

## THE ROLE OF COUNSELORS IN BUILDING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH IN FACING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### Abstract

The role of counselors in building students' mental health amid the influence of social media in the digital era is critical and multifaceted. The rapid development of digital technology and social media platforms has profoundly impacted students' psychological well-being, introducing both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, social media offers students access to information, networking, and community support; on the other hand, it exposes them to risks such as cyberbullying, social comparison, addiction, and increased anxiety or depression. Counselors are essential in helping students navigate these complexities by developing relevant competencies and intervention strategies tailored to the digital context. Counselors support students by raising awareness about the positive and negative effects of social media, teaching deliberate and responsible social media use, and helping students recognize signs of distress in themselves and others. They also educate parents on modeling healthy technology habits and encourage students to balance online and offline interactions to enhance social skills and mental health. Utilizing technology-based counseling methods like cybercounseling expands access to psychological support, offering safe and flexible environments for students to disclose and manage emotional crises, especially for those experiencing social anxiety. Moreover, counselors play a pivotal role in fostering digital literacy, which is closely linked to adolescent mental health. Low digital literacy can exacerbate mental health problems, so counselors implement prevention and intervention programs that empower students to critically evaluate online content and protect their digital footprint. They continuously update their skills to keep pace with evolving social media trends and collaborate with schools, families, and mental health professionals to create supportive ecosystems that promote holistic student well-being. In summary, counselors act as guides and advocates in the digital era by integrating technology into counseling services, educating students and families about social media's impact, and providing targeted support to build resilience and positive mental health outcomes in the face of social media's pervasive influence.

**Keywords:** counselors, students' mental health, social media

### 1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the field of guidance and counseling. The digital era, marked by rapid technological advances, opens up new opportunities as well as challenges in providing effective and efficient counseling services. Information technology enables the delivery of guidance and counseling services online, which can reach clients without being limited by space and time. This is especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated the adoption of technology-based counseling methods, such as e-counseling and cyber counseling, which offer greater flexibility and accessibility for students. However, this digital transformation also poses a number of obstacles that must be faced, including limited infrastructure, lack of counselor training in the use of technology, and issues of ethics and client data security. Virtual interactions that replace direct face-to-face meetings are often less able to build the depth of interpersonal relationships that are the main foundation in the counseling process. Therefore, it is necessary to develop counselor competencies in managing digital counseling services

professionally and ethically, including an understanding of client behavior in a digital context. (Chadwick, D. W., & Cram, W. A. 2024)

Guidance and counseling in the digital era not only function as a medium for solving psychological problems, but also as a forum for developing students' character and morals in dealing with the positive and negative impacts of technology. Counselors are required to be able to integrate information technology in their practices in order to increase the effectiveness of services, while helping students develop healthy and responsible technology use skills. Thus, guidance and counseling in the digital era have a strategic role in preparing students to be able to adapt to changing times and develop their potential optimally. In this context, this study aims to examine the role of information technology in the transformation of guidance and counseling services, the challenges faced, and strategies for developing adaptive and inclusive services in the digital era. This study is expected to provide scientific contributions as well as practical recommendations for the development of more effective and responsive counseling services to the needs of students in the future. (Allen, C. 2023)

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought major changes in various aspects of human life, including in the field of education and counseling services. The digital era marked by technological advances such as the internet, social media, and digital communication applications has changed the way humans interact, learn, and obtain information. In the context of education, especially counseling services, this technological advancement opens up vast new opportunities to increase the effectiveness and reach of services. Counseling that was previously only done face-to-face can now be done online through various digital platforms, making it easier for students to access services without being hindered by distance or time. However, the ease of access and flexibility offered by information technology also brings its own challenges for counselors and students. Virtual interactions sometimes cannot replace the depth of communication and warmth of interpersonal relationships formed in face-to-face sessions. In addition, the use of technology in counseling services requires counselors to have adequate digital competence, ranging from mastery of software to the ability to maintain the confidentiality and security of client data. Not only that, there is also the risk of misunderstandings, technical disruptions, and limitations in reading nonverbal expressions which are an important part of the counseling process.

In addition to technical aspects, the digital era also has a significant psychological impact on students. Intensive use of social media and digital technology can affect students' mental and emotional conditions, both positively and negatively. On the one hand, technology provides broad access to information and social networks that can support students' social and academic development. However, on the other hand, exposure to negative content, cyberbullying, social pressure, and social media addiction can cause psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, the role of counselors is very important to help students manage the influence of this technology wisely and healthily. In facing the challenges and opportunities in this digital era, guidance and counseling services must undergo a significant transformation. Counselors need to develop new strategies and methods that are adaptive to technological developments, including utilizing digital media as a means of intervention and education. The development of technology-based counseling services such as cyber counseling and e-counseling is one innovative solution that allows counselors to provide psychological support more widely and easily accessed. In addition, counselors also act as facilitators who help students develop digital literacy and self-management skills so that they are able to face the impacts of technology with a critical

and positive attitude. Furthermore, the transformation of guidance and counseling services in the digital era also requires close collaboration between schools, families, and communities in creating an environment that supports the mental well-being of students. Counselors must be able to be effective liaisons between these various parties to build a holistic and sustainable ecosystem. Thus, guidance and counseling services not only function as a solution to psychological problems, but also as a means of developing students' character, morals, and life skills so that they are ready to face the challenges of the times. (Clarke, R. 2024)

