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## The Mental Health of First-Year Medical Students in Universitas Baiturrahmah

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** First-year students are a group that has experienced many changes in their lives. Studying in university requires students to be exposed to new challenges, namely academic demands, independence to meet needs and activities, and more independence in learning. Medical students have a heavier burden due to a dense curriculum, so that they will face various module exams, clinical skills, practicums, lectures, and other student organizational activities. If students are not able to adjust, then this can cause emotional mental disorders. **Methods:** This study was a cross-sectional design. Participants are new students of the 2020 in Faculty of Medicine, consist of the Medical Study Program and the Clinical Pharmacy Study Program. The research sample is total sampling. This research instrument uses a Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ). This questionnaire can measure the mental state of a person who has a 30 days time limit. Data processing using SPSS, univariate data is displayed in the form of a frequency distribution table. **Results:** In this study, most of the respondent have total SRQ less than 6 (80.8%). The symptoms of mental emotional disorders that are most commonly found are somatic symptoms and depressive symptoms. **Conclusion:** The mental health of Baiturrahmah medical students is still within the normal range, but mental health assessments need to be carried out every year.

### 1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not only the absence of disease or infirmity. A person is mentally healthy if the person can adjust to himself, with others, and with the society, he lives in. The person can also accept himself and others as they are, with all their shortcomings and strengths.<sup>1,2</sup>

First-year students are a group that has experienced many changes in their lives. Studying in higher education requires students to be exposed to new challenges, namely academic demands,

independence to meet needs and activities, and independent learning compared to previous education (High School). Students must do more reading assignments, prepare, prepare presentation assignments and do more work outside of class. Therefore, first-year students need to master how to adapt to a new social environment, develop a new orientation based on the institution to which they are accepted, become productive members of the community at their university, and adjust to new roles and responsibilities. Successful student adjustment can be seen in good academic achievement,

participation in campus activities, and psychological well-being.<sup>2,3</sup>

Medical education in Indonesia aims to produce doctors who are in accordance with the needs of public health services. Faculty of Medicine, including the Faculty of Medicine, Baiturrahmah University, must develop a curriculum based on the Indonesian National Standard for Medical Professional Education. It makes medical students face various module exams, clinical skills, practicums, lectures, and other student organizational activities, especially first-year students. If the student is not able to adjust, then the student can experience mental-emotional disorders.<sup>4,5</sup>

Mental emotional disorder indicates that the individual experiences an emotional change that can develop into a pathological state. Symptoms of mental-emotional disorders can be depression, anxiety symptoms, somatic symptoms, and symptoms of decreased energy. A study by Jena S has found a mental-emotional disorder in private medical students in Kanpur (India) is 30%. Higher results were found in Atma Jaya Catholic University Medical Faculty students, namely 48.5%.<sup>5</sup>

Medical students with psychiatric problems can reduce productivity and quality of life, cause learning difficulties, and negatively affect patient care, such as medical negligence. It is essential to maintain the mental health of medical students, namely through early detection and early prevention in students. This study aims to determine the description of mental health in the first-year students' Faculty of Medicine Universitas Baiturrahmah.

## **2. Methods**

This study used a cross-sectional design. Research

respondents are new students of the 2020 Faculty of Medicine, consisting of the Medical Study Program student and the Clinical Pharmacy Study Program. The research used total sampling. This research instrument uses a Self Reporting Questionnaire (SRQ). The Self Reporting Questionnaire is a questionnaire developed by WHO to screen for psychiatric disorders and research purposes that have been carried out in various countries, including Indonesia. This questionnaire can measure the mental state of a person who has a 30 days time limit. In data processing using SPSS, univariate data is displayed in the form of a frequency distribution table.

## **3. Results**

This research was carried out at the Baiturrahmah University Faculty of Medicine in September 2020. Respondents were new students of the 2020 Faculty of Medicine, consisting of the Medical Study Program and the Clinical Pharmacy Study Program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the questionnaire was distributed using the google form application.

### **Characteristics of respondents**

The data found that 160 respondents consisted of 125 students in the Medical Study Program and 35 students in the Clinical Pharmacy Study Program. Most of the participants were women, both in the Medical Study Program (76%) and Clinical Pharmacy Study Program (91.4%). In addition, most of the respondents aged 18 years were in both the Medical Study Program (60.8%) and Clinical Pharmacy Study Program (60%), and most of the respondents were unmarried (99.4%).

