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Mental Health Problems and English Achievement of UNKLAB High School Students

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to find out the correlation between mental health problems and English achievement of students at a private high school in Airmadidi, Indonesia. This study also explored the mental health problems that was categorized as depression, anxiety, and stress, and student English achievement. The results showed that the overall mental health problems were categorized in moderate level. The English achievement was categorized as below average. There was a significantly negative correlation between the student mental health problems and their English achievement. It signified that the higher score in the final test of English subject was significantly associated with lower mental health of the students. The higher the mental health problems, the lower the score in English final test of the students.

Keywords—mental health, English achievement, depression, anxiety, stress

Abstrak

Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui korelasi antara masalah kesehatan mental dengan prestasi bahasa Inggris siswa di sebuah sekolah menengah swasta di Airmadidi, Indonesia. Penelitian ini juga mengeksplorasi masalah kesehatan mental yang dikategorikan sebagai depresi, kecemasan, dan stres, serta prestasi bahasa Inggris siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masalah kesehatan mental secara keseluruhan dikategorikan dalam tingkat sedang. Prestasi bahasa Inggris dikategorikan di bawah ratarata. Ada korelasi negatif yang signifikan antara masalah kesehatan mental siswa dan prestasi bahasa Inggris mereka. Ini menandakan bahwa skor yang lebih tinggi dalam tes akhir mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris secara signifikan dikaitkan dengan kesehatan mental siswa yang lebih rendah. Semakin tinggi masalah kesehatan mental, semakin rendah skor dalam tes akhir bahasa Inggris siswa.

Kata kunci—kesehatan mental, prestasi bahasa Inggris, depresi, kecemasan, stres.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue about mental health problems is something common not only in a country but even in around the globe. World Health Organization (2020) considers the mental health problems as a top priority and calls for increased awareness, understanding, and care. White, et. al (2022) stated that mental health refers to "cognitive, behavioral, and emotional wellbeing" (p. 1) - it is all about how we think, feel, and behave. Mental health is something that refers to the way people think, their emotional and how they act. People with healthy minds can think clearly and do their activity accordingly.

Mental Health Problems

World Health Organization (2020) defines mental health as "state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community." (p. 1). People need healthy mind so it can help them to work productively and achieve their goals. People who have healthy mind are more likely to stay positive in every situation and be able to show that they do not have any sickness or disease. On the other hand, the mental health disorder has negative effect on people's life. When people heard about mental health, they think about the conditions where a person has some serious disease, but mental health refers to human overall emotion, psychological and social well-being (Lanese, 2019). Mental health could affect almost all the aspects in life.

Mental health could affect in people's daily life including the learners' English achievement. There are a lot of students struggling with their mental health, and they just do not know how to get rid of it. Khurshid, et. al., (2015) stated that depressed students who often felt sad resulted in reductions in academic achievement. Mental health problems not only affect adults but also children in Malaysia (Sharil, et. al., 2021) and Indonesia (Kumara, et. al., 2017). Additionally, Suldo, et. al. (2013) found that mental health affected academic outcomes and the other way around the academic achievement affected mental health. It means that student mental health and academic outcomes are mutually interrelated and cannot be separated. Clark and Watson (1991) wrote that depression, anxiety, and stress were the main factors in mental health problems, and everyone was easily affected by it. Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) also stated there were three things such as depression, anxiety, and stress in mental health and they developed the depression, anxiety and stress scale called (DASS). Parents and teachers can develop student mental health before adulthood so they can generate greater personal, social, and economics later.

Mental Health Foundation (2016) classified five most common mental health problems including depression, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Kumari (2018) wrote that mentally healthy person "works functionally" (p. 6). Mentally healthy persons are generally good workers, good friends, and good students. A person who has good mental health is a person who has healthy mind. When the person or student has healthy mind, it can help him or her to do well in his or her courses in the school.

Mental health problems comprise of as depression, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. But this study will only discuss three mental health problems which are depression, anxiety, and stress.

