UNGS 1201

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS AMONG IIUM STUDENTS

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1.0 Background

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, able to work productively and fruitfully, and also able to contribute to his or her community". Otherwise, mental disorders or mental illness are conditions that affect our thinking, feeling, mood and behavior. It is including anxiety, depression, eating disorder, stress and others.

Nowadays, the demands of living causing a rising number people being diagnosed with depression, anxiety or other mental health problems. A survey done by National Health and Morbidity 2015 finds that the prevalence of mental health problems among adults in Malaysia has increased from 10.7% in 1996, to 11.2% in 2006, to 29.2% in 2015. In 2015, one in 10 individuals among Malaysian students were reported. Then, it was increased to one in five in 2016. By 2020, the professionals expecting that mental illness will be the second biggest health problem affecting Malaysians after heart disease. These results reveal a worsening state of mental health problems especially among students in Malaysia that must be addressed.

University students are the riskiest group of people that may face mental health problems. It is because at this age they are moving from adolescence stage to adulthood whereby it can be one of the most stressful times in a person's life. It was proven by our survey among 80 students of international Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) between age of 18 and 23. Based on our survey, 69% of them were experienced an 'attack' of anxiety, stress or others.

Factors found to be significantly associated with mental disorder among students were year of study, family history of mental illness, availability of social supports, increased class workload, deceased grade than anticipated also missing too many classes and lack of vacation. Nowadays, effect from pandemic Covid-19 also become one of mental disorder factors among students. Based on our survey, 85% of respondents have affected with Covid-19 issues. Lockdown stressors include separation from family and friends, loss of

independence, doubts about the virus's spread, lockdown length, resentment and monotonous lifestyle highly increased students' mental health disorder.

In the short-term, mental health problems can cause students to be anger, sadness, and feelings of helplessness if the person does not now or understand what is happening. It also will affect academic and productivity. As reported in our survey, almost 70% of respondents feeling affected in their academic and productivity because of mental disorder. It will increase their mental disorder to be worse for sure. In the long-term side, mental health disorders can may cause or worsen existing disruptions to the way the brain works, and in some cases, even the way to brain is structured. The ultimate effect is it can drive a person to commit suicide. According to the National Mental Health of Malaysia 2017 survey proved that at least one in 10 young people or 10% of the 5.5 million youths in this country have ever thought of committing suicide.

Otherwise, good mental health will drive students to many benefits such as they can be creative, learn and try new things and take risks. Sometimes, they will feel the sadness and anger that extremely hard to face. But in time, they are able to get on with. Nurturing mental health can also help them prevent the mental health problems that are sometimes associated with a chronic physical illness. They also can manage stress well and have a positive impact on heart disease.

After we have gone through our survey, we have found that IIUM students with big probability are facing mental health problems that can bring them to many dangerous effects. So, we as a team come out with our project to ensure their well-being is in an optimum state by solve their mental health problems and create awareness among them about the mental health. So, they are no longer affected by mental disorder but get many advantages from good management of mental health.

2.0 Objectives

Our main goal for this project is to ensure student's wellbeing is in an optimum state. There are three objectives to help achieve this goal.

Objective 1: To improve mental health by 20% among IIUM students with reaching them through social media by the end of 2021. The result will be measured by handing out a survey and by creating a poll at our subreddit to determine the mental health of students.

Objective 2: To create a trustworthy and interactive platform on reddit that can help at least 200 IIUM students to share their problems by Jun 2021.

Objective 3: To collaborate with Counselling & Career Services Unit (CCSU) by sharing the problems from IIUM students at our subreddit for them to receive further help by Jun 2021.

3.0 Significance

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. If you experience mental health problems, you're thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems which are biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry, life experiences, such as trauma or abuse, family history of mental health problems, etc.

When students are having a mental health problem, there are a lot of consequences that mental health brings in their life such as academic, family affairs, friendship, physical health, bad eating habit, etc. Based on the online survey given among the students, the highest votes go for the consequences that mental health brings in their life is academic which is near to 70 percent.

The second goes to productivity and the third one goes to physical health. Students' productivity is related to academic performance and also co-curricular' achievements. Students' productivity is very important as it could affect their lifestyle and their future. Being physically active is also crucial to keeping your body in its top condition. A few proven benefits of physical activity are strengthened bones and muscles, reduced risk of disease and stroke, and more energy. Physical health plays a big role in the students' life.

Depression is a recurrent mental health problem among younger demographics, and university students are particularly susceptible owing to stress, workload, and independent living, amongst other factors. This study explores the prevalence of depression and the factors influencing depression among university students in Malaysia. This cross-sectional study involved 1,023 university students (response rate 90.4%). Approximately 30% of respondents

experienced depression, and 4.4% of this category suffered severe depression. The main significance of our project is to help improve the mental health among the students which automatically can improve their academic capability and give a lot of benefits to the students themselves. Diagnosed depression was associated with a 0.49 point, or half a letter grade, a decrease in student GPA, while treatment was associated with a protective effect of approximately 0.44 points. The self-reported data regarding the impact of depression on the performance of academic tasks were consistent with these findings. Depressed students reported a pattern of increasing interference of depression symptoms with academic performance peaking in the month of diagnosis and decreasing thereafter with the lowest levels reported in months 4 through 6 post-diagnosis, each of which is significantly less than the month of diagnosis. With good mental health, students can have a better lifestyle and a more productive life.

