



Mental Health Literacy and Self-Stigma on Intention to Seek Professional Psychological Help

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini untuk mengetahui pengaruh antara literasi kesehatan mental dan stigma diri terhadap intensi pencarian bantuan psikologis profesional pada komunitas kesehatan mental. Pengumpulan data menggunakan instrumen penelitian dari *Mental Health Literacy Scale* (MHLS), *The Self Stigma of Seeking Psychology Help* (SSOSH-10) dan *TPB Questionnaire* pada 100 anggota komunitas *Mentalhealing.id* yang tergabung dalam aplikasi *Telegram* (n=100). Analisis data menggunakan regresi linier berganda. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh antara literasi kesehatan mental dan stigma diri terhadap intensi pencarian bantuan psikologis profesional pada komunitas kesehatan mental ($F_{hitung} = 20,501$; $F_{table} = 2,36$; $p < 0,10$). Tingkat intensi pencarian bantuan psikologis secara profesional responden dalam kategori cukup baik yakni sebesar 61%.

Keywords

Mental Health Literacy;
Self-Stigma;
Intention to Seek
Professional
Psychological Help

Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help in the mental health community. Data collection using research instruments from the Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS), The Self Stigma of Seeking Psychology Help (SSOSH-10), and the TPB Questionnaire on Mentalhealing.id community members who joined in the application Telegram (n=100). Data were analyzed using the Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The results of this study indicated that there is a significant effect of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help in the mental health community ($F_{value} = 20,501$; $F_{table} = 2.36$; $p < 0.10$). The level of intention to seek professional psychological help is in a good category, which is 61%.

Introduction

Mental health is the condition by which someone can improve mental, spiritual, physical, and social factors, control pressure, live productively and contribute to his/her community(1). The national prevalence of major mental illness in 2013 was 1.7 per square mile. In the other words, about 2 out of 1000 Indonesians suffer from mental disorders(2) Furthermore, the prevalence of mental illness increased to 7 per square mile in 2017 which means that 7 out of 1000 Indonesians have severe mental illness (3).

Mental health is a global health problem that raises great concern and distress for families of its survivors and people surrounding them and has a significant impact on risk factors (4). False beliefs create a negative attitude towards people with mental health problems in their families and societies. Although not uncommon, people with mental health, such as those with schizophrenia, need to be concealed, isolated, and shackled. 31.5% of Indonesians with schizophrenia/ psychiatric patients experience bondage (5).

Negative attitudes of society towards people with mental illness indicate that poor general knowledge of mental illness can discourage someone from seeking help from professional services(6). Help-seeking is a coping strategy used to describe every stage of the process from initiation to involvement in an individual's treatment (7) For people with mental illness who are currently prevented from actively seeking psychological support from professionals (8), psychological support can reduce the

long-term adverse effects of new mental health problems (9).

Intention is defined as a plan for performing the desired action. The stronger the intention to engage in an action, the more likely the expected action will occur. The three aspects that can cause behavioral intention are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control(10). Meanwhile, several variables have been found to be related to the individual's intention to seek help such as low the levels of mental health literacy(11) and self-stigma (12).

Mental health literacy is general knowledge and belief about mental health problems, including the ability to identify, treat, or prevent mental health disorders. The three aspects of mental health literacy are aspects of knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about the symptoms, causes, and sources of mental health problem treatment services(13). Poor understanding about mental illness is also a major issue among Indonesian people. Most Indonesians believe that mental illness is caused by irrational, more specifically, the consequences of a supernatural world(5).

Misunderstandings about the problem of mental illness in Indonesia also elicits stigma in society(5). Stigma is a form of social disapproval of what is considered incompatible with social values towards a person's behavior or condition(14), including stereotypes, prejudice, and discriminatory behavior toward those who seek for psychological treatment(15). Mental health stigma can be divided into two categories: public stigma and self-stigma. Self-stigma is a process that internalizes negative perceptions of society(16), forms a negative self-image, and is characterized by decreased self-esteem (17) and diminished intention to seek help in the future(12).

During the decade of the 2010s, technology grew rapidly, affecting mental health information that was easily accessible and distributed using the Internet, especially social media(18). The presence of public education on mental health and the benefits of mental health services has been found to motivate individuals to access to mental health services(19). Having specialized knowledge of mental health services is also one aspect of a high level of mental health literacy(13).

The use of technological developments to educate the general public about mental health has driven the authors to investigate the mental health status of the online mental health community. This study aims to determine the impact of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help.

