


Mental Health Literacy Study of Tadulako University Students

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ABSTRACT: The preliminary study is an important, first step as a basis for intervention in improving the student's mental health of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University. Previous research has confirmed students' mental health literacy based on gender, age, ethnicity, and education level. However, this research on determining risk groups based on differences in student mental health literacy between study programs is limited. The study aims to determine risk groups based on differences in Mental Health Literacy in 14 Programs Study of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University. The type of research used is a *cross-sectional* study. The research procedure begins with distributing the Mental Health Literacy questionnaire to 730 new students in 14 Programs Study of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University. Academic Year 2024/2025 selected through quota sampling. Data analysis used descriptive statistics, and ANOVA. The findings are that the level of Mental Health Literacy of new students in 14 Programs Study of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, is in the category of Less by 43.43%, Sufficient by 49.18%, while only 7.12%, classified as Good, and 0.27% classified as Very Good. The vulnerable group of students' Mental Health Literacy is in the Undergraduate Program Study of Indonesian Language and Literature Education ($p=0.39$), Mathematics Education ($p=0.227$), History Education ($p=0.330$), Physics Education ($p=0.10$), and Guidance and Counseling ($p=0.10$). The results suggest interventions to improve student mental health literacy based on a priority scale in Programs Study that have student mental health literacy classified as vulnerable groups.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health prevalence studies from 2013-2023 of students from 373 colleges/universities in the world show worsening trend data. The increase in depressive symptoms was 134.6%, anxiety symptoms experienced an increase of 109.5%, eating disorders experienced a change of 95.6%, suicidal ideation increased to 64%, and self-injury 45% (DeBate et al., 2022). Furthermore, DeBate et al. (2022) said that it is imperative to improve mental well-being among college students as poor mental health has been identified to be associated with drug and alcohol abuse, physical inactivity, poor diet, stress, anxiety, loneliness, interpersonal problems. If it is not untreated, the mental health disorders are indicated as a risk factor for decreased academic productivity and a doubled risk of dropping out of college without graduating (Reis et al., 2022; Tambling et al., 2023).

Previous research on student mental health has revealed that support services in universities are heavily influenced by the high demand for help caused by the increasing rates of mental health problems among students (Bennett et al., 2024; Campbell et al., 2022). Over time, the prevalence of mental disorders such as stress, anxiety, depression, and other disorders has increased, largely due to academic pressures, social demands, and major changes in students' personal lives. These conditions encourage many students to seek psychological support services, which in turn increases the burden of demand for such services in universities. However, in many cases, the capacity of existing support services is unable to keep up with the number of students in need of assistance, leading to delays or even an inability to provide sufficient attention (Gorczynski & Sims-Schouten, 2024; Peach, 2023). Therefore, this phenomenon emphasizes the importance of strengthening and developing the infrastructure and resources of mental health services on campus to meet this growing need.

One of the preventive and promotive mental health measures for students is the concept of mental health literacy. This concept includes a comprehensive understanding of how to obtain and maintain positive mental health, including the implementation of daily habits that support psychological well-being, such as stress management, maintaining emotional balance, and building healthy social relationships (Crawford, 2022). Moreover, mental health literacy also involves understanding mental disorders, their symptoms, and the ways in which they can be treated, whether through therapy, counseling, or medical support (Abdelsalam & Said, 2022; Munawar et al., 2022). Therefore, mental health literacy is not just knowledge, but also the development of competencies that support students in managing their mental well-being independently, as well as the ability to self-care and seek help when needed.

Mental health literacy is a multifactorial construct that includes: (1) knowledge related to the prevention of mental health problems; (2) recognition of signs and symptoms (being able to identify the onset of mental health problems); (3) identification of available options and treatments for mental health problems; and (4) knowledge and skills about strategies to help oneself and others who are experiencing mental health problems (Campos et al., 2022). In addition, Pribadi et al (2023) said that the measurement of mental health literacy is related to difficulties in knowledge and stigma of mental health problems (either in oneself or others), difficulties in seeking professional help related to mental health problems, difficulties in using self-strategies for effective actions to deal with mental health problems.

Based on the findings above, to understanding how students manage their mental health while at university is more important than ever, as more students are experiencing poor mental health and need support from universities as a preventive and promotive measure (Fatmawaty et al., 2024; Gorczynski & Sims-Schouten, 2024). Meanwhile, especially at Tadulako University there is no database of mental health literacy, a preventive and promotive model of mental health literacy for students. In this study, it will reveal mental health literacy in Tadulako University students who adopt the opinion of Pribadi et al. (2023) about measuring mental health literacy which consists of 3 factors, namely; (1) knowledge and stigma towards mental health; (2) seeking professional help related to mental health problems; (3) using effective self-skill strategies to deal with mental health problems.

