

# “I’ll Be There for You”: The Role of Social Support Towards Migrant-Students' Mental Health During Pandemic Covid-19

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## ABSTRACT

Mental health is one of important elements in achieving academic success for students. However, the current condition of the Covid-19 pandemic will likely have negative impact on students' mental health, especially those who live far from their parents and families. The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of social support from family, friends, and significant others towards migrant-students' mental health. The study used quantitative method approach. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPPS) was used to measure social support and the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) scale was used to measure students' mental health. The respondents in this study were 133 migrant-students in Jakarta who did not return to their hometown during this situation. The data were collected through a questionnaire distributed online with an incidental sampling technique. The result of this study indicates a significance contribution of social support towards mental health of migrant-students ( $F=27,305$ ;  $CI95\%$ ;  $p=0.000$ ). The social support variable contributed 17.2% to the mental health of students, while 82.8% was influenced by other factors. These findings suggest that support from family, friends and closest people during pandemic contribute to migrant-students' mental health and furthermore will likely increase their academic success.

**Keywords:** Mental health; migrant-students; quantitative method; social support

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of science and technology is one of the reasons someone chooses to become a migrant-student in Java (Harita & Nurchayati, 2018). However, life from abroad is not easy, many migrant-students experience various changes in their lives such as cultural differences, separation from family, and adaptation to the campus environment (Salsabhillah & Panjaitan, 2019). Furthermore, this change makes students often feel uncomfortable both psychologically and physically (Nadlyfah & Kustanti, 2018).

Living overseas can have an impact on students' mental health, especially the potential to experience loneliness because they have to live far from their family (Nurayni & Supradewi, 2017; Baron, 2005; Halim & Dariyo, 2016). In addition, migrant-students also have to face various demands for lecture assignments, time management problems, financial burdens, social interactions and adaptation to new environments. This condition was then exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic where the government appealed to migrant-students not to return to their hometown to prevent the spread of the corona virus. On the other hand, lectures are now conducted online, students are not allowed to go

to campus so that student movements are increasingly limited. This situation, of course, will more or less have a bigger impact on migrant students than in the previous normal conditions. Therefore, one of the objectives of this study was to describe the mental health of migrant students during this pandemic.

Mental health has become an important issue in the world of education, especially in universities. This is inseparable from the fact that mental health has a contribution to the development and academic success of students. Even problematic mental health can have a strong enough impact on campus life, both at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional level (Kitzrow, 2009).

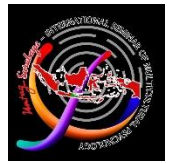
Galderisi, et al (2015) defines mental health as a dynamic state, an individual's internal balance that allows him to use his full abilities according to the values in society. Mental health is a mental state or psychological condition that shows a person's ability to adapt or solve problems to problems that exist within oneself (internal) and problems that exist in the external environment. Mental health focuses on the process of thinking, feeling and behaving effectively and efficiently in dealing with life's problems (Hanurawan, 2012).

One of the important factors affecting one's mental health is social support. Research has shown that social support plays an important role as a buffer from the negative effects of stress, including stress in an academic context (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). Several previous studies have also shown the positive contribution of social support to students' mental health in various environmental contexts and scientific disciplines. A study from Estiane (2015) states that good social support for new students can help their social adjustment process to the university environment, so that new students can adapt and perform well. This is in line with the findings of Pramestuti and Dewi (2014) and Sasmita and Rustika (2015) in the context of different disciplines and locations. Meanwhile, Asuti and Hartati (2013) found that the success of students in completing their thesis is due to the social support they receive from their family and friends.

This study focuses on the role of social support that students get from their family, peers, and their closest people on their mental health. Khan and Arif's research (2019) found that peer support was positively correlated with psychological well-being and negatively correlated with psychological distress. The results also showed that social support positively predicts mental health in college students. Individuals who receive high social support from the surrounding environment have better mental health than individuals who have low social support (Lahey & Orehek, 2011).

Research also shows that students with low social support are more likely to experience mental health problems including a sixfold risk of depressive symptoms relative to students with high social support (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). In a study conducted by Reid et al (2016) found that the perception of family social support at the start of college in college can protect a person from overcoming anxiety during adjustment in learning processes in campus.

Research related to the role of social support for students' mental health has indeed been done a lot, especially in the context of the adjustment of new students in the campus environment. However, research on how the impact of social support on mental health, especially for migrant students during this pandemic, still needs to be done considering the importance of the role of family, peers and the closest people in supporting students through the lecture process. Therefore, the aims of this study s to investigate the contribution of social support from family, peers, and closest people to the mental health of migrant students during the pandemic.



## METHOD

This research was conducted in June 2020 in Jakarta, and due to the pandemic, researchers required the data collection process in the form of an online questionnaire. This type of research is quantitative research where the dependent variable in this study is mental health and the independent variable in this study is social support.

