



# Strategies of Students with Mental Illness in Completing Education at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji

Nurfinahati<sup>1</sup>, Sri Wahyuni<sup>1</sup> and Rahma Syafitri\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of social and political science, sociology, Raja Ali Haji Maritime University, Tanjung Pinang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: rahma.syafitri@umrah.ac.id

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 28 June 2023

Revised 24 August 2023

Accepted 28 September 2023

Available online 3 October 2023

E-ISSN: [2745-536X](https://doi.org/10.26594/10.32734/ijma.v4i2.12594)

**How to cite:** Nurfinahati, Wahyuni.S & Syafitri.R (2023) Strategies for Students with Mental Illness in Completing Education at Raja Ali Haji Maritime University. Indonesian Journal of Medical Anthropology. 4(2), 1-8.

## ABSTRACT

*Mental illness* is a disease that affects mood, thinking, and behavior. *Mental illness* is recognized as hindering students from completing their education. The pressure and burden from parents that require their children to finish quickly becomes a mental disorder in itself. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide an overview of how Raja Ali Haji Maritime University students can survive completing their education in conditions of mental health disorders or *mental illness*. Using descriptive and qualitative methods, interviews were conducted to obtain the required data. Next in the analysis is the theory of social capital. The results of this study have a pattern of strategy in which it shows a social network in the form of creating trust, reciprocal relationships, and the existence of values and norms that are built in the process of completing education

**Keywords:** Strategy, Mental illness, Students

## ABSTRAK

*Mental illness* merupakan penyakit yang mempengaruhi suasana hati, berfikir, dan berperilaku. *Mental illness* diakui dapat menghambat mahasiswa dalam menyelesaikan Pendidikan. Tekanan dan beban dari orang tua yang mengharuskan anaknya cepat tamat menjadi gangguan mental tersendiri. Maka dari itu, tujuan dari kajian ini memberikan gambaran bagaimana mahasiswa Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji bisa bertahan menyelesaikan pendidikannya dalam kondisi memiliki gangguan kesehatan mental atau *mental illness*. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, wawancara dilakukan untuk mendapatkan data yang dibutuhkan. Selanjutnya dalam analisis menggunakan teori modal sosial. Hasil penelitian ini terdapat pola strategi yang di dalamnya menunjukkan sebuah jaringan sosial berupa terciptanya kepercayaan, hubungan timbal balik serta adanya nilai dan norma yang terbangun dalam proses penyelesaian pendidikan tersebut.

**Keywords:** Strategi, *Mental illness*, Mahasiswa



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<http://doi.org/10.26594/10.32734/ijma.v4i2.12594>

## 1. Introduction

A strategy is defined as a plan aimed at achieving desired goals. In the process of life, strategy is a way for individuals to survive in an increasingly competitive world, and it involves creating a positive perception within one's thinking or future life plans. Literally, a student is someone who studies at a higher education institution, whether it's a university, institute, or academy. Those who are enrolled as students at a higher education institution are automatically referred to as students. Students bear a significant burden as they not only strive to improve their own educational quality, but they are also indirectly expected to become agents of change within society. Students are indirectly required to act as catalysts within society, bringing

about positive changes through the knowledge, ideas, and insights they possess. Society expects students to be the driving force behind the nation's progress and development.

Mental illness is a term used to describe a range of mental health disorders experienced by individuals. It affects one's mood, thinking, and behavior. The most common types of mental disorders include depression and anxiety, where individuals experience persistent mood disturbances, feelings of being overwhelmed, and a loss of interest in activities, resulting in a significant decline in their overall quality of life (Putra, 2019).

Another common type of mental health disorder is anxiety disorder, characterized by excessive worry, fear, and anxiety in carrying out daily activities, accompanied by physical reactions such as trembling, shortness of breath, cold sweats, and even stiffness in certain parts of the body (Putra, 2019). Mental illness is a condition that can affect anyone regardless of their background, yet it often lacks proper attention and treatment.

