

Psychological Distress in College Muslim Student during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic has set a tremendous challenge for everyone, and caused negative effects in various aspects including social, economic, educational and psychological aspects. Psychological distress is one of the emotional states characterized by depression and anxiety symptoms arising within an individual. The objective of the study is to examine psychological distress in Muslim college students during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research design employed a descriptive quantitative research design with a survey. The Participants , Muslim college tudents and going through online learning were required to complete self report online survey of HSCL-25. The results of this study present that of the 218 participants, 60,8% experienced psychological distress in the moderate category. Psychological distress during the covid-19 pandemic occurring in college Muslim students was encountered more by women than man (sig. 0,07, $p < 0,05$). There is also a difference in psychological distress between students who are in their late adolescents (18-21 years) and in their early adulthood (22-23 years) with $p = .0,08$, $p < 0,05$. However, it can be solved with various religious activities such as zikr & salat (prayer).

Keywords: Psychological Distress, College Muslim student, Covid-19

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is an extraordinary challenge for every human being in the world (Oktavia & Muhopilah., 2021). Individuals infected with Covid-19 have been experiencing cardiovascular system damage (Madjid et al., 2020), pneumonia, to death (Barro et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic affects significant changes for instance, the enactment of physical



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distancing policies causing various social, economic, educational and psychological effects (Sood, 2020).

The policy has positive and negative impacts, one of which is that the community is more concerned with health, closer family relationships, new activities and practices which are productive but still frugal, and others. Meanwhile, the negative impacts significantly experienced encompass limited activity, reduced economic turnover, learning models administering online which cause saturation because of the lack of effective interaction online, and others. With this policy, the world of education in Indonesia ranging from kindergarten, elementary, junior high, high school, and college requires to pursue the change from a face-to-face learning system into online learning method with a rapid shift, despite understanding the negative impact. The aim is that students are able to actively study independently, and adjust to various situations (Pajarianto, Kadir, Galugu, Sari, & Febrianti, 2020).

Before the pandemic, psychological distress among college students was discovered to be more significant than in the rest of the general population (Riulli, et al., 2012). It is caused by an excess quantity of assignments with a short work time, difficulty in having discussion with friends, environmental changes causing stress and depression and even triggering suicide. Based on KPAI (2020) data, several suicides were suspected to be affected by stress and depression due to encountering various online tasks.

The Indonesian Association of Mental Medicine Specialists (PDSKJI) conducted an online survey on mental health that found the problem was associated with three psychological problems, consisting of anxiety, depression, and trauma. Psychological problems occurred quite significantly in April which was more than 75%. Of these data, the most psychological problems were encountered by individuals aged 17-29 years and over. The survey results revealed that 75% experienced psychological trauma problems, 62% were depressed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and 65% of respondents experienced anxiety problems (Pdsjki, 2020).

Psychological distress problems frequently occur in students, numerous studies were conducted in various countries such as America, China, and Hong Kong with the results revealing the negative effects of distress in the experience of students (Pidgeon, Rowe, Stapleton, Magyar, & Lo, 2014). Many cases of psychological distress encountered by students possess a dreadful impact on mental health, even some end in a case of death. According to research performed by Forman-Hoffman, Muhuri, Novak, Pemberton, Ault, & Mannix (2014), some of the identified deaths confirmed that the extent of psychological distress is the most robust possible cause of premature death regardless of health, physical, and behavioral factors. Meanwhile, this pandemic also causes mental health problems directly and indirectly. It is evidenced by Prayogi & Haqi (2020) research at Universitas Airlangga Surabaya which uncovered that the prevalence of depression rates in students was 48.4% during distance learning in the COVID-19 period.

Students themselves were individuals in the stage of early adult development (Hendarto & Ambarwati, 2020). Various demands and responsibilities affect the potential to cause psychological distress, which is emotional suffering experienced (Myrowsky & Ross, 2003) by students. Most of the empirical research spread among Muslims uses large sample sizes that are not representative of the Islamic population itself. The application of psychological theories

and conceptual frameworks that have been developed mainly in the context of Western culture to Islam may be biased and fail to capture the uniqueness of religion, and may be culturally insensitive (Supriatna, Septian, & Alawiyah, 2021). So that this study specifically took research participants who were Muslim.

Research conducted by Pidgeon, et al.(2014) discovered that students with low levels of resilience possess higher levels of psychological distress compared to those with high levels of resilience. Furthermore, in Shabrina study, Puspitaningrum (2021) asserted that the higher the resilience, the lower the individual's psychological distress, affecting the increase in well-being. Munawar and Choundhry (2020) elaborated more that religion is able to produce strategies in encountering anxiety problems in this pandemic. After all, religious beliefs are able to generate a person's psychological perception of distress, in which he or she can create a mindset to enhance the endurance during Covid-19 pandemic (Joshi et.al, 2008).

