

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR AMONG GENERATION Z

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Receive : 28 Aug 2025
Accepted : 21 Oct 2025
Published: 12 Nov 2025
DOI : 10.30829/jipi.v10i2.25893

Abstract

Generation Z, which is vulnerable to mental health problems, uses the internet as a primary source for obtaining information related to mental health. This study aims to determine the influence of demographic characteristics, digital literacy, and psychological conditions on mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z. This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. Data collection was carried out by distributing online questionnaires consisting of a questionnaire on respondents' demographic characteristics, a digital literacy questionnaire adapted from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (KOMINFO) questionnaire for measuring the 2022 Indonesian digital literacy index, DASS-42 to measure psychological conditions, and a questionnaire to measure mental health information-seeking behavior that has been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis used descriptive analysis, classical assumption tests, and hypothesis testing using multiple linear regression tests. Gender and digital literacy variables partially influence mental health information-seeking behavior. Meanwhile, simultaneously, it was found that demographic characteristics, digital literacy, and psychological conditions significantly influence mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z by 42.1%, while the remaining 57.9% was influenced by other factors not examined in this study. The results of this study are expected to be a basis for madrasas in designing programs to improve digital literacy as well as awareness and handling of mental health problems among students.

Keywords: Generation Z, Mental Health, Digital Literacy, Information Seeking Behavior, Demographics

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010, is currently transitioning from childhood to adulthood. During this period, they experience physiological and psychological changes that, if not properly adapted, put them at risk of developing mental health problems (Kaligis et al., 2021). Furthermore, Generation Z's early exposure to internet technology can make them vulnerable to internet addiction, which, if left untreated, can lead to severe mental health problems (Simanjuntak et al., 2021). This statement is supported by the fact that half of all

mental health disorders in adulthood begin by age 14, but most cases go undetected and untreated (WHO, 2022).

It is known that more than 50% of people with mental health problems use the internet to find out about their problems (Kalckreuth, Trefflich, & Rummel-Kluge, 2014). Based on research conducted on Generation Z in Jakarta, 91% of Generation Z respondents searched for health information online, using both social media and online news sites (Roselina, Asmiyanto, & Andriany, 2021). This is preferred by Generation Z over consulting with healthcare professionals about their health conditions (Limilia & Pratamawaty, 2020). However, searching for health information online can lead to misinformation and increase the tendency towards self-diagnosis or self-treatment, arguments between patients and doctors during in-person consultations, and even self-medicating using recommendations found online (Tan & Goonawardene, 2017).

In searching for information, there are several stages, from starting with determining the topic of information to finally obtaining the needed information (Riani, 2017). Generation Z typically selects keywords related to the topic based on their existing understanding (Erlianti, 2020). One popular theory regarding information-seeking behavior is Wilson's theory, which states that psychological factors, demographics, a person's role in society, and the environmental characteristics of the information source will influence a person's information-seeking behavior (Widiyastuti, 2016). Furthermore, various studies have explored the factors influencing information-seeking behavior, although a research gap remains.

A previous study, "Online Health Information Seeking: A Review and Meta-Analysis" (2020), explained that demographic factors such as age, gender, and education influence information-seeking behavior (Wang, Shi, & Kong, 2020). However, other research suggests that age does not influence information-seeking behavior (Triaji, Padmaningrum, & Anantanyu, 2021). Xiaohui Wang (2020) in her research stated that women tend to prefer seeking health information online compared to men (Wang et al., 2020). However, this contradicts the results of other studies that suggest that health information seeking is not influenced by gender (A.A. & M.Z., 2018).

A previous survey found that people experiencing psychological distress were more likely to use the internet to search for information related to their mental health issues than those without (Powell & Clarke, 2006). However, this finding contradicts a 2021 study, which found no significant correlation between information-seeking behavior and common mental health disorders (depression, anxiety, and stress) (Syafitri, Falasifah, & Hakim, 2021).

In addition to the factors mentioned above, information-seeking behavior, particularly via the internet, is also influenced by digital literacy. Research by Nurul Hafidhah found that digital literacy has a strong influence on information-seeking behavior (Hafidhah, 2020). Digital literacy skills are crucial in the information-seeking process, ensuring that the information obtained is high-quality and reliable. Based on the results of the 2022 National Literacy Index Measurement, it was found that there was an increase of 0.8 points compared to the 2021 digital literacy index, with a score falling into the moderate category (Katadata Insight Center (KIC) & Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo), 2023).

