

Mapping the Intensity of Sadfishing Behavior as the Basis for Need Assessment of Guidance and Counseling Programs in Students

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Abstract

The development of technology has made social media the main space for adolescents to express their emotions. However, excessive self-disclosure to gain sympathy, or known as the phenomenon of sadfishing, can be a risk to students' mental well-being. This study aims to map the intensity of sadfishing behavior in school-age adolescents as a basis for need assessment in the preparation of guidance and counseling programs. This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive research type. Data collection was carried out through a survey of 104 valid student respondents. The collected data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics to categorize student behavior into low, medium, and high levels based on empirical normal distribution guidelines. The results of the study showed that the mapping of the level of sadfishing provides a real portrait of the psychosocial condition of adolescents in cyberspace. Most of the students identified as needing education related to the limits of self-disclosure in the digital space, while students in the extreme category need specific interventions. These findings confirm that sadfishing is not just a trend, but an emergency signal of the high need for empathy and social support. As an implication, the results of this mapping can be used by schools and counseling teachers to design prevention and intervention programs that focus on improving emotional literacy and interpersonal communication skills in the real world.

Keywords: *Sadfishing; Need Assessment; Adolescents; Guidance and Counseling.*

INTRODUCTION

The massive development of information technology today has made social media platforms the main space for school-age adolescents to explore and express themselves freely (Agustina & Laelatus, 2020). The transformation of this digital space no longer just functions as an ordinary communication tool, but has become a forum for social interaction that accommodates and shows various psychosocial dynamics of students openly (Darmawan et al., 2019). In a review of developmental psychology, online self-disclosure is basically recognized as an integral part of the process of finding the identity of adolescents that is classified as normal, as long as the activity is not carried out compulsively (Soputan, 2021).

The phenomenon of the rampant use of digital space is often used specifically by students as a means of temporary emotional catharsis to vent the various emotional turmoil they are experiencing (Runtu & Kurniawan, 2019). The practice of sharing negative emotions in cyberspace can sometimes indeed function as a healthy coping mechanism to get instant social support from peers, as long as the intensity of its use remains well controlled (Kristofora & Hendriati, 2021). However, the limitations of self-disclosure that are poorly understood by students often plunge them into very excessive validation-seeking behavior in the online public space (Yosida, 2024).

The behavior of seeking sympathy excessively through uploading sadness content on social media platforms has recently become widely known as the phenomenon of sadfishing (Hamzah & Putri, 2022). Individuals who fall into high-level sadfishing tendencies are often motivated by feelings of extreme loneliness and the belief that face-to-face interactions in the real world no longer provide adequate emotional support (Asari & Mukhoyyaroh, 2024). As a result of various psychological needs that are hampered in the real world, these adolescents ultimately decide to switch drastically by seeking validation from a digital audience whose scope is much wider (Firual & Hariyadi, 2022).

Although it is often considered a normal phase, sadfishing actions that are carried out continuously and without good emotional regulation actually harbor potential psychological risks that require serious attention (Sudrajat, 2020). Instead of getting the expected sympathy, adolescents who excessively expose their sadness on social media often reap negative responses from other internet users, ranging from social rejection to becoming victims of cyberbullying (Sekarayu & Santoso, 2022). The predicate as an attention seeker who is ultimately embedded in the online social environment has actually been proven to worsen and decrease the quality of mental well-being of the students themselves (Wulandari et al., 2024).

Faced with this complex psychological phenomenon, sadfishing behavior should no longer be seen as just a momentary trend, but should be interpreted as an emergency signal for the high need for empathy and human connection (Hamzah & Putri, 2022). Therefore, educators and schools are required to be much more sensitive in paying attention to the various signs shown by students on social media, considering that these digital behaviors are essentially an authentic reflection of their mental state in real life (Yunere et al., 2021). The failure of schools to identify emotional signals in the digital realm has the potential to cause neglect of students with excessive behavior intensity who are in dire need of advanced psychological assistance (Nadhirah et al., 2022).

As an essential initial strategic step, a systematic effort is needed to map precisely the extent to which the intensity of this sadfishing behavior is actually demonstrated by students in the school environment (Hamzah & Putri, 2022). Through a measurable mathematical footing and based on empirical normal distribution guidelines, the determination of boundaries between categories of student behavior can be objectively analyzed to sort out extremist tendencies (Brett Nito et al., 2022). The results of this comprehensive mapping are crucial because the data will provide a real portrait of students' psychosocial dynamics, as well as facilitate teachers to identify which subjects really need assistance (Nadhirah et al., 2022).