The population of this study were migrant-students at one of the universities in Jakarta. The total number of migrant students who did not return to their home regions during the Covid-19 pandemic was 158 students, while those who were willing to become respondents in this study were 133 students. The sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling.

The questionnaire used in this study is the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) instrument developed by Veit and Ware (1983) to measure students' mental health and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MPPS) instrument from Zimet (1990) to measure social support variables. The researcher carried out the process of translating the two measuring instruments into Indonesian, then continued with the expert judgment process on two experts and testing the instruments. The trials of the two instruments were carried out on 60 students.

The MHI instrument measures the positive aspects (psychological well-being) and negative aspects of mental health (psychological distress) with a total of 18 questions. The psychological well-being aspect consists of 5 questions, while the psychological distress aspect consists of 13 questions. This MHI instrument uses a 7-point Likert scale with answer choices ranging from: "Always" (7) to "Never" (1). Respondents in this study were asked to choose answers that match their conditions in the past month. Statement items such as "Have you ever felt hopeless and sad?" used to measure the psychological distress aspects. As for items such as "Have you ever felt loved and wanted?" used to measure aspects of psychological well-being. The validity coefficient of the MHI scale in the study ranged from .285 - .598 while the reliability coefficient showed Cronbach's alpha of .863.

The MPPS instrument measures social support from three sources, namely: family, friends, and significant others. This measuring instrument consists of 12 items of favorable statements where each dimension consists of 4 items of statement. This MPPS uses a Likert scale with 7 points in each item with answer choices ranging from: "Strongly Agree" (7) to "Strongly Disagree" (1). Statement items such as "I have a special person who provides comfort for me" are used to measure support from significant others, as for statement items "I get the help and emotional support I need from my family" and "I have friends who can share joys and sorrows." Is a statement item from the dimensions of family and friend support. The item validity coefficient on this instrument moves in the range .497 - .754 with Cronbach's alpha obtained as .906.

The data analysis technique in this study is a simple regression technique to answer the research hypothesis. Descriptive statistics and correlations were calculated for demographics. This analysis is used to see how much social support contributes to the mental health of migrant students. Data analysis was performed using SPSS for Windows 23.0

## RESULTS

### *Demographic Data of Respondents*

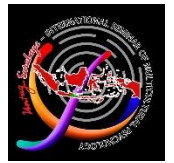
Respondents in this study were 133 active students at a tertiary institution in Jakarta, who are currently migrating or have an area of origin outside Jabodetabek, and did not return to their hometown during the Covid-19 pandemic. An overview of the sample demographic data in this study can be seen in table 1 below. There were slightly more female respondents (54.9%, n = 73) than male respondents (45.1%, n = 60). The average age of the respondents in this study was 22 years, with an age range between 18-26 years. The distribution of respondents by region of origin shows that most respondents came from the island of Java (41%, n = 54), followed by Sumatra (35%, n = 46), Papua (12%, n = 16). Based on the education level, the undergraduate level respondents dominated this study (97.7%, n = 130) compared to diploma students (2.3%, n = 3).

**Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics (N=133)**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>N valid (%)</b>
Gender	
- Female	73 (54.9%)
- Male	60 (45.1%)
Age	
- 18 – 20	52 (39%)
- 21 – 23	72 (54%)
- 24 – 26	9 (7%)
Education	
- S1/bachelor	130 (97.7%)
- D3/diploma	3 (2.3%)
Hometown	
- Java	54 (41%)
- Center Java	31 (24%)
- West Java	16 (12%)
- East Java	7 (5%)
- Sumatera	46 (35%)
- Papua	16 (12%)
- Kalimantan	4 (3%)
- Others	13 (9%)

### *Students' mental health dan social support*

The results of descriptive data analysis of the mental health variables of migrant students showed a mean = 79.95 and the categorical mean analysis showed that most of the students were in good mental health condition (75.2%, n = 100). The results of the analysis of social support showed mean = 64.75 and showed that migrant students perceived themselves to have high social support (88%, n = 117) from family, friends and significant other. The following Table 2 is a statistical descriptive table of the two variables.



**Table 2. Descriptive Statistic of Students' Mental Health and Social support**

Statistik	Mental Health	Social support
Mean	79,95	64,75
Median	80	68
Modus	80	77
Standar Deviasi	13,129	12,886
Varians	172,37	166, 03
Range	79	58
Nilai Maksimum	126	84
Nilai Minimum	47	26
Sum	10634	8612

*Hypothesis testing*

This study aims to investigate social support perceived by migrant-students will contribute to their mental health during a pandemic. The results of the hypothesis with regression analysis can be seen in Table 3:

**Tabel 3 Hasil Uji Hipotesis**

Variabel	P	A	F	F table	Interpretation
Mental health	0,000	0.05	27,305	3,91	Accepting Ha
Social support					

- a. *Dependent variabel* : Mental health
- b. *Predictors* : (*Constant*), Social support

Based on the single predictor linear regression test, the calculated F value is 27.305 with F table 3.91 and the p value is 0.000 with an  $\alpha$  value of 0.05. This shows that the calculated F value is greater than the F table and the p value is smaller than the  $\alpha$  value. From these results it can be concluded that H0 is rejected, Ha is accepted, which means that there is a significant influence from social support towards mental health among migrant students at one college in Jakarta.

