



Psychological Distress among Scholarship Awardee Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction: Scholarship awardee students have greater demands on their studies than regular students. The demands of lectures are in the form of a period of completion of lectures and in the form of a good cumulative grade point average. This can provide pressure that can trigger psychological distress in these students which consists of aspects of depression, anxiety and stress. The impact of poor psychological distress will not only affect their learning, personal well-being and academic performance, but also potentially lead to other problems such as sleep disturbances, inability to manage stress, and a decrease in overall quality of life.

Objectives: This study aimed to determine depression, anxiety and stress among scholarship awardee nursing students.

Methods: The research design used a descriptive approach with a total sample of 43 respondents taken through purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21) questionnaire and data analysis was carried out using a descriptive statistical approach. Data collection was carried out in January 2024.

Results: Most of the scholarship awardee students did not have depressive symptoms (48,8%). However, most of them have very severe anxiety symptoms (72.1%). The health care provider including community and psychiatric nurses were suggested to provide health promotion related to preventing psychological distress especially among awardee nursing students. So, it would contribute to increasing academic achievement of nursing student.

KEYWORDS:

Psychological Distress, Depression, Anxiety, Stress, nursing student

INTRODUCTION

In pursuing higher education to the university level, costs often become a major obstacle. Many of us aspire to pursue higher education, but high costs often pose a significant barrier. As Rahmawati (2022) revealed, the cost of higher education is a crucial factor in someone's decision to continue their education⁽¹⁾.

The Indonesian government, through the Directorate General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture, aims to allocate funds to provide financial assistance for education to students whose parents are unable to afford their education. Additionally, scholarships are also awarded to students who have high achievements, both academically and in extracurricular activities⁽²⁾.

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One of the scholarships that provides full financial coverage for education expenses is the Kartu Indonesia Pintar (KIP) Kuliah⁽¹⁾.

However, the students who receive scholarships have greater demands and responsibilities compared to non-scholarship students. They face additional pressure in completing coursework, meeting academic deadlines, and competing for academic achievements with fellow students in the same classroom. Student unpreparedness can lead to higher levels of stress among scholarship recipients⁽³⁾.

Stress that can threaten health is psychological distress, the term psychological distress has been defined as an emotional state characterized by symptoms of depression and anxiety, sometimes accompanied by somatic symptoms (such as insomnia, headaches, lack of energy). Such suffering can have a tremendous impact on individuals both directly and indirectly. Psychological pressure has been proven to cause cognitive disorders and physical health problems⁽⁴⁾.

The study by Direk & Tiemeier (2010), has shown that about 20% of teenagers experience mental health problems, which can impact interpersonal relationships, academic achievement, or performance. Severe cases can even lead to suicide or other maladaptive behaviors⁽⁵⁾.

Another study conducted by Al Saadi (2017), found that students in the health field tend to experience high levels of psychological stress. Similarly⁽⁶⁾, according to Arif (2021), it is stated that scholarship-receiving students tend to experience higher personal fatigue compared to students who finance their own education⁽⁷⁾.

Based on the preliminary study conducted at Iskandar Muda Nursing Academy, Banda Aceh, scholarship-receiving students felt financially supported by the Kartu Indonesia Pintar (KIP) Kuliah scholarship program for 6 semesters. With this assistance, they no longer worry about tuition fees, rent, and monthly allowances, as all are covered since the beginning of the semester. However, as part of the scholarship program, they are also required to achieve high academic performance with a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.00, graduate on time, and develop student creativity programs (PKM). Responsibility towards coursework is also crucial to maintain the continuity of the scholarship program. Failure to meet the set targets may result in sanctions and the loss of their scholarships.

In addition to the demands of the scholarship program, students also face various other demands organized by the campus, such as attending morning assemblies, adhering to class schedules, and participating in departmental and practicum activities. All of these add to the burden and pressure on students. The impact can be felt in the form of fatigue, stress, anxiety, and psychological distress, all of which can affect their mental health.

