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**Stress, anxiety, and depression among junior high school students  
in Purwokerto, Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Adolescence is a critical phase characterized by rapid physical, psychological, and intellectual development. Adolescents often exhibit a high level of curiosity, boldness, and impulsive behavior, which, if not properly directed, can lead to physical and mental health problems. The impact of mental health disorders in adolescence is far-reaching, affecting not only the current quality of life but also the future potential of individuals and society.

**Purpose:** To determine the level stress, anxiety, and depression among junior high school students in Purwokerto, Indonesia,

**Method:** Quantitative research with descriptive survey type to explore the mental health condition of adolescents with a focus on stress, anxiety, and depression levels. This study was conducted at Telkom Junior High School, Purwokerto. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling and a sample of 114 respondents was obtained according to the inclusion criteria that had been set, namely adolescents aged 11-13 years and in grade 7. Data collection was carried out using an online questionnaire adapted from a validated psychological scale, namely the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10).

**Results:** The majority of respondents' age data is 12 years old, as many as 83 respondents (72.8%) with an average value and standard deviation of  $12.219 \pm 0.475$ , in the age range of 11-13 years. Most respondents are male, as many as 70 respondents (61.4%). Most respondents experience moderate stress, as many as 52 respondents (45.6%), moderate anxiety, as many as 43 respondents (37.7%), and the normal category at the level of depression, as many as 83 respondents (72.8%).

**Conclusion:** Emotional disorders, such as stress, anxiety, and depression are common among students. Sociodemographic factors, including age and gender significantly influence students' mental health. Male students are more susceptible to stress and anxiety, while female students are more susceptible to major depression due to more complex biological and psychological factors.

**Suggestion:** Emotional disorders, such as stress, anxiety, and depression that occur in adolescents do need to be considered by various parties, especially parents who have more time with their children. In addition, schools must create a comfortable school environment and implement school-based mental health programs.

**Keywords:** Adolescence; Anxiety; Depression; Stress.

**INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a critical phase marked by rapid growth in physical, psychological, and intellectual dimensions. While the World Health Organization defines adolescents as individuals aged 10 to 19

years, regulations in Indonesia extend the age range of adolescents to 24 years, reflecting the lack of universal agreement on the boundaries of adolescence. Nevertheless, there is a common

understanding that adolescence is a preparatory stage for adult maturity (World Health Organization, 2018; Fatkhiyah, Masturoh, & Atmoko, 2020; Avedissian & Alayan, 2021).

Adolescents often exhibit high curiosity, boldness, and impulsive behavior, which if not properly directed, can lead to physical and mental health problems (Firdaus & Marsudi, 2021). In this context, adolescent mental health becomes an important factor, especially in overcoming challenges, such as peer pressure, violence, and stress originating from the school and family environment (Addy, Agbozo, Runge-Ranzinger, & Grys, 2021).

According to the World Health Organization, mental health is a condition when an individual is able to cope with the pressures of life, work productively, and contribute to society (World Health Organization, 2014). However, a report from the Global Health Data Exchange shows that in Indonesia, one in ten individuals suffer from mental health disorders with the prevalence of mental disorders in adolescents aged over 15 years reaching 9.8% (Global Health Data Exchange, 2017). The stigma surrounding mental health often makes adolescents reluctant to seek help, so that the problems they experience are not resolved (Syamaun, 2019).

The impact of mental health disorders in adolescents is very broad, not only affecting current quality of life, but also potentially affecting the lives of individuals and communities in the future (Jonsson, Alaie, Löfgren Willeus, Zander, Marschik, Coghill, & Bölte, 2017). Adolescents with poor mental health can experience a decline in quality of life and can affect productivity and social relationships in adulthood. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence adolescent mental health is essential, including genetic predisposition, physical health, and family support (Burke, McCormick, Pellis, & Lukkes, 2017).

Given the increasing number of cases of adolescent mental health problems in Indonesia, this study focuses on anxiety, stress, and depression to raise awareness of the importance of mental health, recognize early signs of mental disorders, and promote emotional balance among school-age adolescents. A better understanding of mental health aims to support adolescent resilience, foster an

environment that supports their development, and improve their overall psychological well-being (Rosnawanty, Sholihat, Saryomo, Restiana, Nissa, Nugraha, & Rispani, 2022).

Women are more susceptible to mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety due to hormonal and social factors. Hormonal changes, especially those associated with menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause can affect women's moods and increase the risk of mental disorders. In addition, women are more likely to experience social and psychological pressures related to gender roles that require them to manage emotions and express feelings, which can sometimes increase the risk of stress (Wieczorek, Targonskaya, & Maslowski, 2023). On the other hand, social expectations for men to avoid showing emotional vulnerability can also cause them to suppress or ignore distress that can potentially lead to serious psychotic disorders. The social stigma surrounding mental health also makes men reluctant to seek help until their condition worsens. The reality is that both women and men have their own challenges when it comes to mental health, so it is important to raise awareness for each individual to recognize early signs of mental disorders, and promote emotional balance (Salk, Hyde, & Abramson, 2017).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative design with a descriptive survey to explore the mental health conditions of adolescents with a focus on stress, anxiety, and depression levels. The study was conducted on July 23-24, 2024 to all 7th grade students aged 11-13 years at Telkom Junior High School, Purwokerto. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling and a sample of 114 respondents.

