

# **SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WITH KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, AND PRACTICE ON LEPROSY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Leprosy is a contagious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. It has negative impacts on the lives of the leprosy patients. For example, stigmatization on the patients has surfaced along the years, which has made leprosy patients, including those who are cured, difficult to reintegrate into society. The purpose of this study was to determine the associations between sociodemographic characteristics and knowledge, attitude, and practice on leprosy.

**Subjects and Method:** This was an analytical cross-sectional study with ethical approval obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA. This study was conducted in Malaysia. A total of 437 study subjects were interviewed face-to-face using validated questionnaires for a period of 18 days. The dependent variables were knowledge, attitude, and practice on leprosy. The independent variable was sociodemographic characteristics: age, sex, education, and ethnic. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: (1) sociodemographic information, and (2) knowledge, attitude, and practice on leprosy. Association between variables under study was analyzed using Odds Ratio and Chi Square test.

**Results:** Young adults, i.e. adults aged <40 years old (OR= 5.07; p= 0.002), female (OR= 6.19; p= 0.013), Malay (OR= 4.14; p= 0.042), and higher education level (OR= 3.73; p= 0.054) were associated with better knowledge on the etiology of leprosy. Young adults (OR= 4.77; p= 0.029) and female (OR= 11.40; p= 0.001) were associated with positive attitude (stronger perceived susceptibility to leprosy). Low education level (OR= 5.74; p= 0.016) was associated with negative practice towards leprosy patients (i.e. They stated that leprosy patients should be isolated from society).

**Conclusion:** Young adults, female, Malay, and higher education level are associated with better knowledge on the etiology of leprosy. Young adults and female are associated with positive attitude towards leprosy patients. Low education level is associated with negative practice towards leprosy patients. Stigmatization still exists within the population under study.

**Keywords:** leprosy, patients, sociodemographic characteristics, knowledge, attitude, practice

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