

Attitudes Toward Mental Health and Help-Seeking Behaviour Among Psychology Students at Nusa Cendana University

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Abstract. This study explores the relationship between attitudes toward mental health and help-seeking behaviour among psychology students at Nusa Cendana University. The study involved 217 active students aged 18–24, selected through purposive sampling. Questionnaires measuring attitudes toward mental health and help-seeking behaviour were used to collect data, analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The results indicate that 77.4% of respondents hold positive attitudes toward mental health, while 22.6% display negative attitudes, reflecting stigma and barriers to seeking help. A significant positive relationship was found between attitudes toward mental health and help-seeking behaviour ($r = 0.269$, $p < 0.05$). Students with positive attitudes were more likely to seek support, whether from friends and family or professional services. The study concludes that positive attitudes are critical in promoting help-seeking behaviour. It recommends ongoing education to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy, encouraging students to seek help when needed.

Keywords: attitudes toward mental health, help-seeking behaviour, psychology students, Nusa Cendana University, stigma

Abstrak. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi hubungan antara sikap terhadap kesehatan mental dan perilaku mencari bantuan di kalangan mahasiswa psikologi Universitas Nusa Cendana. Penelitian ini melibatkan 217 mahasiswa aktif berusia 18–24 tahun yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner yang mengukur sikap terhadap kesehatan mental dan perilaku mencari bantuan, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan korelasi product-moment Pearson. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 77,4% responden memiliki sikap positif terhadap kesehatan mental, sementara 22,6% menunjukkan sikap negatif yang mencerminkan stigma dan hambatan dalam mencari bantuan. Terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan antara sikap terhadap kesehatan mental dan perilaku mencari bantuan ($r = 0,269$, $p < 0,05$). Mahasiswa dengan sikap positif lebih cenderung mencari dukungan, baik dari teman dan keluarga maupun layanan profesional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sikap positif sangat penting dalam mendorong perilaku mencari bantuan. Disarankan adanya edukasi berkelanjutan untuk mengurangi stigma dan meningkatkan literasi kesehatan mental agar mahasiswa lebih terbuka mencari bantuan saat menghadapi tantangan kesehatan mental.

Kata kunci: sikap terhadap kesehatan mental, perilaku mencari bantuan, mahasiswa psikologi, Universitas Nusa Cendana, stigma

Article history:

Received 18 November 2024

Received in revised form 26 November 2024

Accepted 29 November 2024

Available online 30 November 2024

Introduction

Mental health is one of the most important aspects of human life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) defines mental health as a condition where individuals are fully aware of their potential, able to manage stress, work productively, and contribute positively to their community. Mental health issues in Indonesia remain high, particularly among adolescents and young adults, with the highest prevalence occurring among students aged 18 to 25 (McLafferty et al., 2017).

The IPSOS Global Health Service Monitor survey (2023) indicates that 44% of 31 countries, including Indonesia, consider mental health as the most concerning health issue. Meanwhile, the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (2022) reveals that there are 15.5 million (34.9%) adolescents with mental health issues and 2.45 million (5.5%) adolescents with mental disorders. However, only 2.6% of these adolescents utilize mental health services or counseling. A study by Hidayati and Rahman (2019) found that about 24.7% of students in Indonesia experience symptoms of depression, while 30.1% experience symptoms of anxiety.

Psychology students, as future professionals in the mental health field, have a strategic role in providing support and services to individuals with psychological problems (Santrock, 2019). Several factors influence help-seeking behaviour among psychology students, including internal and external stigmatization, fear of judgment from peers or professors (Evans et al., 2018). The expectation to understand and solve problems independently can also hinder

seeking external support (Lipson & Sonnevile, 2019). Positive attitudes toward mental health are often associated with good knowledge and strong social support (Nagy et al., 2020).

Barriers to seeking psychological help (Vidourek et al., 2014) often stem from negative attitudes perceived by individuals or expressed by others. Individuals experiencing mental health issues may feel ashamed and fear stigmatization from family, friends, or society. The emergence of feelings of shame can trigger hesitation to ask for help or seek treatment, often leading to self-isolation (Hambrock, 2018). Help-seeking behaviour is the action taken by individuals to seek professional help or health services (Hammer & Spiker, 2018). Help-seeking behaviour related to mental health is a complex phenomenon, influenced by several factors, including stigma, which remains a major obstacle (Clement et al., 2015).