In order to pursue education successfully and maintain focus on learning, all students need to be in good physical and mental health. The mental health of students is paramount and must be safeguarded to ensure their paths are not hindered in achieving their aspirations. However, in reality, students of all ages face mental health pressures. Incidents of suicide among students serve as evidence that mental health issues in society have not been adequately addressed. Therefore, students, particularly university students, are vulnerable to mental health disorders such as stress, depression, anxiety, and frustration. Moreover, in more severe cases, there is a need for serious attention when mental health disorders lead to self-harm or harm to others (Dumilah Ayuningtias, 2018).

College students are twice as likely to experience depression compared to individuals of the same age and background in the working world. Additionally, there is a significant risk of procrastination in completing academic tasks (Anggawijaya, 2013). Depression can greatly disrupt the college environment by interfering with learning and leading to a loss of interest in completing education (Glading, 2015).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which individuals can realize their own potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community (WHO Mental Health: a state of well-being, n.d.).

The increasing cases of mental health disorders or mental illness in Indonesia have not been balanced with the number of counseling or psychological consultation services available to meet the needs. While university students can access psychological services on campus, not all campuses provide such services. Furthermore, psychological and psychiatric services can be costly, placing a heavy burden on many students. There is also a lack of awareness about available psychological and psychiatric services, coupled with the prevalence of self-diagnosis without professional guidance, which exacerbates the mental health problem.

The worst impact when a student is diagnosed with a mental illness includes a loss of interest in continuing education, feelings of worthlessness, excessive anxiety, declining academic performance, lack of self-confidence, withdrawal from the campus community, and in extreme cases, self-harm or suicide (Teresa M. Evans, 2018).

In Indonesia, there is still a lack of understanding among the general public regarding the management of mental health issues. The limited understanding, lack of access to healthcare providers, and inadequate budget allocation for mental health patients contribute to the negative stigma associated with such conditions. Consequently, there are often mishandlings of mental health patients, further worsening their conditions. The government's insufficient budget for addressing mental health issues has resulted in a lack of psychiatric hospitals, and psychiatric wards in general hospitals are unable to meet the needs of the population.

In Indonesia, there are six provinces that do not have psychiatric hospitals: Riau Islands, Banten, North Kalimantan, West Sulawesi, Gorontalo, and West Papua. The Indonesian Ministry of Health predicts that at least 90% of individuals with mental illness do not receive adequate care (PMK, 2021).

1.1 Table: Number of visits by patients with mental health disorders at primary healthcare facilities (First Level Health Facilities) and advanced healthcare facilities (Hospitals) in Tanjungpinang.

No	Health Service Facility	Visits of Patients with Mental Health Disorders		
		M	F	M+F
	Number of Outpatient Visits	4.084	2.032	6.116
A	First Level Health Facilities (Puskesmas)			

1	Tanjungpinang	55	56	111
2	Batu 10	0	0	0
3	Melayu Kota Piring	7	6	13
4	Mekar Baru	74	28	102
5	Kampung Bugis	41	37	78
6	Sei Jang	20	10	30
7	Tanjung Unggat	55	38	93
Sub Total		255	175	427
B	Advanced Healthcare Facilities (Hospitals)			
1	RSUD Raja Ahmad Tabib	17	24	41
2	RS Kota Tanjungpinang	0	0	0
3	RS Dr Midiyanto.S	3.815	1.833	5.648
Sub Total		3.832	1.857	5.689

Source: Tanjungpinang City Health Profile 2019.

Based on the data above, it shows that Riau Islands, specifically in the city of Tanjungpinang, has a significant number of visits by patients with mental illness, primarily among adolescents and adults aged approximately 17-35 years. Within this age range, it is estimated that many are still in the process of pursuing education or are students. This needs special attention in terms of treatment, as Riau Islands still lacks adequate mental health facilities, such as psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric wards. The mentioned number does not include patients with severe mental disorders, and the risk is that this number may continue to increase (Tanjungpinang City Health Profile 2019).

The advancement of the sociology of health began when humans realized that health is not solely about physical well-being but also about mental and social conditions. Talcott Parsons argued that "an individual can be considered healthy when they have the optimum capacity to fulfill the roles and tasks they have learned through the process of socialization, regardless of their physical health status" (Dewi Rosmalia, 2017). Parsons also stated that "the sociological health of an individual is relative and depends on their role in society" (Dewi Rosmalia, 2017).

