

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

In recent years, the phenomenon of having suicidal thoughts among Generation Z has become a serious mental health issue. (This generation born in between 1997 until 2012 who are raised in the digital era with rapid access to information and more complex social demands). (Suicidal thoughts occur when someone possesses persistent ideas and intentions to end one's life ranging from considering, planning, until attempting to commit suicide eventually (Klonsky et al., 2016). Having such thoughts is the initial step of suicidal behaviour that significantly contributes to global death (Karisma & Fridari, 2021). Statistics provided by *World Health Organization* (WHO) (2021b) indicate that suicide ranked as the fourth most prominent reason people aged 15 to 29 died around the world in 2019. This exceeded the number of deaths caused by malaria, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, or war and homicide. Globally, the number of individuals who die by suicide surpasses 700,000 annually (*World Health Organization*, 2021a).

In Indonesia, this issue gives cause for concern as well. Statistics sourced from the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) show that from 2012 to 2023, the country saw 2,112 incidents of suicide, out of which 985, or roughly 46.63%, involved young people. (Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional, 2023). Research from Marthoenis & Yasir Arafat (2022) provided information on suicidal actions among young people in Indonesia, indicating that among the 6,482 young participants, 5.2% reported having suicidal ideation, 5.6% had formulated a strategy for suicide, and 2.7% had engaged in a suicide attempt. Based on the results of a questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents, the late adolescent group aged 17-21 years was the age group that most frequently experienced suicidal thoughts compared to other age groups. Furthermore, *Survei Kesehatan Indonesia* (SKI) (2023) reported that the population in the 15-24 years age group, which is part of Generation Z, has the highest prevalence of depression at 2% compared to other age groups. This same 15-24 years age group with depression also ranked highest in the tendency to have ideas or thoughts of suicidal acts, at 0.39%. This figure is the highest compared to other age groups, such as 0.28% for ages 65-74, 0.22% for ages 25-34, and 0.19% for ages 35-44. The tendency to have suicidal thoughts is 36 times greater compared to young people who do not experience depression. Ironically, although the prevalence of depression and the tendency for suicidal thoughts in Generation Z rank the highest, this group

is the age group that receives the least treatment, with only 10.4% of them receiving professional help (Badan Kebijakan Pembangunan Kesehatan, 2023).

The high rates of depression and suicidal thoughts among Generation Z, coupled with the low number of individuals receiving treatment, are exacerbated by the social stigma attached to suicide. This stigma can stem from the individual themselves, their loved ones, society, or even healthcare professionals themselves (Malonka & Rusli, 2022). In Indonesia, suicide is often viewed as a shameful act that must be concealed because it is seen as a moral failure linked to religious values, which play a central role in Indonesian society. Onie et al (2022) noted that religious factors and family dynamics play a significant role in influencing both the risk of suicidal behavior and suicide prevention efforts. A dysfunctional family serves as a risk factor that can trigger suicidal thoughts; however, on the other hand, thinking about one's family or loved ones can often prevent a person from committing suicide. Similarly, with regard to religious factors, strong religious beliefs can often stop individuals from having suicidal thoughts or acting on them, but this factor can also sometimes prevent them from seeking help. This is due to the stigmas imposed by society, such as being seen as lacking faith, not being devout enough, or being ungrateful. These stigmas lead them to prefer hiding their condition due to feelings of shame, guilt, or sin.

The lack of support for people experiencing suicidal thoughts is also due to the fact that suicide prevention hotlines in Indonesia are still considered ineffective in providing assistance. BBC News Indonesia (2024) reported that some survivors had negative experiences when contacting the 119 ext. 8 hotline. Some complained that the response fell short of expectations, while others were unable to connect to the hotline at all. BBC also noted that the available hotline fails to meet adequate standards, such as inadequately trained staff, services not available 24 hours a day, and limited resources. This highlights the need for significant improvements in Indonesia's mental health system.

According to WHO in the book 'Pedoman Pencegahan dan Penanganan Bunuh Diri' (Guidelines for Suicide Prevention and Management) published by the Direktorat Jenderal Pencegahan dan Pengendalian Penyakit (Directorate General of Disease Prevention and Control) (2021), There are five risk factors that contribute to suicide. First, community factors, which include disasters, war, social conflict, discrimination, and traumatic events. Next, environmental and social factors, which include access to means of suicide, inappropriate media coverage, and stigma, are significant factors. Within the healthcare system, barriers to accessing

facilities, limited mental health capacity, and the inability of healthcare facilities to handle suicide cases also contribute to suicide. Additionally, interpersonal factors such as social isolation, lack of support, loss of close relationships, and relationship conflicts further increase the risk. Finally, regarding individual factors, mental health issues, financial problems, feelings of helplessness, chronic illness, a family history of suicide, as well as genetic and biological factors play a significant role in exacerbating the risk of suicide.

