

PREVALENCE OF TRUANCY AMONG SCHOOL-GOING ADOLESCENTS IN MALAYSIA

FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL HEALTH & MORBIDITY SURVEY (NHMS) 2022

Nazirah Alias, Khaw Wan-Fei, Nur Hamidah Nasaruddin, LeeAnn Tan, Eida Nurhadzira Muhammad, S Maria Awaluddin, Mohd Ruhaizie Riyadzi, Tania Gayle Robert Lourdes, Thamil Arasu Saminathan, Lim Kuang Kuay

Institute for Public Health, National Institutes of Health, Ministry of Health Malaysia, Setia Alam, 40170 Shah Alam, Selangor

INTRODUCTION

- Truancy is a serious educational issue associated with high-risk behaviours among the adolescents such as alcohol, drug use, engaging in fights and poor academic performance.¹
- It is essential to have national estimates in order to establish regular monitoring mechanisms and to manage future truancy problems.
- The study aimed to investigate the prevalence of truancy by sociodemographic characteristics and high-risk behaviours among school-going adolescents in Malaysia in 2022.

Truancy was defined by missing class or school without permission for at least one day in the past 30 days.²⁻³

METHODOLOGY

- This is a cross-sectional nationwide study using multistage stratified cluster sampling design among school-going adolescents.
- This study used Global School-based Student Health Survey and Adolescent Health Survey, a validated self-administered questionnaire from the World Health Organization.
- Out of 37,479 eligible adolescents, a total of 33,020 students aged 13 to 17 years old participated in this study, with 88% response rate.
- Data was analysed using complex sample analysis and the Rao-Scott chi-square test.



CURRENT ANY TOBACCO PRODUCT USER

The use any of any tobacco product during the last 30 days



EVER DRUG USE

Adolescents who had a history of drug use in their lifetime



BEING PHYSICALLY ATTACKED

One or more individuals hurt another person, with or without a weapon in the past 12 months.



BULLYING

A student or group of adolescents say or do bad and unpleasant things towards another student in the past 30 days



EVER DRINKER

Those who had a history of alcohol consumption in their lifetime

RESULT

- The overall prevalence of truancy among school-going adolescents in Malaysia in 2022 was 25.6% (95% CI: 24.3, 27.0).
- The prevalence of truancy was significantly higher among males, older age, adolescents with separated/divorced/ widowed parents and Bumiputera Sabah ethnicity ($p < 0.001$).
- The prevalence of truancy was also significantly higher among adolescents who experienced physical attacks, being bullied, ever drug user and current any tobacco products user ($p < 0.001$).