According to Parsons, illness is a disruption in an individual's ability to perform expected roles or tasks. He viewed illness as a social role, and a sick person has certain social rights and obligations, as well as a condition of helplessness and the need for assistance. If an individual is unable to fulfill their tasks and roles due to factors beyond their control, according to Parsons, they are expected to assume what is called the sick role (Dewi Rosmalia, 2017).

The role of being sick can arise when the illness is considered severe enough that the individual is unable to perform some or all of their normal roles and imposes additional demands on the people around them (Dewi Rosmalia, 2017). Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to the mental well-being of students with mental illness who are striving to complete their education to prevent decisions that may lead to self-harm or suicide.

## 2. Methods

In this study, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative research method that focused on a case study approach and in-depth information gathering from informants who are students at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH) experiencing mental illness. The data collection techniques in this study included field observations and in-depth interviews. The research was conducted within the environment of UMRAH, which is an institution of higher education located in Tanjungpinang, Kepulauan Riau.

In the data collection phase, the selection of informants and data gathering were done using purposive sampling technique. The research utilized an interview guide in the form of a list of questions, which further evolved as the research progressed in the field. According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975:5), qualitative research is defined as "research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviors." Johnny Saldana (2014) suggests that qualitative research is the umbrella term for various naturalistic research methods in social life. Qualitative analysis involves interpreting textual data from interviews, field notes, documents, visual materials such as artifacts, photos, videos, data from the internet, and documents of human life experiences, in a non-quantitative manner.

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the instrument, thus requiring a solid theoretical foundation and broad knowledge. This enables the researcher to ask questions, analyze, capture, and

construct the object of study in a clearer and more meaningful way. In conclusion, qualitative research is a research method based on postpositivist philosophy. Data collection is conducted through triangulation, which combines observation, interviews, and documentation.

The research findings are used to understand meanings, uniqueness, construct, and generate hypotheses. The choice of qualitative method in this study explains its usefulness in understanding the strategies employed by UMRAH students with mental illness in completing their education. Therefore, the research results can provide a comprehensive overview of the studied phenomenon.

### 3. Results and Discussion

In this study, the object of research is Raja Ali Haji Maritime University (UMRAH). The research focuses on active UMRAH students who are indicated to have mental illness and their strategies in completing their education.

Considering the condition of UMRAH students who come from various regions and face challenges in the early phase of their student life in a new environment, they may experience physical and emotional discomfort. This is a natural reaction when transitioning and living in a new environment, especially one with different cultural conditions. Adjusting to a new culture can potentially cause stress, as understanding and accepting new cultural values is not an instant process and may not always go smoothly (Devinta, 2015).

Rural students are susceptible to loneliness due to the different cultural backgrounds between their hometown and their new place of study (Pratiwi, 2019). Being far away from parents requires them to be independent. The demand for independence, coupled with being far from parents, makes students more vulnerable to stress, despair, and depression (Pratiwi, 2019). Therefore, UMRAH students in a new place of study need to adapt to their new environment in order to build relationships with individuals who have diverse characteristics and attitudes.

If students are unable to establish good relationships while studying away from home, they may lack close friends or group companions, which can lead to feelings of loneliness (Larassati, 2018). Loneliness is a response to the absence of certain types of relationships. It occurs when there is a discrepancy between what someone expects in their interpersonal life and the reality they experience, resulting in feelings of isolation and loneliness. Loneliness is accompanied by various negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, self-blame, and shame. Loneliness can be categorized into two types: emotional loneliness, which refers to the absence or lack of intimate attachment in relationships with others, and social loneliness, which means an individual experiences a sense of inadequacy in social involvement or integration gained from friends or colleagues, causing them to feel friendless or like no one understands their situation.

Loneliness can be caused by situational factors, such as the end of close relationships with peers and separation from parents. University students also experience high levels of loneliness due to the social transitions they undergo, such as living alone, leaving home, entering university, or entering the workforce (Taylor in Raissa, 2018).

The researcher aims to explain the strategies employed by UMRAH students with mental illness in completing their education. In this section, the researcher has presented the research findings and interviews with 11 informants using an interview guide prepared after obtaining interview results. The findings will be analyzed by connecting social capital theory with the facts observed in the field.

Mental health is crucial for good thinking and can significantly impact a person's ability to engage in activities. Physical health is also influenced by one's mental health, as certain physical ailments can arise when someone is experiencing problems or disorders with their mental health.

