

## THE URGENCY OF UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY IN IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH OF GEN Z IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### Abstract

Generation Z, born and raised in the digital era, faces significant challenges in managing their mental health amidst the rapid development of technology, particularly social media. This study aims to explore the urgency of utilizing technology to support mental health for Generation Z. While technology offers many conveniences, excessive use of social media can lead to psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Therefore, this research highlights the need for a balanced approach to using technology, such as through counseling apps, stress management training, and technology-based awareness campaigns. Additionally, the role of family, schools, and communities in creating a healthy digital environment is crucial to supporting the mental well-being of youth. By optimizing technology, Generation Z is expected to better manage their mental health while maintaining a balance between digital and real-life experiences. This study also proposes the importance of raising awareness about digital ethics and implementing stricter supervision of social media use to prevent negative impacts on mental health.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Mental health, Digital technology

### 1. Introduction

Gen-Z or generation Z is the generation that emerged after the internet, this generation was born around 2000 and onwards. Generation Z is a modern generation that develops along with technology, and is very dependent on digital technology, so this generation can do anything with the help of modern technology. This generation has another name, namely the Net generation (internet). They have skills in running modern technology such as replying to chats, playing social media (medsos), browsing, and listening to music casually, they do it without feeling difficult and rushed, but everything runs quickly and smoothly. This is due to the influence of childhood that has been presented with technology. Gen-Z can be said to be an independent generation than the previous generation, because they do not wait for their parents to teach them new things like making decisions. Gen-Z tends to have good tolerance for cultural differences and cares about their surroundings. They have their own characteristics such as being used to doing various activities at the same time. For example, talking, watching, listening to music and reading at the same time. This happens because they want to be fast and straightforward, they also tend to be individualistic, tend to communicate verbally and egocentrically and want everything to be fast and do not appreciate the process. They always rely on the internet to answer every challenge, they do not know that all life problems cannot

be solved immediately with technology. There are some problems in real life that need to be solved with several fairly long processes and only he can solve and go through several stages. It can be in the form of physical effort, contemplation, psychological effort, and needing help from others in real terms, not virtual. The rapid development in the digital era is quite influential on the mental health of the generation. This is evident in the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) data which states that adolescents under the age of 15 experience various mental illnesses such as depression but only 9% of them choose to seek treatment from professionals such as psychiatrists and psychologists and this happens in almost all provinces in Indonesia (Murnitasari et al., 2024).

This high rate of mental illness in adolescence occurs due to various factors such as the lack of professional workers in the field of psychology, social disparities that occur in the individual's environment, the increasingly rapid era of globalization today, and mental health support in society provided by infrastructure and government assistance is still lacking. Djwandono stated that Generation Z has characteristics that tend to always want to learn how to be active in general, sensually, and visually. An active Generation Z means that they easily learn new things and apply what they learn. General refers to someone who usually learns by jumping from one understanding to the next, then taking an understanding at random without paying attention to how it is connected, and suddenly getting what they want. This is like a universal learner who can solve complex problems quickly and connect everything into a bigger picture. This is what makes Generation Z less concerned with the process and only relies on answers on the internet and life challenges from social media information, without realizing that problems in the real world cannot always be solved only with the power of technology. Gen-Z is often exposed to the internet and other social media from a young age, they tend to be more creative and more concerned with the environment. In Indonesia, cases of suicide and mental health cases such as depression are increasing, those who are especially Gen-Z often experience stress, depression, excessive anxiety, but are still not taken seriously in Indonesia. In fact, depression and stress can be the source of all diseases. If left untreated, it can burden the mind which eventually interferes with the immune system. Many Generation Z suffer from depression or stress but do not immediately seek help. This can happen because society gives a negative stigma to mental health problems. The causes vary, one of which is the lack of mental treatment facilities in the form of psychologists and psychiatrists in Indonesia. Many people do not know what mental health is and the symptoms and impacts it causes. The lack of knowledge about mental health reflects the low interest in reading among Gen Z and the community.

