The Relationship of Self-Esteem to Depression Incidence in Level 1 Nursing Students

Nur Aulia Majidah[1]*, Shinta Prawitasari[2] and Hardin La Ramba [3]
[123]Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan RS Husada Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia
*Email Correspondence: majidahnuraulia@gmail.com

Mahasiswa keperawatan tingkat awal sering menghadapi tekanan akademik dan transisi psikososial yang dapat memengaruhi kesehatan mental mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi hubungan antara harga diri dan tingkat depresi pada mahasiswa keperawatan tingkat 1 di Jakarta. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kuantitatif korelasional dengan pendekatan cross-sectional, melibatkan 106 responden yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Instrumen yang digunakan meliputi Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) untuk mengukur harga diri dan Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) untuk menilai tingkat depresi. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan uji Spearman dan chi-square. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya korelasi negatif yang signifikan antara harga diri dan depresi (ρ = –0,875; p < 0,001), yang berarti semakin rendah harga diri, semakin tinggi tingkat depresi yang dialami. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya intervensi psikososial yang berfokus pada penguatan harga diri untuk mencegah depresi pada mahasiswa keperawatan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi untuk pengembangan strategi promosi kesehatan mental di pendidikan tinggi keperawatan. Implikasinya menunjukkan perlunya integrasi pendekatan promotif dan preventif dalam kurikulum serta layanan konseling untuk mendeteksi risiko depresi dan memperkuat harga diri mahasiswa sejak awal. Intervensi berbasis kelompok dan pelatihan coping skills dapat meningkatkan kesejahteraan psikologis mahasiswa

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Nursing students in their early stages often face academic pressure and psychosocial transitions that can impact their mental health. This study aims to identify the relationship between self-esteem and depression levels among first-year nursing students in Jakarta. A quantitative correlational research method with a cross-sectional approach was used, involving 106 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used include the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) to measure self-esteem and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) to assess depression levels. Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's test and chi-square. The results showed a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and depression (ρ = -0.875; p < 0.001), indicating that lower self-esteem is associated with higher levels of depression. These findings emphasize the importance of psychosocial interventions focused on enhancing self-esteem as a preventive measure for depression among nursing students. The study contributes to the development of mental health promotion strategies in nursing higher education. The implications suggest the need to integrate promotive and preventive approaches into the curriculum and counseling services to detect early depression risks and strengthen students' self-esteem from the outset. Group-based interventions and coping skills training can enhance the psychological well-being of students.

Introduction

Nursing students are in the transition phase from high school to college, which is characterized by academic pressure, social adaptation, and identity change (Hasanah et al., 2022). Study by Nugraha (2023) Calling the phase *emerging adulthood* as a period of vulnerability to psychological disorders. According to *World Health Organization* (WHO) year (2023) More than 280 million people in the world suffer from depression, and adolescents and college students are high-risk groups. In Indonesia, 5.9% of the population of DKI Jakarta experiences depression with the age group of 15–29 years. Surveys *Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health* (I-NAMHS) year (2022) said that between 2.45 million (5.5%) and 15.5 million (34.9%) adolescents have mental health problems. Mental health will have a major impact on national productivity.

Longitudinal research by Lei et al (2024b) conducted a survey of 1,265 respondents in Changsha, China. The study found a strong correlation between depression, self-esteem, and non-suicidal self-harm behaviors (NSSI) in adolescents. Depression is exacerbated by low self-esteem, and depression increases the likelihood of self-harm. On the other hand, the despair caused by self-injurious behavior can also have a detrimental effect on self-esteem. The reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and self-injurious behavior is entirely mediated by depression. The cyclical relationship between self-esteem, depression, and self-harming behaviors is explained by the theoretical model proposed in this study, which underscores the importance of interventions aimed at improving self-esteem and lowering depression in preventing self-harm behaviors in adolescents.

