

**NUTRITIONAL STATUS, DIETARY AND
LIFESTYLE HABITS OF ADOLESCENTS
IN THE WELFARE HOME**

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ABSTRACT

Growth and development are important aspects of adolescence and there are limited nutrition-related studies on children living in welfare homes. Hence the purpose of this study is to determine the nutritional status, dietary and lifestyle habits of adolescents in four selected private welfare homes in the Klang Valley. A total of 88 subjects participated in this study and anthropometric measurements (weight and height) were obtained to assess the nutritional status. Dietary and lifestyle habits were determined using a questionnaire. In this study it was found that the majority of the subjects did not consume the recommended daily intake for three out of the four food categories, except for the fish, meat and poultry category. The main reasons for skipping meals were time constraint (40.9%) and a lack of appetite (30.9%). It was also found that there was a significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between nutritional status and age and also between age and the number of hours of sleep per day. Other measurements that could be taken to obtain more accurate anthropometric measurements are mid arm circumference and skin fold thickness. Private welfare homes rely on public funding and therefore have limited funds for maintaining these homes in terms of providing more healthful foods. More studies should be conducted regarding the health status of children in welfare homes. The government and health care professionals should collaborate in ensuring the nutritional health and food served in welfare homes is nutritionally adequate to support the needs of growing adolescents. The government should also provide larger yearly grants for maintaining welfare homes.

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