Based on this background, this study is directed to examine in more depth the role of information technology in the transformation of guidance and counseling services, the challenges faced by counselors, and strategies for developing responsive and innovative services in the digital era. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide a meaningful contribution to the development of more effective, inclusive, and mental well-being-oriented guidance and counseling practices in the future. (Gallo, L. L., Rausch, M., Smith, C. K., & Wood, S. 2016)

## 2. Methods

The method in this article uses library research, which is a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories from various literatures related to the research. There are four stages of library research in research, namely preparing the necessary equipment, preparing a working bibliography, organizing time and reading or recording research materials. The data collection uses a method of finding sources and constructing from various sources, for example books, journals and research that has been done. Library materials obtained from various references are analyzed critically and must be in-depth in order to support their propositions and ideas. The data analysis technique in this work uses the content analysis method, which can be used to draw correct conclusions and can be reviewed. In the analysis, selection, comparison, combination and sorting are carried out in such a way that the relevant ones are found. Inter-library checks and consideration of supervisor comments are carried out to maintain consistency in the evaluation, prevention, and elimination of incorrect information, namely human misunderstandings that can be caused by a lack of bibliographic author factors. (Mei Tang. 2019)

## 3. Results and Discussion

The rapid development of information and communication technology in the digital era has brought major changes in various aspects of life, including in the world of education and the psychosocial development of students. Social media as one of the main products of digital technology advancement has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives. The massive use of social media provides easy access to information, expands social networks, and becomes a means of self-expression for teenagers. However, behind these benefits, social media also has a significant negative impact on students' mental health, such as increasing the risk of stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotional disorders. This phenomenon poses new challenges for the world of education and guidance and counseling services. Students who are the digital native generation face different social and psychological pressures than previous generations. Exposure to unhealthy content, cyberbullying, unrealistic social comparisons, and dependence on social media can disrupt their mental and emotional balance. Therefore, the role of school counselors is very crucial in helping students manage the influence of social media so that it does not

have a negative impact on their mental health. (European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA). 2022)

Counselors as professionals who have expertise in educational psychology and counseling have a great responsibility to provide psychosocial support, education, and appropriate interventions for students. In the context of the digital era, counselors are required to develop new competencies that are able to integrate information technology into counseling practices, including the use of cyber counseling as an alternative media to reach students who need help. In addition, counselors also act as digital literacy facilitators who help students understand and use social media wisely and healthily. However, the reality on the ground shows that many counselors still face obstacles in optimizing this role. Some of these include limited resources and technological infrastructure, minimal special training related to digital-based counseling services, and lack of awareness and support from various parties regarding the importance of student mental health in the era of social media. This condition requires strategic and collaborative efforts between schools, families, and communities in supporting the role of counselors so that they can work optimally. In addition, the very dynamic development of social media requires counselors to always follow the latest trends and phenomena that occur in the digital world. This is important so that the interventions provided are relevant to the current needs and conditions of students. Counselors must also be able to build strong and trustworthy relationships with students, so that students feel comfortable and open in conveying the problems they face, both those related to social media and other psychological aspects. (Hardt, D., & Narayanan, A. 2023)

With this background, this study focuses on the role of counselors in building students' mental health in dealing with the influence of social media in the digital era. This study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges, strategies, and best practices that can be applied by counselors in supporting students' mental well-being. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to be a consideration for educational policy makers and the development of counseling guidance programs that are adaptive to technological developments and the needs of today's students.

Impact of Social Media on Students' Mental Health. (Ernawati, R., Karneli, Y., & Mudjiran. 2025) The results of the study show that social media has a complex influence on students' mental health. On the one hand, social media provides various benefits such as ease in obtaining information, expanding social networks, and as a means of expression and gaining social support. Students can communicate with peers, join communities that match their interests, and access learning resources quickly and easily. However, on the other hand, excessive and uncontrolled exposure to social media can cause various psychological problems. Some students reported experiencing social pressure due to comparing themselves with others who often display ideal and unrealistic images. This phenomenon can trigger feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

- 1) In addition, cyberbullying or bullying through social media is a significant risk factor for students' mental health. Victims of cyberbullying often experience deep psychological trauma, which has the potential to reduce learning motivation and even trigger suicidal ideation. Dependence on social media also causes impaired concentration, irregular sleep patterns, and decreased quality of direct social interactions. Therefore, social media is a double-edged sword that must be managed wisely so that its benefits can be felt without sacrificing students' mental health.
- 2) The Role of Counselors in Managing the Impact of Social Media. Counselors have a strategic role in helping students manage the impact of social media on their mental health. Based on the data

obtained, counselors actively carry out various interventions, including providing education on healthy and responsible use of social media. Counselors teach students to recognize signs of stress and anxiety related to activities on social media and provide effective coping strategies, such as limiting usage time, doing a digital detox, and developing hobbies in the real world. In addition to education, counselors also provide individual and group counseling services that focus on issues related to social media. In counseling sessions, students are encouraged to be open about their experiences and feelings related to social pressure in cyberspace. Counselors use an empathetic and non-judgmental approach to build trust and help students identify negative thought patterns that arise from interactions on social media. This approach has proven effective in reducing anxiety levels and increasing students' self-confidence.