Self-esteem is an evaluation of a person's self-esteem based on how well their actions align with their personal values. Feelings of competence (high self-esteem) or low self-esteem (low self-esteem) are directly affected by how well a person completes a task. High self-esteem is an unconditional sense of acceptance of oneself as a valued and significant being, regardless of one's mistakes, failures, or losses (Stuart., 2022). Rosenberg's Theory (1965) in research (Mingli et al., 2024) emphasizes that self-esteem is an individual's overall evaluation of himself. Key aspects: Self-esteem (*Self-respect)*, acceptance of shortcomings and excesses (*Self-acceptance)*, and the perception of self-worth in a social context (*Self-worth).*

Depression is one of the mental disorders that can alter the state of the heart and feelings, make it difficult to feel happy or happy, change eating and sleeping patterns, and result in severe weight loss (Anissa., 2024). Aaron Beck's (1961) theory in research (Ihsanuddin & Taurusta, 2021) mentions that depression arises from negative mindsets regarding: Self (feeling worthless), the world (the environment is perceived as full of difficulties), the future (belief in failure). This research has high urgency because it targets population groups that are in a critical transition phase, namely first-year students. This phase is characterized by academic pressure, demands for social adaptation, and the search for self-identity, which psychologically puts them in a vulnerable position to mental disorders such as depression (Hasanah et al., 2022; Nugraha, 2023). The main arguments in this study are the high prevalence of depression in the age group of students, mental health as a determinant of national productivity, the strong correlation between self-esteem and depression, the need for a comprehensive theoretical approach and the lack of contextual studies in Indonesia.

Method

This study adopts a quantitative approach with correlational design and descriptive analysis, which aims to explore the relationship between two main variables: self-esteem and depression levels in first-year students. The correlational design was chosen because it allows the identification of patterns of relationships between variables empirically without direct intervention, thus fitting the exploratory objectives of this study. The determination of the sample was carried out in this study with the following criteria: Inclusion criteria: 1st level nursing students in Jakarta in the 2024-2025 academic year and Students willing to become respondents and Exclusion criteria: Nursing students at levels 2, 3 and 4 in Jakarta, students who are not willing to be respondents and students who are not present in class The sampling technique was carried out purposively, with a total of 106 participants determined through calculations using the G*Power application. Data collection was carried out through two standard instruments, namely the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) to assess the level of self-esteem and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) to assess the level of depression. The data was analyzed through the utilization of the Spearman Rank correlation test with the help of

SPSS software version 25. The research process took place during the period from May to June 2025.

Research Results

Univariate analysis in this study is used to describe the basic characteristics of each variable individually, as the initial stage before analyzing the relationship between variables.

Age characteristics

Table 1. Age characteristics

No	Age	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	17 years	1	0.9
2	18 years old	15	14.2
3	19 years old	56	52.8
4	20 years	26	24.5
5	21 years old	4	3.8
6	22 years old	1	0.9
7	24 years	1	0.9
8	25 years	1	0.9
9	26 years old	1	0.9
	Total	106	100

Judging from the age aspect, as many as 106 respondents were analyzed based on age categories. Their ages range from 17 to 26 years old, with an average age of 19 years.

Sex characteristics

Table 2. Sex characteristics

No	Gender	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Male	6	5.7
2	Women	100	94.3
	Total	106	100

Based on gender distribution, out of a total of 106 respondents, as many as 100 individuals (94.3%) were female, while 6 respondents (5.7%) were male.

Uji Kolmogorov-Smirnov

Table 3. Uji Kolmogorov-smirnov

Variabel	Statistics K-S	Sig. Asimptotics	Monte Carlo Sig.	Distribution
Self-Esteem	0.370	<0.001	<0.001	Abnormal
Depression	0.288	<0.001	<0.001	Abnormal

In this finding, normality testing was realized on two main variables, the test used was Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) accompanied by Lilliefors correction and Monte Carlo estimation as a result amplifier. Based on the output produced, the statistical value of K–S for the self-

esteem scale is 0.370 and for the depression scale is 0.288, each showing a significance value of < 0.001.