An initial survey conducted by the researcher using a questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms between February 18–24, 2024, involved 60 psychology students aged 18-24 years, consisting of 45 females and 15 males. Of these, 32 respondents (53.3%) expressed a positive view on mental health issues. The majority of respondents had a good understanding. However, when asked about how they handle mental health issues, 29 respondents (48.3%) preferred to manage mental health problems independently, 19 respondents (31.7%) chose to contact family or friends, and 10 respondents (16.7%) preferred to suppress the issues, while only 2 respondents (3.3%) chose to seek professional help.

Kreuze et al. (2020) found that while many students acknowledge the importance of receiving professional support, most tend to avoid seeking help from professionals. Students prefer to address issues on their own or seek support from friends and family. This is often related to social stigma around mental health and concerns about privacy. Some individuals may not realize the extent to which mental health problems have developed or feel that no help can improve the situation (Sorsdahl et al., 2016).

This contrasts with the view that 56 respondents (93.3%) believe it is important to visit mental health services. A question about self-confidence in addressing mental health issues also showed a difference, with 31 respondents (51.7%) stating that they have sufficient knowledge, while 29 respondents (48.3%) felt they lacked enough knowledge. Nevertheless, positive views toward individuals seeking help are strong, with 53 respondents (88.3%) expressing a positive view and only 7 respondents (11.7%) being neutral. However, 19 out of 60 respondents (31.7%) still felt uncomfortable talking about mental health issues.

Method

This study employed a quantitative design with the aim of measuring attitudes towards mental health and help-seeking behaviour among students. The research was conducted from May to June 2024 in the Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Public Health, Nusa Cendana University. The respondents were active students from the 2020–2023 academic cohorts, who were within the early adulthood age range of 18–24 years. The initial data collection was carried out face-to-face with 161 participants to ensure their understanding of the statement items being measured. Afterward, a Google Form link was distributed via social media platforms to reach more participants. A total of 217 respondents participated in this study.

Adolescents' Attitude Towards Mental Health Questionnaire, which was adapted and developed by Kaligis et al. (2022) from the Mental Health Literacy scale by Kutcher and Wei. This scale consists of 12 items, with 6 favorable and 6 unfavorable items. The scale has been tested for validity, showing an item content validity index (I-CVI) ranging from 0.7 to 1.0, and a scale content validity index (S-CVI) of 0.90. The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.780, indicating that the scale is sufficiently reliable for measuring attitudes toward mental health.

General Help-Seeking Questionnaire, developed by Wilson et al. (2005), was used to measure help-seeking intentions when individuals face emotional problems

and stress. In this study, the Help-Seeking Intentions subscale, specifically for emotional problems, was used. The reliability test for this subscale produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7, while the test-retest reliability yielded a score of 0.86. The scale's validity was tested by correlating its results with actual help-seeking behaviour, showing a positive and significant correlation ($r(218) = 0.17, p < .05$). This scale was adapted into Indonesian by Indriyawati et al. (2022), with a calculated validity value of $r < 0.2072$, and the reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.84.

Result

Description of participants based on gender and faculty can be seen in the table below:

Table 1.

Gender of Participants

Gender	Amount	Persentase (%)
Male	46	21,20 %
Female	171	78,80 %
Total	217	100 %

Table 2.

Semester of Participants

Semester	Amount	Percentage (%)
Semester 2	36	16,6 %
Semester 4	61	28,1 %
Semester 6	56	25,8 %
Semester 8	64	29,5 %
Total	217	100%

Table 3.

Attitude Toward Mental Health

Attitude Towards	Amount	Percentage
Sikap Positive	168	77,4 %
Sikap Negative	49	22,6 %
Total	217	100 %

According to the data in Table 8, 168 respondents (77.4%) have a positive attitude toward mental health, while 49 respondents (22.6%) show a negative attitude.

Table 4.
Attitude Toward Mental Health by Gender

Category	Gender	
	Male	Female
Low	1 (2,2%)	3 (1,8%)
Moderate	30 (65,4 %)	99 (57,9%)
High	15 (32,6%)	69 (40,4%)
Total	100%	100%

Based on Table 9, most respondents fall into the *moderate* category, with 30 male respondents (65.4%) and 99 female respondents (57.9%).