By knowing exactly the mapping of students' sadfishing levels, especially for those at a very high level, guidance and counseling teachers can formulate much more specific and targeted handling and intervention measures (Nadhirah et al., 2022). Intervention plans to overcome maladaptive social media behaviors must focus on efforts to improve emotional literacy and improve students' interpersonal communication skills when interacting in the real world (Wiretna & Eka Saputra, 2021). Furthermore, holistic education on how to seek healthy social support is absolutely necessary to help all adolescents avoid the destructive impact of social media use that is too oriented towards negative emotions (Kinanti & Hartati, 2019).

Seeing the urgency of the digital behavior phenomenon, this study was carried out specifically using a quantitative approach with a descriptive research type to map in detail the intensity of sadfishing behavior among students (Hamzah & Putri, 2022). The quantitative data collected through this survey will then be used to extract empirical values to produce an objective and academically accountable classification of behavior. In the end, the mapping results of this study will function directly as a basis for need assessment for schools in developing various psychological intervention programs and counseling guidance that are truly effective.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive research type. This descriptive survey approach was specifically chosen to map the intensity of sadfishing behavior shown by the students. The results of this mapping will later function as a basis for need assessment for schools to develop psychological intervention programs and counseling guidance that are right on target. The population and sample in this study focused on school-age adolescents. Based on the field data that was successfully collected, the total number of respondents who were validly involved in this study amounted to 104 students.

The quantitative data that has been collected is analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques using the help of SPSS software. This descriptive analysis is used to extract empirical values from field data, which include minimum values, maximum values, mean, and standard deviations (SD).

In order to map the intensity of *sadfishing behavior* shown by the students, this study classified the respondents' scores into three main strata, namely low, medium, and high. This leveling process is based on the empirical normal distribution guideline by referring to the provisions of Azwar (2012), which specifically utilizes the calculation of the mean value (M) as well as the standard deviation (SD) from the field data. The selection of this statistical approach is based on its function of being able to concentrate the majority of the respondents' answer distribution into the middle value range, which represents behavioral tendencies in general.

Through this measurable mathematical footing, the determination of the boundaries between categories becomes much more objective, so that researchers can precisely sort and identify which subjects really show a tendency to *sadfish* at extremes, both very high and very low. 1 SD benchmark from the average because statistically, groups in the range between (Mean - 1 SD) to (Mean + 1 SD) account for about 68% of the total population that is considered "normal" or "average" (Medium category).

Table 1. Categorization Norm Formula

No.	Categories	Formula
1.	Low	Score < (Mean - 1 SD)
2.	Medium	(Mean - 1 SD) ≤ Score (Mean + 1 SD)
3.	Height	Score > (Mean + 1 SD)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Contains research results and discussion of research results that examine research results with developed theories. If it contains tables or graphs, it must be referred to in the discussion of research results.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total_Sadfishing	104	8,00	32,00	16,6538	4,59584
Valid N (listwise)	104				

Data examination related to the sadfishing variable has been carried out involving a sample group consisting of 104 students. This data processing is based on the application of descriptive statistical methods to see an overview of the participants' responses. From the recapitulation process, it was found that the score range was quite varied; the minimum score was at 8, while the maximum score achievement was recorded at 32. This calculation also gave rise to a concentration point in the form of a mean value of 16.65, which was accompanied by a standard deviation or standard deviation at a magnitude of 4.60. The average number and the standard deviation are not just complementary numbers,

but function directly as a mathematical guideline to level research subjects into low, medium, and high classifications.

Table 3. Category Score

No.	Categories	Score
1.	Low	< 12
2.	Medium	$12 \leq 20$
3.	Height	> 21

The determination of the classification of *sadfishing behavior* is realized through the application of psychological categorization norms. By adding and subtracting one standard deviation (4.60) to the empirical mean value (16.65), a mathematical cut-off point basis was obtained to distribute the respondents. In order to simplify the process of scoring sorting in a practical and applicable manner, the results of the calculation of the threshold limit were then adjusted into the form of integers. Through this adjustment, the lower threshold was set at 12, while the upper limit was positioned at 20. Consequently, subjects who obtained an accumulated score of less than 12 would be immediately placed in the group with a low tendency. Furthermore, individuals who have a score range ranging from 12 to 20 are categorized as included in the moderate criteria, while those who record scores beyond 20 are automatically classified into groups with high behavioral intensity. As a final stage, the process of sorting the position of each subject is executed in a structured manner through the SPSS statistical application program.

