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Health Literacy Overview of Sriwijaya University Students

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic has caused behavioral changes in accessing information related to various health information. Previous studies show that the physical literacy of young adult university students is still inadequate. This study aims to describe the health literacy overview of Sriwijaya University students during the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 764 (M= 191; F= 573) and 17-34 year's old (19,22; ±1,76) students were participated in this study.This study used a cross sectional survei using the HLS-SQ10-IDN comprehensive health literacy questionnaire consists of 10 items measuring health literacy. The results show that the health literacy level of Sriwijaya University students during Covid-19 pandemic was good. The students could easily find information related to health, find out what medical action to take in the case of an emergency, and were aware of health threats. This study is limited to the general health literacy overview of Sriwijaya University students, future studies are suggested to examine several factors that may influence or associate to the health literacy of university students.

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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic has caused behavioral changes in accessing information related to various health information in order to find solutions related to the problems caused by the pandemic (Adelweis et al., 2021). This change causes a paradigm shift in accessing information from offline and online to mostly online. The abundance of information related ti the spread of corona virus, offline and online interactions, and public opinions conveyed on social media can be valuable sources of knowledge when analyzing the dynamics of the pandemic (Viroj et al., 2020). According to (Ifroh & Asrianti, 2020), the higher exposure of information through mass and non-mass media have a correlation in increasing the health literacy level and behavior to prevent Covid-19 of young adult.

A lot of information related to Covid-19 circulated on social media during this pandemic. Not all of the information is valid and reliable, thus making most people confused about which news or information is right or wrong. As a result, people have become ignorant of information or recommendations related to the spread of the Covid-19 prevention. This condition could be the trigger of public indiscipline health protocols implementation in Indonesia, so that the number of people affected by Covid-19 was getting higher. However, the spread of the Covid-19 can be prevented if people have good health literacy (Parmitasari, 2021).

Health literacy is a multidimensional concept that is considered a major concern in public health. WHO defines health literacy as cognitive and social skills that determine an individual's motivation and ability to access, understand and use information in ways that promote and maintain good health (Juvinyà-Canal et al., 2020). Health literacy describes a person's ability to carry out activities to understand and use the information needed to make health-related decisions (Nutbeam, 2015). According to (Rababah et al., 2019), this concept is still often ignored in research, and the evidence regarding health literacy in students is still limited. While according to (Sarhan et al., 2021), universities are the starting point for humans to become adults and begin to take responsibility for their own health, so understanding health literacy level of the students is important.

The health literacy knowledge needs to be possessed by university students, because the students are expected to be able to perpetuate and develop healthy living behaviors, either for themselves, their families or communities (Alfan & Wahjuni, 2020). However, previous studies show that the physical literacy of young adult university students is still inadequate so that they are not suitable to be the health promoters (Nurjanah et al., 2016; Sukys et al., 2017), moreover low health literacy even occurs in health major university students.

University students are a group of individuals who have high level of education which should have higher level of health literacy if compared to individuals with lower level of education. However, based on several studies that have been stated above, the health literacy level of university students has not been as expected. This generate further question about the health literacy level of Sriwijaya University students.

Sriwijaya University is the largest university in South East Asia. According to (Galamedia. Pikiran-Rakyat.com, 2021), Sriwijaya University has a land area of 712 hectares consisting of the Palembang and Indralaya campuses with 25.502 active students who spread over 119 departments. This study aims to describe the health literacy overview of Sriwijaya University students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

METHODS

This study used data from a cross sectional survei in Sriwijaya University using the HLS-SQ10-IDN comprehensive health literacy questionnaire in Indonesian version (Rachmani et al., 2019). The HLS-SQ10-IDN consists of 10 items measuring health literacy. The perceived difficulty of each item was rated on a 4 point Likert scale (1=very difficult, 2=difficult, 3=easy, and 4=very easy), with a possible lowest mean score of 1 and a possible highest meanscore of 4. Questions on the following were requested from the respondents during the survey: age (years), gender (male or female). The interviewers contacted the selected participants and provided the self-reported questionnaire which can be seen in **Table 1**.