Tabel 5.
Attitude Toward Mental Health by Semester

Category	Semester (%)			
	2	4	6	8
Low	2 (5,6%)	2 (3,3%)	-	-
Moderate	19 (52,8%)	36 (59,0%)	33 (58,9 %)	43 (67,2%)
High	15 (41,7%)	23 (37,7%)	23 (41,1%)	21 (32,8%)
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

According to Table 5, most respondents in each semester fall into the moderate category. In semester 8, the highest number of respondents (43 respondents, 67.2%) fall into this category.

Table 6.
Measurement Scores of Help-Seeking Behaviour

Category	Score	Amount	Percentage
Low	1 – 30	2	0,9 %
Moderate	31 – 50	147	67,7%
High	51 – 70	68	31,3%
Total		217	100%

The measurement results in Table 6 show that most respondents fall into the moderate category, with 147 respondents (67.7%), while 2 respondents (0.9%) fall into the low category.

Table 7.
Help-Seeking Behaviour Categories by Gender

Category	Gender	
	Male	Female
Low	1 (2,2 %)	1 (0,6%)
Moderate	33 (71,7%)	113 (66,1%)
High	12 (26,1%)	57 (33,3%)
Total	100%	100%

According to Table 7, most respondents fall into the *moderate* category, with 33 male respondents (71.7%) and 113 female respondents (66.1%).

Table 8.
Help-Seeking Behaviour Categories by Semester

Category	Semester (%)			
	2	4	6	8
Low	-	-	2 (3,6%)	-
Moderate	26 (72,2%)	41 (67,2%)	40 (71,4%)	39 (60,9%)
High	10 (27,8%)	20 (32,8%)	14 (25,0%)	25 (39,1%)
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Based on the results from Table 8, most respondents in each semester fall into the moderate category. The highest number of respondents in this category was observed in semester 2, with 26 respondents (72.2%).

Table 9.
Sources of Support

Type of Support	Support Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Social Support	Close Partner (Spouse, Boyfriend/Girlfriend, etc.)	79	14,91%

	Friends	56	10,57%
	Parents	103	19,43%
	Relatives/Other Family Members	22	4,15%
Professional Support	Mental Health Professionals (Psychologists, Counselors, Social Workers)	90	16,73%
	Phone Helpline 119	28	5,03%
	Doctors	44	8,18%
Spiritual Support	Religious Leaders (Priests, Pastors, Imams, Monks)	27	5,02%
No Help-Seeking	No Help-Seeking	20	3,78%
Other Sources	I will seek help from a source not listed above	54	12,20%
Total			100%

According to Table 9, most respondents prefer to seek informal support or social support, followed by formal support or professional assistance.

Discussion

The results of this study show that most psychology students (77.4%) have a positive attitude toward mental health, reflecting good awareness and acceptance of the importance of mental health care. This finding aligns with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2011), which states that a positive attitude plays a crucial role in influencing the intention to seek help. This positive attitude is also supported by Budiyo and Nuryana's (2023) research, which found that a good understanding of mental health is associated with the intention to seek professional help. This indicates that the more positive a student's attitude toward mental health, the more likely they are to seek help when experiencing psychological problems.

However, 22.6% of students exhibited negative attitudes toward mental health. These negative attitudes are reflected in beliefs that mental health treatment is a sign of weakness or in blaming individuals with mental disorders for their

condition. Such views reinforce social stigma, which often serves as a barrier to help-seeking, as revealed in the study by Nursasi et al. (2019), which found that negative stigma is a primary obstacle to help-seeking in Indonesia. These negative attitudes, if not addressed, may impact students' behaviour in interacting with mental health services and hinder them from obtaining the necessary support.

The negative attitudes of students toward mental health can be further explained through the Health Belief Model (Skinner et al., 2015), which suggests that individuals' decisions to seek help are influenced by their perceptions of the severity of the issue, their vulnerability to the problem, and the perceived effectiveness of intervention. Beliefs that downplay the importance of mental health issues, such as considering treatment a sign of weakness or blaming the individual, can reduce students' perception of the urgency of mental health issues and the effectiveness of available interventions. Consequently, they may underestimate the severity of their problems and feel that interventions would not be effective, as discussed in the study by Sari and Wijayanti (2021).

