

Self-Harming Behavior Among Students in the Medical Program at Yarsi University and Its Review From an Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Self-harm is a self-injurious behavior that commonly occurs among young adults, including medical students who are highly susceptible to academic and psychological stress. This study aims to describe the tendency of self-harm among medical students at YARSI University and review it from an Islamic perspective. A quantitative descriptive design was applied using the Self-Harm Inventory (SHI) as the research instrument. The study involved 141 participants selected through total sampling, and the data were analyzed descriptively. The findings revealed that all respondents (100%) exhibited a tendency toward self-harm, with an average score of 30.11 (range 22–71). Most respondents were categorized as low (49.6%), followed by moderate (34.8%) and high (15.6%). The majority experienced low levels of psychological and academic impact. Predominantly, respondents were female, 20 years old, and from the 2022 cohort. From an Islamic perspective, self-harm is strictly prohibited as it represents self-destruction, aligning with the prohibition stated in Surah An-Nisa :29. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive interventions that combine psychological support, academic guidance, and spiritual reinforcement to prevent self-harm among medical students.

KEYWORDS self-harm, medical students, Self-harm Inventory, Islam



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INTRODUCTION

Self-harm, or self-injurious behavior, is defined as the deliberate and direct destruction or alteration of one's own body tissue without conscious suicidal intent (Kingdon, 2021; Persano, 2022; Yearwood, 2016). This behavior is increasingly recognized as a significant public health concern, particularly among adolescents and young adults, where it often manifests as a maladaptive strategy for regulating intense or overwhelming negative emotions (Cracco et al., 2017; Harun et al., 2025; Singh & Singh, 2023). In university settings, students are confronted with a multitude of academic, social, and psychological pressures that can exacerbate emotional distress (Granieri et al., 2021; Hussain, 2024). Indonesian studies have corroborated these global trends, indicating that students experience considerable stress that may trigger self-harm as a coping mechanism (Alini et al., 2025; Handayani et al., 2024).

Medical students are a particularly vulnerable group to mental health problems because they face heavy academic workloads, demanding study schedules, and high performance expectations (Alifiando et al., 2022). This pressure can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression, which may manifest as self-harm behavior (Anugrah et al., 2023). However, research examining self-harm among medical students in Indonesia remains limited (Handayani et al., 2024; Wiswanti & Hendrawan, 2025).

Research on self-harm behavior among medical students in Indonesia holds high urgency for several fundamental reasons (Handayani et al., 2024; Maghfiroh et al., 2025; Nurendah et al., 2023; Tumanggor et al., 2025). First, medical students constitute a

population with heightened psychological vulnerability due to intense academic demands, strict professional expectations, packed educational schedules, and constant pressure to excel (Alifiando et al., 2022). The combination of these factors places them at significant risk of developing various mental health issues—including chronic stress, anxiety, depression, and self-harm—as maladaptive coping mechanisms (Anugrah et al., 2023).

Based on previous studies, several research gaps emerge that this study seeks to address. Research by Edwards-Bailey (2023) provides an in-depth qualitative exploration of the psychological profiles of students who engage in self-harm through a case study approach. Although rich in contextual insights, this method limits the generalizability of findings and does not measure the prevalence or demographic patterns of such behavior in specific high-risk populations such as medical students (Sadighpour et al., 2023). Another study by Alifiando et al. (2022) quantitatively assessed the tendency toward self-harm among final-year students. While relevant, its focus is restricted to a single educational level (final-year students) and does not incorporate religious perspectives in interpreting the results. Meanwhile, studies by Bahmani (2022) and Azzahra & Wahyuni (2023) identified a correlation between academic stress and self-harm behavior, but did not specifically target medical students—a group characterized by distinctive academic pressures that differ from other disciplines.