The following is a detailed table of the results of the *calculation of the sadfishing* level categorization, complete with the score range and distribution percentage:

Table 3. Category Score

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rendah	15	14,4	14,4	14,4
	Sedang	66	63,5	63,5	77,9
	Tinggi	23	22,1	22,1	100,0
	Total	104	100,0	100,0	

Referring to the table above, the results of categorization based on low, medium and high categories can be seen in the following figure:

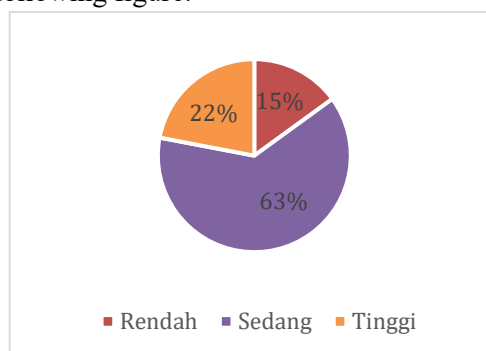


Figure 1. Sadfishing Category Diagram

If a more in-depth study of the details of the quantitative data presented, it is clear that the distribution of *sadfishing* tendencies among respondents is significantly concentrated in the medium category, with the dominant portion reaching 63%. In the next order, subjects with a relatively high level of behavioral manifestation occupy the second position through the achievement of 22%, while the most minor proportion is filled by the group at a low level, which is 15%. This statistical mapping basically provides a confirmation that the tendency of students to express negative emotions in order to trigger

public sympathy on the majority online platforms is still within the usual limits of reasonableness. Although the main picture is dominated by groups with moderate intensity, the results of this categorization do not necessarily rule out specific findings that appear in the field. The fact that more than one-fifth of the total identified sample has a tendency to seek attention excessively is a crucial note. This reality deserves special attention, given that the high percentage in this category suggests the existence of a group of individuals with certain emotional vulnerabilities, so their condition absolutely requires more comprehensive assistance, supervision, and attention in the mental health and psychological review.

Discussion

This study aims to map the intensity of sadfishing behavior in students using an empirical normal distribution approach that refers to the provisions of Azwar (2012). Through the use of an average score (M) of 16.65 and a standard deviation (SD) of 4.60, the researcher succeeded in classifying subjects into three main strata: low, medium, and high objectively. The use of this standard deviation is very crucial because it is able to concentrate the majority of the distribution of respondents' answers into the middle value range, so that the representation of behavioral tendencies in general can be seen more precisely.

Based on the descriptive data obtained, it was found that the majority of students were in the "Medium" category with a percentage of 63.5% or as many as 66 students. This shows that the behavior of seeking sympathy through sadness content on social media is a common phenomenon among adolescents today (Ainy et al., 2023). In the context of developmental psychology, adolescents do tend to use social media as a space for self-expression. This study states that online self-disclosure is part of a normal search for identity as long as it is not done compulsively (Pérez-wiesner et al., 2025).

The presence of most students in the medium category gives an idea that the sadfishing behavior they exhibit is still at a tolerable level (Putri et al., 2020). These students are most likely to use social media as a means of temporary emotional catharsis in the absence of extreme reliance on public validation (Minutillo et al., 2024). Sharing negative emotions on social media sometimes serves as a healthy coping mechanism to gain instant social support, provided the intensity remains under control (Ismail et al., 2021).

Although the category is dominating, these findings also leave an important note as there are 22.1% or 23 students who fall into the "High" category. The excessive intensity of sadfishing in this group indicates that there are psychological needs that have not been met in the real world. Individuals with high sadfishing tendencies often have greater levels of loneliness and feel that face-to-face interactions do not provide enough emotional support, so they turn to a wider digital audience (Jin et al., 2025).