Based on the above exposure, it can be implied that religiosity is one of the factors affecting mental health, such as research conducted by Yuniaty & Hamidah (2019) which explains that religiosity owns a tremendous influence than the perceived stress on suicidal intentions in early adulthood. According to USCIRF (2017), Indonesia encompasses the largest Muslim population in the world, more than 87% of its population which are 258 million identifying themselves as Muslim. Therefore, this study concerned participants who were Muslims, and the data collection was administered during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Literature Review

Psychological distress is a condition considered to suppress the psychological state of a person caused by various things in the environment. Thus, it causes stress which generates negative direction (distress). Furthermore, Mirowsky and Ross (2003) asserted psychological distress as an emotional state described by symptoms of depression (loss of interest, sadness, hopelessness) and anxiety (insomnia, headaches and lack of energy). Psychological distress is associated with negative perceptions of stressors causing symptoms of depression, life-ending urges, and anxiety (Lebares, et al., 2018).

Moreover, Mirowsky & Ross (2003) categorized psychological distress into two main aspects comprising of:

- a. Depression is an excessive feeling of sadness pictured by loneliness, despair, worthless feeling, like-dying feeling, difficulty in sleeping, loss of spirit, difficulty in eating, feeling like they have performed everything but not obtaining any or the expected results.
- b. Anxiety is a state when a person experiences tense, restless, worried, irritable, and frightened. In addition to the affecting aspects, psychological distress also possesses factors which affect it, which is: a. Intrapersonal factors comprise personality traits. A study discovered that trait neuroticism possesses a negative relationship with emotions (moods) in individuals as depression and anxiety (Matthews, 2000). b. Situational factors encompass physiological factors, cognitive factors, and social factors (Matthews, 2000). The influence of cognitive factors on psychological distress is also perceived from the experimental studies result

which displays that the psychological and physiological impact of a stressor is affected by a person's beliefs and expectations of the stressor. Meanwhile, social factors to psychological distress are identified when individuals encounter disorders in social relationships. Social factors affecting an individual's psychological distress encompass age, gender, marital status, socioeconomic status, social support and also undesirable life events (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003).

3. Method

The research design administered was a descriptive quantitative research design with a survey type. Descriptive methods are methods employed to examine a study result but are not administered to create broader conclusions (Sugiyono, 2012). According to Kerlinger (1973), survey type research method is a study which obtains samples from one population and employs questionnaires as a data collection tool which is the main data collection method itself as a research method aiming to collect several data in the form of variables, units or individuals at the same time. The variable administered in this study was psychological distress.

3.1. Sample

The determination of the study subjects was performed by purposive sampling technique with criteria: students who were studying online, late adolescent (18-21 years) and early adulthood (22-30 years), and also Muslims.

3.2. Measurement Tools

The data collection method employed was a survey method utilizing questionnaires which was disseminated online.

3.2.1. HSCL-25 (Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25)

HSCL-25 is a calculating tool generally utilized to determine the psychological distress based on symptoms of anxiety and depression that occur (Puspitaningrum, Sigumonrong, Isnandini, & Putri, 2021).

This measuring tool has also been administered in the Mental Health Research Umbrella and possesses a value of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.93, hence, this measuring tool is consistent in assessing the level of psychological distress (Kaaya, et al., 2002). HSCL-25 is a self-report measuring tool containing 25 items which comprise of 15 items measure symptoms of depression and 10 items measure symptoms of anxiety (Kaaya et al, 2002).

Results and Discussion

The study had 218 participants consisting of 67 men and 151 women. Here are some of the data obtained from the study result:

Table 1: Demographic of Participants

Demographic Data	n	(%)	Description
Gender			Based on the data above, it can be identified that the participants of this study comprise of 69.3% women and 30.7% men. Most of the ages of the participants in the study were late adolescents (80.3%). Based on the education, participants' education at S1 level (91.3%) was more than S2 level (5%), D3 (2.3%), and Profession (1.4%).
Men	67	30.7	
Women	151	69.3	
Age			
Late adolescent (18-21)	175	80.3	
Early adulthood (22-30)	43	19.7	
Education			
D3	5	2.3	
S1	199	91.3	
S2	11	5	
Profession	3	1.4	
n = 218			

