

# Youth Help-Seeking Intention During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Comparison of Infection Rate in Living Area

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**ABSTRACT:** The aim of this study was to compare help-seeking intentions among youth living in areas with different Covid-19 infection rates during the pandemic. Data was collected using demographical questions and the General Help-seeking Questionnaire from a sample of 1,340 adolescents (971 females, 369 males) between August 11th and 21st, 2020. Of these participants, 423 (122 females, 301 males) were eligible for analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis and ANOVA. The results showed that youth living in areas with low Covid-19 infection rates had higher help-seeking intentions than those living in areas with high infection rates or no Covid-19 cases. These findings suggest that the rate of Covid-19 infection in an individual's living area may impact their help-seeking intentions during the pandemic. Further research is needed to fully understand the factors that contribute to help-seeking intentions during times of crisis and to develop interventions to support individuals in need of help. It is also important to consider the potential impact of other factors, such as access to resources and support systems, on help-seeking intentions among youth.

**KEYWORDS:** help-seeking intention, infection area, pandemic, youth

## INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic has an impact on all parties, not least on adolescents. The study results (Długosz, 2021) showed that among all age categories, the highest covid-19 mental health problems were observed among the youngest Americans aged 18-29. The majority of respondents experienced anxiety and depression (Kadafi et al., 2021). The research confirms that the younger generation is struggling to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and related difficulties. Furthermore (Rodriguez-Quintana et al., 2021) states that the pandemic has significantly contributed to anxiety and depression due to students' limited access to mental health services. Many of the most vulnerable students take it. Other problems include increased stress related to financial uncertainty, the risk of exposure to COVID-19, and social isolation (Courtney et al., 2020). Some teenagers also feel the pain or death of a loved one. The covid-19 pandemic has an impact on all parties, not least on adolescents. The study results (Długosz, 2021) showed that among all age categories, the highest covid-19 mental health problems were observed among the youngest Americans aged 18-29. The majority of respondents experienced anxiety and depression. The research confirms that the younger generation is struggling to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and related difficulties. Furthermore (Rodriguez-Quintana et al., 2021) states that the pandemic has significantly contributed to anxiety and depression due to students' limited access to mental health services. Many of the most vulnerable

students take it. Other problems include increased stress related to financial uncertainty, the risk of exposure to COVID-19, and social isolation (Courtney et al., 2020). Some teenagers also feel the pain or death of a loved one.

The limitations of health services are not the main reason, but how trust in health services itself affects a person's mental health. This is an illustration that the issue of the covid-19 pandemic affects a person's mental health, especially stress and depression, health workers need to take initial steps to provide treatment so that a person has stable mental health (Bouabdallaoui et al., 2021). Health workers and therapists have contributed to the Covid problem but more in high-income countries than in low-income countries (Murphy et al., 2021). It is explained here that seeking help from health workers does affect mental health in a country, especially countries affected by COVID-19 with mental health as something that must be maintained. Stable mental health as a sign that a person has power over himself by maintaining emotions and can reduce anxiety so as not to stress and depression (Kadafi et al., 2021; Pant & Sharma, 2021).

The issue of the COVID-19 pandemic makes it seem real, namely a picture of anxiety about issues that greatly affect a person's mental health which has an impact on trust in seeking help. This becomes serious when a person aims to be healthy or recover but there are several things that influence a person not to get help, some things such as financial difficulties, stigma against this disease to the factor of suicide, this has become a major issue in the United States as an effort to seek help. assistance in the midst of this pandemic issue (Lueck, 2021). In certain cases, for example, people with certain disorders, say having an eating disorder, anxiety and depression in Canada are very influential in the crisis period during the COVID-19 period (Richardson et al., 2020).

Education is one of the sectors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, how do teenagers or students carry out distance learning or online learning as well. How online learning patterns have a distinct impression for students, especially in the field of mental health, such as research conducted by Cheng et al. (2021) that during the COVID-19 pandemic that 1595 adolescents in China there was a significant relationship between stress depression appeared in engagement education during the pandemic and leading to suicidal ideation, it is clear that it indirectly raises several problems in the mental health of adolescents who are affected by learning patterns during the covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, what about efforts to seek help during the pandemic for adolescents.

