

A39 Food neophobia and its association with weight status among preschoolers in Terengganu, Malaysia

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Food neophobia is known as the attitude towards foods, including reluctance to eat and avoiding trying new food, resulting in restricted eating habits. There is a link between food neophobia and weight status, however there is a lack of articles and research conducted in Malaysia regarding food neophobia. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the association between food neophobia and preschoolers' weight status in Terengganu. This study was a cross-sectional study carried out among preschoolers in Terengganu. There were 126 preschoolers (36.5% were 5 years old; 63.5% were 6 years old) participating in this study. Data on sociodemographic, food neophobia were collected using questionnaires through Google Form while height and weight data were collected during the school visits. Child food neophobia was measured using the Child Food Neophobia Scale (CFNS) that consists of 10 items of which 5 items were reverse coded to calculate the CFNS score. Response options were rated using a 5-point Likert scale; response options ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. High mean scores of food neophobia indicate a high level of food neophobia. The cross-sectional associations between total CFNS score and Body Mass Index (BMI) Z-score were examined via simple linear regression test. The results of the study show that 80.2% of the participants were female, all Malays and 85.7% were living in urban areas. The median for the BMI Z-score was -0.66 ± 1.52 with 78.6% of preschoolers had normal body weight, while 13.4% of them were overweight and obese. The results show that 62.7% of the participants experienced food neophobia while 37.3% of them were not having food neophobia. There was no significant association between BMI Z-score and CFNS score. Results highlight the need for interventions to educate parents on strategies to overcome neophobia and enable health professionals to improve children's nutrition and health in the future.