidities such as substance abuse and anxiety disorders.^{2,3}
2. This comparison of two studies showed quite similar findings as increasing trend of the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity among adolescents was from 13.0% in NHMS 1996, to 19.4% in 2006 and 20.0% in 2011.⁴
3. A trend study in United States also reported that the prevalence rate of severe adolescent depression varied from 8.7% in 2005 to 11.3% in 2014. The trends remained significant after adjustment for substance use disorders and sociodemographic factors.⁵
4. This comparison also showed the rates of prepubertal depression are similar for boys and girls; however, depression rates double in females after puberty.²

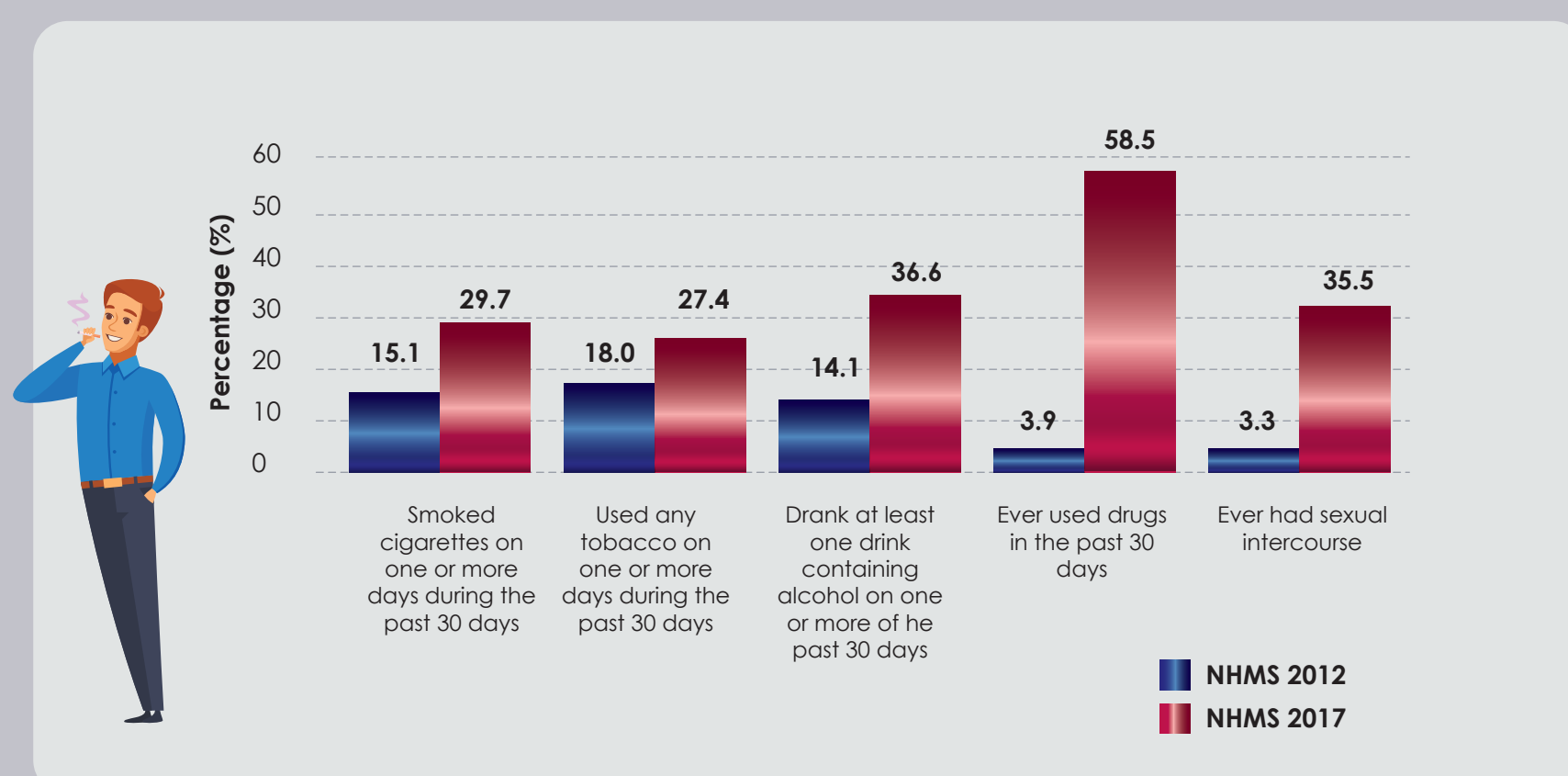


CONCLUSION

There was an increase in the prevalence of depression among adolescents in NHMS 2017 compared to the NHMS 2012. Depression remains a problem among adolescents especially those with risky behaviours. Intervention strategies should be targetted on adolescents with risky behaviours and those from broken family.



Figure 1: The Prevalence of behaviour Among Adolescents with Depressive Symptoms



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