Previous research has confirmed that college students' mental health literacy is influenced by various demographic factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity, and level of education (Naal et al., 2022; Seboka et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Although mental health literacy has been widely studied in the context of these factors, research focusing on determining risk groups based on differences in mental health literacy at the study program level is limited. In fact, each study program at university can have different student characteristics, both in terms of academic pressure, curriculum demands, and how students perceive mental health problems. Furthermore, the research is needed to

understand how differences in mental health literacy among students from different study programs can affect their vulnerability to mental health problems, and to design more specific and targeted interventions.

Based on the problems previously described, the purpose of this study is to identify risk groups based on differences in the level of mental health literacy of students in 14 programs study of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University. By paying attention to differences in mental health literacy in various study programs, the expected of this research can provide a clearer groups picture of students who have low of knowledge about mental health, as well as groups who are more at risk of experiencing mental disorders. The findings of this study are expected to be basis for designing more targeted educational programs to increasing understanding of mental health, and providing more effective support for students, especially in the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Tadulako University.

METHODS

This study uses a cross-sectional study approach. in the research, data collection is only done once in certain period of time. The object of study was new students of 14 FKIP undergraduate programs study at Tadulako University in academic year between 2024 and 2025, the total of population research is 2206 peoples of male and female. The sampling technique used quota sampling with the target sample of 30% or 662 people from the population of new students in 14 undergraduate study programs at FKIP Tadulako University, in academic year between 2024 and 2025.

This research procedure begins with distributing mental health literacy questionnaires using google forms with informed consent to the entire research population of 2206 new students in 14 FKIP Undergraduate Programs Study at Tadulako University in academic year between 2024 and 2025. The period of distributing and returning questionnaires for 3 months (August 22, 2024 - October 17, 2024) was considered as respondents involved in the study.

The instrument or measuring tool used was the mental health literacy questionnaire adopted from (Pribadi et al., 2023). The mental health literacy questionnaire consists of 33 items with 4 alternative Likert-scale options (from 1 = strongly disagree, to 4 = strongly agree). The total score of the mental health literacy questionnaire (global score), indicates a higher level of mental health literacy. The global score for the 33 items of the mental health literacy questionnaire ranged from 33 to 132. Furthermore, the average mental health literacy score was categorized into 4 categories, namely, Excellent; Good; Fair; Deficient (see Table 1).

Table 1. Categories of Mental health Literacy Score

Score	Category
132-120	Excellent
120-108	Good
108-96	Fair
<96	Deficient

The internal consistency global score of the mental health literacy questionnaire had a satisfactory Cronbach's Alpha value ($\alpha=0.821$). There was a significant difference in the global score of the mental health literacy questionnaire ($p\text{-value}=<0.001$) based on the difference between proximity to people with mental health problems and proximity to people with no health problems.

The data analysis technique is a descriptive statistical analysis of the description of mental health literacy in new students of 14 FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training) Undergraduate Study Programs, Tadulako University in academic year between 2024 and 2025. While, the ANOVA test is

used to see differences and comparisons of Mental Health Literacy of new students in 14 FKIP undergraduate study programs at Tadulako University in academic year between 2024 and 2025.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The implementation of data collection for 3 months from August 22, 2024 to October 17, 2024. Through the google form link, the mental health literacy questionnaire was distributed to 2206 new students in academic year between 2024 and 2025 for 14 undergraduate programs study at FKIP Tadulako University, from those new students the number of questionnaire mental health literacy respondent are netted or returned with the help of google form was 730 (33.09%) new students which amount exceeds the planned target. While the target sample of new students at Tadulako University is only 662 (30%).

The characteristics of respondent from 730 new students in academic year between 2024 and 2025 spread across 14 undergraduate programs study at FKIP Tadulako University who were netted based on age between 17-21 years, 133 were male and 597 were female. This finding shows that the distribution of respondents based on gender, the participation rate of respondent's female gender who are netted is greater than the participation rate of respondent's male gender (see table 2).