Depression

Depression is also one of the most serious mental health problems, but it is also a common disease that could affect almost anyone. According to Soriano (2022) someone with depression often feels like carrying a very heavy burden. When people have heavy burden, their days seems hopeless, and something their mood changing so fast without

certain reasons. "Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest." (Chand & Arif, 2022, p. 1). Andrews and Thomson (2009) described that depression influences many aspects of our lives like motivation, emotions, the way of thinking, behaviors, physiology, social relationship, and brain states. A good teaching and education about depression and mental health problems can make people aware of it, so it is necessary for the society to know and understand how to help people with mental health disorder such as depression.

Iver and Khan (2012) found that not only adult who suffer this kind of mental health problems but 2% of school learner and 5% teenager also suffer this mental illness. Not all the learners feel this kind of mental health problems when they face test or waiting for exam result. But this is serious if the teacher did not pay attention to this. Depression could lead the learners to commit suicide (Jeon, 2011). Moreover, Huberty (2010) described children and adolescents with depression experience significant academic and social difficulties. They hard times remembering things in detail. In learning something, the importance thing of learning is to remember the things that they have already learnt and if they have depression, it could affect their learning process. During school, learners face many contradictions and obligations to success. Students with depression often do not know where to go or how to get rid of this kind of mental health problems because they afraid of their friends will tell them that they are freak or abnormal. Iruo, et. al., (2021) found that depression of the students was significantly and negatively associated with their academic performance. It means that the higher students feel depression the lower their academic achievement. Wechsler, et. al., (2000) also stated similar thing that the students with depression achieved lower grades and are less active in the classroom. Depression is a serious problem that can impact not only student life but also can impact their achievement including their English achievement.

There are three types of depression which are adjustment disorder with depressed mood, major depressive disorder, and bipolar mood disorder (British Colombia, 2001). The three types of depression could affect in people's daily life, and they show the cognitive symptoms like trouble sleeping/insomnia, crying for no reason, trouble concentrating and low mood or sadness. Depression can affect people's job in the workplace, their behavior, and can affect in student education's life.

Adjustment disorder with depressed mood (ADDM) is feeling hopeless or sad after some stressful events. For example, when people lose something or their beloved one, they will experience this kind of depression. British Colombia (2001) also stated that during that time the person may feel sad and may not be able to enjoy some aspects of life. The symptoms include depressed mood, fearfulness, instability, hopelessness, or feeling of depression disorder. Not only adults who experience this but also children (Cirino, 2018).

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is almost like depressed mood, but the difference is when someone experiences persistent and intense of feeling sadness for a certain period (Juby & Kerr, 2020). The factors of MDD are the same with ADDM which are caused by losing someone they love or something that is important. Since sadness is a natural part of the human experience, then people could be affected by it.

Bipolar mood disorder (BMD) is also called "manic-depressive disorder is brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy, and ability to function" (NYS Office of Mental Health, 2008, p.1). Oftentimes it is not identified as an illness, and people may suffer for years before it can be properly treated. This bipolar disorder should be carefully taken care of throughout one's lifetime. General symptoms of this bipolar disorder is "dramatic mood swing – from overly high and/or irritable to sad and hopeless, and then back again, often with periods of normal mood between" (NYS Office of Mental Health, 2008, p. 2). The first symptoms of this type of depression may appear during childhood or teenage years and emerge in the early adulthood, around 25 years old. (Smith, 2021).

Anxiety

Anxiety is the term of mental health problems that almost the same as depression. "Anxiety is the total response to threat or danger" (Moss, 2002, p. 1), which includes a physiological, behavioral, and psychological reaction (Bourne, 2010), and the most common health problems (Adwas, et. al., 2019). Anxiety has several symptoms like always feeling hot and sweaty, their heart is like racing, feeling like they want to faint, shaky, becoming despondent, and hopeless about the future will be.

Anxiety could affect in people's life, including the students. According to Vitasari, et. al. (2010) anxiety referred to "conditions that are experienced during study process and could be disturbance of academic performance" (p.491). Almost every student ever experienced this kind of mental health problems. Anxiety is a feeling worry about something with an uncertain outcome. They feel anxiety sometimes because of something that was fearful. If the learners let the anxiety takes off, it could be a serious disease. And it is also not good for the learners because the way they get the information are different from other normal learners. They also sometimes tend to interpret ambiguous information negatively (Newman, Cho, & Kim, 2017), including their English achievement if they did not get the information correctly.

