

Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities in Mental Health Care for Adolescents in Urban Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

Masalah kesehatan mental di kalangan remaja di perkotaan Indonesia semakin memprihatinkan, diperburuk oleh urbanisasi dan faktor sosial budaya. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi tantangan dan peluang dalam perawatan kesehatan mental bagi remaja di perkotaan, khususnya di kota-kota seperti Jakarta, Surabaya, dan Bandung. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, menggabungkan survei kuantitatif terhadap 300 remaja dan wawancara kualitatif untuk mengidentifikasi prevalensi gangguan kesehatan mental dan hambatan dalam mengakses perawatan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan tingginya prevalensi kecemasan, depresi, dan stres, dengan perbedaan gender yang signifikan—perempuan melaporkan tingkat kecemasan dan depresi yang lebih tinggi. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi hambatan utama, termasuk stigma budaya, kurangnya kesadaran, dan terbatasnya akses terhadap layanan, terutama bagi mereka yang berasal dari latar belakang sosial ekonomi rendah. Meskipun intervensi yang ada menunjukkan hasil yang menjanjikan, intervensi tersebut belum cukup memadai dalam memenuhi kebutuhan spesifik remaja. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya program kesehatan mental berbasis komunitas yang peka gender dan peran potensial solusi digital dalam meningkatkan aksesibilitas dan mengurangi stigma. Studi ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi yang dapat ditindaklanjuti bagi para pembuat kebijakan, profesional kesehatan mental, dan pendidik untuk meningkatkan perawatan kesehatan mental remaja di perkotaan Indonesia.

Kata kunci: kesehatan mental remaja, perkotaan Indonesia, perawatan kesehatan mental, hambatan sosial budaya, intervensi digital

ABSTRACT

Mental health issues among adolescents in urban Indonesia are a growing concern, exacerbated by urbanization and socio-cultural factors. This research explores the challenges and opportunities in mental health care for adolescents in urban settings, specifically in cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys of 300 adolescents and qualitative interviews to identify the prevalence of mental health disorders and the barriers to accessing care. The findings reveal a high prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress, with significant gender differences—females reporting higher rates of anxiety and depression. The study also identifies key barriers, including cultural stigma, lack of awareness, and limited access to services, particularly for those from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds. While existing interventions show promise, they are insufficient in addressing the specific needs of adolescents. The research emphasizes the importance of gender-sensitive, community-based mental health programs and the potential role of digital solutions in improving accessibility and reducing stigma. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for policymakers, mental health professionals, and educators to enhance adolescent mental health care in urban Indonesia.

Keywords: *adolescent mental health, urban Indonesia, mental health care, socio-cultural barriers, digital interventions*

Introduction

Mental health disorders among adolescents have become a growing global concern. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) estimates that mental health conditions account for 13% of the global burden of disease, with anxiety, depression, and behavioral disorders particularly prevalent among adolescents. According to the Global Burden of Disease Study, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) for adolescents globally (Vos et al., 2019). In Indonesia, urban adolescents are increasingly affected by mental health challenges, compounded by urbanization, social pressure, and stigma surrounding mental illness.

Recent data reveal a worrying trend of adolescent mental health issues in Indonesia. A national survey in 2020 indicated that approximately 10 million Indonesian adolescents suffer from mental health disorders, with anxiety and depression being the most common diagnoses (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2020). Furthermore, a local study in urban Jakarta found that 30% of adolescents reported feeling overwhelmed by academic and social pressures, contributing to high rates of stress and depression (Suryaputri et al., 2020). These findings highlight a growing mental health crisis among the nation's youth, especially in urban settings.

Urban environments present unique challenges and opportunities for addressing adolescent mental health. Urbanization brings stressors—such as academic pressure, social media influences, and increased exposure to risky behaviors—and opportunities, such as better access to healthcare services and the potential for digital health interventions (Krug, 2020). As cities become more crowded and diverse, understanding the mental health needs of adolescents in these environments is crucial for developing effective care strategies.

A range of studies has addressed adolescent mental health in Indonesia, yet they often focus on specific aspects or demographics. Research shows that adolescents face substantial barriers to accessing care due to limited awareness and cultural stigma (Utami & Kartika, 2021), and that available services in urban areas are frequently underutilized because of fears of social exclusion or discrimination (Priyanto et al., 2019). To frame how multilevel determinants shape both risk and service use, this study adopts Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979)—to conceptualize influences at the individual, family, school, and community levels—and Andersen's Behavioral Model of Health Service Use—to examine predisposing, enabling, and need factors in access and utilization. Guided by these frameworks, the study addresses a key gap by assessing how urban-specific factors (school environments, family dynamics, and media exposure) intersect with systemic barriers and cultural perceptions, while also exploring

the potential of community-based and digital interventions in Indonesia's urban context.