Table 2: Descriptive Variable Data

Variable	Mean (SD)	Max	Min	Description
Psychological Distress	57.7 (16.7)	94	25	Based on the data, the psychological distress variable in this study possesses an average value of 55.7 and a standard deviation value of 16.7 with a maximum score of 94 and a minimum of 25. The mean value of variables and standard deviations aims to perceive the general picture of participants associated with the focus of research variables
Categorization	Depression		Total	
	L	P		
Low $X < 22$	15 (6.8%)	23 (10.5%)	38	
$22 \leq X < 42$	34 (15.5%)	95 (43.5%)	129	
High $X \geq 42$	18 (8.2%)	33 (15.1%)	61	
Sum	67	151	218	

Table 3: Categorization of Psychological Distress & Categorization of Psychological Distress based on the depression aspects

Categorization	Sum	%
Low $X < 40$	43	19.7%
$40 \leq X < 74$	131	60.1%
High $X \geq 74$	44	20.2%
Sum	218	100

Table 5: Categorization of Psychological Distress based on the anxiety aspect

Categorization	Anxiety		Total	Description
	L	P		
Low $X < 18$	20 (9.1%)	28 (12.8%)	48	According to the anxiety aspect, most participants were in moderate categorization, which was 79 or 36.2% of people
$18 \leq X < 32$	37 (16.9%)	79 (36.2%)	116	
High $X \geq 32$	10 (4.5%)	44 (20.1%)	54	
Sum	67	151	218	

Table 6: Psychological Distress in Terms of Gender & Age

Gender	N	Mean	Sig	Age	N	Mean	Sig.
Men	67	53.8	0.07	Late adolescent	175	58.7	0.08
Women	151	58.5		Early Adulthood	43	50.4	
Sum	218						

It is perceived from the table above that the significance value is 0.08 ($p < 0.05$). Hence, there is a significant difference in psychological distress between late adolescence and early adulthood.

Psychological distress which occurs in Muslim students overall is in the moderate category (60.1%). The data presents that students experience psychological distress during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is in accordance with the research which revealed that mild anxiety frequently occurs in students during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to anxiety, the number of depressions during the Covid-19 pandemic continues increasing (Hasanah, Fitri, Supardi, & PH, 2020). These two aspects revealed that students have been encountering psychological distress during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Determined by the difference in gender, psychological distress occurs frequently infemale Muslim students (69.3%) compared to male Muslim students (30.7%). The

results are in accordance with Walean, Pali & Sinolungan research (2019) which explains that female students experienced anxiety more intensively during the Covid-19 pandemic than male students.

In this study, psychological distress could not be perceived from the individual education level. It can be observed from the significance value of 0.30 ($p > 0.05$). Thus, it is not in accordance with the Hutapea and Mashoedi (2019) study which discovered that a person's optimism influences an individual's psychological distress. Optimism can be perceived from how individuals possess the confidence to achieve something both in terms of education and others.

The study also unveiled that late adolescents (18-21 years) possessed higher average scores than early adulthood (22-30 years). It corroborates Huang and Zhao's research (2020) which explains that late adolescents frequently present symptoms of depression and anxiety more intensively than the elderly.

Based on research, it was revealed that more Muslim students experienced psychological distress from the depression aspect which is in the moderate category (59%). According to research conducted by Reavley and Jorm (2010), it is explained that depression among students possesses an increased prevalence because depressive symptoms have a negative influence on students.

However, it can be encountered by conducting various religious activities as exemplified in Winurini research (2019) which presents that the higher the level of religiosity, the higher the mental health of individuals. The examples of religiosity activities which possess a significant relationship with mental health are performing 5-times prayers, remembrance (Safitri, Nashori, & Sulistyarini, 2017), and tahajjud prayer (Purnomosidi, 2018).

This study possesses differences from previous studies that the students were measured in general regardless of religion. However, this study also owns the weakness of the limitation of data retrieval time in which there were limitations in measuring religious elements in Muslim students. It is because the researchers merely require whether students as the participants were Muslims or not, without asking further the aspects affecting a person's tyranny, hence, the data might be less specific to categorize the level of student harm.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was determined that female Muslim students had higher psychological distress than male Muslim students during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a proportion of 60.1 percent in the moderate group. One option for overcoming psychological distress is to engage in various religious activities such as prayer and commemoration.

Because the findings of psychological distress are in the moderate group, it is recommended to be followed up by defining specific therapies, based on the conclusions that have been submitted. Furthermore, researchers can increase the number of participants because, due to time constraints, individuals in this study are still included in the average

number. Should further study be conducted, a larger and more diverse sample should be employed, allowing the results to be more generalized. To acquire more varied outcomes, future research should include Islamic variables. The researcher can then add a method of data retrieval, such as interview techniques, so that the data can be examined more narrowly.

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