Table 2. Characteristics of Samples or Respondents by Gender

Characteristic	n	f	%
Male	730	133	18
Female	730	597	82

Furthermore, the distribution of respondents based on the Undergraduate Program Study at FKIP Tadulako University. The Undergraduate Program Study of Biology Education has the highest level in participation of respondents with a total of percentage at 82.88% which is calculated from 146 new student in academic year between 2024 and 2025. While the Undergraduate Program Study of History Education has the lowest level of respondent participation at 13.08% which is calculated from 130 new student in academic year between 2024 and 2025 in this Study Program (see table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of Samples or Respondents Based on Study Program

Study Program	Population	Sample	Percentage
Guidance and Counseling	151	109	72,19
Indonesian Language and Literature Education	200	53	26,50
English Education	248	60	24,19
Biology Education	146	121	82,88
Physics Education	129	33	25,58
Geography Education	145	39	26,90
Early Childhood Teacher Education	127	59	46,46
Elementary School Teacher Education	252	63	25,00
Science Education	68	24	35,29
Physical Education Health and Recreation	202	44	21,78
Chemistry Education	132	50	37,88
Mathematics Education	148	37	25,00
Pancasila and Citizenship Education	128	21	16,41
History Education	130	17	13,08
Total	2206	730	33,09

The description of mental health literacy of new students in academic year between 2024 and 2025 spread across 14 undergraduate FKIP study programs at Tadulako University is in the Less category of 317 people or 43.43%, enough of 359 people or 49.18% while only 7.12% are classified as Good, and 0.27% are classified as Excellent (see table 4).

Table 4. Categories of Mental Health Literacy in the Sample or Respondents

Category	Average score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	132-120	2	0,27
Good	120-108	52	7,12
Simply	108-96	359	49,18
Less	<96	317	43,43
Total		n=730	100

Differences in Mental Health Literacy between S1 Study Programs

Differences in Mental Health Literacy of Study Program S1 FKIP Students of Tadulako University are shown in table 5. Of the 14 FKIP S1 Study Programs at Tadulako University, the skewness value is between -2 to +2, so it can be said to have normal data. The normality of the data means that the Mental Health Literacy of students in each S1 FKIP Study Program at Tadulako University has a positive difference.

Furthermore, to see whether the significance of students' Mental Health Literacy in each undergraduate study program at FKIP Tadulako University has a positive difference, by comparing with the significance level of t-value <0.001 , there is a significant difference in students' Mental Health Literacy in each undergraduate study program at FKIP Tadulako University. The findings show that the undergraduate study programs of Biology Education, Physics Education, Early Childhood Teacher Education, Elementary School Teacher Education significantly have a positive difference in students' Mental Health Literacy (see table 5).

Table 5. Differences in Mental Health Literacy for Each Study Program

Study Program	n	Mean	SD	Skewness
Guidance and Counseling	109	97,72	6,49	0,17
Indonesian Language and Literature Education	53	95,40	6,11	0,43
English Education	60	97,57	5,83	0,38
Biology Education	121	97,66	6,71	0,19
Physics Education	33	96,58	8,14	-0,17
Geography Education	39	94,46	12,08	-3,56
Early Childhood Teacher Education	59	98,83	8,70	1,98
Elementary School Teacher Education	63	97,33	6,49	0,12
Science Education	24	96,54	5,54	0,51
Physical Education Health and Recreation	44	97,95	7,03	0,69
Chemistry Education	50	98,88	6,14	0,35
Mathematics Education	37	95,78	5,79	-0,75
Pancasila and Citizenship Education	21	97,33	6,49	0,12
History Education	17	95,76	4,78	-0,08

Comparison of Mental Health Literacy between S1 Study Programs

The table 6. shows that, the comparison of students' Mental Health Literacy between the Undergraduate Guidance and Counseling Study Program ($p=0.10$) and the Undergraduate English

Education Study Program ($p=0.001$); Biology Education ($p=.000$); Early Childhood Education ($p=.000$); Physical Education and Recreation ($p=0.001$); Chemistry Education ($p=0.000$); Elementary School Teacher Education ($p=0.003$); Natural Science Education ($p=0.075$); Pancasila and Citizenship Education ($p=0.030$) are still better when compared to the Guidance and Counseling Undergraduate Study Program.

For the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program ($p=0.39$); Mathematics Education ($p=0.227$); History Education ($p=0.330$) shows that the Mental Health Literacy of the students Guidance and Counseling Undergraduate Study Program is still better than three others undergraduate study programs. For the undergraduate study program of Physics Education ($p=0.10$) is comparable to the undergraduate study program of Guidance and Counseling ($p=0.10$).