Psychological distress experienced by someone not only affects the individual themselves but also has broad impacts on their surrounding environment. These impacts can be seen through behavioral changes such as withdrawal, restlessness, and disrupted interpersonal relationships. This indicates that psychological distress significantly influences individuals and their social interactions⁽⁸⁾.

Based on the background above, the researcher aims to examine how the clinical presentation of depression, anxiety, and stress occurs in diploma scholarship-receiving students at Iskandar Muda Nursing Academy in Banda Aceh. This research provides an in-depth understanding of the clinical presentation of depression, anxiety, and stress in

scholarship-receiving students. It makes a significant contribution to the development of appropriate interventions and support programs to reduce these clinical presentations.

With this research, it can provide a comprehensive overview of mental health issues, particularly among scholarship-receiving students, thereby formulating more effective interventions and supporting better prevention efforts. The findings of this study can help in designing more effective approaches to manage and prevent the negative impacts of depression, anxiety, and stress on scholarship-receiving students. Additionally, these findings can serve as a basis for educational institutions, scholarship providers, and other relevant parties to develop policies and programs aimed at enhancing the mental well-being of scholarship-receiving students.

METHODS

This research employed a descriptive approach to comprehensively examine the levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among scholarship awardee students among at Nursing Academy, Banda Aceh. The study population consists of second-year students, with a total of 73 students, of which only 43 are scholarship awardee students. Purposive sampling technique is utilized to select respondents who meet the inclusion criteria of the study.

Data collection was conducted through self-report technique employing the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21) questionnaire. This questionnaire, validated psychometrically, is designed to measure levels of depression, anxiety, and stress. The study was conducted from January 3 to 19, 2024. Data analysis was performed using a descriptive approach, wherein the collected data were analyzed to obtain frequency distribution, percentage, as well as statistical distribution of depression, anxiety, and stress scores. The entire research procedure adheres to the applicable research ethics principles and has obtained ethical clearance approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Syiah Kuala University on October 3, 2023, with research ID number 112007120923. The comprehensive research methodology is expected to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the psychological well-being of scholarship awardee students and to provide valuable insights into psychological distress, laying the groundwork for further researchers to develop appropriate interventions to reduce psychological distress and enhance their quality of life.

RESULT

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics (n=43)

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
Late Teens (<20 years)	38	88,4
Early Adulthood (>20 years)	5	11,6

Gender		
Male	3	7,0
Female	40	93,0
Marital Status	0	0
Unmarried	43	100
Academic Achievement Index		
Satisfactory	16	37,2
Very Satisfactory	21	48,8
Excellent	6	14,0
Parental Education		
Elementary School	5	11,6
Secondary School	34	79,1
College	4	9,3
Parental Occupation		
Laborer	5	11,6
Homemaker	6	14,0
Fisherman	2	4,7
Merchant	2	4,7
Retired Civil Servant	1	2,3
Driver	1	2,3
Monthly Student Living Expenses		
Rp. 100.000-500.000	2	4,7
Rp. 600.000	40	93,0
Rp. >1 million	1	2,3

Based on the research results in the table above, it shows that of the 43 respondents, most of the respondents were in their late teens (<20 years), most of the respondents were female as many as 40 respondents (93.0%), all respondents were unmarried as many as 43 respondents (100%), the cumulative grade point average was very

satisfying as many as 21 respondents (48.8%), the majority of parents' education was secondary school as many as 34 respondents (79.1%), most of the parents' jobs were housewives as many as 6 respondents (14.0%). While the monthly living expenses are Rp. 600,000 as many as 40 respondents (93.0%).

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Depression Data (n=43)

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Normal	21	48,8
Mild	8	18,6
Moderate	3	7,0
Severe	2	4,7
Very Severe	9	20,9

Based on the research results in the table above, it shows that of the 43 respondents, the majority of respondents had normal score of depression as many as 21 respondents (48.8%), mild depression as many as 8 respondents (18.6%),

moderate depression as many as 3 respondents (7.0%), severe depression as many as 2 respondents (4.7%) and very severe depression as many as 9 respondents (20.9%).

