

## **DETERMINANT FACTOR OF ANXIETY DISORDERS AMONG BACHELOR DEGREE STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The demands of living nowadays cause a rising number people being diagnosed as having anxiety disorders and mental health problems. A survey done by National Health and Morbidity in 2019 finds that the prevalence of mental health problems among adults in Malaysia has increased from 8.9% in 2012, to 10.7% in 2015, to 31.1 % in 2019. These anxiety disorders share similar symptoms, like nervousness, irritability, insomnia and problems concentrating, but each has its own causes. One in 12 individuals in 2012 to one in six in 2018 cases reported are among Malaysian students. These results reveal a worsening state of mental health problems especially among students in Malaysia that must be addressed. Therefore, a preliminary study was conducted among students in one of the private college. The Depression and Anxiety Scale 21 (DASS-21) inventory was used to measure the students' anxiety disorders based on three elements which are depression and anxiety. The results showed that the students are having moderate to very severe level of depression and anxiety. This finding is alarming in terms of increased risk for psychiatric morbidity because it indicates the amount of burden students have to bear in the current situation. Therefore, initiation of depression and anxiety management programs such as expanding counselling activities, providing adequate facilities and resources should be highly prioritized by authorities. Interview sessions are suggested to explore in depth on these issues.

**Keywords:** Psychology, Anxiety, DASS, Mental Health, Education

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, many people misunderstood the true meaning of being healthy as they thought that being healthy should be physically great and free from any illness. However, as stated from World Health Organization (WHO) in 2014, mental health is best describe as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life (Harun, 2015), can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Thus, mental health is part of health and it is an irreplaceable aspect of health.

In addition, identifying anxiety levels are considered as important indicators for mental health. This emotional disorder can lead to negative outcomes, such as impaired normal functioning, burnout, and health problems. Failure to detect and address it will unfortunately lead to increased psychological morbidity with undesirable impacts all through their professions and lives. As for psychological determinant factor, the psychological factors are the factors that talk about the psychology of an individual that drive his actions to seek satisfaction (Alias, 2011).

Some of the important psychological factors include motivation, perception, learning, as well as attitude and beliefs. In terms of theory, psychological determinant can be found in Psychoanalytic Theory by Sigmund Freud. The theory composed the idea of personality that consists of three different elements which is Id, Ego, and Superego. The Id is the aspect of personality that is driven by internal and basic drives and needs. These are typically instinctual, such as hunger, and thirst. Due to the instinctual quality of the id, it is impulsive and often unaware of implications of actions. Meanwhile, ego is driven by the reality principle. Ego works to balance the id and superego, by trying to achieve the id's drive in the most realistic ways. The Superego is driven by the morality principle. It acts in connection with the morality of higher thought and action. Instead of instinctively acting like the id, the superego works to act in socially acceptable ways.

A survey has been done by National Health and Morbidity (2019) finds that the prevalence of mental health problems among adults in Malaysia has increased from 8.9% in 2012, to 10.7% in 2015, to 31.1 % in 2019 (MIASA, 2019). It is also reported that 12 individuals in 2012 to one in six in 2018 cases reported are among Malaysian students. University students are a special group of people that are enduring a critical transition period. At this age they are transitioning from adolescence stage to adulthood whereby it can be one of the most stressful times in a person's life. The psychological distress among university students have adverse effect on student's health, development, educational attainment, quality of life, and also the deteriorating influence on their family and institutions (Damota, Mekuria, & Bitew, 2019). Islam et al. (2018) had also reported that higher attention is needed for those students in second year, living off campus, from lower economic status (financial issues), with sleeping problem, and with PTSD. A research conducted in Malaysia among undergraduate students showed that the prevalence of moderate to extremely severe level of depression (13.9% to 29.3%) and stress (12.9% to 21.6%) (Gan, Mohd Nasir, Shariff & Azizi, 2013; AlAni, Radeef & Ghazi, 2015). Therefore, addressing these issues is vital to improve the mental health status among undergraduate students. The issues in mental health have been uprising following the increase in prevalence of mental health problems (Harun, 2015). Thus, several problem statements are identified from previous researches and surveys conducted in relation to address this issue into improvement. High prevalence of mental illness in young generation is one of the reasons. Previous surveys revealed that mental health problems until now is still showing incensement, and more cases involving universities student. Severity of depression is among the depressors. Most of the cases reported shows that the individuals involved are in critical level of severity whilst these conditions are actually preventable and curable. Public awareness on this issue are still not in the safe level where people are more concerning on spreading news but less action in prevention methods.

Hence, the objectives of the study were to establish whether financial is a factor of anxiety disorders among undergraduate students and to determine whether semester of study is a factor of anxiety disorders among undergraduate students.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

University students are potentially in contributing for the country in future, this group's health being is taken importantly to ensure their good productivity and influences towards themselves, family, country, and more. A big number of studies have been conducted worldwide regarding the prevalence of depression among college students. A study involving

undergraduate students from University of Malaya, Malaysia has shown that there is significant proportion of depressed subjects (Islam, Low, Tong, Yuen, & Abdullah, 2018).