For adolescents, the behavior of delaying getting help from health workers leads to self-harm behavior which in the future raises suspicions of suicidal behavior (Lustig et al., 2021) the need for support for adolescents in the process of seeking help. Mental health is something that must be taken care of by teenagers during the covid-19 pandemic where the welfare of teenagers is the goal to maintain their mentality during the covid-19 pandemic, why teenagers are very vulnerable to mental health disorders and how do they seek health assistance during the covid-19 pandemic, adolescents and adults have different ways of seeking help during the covid-19 pandemic, but adults have a significant relationship to adolescent well-being for maintaining mental health during the covid-19 pandemic including seeking help (de Abreu et al., 2021).

While prior research focus on the differences of youth and adult help-seeking (de Abreu et al., 2021), general population intention to seek help (Maba et al., 2021), alcohol user (Balhara et al., 2020), and limited to online help-seeking (Luo et al., 2020). In current study we focus to investigate help-seeking in a specific population called youth which living in various area such as green (no infection), yellow (low infection rate), and red (high infection rate) area. We aimed to compare youth help-seeking during covid-19 based on infection rate in their residence.

## METHODS

### Procedures and Participants

We used data collected by (Maba et al., 2021) during August 11-21, 2020 through online questionnaires. The participants involved are 1,350 (Female = 977, Male = 373). We only analyze the participants which meet the criteria of youth. There is no universally agreed international definition of the youth age group. For statistical purposes, however, the United Nations—without prejudice to any other definitions made by Member States—defines ‘youth’ as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. After initial examination of the data, we only used the data from 423 (Age 15 to 24;  $M = 19$ ;  $SD = 2.37$ ) participants which meet the criteria of youth. 28,84% of participants were female and 71.16 were male. Only 14.89% were college students, the majority (85.34%) of the participants were school students (see table 2).

### Instruments

Demographical questions such as gender, age, occupation, and living in infected area are used while the General Help-seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) was used to investigate the help-seeking. The GHSQ consists of 11 items to determine the tendency to seek help from various sources (see table 1). COVID-19 pandemic phrases were used to suit the research context (Wilson et al., 2005). The instruction goes like this *“Jika Anda mengalami masalah emosional seperti takut atau cemas selama pandemi COVID-19, kira-kira seberapa besar kemungkinan kamu mencari bantuan dari sumber berikut ini? Bantuan dapat diberikan melalui tatap muka atau dalam jaringan. Mohon berikan jawaban Anda dengan memilih angka berikut (1 = sangat tidak mungkin sampai dengan 7= sangat mungkin) yang paling sesuai untuk keadaan yang Anda alami”*. The higher score indicates higher intention to seek help. The items used in this study must have  $r > .40$  (Loiacono et al., 2002; Ladhari, 2010). One item deleted due to bellow the loading factor was *“Saya enggan mencari bantuan dari siapapun”* ( $r = -.79$ ). Thus, ten items remained used in current study (see table 1). In current study, the reliability is good ( $\alpha = .865$ ).

Table 1. Results of validity test using Corrected Item Total Correlation

No	Items	M	SD	r
1	<i>Pasangan (suami/istri atau pacar)</i>	3,18	2,19	.458
2	<i>Teman</i>	4,58	1,92	.488
3	<i>Orang tua</i>	5,71	1,94	.528
4	<i>Keluarga (bukan orang tua)</i>	4,43	2,07	.584
5	<i>Ahli kesehatan mental (konselor, psikiater, dan psikolog)</i>	4,57	2,17	.620
6	<i>Pertolongan melalui sambungan telepon</i>	4,42	2,06	.574
7	<i>Dokter</i>	4,97	2,12	.558
8	<i>Guru</i>	3,84	2,02	.659
9	<i>Pemuka agama (kyai, ulama, pastor dsj)</i>	3,90	2,11	.634
10	<i>Pekerja sosial</i>	3,47	1,93	.596

### Data Analysis

We used both descriptive and inferential statistic to analyze the data. Firstly, to obtain the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of demographical data and help-seeking we used descriptive analysis. Secondly, we used ANOVA to determine the differences between three groups (one group for no infection, two group for low and high infection area).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The participants involved in this study were aged 15-24 ( $N = 423$ ;  $M = 19$ ;  $SD = 2.37$ ). This involvement is based on the age category determined by the United Nations for youth. 28,84% of participants were female and 71.16 were male. Only 14.89% were college students, the majority (85.34%) of the participants were school students (see table 2).

