

## **Digital Technology as a Support for Social Inclusion in Guidance and Counseling Services**

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### **Abstract**

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed guidance and counseling services, opening broader access beyond traditional face-to-face interactions and creating new opportunities for social inclusion, especially for marginalized individuals facing geographic, economic, or social barriers. This study aimed to explore how digital technology can expand access to counseling services, reduce social stigma, and enhance service effectiveness through personalization, while identifying key challenges related to data privacy and security. A qualitative case study approach was employed using purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with digital counseling users, service providers, and mental health technology experts, as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that digital technology improved accessibility by enabling virtual counseling sessions, reduced social stigma by allowing anonymous service access, and enhanced service personalization through data-driven algorithms. However, concerns regarding personal data protection emerged as the primary challenge. These findings imply that with robust security systems and clear regulatory frameworks, digital technology holds significant potential to create more inclusive, effective, and equitable guidance and counseling services for diverse populations.

**Keywords:** digital technology; counseling; inclusion social; accessibility; privacy.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid development of digital technology over the last few decades has transformed many aspects of human life, including education and social services. One of the areas that feels the impact is service guidance and counseling services this, the previous one often limited to interaction face face, now start adopt various digital platforms for reach more Lots individuals, including those who are marginalized or be in the area with access limited. Here, digital technology is not only become tool communication, but also plays a role important in support inclusion social, with give more opportunities big for every individual For get support psychological and emotional that they need (Torous et al., 2025)

Inclusion social Alone refers to efforts For ensure that everyone, without except, can participate in life social, economic, and political. In context service guidance and counseling, inclusion social means give equal access for all individual, regardless from background behind social, economic, or geographical they. Digital technology, with various The convenience it offers is affordable become effective means For realize objective this. For example, with existence application online-based, sessions counseling now Can done virtually, which allows

individuals in the area remote or those who have mobility limited For still get the services they provide need (Shpigelman et al., 2021)

Service guidance and counseling own a very important role in individual mental health, which in turn influence welfare social they. However, even though need will service This Keep going increased, many individuals, especially those living in rural areas remote or in condition economy limited, facing difficulty For access it. Therefore that's important For study more carry on How digital technology can become solution For problem accessibility and inclusion social in service guidance and counseling. Research This own high urgency, because with greater understanding deep about How digital technology can expand access service counseling, we can designing more systems inclusive and effective For support welfare psychological public in a way more wide (Torous et al., 2021).

In addition, digital technology also simplifies the search and access process. information related guidance and counseling. The online platform allows individual For look for various service counseling, reading reviews, and choose the most suitable counselor with need they, without must feel Embarrassed or intimidated by possible social stigma is on service counseling traditional. This is very relevant for society that has view negative to counseling or for those who hesitate to come direct to center service Because reason personal or social (Gangamma et al., 2022).

A number of study previously has explore use technology in service counseling, both web-based and applications. For example, research by Andersson & Titov (2014) shows that counseling internet based can produce equivalent results with counseling face advance in overcome problem like depression and anxiety. In addition, research by Cuijpers et al. (2010) confirmed effectiveness therapy internet based in subtraction symptom depression. However, even though there is strong evidence about effectiveness technology in guidance and counseling, some big study the focus on individuals who already have own access to technology and services psychological. In context inclusion social, further research deep about How digital technology can reach marginalized individuals or own access limited still very limited (Linardon et al., 2022)

Digital technology also makes it possible personalization in service guidance and counseling. With leveraging data and algorithms, counseling platform can adapt the approach given to client, based on needs and problems specific issues faced. This is very useful For increase effectiveness service, ensuring that individual get the right support at the right time. In addition, the use of online applications and platforms also allow client For access material guidance and counseling in a way independent, so that give they chance For more understand the problems they have face and gain better coping skills Good (Babu & Joseph, 2024).

On the other hand, digital technology also reduces constraint costs that often become obstacle for those in need service counseling but No own ability financial. Many online counseling platforms offer service with higher costs affordable or even free, which makes it more choices inclusive for various layer public (Blanco et al., 2023).