Methods

This study used a quantitative method to investigate the effect of the independent variable mental health literacy (X_1) and self-stigma (X_2) on the dependent variable the intention to seek professional psychological help (Y). To measure mental health literacy (X_1) we used The Mental Health Literacy Scale (MHLS)(20) with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.791, while to measure self-stigma (X_2) we adapted SSOSH-10 (self-stigma for psychological help)(21), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.704. The instrument of the intention to seek professional psychological help variable was a TPB questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.701 (22). The Population (N) consists of 5,258 members of the MentalHealing.Id community that join in Telegram conversational applications. The total samples were 100 respondents calculated based on the Slovin formula(23).

Results

Partial effects of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help

The table below shows the results of the partial effect of each independent variable on the intention to seek professional psychological help:

Table 1. Output the partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable

		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	18,452	5,267		3,503	0,001
	Mental Health Literacy	0,095	0,061	0,136	1,569	0,120
	Self-stigma	0,554	0,096	0,502	5,783	0,000

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to seek professional psychological help

The results of the partial effect on mental health literacy variables get a significance value of 0.120 > 0.1 and $t_{\text{value}} 1.569 < t_{\text{table}} 1.660$. Based on the results of the partial test, it was found that there was no partial effect of mental health literacy (X_1) on the intention to seek professional psychological help (Y). In the partial effect results, the self-stigma variable (X_2) shows a significance score of 0.000 < 0.1 and $t_{\text{value}} 5.783 > t_{\text{table}} 1.660$. Based on the results of the partial test, it can be concluded that self-stigma (X_2) has a partial effect on the intention to seek professional psychological help (Y).

Simultaneous effects of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help

The table below shows the results of the simultaneous effect of each independent variable on the intention to seek professional psychological help:

Table 2. Output the simultaneous effect of each independent variable on dependent variable

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	994,363	2	497,182	20,501	0,000 ^b
	Residual	2352,387	97	24,251		
	Total	3346,750	99			

The results show a significance score of 0.000 < 0.1 and the calculated F_{value} is 20.501 > F_{table} is 2.36. The results above can be stated that the impact is simultaneously between mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help (Y).

Discussion

The impact of mental health literacy on the intention to seek professional psychological help

Based on the results of the data analysis conducted, it was shown that there is no significant effect of mental health literacy on the intention to seek professional psychological help. The relationship occurs through other variables, namely attitudes towards seeking help indirectly (24).

Previous research found a significant correlation between mental health literacy and the intention to seek professional psychological help. The difference between the results of this study and previous research may be explained by different instruments used and the research subjects. In the previous study, several mental health measurement were used, namely MHKQ(25) and MAKS(26). Meanwhile, this study uses MHLS(20) to find the effect on the intention to seek professional psychological help.

The next difference is in the research subjects. In the previous studies, it was found that the research subjects were 2377 Chinese rural residents aged 18-60 years(25), 200 students(24), 150 new students of psychology department (27) and 357 local and international students(28). In this study, research respondents were divided into three based on Erik Erikson's psychosocial development phase, namely the adolescent phase with an age range of 12-19 years, early adulthood with an age range of 20 to 25 years, and the adulthood with an age range of 26 to 40 years with a total of 100 participants.

The results obtained in this study did reveal that there was no influence between mental health literacy and the intention to seek professional psychological help, so there were other factors that further influenced the intention to seek professional psychological help, such as the experience of personal contact with someone with mental health disorders. The personal contact experience a person has can influence the desire to seek professional psychological help. Having a bad experience with someone with a mental disorder will cause a decrease in the desire to seek psychological help in the future(12).

The other predictors that influence the intention to seek psychological help either are the presence of significant others such as friends and family or in professional psychological services such as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and mental health professionals. The important predictor is subjective needs, which have a positive influence on the intention to seek psychological help consistently. The results of the study imply that if the level of subjective needs is high, intention to seek for psychological help both informally and formally / professionally (29).

Based on these findings, it can be said that mental health literacy does not partially affect a person's intention to seek psychological help from professionals. The presence of other predictors such as subjective need and experience of personal contact with people with mental health disorders had a more significant influence on the intention to seek professional psychological help.

The impact of self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help

The results of data analysis showed that there was a positive effect of self-stigma and the intention on the intention to seek professional psychological help. Based on the analysis results, there is a

positive correlation indicating that if the level of self-stigma is high, the intention to seek professional psychological help will also increase. Previous research has tended to obtain results which reveal that there is a negative correlation between self-stigma and the intention to seek professional psychological help. This means that the majority of previous findings indicate that the level of self-stigma that a person has will reduce the intention of seeking professional psychological help.

