

Self-Harm Tendencies: Early Detection and Preventive Strategies for University Students

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ABSTRACT

University students who are beginning to enter the early developmental stage as adults are in the process of being able to respond wisely to negative emotions that interfere with their practical lives. This study aims to identify the tendency of university students to engage in self-harming behaviour. The approach used in this research is quantitative-descriptive. The population of this research is Syiah Kuala University students, and the sampling technique is a cluster. The sample selection considers the faculty with the lowest Institutional Development Contribution (SPI) level at Syiah Kuala University. So, the number of research samples is 348 students. The research data was collected using a scale prepared by considering the items on the NSSI Ideation Questionary (NIQ) Items Within During Ideation Factor (Wilson, 2008) to determine the condition of self-harm tendencies. Based on the results of data analysis, it is known that there are 7% of respondents who do not have self-harm tendencies. While 74% of respondents have low levels of self-harm tendencies, and 14% of respondents are at moderate levels. However, it is of concern that there are 6% of respondents who have high and very high levels of self-harm tendencies. To prevent the tendency from increasing and possibly becoming self-harming behaviour, it is necessary to create a basic service program as a prevention effort at the university level.

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Introduction

Mental health among adolescents and early adults is increasingly in need of attention. The current generation of young people is believed to have a tendency to harm themselves (also known as self-harm), and some even try to end their lives. The National Criminal Information Center (Pusiknas) of Bareskrim Polri noted that throughout 2023, there were 1288 suicides in Indonesia. Teenage and early adult students dominate the data. On August 31, 2023, a student of the Faculty of Law at Syiah Kuala University was found to have ended

his life by hanging himself. Then, on September 21, 2023, it was found that another student at a university in Banda Aceh ended his life by hanging himself.

This phenomenon shows that humans are prone to self-harm. In the theory of psychoanalysis popularized by Freud, humans have psychic energy that can transfer into physiological energy or vice versa (Ardinsyah, 2022). The desire to turn discomfort into pleasure can drive a person to be aggressive. This can happen to students who are in the transition period from adolescence to adulthood. The turmoil that arises and the problems that are difficult to deal with make students feel sad, disappointed, angry and stressed, so they tend to hurt themselves. The conflict is thought to be an internal factor for students wanting to hurt themselves, and it comes from families who are less supportive of the lecture process and the economy. Walsh (in Muthia & Hidayanti, 2015) explains that the environment can encourage self-harming behaviour. The environmental dimensions that cause someone to want to hurt themselves include interpersonal conflict, frustration, social isolation, and events that remind someone of a traumatic experience.

Two possibilities become the purpose of someone thinking and behaving to harm themselves, namely the desire to commit suicide or just to hurt themselves. If the desires for self-harm are lodged in the mind for too long, it is feared that it will have an impact on actual behaviour. Among students, the term self-harm is familiar. Students witnessed themselves, either directly or through social media posts, friends who cut their hands, hit their heads, pressed the tip of a pencil to their bodies, or locked themselves up for a long time. Some students were also found to see a psychiatrist because of their inability to overcome the depression phase and divert negative feelings by hurting themselves.

Quoted from one of the health websites (www.alodokter.com), continuous depression phases can interfere with brain function and interfere with effective daily life processes. In the student counselling session and other lecturers' statements, some students showed scars when stressed and frustrated. One student also admitted to locking himself in the boarding house and taking drugs such as antimony up to 10 grains at a time. Taking medicine is one of the students' efforts to fall asleep and think they can forget the problems that occur momentarily. This indeed endangers the student's physique. The cycle of self-harm, according to Hawton & Rodham (2006), is as follows.



Figure 1. Self-Harm Cycle

Self-harming behaviour is a picture of students' inability to overcome problems. This is likely because students sometimes have difficulty expressing problems and traumatic events experienced to friends or others. Whereas the ability to express thoughts and feelings openly is an indicator of social skills and may help reduce depression. Support from others can help someone solve or eliminate problems; telling stories can also reduce the burden (Gainau, 2009; Purwadi, 2012). The phenomena and allegations described are the reasons for researching to detect early the possibility of students thinking or having feelings to harm themselves. The study in this research is expected to contribute to and support the University's Guidance and Counseling Implementation Service Center in designing the Guidance Implementation Program, especially in preventive efforts.

