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# Prevalence and Associated Factors of the Severity of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Among Low-Income Community-Dwelling Adults in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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## Abstract

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Growing prevalence of mental illnesses and the role they play in the global disease burden is an emerging public health issue. The prevalence of depression and anxiety is on the rise in Malaysia. Low-income urban communities are among the key affected populations with regards to mental health problems. This cross-sectional study was aimed to determine the prevalence and severity of depression, anxiety and stress, and their associated factors among adults in the low-income community of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A total of 248 participants aged 18–60 years old were recruited. Data were collected via face-to-face interviews using the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale—21 Items (DASS-21). Chi-squared test was used to

examine the association between the variables.

Multiple ordinal regression model was introduced to identify the predictors of depression, anxiety and stress. The proportions of participants with depression, anxiety and stress were 24.2% (95% CI: 19.6–30.4), 36.3% (95% CI: 29.9–43.0), and 20.6% (95% CI: 15.4–26.5), respectively. There was a statistically significant association of ethnicity ( $p = 0.002$ ) and age ( $p = 0.014$ ) with the severity of depression, ethnicity ( $p = 0.001$ ) and age ( $p = 0.024$ ) with the severity of anxiety, and ethnicity ( $p < 0.001$ ) and marital status ( $p = 0.006$ ) with the severity of stress. In a multivariable analysis, only non-Malay ethnicity was an independent predictor of the severity of depression [OR = 2.43, 95% CI (1.25, 4.72),  $p = 0.009$ ], anxiety [OR = 2.55, 95% CI (1.41, 4.62),  $p = 0.002$ ] and stress [OR = 4.28, 95% CI (2.06, 8.89),  $p = <0.001$ ]. Mental health interventions should target low-income communities to address social inequalities of mental health within economically disadvantaged populations.

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### Ethics declarations

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Approval

This study obtained Institutional Review Board approval from Taylor's University Center for Research Management (HEC 2019/058).

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