Most of Generation Z in Indonesia are currently in middle school to college age. Madrasah Aliyah 'X' Jakarta is a high school whose students are Generation Z. Based on initial observations through interviews with guidance counselors at Madrasah Aliyah 'X' Jakarta, it was discovered that mental health issues are one of the health issues frequently discussed by students. Many students self-diagnose themselves as having mental illnesses such as bipolar

disorder, depression, or anxiety. This is usually done after searching for information related to mental disorders online and comparing it to their current condition. However, in essence, obtaining a diagnosis of mental illness cannot simply be based on information found online; it requires an assessment by a psychologist or psychiatrist. Furthermore, the rapid flow of information on the internet requires students to have digital literacy skills to access quality information.

Based on the above background, the main issue that emerged was the inconsistency of results regarding the influence of demographic characteristics, psychological conditions, and digital literacy on mental health information-seeking behavior. This inconsistency raises the need for further research into how these factors play a role in mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z, particularly within the Madrasah Aliyah environment. "X" Jakarta. This research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of mental health information-seeking patterns and serve as a basis for efforts to improve digital literacy and understanding of students' psychological conditions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach and an observational analytical cross-sectional design. The population was all students at Madrasah Aliyah "X" Jakarta. The inclusion criteria were students aged 14-18 who had previously searched for mental health information online. Exclusion criteria included students who were absent during data collection and those who withdrew and were unwilling to continue the study. The sampling technique used was proportionate stratified random sampling. The sample size was increased by 10% to avoid errors in data collection. The sample size was 286 students: 98 from Grade X, 94 from Grade XI, and 94 from Grade XII.

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher submitted a request for research permission at Madrasah Aliyah "X" Jakarta. Furthermore, the researcher submitted an ethics review to the Research Ethics Committee of Esa Unggul University. Prior to data collection, respondents were provided with an informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study and ensuring the confidentiality of the information provided.

The questionnaire was distributed online to guidance and counseling teachers, who then forwarded it to students to complete. The variables used in this study were age, gender, education level, digital literacy, psychological condition, and mental health information-seeking behavior. The questionnaire used to measure digital literacy adopted the questionnaire used by the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (KOMINFO) to measure the 2022 Indonesian Digital Literacy Index. The questionnaire used to measure psychological condition was the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-42). Both of these questionnaires are standardized and do not require further validity and reliability testing. The questionnaire used to measure mental health information-seeking behavior was compiled based on indicators according to David Ellis, which have been tested for validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.929.

The data analysis used in this study included descriptive analysis and classical assumption tests, consisting of data normality tests, multicollinearity tests, and heteroscedasticity tests. The hypothesis testing used multiple linear regression.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics, Digital Literacy Skills, and the Psychological State of Generation Z

This study used responses from 286 students. However, during the data analysis process, the collected data had to be transformed into a Lag format. This transformation process reduced the number of respondents available for study to 285 students.

Based on the descriptive analysis of demographic characteristics, it was found that of the 285 respondents, the majority were female (207) and the remaining 78 (27.4%) were male. Respondents aged 16 and 17 years old were the most numerous, with 90 respondents (31.6%) each, while those aged 14 years old had the fewest respondents, with only 8 (2.8%). Based on educational level, the number of respondents per class was nearly equal: 98 respondents (34.4%) were in Grade 10, 94 respondents (33%), and 93 respondents (32.6%) were in Grade 11.

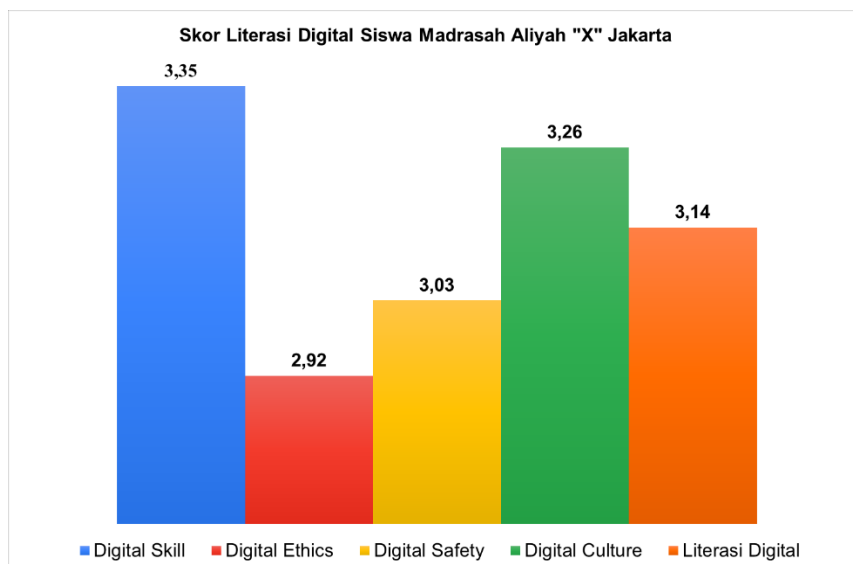


Figure 1. Digital literacy scores of students at Madrasah Aliyah "X" Jakarta

Based on the descriptive analysis, respondents' digital literacy skills were found to be in the good category with a score of 3.14. This digital literacy skill was measured based on four indicators: digital skills, digital ethics, digital safety, and digital culture (Ameliah, Negara, Minarto, Manurung, & Akbar, 2022).