In the research conducted by Aulia, N., Yulastri, Y., & Sasmita, H. (2019) The primary factor contributing to the risk of someone having or experiencing suicidal thoughts is psychological factors. One psychological disorder that significantly increases the risk of suicidal thoughts is depression. Depression is a condition in which a low mood persists continuously for at least two weeks and interferes with daily activities (Malonka & Rusli, 2022). These low feelings or moods can manifest as sadness or a sense of emptiness, often accompanied by other symptoms such as loss of energy, changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and a loss of interest in activities. Depression can also be accompanied by feelings of guilt, hopelessness, a bleak outlook on the future, feelings of worthlessness, and even thoughts of ending one's life (suicidal thoughts). In adolescents, the causes of depression are typically linked to experiences of bullying, peer pressure, and a lack of support from friends, difficulties keeping up with schoolwork, or family issues. (Malonka & Rusli, 2022).

Among Generation Z, the topic of depression is often discussed in a more casual or humorous tone on social media, such as through depression memes. Research conducted by Kariko & Anasih (2019) shows that among college students in Jakarta, the second most commonly used memes are those containing depressive content, even though 29% of them stated that they had never experienced symptoms of depression in their lives. This phenomenon can influence a person's perception of their mental health, as frequent exposure to content about depression can lead individuals to feel as though they are experiencing such symptoms, even though they are not (Mustang News, 2022). In fact, depression is not a condition that can be self-diagnosed; it requires a medical diagnosis from a mental health professional in order to be treated properly.

Depression in adolescents shares similarities with the normal phenomenon of "teen angst" commonly experienced by teenagers (Quinn, 2023). This may be why many young people find it difficult to distinguish between them, especially given the significant influence of social

media, which amplifies their emotional experiences. Quinn (2023) explains that teen angst describes feelings of anxiety, worry, and stress that are natural for adolescents to experience. Teenagers undergo numerous changes, transitions, and new challenges during their adolescence, which can naturally cause anxiety and worry. Various factors can trigger these feelings of angst in teenagers. The causes include unexpected events or situations, major life changes, hormonal shifts, and facing uncertainty. One of the fundamental causes of teen angst is the newfound need for privacy and independence, alongside the many changes they experience during puberty. During this phase, adolescents begin to pay more attention to their appearance, friendships, relationships, and their future. Some other common triggers include unfamiliar or unpredictable events, the influence of social media and social comparison, feeling insecure or lacking someone to trust, fear of not being accepted, and anxieties about the future. Additionally, the use of alcohol or illicit substances can also trigger angst in teenagers. However, if anxious behavior seems to persist, does not go away, or worsens over time, it could be a sign of a mental health condition like depression (Quinn, 2023).

An individual who experiences unpleasant life events often develops psychological problems as a result of the pain they endure. Someone who is unable to face or overcome this psychological pain may be driven to commit suicide (Karisma & Fridari, 2021). Klonsky & May (2015) state that suicidal thoughts develop through a combination of pain and hopelessness. As the pain they feel deepens and they lose hope for their lives, thoughts of suicide emerge as a way to end their suffering. Additionally, connectedness also has a significant influence on suicidal ideation. Klonsky and May also state that connectedness can refer to an individual's relationship with work, projects, roles, interests, or life's meaning. Connectedness is a crucial factor because even when someone experiences pain and hopelessness, maintaining connections to meaningful aspects of life can keep suicidal ideation at a moderate level. However, if this connectedness is disrupted or lost, while pain and despair intensify, the desire to commit suicide will grow stronger. This aligns with the concept that low social belonging and feelings of being a burden to others can exacerbate suicidal ideation.

In the context of suicide attempts, Mukarromah & Nuqul (2014) found that suicide attempts are often perceived as an escape from the problems faced by the individual. The act is also seen as a way to change a reality that does not meet their expectations. Individuals who attempt suicide feel that their lives no longer offer solutions to their problems, leading them to seek an extreme way to end their suffering. This aligns with the theory stating that unbearable pain,

when combined with hopelessness and a lack of connectedness to meaningful aspects of life, can drive an individual to consider suicide as a final solution.

