**Title:** Body Weight Perception among Non-pregnant Urban Malaysian Women: Is It Reliable?

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:**

In maternal healthcare, pre-pregnancy weight is used to predict pregnancy outcomes. Since no recorded data on pre-pregnancy weight, perceived weight is used alternatively. This study examines the relationship between perceived and actual weight among non-pregnant urban Malaysian women and identifies differences in perceived and actual weight by selected socio-demographic characteristics.

**Methodology:**

A cross-sectional study was conducted between April and June 2013 among urban Malaysian women attending public health clinics. Information on height, perceived current weight and time when their weight was last taken were obtained and actual weight was the average of two measurements (TANITA-HD-323-digital-scale). Socio-demographic data collected were age, ethnicity, education level, marital and employment status and total household income.

**Results:**

Mean age of 371 women in this study was 28.81±5.65, 82.2% were Malays, 62.8% had tertiary education, over 75% were married and employed, with more than half from middle-income households. Overall, the mean perceived and actual weight was 59.29±11.59 and 59.20±11.90 respectively. Pearson’s Correlation test showed a very strong positive correlation between perceived and actual weight (r=0.957;p<0.0001), ranging between 0.852 to 0.994 among subgroups; 258 (69.5%) perceived their weight accurately (±2.0 kg of actual weight), 49 (13.2%) under and 64 (17.3%) overestimated their weight.Main outliers were among younger women, Malays, tertiary educated, employed, middle-income and had weight last measured a month or more ago.

**Conclusion:**

Strong correlation between perceived and actual weight among women in this study reassured weight perception can be used more confidently in future research among urban Malaysian women using public health services.

**Keywords:** reliable; urban; weight perception; women

# Total word counts: 2358

**ABSTRAK**

**Pengenalan:**

Dalam penjagaan kesihatan ibu, berat pra-kehamilan digunakan untuk meramalkan hasil kehamilan. Oleh kerana tiada data berat pra-kehamilan yang direkod, persepsi berat badan digunakan sebagai alternatif. Kajian ini mengkaji hubungan antara persepsi berat badan dan berat badan sebenar dalam kalangan wanita Malaysia di bandar yang tidak mengandung dan mengenal pasti perbezaan antara persepsi berat badan dan berat badan sebenar dengan ciri-ciri sosio-demografik terpilih.

**Metodologi:**

Satu kajian keratan rentas telah dijalankan antara April dan Jun 2013 dalam kalangan wanita Malaysia di bandar yang hadir di klinik kesihatan awam. Maklumat mengenai ketinggian, persepsi berat badan dan masa kali terakhir berat badan mereka ditimbang telah diperolehi dan berat badan sebenar adalah purata dua ukuran (TANITA-HD-323-skala-digital). Data sosio-demografi yang dikumpul ialah umur, etnik, tahap pendidikan, status perkahwinan dan pekerjaan dan jumlah pendapatan seisi rumah.

**Hasil Kajian:**

Min umur bagi 371 wanita dalam kajian ini adalah 28.81±5.65, 82.2% adalah Melayu, 62.8% berpendidikan tinggi, lebih daripada 75% telah berkahwin dan bekerja, dengan lebih daripada separuh berpendapatan sederhana. Secara keseluruhan, min bagi persepsi berat badan dan berat badan sebenar ialah 59.29±11.59 dan 59.20±11.90. Ujian Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan korelasi positif yang kuat antara persepsi berat badan dan berat badan sebenar (r = 0.957;p <0.0001), julat di antara 0.852-0/994 dalam kalangan kumpulan kecil; 258 (69.5%) mempunyai persepsi berat badan mereka dengan tepat (± 2.0 kg daripada berat badan sebenar), 49 (13.2%) kurang dan 64 (17.3%) melebihi berat badan mereka. Titik terpencil utama adalah dalam kalangan wanita yang lebih muda, Melayu, berpendidikan tinggi, bekerja, berpendapatan sederhana dan menimbang berat badan mereka sebulan yang lalu atau lebih.

**Kesimpulan:**

Korelasi yang kuat antara persepsi berat badan dan berat badan sebenar dalam kalangan wanita dalam kajian ini memberi jaminan persepsi berat badan boleh digunakan dengan lebih yakin dalam penyelidikan masa depan dalam kalangan wanita Malaysia di bandar yang menggunakan perkhidmatan kesihatan awam.

**Kata kunci:** reliabiliti; bandar; persepsi berat; wanita