Dobson (2012) found that students who reported higher level of anxiety showed lower level of academic achievement. Specifically, in English students, English language anxiety had the negative impact, as revealed in the study of Halder (2018) about the correlation of student English language anxiety and their English achievement. Tum and Kunt (2013) advocated that it was normal for students and teachers to experience anxiety when communicating English as a foreign language to native speakers. When the students and teacher are helping each other to accept the anxiety as the part of learning English and both can accomplish their goal.

Stress is "a feeling of mental pressure and tension" (Shahsavarani, et. al., 2015, p. 230). Stress is a normal part in human life. Almost everybody in this world experiences this disease. Stress refers to the response of human's body to pressures from a situation or life event (Mental Health Foundation, 2018). According to Bhargava and Trivedi (2018) the symptoms of stress are headaches, irritability, bouts of anger, restlessness, insomnia, anxiety, worry and phobias. People got stress usually because they had pressure in their life, especially in making decision. Stress can impact someone mentally, socially, physically, and emotionally in both positive and negative ways. The causes of stress in student life are upcoming test, too much homework, lack of organization, poor sleep schedule, participating in class, lack of support, and transitioning to a new environment (Oxford Learning, 2018)

Almost every learner feels the same too, some because of their academic problems, their social life, and sometimes they feel stress also when they are at home because every child must face the reality that life is not always fair. Students feel stress generally when they have some tests. When student feel stressful, they cannot answer the test correctly. Yikealo, et. al. (2018) found that the level of stress among students was a moderate level; and Peyman and Sadighi (2011) found that stress had a significant relationship with student English achievement especially their reading comprehension.

English Achievement

Academic achievement is one of the most important goals of education nowadays, while English achievement denotes a prestige as well as a pride among students and parents whose English is a foreign language, like the students in Indonesia. Zheng and Mustappha (2022) summarize that learning achievement or academic achievement is the result of objective and subjective assessment of learners through teaching in school or self-study. Brookhart, et. al., (2016) suggests that it should be distinguished between learning achievement and academic achievement. Learning achievement is academic achievement in the narrow sense if it is only measured through the results of an exam or a certain stage of study. Meanwhile, academic achievement broadly covers all aspects of knowledge, competence, and literacy development. In a narrow sense, learning achievement refers to the results of learners measured by exams at a certain stage of study, special to the results or scores of the final exam.

English achievement is a measure of the student level of knowledge in learning English and the learners will know their capability in learning something. English achievement is usually measured through test, quiz, and assignment that made by the teacher. Lasagabaster (2010) wrote that English achievement was to measure the four tests which are grammar, listening, speaking, and reading. To help student for their better grade of their English achievement, Goldenberg (2006) wrote that instructor that can give good instruction can help the English learners in their achievement. But, to accomplish their duty, children also need help from their parents.

Mental Health Problems and English Achievement

Bostani, et. al., (2014) and VanderLind (2017) showed that mental health had a significant relation with learning achievement. The mental health is the main thing that could affect people to do their activities, their behaviors, the way they think, and so on. As reported by Eisenberg, et. al. (2009) that mental health problems namely depression and anxiety were the factors that affect students to get lower in their academic achievement. Likewise, problems in mental health could affect student achievement including English achievement, as shown by the study of White (2016). Anxiety and depression were found to have a negative impact on student academic achievement, because it decreased academic achievement (Khesht-Masjedi, et. al., 2019).

Having good English achievement can reflect the knowledge of the English learners in the English learning process. But students with mental health problems might not be able to finish their studies (Smit, 2015). Every English teacher wants their English learners to have good grades in English lessons. Therefore, the English teacher should better know that their English learners have healthy mental. In this case, the English teacher can develop the English learning environment to increase the students who have poor mental health. Halder (2018) noted that by doing that the English teacher can help the English students to face their failures in making mistakes in learning English.