Table 6. Comparison of Mental Health Literacy of Undergraduate Study Program

Study Program	Mean Diff	t-value	df	p-value
Guidance and Counseling	97,72	0.394	134	0.10
Indonesian Language and Literature Education	97,72	0.032	52	0.39
English Education	95,40	0.014	59	0.001
Biology Education	97,57	0.000	120	.000
Physics Education	97,66	0.000	32	0.10
Geography Education	96,58	0.003	38	0.91
Early Childhood Teacher Education	94,46	0.001	58	.000
Elementary School Teacher Education	98,83	0.000	62	0.003
Science Education	97,33	0.272	23	0.075
Physical Education Health and Recreation	96,54	0.001	43	0.001
Chemistry Education	97,95	0.006	49	0.000
Mathematics Education	98,88	0.126	36	0.227
Pancasila and Citizenship Education	95,78	0.075	20	0.030
History Education	97,33	0.615	16	0.330

Discussion

Descriptive statistics of the research results show that the level of mental health literacy in new students spread across 14 FKIP undergraduate study programs in Tadulako University at 49.18% Respondents in the Sufficient category. In contrast to the research results (Seboka et al., 2022b) which shows that the level of Mental Health Literacy of the students is still low and inadequate. However, the results of this study also found that 43.43% of respondents were in the insufficient or inadequate category.

From a quantitative perspective, the percentage of mental health literacy at 43.43% respondents in the deficient category is large, and this figure is quite alarming. This means that students need to be supported in developing sustainable strategies to manage their mental health. (Peach, 2023b) Suggests to the services and support in universities are heavily influenced by the increasing demand for support arising from high levels of poor student mental health. Tadulako University is still limited in providing mental health services and support for students. Based on these findings, it is urgent for Tadulako University to develop mental health services and support for students. One of them is a student mental health improvement program as a promotive and preventive measure.

Interventions to improve student mental health are needed. The findings found that 14 FKIP undergraduate study programs at Tadulako University had a positive difference in student mental health literacy (Skewness = 2 to +2). This difference certainly means that there are differences in the

level of mental health literacy of FKIP students at Tadulako University. This difference is certainly related to the good and bad mental health literacy between FKIP Tadulako University. To see more details, this study found that the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program ($p = 0.39$); Mathematics Education ($p = 0.227$); History Education ($p = 0.330$), Undergraduate Study Program in Physics Education ($p = 0.10$), Undergraduate Study Program in Guidance and Counseling ($p = 0.10$) showed that the level of Mental Health Literacy of the bottom 5 students from 14 undergraduate study programs of FKIP Tadulako University. In line with recent research conducted by (Miles et al., 2024) found that mental health literacy is significantly different between majors. Specifically, students who majored in accounting, nursing, business, biology in the category had significantly lower mental health literacy scores compared to the majors with the highest scores, namely psychology.

The results found that students in the Guidance and Counseling Undergraduate Study Program who studied the types of psychology, such as counseling psychology, mental health, abnormal psychology are actually among the 5 undergraduate study programs with the lowest average score of mental health literacy out of 14 undergraduate study programs investigated at FKIP Tadulako University. In contrast (Miles et al., 2024) found that students in the Department of Psychology Studies achieved an average score of psychology majors ($M = 65.2\%$) was the highest among all majors investigated. This probably due to the fact that the students of the Bachelor of Guidance and Counseling Study Program investigated are new students who have not studied the fields of counseling psychology, mental health, abnormal psychology.

The findings of students in 5 undergraduate study programs with the lowest level of mental health literacy are referred to as vulnerable groups from 14 undergraduate study programs at FKIP Tadulako University. Limited professional resources (14 lecturers with a background in Psychology / Guidance and Counseling FKIP Tadulako University), the intervention strategy is based on a priority scale based on study programs that have the characteristics of vulnerable groups, namely; students in the Indonesian Language and Literature Education study program, Mathematics Education, History Education, Physics Education S1 Study Program, and Guidance and Counseling S1 Study Program.

This study has several limitations due to its cross-sectional design, such as selection bias. Increased diversity should be carried out in future studies, because this study only involved participants from 14 undergraduate study programs in the FKIP environment at Tadulako University. In the future, the inclusion of more diverse sample includes undergraduate study programs in 8 faculties at Tadulako University. In addition, the participation of students sampled has a very high percentage of women (82%) compared to men (12%). Participation of students sampled based on the undergraduate Biology Education Study Program reached (80.88%) compared to History Education (13.08%) which may limit generalizability, and some Study Programs have small sample sizes which may limit generalizability.

CONCLUSION

The level of mental health literacy in FKIP students at Tadulako University for the Lack category is 43.43%. This percentage certainly quite alarming so that it becomes an urgency for Tadulako University to improve student mental health literacy as a promotive and preventive step. At the level of intervention implementation, the research suggests that the priority scale is aimed at students in Study Programs categorized as vulnerable groups, namely; Study Programs for Indonesian Language and Literature Education, Mathematics Education, History Education, Physics Education, and Guidance and Counseling.

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