Among students, mental health problems, pressures, and demands, whether direct or indirect, become burdens during their academic journey. Students with mental illness are potentially hindered in their academic progress. Therefore, in the strategies employed by UMRAH students with mental illness to complete their education, it is essential to address how these students can cope with their mental illness while pursuing their education.

Social capital serves as a resource for individuals to achieve success. With social capital, individuals can enhance their performance, feel a sense of responsibility, and mutually support one another. Social capital fosters confidence, collaboration, and interdependence among individuals. Therefore, success is not solely attributed to individuals but is a collective achievement based on shared interests and circumstances. Looking at the strategies employed by UMRAH students with mental illness to complete their education, the researcher observes how these students employ strategies related to social capital, such as trust, reciprocity in relationships, values, and norms.

### **A. Believeness**

According to Robert D. Putnam, trust is a form of willingness to take risks in social relationships based on the belief that trusted individuals will act as expected and engage in mutually supportive actions, or at the very least, they will not act to harm themselves or the group.

In the context of this research, trust refers to the trust that emerges in the strategies employed by UMRAH students with mental illness to complete their education at Raja Ali Haji Maritime University. After conducting interviews, the researcher found a sense of trust and confidence that is being built for those experiencing mental illness, allowing others to understand their actual condition. This action is taken because it is expected to create a mutually beneficial relationship, especially for the informants with mental illness. Additionally, efforts to enhance trust and confidence are being made by Raja Ali Haji Maritime University towards its students and staff, which naturally fosters a sense of trust..

### **B. Reciprocal**

In social capital, there is always a reciprocal relationship, which refers to the tendency to exchange goods in the form of social care, mutual attention, and assistance, driven by norms and values that are realized within individuals.

The reciprocal relationship mentioned in this research is a form of mutual benefit that emerges in the strategies employed by UMRAH students with mental illness to complete their education at Raja Ali Haji Maritime University. The researcher explores the reciprocal relationships that are formed in the strategies used by UMRAH students to complete their education. The presence of mental illness among students creates a pattern of interdependence in interconnected relationships that are mutually beneficial and create a network of interconnectedness. These reciprocal relationships are established to support the educational strategies of students with mental illness.

Social networks or reciprocal relationships involve patterns of social connections between individuals, groups, and various other collectives. According to John Field, the concept of social networks or reciprocal relationships involves a significant influence of trust. When the process of trust does not occur smoothly, the process of reciprocity can be challenging to achieve.

### **C. Value and Norms**

Values and norms are part of social capital that is formed through traditions, history, and charismatic figures who establish certain behavioral norms for individuals or social groups. Within these norms, social capital begins to emerge spontaneously within a framework that determines rules to govern personal and group interests.

Social capital in the form of values and norms is inherent in the process of strategies used by UMRAH students with mental illness to complete their education. It involves the interaction between informants who have mental illness and other trusted individuals who are aware of their health condition. It demonstrates the development of feelings of sympathy, empathy, and care, which are considered positive and principles that guide people's lives. Raja Ali Haji Maritime University also provides support, care, and assistance to students with mental illness to help them continue their education, particularly in the form of academic support.

## **4. Conclusion**

Based on the research findings conducted by the researcher regarding the strategies of UMRAH students with mental illness in completing their education, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Mental health problems or mental illness can affect anyone and are particularly prevalent among students, posing a high risk of hindering the educational process.
2. Students who have experienced mental illness during their education have strategies in place to enable them to complete their studies. These strategies involve developing positive perceptions, long-term life plans, and involving trusted individuals in their decision-making processes.
3. The theory of social capital developed by Robert D. Putnam defines social capital as a part of social life, including trust, reciprocal relationships, and norms that encourage individuals to act effectively together. These elements are formed within the strategies of UMRAH students with mental illness in completing their education.
4. Students with mental illness leverage their relationships and create mutually beneficial connections within trusted environments, fostering a positive atmosphere that supports their educational journey at UMRAH.

5. Within the educational environment at UMRAH, faculty members and students, including those with mental illness, demonstrate heightened emotional sensitivity toward the campus community. This leads to the development of empathy, sympathy, and care, as well as mutual efforts to support the educational process.

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