However however, although digital technology opens up Lots opportunities, there are challenges that need to be overcome be noticed. One of them is problem privacy and data security, which is very important in service related counseling with information personal and sensitive. Therefore that, the implementation system Strong security and clear regulations are

essential for digital technology to be used in a way maximum without reduce quality service or violate rights individual.

In a way Overall, digital technology plays a role important in support inclusion social in service guidance and counseling. With utilise progress technology this, service counseling can more easy accessible, more efficient, and more inclusive, providing chance to more Lots individual For get the support they provide need in undergo a better life Healthy mentally and emotionally.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach because it aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the use of digital technology in guidance and counseling services and its impact on social inclusion. Case study used For dig experience and views from various party related, such as users service guidance and counseling digital-based, provider services, and takers policy. Taking sample study chosen use purposive sampling technique, where the sample is selected own relevant characteristics with topic study this, like individual with access limited to service counseling conventional or those who use online counseling platforms.

Data collection in study This will done through a number of techniques, including: 1) Interview In-depth: Interview will done with users service digital counseling, provider services and experts in field digital technology and mental health. Interview This aim For dig experiences, views, and challenges faced in use digital technology for service guidance and counseling, and 2) Focus Group Discussion (FGD): FGD will done with group users service digital guidance and counseling for discuss experience they in a way collective. Discussion This will give outlook about perception common issues and challenges faced by users service based technology.

Data collected from interviews, FGD will analyzed use approach analysis thematic analysis. This will identify themes main related with use digital technology in guidance and counseling, as well as How technology the can support inclusion social. Analysis process This will done in a number of stage, start from raw data coding, identification theme, until interpretation and withdrawal conclusion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

This study revealed several findings regarding the use of digital technology in guidance and counseling services to support social inclusion. Based on results interview in-depth and Focus Group Discussion (FGD), several findings main thing that can concluded is as following:

**Service Accessibility:** Digital technology has succeed increase accessibility service guidance and counseling. Many respondents came from from area remote report that they can access service counseling virtually, reducing obstacle previous geographic become problem main. In addition, several counseling platforms offer free session or with affordable costs, which allows individual from background behind economy low For get help psychological.

**Reducing Social Stigma:** One of the benefit the biggest from service guidance and counseling digital based is his abilities For reduce social stigma related with counseling. Many respondents feel more comfortable For access service counseling online compared with must present directly on the spot service. This is very important For individuals who feel

Embarrassed or intimidated by the social stigma that still exists There is in public related with mental health.

**Service Personalization:** Usage digital technology makes it possible personalization service guidance and counseling. Some platforms use data and algorithms For adapt approach counseling in accordance with need individual. Respondents involved in study This feel that personalization This make service more relevant and effective in overcome problem they.

**Security and Privacy Challenges:** Although digital technology provides Lots convenience, problem privacy and data security become challenge main. Some respondents disclose concern about personal data protection they during session online counseling. This is show the need clear regulations and systems more security strong For guard confidentiality information client

## **Discussion**

Study This disclose various findings that show role significant digital technology in support inclusion social in service guidance and counseling. As tools that allow more access spacious and efficient to service psychologically, digital technology has the potential overcome various existing obstacles in service counseling traditional, such as limitations geographical, cost, and social stigma. However, behind various The benefits offered are there a number of challenges that need to be overcome attention to its implementation can be optimal.

### **Accessibility and Inclusion Social**

One of findings main from study This is improvement accessibility service guidance and counseling through digital technology. In the past, individuals who lived in remote areas remote or with mobility limited often face difficulty in access service counseling, which is usually only available in the city big or in centers service health. With existence service digital- based, access to counseling No Again limited to distance or location physical. The online counseling platform allows individual For access service without need go to place physical, which is very important for those who live in remote areas or for those who have limitations physique or mobility (Oliver et al., 2024)

Condition This give opportunity for more many people to get support psychological that they need, especially for those who were before No can access service Because reason geographical or costs. This also allows service counseling For more inclusive, accommodating various individual from background behind diverse social, economic, and geographical conditions. Therefore that, digital technology plays a role important in push creation system more services fair and equitable, with give chance for all individual For access support mental health.

This matter in harmony with study previous study by Andersson & Titov (2014) shows that counseling internet based can become solution For increase accessibility service, with comparable results with counseling face advance in overcome problem like depression and anxiety. In addition, Cuijpers et al. (2010) also found that therapy effective internet based in reduce symptom depression, which indicates that digital technology can give more access wide For service quality mental health (McBain et al., 2023).