Method

The type of research used to answer the purpose of this study is quantitative, with a descriptive research approach designed to identify students' tendency to self-harm. The research population involved Syiah Kuala University students. The technique used to determine the research sample is cluster random sampling, considering the lowest level of Institutional Development Contribution (SPI). The six faculties at Syiah Kuala University with the lowest SPI include Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Law (FH), Economics and Business (FEB), Marine and Fisheries (FKP), and Agriculture

(FP). The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a 95% confidence degree, so a sample of 348 students was obtained. Data collection was carried out from July to August 2024.

The instrument used to measure the condition of self-harm tendency was developed by considering the items on the NSSI Ideation Questionary (NIQ) Items Within During Ideation Factor (Wilson, 2008). Based on the results of the instrument test on 50 students, there were 20 valid statement items with an Alpha Cronbach value of 0.68. The answer choices used are disagreed, disagree less, doubt, agree enough, agree and strongly agree. In favourable statements, the answer choice disagree indicates that there is no tendency (0); conversely, in unfavourable statements, the answer choice strongly agrees, which indicates no tendency (0).

The classification of self-harm tendencies is divided into six categories, namely no tendency, very low tendency, low, medium, high and very high. The interval value of each category is assumed by adapting a normally distributed model. The assumption that students have a tendency or not can be analyzed by estimating individual scores in a hypothetical population (Azwar, 2022). Thus, the estimated standard deviation and average used to determine the normative category of respondents' scores are 16.7 and 50. Based on these values, the following categorization norms are used to determine the tendency to self-harm.

Table 1. Category Norms for Self-Harm Tendency

Interval Value			Categorization
	$X = 0$		No tendency
0	$< X \leq 25$		Very low
25	$< X \leq 41.7$		Low
41.7	$< X \leq 58.3$		Moderate
58.3	$< X \leq 75$		High
75	$< X$		Very high

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The results of this study cannot represent all students of Syiah Kuala University as a whole because the selection of samples used is based on specific characteristics. Table 2 shows the demographics of the research sample.

Table 2. Frequencies and Percentages of the Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 348)

Characteristics	N	(%)
Class of		
a. 2020	74	21.3
b. 2021	94	27.0
c. 2022	101	29.0

Characteristics	N	(%)
d. 2023	79	22.7
Fakulties		
a. Social and Political Sciences	52	15.0
b. Teacher Training and Education	152	43.7
c. Law	21	6.0
d. Economics and Business	63	18.1
e. Marine and Fisheries	28	8.0
f. Agriculture	32	9.2
Gender		
a. Male	76	21.8
b. Female	272	78.2
Parents' Income		
a. < 1 million	128	36.7
b. 1 million – 2.5 million	97	27.9
c. 2.5 million – 5 million	103	29.6
d. 5 million – 10 million	18	5.2
e. > 10 million	2	0.6

The data in Table 2 shows that the most significant respondents are students in the Class of 2022. Based on this table, it is known that the most critical respondents come from the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education and are dominated by female students. It can be seen that 36.7% of respondents have parents' incomes of less than one million rupiah per month.

Based on descriptive data analysis, it was found that only 7% of respondents did not have self-harm tendencies. While 74% of respondents tend to self-harm at low and very low levels, and 14% of respondents are at moderate levels. However, it is of concern that there are 6% of respondents who have high and very high levels of self-harm tendencies. Based on the findings that have been explained, the following is a description of data on students who tend to self-harm in terms of class characteristics.

Table 3. Self-Harm Tendency Category by Class

Categorization	Class Of							
	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No tendency	7	9.5	6	6.4	6	5.9	5	6.3
Very low	41	55.4	58	61.7	59	58.4	54	68.4
Low	6	8.1	19	20.2	9	8.9	11	13.9
Moderate	14	18.9	10	10.6	20	19.8	4	5.1
High	5	6.8	1	1.1	5	5.0	5	6.3
Very high	1	1.3	0	0.0	2	2.0	0	0.0

The data in Table 3 illustrates that students who have a very high tendency to self-harm are in the Class of 2020 and 2022, while each class is known to have respondents with high

self-harm tendencies. The following is a description of data on students who tend to self-harm in each Faculty.