According to Indonesian Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), empat urutan metode bunuh diri yang paling umum di Indonesia adalah gantung diri, meracuni diri sendiri, melompat dari ketinggian, dan menggunakan benda tajam. the four most common methods of suicide in Indonesia, in order, are hanging, self-poisoning, jumping from a height, and using sharp objects. This pattern reflects the characteristics of an agrarian country in a tropical region, where access to such means is easier. in the book 'Pedoman Pencegahan dan Penanganan Bunuh Diri' (Guidelines for Suicide Prevention and Management) published by the Direktorat Jenderal Pencegahan dan Pengendalian Penyakit (Directorate General of Disease Prevention and Control) (2021), states that cultural context, geography, and an individual's proximity to specific tools or means play a significant role in the choice of suicide method. Furthermore, detailed media reporting on the methods used in suicide incidents can increase the risk of imitation or copycat behavior among vulnerable individuals, especially if suicide is portrayed as a common response to stressful or crisis situations. Therefore, disseminating information about suicide must be done with great care to avoid increasing the risk of imitation.

In 2020, Badan Pusat Statistik [Central Statistics Agency] reported that Indonesia's population was dominated by Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012 and aged 12–27—accounting for 27.94% of the population, or approximately 74.93 million people. Generation Z, currently in their teenage years through early adulthood, is going through a crucial period of emotional development. At this stage, they tend to have more sensitive, reactive, and temperamental emotions, and are more vulnerable to psychological stress. An unfavorable environment can hinder their emotional maturity, leading to aggressive behaviors such as fighting or defiance, as well as regressive behaviors like daydreaming, withdrawing, or even suicide, especially when they are experiencing depression (Zuhroh, 2024). During late adolescence, around the ages of 17 to 21 (Soetjiningsih, 2004), There is a significant increase in physical, cognitive, and social development, enabling individuals to select and integrate their childhood identities and experiences to chart a clearer path toward adulthood (Santrock, 2003). According to The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2024), The age range of 14 to 24 years is a critical phase in life, marked by significant changes in cognitive, biological, and psychosocial aspects. During this period, individuals undergo profound development while facing challenges such as increased responsibilities, the formation of self-identity, and the development of skills

in interacting with others and managing their own lives. Additionally, they must focus on education and career training, all of which are critical factors in shaping their future.

The availability of the internet and social media as an easily accessible and rapidly growing source of information among Generation Z offers many benefits, but excessive use also has a negative impact on their mental health. Data from Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII) In 2024, data indicates that 79.5% of Indonesia's total population—or approximately 221 million people—use the internet, and the majority of these users are Generation Z. Generation Z, living amid rapid technological advancements, faces significant challenges related to psychological issues. Academic stress, economic pressures, environmental issues, excessive exposure to social media, technology dependence, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly contributed to high rates of depression, anxiety, and stress among this generation (Akbar et al., 2024). With their constant exposure to information through digital media, Generation Z is becoming increasingly vulnerable to mental health issues, as they are more frequently exposed to social pressure, self-comparison, and high expectations from their digital environment.

Given the complexity of this issue, it is important to develop innovative approaches that can effectively reach Generation Z. Their tendency to be frequently exposed to visual content on social media makes visual-based solutions, such as illustrated books, a relevant option. Illustrated books also serve as an alternative solution to divert their attention away from gadgets, the internet, and social media. According to Mrs. Rochmatul Fitri, S.Psi., M.Psi., taking a break from social media is necessary for someone experiencing suicidal thoughts. This is because a person may imitate or be influenced by the feelings and experiences of others that have been shared on social media or the internet.

In addition, illustrated books are able to convey complex messages or difficult material effectively in a way that is more engaging, accessible, and easy to understand than plain text (Pratama & Yasa, 2020). This is supported by the results of a survey of 100 respondents, 94% of whom stated that they prefer reading books that include visuals or images rather than long blocks of text. Additionally, 96% stated that illustrations help them understand information more easily, particularly regarding mental health issues. Illustrated books can provide visual representations that foster empathy, comfort, and motivation to seek help. According to Adinugroho et al., (2021), illustrations have the ability to convey impressions and emotions, and stimulate the feelings of the individuals viewing them. Visual media in the form of

illustrations have a strong correlation with emotional stability and relaxation, making them a highly potential means of supporting mental health (Adinugroho et al., 2021). Through this emotional approach, the design of this illustrated book is hoped to be not only an educational medium but also a tool that can build awareness, provide emotional support, and help prevent individuals from progressing to the stage of a suicide attempt. Therefore, an illustrated book is chosen as a potential medium to help alleviate suicidal thoughts.