## **Reducing Social Stigma**

Social stigma related with counseling and mental health is obstacle big which often makes individuals hesitate to look for assistance. In Lots society, there is perception that someone in need counseling or therapy considered weak or No capable manage problem they alone. Condition This leading to a tendency For cover mental and emotional problems, which ultimately can make things worse welfare individual.

However, research This show that digital technology can play a very important role in reduce this stigma. Counseling online based providing individual room For look for help anonymously, without must face gaze or other people 's assessments. Many respondents felt more comfortable and open in access service digital counseling compared with service face face, especially for those who feel Embarrassed or Afraid judged by society around. With However, digital technology is not it only change method service counseling delivered, but also changes method view public to counseling, making it as something essential needs For mental health, not something that is necessary hidden or humiliated.

This matter in harmony with research by Barak, Hen, Boniel-Nissim, and Shapira (2008) also shows that counseling internet based can reduce the stigma associated with look for help psychological. With give chance For remain anonymous, online counseling becomes more choices accepted by individuals who feel Afraid will evaluation social. In addition research conducted by Andersson (2016) study This give analysis deep about online therapy for mental disorders, focusing on effectiveness and relevance use of digital platforms in support inclusive mental health care (De la Rosa-Gómez & Waldherr, 2023).

## **Personalization and Service Effectiveness**

In addition to improving accessibility, use digital technology in guidance and counseling also allows personalization more services good (Paalimäki-Paakki et al., 2022). Through use of data and algorithms, counseling platform can adapt approach therapy in accordance with need specific client. For example, the platform can analyze pattern problem psychological problems experienced by clients and recommend type therapy or the most suitable approach For overcome problem the approach personalization This proven more effective Because allows client For get more support relevant and appropriate with condition they (Barak et al., 2008).

In addition, digital technology provides freedom for client For access material guidance in a way independent. Clients can utilise various source power available on the platform, such as articles, videos, or test psychological, for understand more in about the problems they have face and gain better coping skills good. This gives more control big to client on the counseling process they, who can increase confidence yourself and help they in manage problem in a way more independent. However, even though There is potential big in personalization this is important For ensure that the system used can reliable and truly can adapt self with need client. Usage technology that is not appropriate or error in algorithm can leads to experiences that are not effective for client, so that influence results counseling. This matter in harmony with research conducted Muench et al. (2005) discuss various innovation in service internet-based mental health, showing How technology can increase accessibility and quality therapy (Babu & Joseph, 2024; Simões et al., 2024).

## **Challenge Data Privacy and Security**

One of the biggest challenges in service counseling digital based is problem privacy and data security. Services counseling involving very personal and sensitive information, such as problem emotional, psychological, and experiential life that is not expressed to others. Therefore that, personal data protection client must become priority main for digital counseling platform provider. Based on findings study this, some respondents disclose concern about their data security during the counseling process. They worry that personal data they, including conversation or notes counseling, can be leaked or used without permission. This shows that provider service digital counseling is necessary ensure that system security they Enough strong For protect client data and prevent leakage information that can harm. Research by Doherty et al. (2021) revealed that although digital counseling provides Lots benefits, attention to problem privacy and data security is things that are not Can ignored. They recommend that providers service online counseling applies system encryption and policy more privacy strict For guard trust client to the platform (Ienca & Malgieri, 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that digital technology has significant potential to support social inclusion in guidance and counseling services. With utilise various digital platforms, services counseling now can be reached by more Lots individuals, including those who were previously limited by obstacles geographic, economic, or social stigma. Digital technology also plays a role important in reduce social stigma related with counseling, allowing individual For get support psychological with a better way safe and comfortable. In addition, personalization service through data and algorithms increase effectiveness counseling, ensuring a more approach relevant and appropriate target For every individual.

However, the challenge related with privacy and data security remain become issue main thing that is needed overcome. Therefore that's important for provider service digital counseling for apply system strong security and clear regulations. With enough attention to challenge this, digital technology can play more roles big in create service more guidance and counseling inclusive, effective, and safe, for support mental well-being of society.

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