

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Mental health problem differs from mental health disorder. Mental health disorder is a diagnosable condition which disturbs a person's emotional, cognitive, and social functioning. Mental health problem is frequently a response to life stressors and it affects a person's emotional, cognitive, and social performance in a slighter degree. Mental health problem is commonly a temporary condition, but when not treated well it could progress to mental disorder. The examples of mental disorders include depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and substance abuse (Fuller *et al.*, 2000; Australian National University, 2015).

Mental health problems in medical students may cause a significant impact in the students' life. Mental health problem affects their ability to study in long hours, ability to socialize well, and ability to achieve well in school. Medical students have higher rates of burnout and depression compare to the general population of the same age. This higher prevalence is likely due to the excessive workload given to the students. Study among Brazilian medical undergraduates showed the stressful factors contributed to the formation of mental health problems consisted of competitiveness, very stressful environment, peer pressure, too much workload, sleep deprivation. Mental health problems were associated to signs of lack of motivation such as dissatisfaction with the course and thoughts of dropping out in addition to later

academic year, insufficient leisure time, and lack of emotional support (Slavin, Schindler and Chibnall, 2014; Pacheco *et al.*, 2017).

Studies focused on the association between mental distress and academic achievement is limited. Within the limited researches however it is found that the declining of students' academic performance can be a definitive sign of students having mental health disorder (Kernan and Wheat, 2008; Pacheco *et al.*, 2017). Student distress may increase because of the rigorous academic curriculum and the lack of experience during medical training period. Higher level of mental health problems eventually lead to a lower academic performance (Makhal *et al.*, 2015; Bru *et al.*, 2018). Mental health problems with no proper management may end as a mental health disorder.

Mental health problems generally affect the students' productivity (Eisenberg, Golberstein and Hunt, 2009). As an illustration on how mental health problems influence academic achievement, we can take a look at the common symptoms of depression. The difficulty in concentrating, the absence of interest and motivation, and poor attendance essentially justify the reducing of students' mark. Students with depression also tend to have pessimistic thinking and do not make an effort to achieve their goal. Students continue to be frustrated and giving up, causing lesser academic result (Pua *et al.*, 2015).

Medical students are hesitant to seek appropriate help for their mental health problems. Some of the students are already burned out or in a crisis when they finally decide to find help. If they are not in the risk of immediate failing, the students will more likely to try solve their own problems. Students favour

seeking counsel to family and friends than going to the services provided by the university (Chew-graham, Rogers and Yassin, 2003; Smith, 2016).

The main reason students avoid getting help is the stigma. Another cause is shame and embarrassment in admitting weakness. This may lead to a fear of having mental health problems will affect their future career and job offers. Concern regarding confidentiality violation also hinder students for seeking the help (Chew-graham, Rogers and Yassin, 2003).

WHO stated that literacy is the best predictor of one's health status. Mental health literacy is a suitable for early identification of mental disorders, decreasing stigma towards people with mental disorders or about seeking help on mental disorders, and improving help-seeking behavior. Improving knowledge about mental health and mental disorder, knowing how to find help, and reducing stigma makes early identification possible thus creates better mental health outcome (Wei *et al.*, 2015; Hines-Martin and Yearwood, 2016).

The objective of the study was to describe aspects of mental health literacy among Universitas Airlangga's medical students with regard to the recognition of mental health problems and the help-seeking behavior based on the knowledge students have.

1.2 Research Question

Does mental health literacy among Universitas Airlangga's medical students influence help-seeking behavior?

1.3 Research Objectives

General objective

To determine the influence of mental health literacy to the students' help-seeking behavior.

Specific objective

1. To describe mental health literacy among medical students.
2. To describe help-seeking behavior among medical students.
3. To determine the influence of mental health literacy to the help seeking behavior of medical student.

1.4 Research Benefits

Benefit for Institution

The result of this study can be used as a feedback for medical school curriculum to focus more on mental health education in general and mental health literacy in particular.

Benefit for Practice

To help improving mental health literacy among medical students in Universitas Airlangga.

Benefit for Respondents

From the result of this study, medical students of Universitas Airlangga will know about the quality of their mental health literacy and be able to reflect upon it.

1.5 Research Risk

The risk of this research is very low because there is no invasive procedure done and the participant is only asked to voluntarily give some of their time to answer questionnaire.

Both of the questionnaires used in this research are translated in Indonesian although English version will also be provided for the foreign respondents.