Though some studies found most of students had adequate mental health, Suleiman et al. (2017) reported that there is also previous study with first year college student showing 50% depressive symptomology and they are prone to experience elevation in the depression and anxiety levels throughout the study years.

Studies in regard of college students' depression level are conducted to manage the current increasing prevalence in those matters. Several previous studies had been done to investigate and correlate the prevalence of mental health issues with their determinant factors as well as the major implications. The psychological distress among university students have adverse effect on student's health, development, educational attainment, quality of life, and also the deteriorating influence on their family and institutions (Damota, Mekuria, & Bitew, 2019). Islam et al. (2018) had also reported that higher attention is needed for those students in second year, living off campus, from lower economic status (financial issues), with sleeping problem, and with PTSD.

On the other hand, students in all three involved faculties showed equal presence of depression and no differences were seen on the basis of years of study (Suleiman et al., 2017). Nevertheless, there are various studies agreed upon the basis of multiple determinant factors that influence college students to have higher risk in having depression and stress as supported with the most recent study by Othman, Ahmad, Morr, & Ritvo (2019) revealing high prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among students as well as identified the significant factors covering the ecologic perspective of personal, interpersonal, family, social and others. Students' motivation, studies burden, attribution styles and proper study facilities should be taken account as well so interventions can be designed in the efforts of reducing the increasing mental health issues (Suleiman et al., 2017).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted among 30 undergraduate students in one of the private institution in Kuantan. The Depression and Anxiety Scale 21 (DAS-21) inventory was used to measure the student's mental health based on two elements which are depression and general anxiety. As for this study, it focus only on anxiety disorders with self-administered questionnaires consist of 2 sections which is demographic data and Dass-21 questions. Demographic data consists of 5 questions based on personal details: gender, age, education background, current semester and financial support and another 3 questions will have added. The DASS-21 is a 21 item self-report questionnaire devised to measure and assesses the severity of a range of symptoms common to depression and general anxiety. The DASS-21 was conducted online that provide the score once the students complete all the questions. DASS-21 was used because it is well established, easy to use and reliable, based on Cronbach's alpha scores (0.91 for depression, and 0.84 for anxiety) in the normative sample.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

- (i) *Financial support group by sponsored score above normal for anxiety*
- (ii) *Semester group of 1 up to 3 score above normal for anxiety*

Based on the survey conducted, we divided the results into two groups that may contribute to the score of DASS-21. This group is divided solely based on the number of students that score above normal which is in mild and extremely severe in anxiety disorder score.

The first group is divided among semester. For semester 1 to semester 3 the number of students that score above normal for anxiety disorder is nine students. Another semester is including students in semester 4 until semester 7 that score Depression and general anxiety above normal.

The second group is divided among financial support. For the student whom are sponsored, the total student that score above normal for general anxiety. The students whom are self-support have total normal level of Depression and none scored for general anxiety.

## **DISCUSSION**

From the research findings, the authors found some connection between financial supports including monthly expenditure and the current semester that the students are studying may have an effect towards the score in DASS-21. This is because some students might find it difficult to manage their money wisely. Some students thought that these financial issues make them suffered and stressed. Based on the result of financial support, due to high expectation, it was found that sponsored students have the highest number of anxiety as compared to self-sponsored students. Apart from that, the current semester that the students are currently studying also influence the score of DASS-21 to increase from mild to extremely severe for some students. For example, the highest number of students that score above normal for depression is from students in semester 1 until semester 3.

The result of this research is focus solely on the score of DASS-21. The reason to choose DASS-21 is based on some reasons. There are two types of DASS which is DASS-42 and DASS-21. The full DASS-42 gives somewhat more reliable scores, and more information about specific symptoms, but the DASS-21 has the advantage of taking only half the time to administer. There are several published studies showing that the DASS-21 has the same factor structure and gives similar results to the full DASS. In general, the full DASS-42 is often preferable for clinical work, and the DASS-21 is often best for research purposes. Other than that, DASS-21 also available online that makes the survey can be completed in short period of time. The disadvantages of using DASS is simply because it can only be use and valid for short period of time. This DASS-21 does not indicate that some people have the mental health issues; however, the result can be used as prevention from mental health problems. The exact cause of depression is unknown. It may be caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. In general, about one out of every 6 adults will have depression at some time in their life. Anyone can get depressed, and depression can happen at any age and in any type of person. However, those vulnerable to depression and general anxiety are among the age ranged from middle childhood to adolescence. Overall, these results might help to better understand the phenomenon of emotional instability among undergraduates. Early recognition of depression, anxiety and stress level and problems are essential as to offer treatment to those who are affected. Interview sessions are suggested to explore in depth on these issues.

## CONCLUSION

The results showed that the students are having moderate to very severe level of depression and anxiety. This finding is alarming because it indicates the amount of burden students have to bear in the current situation. Therefore, initiation of depression and anxiety management programs such as expanding counselling activities (Harun, 2018), providing adequate facilities and resources should be highly prioritized by the related authorities.

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