Data collection was conducted by distributing online questionnaire instruments to respondents. The questionnaire used was adapted from validated psychological scales, namely the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) and the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10). The DASS scale consists of 42 items divided into three subscales, namely 15 items for stress conditions, 14 items for anxiety, and 13 items for depression. The assessment is grouped according to the Likert scale: "never" (score 0), "sometimes" (score 1), "often" (score 2), and "very

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often" (score 3). Furthermore, the scale is classified into four categories, namely normal if the score is 0-16, mild if the score is 16-20, moderate if the score is 21-25, severe if the score is 26-29, and very severe means the score is >29. The questionnaire showed strong validity ( $r$  value >  $r$  table value 0.5140) and reliability with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.6 for all respondents (stress = 0.869, anxiety = 0.854, depression = 0.859), indicating consistency and dependability.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, with univariate analysis used to determine the frequency and percentage of each variable. In the procedure, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of the respondents' data and obtained written consent from the school and parental consent. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time during the study.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

**Table Distribution Characteristics of Respondents (N=114)**

| Variables                     | Results                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Age (n/%)</b>              |                             |
| (Mean $\pm$ SD)(Range)(Years) | (12.219 $\pm$ 0.475)(11-13) |
| 11                            | 3/2.6                       |
| 12                            | 83/72.8                     |
| 13                            | 28/24.6                     |
| <b>Gender (n/%)</b>           |                             |
| Female                        | 44/38.6                     |
| Male                          | 70/61.4                     |
| <b>Stress Level (n/%)</b>     |                             |
| Normal                        | 27/23.7                     |
| Moderate                      | 52/45.6                     |
| Severe                        | 21/18.4                     |
| Very Severe                   | 14/12.3                     |
| <b>Anxiety Level (n/%)</b>    |                             |
| Normal                        | 30/26.3                     |
| Moderate                      | 43/37.7                     |
| Severe                        | 29/25.4                     |
| Very Severe                   | 12/10.5                     |
| <b>Depression Level (n/%)</b> |                             |
| Normal                        | 83/72.8                     |
| Moderate                      | 23/20.2                     |
| Severe                        | 4/3.5                       |
| Very Severe                   | 4/3.5                       |

Based on the table above, the majority of respondents' age data is 12 years old, as many as 83 respondents (72.8%) with an average value and standard deviation of 12,219  $\pm$  0.475, in the age range of 11-13 years. Most respondents are male, as many as 70 respondents (61.4%). Most respondents experience moderate stress, as many as 52 respondents (45.6%), moderate anxiety, as many as 43 respondents (37.7%), and the normal category at the level of depression, as many as 83 respondents (72.8%).

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## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, it is known that the majority of respondents are 12 years old, namely 82 people (72.8%). Adolescents are individuals aged 10 to 19 years. At this stage, adolescents have a high curiosity, a critical nature, and impulsive behavior which if not directed properly can result in physical and mental health disorders (Firdaus & Marsudi, 2021). This is in line with previous research which showed that the majority of respondents were aged 12-15 years (Hidayat, Nurbaya, & Darmawan, 2024).

The number of male respondents in this study was greater than female respondents, which was 70 (61.4%). In addition, gender differences were found in the severity of mental health disorders. Male students were found to be more susceptible to stress and anxiety. Previous studies have also identified hormonal mechanisms (including the conversion of testosterone to cortisol) as factors that influence emotional balance and mental health in males (Pardamean & Lazuardi, 2019). However, this study also found that females were more likely to experience major depression (6.8% females compared to 1.4% males). A study conducted at a junior high school in Denpasar, Bali revealed that male adolescents experienced bullying more often than female adolescents, especially physical bullying. This is one of the factors why males are more likely to experience stress and anxiety because of the school environment they get (Kardiana & Westa, 2015).

Research findings reveal that emotional disorders, including stress, anxiety, and depression are widely experienced by students, mainly influenced by puberty and hormonal changes. The results of the study showed that 45.6% of students experienced moderate stress levels, mainly triggered by long study hours that lasted from morning to evening. This is in line with previous studies which found that long school hours in a full-day learning system can cause student fatigue (Soeli, Yusuf, & Lakoro, 2021). Prolonged stress can negatively impact students' physical and mental health, leading to fatigue, anxiety, and memory impairment. This study highlights the significant role of the full-day school system in increasing stress and anxiety levels among students (Sanford & Steiner, 2021).

This is in contrast to several previous studies that

showed higher levels of anxiety and depression among women (Farkhah & Ginanjar, 2024). The observed differences may be due to psychological and social factors, which intensify women's emotional responses compared to men. In addition, the relationship between neuroticism and a higher tendency towards depression in women (Umadiyan & Kalifia, 2024). The study's findings underscore the need for schools to adopt measures that can reduce stress and anxiety among students. Recommendations include revising the full-day school system to provide longer breaks or reduce learning hours, and implementing school-based mental health programs.

## CONCLUSION

Emotional disorders, such as stress, anxiety, and depression are common among students. Sociodemographic factors, including age and gender significantly influence students' mental health. Male students are more susceptible to stress and anxiety, while female students are more susceptible to major depression due to more complex biological and psychological factors.

## SUGGESTION

The mental condition of adolescents does need to be considered by various parties, especially parents who have more time with their children. In addition, schools must create a comfortable school environment, even though the school system is full day, schools can provide longer breaks or reduce study hours, and implement school-based mental health programs.

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