From an Islamic perspective, self-harm behavior is considered contrary to the principle of preserving the soul (*hifzh an-nafs*), which constitutes one of the primary objectives of the sharia. The Qur'an explicitly forbids self-destruction in Surah An-Nisa :29 and emphasizes the sanctity of human life in Surah Al-Maidah :32. Thus, the study of self-harm is not only relevant from a psychological and public health standpoint but also holds profound importance from a religious perspective.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the tendency of self-harm behavior among students of the YARSI University Medical Study Program and to analyze it from an Islamic perspective.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive quantitative design with a cross sectional approach. The research population is students of the YARSI University Medical Study Program, with a total sample of 141 people taken using the total sampling method. The instrument used is the Self-harm Inventory (SHI) which consists of 22 items that measure self-harm behavior with a cut-off of ≥ 5 as an indicator of self-harm tendencies.

Data collection was carried out through the distribution of online questionnaires to respondents. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS software version 25 through a descriptive test, including frequency distribution, minimum values, maximums, averages, medians, and standard deviations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 141 medical students of YARSI University. All respondents (100%) had a tendency to self-harm based on Self-harm Inventory (SHI) with an average score of 30.11, median 28, minimum score of 22, and maximum of 71.

Based on categorization, most respondents were in the low (49.6%) category, followed by the medium (34.8%) and high (15.6%) categories.

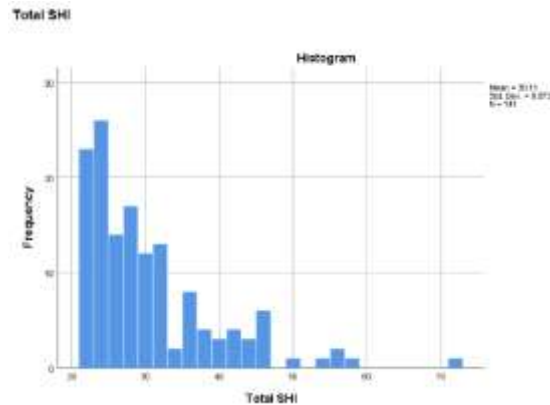


Figure 1. Self Harm Inventory (SHI) Score Distribution

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Category of Self-Harm Predisposition

| Category | Frequency (n) | Presentase (%) |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Rendah (22-27) | 79 | 49,6 |
| Medium (28-41) | 49 | 34,8 |
| Height (≥ 42) | 22 | 15,6 |
| Total | 141 | 100,0 |

In addition to the tendency to self-harm behavior, this study also assesses the psychological and academic impact experienced by respondents. The results of the analysis showed that most of the respondents experienced mild impacts both emotionally and academically.

Table 2. Distribution of Academic Impact Categories on Respondents

| Category | Frequency (n) | Presentase (%) |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Low (4-6) | 114 | 80,9 |
| Medium (7-9) | 18 | 12,8 |
| Tinggi (10-13) | 9 | 6,4 |
| Total | 141 | 100,0 |

The majority of academic impacts due to self-harm are in the low category (83.0%), while the Psychological impact is also dominated by the low category (80.9%).

Table 3. Categorical Distribution of Psychological Impact on Respondents

| Category | Frequency (n) | Presentase (%) |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Low (4-6) | 177 | 83,0 |
| Medium (7-9) | 19 | 13,5 |
| Tinggi (10-13) | 5 | 3,5 |
| Total | 141 | 100,0 |

The characteristics of the respondents in this study showed that the majority of the study participants were women (76.6%), while men were 23.4%.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents by Gender Respondents' Age

| Gender | Frequency (n) | Presentase (%) |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Male- Male | 33 | 23,4 |
| Woman | 108 | 76,6 |
| Total | 141 | 100,0 |

By age, most respondents were 20 years old (46.8%), followed by 19 years old (17.0%), 21 years old (17.0%), and others under 10%.

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents by Age

| Age | Frequency (n) | Presentase (%) |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 18 | 22 | 15,6 |
| 19 | 24 | 17,0 |
| 20 | 66 | 46,8 |
| 21 | 24 | 17,0 |
| 22 | 3 | 2,1 |
| 23 | 1 | 0,7 |
| 24 | 1 | 0,7 |
| Total | 141 | 100,0 |

Judging from the batch, the most respondents came from the class of 2022 (59.6%), followed by the class of 2024 (20.6%) and 2023 (19.9%).