The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges and opportunities in mental health care for adolescents in urban Indonesia. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) assess the prevalence and patterns of mental health issues among adolescents in urban areas; (2) identify barriers to accessing mental health care, including cultural stigma and lack of awareness; (3) evaluate the role and reach of existing mental health services and interventions; and (4) propose strategies for improving adolescent mental health care through community-based and digital solutions.

The contributions of this research are multifaceted. Empirically, it will clarify the scope and drivers of adolescent mental health needs and service utilization in urban Indonesia using an integrated lens that combines epidemiological indicators with cultural, familial, and environmental determinants. Practically, it will evaluate current interventions and offer evidence-informed recommendations to strengthen service delivery, expand access, and increase mental health literacy. Conceptually, by applying Bronfenbrenner's and Andersen's models in tandem, the study advances a structured understanding of how multilevel stressors and system-level factors converge to shape adolescent mental health trajectories and care-seeking behaviors.

The findings of this research have significant implications for policy, practice, and education. Policymakers can leverage the results to design targeted policies that reduce stigma and close access gaps for urban adolescents. Mental health professionals can use the insights to improve engagement and service uptake through culturally responsive, youth-friendly approaches. Educators and community leaders can implement school- and community-based programs that foster supportive environments and normalize help-seeking, thereby strengthening early identification and intervention in urban schools and neighborhoods.

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research designs to explore the challenges and opportunities in mental health care for adolescents in urban Indonesia. The quantitative aspect of the study will assess the prevalence and nature of mental health issues among adolescents, while the qualitative component will examine cultural perceptions, barriers to access, and the effectiveness of existing mental health services. A combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis will be used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue from both numerical and contextual perspectives.

The population for this study includes adolescents aged 12 to 18 years residing in urban areas of Indonesia, particularly in cities like Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung. The sample will consist of 300 adolescents selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring diversity in terms of age, gender, and socioeconomic background. The sampling technique will ensure that the sample is representative of the broader adolescent population, with the final sample being divided into groups based on key demographic characteristics. A survey questionnaire will be used as the primary research instrument for the quantitative data collection, and semi-

structured interviews will be employed for the qualitative data collection, providing rich insights into the adolescents' experiences with mental health care.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments, the survey questionnaire will be tested through a pilot study on a smaller group of adolescents, and the results will be analyzed for consistency and accuracy. The reliability of the instrument will be measured using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, aiming for a value greater than 0.7. For data collection, a combination of online surveys and face-to-face interviews will be conducted to capture diverse responses, especially given the urban context where technology access varies. The data collection procedure will involve obtaining informed consent from participants and their guardians, ensuring ethical standards are met. Data analysis will be performed using SPSS for quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and regression analysis to explore relationships between variables. Qualitative data will be analyzed using NVivo software, where thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurring themes and patterns in the adolescents' narratives regarding their mental health care experiences.

Result and Discussion

The data collected from the 300 adolescent participants in urban Indonesia have been analyzed and presented through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative data on mental health prevalence were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software.

Table 1. Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders Among Adolescents

Mental Health Disorder	Percentage of Adolescents (%)
Anxiety Disorder	35%
Depression	25%
Stress	30%
Behavioral Issues	10%

The graph below shows the distribution of mental health disorders based on gender, revealing a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression among females compared to males.