**Tabel 4 Model Summary**

Variabel	R	R square	Adjusted R square
Mental health	0,415	0,172	0,166
Social support			

- a. *Dependent variabel* : Mental health

b. *Predictors* : (Constant), Social support

Based on the data in table 4, it shows the results of the calculation of multiple correlation analysis (R). The multiple correlation index (R) obtained was 0.415 with an R square value of 0.172 (17.2%). The results of the R square show that the social support variable affects mental health variables contributing 17.2% while the remaining 82.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

Analysis the direction of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. This can be seen in table 5 as follows:

**Table 5 Persamaan Regresi**

Model	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	52,554	5,346		9,831	0,000
Social support	0,423	0,081	0,415	5,225	0,000

a. *Dependen Variabel*: Mental health

Based on table 5, it can be seen that the mental health variable constant is 52.554, while the regression coefficient for the social support variable is 0.423. Based on the regression equation, it can be seen that the direction of the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable is positive. The results of the calculation of the regression equation above indicate that if there is an influence from social support, the constant value of mental health will increase by 0.423.

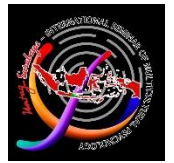
## DISCUSSION

Based on the data collection that has been done, the majority of migrant-students have mental health in the good category with a percentage of 75.2% of 133 students. Migrant students at the Jakarta State University have high social support with a percentage of 88% of the 133 students.

This study showed that there was a significant influence from social support towards mental health among migrant-students. This result is in line with the research of Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) that students with low social support are more likely to experience mental health problems including a sixfold risk of depressive symptoms relative to students with high social support.

The results of the calculation of the R square analysis show that the social support variable affects mental health variables contributing 17.2% while the remaining 82.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The magnitude of the influence given by social support on mental health is quite large as evidenced in the results of the research showing that social support contributes quite a lot to mental health, especially for students, this is because students are still easy to interact with their surroundings. The number of friendships that are built makes these friends as social support for the students themselves.

The results of this study indicate that mental health and social support variables have a positive and significant effect. In the sense that the higher the level of social support that overseas students have, the better the level of mental health. Conversely, if there is a decrease in the level of social support for



overseas students, the mental health level will worsen. Migrant-students who perceived that their family, peers, and important people be there for them although in distance, support them in their learning during this pandemic will likely have higher level of mental health condition than others that perceived lack of social support. In addition, these students will also likely able to focus on the process of thinking, feeling, and behaving effectively and efficiently in gaining academic achievement.

Based on the results of research which states that there is a significant influence between social support on mental health in migrant-students in this study, this is in line with previous research which shows that there is an effect of social support on mental health. Research conducted by Khan and Arif (2019) reveals that family support and peer support are positively correlated with psychological well-being and negatively correlated with psychological distress. Harandi and Nayeri (2017) in their research shows that there is a relatively high effect of the correlation between social support and mental health, especially for women, parents, patients, workers, and students. The selection of student samples in this study is one of the factors that has a significant influence between social support and mental health. Social support has an impact on mental health because social support obtained from family, friends, and closest people is a form of attention or assistance given to individuals and these individuals can feel with the aim of reducing the amount of stress and coping better in dealing with stress.

In conducting research, of course, there are limitations in research. The obstacles faced during the study were difficulty in finding samples due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The variables in this study were mental health and social support. The researcher wanted to know the effect of these two variables with a sample of migrant students. Samples are difficult to find because many of the students who fled Jakarta and have returned to their regions of origin, however the number of participant in this study is adequate to test the hypothesis. The distribution of questionnaires online causes the researcher unable to directly supervise respondents in filling out the questionnaire.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted by 133 migrant students at a tertiary institution in Jakarta, it can be concluded that there is an effect of social support on the mental health of migrant students. The effect resulting from the social support variable on mental health is positive, namely the higher the level of social support that migrant students have, the better the level of mental health. Conversely, if there is a decrease in the level of social support for migrant students, then the level of mental health will worsen.

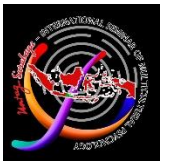
The next researcher is expected to be able to conduct research on a larger sample, to be able to examine a larger number of research samples so that the research results can be generalized. In further research, researchers are expected to be able to find out what can affect mental health, especially in students and make the findings as variables to be investigated further.

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