Mental health is the most important aspect in achieving complete and holistic health, both psychologically and physically. Mental health also includes efforts to overcome various problems such as stress. Many individuals, at some point, experience mental health problems in their lives. Therefore, it is very important for us to understand the stages of development as an effort to explore the problems of child development, especially adolescents, in order to shape mental health within the family. The digital era has brought major changes in the way we interact, work, and live our daily lives. While technology provides tremendous benefits, such as easy access to information and global connectivity, excessive or unhealthy use of this technology can have a negative impact on our mental health. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider the benefits and risks of using social media and digital technology, and to build the right balance between the benefits of technology and the need for peace of mind. The digital era has a complex and diverse impact on mental health. Many studies have discussed the impact of the digital era on mental health, showing several points of synthesis related to the influence of social media and digital technology, such as the impact of social

media on mental health, feelings of loneliness and isolation, and exposure to negative news. Social media use can have negative effects on mental health, such as increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation, as well as exposure to negative news. The use of digital technology can enable social isolation, which can increase the risk of mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. In addition, social media and the internet can enable exposure to negative news that can affect mental health, such as increasing stress and anxiety. Government policies that regulate the use of digital technology and social media can also help maintain the mental health of individuals and society in the ever-growing digital era. Overall, the digital era has brought major changes to the way we interact, work, and live our daily lives. Although technology provides tremendous benefits, such as easy access to information and global connectivity, excessive or unhealthy use of this technology can have a negative impact on our mental health. Therefore, it is important to carefully consider the benefits and risks of using social media and digital technology, and to build the right balance between the benefits of technology and the need for peace of mind. Generation Z is a very tech-savvy generation even more than previous generations, because they have never known a world without smartphones and social media. Generation Z, or known as the internet generation or iGeneration, is accustomed to internet access which has become a global culture. This greatly influences their values and outlook on life. Generation Z is not only comfortable with technology, but also highly dependent on it. Since childhood, they have been familiar with technology, and they are categorized as a creative generation as well as physically and entrepreneurially conservative (Nadeak & Dudi Rustandi, 2024).

Research by Andriana and Rismanto (2020) examined the relationship between social media use and mental health of adolescents at SMK Kosgoro 1 Padang. The results showed that adolescents who actively use social media have higher levels of anxiety and depression. This indicates that although social media provides convenience in communication and access to information, the psychological impact of excessive social media use can increase the risk of mental disorders in adolescents. This study highlights the need to educate adolescents about healthy social media use and the important role of families and schools in guiding the use of technology among adolescents (Estu & Rahmi Ramadhan, 2021).

Meanwhile, research by Yuliana (2020) also discusses the impact of social media on adolescent mental health. This study emphasizes the importance of a wise approach in using social media to maintain the balance of adolescent mental health. Although social media provides many benefits, such as access to information and global interaction, the negative effects of social media, such as exposure to negative news and social pressure, can increase feelings of loneliness, stress, and anxiety in adolescents. Therefore, this study suggests the need for supervision and training for adolescents in using social media in a healthy and productive way (Rosmalina & Tia Khaerunnisa, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to explore the urgency of utilizing technology to improve the mental health of Generation Z in the digital era. This study aims to identify how technology, especially social media and other digital platforms, can be used as an effective tool in supporting adolescent mental health, either in the form of counseling applications, stress management training, or educational campaigns about mental health. In addition, this study also focuses on the challenges faced by Generation Z in accessing appropriate mental health services and how technology can overcome these obstacles. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to formulating strategies to

optimize the use of digital technology in maintaining and improving adolescent mental health amidst the rapid flow of information that continues to grow.