Attitude distribution based on gender shows that female students are more likely to fall into the high-attitude category (40.4%) compared to male students (32.6%). This suggests that female students in this study have greater awareness or concern about the importance of mental health. Sorsdahl et al. (2016) emphasized that social factors play an important role in shaping attitudes toward mental health, and these findings are consistent with research showing that women are generally more open to discussing mental health issues compared to men. Nevertheless, women still face challenges in help-seeking, such as social pressure to appear strong and not show weakness, as highlighted by Salamah and Fitria (2020).

Men's attitudes toward mental health, as explained by Vebiana and Ariana (2023), are often influenced by masculinity norms that hinder help-seeking. These norms can create self-stigma, making men reluctant to acknowledge or seek help for mental health issues. This is also consistent with the Theory of Planned Behaviour

(Ajzen, 2011), which suggests that stigma can hinder the formation of positive attitudes toward mental health and prevent help-seeking behaviours.

Regarding help-seeking behaviour, most respondents are in the moderate category (67.7%), indicating that most students are inclined to seek help. However, factors such as stigma and a lack of awareness seem to contribute to the low level of help-seeking behaviour among some students. This finding is consistent with Fischer & Turner (2017), who found that women are more likely to seek help for mental health issues than men. The study also shows that female students have a higher percentage in the high help-seeking behaviour category (33.3%) compared to male students (26.1%). This reinforces the argument that women are more proactive in seeking support for mental health issues, although social pressures still influence them.

The low level of help-seeking behaviour among men is also related to the strong stigmatization, where men fear being criticized or ostracized if they seek help, especially for mental health problems. This is supported by Call & Shafer (2018), who found that stigma is a major barrier for men in seeking support.

The distribution of help-seeking behaviour based on the academic semester shows an increase among 8th-semester students, with a higher percentage (39.1%) compared to other semesters. This indicates that final-year students have greater awareness or face heavier pressures, such as final exams and preparing for the workforce, which encourages them to be more proactive in seeking help. Hutapea & Fauziyah (2018) also confirmed that awareness of mental health increases with higher academic levels, which is related to the more complex life experiences faced by these students.

From these research results, it is evident that students are more inclined to seek informal support, such as from family members, partners, or friends, rather than professional help. Help-Seeking Theory (Rickwood et al., 2014) explains that individuals are more comfortable seeking support from close ones before turning to

professionals, as informal help is perceived to be less stigmatizing. The study by Way et al. (2010) also shows that the collectivist culture in Asia encourages individuals to seek emotional support from close family members before seeking professional help. Concerns about negatively affecting social relationships through formal help-seeking were also found by Zheng et al. (2021), who noted that in collectivist cultures, formal help-seeking may be viewed as negatively impacting interpersonal relationships.

Emotional support from family plays a crucial role in helping students cope with mental health issues, as found in the study by Agustini & Soetjningsih (2021). Ramadhani et al. (2019) also showed that students often rely on close relationships for emotional support to cope with academic pressures. Nevertheless, professional help remains a significant secondary option, indicating trust in mental health professionals, such as psychologists or counselors. Rizki and Supriyanto's (2022) research confirmed that students with a positive attitude toward mental health are more likely to seek help from mental health professionals. Wong et al. (2021) also found that students tend to rely on family or friends before turning to professional help for mental health issues.

However, a small portion of students do not seek either formal or informal help. This is in line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2011), where stigma or negative perceptions of mental health can inhibit attitudes and behaviour toward help-seeking.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates a significant relationship between positive mental health attitudes and the likelihood of seeking help among psychology students at Nusa Cendana University. While most students exhibit supportive attitudes, a substantial minority still hold negative perceptions, underscoring the need for educational programs to address stigma. Efforts should focus on enhancing

mental health literacy and accessibility to professional services to encourage healthier help-seeking behaviours.

Suggestion

For future policy and program development, it is important to incorporate mental health awareness initiatives into university curricula. Universities should prioritize the creation of a supportive environment that reduces stigma and encourages students to seek professional help. Additionally, integrating peer support networks may serve as a bridge to formal help-seeking behaviours and further reduce mental health-related barriers.

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