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Anxiety Data (n=43)

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Mild	4	9,3
Moderate	4	9,3
Severe	4	9,3
Very Severe	31	72,1

Based on the research results in the table above, it shows that the level of anxiety is very severe as many as 31

respondents (72.1%), while for mild, moderate and severe anxiety has the same value, namely 4 respondents (9.3%).

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Stress Data (n=43)

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Normal	1	2,3
Mild	4	9,3
Moderate	14	32,6
Severe	10	23,3
Very Severe	14	32,6

Based on the research results in the table above, it shows that the majority of stress levels are very severe and moderate stress, which has the same value as 14 respondents (32.6%), while for severe stress, there are 10 respondents (23.3%), mild stress as many as 4 respondents (9.3%) and no stress symptoms as many as 1 respondent (2.3%).

DISCUSSION

Students are often faced with various problems and challenges, both in everyday life and in the academic environment. Scholarship students, in particular, face higher pressures related to academic aspects, regulations, and study obligations. This can make them vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and depression, and can even lead to destructive behavior⁽⁹⁾.

Depression is identified as a significant mental health issue among scholarship awardee students, with impacts that can interfere with their well-being and academic performance. The findings of this study indicate that the prevalence of depression among scholarship students tends to be high, with the majority of respondents showing symptoms of very severe depression. Factors such as academic pressure, financial uncertainty, and high expectations from self and environment were identified as the main causes of depression in this group.

Anxiety also affects the emotional state of students, which can be triggered by unclear situations or circumstances that make it difficult for individuals to identify the object or reason for anxiety (Brem et al., 2020). This can also be seen from the results of the average student anxiety level at a very severe level of anxiety as many as 31 respondents (72.1%).

Some students feel burdened by the deadline for graduation. They are afraid of being late in completing their studies and worry about the consequences of not graduating on time, such as having to bear their own school fees, becoming the talk of their peers, and disappointing their parents and family. Therefore, counseling centers are needed, along with efforts to increase awareness among students to seek help at counseling centers. The provision of mental health services is essential in providing promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. Integration of various approaches is needed to overcome mental health problems experienced by students⁽⁹⁾

According to Potter (2021), individuals who experience moderate to severe stress often face stressful situations such as conflict at work, excessive workload, financial difficulties, and if prolonged, the consequences of stress can lead to increased sensitivity and overreaction⁽¹⁰⁾.

This can lead to increased sensitivity and overreaction, sleep disturbances, an overly pessimistic outlook, depression, and feelings of hopelessness⁽¹¹⁾.

In line with the statement Tarwiyah (2020), academic demands sometimes make students experience pressure or feel burdened so that it can trigger stress. The research findings show that academic stressors in students arise due to the large number of assignments and irregular lecture schedules. Conditions of psychological distress, such as depression, anxiety, and stress, can threaten physical and mental health, and the inability to cope with these three psychological symptoms has an impact on academic performance⁽¹²⁾. Psychological distress, as an unpleasant subjective condition, is reflected in the main symptoms of depression and anxiety. Students are at risk of psychological distress due to the increasing cost of education and the demands of high academic achievement⁽¹³⁾

This data provides an insight into the levels of depression, anxiety and stress among scholarship awardee students, as well as variations in their experiences in fulfilling scholarship responsibilities and academic demands in completing vocational nursing education.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that 20.9% of the scholarship awardee students were severely depressed, and 18.6% were mildly depressed. Anxiety levels were identified as follows: 72.1% experienced very severe anxiety, 9.3% experienced severe, moderate and mild anxiety. As for stress, 32.6% of students experienced very severe and moderate stress, 23.3% experienced severe stress, and 9.3% experienced mild stress. Therefore, efforts are needed to help reduce psychological pressure to ensure that the mental well-being of scholarship recipients is maintained and improved. For future researchers, it is recommended to develop appropriate interventions to reduce psychological distress and improve their quality of life, including interventions such as expressive writing therapy or health counseling.

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