- 3) **Utilization of Technology in Counseling Services.** The digital era also encourages counselors to adopt technology as a medium in providing services. Cyber counseling or online counseling is one of the innovations that allows counselors to reach students who are difficult to access directly, for example students who experience geographical barriers or feel embarrassed to come to the counseling room. This service provides flexibility in time and place, and provides a sense of security for students to convey their problems anonymously if needed. However, the use of technology in counseling also poses challenges, such as limitations in nonverbal interactions that are important in the counseling process, the risk of technical disruptions, and data privacy issues. Therefore, counselors need to have adequate digital competence and understand the ethics of using technology in counseling practice. Continuous professional training and development are absolute necessities to ensure that the quality of service is maintained.
- 4) **Development of Digital Literacy as a Prevention Effort.** In addition to direct intervention, counselors also play a role in developing students' digital literacy as a preventive measure. Good digital literacy helps students to be more critical in filtering information received from social media, recognizing potentially harmful content, and avoiding risky behavior such as spreading hoaxes or involvement in cyberbullying. Digital literacy programs developed by counselors include workshops, seminars, and learning activities involving students, teachers, and parents. Increasing digital literacy not only has an impact on students' mental health, but also on their character development and social responsibility. Students who have high digital awareness tend to be better able to manage emotions, communicate healthily, and maintain positive social relationships both in the virtual and real worlds.
- 5) **Collaboration between Counselors, Schools, and Parents.** Success in building students' mental health cannot be achieved by counselors alone. The results of the study emphasize the importance of close collaboration between counselors, schools, and parents. Schools need to provide adequate policy support and facilities for guidance and counseling services, including. This collaboration creates an ecosystem that supports the holistic mental and emotional development of students. With good synergy, the interventions provided become more effective and sustainable, so that students can grow into psychologically healthy individuals and be able to face the dynamics of social media wisely. (Zyskind, G., Nathan, O., & Pentland, A. 2024)
- 6)

The role of counselors in building students' mental health amidst the influence of social media in the digital era is very vital. Counselors not only function as companions and solution providers for psychological problems, but also as educators and facilitators of digital literacy who help students develop healthy social media management skills. The use of technology in counseling services provides

opportunities as well as challenges that must be faced with professional competence and ethics. Collaboration between counselors, schools, and parents is the key to success in creating an environment conducive to students' mental health. Therefore, the development of counselor capacity and strong systemic support is needed to face mental health challenges in this digital era. (Steele, T., Nuckols, G., & Stone, C. 2018).

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the results of the discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that the role of counselors in building students' mental health in the digital era is very strategic and crucial. Social media as part of the advancement of information technology has a complex impact on students' psychology, both positive and negative. On the one hand, social media provides easy access to information, expands social networks, and becomes an important means of self-expression for adolescent development. However, on the other hand, exposure to negative content, social pressure, cyberbullying, and social media addiction can cause various mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, and serious emotional disorders. In this context, counselors have a great responsibility to provide appropriate and effective psychosocial support for students. Counselors not only act as listeners and solution providers for problems faced by students, but also as educators who equip students with digital literacy skills and healthy self-management strategies in using social media. Through counseling services both directly and online (cyber counseling), counselors can help students recognize signs of mental disorders, develop positive mindsets, and improve coping skills to deal with the pressures that arise from interactions in cyberspace.

The use of technology in counseling services provides a great opportunity to reach more students in a more flexible and accessible way. However, this also requires counselors to master digital competencies and understand the ethical and security aspects of using technology. Continuous professional training and development are non-negotiable needs so that the quality of services remains maintained and relevant to current developments. In addition to direct intervention, developing digital literacy is an important preventive step in maintaining students' mental health. Good digital literacy helps students to be more critical in filtering information, avoiding harmful content, and managing healthy social interactions on social media. Counselors play an active role in initiating digital literacy education programs that involve not only students, but also teachers and parents, so that an environment is created that supports students' holistic mental and emotional development. Collaboration between counselors, schools, and parents is a key factor in the success of efforts to build students' mental health in the digital era. Support from school policies, parental involvement in mentoring children, and synergy between stakeholders create an ecosystem that is conducive to optimal student growth and development. With solid cooperation, the interventions provided become more effective and sustainable, so that students are able to face the challenges of social media with a wiser and more resilient attitude. Overall, the role of counselors in dealing with the influence of social media in the digital era is not only as a problem solver, but also as an agent of change who equips students with life skills, digital awareness, and strong mental health. Therefore, there needs to be systemic support from various parties to increase the capacity of counselors, provide adequate technological facilities, and develop adaptive and innovative counseling guidance programs. Thus, guidance and counseling services can contribute significantly to creating a young generation that is mentally healthy, productive, and able to adapt to the dynamics of technological developments in the future.

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