Table 4. Spearman correlation test

Variabel	Spearman correlation (p)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Self-Esteem and Depression	-0.875	<0.001	106

Referring to the table, a Spearman correlation test was conducted to identify the relationship between self-esteem levels and depression in 106 respondents. The results of the analysis showed a very strong negative correlation between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient value of –0.875.

Table 5. Chi-square test

Self-esteem	Depression				Total	p-value
	Normal	Mild depression	Moderate depression	Severe depression		
Height	36	1	0	0	37	
Average	8	0.0	0.0	0.0	8	<0.001
Low	0	0	19	42	61	
Total	44	1	19	42	106	

A *p-value* of < 0.001 shows a statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and depression in the population studied. Thus, the zero (H₀) hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted, namely empirically there is a correlation between the level of self-esteem and the incidence of depression in level 1 nursing students.

Discussion

Age and gender, as two main indicators, play a significant role in determining the level of susceptibility to psychological disorders. The majority of respondents were 19 years old (52.8%) and female (94.3%). Late adolescence to early adulthood is a developmental phase that is prone to psychological stress, including depression. Related matters are in line with the findings of the Li et al., (2023) which said that women have a higher prevalence of depression than men, influenced by hormonal, social, and psychological factors. Studies carried out Mallapiang et al., (2025) supports this argument by asserting that women experience more complex psychosocial challenges than men. In addition, the researchers also underlined the contribution of biological

and hormonal factors that strengthen women's susceptibility to mental disorders, as well as highlighting the social role that also influences their psychological state.

The relationship between self-esteem and the incidence of depression in 1st level nursing students

Depression is one of the mental health issues that continues to increase and is a serious concern in various circles. Psychological factors such as self-esteem are believed to have an important role in influencing a person's risk of developing depressive disorders. This study aimed to examine the relationship between the level of self-esteem and the incidence of depression in the respondents studied. The results of the Chi-Square test found a significant association between self-esteem and the incidence of depression (*p-value* < 0.001). All respondents with high self-esteem sometimes have high self-esteem and a more positive outlook on life so that they are more resilient when dealing with stress in daily life. The study also found that all respondents who experienced depression showed low self-esteem.

These findings are consistent with the theory of Rosenberg (1965) and the cognitive model of Beck (1961), and are reinforced by longitudinal studies by Lei et al., (2024a) which states that low self-esteem increases the risk of depression and self-harming behavior. The research is also supported by Lei et al., (2024b) which suggests that low self-esteem has the most influence on depressive symptoms. Other findings by Rossi et al., (2024) shows that self-esteem is an important mediator in the relationship between social support and depression.

Self-Esteem of Students

Self-esteem is an important dimension in the formation of individual identity and emotional stability, especially for students who are in a period of transition and adaptation to the higher education environment. Viewed from the context of nursing education, self-esteem acts as a psychological protector against academic pressures and complex social demands. As many as 57.5% of respondents have low self-esteem. Franze et al., (2021) states that nursing students with low self-esteem are more susceptible to psychological distress and depression. Study by Warnidar et al., (2024) emphasized that the condition of weak self-esteem directly contributes to the decline in the psychological well-being of nursing students. Students with low self-esteem

show limited adaptive capacity to manage stress, and are more susceptible to emotional disorders such as psychological fatigue and decreased life satisfaction.

Study by Aitama et al., (2021) affirms that low self-esteem is associated with psychological distress, such as stress, anxiety, and decreased adaptive abilities in campus life. This study confirms that self-esteem is not only a personal aspect, but is also influenced by social factors such as family support and physical health. The majority of respondents showed low self-esteem, which could be an indicator that the environment or context in which they were (such as educational, work, or social) may not be sufficiently supportive of the development of positive self-esteem. Students with low self-esteem tend to experience higher emotional distress and difficulty managing complex academic demands, making them vulnerable to psychological distress.