The objective of this project is to identify and analyze mental health issues among students and also finding a solution for them. Our main goal for this project is to ensure student's well-being is in an optimum state. There are three objectives to help achieve this goal which is to improve mental health by 20% among IIUM students with reaching them through social media by the end of 2021. The result will be measured by handing out a survey and by creating a poll at our subreddit to determine the mental health of students. The next objective is to create a trustworthy and interactive platform on Reddit that can help at least 200 IIUM students to share their problems by Jun 2021. The last one is to collaborate with Counselling & Career Services Unit (CCSU) by sharing the problems from IIUM students at our subreddit for them to receive further help by Jun 2021.

The other significance of this project is to prevent suicide attempts among students. Suicide is a serious issue that has to be dealt with immediately. According to estimates released by the World Health Organization (2010), suicidal attempts happen every three seconds,

whereas deaths due to suicide happen every forty seconds which makes up to almost a million deaths connected to suicide every year (WHO, 2010). Committing suicide and depression are issues closely related to an individual's mental health. Research done among college students shows that suicidal ideation is not at a critical level. However, there is still a tendency to think towards it based on the scores of respondents' answers in the research that had been done by WHO.

Besides, another significance is to fight the stigma of society about mental health problems. Most people tend to presume that the mental health problem is a small issue and not important. Most of them underestimate this problem as they didn't experience it by themselves. Mental health problem is not a small issue as it could lead to many major problems. By doing this project, we hope that we could fight that stigma in society. Furthermore, this project helps to prevent students from dropping out of university or school. We want to help them by making them realize that they are not facing the problem alone themselves. This project will show them the efforts that we did to help them confront their mental health problems.

4.0 Challenges

As we propose and conduct this project in the future, our main goal is to obtain project's objective which is to improve students' mental health by 20% in one-year period by providing an interactive and trustworthy online platform, we anticipated a few challenges and hurdles prior to and during managing our project. Creating an interactive online platform where students are free to share their experiences and stories about their mental health, there is no doubt that challenges like public shaming, trolling in social media, not trusting our platform, and many more will arise.

When our group first introduce the platform in the app Reddit, there are still many students who do not own a Reddit account and some might not even know that such app exists. This is the first challenge that we anticipated. Students are used to social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. According to statcounter.com, as of November 2020, only 0.31% of social media users in Malaysia own Reddit active accounts, whereas Facebook users is recorded up to 80.27% of Malaysia social media users. This huge gap will become a challenge when we first promote our platform to the student's community.

Another major challenge that our group anticipated is also the ongoing stigma of mental health in the current society. Undeniably mental health is still an issue that does not get much coverage as it should get. Some folks would say that young people having mental health issues like depression and anxiety due to various reasons are weak in terms of their faith. Our group believe that weakness in faith (Iman) plays an insignificantly small contribution to the overall mental health problems experienced by young people in Malaysia. Many organizations such as Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM), Mental Illness Awareness and Support Association (MIASA) and Mentari Malaysia are among the active ones promoting mental health support and awareness to the patients regardless of age, gender and ethnicity. On October 10 2020, in

conjunction with World Mental Health Day, health director general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah has called for Malaysians to come together and destigmatize mental health issues in the society. In our society, mental health is still an issue that needs more awareness by the public.

The next challenge which is quite related to the ongoing stigma in the society is public's acceptance of our platform. We anticipated that there will be public trolling and public shaming of our platform users. Since giving awareness about mental health is still an ongoing effort, some people might think that sharing one's mental health problems and experiences is considered to be a despiteful action in the society. The consequence from this is the numerous malicious comments and nasty feedbacks that people will get from the public if they share their mental health issues on social media and online platforms. Our group has anticipated that after our online platform gain some popularity for being able to help students coping with mental health problems, there will be a group of people posting malicious and nasty comments on our platform or on other social media platforms.

In addition, at an early stage of executing our project, challenges like students might find our online platform untrustworthy, students being scared to share their problems online and students not knowing that such online platform exists are inevitable. Thus, our group has also planned rigorously on how we should promote our online platform and improve it from time to time to cater to all of our users' needs and gain their trust over time.

5.0 Recommendations

In order to achieve our aim of improving students' mental health by 20% in a one-year period through establishing an online supportive community, we recommend using Reddit as the platform.

Reddit is essentially a large group of forums in which users can talk and share anonymously just about anything that they are interested in be it just words, pictures, or videos, making it an ideal platform to share about mental health problems without compromising personal info.

Users can choose to join subreddits, which are niche forums that usually revolves around one specific topic. There are three important details about subreddits. Firstly, there are specific rules for each subreddit. Secondly, in each subreddit, there will be moderators who will control and regulate the content and also make the rules. Lastly, members of the subreddit can post whatever they want as long as it is within the rules of the subreddit.