Table 4. Self-Harm Tendency Categories by Faculty

Categorization	Faculties											
	FISIP		FKIP		FH		FEB		FKP		FP	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No tendency	4	7.7	11	7.2	3	14.3	2	3.2	1	3.6	3	9.4
Very low	30	57.7	99	65.1	8	38.1	38	60.3	18	64.3	19	59.4
Low	6	11.5	17	11.2	6	28.6	9	14.3	6	21.4	1	3.1
Moderate	9	17.3	17	11.2	3	14.3	12	19.0	1	3.6	6	18.8
High	2	3.8	7	4.6	1	4.8	1	1.6	2	7.1	3	9.4
Very high	1	1.9	1	0.7	0	0.0	1	1.6	0	0.0	0	0.0

The data in Table 4 show that the presentation value of students in the category with a high tendency to self-harm is students at the Faculty of Agriculture. However, if examined based on the number, it can be seen that eight students tend to self-harm in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. Male and female students have differences in responding to the problems they face. Men are often considered more rational than women. Therefore, to show this, it is necessary to analyze subsequent self-harm tendencies based on gender characteristics.

Table 5. Self-Harm Tendency Categories by Gender

Categorization	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%
No tendency	5	6.6	19	7.0
Very low	43	56.6	169	62.1
Low	11	14.5	34	12.5
Moderate	14	18.4	34	12.5
High	3	3.9	13	4.8
Very high	0	0.0	3	1.1

The following characteristic is described based on the parents' estimated monthly income. This is important to analyze the life background of students who tend to self-harm.

Table 6. Category of Self-Harm Tendency based on Parents' Income

Categorization	Amount of Parental Income									
	< 1 million		1 – 2.5 million		2.5 – 5 million		5 – 10 million		> 10 million	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No tendency	10	7.8	3	3.1	9	8.7	2	11.1	0	0
Very low	75	58.6	60	61.9	62	60.2	14	77.8	1	50
Low	17	13.3	11	11.3	16	15.5	0	0.0	1	50
Moderate	22	17.2	16	16.5	9	8.7	1	5.6	0	0
High	3	2.3	7	7.2	6	5.8	0	0.0	0	0

Categorization	Amount of Parental Income									
	< 1 million		1 – 2.5 million		2.5 – 5 million		5 – 10 million		> 10 million	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very high	1	0.8	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	5.6	0	0

Self-harm tendency data were analyzed based on the level and process of ideation so that the indicators that show the tendency are (a) frequency, (b) duration, (c) intensity, and (d) motivation. To formulate a more specific work plan and consider the effectiveness of the implementation of Guidance and Counseling services related to self-harm tendencies, the following data analyzes the tendency of self-harm of students on each indicator.

Table 7. Mean and Descriptive Interpretation of Self-Harm Tendency

Indikator	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Frequency	1.03	Very little
Duration	1.15	Very little
Intensity	1.32	Very little
Motivation	0.96	Very little

Note: 0 – 0.83 = Not at all; 0.84 – 1.67 = Very little; 1.68 – 2.50 = little; 2.51 – 3.34 = simply; 3.35 – 4.18 = entirely; 4.19 – 5.00 = very entirely

Discussion

The tendency is not a behaviour but a desire still lodged in a person's heart or mind. The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) VI Online defines *tendency* as inclination, willingness, and desire (liking). Kartono (1996) defines *tendency* as a desire or reactive readiness aimed at a concrete object that always appears repeatedly in a person. Meanwhile, Sujanto (2009) defines *tendency* as an active desire that tells an individual or a person to act quickly. This can lead to an essential fondness for something (Fitriyah, 2014).

The results of the data analysis show that only 7% of 348 respondents do not tend to self-harm. This result is undoubtedly expected of all Syiah Kuala University students. The absence of a tendency to self-harm illustrates the ability of students to control negative emotions so as not to disturb the mind and feel continuous sadness. Students who do not have a tendency to self-harm are expected to be able to carry out focused learning and quickly adapt to their surroundings. However, very few students do not tend to self-harm, so many respondents think of hurting themselves. Namely, 93% of respondents have a tendency either in the classification of very high (1%), high (5%), medium (14%), low (13%) or very low (61%).

Self-harm is a form of behaviour carried out to overcome emotional distress or emotional pain by hurting and harming oneself without intending to commit suicide (Jenny, 2016; Klonsky et al., 2011). People usually hurt themselves (ego) in extreme anger (id) and

very turbulent emotions. Based on this data, it can be said that a person has the desire to self-harm when experiencing emotional distress or deep hurt. The more frequent and stronger the urge to self-harm, the more it is feared that a person will make a wound mark on his body.

