

The Need for Financial Incentive towards Joining Weight Loss Program among Malay Obese Married Women in Malaysia

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Abstract

Background: Abundant of health problem issues related to obesity nowadays require drastic solutions to prevent them from becoming worst. Therefore, one of supportive measure is by applying financial incentives. Previous studies suggested that financial incentives were effective to be applied to solve health problems among human being. However assessing the need for financial incentives among obese married women to join a weight loss program in order to combat with obesity in Malaysian context will need a slight review regarding their acceptability of financial incentives so as to ensure the successfulness of the intervention. Giving financial incentive for public is a huge investment so issues related to it should be considered. **Methodology:** An online survey was done among 30 respondents of married or ever married women who is currently having excess weight or obese. The survey was conducted by Survey Monkey to determine their acceptability about financial incentive through a weight loss program. The study was analysed in SPSS and the results were discussed in three aspects: age, types of occupation, and duration of being obese. **Results and Discussion:** The result shows that all different range groups of these obese married women agree to accept the idea of giving financial incentive by joining weight lost programs. However, the acceptance varies among different age, career status and how long has been obese. **Conclusion:** The need for financial incentive is a must and should be proceed immediately to encourage obese married women to join weight lost program in order to combat obesity in Malaysia.

Keywords: Financial incentives; Malay obese married women; Age group; Types of occupation; Duration of being obese.



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1. Introduction

Abundant of obesity issues related to public health is continuously rising in many countries. While in Malaysia, the increasing of obesity health related problems requires drastic solutions to prevent them from becoming worst. Therefore, one of preventive measures could be done through applying financial incentives for the society to encourage particular health behaviour improvement (Phipps *et al.*, 2013; Purnell *et al.*, 2014; Relton *et al.*, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2015; Sawada *et al.*, 2014). Previous studies suggested that financial incentives were effective to be applied to solve health problems among human being (Blondon *et al.*, 2012; Shaw and Gupta, 2015). Financial incentive is defined as monetary benefit offered to an individual or organizations to encourage behaviour which not takes place without that monetary benefit, and have been used in variety of research and policy to induce behaviour change in health-related settings (Belle and Cantarelli, 2015; Dolan *et al.*, 2015; Phipps *et al.*, 2013; Promberger *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, a financial incentive has been used to encourage people to participate in preventive health behaviors such as weight loss and smoking evasion. In spite of that, assessing public response towards giving financial incentives for medication adherence will need a review in terms of acceptability, effectiveness, scalability, and affordability (Crane *et al.*, 2012; Promberger *et al.*, 2012; Shin *et al.*, 2016). This study aimed at gathering public responses among Malay obese married women regarding their acceptance if be given financial incentive to join a weight lost program in order to reduce obesity in the country.

2. Methodology

An online survey system named Survey Monkey has been used in collecting responses from thirty Malay obese married women around Malaysia who fits the criteria needed for the survey. The system provides a web link for respondents to fill up the questionnaires of the study. Target respondents among Malay married women who are currently experiencing excess weight problems were obtained randomly by circulating the survey link through various social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. The data then transferred into SPSS and three aspects of discussion: age, types of occupation, and duration of being obese has been analysed and interpreted.

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Respondents among Malay obese married women must be an individual with excess weight problems either overweight or obese, and whether currently experiencing or having it in the past. In addition, only married women needed for the study because they engaged in higher obesity rate compared to men (Camhi *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, previous study agreed that the tendency of a woman to gain the greatest amount of weight is between the age range of 25 until 44 years old, and being married was identified as a predictor of obesity in women (Sidik and Rampal, 2009); (Coll *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, this study was set the range of respondent's age to be between thirty to forty-five years old.

3. Results

The study identified demographic factors of age group, types of occupation and duration of obese to provide significant indicators on how financial incentive may influence married women to join weight lost program which answers vary from different groups. The table below compiled the acceptance of financial incentive based on three aspects; age, types of occupation, and duration being obese.