Differences in research results with previous research may be caused by different measurement used and the research subject. In previous studies, several measuring tools to determine the effect of self-stigma and the intention to seek professional psychological help were the ISCI (30), GHSQ (31), PSBCS-SS(32). Meanwhile, this study used the SSOSH-10 measuring instrument(21).

The results of this study are the same as previous findings conducted in Israel on 238 adolescent subjects ranging in age from 14 to 18 years and using the same measuring instrument, SSOSH-10(21), found that there was a positive correlation between self-stigma and the intention to seek psychological help from various groups type of therapy. The tendency not to apply negative stereotypes about mental illness to themselves as a part of the developmental task of being able and having control over their own destiny. The realization that it is not necessary to have a mental disorder to seek therapy or professional help is the background to the positive influence of self-stigma. (33).

The results of the study found that most students (mean age 24) and primary care patients (mean age 45) preferred face-to-face care when seeking help for general mental health problems. This study using the same measuring instrument, SSOSH-10(21), found that the number of participants who preferred online treatment was higher when they sought help for a problem they perceived as a stigma. Most primary care patients prefer face-to-face treatment regardless of the nature of the problem. Participants indicated that those who perceive high self-stigma pressures in seeking help were more likely to report higher intentions to seek psychological treatment for mental health problems both online and offline(34).

Self-stigma appears to be a complex construct that does not necessarily prevent someone from seeking professional help. Although some individuals are hindered by stigma, some are not hindered by the existence of self-stigma(35). The age range used in this study has similarities with previous research which used a sample of adolescents(33) and categories of early adulthood and adulthood(34). The second similarity is the use of a self-stigma measurement tool that uses SSOSH-10 (21).

During the adulthood, individual should pass developmental tasks regarding intimacy, which can be defined as the stage of warm, intimate, and communicative relationships, or without sexual contact with others(36). Adult self-maturity is characterized by realistic adjustments, flexibility, and the ability to adapt to new situations and realities of life(37). Differences in traits such as greater responsibility and autonomy in adulthood are a continuation of developmental stages in adolescence, which may be one reason why self-stigma positively affects help-seeking intentions..

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that self-stigma has a partial positive effect on the intention to seek professional psychological help. This means that if self-stigma is high, the intention of those seeking psychological help will also increase.

The impact of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention to seek professional psychological help

Data analysis shows that there is a simultaneous correlation between mental health literacy and self-stigma with the intention of seeking professional psychological help. Two independent variables explain 29.7% variance in the the intention to seek professional psychological while the other 70.3% is explained by other variables beyond this study. 61% of participants had a medium level of intention to seek professional psychological help, 62% of participants had a medium level of mental health literacy and 63% of participants had a medium level of self-stigma, which means that in general participants have a medium level of mental health literacy, self-stigma and intentions to seek professional psychological help.

The difference from previous findings is that there is a direct link between mental health literacy and the self-stigma of the intention of seeking professional psychological help. Based on the theory of planned behavior, attitude is a predictor of behavior that enhances one's intention to occur behavior in previous studies(10,38). Attitude has been shown to be associated the intention of seeking help(38). Attitude as one of the variables predicting the intention to seek help is known to have awareness in recognizing symptoms, the benefits of professional help, and openness to treatment for emotional problems(39).

Another previous study also found the simultaneous effect of self-stigma and mental health literacy on attitudes toward seeking psychological help. This study highlights the importance of the simultaneous influence of self-stigma and mental health literacy to facilitate positive attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help that can increase intentions to seek psychological help (40). In addition to tracing a person's intentions through the attitudes of 571 citizens of Surabaya who are included in the early adult development period (18-29 years), This recent study found that mental health literacy and self-stigma correlated simultaneously with the intention to seek psychological help, either

formally by seeking help from professional services such as psychiatrists and psychologists or informally through the support of significant others such as family and friends(41).

Based on these results, it can be concluded that mental health literacy and self-stigma simultaneously influence an individual's intention to seek formal psychological support from professional services.

Conclusion

This study shows a simultaneous effect of mental health literacy and self-stigma on the intention of seeking professional psychological help in the mental health community. However, from further partial analysis, mental health literacy has no influence and self-stigma has a positive effect on respondents' intentions to seek professional psychological help.

The influence of the two independent variables on the intention to seek professional psychological help is 29.7%, while 70.3% is influenced by other variables that can be used as variables in the next study related to the intention to seek professional psychological help.

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