Table 2. Demographic information

Variable	Category	Frequency	
		<i>N</i>	%
Sex	Male	122	28.84
	Female	301	71.16
Students	College	63	14.89
	School	361	85.34

Prior to the ANOVA test, we applied two prerequisite tests, namely normality and homogeneity tests. The test results show that the data is normally distributed ( $p = .426$ ) and homogeneous ( $p = .829$ ) after data transformation using SQRT ( $k-x$ ).

Table 3. Results of ANOVA test with data transformed using SQRT( $k-x$ )

Area	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
				Lower	Upper			
No Infection	178	4.47	1.44	4.25	4.68			
Low Infection	145	4.70	1.31	4.49	4.92	3.346	2	< .05
High Infection	100	4.24	1.43	3.95	4.52			

Table 3 showed that help-seeking of adolescence who living in not, low, and high infected area ( $F(2) = 3.346$ ,  $p < .05$ ) are significantly different. The low infected area showed highest help-seeking intention ( $M = 4.70$ ;  $SD = 1.31$ ) followed by no infection area ( $M = 4.47$ ;  $SD = 1.44$ ), while high infection area showed lowest help-seeking intention ( $M = 4.24$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ).

### Discussion

The results of this study suggest that young people in Indonesia who live in areas with low rates of COVID-19 infection are more likely to seek help in response to the pandemic than those who live in areas with high rates of infection or no reported cases. This finding is consistent with previous research on help-seeking behavior, which has shown that individuals may be more likely to seek help in response to stressors when they perceive a lower level of threat (Gureje et al., 2015).

Similar studies have found that access to resources and perceived threat level can influence help-seeking behavior. For example, a study by Kapoor et al. (2012) found that individuals with greater access to resources were more likely to seek help for mental health issues. There are several theories that can help explain why access to resources and perceived threat level may influence help-seeking behavior. For example, the self-determination theory suggests that individuals are more likely to seek help when they feel competent and autonomous in their decision-making (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When individuals have access to resources, they may feel more competent and capable of seeking help, leading to higher rates of help-seeking behavior. On the other hand, if individuals feel threatened or uncertain about their ability to manage a problem, they may be less likely to seek help.

Additionally, the social cognitive theory proposes that individuals are more likely to seek help when they have positive attitudes and perceptions about help-seeking (Bandura, 1997). When individuals have access to resources, they may have more positive attitudes about seeking help because they feel more capable of accessing the necessary support. On the other hand, if individuals feel threatened or uncertain about their situation, they may have negative attitudes about seeking help, which could lead to lower rates of help-seeking behavior. Overall, it is clear that access to resources and perceived threat level can significantly influence help-seeking behavior. It is important for individuals and organizations to be aware of these factors and to provide support and resources to those who may be in need.

There are several possible explanations for the findings of this study. In addition to the explanation provided in the original text (that individuals in areas with low rates of infection may feel more able to access resources and support), it is also possible that those in areas with low rates of infection may feel more socially connected and supported, leading to an increased willingness to seek help. Alternatively, individuals in areas with high rates of infection may feel overwhelmed by the severity of the situation and feel unable to reach out for assistance.

There are several ways that interventions aimed at increasing help-seeking behavior among young people in Indonesia could consider the access to resources and perceived threat level in the local community. For example, interventions could focus on providing young people with information about the resources that are available to them, such as mental health clinics, hotlines, and online support groups. This could help to increase their knowledge about the options that are available to them and make it easier for them to access the support they need.

In addition to providing information about resources, interventions could also focus on addressing the perceived threat level in the local community. This could involve working with community leaders, schools, and other organizations to promote a culture of support and acceptance for help-seeking. By reducing stigma and promoting a positive attitude towards seeking help, interventions could encourage more young people to reach out for support when they are facing mental health challenges.

It is important to note that the study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. For example, there may be a potential for self-selection bias in the sample, meaning that the results may not be representative of the larger population. Additionally, the results may not be generalizable to other populations, as the findings may be specific to the context of Indonesia. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider the limitations of the study and to conduct further research in order to better understand the factors that influence help-seeking behavior among young people in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that adolescents living in areas with low Covid-19 infection rates were more likely to seek help for mental health issues related to the pandemic than those living in areas with high infection rates or no Covid-19 cases. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the influence of community infection rates on help-seeking behavior among young people during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further research is needed to better understand the specific factors that contribute to differences in help-seeking behavior among adolescents in different community infection contexts. This information could be used to develop targeted interventions to increase help-seeking behavior and support the mental health needs of young people during times of crisis.

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