## **1.2. Problem Identification**

Based on the background described above, the identified problems can be concluded as follows:

- a. The high number of global suicide cases, based on World Health Organization (2021) data, shows that more than 700,000 people worldwide lose their lives to suicide each year. In 2019, suicide was the fourth leading cause of death globally for the 15-29 years age group.
- b. The high prevalence of depression in the 15-24 years age group, which is part of Generation Z, based on the 2023 Indonesia Health Survey (SKI), is 2% compared to other age groups. The 2023 SKI also shows a high tendency for having ideas or thoughts of suicidal acts (suicidal thoughts) in the 15-24 years age group, at 0.39%. Based on the results of a questionnaire distributed to 100 respondents, the late adolescent group aged 17-21 years is the age group that most frequently experiences suicidal thoughts compared to other age groups, at 64%
- c. Although Generation Z has the highest prevalence of depression and suicidal tendency, only 10.4% receive professional treatment. This finding aligns with the questionnaire results, where 74% of respondents admitted to never having accessed a psychologist or psychiatrist. The lack of access to professional services is exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of the suicide prevention hotline in Indonesia. According to BBC News Indonesia (2024), the service does not meet standards—such as undertrained staff, non-24-hour operation, and limited resources—thus failing to provide optimal help.
- d. Suicide is often considered a disgrace that must be hidden because it is viewed as a moral failure related to religious values. Societal stigma—such as labels of 'lack of faith', 'lack of worship', or 'ingratitude'—reinforces this perception. Consequently, individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts tend to hide their condition due to feelings

of shame, guilt, or sin. Questionnaire data shows that 74% of respondents chose not to tell family or friends when facing such thoughts. Instead of seeking help, most respondents preferred methods to distract themselves, be alone, or ignore their feelings

### **1.3. Problem Statement**

How to design illustrated books as a way to address suicidal thoughts among Generation Z aged 17-21 years old using an empathetic and supportive visual approach?

### **1.4. Project Scope**

- a. In designing an illustrated book as an effort to address suicidal thoughts among Generation Z, several limitations have been established to maintain the focus and effectiveness of this design, namely:
- b. This book will focus on Generation Z aged 17-21, considering that this age group has the highest percentage of experiencing suicidal thoughts according to the distributed questionnaire data.
- c. This book will focus solely on the topic of suicidal thoughts and how to deal with and manage them when one is in this phase, thereby preventing them from progressing to the more advanced stage of a suicide attempt.
- d. Another limitation is that this book does not cover direct medical intervention, but rather functions as a medium for education and emotional support. This book is designed to support preventive measures and provide encouragement to seek professional help, without replacing the role of psychological therapy or counseling.
- e. The content of this illustrated book includes the definition of suicidal thoughts, its causative factors (including depression, family factors, academic factors, etc.), ways to cope, information on contactable hotlines, as well as positive quotes or supportive messages that will be presented in a visually engaging format that is easy to understand and aligns with the communication style of Generation Z.

### **1.5. Design Objectives**

The design of this illustrated book has the following objectives:

- a. To raise awareness among Generation Z about the importance of mental health and how to cope with suicidal thoughts.

- b. To provide education and emotional support to readers by presenting calming visuals and positive messages.
- c. To help readers better understand the topic of suicidal thoughts and serve as a means for readers to learn healthy and constructive emotional management through engaging visual illustration strategies and simple language.
- d. To motivate readers to have the courage to seek professional help or other support when experiencing mental pressure or suicidal thoughts.

### **1.6. Design Benefits**

The design of this illustrated book is expected to provide the following benefits

#### a. For Society

- 1. To increase public awareness of mental health issues, especially suicidal thoughts among Generation Z.
- 2. To encourage openness and concern for the importance of supporting the mental health of adolescents and young adults.

#### b. For Students

- 1. To serve as a medium for channeling the skills and knowledge acquired during university studies.
- 2. The results of this design are expected to be used as a reference for the development of further research related to the topic of suicidal thoughts.