## 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method that aims to explore the urgency of utilizing technology to improve the mental health of Generation Z in the digital era. Data were collected through a review of various literature and previous studies that discuss the use of digital technology, social media, and its impact on adolescent mental health. This study also analyzes how Generation Z, who are highly dependent on technology, can utilize digital platforms and technology-based applications to support their mental health. In addition, this study considers external factors such as the influence of family, education, and society in forming a healthy digital ecosystem. The results obtained are expected to provide insight into the challenges faced by Generation Z in managing their mental health, as well as provide recommendations on ways that can be taken to use technology wisely to improve their psychological well-being.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. *Generation Z in the Digital Era*

Generation Z is a dynamic, creative, and forward-thinking generation. They have great potential to face the future with confidence and success. By developing superior competencies, such as digital literacy, critical thinking skills, creativity, adaptability, communication skills, empathy, and independence, Generation Z will become superior individuals and be able to contribute positively in an increasingly complex and connected world. Support from the educational environment, family, and community will be key in helping them achieve their best potential and face the future with confidence and optimism. There are many advantages that have been explained above regarding Generation Z, but there is one factor that is now causing this generation to be quickly distracted by the very abundant social media. Which requires that at this age they must be married, must have a house, apartment, and so on. Like the world requires us to move quickly, and we don't know whether we are able to do it or not. Everything seems to view Generation Z as a symbol of excellence that must know and be able to work so quickly. In fact, there are so many young people, especially this generation whose mental health can now be said to be not good. It's not that this generation is spoiled or weak, but it's just that the world seems to be pressuring us to be good at everything without knowing whether we can actually do it or not. Currently, many Generation Z have mental health disorders, the most familiar of which are anxiety disorders, stress, and depression.

Generation Z is a generation that has interacted with technological advances since birth. Their upbringing was greatly assisted by technology and the internet. Born between 1995 and 2012, they have never experienced life without technology and the internet. The existence of technology and the internet has become an important part of their daily lives. For Generation Z, technology and the internet are things that must exist, not just innovations like the views of previous generations. Technological advances and the rapid flow of information via the internet have affected their lives. They are used to communicating using gadgets, accessing information from various sources on the internet, playing games, and even shopping through one device, namely smartphones. Almost all Generation Z have smartphones, both from rich and poor families, who live in urban and rural areas. It can be said that all Generation Z are exposed to smartphone use every day.

Generation Z's level of dependence on smartphones is higher than on television. They will feel more upset if they cannot access the internet than if they lose their pocket money. The use of technology and the internet in their daily lives trains them to be interested in several subjects or problems at once. This condition is likely caused by the higher synchronization of motor skills in the eyes, hands, and ears compared to previous generations. Some characteristics of Generation Z related to the use of technology are socializing via the internet, consuming the internet very quickly, tending to be efficient and innovative with technology in hand, and liking games that challenge creativity. In the use of technology, especially smartphones, some Generation Z use it for self-empowerment in addition to entertainment. However, there are also some of them who have very low digital literacy awareness, so their smartphones are often used only for consumptive purposes. Generation Z also has a good orientation towards education, especially lifelong learning, and has many abilities and knowledge related to technology, due to their high integration with the internet (Irsyadi et al., 2020).

Generation Z is often referred to as “digital natives” because they were born in the internet era and have been accustomed to digital technology since childhood. Research shows that Generation Z is highly dependent on social media and instant messaging applications to communicate, share information, and shape their identity. The intensive use of digital technology by Generation Z and Alpha has significant implications for guidance and counseling services, including:

#### 3.1.1. More Innovative Approach Methods

Guidance and counseling services need to adapt by utilizing digital technology in providing services. Counselors can use online counseling applications, social media, and other digital platforms to reach students.

#### 3.1.2. Increasing Awareness of Mental Health

With such easy access to information, Generation Z and Alpha are more aware of mental health issues than previous generations. Counselors need to facilitate conversations about mental health with relevant and technology-based approaches, such as mental health applications or online discussion forums

#### 3.1.3. Challenges in Dealing with Cyberbullying and Online Security

The use of digital technology also brings new challenges, such as cyberbullying, gadget addiction, and online privacy risks. Counselors need to have specific strategies to address this issue, such as providing education about digital safety and providing support for students who experience cyberbullying.