One of the impacts that can arise from Self-Harm behaviour, according to Nasution and Anggraini (2021), is a serious injury that sometimes can result in accidental death. The more often a person hurts themselves, the more likely they are to commit suicide. Apart from leaving scars on the body, self-harm behaviour can also have an impact on student adulthood. Anugrah et al. (2023) also said that self-harm behaviour can have an impact on social, health and career problems. However, related to this research, the data collected aims to early detection of the desire or tendency that arises in students to hurt themselves.

Students, the majority of whom are migrants and far from the reach of parents or guardians, often feel lonely and are worried about not having control over themselves. Even because of the inability of students to tell the problems they face or are embarrassed to share the pain they experience, they also sometimes blame themselves for the problems that occur, making students tend to think about hurting themselves. A small number of students have carried out this behaviour. Therefore, early detection of self-harm tendencies is needed so that self-harm behaviour does not spread to other students. Based on the competency standards for learner independence at the tertiary level, it is known that students can at least be tolerant of various expressions of their own and others' feelings. This ability shows that students are starting to mature emotionally. Regarding intellectual maturity, students have also at least begun to learn ways of making decisions and solving problems objectively (BK and Hafid, 2007).

This study examines the tendency of self-harm based on the classification of the Force. The results of the analysis show that the highest frequency of having a high tendency of self-harm is the Class of 2020 students, namely 8.2%. The Class of 2020 students have the most mature age range compared to other respondents. So, students in the Class of 2020 are more mature regarding age and development in responding to situations or conditions that interfere with their lives. Although the reality based on the analyzed data does not show this, other factors, such as traumatic experiences or opportunities to learn developmental tasks, could not be optimal.

Wilson (2012) explains that ideation for self-harming behaviour can be assessed based on frequency, intensity, duration, and drive to act. The tendency is shown by thoughts that often arise, especially when experiencing emotional turmoil and the urge to act.

Preventive Strategies for Syiah Kuala University Students

Based on students' entries on the self-harm tendency scale statement items, it shows that they have very little ideation. Even for a small number of students, there is no tendency. However, this result does not mean it goes unnoticed because slight tendencies can become significant if not handled immediately. Therefore, so that this tendency does not continue to become an actual behaviour, it is necessary to implement essential services as a preventive effort. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (2014), guidance and counselling services include preventive, repair and healing, maintenance and development activities. Prevention is helping students/clients anticipate various possible problems and trying to prevent them so that students/clients do not experience problems in their lives.

This is mainly the task of the Guidance and Counseling Service Management Center of Syiah Kuala University, together with the ranks of Lecturers. The prevention in question includes classical, group, and cross-class guidance service strategies and the provision of media related to the impact and risks of self-harming behaviour. Guidance and counselling services in the classroom (classical guidance) are carried out in a classroom setting and given to all students in the form of a face-to-face schedule and routine for every class/week. Due to a large number of students and limited time, as well as counsellors at the university who need to be considered, in the learning process in class, lecturers can integrate thematically on how to deal with difficulties or traumatic experiences that can interfere with student emotions. Furthermore, as an implementation of the research results, the Syiah Kuala University Guidance and Counseling Service Management Center can contribute to implementing cross-class services, especially for respondents who tend to self-harm in the very high, high, and medium categories. Cross-class guidance is an activity of prevention and development that provides insight, understanding, and experience to students in the social, personal, learning, and career fields on a large scale and with the same grade level (Rahim, 2021). The topics or materials related to the research results are self-control, mental health, and positive affirmations.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that very few students have a high tendency to self-harm, namely 6% of the total respondents. Students who tend to self-harm in the high category consist of each generation, where students in 2020 and 2022 have the highest presentation. However, most students who tend to self-harm are in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (smaller presentation value because of the large number of students and more study programs than other faculties). Furthermore, of all respondents, there are 16 female students and three male students who have high self-harm tendencies. However, students with

parental income above 10 million did not tend to self-harm. Students with parental income between 1 and 2.5 million have high self-harm tendencies. In order to prevent the tendency or ideation of self-harm carried out by students, it is necessary to hold Guidance and Counseling services in prevention strategies or essential services. When teaching in class thematically, lecturers can carry out strategies that can be carried out in the form of classical learning. Procurement of media, as well as cross-class service activities specifically for respondents who have very high, high and moderate self-harm tendencies.

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