#### c. For the Target Audience:

- 1. This illustrated book can serve as a tool for education, reflection, and emotional support.
- 2. To help them better understand their mental condition and find ways to cope with the pressure, depression, or suicidal thoughts they are experiencing.
- 3. This book is also expected to encourage them to be more courageous in seeking professional help

## 1.7. Kerangka Perancangan

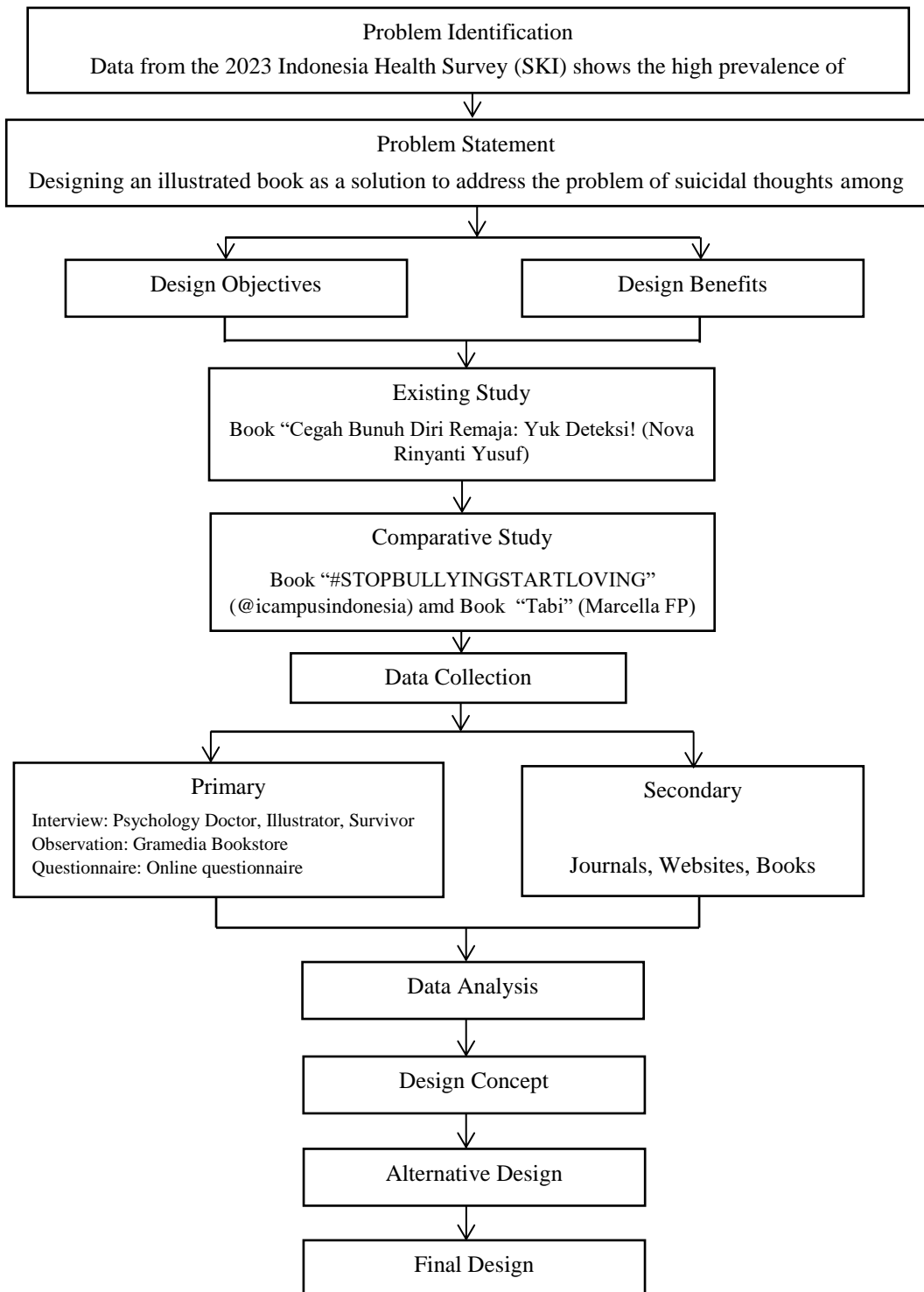


Figure 1. 1 Planning Framework, 2025

(Source: Personal Documents)