Variable	TRUANT					NOT TRUANT			
	Unweighted count	Prevalence	Lower CI	Upper CI	p-value	Unweighted count	Prevalence	Lower CI	Upper CI
Overall	8,412	25.6	24.3	27.0		24,608	74.4	73.0	75.7
Gender					0.004				
Male	4,058	26.6	25.1	28.2		11,151	73.4	71.8	74.9
Female	4,354	24.6	23.1	26.1		13,457	75.4	73.9	76.9
Age					< 0.001				
13	1,381	19.7	18.1	21.5		5,566	80.3	78.5	81.9
14	1,521	22.7	21.2	24.3		5,256	77.3	75.7	78.8
15	1,624	25.5	23.4	27.7		4,806	74.5	72.3	76.6
16	1,902	29.2	26.7	31.9		4,747	70.8	68.1	73.3
17	1,984	31.9	29.7	34.3		4,233	68.1	65.7	70.3
Marital status of parents					< 0.001				
Married	6,745	24.4	23.1	25.9		20,924	75.6	74.1	76.9
Separated/ divorced/ widowed	1,667	31.5	29.5	33.6		3,684	68.5	66.4	70.5
Ethnicity					< 0.001				
Malay	6,330	28.5	27.0	30.1		16,462	71.5	69.9	73.0
Chinese	662	13.3	11.2	15.8		4,358	86.7	84.2	88.8
Indian	314	20.3	16.9	24.1		1,216	79.7	75.9	83.1
Bumiputera Sabah	560	35.9	32.7	39.2		1,108	64.1	60.8	67.3
Bumiputera Sarawak	319	26.4	22.2	31.2		920	73.6	68.8	77.8
Others	227	29.9	25.4	34.7		544	70.1	65.3	74.6
Ever drinker					0.378				
Yes	1,303	24.5	21.5	27.7		3,924	75.5	72.3	78.5
No	7,109	25.8	24.6	27.2		20,684	74.2	72.8	75.4
Been physically attacked					< 0.001				
Yes	1,679	35.8	33.6	38.1		3,135	64.2	61.9	66.4
No	6,733	23.8	22.5	25.2		21,470	76.2	74.8	77.5
Being bullied					< 0.001				
Yes	983	36.6	34.1	39.2		1,774	63.4	60.8	65.9
No	7,426	24.6	23.2	26.0		22,825	75.4	74.0	76.8
Ever drug					< 0.001				
Yes	599	36.3	33.1	39.5		1,013	63.7	60.5	66.9
No	7,771	25.0	23.7	26.4		23,502	75.0	73.6	76.3
Current tobacco user					< 0.001				
Yes	2,184	38.0	36.0	40.0		3,595	62.0	60.0	64.0
No	6,228	22.8	21.5	24.2		21,011	77.2	75.8	78.5

DISCUSSION

- The prevalence of truancy among school-going adolescent in Malaysia showed a decreasing trend compared to 2012² with 30.9% and 29.4% in 2017³.
- Truancy was higher among male adolescents because of the cultural expectations of males more related to be truant⁴ while older adolescents playing truant because of less supervision from their parent or guardian.⁵
- Furthermore, adolescents living in 1-parent households were more truant due to less relationship with father and parental monitoring compared to those living with 2-parent household.⁶
- Adolescents who smoked and used drug was more truant because they might have more unsupervised time to engage in tobacco and drug use. Those being bullied also skipped school to escape further being a victim.⁷

CONCLUSION

These findings emphasize the importance of developing interventions and strategies towards the targeted group such as extra monitoring for bullying activities or awareness program for older adolescents to reduce truancy and eventually improve their well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank the Director of Health Malaysia for permission to present this poster.

REFERENCES

1. Vaughn, M. G., Maynard, B. R., Salas-Wright, C. P., Perron, B. E., & Abdon, A. (2013). Prevalence and correlates of truancy in the US: Results from a national sample. *Journal of Adolescence*, 36(4), 767-776. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2013.03.015>
2. Institute for Public Health. (2012). The National Health and Morbidity Survey: Malaysia Global School-Based Student Health Survey 2012 (Report No: MOH/S/IKU/14.13 (TR)). Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Health Malaysia.
3. Institute for Public Health. (2017). National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2017: Adolescent Health Survey (Report No: MOH/S/IKU/17.17(RR)). Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Health Malaysia.
4. Siziya, S., Muula, A. S., & Rudatsikira, E. (2007). Prevalence and correlates of truancy among adolescents in Swaziland: findings from the Global School-Based Health Survey. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health*, 1(1), 1-8.
5. Supa Pengpid & Karl Peltzer (2017) Prevalence, demographic and psychosocial correlates for school truancy among students aged 13-15 in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, *Journal of Child & Adolescent Mental Health*, 29:3, 197-203, DOI: 10.2989/17280583.2017.1377716
6. Sanchez, L. M., Oman, R. F., Lensch, T., & Yang, Y. (2022). Prospective Associations Between Youth Assets and Truancy Within the Context of Family Structure. *Journal of School Health*, 92(3), 293-299. [Ol: 10.1111/josh.13128](https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.13128)
7. Seidu, A. A. (2019). Prevalence and correlates of truancy among school-going adolescents in Mozambique: evidence from the 2015 Global School-Based Health Survey. *The Scientific World Journal*, 2019.