The condition of students in this high category requires further attention in the psychological realm because of the considerable potential risk (Naslund et al., 2020). Sadfishing that is carried out continuously can trigger negative responses from other internet users, such as cyberbullying or social rejection (Sela-Shayovitz et al., 2024). Adolescents who excessively expose sadness on social media are often considered attention seekers, which ultimately lowers the quality of their own mental well-being (Dixon-Ward & Y. Chan, 2021).

On the other hand, there are 14.4% or 15 students who are in the "Low" category. This group shows very minimal intensity of sympathy-seeking behavior through digital platforms. This can indicate that the student has good emotional regulation or has a very strong real-world social support system so that they do not feel the need to seek validation on social media (Kristofora & Hendriati, 2021). In line with the theory from Boyd (2014), some adolescents choose to maintain their emotional privacy as a form of more mature and selective self-image management (Dianiya, 2021).

The wide variation in scores, ranging from a minimum score of 8 to a maximum score of 32, reflects the diversity of students' psychological characteristics in response to their life problems. These

significant differences prove that internal factors such as self-esteem and emotional stability play an important role in determining whether or not a person will sadsfish (Ceballos et al., 2024). Research by Woods & Scott (2016) confirms that emotional engagement with social media is highly correlated with individual anxiety levels, which is in line with the extreme distribution of data in this study (Jin et al., 2025).

The results of this categorization become a measurable mathematical footing for schools to accurately identify subjects who need help. By knowing who are the students who are at a very high level, guidance and counseling teachers can provide more specific and targeted interventions. Interventions for maladaptive social media behaviors should focus on improving emotional literacy and interpersonal communication skills in the real world (Darmawan et al., 2019).

In the perspective of need assessment, this data shows that schools need to develop prevention programs that not only target students in the high category, but also strengthen digital literacy for all students (Naslund et al., 2020). Since the majority are in the medium category, education on limits on self-disclosure is very relevant (Yosida, 2024). Education on how to seek healthy social support can help adolescents avoid the negative impacts of negative emotion-oriented social media use (Zhou & Cheng, 2022).

Overall, this descriptive analysis provides a real portrait of the psychosocial dynamics of students in the digital era. Sadsfishing behavior is not just a trend, but a signal of the need for empathy and human connection. Through this data, it is hoped that educators can be more sensitive to the signs shown by students on social media, because these digital behaviors are a reflection of real mental states in real life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of descriptive data analysis that has been carried out on 104 respondents, it can be concluded that the mapping of the intensity of sadsfishing behavior provides a very clear picture of the psychosocial dynamics of students in the current digital era. The phenomenon of sadsfishing or excessive sympathy seeking in cyberspace is proven to be not just a trend in social media use, but a real signal of the high need of adolescents for empathy and humane social connection. Through statistical categorization that divides student behavior into low, medium, and high levels, this data objectively shows that most adolescents still have difficulty setting limits on self-disclosure. This proves that many students use the digital space as an escape because of the lack of emotional support in the real world, so they urgently need guidance on how to express negative emotions and seek support with healthier coping mechanisms.

The mapping data from this study has a very crucial function as a foundation for a comprehensive need assessment for the school. For guidance and counseling teachers, specific information about the level of student sadsfishing is very helpful in designing a more targeted and targeted psychological intervention program, especially for students who are identified as being in the high category. However, the follow-up from the school should ideally not only focus on the mentoring approach for certain individuals. Schools need to formulate a classically preventive education program that focuses on improving emotional literacy, strengthening digital literacy, and improving the interpersonal communication skills of all students when interacting in the real world. Education on how to seek positive social support is absolutely necessary so that students avoid the negative effects of social media such as cyberbullying and the tendency to seek pseudo-validation.

Although this study has succeeded in mapping the condition of students' digital behavior in a measurable manner, the main focus is still limited to a descriptive picture of behavior intensity, so there are still various academic gaps that need to be explored further. Therefore, further researchers are strongly advised to examine the driving factors and psychological impact of this sadsfishing behavior in more depth, for example through a qualitative or correlational approach involving variables such as levels of loneliness, self-control, and peer support. In addition, future research is also encouraged to

expand the reach of the population and research samples from various school levels so that the results are much more representative. Furthermore, the development of further experimental-based research is highly expected, such as designing and testing the effectiveness of a module of direct guidance and counseling services to reduce the intensity of sadfishing behavior in adolescents.

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