Table 6. Distribution of Respondents by Semester and Class Level

| Characteristics | Category | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Semester | Semester 2 | 30 | 21,3 |
| | Semester 4 | 28 | 19,9 |
| | Semester 6 | 83 | 58,9 |
| Force | 2022 | 84 | 59,6 |
| | 2023 | 28 | 19,9 |
| | 2024 | 29 | 20,6 |
| Total | | 141 | 100,0 |

Based on academic achievement, most respondents had a Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of ≥ 3.0 (67.4%), which indicates that the majority of students have good academic performance

Table 7. Distribution of Respondents by GPA

| GPA | Frequency (n) | Presentation (%) |
|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| < 3.0 | 46 | 32,6 |
| > 3.0 | 95 | 67,4 |
| Total | 141 | 100,0 |

These results illustrate that the group with a tendency to self-harm in this study was dominated by female students of early adulthood with relatively high academic ability. These Self-Harming Behavior Among Students in the Medical Program at Yarsi University and Its Review From an Islamic Perspective

findings indicate that self-harm behaviors are not necessarily related to low academic performance, but rather to psychological factors and the way individuals manage emotional stress.

Discussion

The results of this study show that self-harm behavior is a real phenomenon among medical students at YARSI University, as all respondents exhibited a tendency toward self-harm. These findings confirm that academic and psychological pressures in medical education may be the main triggering factors for the emergence of such behaviors. This condition aligns with the research of Alifiando et al. (2022) and Anugrah et al. (2023), which state that a high academic burden and professional demands can increase the risk of psychological disorders and self-injurious behavior among medical students.

The majority of respondents demonstrated low levels of self-harm, indicating that most students are able to manage stress; however, this behavior still requires serious attention. These findings are consistent with those of Destiana and Azzahra & Wahyuni, who explain that despite low self-harm intensity, individuals exhibiting such behaviors remain at risk of increased frequency and severity without adequate emotional support.

The dominance of female respondents aged 20 reinforces previous findings that women are more likely than men to express emotional distress through self-harm behaviors. Interestingly, most students with self-harm tendencies had a GPA of ≥ 3.0 , suggesting that this behavior is not necessarily linked to low academic achievement but rather to maladaptive emotional regulation strategies.

From an Islamic perspective, self-harm is clearly prohibited as it contradicts the principle of preserving the soul (*hifzh an-nafs*), which is one of the primary objectives of *Maqashid al-Sharia*. The Qur'an, in Surah An-Nisa :29, emphasizes the prohibition of self-destruction, while the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) states that the human body has rights that must be respected and should not be harmed. Islam regards the body and soul as a trust (*amanah*) from Allah SWT that must be safeguarded; therefore, acts of self-harm, whether physical or emotional, constitute a violation of that trust.

In a psychological context, self-harm often arises from emotional imbalance and weak spiritual connection. Islam offers both preventive and curative solutions through spiritual practices such as *dhikr*, supplication, prayer, and the strengthening of faith as healthy coping mechanisms. For medical students who face high academic and emotional stress, reinforcing religious values and participating in spiritual development programs can be effective strategies for managing stress and preventing destructive behavior.

Thus, Islam not only prohibits self-harm but also provides comprehensive guidance to preserve mental and spiritual well-being, enabling individuals to face life's challenges with patience and steadfast faith. The results of this study contribute to the advancement of knowledge, particularly in health psychology and medical education, by highlighting the importance of spiritually based interventions and emotional support in preventing self-harm. Practically, these findings also provide a foundation for higher education institutions to design holistic student support programs that integrate psychological counseling, academic mentoring, and religious guidance.

CONCLUSION

All medical students of YARSI University in this study have a tendency to self-harm with varying degrees, although the majority are in the low category. The psychological and academic impact is also largely low, but this phenomenon still needs special attention. The dominant characteristics of respondents are female, 20 years old, and class of 2022. Viewed from an Islamic perspective, self-harm is a behavior that is prohibited because it is contrary to the teaching of self-care (hifzh an-nafs). Therefore, strategies for preventing and handling self-harm in students need to be carried out comprehensively, including psychological interventions, academic support, and strengthening spiritual aspects.

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