Mental health problem is a serious issue nowadays among adolescents and children that because it can negatively impact their potential for school success (Williams, 2012). It consists of depression, anxiety, or stress; they will not gain better English achievement as far as English learning is concerned. Home is supposed to be the best place for the English learners to spend for their whole day. However, feeling insecure happen when parents and siblings put so many pressures on a child. Family has an important role of responsibility for the children's learning (Huang, et. al., 2005). But with the insecure feeling, they cannot concentrate on their English homework or to prepare for their English test. These uncomfortable feelings can gradually emerge to become mental health problems of the English learners. Sadly, there are some English teachers often had difficulties to identify students with mental issues and they do not know how to help them.

It is necessary to explore more about the mental health problems, including anxiety, stress, and depression, among English students since English teachers were not fully aware of this issue that might occur in UNKLAB high school.

Purpose of the Study

In reference to the identified problems, this study was intended to find out if there is correlation between the mental health problems and their English achievement of the Grade 10 students who were officially registered at UNKLAB High School. The use of the questionnaire of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was limited to depression, anxiety, and stress and for English achievement referred to the English score as appeared on the students Grade Report Book. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1. What is the level of Mental Health Problems?
- 2. What is the level of English Achievement?
- 3. Is there any significant correlation between Mental Health Problems and English Achievement?

Alternative Hypothesis

Referring to the research questions about the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable, the following alternative hypothesis is made:

H_a: There is a significant correlation between student Mental Health Problems and their English Achievement

Conceptual Framework

Student Mental health problems is independent variable and student English achievement is dependent variable. Students' mental health problems has significance correlation with student English achievement. The researcher drew the concept into the figure as shown below:

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of mental health problems and English achievement



METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research held the descriptive and correlational method by using a questionnaire to gather data. This study sought to get a description of the independent variable, respondents' mental health problems, and the dependent variable, their achievement in English language. Ultimately it explored whether there was a significant correlation between the student mental health problems and their English achievement.

Respondents

The population of this study was the whole students in a private high school in Airmadidi. The sample respondents were 89 students of Grade 10 who were officially registered at the time the data was gathered. Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample respondents. Grade 10 students are the first-year student in Indonesian high school which is considered as developmentally crucial period because it is the transition period of them from adolescent to adulthood.

Instrument

In collecting the data, the researcher used an adapted questionnaire. The original questionnaire was constructed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). It is called Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) which was based on Clark and Watson's (1991) theory of mental health. The questionnaire consisted of three parts which are Depression, Anxiety and Stress. There are 21 items (short version of the scale): Items number 1 to 7 were for Depression, items number 8 to 14 were for Anxiety, and items number 15 to 21 are for Stress. After the researcher did the pilot study the number of items questionnaire decreased from 21 to 13 items: The questionnaire has been translated into Bahasa Indonesia and has been validated by three English university teachers. To find out the level of mental health problems in questionnaire, this study used 5-point Likert scale as the follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Pilot Study

The questionnaire was tried out through a pilot study to get the statistical validity and reliability. There were 39 students of grade 10 IPA 3 who participated in answering the questionnaire. The mean score of each item was correlated with the mean score of the sum of all the items. Significant correlation indicated a valid item. Correlational analysis resulted in 13 valid items, namely were items number 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 21; wherein eight items were not valid, namely items number 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, and 20. Only the 13 valid items were further analyzed to find the Cronbach alpha, which was finally shown as .89 or 89% implying that the construct of the 13 items was valid and reliable for use in the actual study.

Interpretation of the Data

In interpreting the level of mental health problems was based on the five-point Likert Scale. The higher score indicated more mental problems in the students. The mean score was rounded, and the interpretation was as follows:

 $4.50 - 5.00 \rightarrow 5$ interpreted as very high mental health problems

 $3.50 - 4.49 \rightarrow 4$ interpreted as high mental health problems

 $2.50 - 3.49 \rightarrow 3$ interpreted as moderate mental health problems

 $1.50 - 2.49 \rightarrow 2$ interpreted as low mental health problems

 $1.00 - 1.49 \rightarrow 1$ interpreted as very low mental health problems

The interpretation of the English achievement score was based on the grading system as prescribed by Permendikbud Year 2013 No. 81A chapter IV verse 7 bagian a.1, as follows:

100 = Excellent

80 - 90 = Above Average

60 - 79 = Average

30 - 59 = Below Average

01 - 29 = Poor

The significance of the correlation is measured by rejection or retainment of the alternative hypothesis. If the significance value p is less than the significance level α = .05, the alternative hypothesis is retained, implying that there is a significant correlation between the mental health problems and English achievement. The direction of relationship is determined by the correlation coefficient whether it is positive or negative. Positive coefficient indicates the same direction of the two variables wherein the higher score of the independent variable is associated with higher score of the dependent variable. Positive relationship indicates a reverse direction of the two variables wherein the higher score of the independent variable is associated with lower score of the dependent variable and the other way around.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Mental Health Problems

The first research question of this study was to find out the level of mental health problems. By using Mean, the result showed that the mean score of mental health problems was 2.79 (see Table 1), which was rounded as 3.00 interpreted as moderate. It means that the student mental health problems was categorized in the moderate level. Similar to the study of Kumara, Wimbarti, Susetyo, and Kisriyani (2017) who explored "The Epidemiology of Indonesian Children and Adolescent School-based Mental Health: Validation of School-based Mental Health Information System" in Yogyakarta Indonesia. In their study, there were 308 participants consisting of elementary school, middle school, high school students, and 28 teachers. The results of their study showed that students mental health problems in Yogyakarta was categorized as moderate (81%) and high (19%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Mental Health Problems

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mental Health Problems	89	1.00	4.15	2.79	.712

English Achievement

The second research question of this study was to find out the level of English achievement. By the computation of mean score, the output showed that the level of English achievement was 59.97. Based on the interpretation of the level of English achievement by Permendikbud Tahun 2013 (see page 21), this mean score indicates that the level of English achievement is below average.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of English Achievement

	N	Minimum	Maximum		Std. Deviation
Mental Health Problems	89	24	100	59.97	20.5

Relationship between Mental Health Problems and English Achievement

Analysis of Pearson bivariate correlation was utilized to test the alternative hypothesis. The output of the analysis, as shown in Table 3, revealed that significance value p=.00, which was less than the significance level $\alpha=.05$, implying that the alternative hypothesis was retained. It meant that there was a significant correlation between mental health problems. Furthermore, the analysis of correlation coefficient resulted in r=-0.42, indicating that the direction of relationship was negative. It all meant that the relationship was significant with an opposite direction of relationship of mental health problems and English achievement. It signifies that the higher achievement in English subject is significantly associated with lower mental health problems of the students. The higher the mental health problems, the lower is the English achievement of the students of X IPA 1, IPA 2, and IPS grades at SMA UNKLAB Airmadidi.

Table 3. Correlation between Mental Health Problems and English Achievement

		English Achievement
Mental Health Problems	Pearson Correlation	416**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00
	N	89

CONCLUSIONS

This quantitative study explored the mental health problems and the English achievement and the relationship between these two variables, by involving 89 student respondents of SMA UNKLAB Airmadidi grade X IPA 1, IPA 2, and IPS. The questionnaire was adapted from Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). It is about Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS) based on the theory of mental health of Clark and Watson (1991). The English achievement was the final English test score of the semester. The mental health problems were found to be moderate and English achievement was below average and there was a negative significant correlation between mental health and English achievement. Depression, anxiety, and stress have relationship with the English achievement, implying that more mental health problems are significantly associated with lower score of English final test of the students in UNKLAB high school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the student mental health problems have correlation with the score of English final test, it is recommended that the school administration seeks to encourage the English teachers to create a conducive learning environment. This environment should be fun and pleasant where students have a positive and friendly relationship with the English teachers. Teachers need to devise in such a way a learning approach which is wholesome, acceptable, and understandable to the students. English teachers could develop a personality that can minimize the anxiety and fear of the students such as understanding as well as accepting their mistakes rather than criticizing or scolding them publicly so that the students can feel acceptable in the English classroom. Further similar studies be conducted to explore the English teacher personality or other variables that might be related to student mental health problems.

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