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	%
Age		
17 years	3	1.9
18 years	97	60.6
19 years	51	31.9
20 years	9	5.6
Gender		
Male	33	20.6
Female	127	79.4
Marital status		
Married	1	99.4%
Single	159	0.6%
Study Program		
Medical study	125	78.1%
Clinical Pharmacy	35	21.9%

**Emotional mental health status**

In this study, most of the respondents have a total SRQ score was less than 6, both in the medical

program study (80.8%) and the clinical pharmacy program study (77.1%).

Table 2. Total SRQ score

Study program	Medical		Clinical pharmacy	
	n	%	n	%
Total SRQ score				
<6	101	80.8	27	77.1
>6	24	19.2	8	22.9
Total	125	100%	35	100%

**Symptoms of mental health problems**

Based on mental and emotional symptoms, the most common symptoms found were somatic symptoms and depressive symptoms, while there were no symptoms of decreased energy. In Medical Study

Program students, the most common symptoms found were somatic symptoms, while in the Clinical Pharmacy Study Program students, were symptoms of depression.

Table 3. Symptoms of mental health problems

Mental health Problems	Medical program study		Clinical pharmacy program study	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Somatic symptoms	11 (8.8%)	114 (91.2%)	2 (5.7%)	33 (94.3%)
Depressive feelings	9 (7.2%)	116 (92.8%)	3 (8.6%)	32 (91.4%)
Depressive thoughts	7 (5.6%)	118 (94.4%)	6 (17.1%)	29 (82.9%)
Energy drop	0	125 (100%)	0	35 (100%)

#### 4. Discussion

Based on this study, it was found that the emotional and mental status of first-year students at the Faculty of Medicine, Baiturrahmah University, mainly was a total SRQ below six or within normal limits. It means that most students do not experience mental health problems. It is relevant to research conducted by Michelle Stephani at Atmajaya Catholic University that the mental health of first-year students with a total SRQ below 6.<sup>6,7</sup>

This research was conducted when the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) came into effect in Padang so the implementation of the education process was online (on the network). This condition made new students stay in their respective areas. They followed the lessons from their respective homes and regions. It increased comfort for students because of the family, which is the primary support system. This is in accordance with I Nyoman's research on Udayana medical faculty students that family social support and self-efficacy play a role in reducing academic stress in new students. Self-efficacy is self-confidence that can be strengthened by action and support from family. Parents who express their belief in their children's abilities will make it easier for their children to adapt to changes in life in the world of lectures.<sup>8,9</sup>

Large-scale social restrictions require universities to organize online learning processes. Online learning has several advantages compared to face-to-face learning. Based on research on Yarsi medical students, the advantages of online learning are that students do not have to get up early to go to campus, students have more time to gather with their families, and better time management for other activities. One interesting thing is that this online method is beneficial for shy students; they can ask the lecturer face to face.<sup>10</sup>

Based on emotional mental disorders, the most common symptoms were somatic symptoms and depressive thoughts. Somatic symptoms include stomach complaints, poor digestion, decreased appetite, and frequent headaches. This is in accordance with research on medical students in

Bahrain that 80% experienced physical symptoms such as nausea and bloating. Research by Mario Alber6t8 found a relationship between perceived stress and physical symptoms in medical students. Medical students have more demands than students from other faculties. It includes academic, social, and financial matters. Demands make students in a state of stress. In response to stressors, physical reactions such as hyperventilation, increased cholesterol, increased heart rate, muscle tension, heartbeat, muscle tension, diarrhea, or constipation.<sup>11,12</sup>

The mental health of first-year students is still within normal limits, but their mental health tends to worsen the following year. Several studies have found a relationship between years of college and the severity of mental disorders. A cross-sectional study of medical students in Brazil found an increase in stress symptoms in eighth or fourth-year students. Institutions need to consider strategies for preventing and identifying students who are at risk for mental health decline. These strategies can cover individuals and groups as a whole, promote the resumption of healthy habits, and attention to health, leisure, and religiosity.<sup>12</sup>

#### 5. Conclusion

The mental health of new students of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Baiturrahmah is within normal limits. Symptoms of health problems that often appear are physical symptoms. Suggestions for the following research are research on factors that affect students' mental health and screening for symptoms of mental disorders each year.

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