Table 1. HLS-SQ10-IDN

On a scale from very easy to very difficult, how easy would you say it is to:
…find information about symptoms of illnesses that concern you?
…find out what to do in case of a medical emergency?
…judge how reliable health warnings are, such as smoking, low physical activity and drinking too much?

…judge which vaccinations you may need?
…decide how you can protect yourself from illness based on advice from family and friends?
…find out about activities (such as meditation, exercise, walking, Pilates, etc.) that are good for your mental well-being?
…find out about political changes (such as legislation, new medical examination methods, changes in government, restructuring of health services, etc.) that may affect health?
…understand advice on health from family members or friends?
…judge how where you live (such as your community, neighborhood) affects your health and well-being?
…make decisions to improve your health?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 764 Sriwijaya University students (M= 191; F= 573) participated in the study, with mean age of 19,2 (±1,76) years old.

Table 2. Result HLS-SQ10-IDN

Very Difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very Easy
2,23%	3,01%	70,16%	24,61%
2,75%	6,68%	67,28%	23,30%
2,09%	14,66%	66,23%	17,02%
2,49%	18,98%	63,74%	14,79%
2,62%	5,63%	72,51%	19,24%
3,01%	16,10%	60,60%	20,29%
1,83%	33,77%	59,29%	5,10%
6,54%	41,23%	46,07%	6,15%
2,36%	3,80%	60,60%	33,25%
2,75%	16,49%	63,48%	17,28%

The results show that the health literacy level of Sriwijaya University students during Covid-19 pandemic was good. This can be seen from how Sriwijaya University students could identify the factors that affect their health. The results of this study show that 35.60% of the students answered it is difficult or very difficult for them to understand about the factors of political change, new medical examination methods, changes in government, and restructuring of health services can affect their health. Moreover, 47.77% students answered that they hardly understand about any health advices from family members or friends.

Meanwhile, the results also show that Sriwijaya University students could easily find information related to their health (94.76%), find out what medical action to take in the case of an emergency (90.58%), and were aware of health threats toward themselves (83.25%). In addition, Sriwijaya University students were aware of the importance of the environment on their health (93.85%) and making decisions to improve their health (80.76%).

There are differences of the results from previous studies about health literacy in several universities in Indonesia. The results from (Nurjanah et al., 2016) show that the health literacy of Dian Nuswantoro University students was low, 93.9% of them were in limited health literacy level, while (Emilia & Wahjuni, 2020) show that 80.4% of Surabaya State University students were in high health literacy level. However, (Parmitasari, 2021) shows that there were health literacy differences in male and female university students in Semarang city. Although some of the students were in problematic or insufficient health literacy level, it appears that female university students in Semarang had better health literacy level than the male.

The differences in health literacy level of university students can be influenced by various factors. (Milufa & Wahjuni, 2020) state that there is a significant relationship between health literacy with the quality of life of university students, while (Kim & Oh, 2021) show that there is an indirect association between health literacy and health-promoting behaviors through social media use for health information, online health information-seeking behaviors, and self-care agency of students.

This study is limited to the general health literacy overview of Sriwijaya University students, so that several other factors were not investigated. However, future studies are suggested to examine several factors that may influence or associate to the health literacy of university students, such as health literacy differences in male and female students, between public and private university students, or in students of bigger or smaller universities.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that health literacy level of Sriwijaya University students during Covid-19 pandemic was good. The students could easily find information related to health, find out what medical action to take in the case of an emergency, and were aware of health threats. The students were also aware of the importance of the environment on their health and making decisi-

ons to improve their health. There are differences between this study and previous studies, so future studies are suggested to examine several factors that may influence or associate to the health literacy of university students.

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