With these details in mind, we recommend to create a subreddit, which specially focuses on the mental health of IIUM students. In the subreddit, students can freely share about the problems they are facing and others can give supportive feedbacks and suggestions to help. Freedom should be given to the students whether they want to share their problems anonymously or not. This is crucial because from the survey that we carried out, students refrain from sharing their problems online in fear of exposing their personal info. Subsequently, any students who chose to share their identity will be given personal support and will be referred to the counselor for further help. We believe just by sharing our own struggles and problems with other people, it can help ease the burden on our mental health.

Aside from students sharing their problems, the moderators and the users can also share tips on handling mental health problems through all kinds of medium like articles, infographics, and videos. The subreddit can also be used as a platform to share and promote programs such as forums and talks that are related to mental health. With permission from the moderators, any clubs or societies can promote their mental health related programs in the subreddit, thus increasing students' participation in beneficial activities. All this will in turn increase students' awareness on the reality of mental health, and also break the social stigma that mental health is not as important as physical health and are often conclusively related to weakness in faith alone.

We have stated that there are not many people who are familiar to reddit. Therefore, to solve this problem, it is recommended to properly promote this project via official channels within the IIUM community. For example, we can make collaborative efforts with CCSU so they can promote students to join the subreddit on other social medias like Twitter and Facebook. Aside from promoting the project, official link with the administration will make the platform more trustworthy and therefore makes it easier for students to participate.

As part of the collaboration with CCSU, we can also provide and promote hotline for students to directly and immediately share their problems by calling counselling services. It is recommended to provide a clear info on how to get counselling services on the subreddit. This info can be provided through infographics and videos that will then be pinned on top of the subreddit so students can easily access them whenever needed. To make it even more effective, it is recommended to recruit people who are experienced in graphic design to design attractive posters and infographics about any important tips and info about mental health and post it regularly.

Besides sharing problems and tips about mental health, the subreddit can also be used as a tool to assess the level of students' mental health. Through voting polls and surveys, students' can rate their satisfaction of their own mental health, and also rate how the project have helped them so far. This data can then be used to improve our project in the future, making it better and better as time progresses.

Finally, as in every other online social media, there will be public-shaming and public-trolling in the subreddit. For a platform that is made specifically for sharing personal problems, hateful comments and spiteful feedbacks from other people can be especially hurtful to our users. This is one of the specific reasons why we chose Reddit as the ideal platform for the project. To prevent internet "trolls" from disrupting our effort, we recommend to recruit a group of moderators that will ban the "trolls" and delete any comment or post that are deemed insensitive and hurtful to others. The moderators can be recruited by holding interviews for students who want to volunteer. The criteria are they must be committed to the work and fully understand the importance of mental health. With a dedicated group of moderators, problems of public-trolling and shaming will cease to exist.

In conclusion, by giving the students a trustable place where they can express themselves anonymously, without the risk of getting shamed and condemned through careful supervision from the moderators, we believe it will boost students' mental health effectively in the long term. With the support from the administration, we have faith that our recommendation can give a significant impact on the mental health of IIUM students.

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Mental Health Survey

Assalamualaikum, we are group 10 from UNGS 1201 section 22 is conducting an online survey regarding mental health among university students to help our project. Mental health is becoming a serious issue nowadays as it includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.
As you go through with this survey please be as honest as possible. Be assured that we will not share your data with any other people or parties.
*Required

1.   Gender *

     Mark only one oval.

          ◯ Male

          ◯ Female

2.   Age *

     _____

3. What course are you taking? *

Mark only one oval.

- ⬭ Architecture an Environmental Design
- ⬭ Education
- ⬭ Engineering
- ⬭ ENMS
- ⬭ ICT
- ⬭ IRKHS
- ⬭ Laws
- ⬭ Language and Management
- ⬭ Other: _____

4. How is your mental health at this moment (Rate from 1 to 5) *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Bad	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	Very Good

5. Has COVID-19 and self isolation/ quarantine has affect your mental health If so, to what extend (Rate from 1 to 5) *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
low	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	high

6. Have you ever experienced an 'attack' of fear, anxiety, or panic? *

Mark only one oval.

- ⬭ Yes
- ⬭ No
- ⬭ Maybe
- ⬭ Other: _____

7. What is the best way that you could do to improve your mental well-being? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Sleep

    ◯ Exercises

    ◯ Eat

    ◯ Pray to Allah

    ◯ Other: _____

8. Do you talk to someone (family / friends / lecturers / therapist) about your mental health? If YES how often? If NO, why you choose to be silent about your mental health? *

    _____

9. How do you feel about sharing your mental health problems anonymously on the internet?(Rate from 1 to 5) *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
not okay	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	very okay

10. What consequences does mental health bring in your life? *

    Tick all that apply.

    ☐ Family affairs

    ☐ Friends

    ☐ Academic

    ☐ Physical health

    ☐ Bad Eating habit

    ☐ Productivity

    Other: ☐ _____