Table-1.1. Acceptance of Financial Incentive based on Age Group, Types of Occupation, and Duration Being Obese

| Items | Age Group (Years old) | | | | | | Types of Occupation | | | | Duration being Obese (years) | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | Mean \pm SD | | | | | *p-value (<0.05) | Mean \pm SD | | | *p-value (<0.05) | Mean \pm SD | | | | *p-value (<0.05) |
| | <30 | 31-35 | 36-40 | 41-44 | >45 | | Working | Business | Housewife | | <1 | 2-5 | 6-9 | >10 | |
| Weight loss program is my choice to lose weight | 4.57 (0.976) | 4.81 (0.911) | 5.00 (1.000) | 4.00 (0) | 5.00 (0) | 0.713 | 4.87 (0.990) | 4.50 (0.577) | 4.64 (0.809) | 0.692 | 4.00 (1.414) | 4.75 (1.138) | 5.33 (0.577) | 4.69 (0.480) | 0.426 |
| Financial support is the main aspect for me to join weight loss program | 5.57 (0.535) | 4.94 (1.526) | 5.67 (0.577) | 3.00 (1.414) | 5.00 (0) | 0.151 | 5.00 (1.069) | 5.00 (0.816) | 5.09 (1.814) | 0.985 | 5.00 (1.414) | 4.75 (1.658) | 5.33 (0.577) | 5.23 (1.166) | 0.820 |
| I am willing to spend money on joining weight loss program to lose weight | 4.00 (1.414) | 3.94 (1.482) | 3.67 (1.528) | 3.00 (1.414) | 4.50 (0.707) | 0.868 | 3.87 (1.302) | 4.75 (0.500) | 3.64 (1.629) | 0.391 | 3.50 (2.121) | 3.50 (1.624) | 5.33 (0.577) | 4.00 (1.000) | 0.213 |
| It is easy for me to join weight loss program with the help of financial incentive | 5.57 (0.535) | 5.13 (0.806) | 5.33 (0.577) | 3.50 (2.121) | 5.00 (1.414) | 0.088 | 4.93 (0.799) | 5.25 (0.500) | 5.36 (1.206) | 0.510 | 6.00 (0) | 5.25 (0.622) | 5.33 (1.155) | 4.85 (1.144) | 0.369 |
| I intend to participate in weight loss program if be given financial incentives | 5.57 (0.535) | 5.19 (0.834) | 5.33 (0.577) | 3.50 (2.121) | 5.50 (0.707) | 0.072 | 5.13 (0.834) | 5.25 (0.500) | 5.27 (1.191) | 0.929 | 5.50 (0.707) | 5.25 (0.622) | 5.67 (0.577) | 5.00 (1.225) | 0.678 |

*One-way ANOVA

4. Discussion

Different choice of answers between groups of respondent's demographic in the Likert-scale questionnaires made the study to understand the need for financial incentive by different groups of married women to combat with obesity. Financial incentive is important for some group of these married women but less to another. Overall, the result showed that all different range groups of these obese married women agree to accept the idea of giving financial incentive by joining weight lost programs. Based on the given p-value, there are no significant differences between the age group's answers. However, it indicated that younger women were more interested rather than older women who were in the age between 41-44 years old to join weight lost program with the given financial incentives. This is supported by past studies which agreed that this age range of Malaysian women were commonly obese (Sidik and Rampal, 2009). Maturity in life experience and more responsibility make their appearance as not their priority at all. It was suggested that social obligations in the family made women less concern of their body image and become obese (Coll *et al.*, 2015). Meanwhile, similarities in choice of answers between Malay obese married women among different types of occupation explaining that all of them agreed with the idea of giving financial incentive through weight lost programs to reduce obesity in Malaysia. However, businesswomen who said to have more money were less interested with the financial incentive. They are more independent and affordable to lose weight in other ways such as by eating food supplements that their focus are on business (Coll *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, working women were less interested as well because they did not have enough time to spend for joining weight lost program (Donath *et al.*, 2015). Result also showed that duration of being obese did not provide significant differences between respondents as they were more to agree with the financial incentive through weight lost programs. The tendency in answering the Likert-scale questions indicated that women who has being obese for a long time were less sensible to lost weight. They already comfortable with their obese image and being slim was no longer their main target. On the other hand, those obese people in less than one year were hoped to lose weight and turned to their old slim image by joining weight lost program thus financial incentive is quiet interesting for them.

Future study may look details on how to better giving financial incentive to reduce obesity instead of through joining weight lost programs. Other effective ways to campaign awareness for the society to better care for their healthy weight is recommended.

5. Conclusion

The idea of giving financial incentive for obese married women through weight lost programs is interesting and requires proper arrangement on how to successfully apply them. Further studies need to be performed to determine other factors which might influence the use of financial incentive intervention to encourage married women joining weight lost programs to overcome obesity in Malaysia.

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