

# Sources of Students' Mental Health Help-Seeking during the Pandemic: a Descriptive Report from Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** This article investigates the level of help-seeking among Indonesian students during the covid-19 pandemic. Using an online General Help-seeking Questionnaire, the author collected data from several provinces in Indonesia. A total of 411 (Perempuan = 308; Laki-laki = 103; M Usia = 15,61; SD = 1,57) participants were given their consent to be involved in the study. Results showed that 4 (four) primary sources of help will probably be accessed by students when they experience anxiety or fear during covid-19. Those are help from parents, doctors, family members other than parents, and mental health professionals. These findings imply that parents, doctors, family members, and mental health professionals play a significant role in supporting students. Furthermore, these findings also highlight the need for greater awareness and access to mental health services among Indonesian students. Finally, these sources of help should be prepared with first aid mental health skills to provide appropriate support for the students.

**KEYWORDS:** sources of assistance, student mental health, pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

Many people experience mental health problems during the Covid-19 pandemic (Roy et al., 2020). The problems faced include excessive anxiety and fear caused by the possibility of being exposed to Covid-19 (Wulandari & Hidayat, 2020). The mental health problems experienced are indicated by the increasing desire of the community to seek psychological assistance (Abdullah, 2020). Apart from that, a similar problem can be seen from the suicides committed by several employees who were terminated by the employers (Gunadha, 2020).

Meanwhile, students also reported experiencing anxiety and fear during this pandemic. Mental health problems in students are allegedly due to the implementation of distance learning where they are isolated from the academic and social environment. Furthermore, social restrictions prevent them from meeting friends, going to play, and group activities. In addition, uncertainty about the future, academic pressure, and family conditions also contribute to the growth of mental health problems experienced by students (Coelho, Suttiwan, Arato & Zsido, 2020).

Intention to seek help has been raised by many researchers in recent decades (Ajzen, 2002). Intention to seek help is a strong indicator for predicting behavior (Dschaak et al., 2021). As explained by the theory of planned behavior, behavior is very closely associated with intention. Therefore, if someone has an intention, it is likely that the intended behavior will occur. This theory could explain the inclination of help-seeking during this critical situation.

In the General Help Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) there are several sources where a person can get help (Wilson et al., 2005), including spouses, friends, parents, family other than parents,

mental health professionals, online help, doctors, teachers, leaders of religion, and social workers. Research reports that people who have access to many sources of help are more likely to seek help than those who have few sources of help. In addition, the mental health literacy factor will also increase a person's potential in utilizing these sources of assistance (Gulliver et al., 2010).

In this article, the author raises the issue of sources of assistance that are likely to be accessed by students when they experience anxiety or fear during a pandemic. Research findings are expected to contribute to formulating policies in order to optimize these sources. Furthermore, the authorized stakeholders provide support for the implementation of this policy in the hope that students can get through this crisis period well, physically and mentally healthy.

## METHODS

After obtaining a research permission with number 11/0105/IAIMNU/LPM/VII/2020 from the Institut Agama Islam Ma'arif NU Metro Lampung, the author began collecting research data which started on August 11 – 21 2020. This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. A total of 411 (Female = 308; Male = 103; M Age = 15.61; SD = 1.57) students gave their consent to be involved in this study.

The author uses the General Help-seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) to collect research data (Wilson et al., 2005). This instrument was modified by adjusting the context of research conducted during a pandemic. Some of the sources of assistance mentioned in this instrument include spouses, friends, parents, family other than parents, mental health professionals, online help, doctors, teachers, leaders of religion, and social workers. Participants were given the opportunity to choose the most likely source of assistance they could use when experiencing anxiety or fear caused by COVID-19. There are 7 (seven) answer choices used in this instrument, namely 1 = very unlikely – 7 = very likely.

The higher the score obtained by the participants shows an indication of the higher their desire to use the source of assistance. The internal norms used are 3 (three) categories, namely high (score 6 – 7), moderate (score 3 – 5), and low (score 1 – 2). The author uses descriptive statistical analysis using internal norm guidelines to classify the level of willingness to seek help from the participants.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Frequencies

No	Sumber bantuan	M	SD	Category (F)		
				Low	Average	High
1	Spouses	2,41	2,00	270	93	48
2	Friends	4,43	2,10	94	166	151
3	Parents	5,90	2,04	57	36	318
4	Family other than parents	4,74	2,22	88	126	197
5	Mental health professionals	4,69	2,36	106	109	196
6	Online help	4,35	2,27	111	143	157
7	Doctors	5,40	2,17	74	73	264
8	Teachers	3,94	2,16	129	160	122
9	Leaders of religion	3,58	2,23	167	139	105
10	Social workers	3,07	2,08	213	130	68
11	Not seeking help	2,35	2,07	282	74	55

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Table 1 shows that there were 4 (four) sources of assistance most chosen by the participants, namely parents (M = 5.90; SD = 2.04; F high category = 318) followed by doctors (M = 5.40; SD = 2.17; F high category = 264) then family other than parents (M = 4.74; SD = 2.22; F high category = 197). Meanwhile, mental health experts are in fourth position (M = 4.69; SD = 2.36; F High category = 196).

### Discussion

The purpose of this research is to explore the sources of assistance that are likely to be most sought after by students during a pandemic. The results of the study show that parents are the ones most often chosen to provide assistance, followed by doctors, then families other than parents, and finally professionals in the field of mental health. These results indicate that families and medical personnel have an important role in providing mental health support to students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Parents are the most likely source of assistance to be sought among other sources. This tendency can be caused by the important role of parents in family life in Indonesian culture. Parents are often the place to express complaints and seek support (Carrasquillo & London, 2013). However, parents cannot solve all of their child's problems, especially when it comes to mental health issues. Therefore, medical personnel, doctors or mental health experts, are important for students in this study (Maba & Saputra, 2019).

Medical personnel such as doctors and mental health professionals are the third and the fourth highest choice that students will seek when experiencing anxiety and fear during a pandemic. This may be due to a growing awareness of the importance of maintaining mental health (Salerno, 2016). Even though medical personnel are included in the top four choices, outreach and campaigning efforts need to be continued so that there is an increase in understanding and access to mental health among students (Kelly, Jorm & Wright, 2007).

In an effort to promote the mental health of students, it is also necessary for all parties to equip themselves with the skills to provide mental health services. This effort certainly requires the cooperation of all parties. Parents and families open themselves up to receive training in providing preventive and curative measures for mental health problems, medical personnel can become facilitators of training or campaigns for these skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, there are 4 (four) main source of help that probably will be accessed by students when they experience anxiety or fear during covid-19. Those are help from parents, doctors, family members other than parents, and mental health professionals. These findings imply that parents, doctors, family members, and mental health professionals play a significant role in providing support to students. Furthermore, these findings also highlight the need of greater awareness and access to mental health services among Indonesian students. Finally, these sources of help should improve their awareness related to students' mental health during this pandemic, if possible, they need to prepare them self with first aid mental health skills so that they would provide an appropriate support for the students.

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