#### 3.1.4. Leveraging Data for More Effective Interventions

Digital technology allows for the collection of more detailed data about students' behaviors and needs. Counselors can use this data to develop more targeted and evidence-based interventions (Malelak et al., 2024).

### *3.2. Mental Health of Gen Z in the Digital Era*

Mental health problems need to be helped to prevent mental health problems such as stress, depression and suicide. One way to overcome these mental health problems is by providing social support. Social support is needed to help with mental health problems. Based on the findings of the problem, it was found that currently one of the problems experienced by Gen Z is mental health

problems, one of the causes of which is the intensity of social media use. Gen Z also still has not received assistance in the form of social support even though they realize that they need social support. Therefore, one way to help with mental health problems is to provide social support. To find out to what extent social support and the intensity of social media use affect mental health, researchers want to conduct a contribution study to find out how social support and the intensity of social media use contribute to Gen Z's mental health. Mental health itself is defined as a state of physical, mental and social well being. Mental health is an aspect of overall health in a person which consists of how to deal with stress, relationships with the surrounding environment and decision-making actions based on the physical and psychological aspects. Health itself is a condition that is well-being as a whole or perfect both in terms of physical, social and free from disease or weakness. So it can be concluded that mental health is a state or condition of a healthy and prosperous individual, both physically, mentally, and socially, so that they can cope and adapt to the pressures of life normally in order to live a normal life and contribute to their surroundings.

Mental health problems have two aspects, namely psychological distress and social dysfunction. Psychological distress is a negative mental health problem related to depression and deep anxiety in the individual. While social dysfunction is an inability for an individual to undergo and carry out demands that are received, both future demands or those that are currently being carried out. Social support is defined as a person's perception of comfort, attention, appreciation, information and assistance received by others. So it can be defined that social support is a form of support or assistance given by people closest to them such as family, close friends, friends and people around them to someone in the form of care, attention, comfort, affection, concern when facing a problem that cannot be solved alone. Social support has four aspects, namely emotional support, instrumental support, information support and friendship support. The intensity of social media use itself is the amount of time a person spends every day using the facilities available on social media. So it can be defined that the intensity of social media use is the amount of duration, frequency, time a person spends by paying attention and interest when using all types of social media facilities with a certain period of time. The intensity of social media use consists of five aspects, namely during relaxation and free periods, when in an academic scope (academic-related periods), when in public places (public-places related), when experiencing stress (stress-related periods) and motive for use (motive for use) (Achmad, 2024).

Depression is one type of mental disorder that is susceptible to Generation Z or Gen Z. Based on research by University College London, the depression rate of Gen Z is two-thirds higher than that of millennials. In fact, based on research by the Pew Research Center, around 70 percent of adolescents of all races, genders, and family income levels experience anxiety and depression. Reporting from the McKinsey Health Institute, according to the 2022 Global Gen Z survey, Gen Z women are twice as likely to have poor mental health compared to men. Most countries show that Gen Z has poor mental health without any clear cause. However, the McKinsey Health Institute concluded that there are several age-specific factors that can affect Gen Z's mental health, such as developmental stage, level of involvement with health services, family or community attitudes, and social media (Mudarya & Ni Nyoman Novi Kurniawati, 2024).