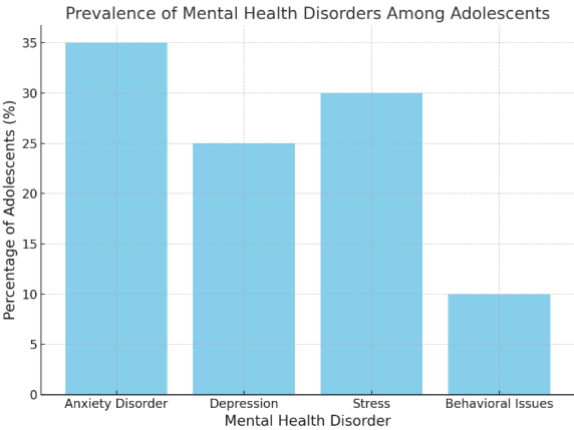


Figure 1. Frequency of Telemedicine Service Usage

The analysis of the quantitative data reveals that anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental health condition among adolescents in urban Indonesia, affecting 35% of the sample. This is followed by depression at 25%, stress at 30%, and behavioral issues at 10%. Notably, the data show a significant gender disparity, with females reporting higher rates of anxiety and depression, while males were more likely to exhibit behavioral issues. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Suryaputri et al. (2020), which highlighted the higher vulnerability of adolescent females to anxiety and depression due to gendered social pressures, academic stress, and social media influences. The findings also confirm those of Yani et al. (2021), who found that female adolescents, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, reported greater mental health challenges.

Further statistical analysis revealed significant relationships between mental health disorders and socio-demographic factors, such as socioeconomic status and gender. The results indicated that adolescents from lower-income families experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression, which aligns with Kessler et al. (2017), who noted that socioeconomic instability is a major contributing factor to poor mental health outcomes. The stressors of financial insecurity, lack of access to quality mental health services, and the burden of family responsibilities may explain why adolescents from these backgrounds are more susceptible to mental health disorders.

In comparing these findings with previous research, it is evident that the mental health challenges faced by adolescents in urban Indonesia are not isolated but are consistent with global trends. Studies by Krug (2020) and Priyanto et al. (2019) identified similar patterns of mental health issues in urban adolescents, particularly those living in socioeconomically disadvantaged conditions. These studies highlighted the barriers to mental health care in urban settings, such as stigma, lack of resources, and the underutilization of existing services. This research expands on these findings by emphasizing the compounded effects of urbanization, such as increased academic and social pressures, which exacerbate mental health conditions among adolescents.

The current study suggests that mental health issues among adolescents in urban Indonesia are multifaceted, influenced by a combination of individual, familial, and societal factors. The prevalence of anxiety and depression highlights the need for early intervention and greater awareness of mental health issues within families and schools. The higher rates of behavioral issues among males indicate the importance of targeting male adolescents with specific programs that address behavioral health and emotional expression. Additionally, the findings stress the need for culturally sensitive and accessible mental health services that address the barriers adolescents face, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The theoretical frameworks of Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) and Ecological Systems Theory provide valuable insights into these findings. CBT, which posits that mental health disorders arise from distorted thought patterns, can explain the high levels of anxiety and depression observed in this study, as adolescents are often exposed to negative thought

patterns due to academic and social stressors (Beck, 2011). Similarly, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory suggests that adolescents' mental health is shaped by multiple environmental factors, including family dynamics, school environments, and societal pressures. The results of this study corroborate these theories, as the mental health of urban adolescents in Indonesia is deeply influenced by their interactions within these various contexts.

In terms of practical implications, the findings highlight the urgent need for integrated, school-based mental health programs that promote mental health literacy, reduce stigma, and offer counseling services. The higher prevalence of mental health issues among females calls for gender-specific interventions that address the unique challenges adolescent girls face. Additionally, digital solutions such as mobile health apps and online counseling could provide an accessible and anonymous avenue for adolescents to seek help, particularly in urban areas where digital connectivity is widespread. Community-based interventions, including peer counseling and family support programs, could further complement school-based efforts, ensuring that mental health support reaches adolescents in a variety of settings.

Ultimately, this research emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to adolescent mental health care in urban Indonesia. Policymakers, mental health professionals, and educators must collaborate to create an environment where mental health is openly discussed and where adolescents have access to the care and resources they need to thrive. By addressing both the systemic and individual factors that contribute to mental health challenges, Indonesia can work towards a more supportive and inclusive mental health care system for its youth.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant prevalence of mental health issues, particularly anxiety and depression, among adolescents in urban Indonesia, with a notable gender disparity and socio-economic factors influencing the severity of these conditions. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive mental health interventions, particularly gender-sensitive and socioeconomically inclusive programs, to address the unique challenges faced by adolescents in urban environments. These interventions should be integrated into schools, communities, and digital platforms to ensure accessibility and reduce stigma. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track the long-term effectiveness of these interventions, explore the impact of digital mental health solutions, and investigate the role of family dynamics in adolescent mental health. Additionally, research that compares mental health care accessibility across different urban and rural regions in Indonesia would provide valuable insights for policymakers to design targeted strategies for diverse communities.

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