Identify the level of student depression

In the world of higher education, especially in the field of nursing, students are faced with intense academic pressure and high professional demands from the first year. This phase, which coincides with a period of psychological and social transition, makes students vulnerable to mental health disorders, including depression. Understanding the prevalence and characteristics of depression among nursing students is crucial in an effort to create an educational environment that is more supportive and responsive to their psychological needs. A total of 57.5% of respondents experienced depression, with details of 20.8% mild, 32.1% moderate, and 4.7% severe. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that more than half of nursing students experience mood disorders. This condition reflects the high level of vulnerability to depression faced by students in the health education environment. Depression can no longer be seen as an individual symptom that is temporary, but rather as a collective problem that shows systemic pressures in the academic world of nursing.

Becerra et al., (2020) emphasizing that female students with low self-esteem tend to show higher depression scores, indicating that psychological dimensions such as self-perception also affect depression levels. Similar studies by Ratu et al., (2025) reinforcing this view by stating that an increasing number of health students are exhibiting depressive symptoms identified

through decreased concentration, sleep disturbances, withdrawal from social environments, and the use of non-adaptive coping strategies.

 Analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and depression

Self-esteem has long been recognized as one of the psychological aspects that has a vital role in maintaining the emotional balance of individuals, especially in the student population. In an academic context that is full of demands and pressures, a strong state of self-esteem is an important capital to form psychological resilience and reduce the risk of mental disorders. This analysis showed that all respondents with high self-esteem showed low levels of depression, while all respondents who experienced depression had low self-esteem. These results are in line with studies by EL-Matury et al., (2022) which indicates a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and psychological disorders in the form of depression, anxiety, and stress among college students. In other words, the higher a person's level of self-esteem, the lower the likelihood of being shaken by mental health disorders.

Studies conducted by Kim (2025) It also confirms that self-esteem plays an important role as a predictor of psychological tendencies, including suicidal ideation and depression. This means that self-esteem is not only closely related to mental health, but also a starting point in the design of preventive interventions that are promotive. This means that strengthening self-esteem can be an effective strategy in reducing the risk of depression among college students. Longitudinal study by Aebi & Orth, (2025) strengthens this view. The research uses the *Continuous Time Modeling*, which allows for the identification of patterns of the relationship between self-esteem and depression dynamically over the long term. The results showed that decreased self-esteem preceded the onset of depressive symptoms, whereas depression did not significantly affect an individual's future self-esteem. This makes it clear that self-esteem is a major risk factor, not just the impact of depression itself.

Conclusion

Based on the results of a study on first-level nursing students at STIKes Husada Hospital Jakarta, a very significant relationship was found between the level of self-esteem and the incidence of depression. Most respondents (57.5%) showed low self-esteem and at the same time experienced depressive symptoms, with moderate to severe depression being the most

predominant. Analysis using the Spearman Rank test yielded a very strong negative correlation value (ρ = –0.875; p < 0.001), which suggests that the lower the individual's self-esteem, the higher the likelihood of depression. In contrast, respondents with high levels of self-esteem showed no signs of depression, so self-esteem may act as a protective factor against psychological distress in academic and social contexts. These findings support Rosenberg's self-evaluation theory as well as Beck's cognitive model that highlights the role of negative mindsets in the emergence of depressive symptoms.

In line with these results, it is recommended to nursing education institutions to integrate self-esteem strengthening programs in the curriculum or student activities. These programs can be social skills training, psychological counseling, and the formation of peer support groups. Lecturers and educators are also expected to be more sensitive to the signs of low self-esteem and symptoms of depression in students, and be able to provide appropriate early interventions. For college students, it is important to build awareness of the importance of mental health and actively seek help when experiencing psychological distress. Researchers are further advised to expand the scope of the population, control for confounding variables such as academic stress and social support, and use a longitudinal approach to observe the dynamics of self-esteem and depression in more depth.

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