### *3.3. Utilization of Technology*

The development of world technology towards digital is currently growing very rapidly. The presence of industry 5.0, which was originally predicted to be 20 years after the 4.0 era, turned out

to be faster, namely only transitioning for about 10 years. Indonesia is still adjusting to the era of revolution 4.0, not yet finished with all its developments, a new concept was born, namely society 5.0, which was initiated by Japan. This concept allows us to use modern-based science for human needs with the aim that humans can live comfortably. Unlike the industrial revolution 4.0 which emphasizes more on business alone, but with the technology of the society 5.0 era, a new value is created that will eliminate social, age, gender, language gaps and provide products and services that are specifically designed for various individual needs and the needs of many people. In a digital era like this, humans generally have a new lifestyle that cannot be separated from electronic devices. Similarly, when facing the 4.0 revolution, in facing 5.0 or super smart society, adjustments are needed in various sectors. Indonesia has no other choice but to continue the development of digital infrastructure, create policies and regulations that encourage the growth of an efficient and progressive telecommunications industry. Entering the 21st century, technological transformation is developing quite rapidly throughout the world. Digitalization is closely related to recent discussions both in cyberspace and the real world.

Digitalization is the process of providing or using a digital system. The increasing use of digital systems has also occurred in our beloved country, Indonesia. Digitalization has begun to be seen from the emergence of various innovations and digital technologies that are already present everywhere. Equal distribution of digitalization is very much needed to support the development of digitalization itself. One of them is through the role of the younger generation in increasing digitalization in remote areas of the country. The younger generation has an important role in supporting digitalization. It is commonly discussed that the younger generation is familiar with technological developments. Starting from the existence of the internet which makes it easy to access information wherever and whenever. Quite rapid development can be seen from the circulation of social media, digital applications, to the transformation of other activities that have switched to using technology. The use of technology to support digitalization in Indonesia is considered quite important. This is in line with the efforts made by the government to support digitalization. For example, the Ministry of Communication and Information continues to strive to accelerate digitalization in Indonesia (Apyanto, 2022).

#### *3.4. The Urgency of Utilizing Technology to Improve Mental Health of Gen Z in the Digital Era*

The urgency of utilizing technology to improve mental health of Generation Z in the digital era is very important amidst the rapid development of social media and information technology. Generation Z, known as “digital natives,” often faces challenges in managing emotions and stress due to dependence on technology. The increasing use of social media has a double impact, namely ease of interaction and accessing information, but also causes potential problems related to mental health, such as anxiety, depression, and decreased self confidence due to social comparison. Therefore, wise use of technology is very necessary to help Generation Z manage their mental health, one of which is through digital platforms that can provide psychological support or applications that facilitate meditation and technology based cognitive therapy.

In this context, digital ethics education is also an integral part of efforts to improve mental health. Generation Z is often unaware of the negative impacts caused by their behavior in cyberspace, such as spreading hoaxes, cyberbullying, or getting caught up in addictive behavior patterns towards technology. For this reason, it is important for society and the government to focus their efforts on building moral and ethical awareness in interacting in the digital world. One solution is through

socialization and education that emphasizes the importance of self-control and the implementation of good digital ethics. For example, introducing the limits of social media use, as well as the importance of maintaining privacy and interacting positively, can help reduce the negative impacts that can damage mental health. In addition, support from parents, the surrounding environment, and educational institutions is also very important in creating a healthy digital ecosystem for Generation Z. The involvement of parents in providing guidance and supervision regarding the use of technology can help teenagers to be wiser in using social media and digital technology. Through a collaborative approach between the government, society, and family, a digital space can be created that not only supports technological developments, but also supports the mental well-being of Generation Z, which is an important asset for the future of the nation (Ismanto et al., 2022).

#### 4. Conclusions

This study highlights the importance of utilizing digital technology in improving the mental health of Generation Z in the digital era. In the context of very rapid technological developments, especially social media, there are dual impacts on adolescent mental health, both positive and negative. While technology provides easy access to information and communication, increased dependence on social media has the potential to cause psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Therefore, it is important for Generation Z to develop skills in using technology wisely, by optimizing digital platforms that can provide psychological support, therapy applications, and digital literacy education. Furthermore, the role of family, education, and society is very much needed to create a healthy digital environment and support adolescent mental well-being. The use of appropriate technology can be one solution to help Generation Z manage their mental health, while raising awareness of the importance of maintaining a balance between the virtual world and the real world.

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