When ranked by the average score obtained for each indicator, the order was: digital skills with an average score of 3.35 (very good), digital culture with an average score of 3.26 (very good), digital safety with an average score of 3.03 (good), and digital ethics with an average score of 2.92 (good). This result differs from the national digital literacy index, where digital culture was the indicator with the highest score, followed by digital ethics, digital skills, and digital safety with the lowest scores.

Digital skills, as the indicator with the highest average score, indicates that the majority of respondents have excellent skills in using hardware, software, and operating systems in their daily lives. Activities such as downloading, uploading, and connecting to the internet on gadgets are easy for respondents. This is inseparable from Generation Z's nature as digital integrators, whose lives have been integrated with digital technology since an early age (Munazar, 2020).

Furthermore, the majority of respondents are also accustomed to searching for digital information online and comparing it to determine its accuracy. However, out of a total of 285 respondents, 51 are still unfamiliar with online shopping via marketplaces.

Digital ethics is an indicator of digital literacy, with the lowest average score of 2.92, although it is in the good category. Digital ethics reflects Generation Z's ability to adapt, rationalize, consider, and develop digital ethical governance, and disseminate and receive information in the digital world. Descriptive analysis revealed that the majority of Generation Z are not wise in sharing information digitally, as many still upload photos with other people's children and screenshots of their conversations on social media. This contrasts with the 2022 national digital literacy status, where the majority of people understand that uploading photos with other people's children is a necessary digital etiquette (Ameliah et al., 2022). Furthermore, many Generation Z members still don't ask their friends' permission before tagging them in their uploaded content. However, Generation Z understands that they shouldn't encourage others to comment negatively on social media and shouldn't respond to negative comments on their own content with offensive language.

The next indicator is digital safety, which relates to Generation Z's ability to protect their personal data in the digital world. The majority of Generation Z members understand that uploading personal data to social media is prohibited. In line with the 2022 Indonesian Digital Literacy Status, Generation Z also understands the importance of creating passwords with a combination of numbers, letters, and punctuation to maintain the security of their digital data (Ameliah et al., 2022). However, many Generation Z members don't use apps to protect their devices from viruses and still can't distinguish between emails containing viruses, spam, or malware that could harm them.

The fourth indicator of digital literacy is digital culture. Digital culture describes Generation Z's ability to apply the values of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in everyday life and the digitalization of culture through the use of ICT. Based on the results of descriptive analysis, it is known that Generation Z has a very good digital culture. Adapting the way they communicate so that no one is offended despite religious, political, and cultural differences is something that has been done by the majority of Generation Z. Regarding cultural arts, Generation Z also shares traditional and contemporary cultural arts content in Indonesia on their social media. If the content uploaded on social media is a repost of someone else's, they do not forget to include the author's name. When compared to the Digital Literacy Status in Indonesia 2022, Generation Z has a better digital culture because they do not hesitate to implement digital culture compared to the majority of Indonesians (Annur, 2023).

Generation Z in Indonesia demonstrates a high level of digital technology proficiency, particularly in using devices and searching for information online. However, there is still a need to improve their understanding of digital ethics, reflecting the evolving social and cultural challenges in society. As a generation growing up amidst technological advancements, Generation Z in Indonesia faces the challenge of maintaining respect for evolving social and cultural values. Awareness of digital ethics will help them maintain mutual respect while using technology responsibly in their daily lives. In the context of mental health, positive use of technology can support their mental well-being by providing access to information and support, while reducing the spread of stigma and misinformation that often exacerbate mental health issues.

Based on the results of the descriptive analysis, it was found that 80.4% of respondents experienced psychological disorders, while only 19.6% of respondents reported a normal

psychological condition. Psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and stress experienced by respondents ranged from mild to very severe. These research findings seem to reinforce the assumption that Generation Z is indeed a generation highly susceptible to mental health issues.

The most common psychological disorder experienced by respondents was anxiety. This can be seen from the percentage of respondents who were in a normal condition or did not experience anxiety, which was only 20.7% of the total 285 respondents. This study's results align with those of Fransiska Kaligis et al. in 2021, which stated that anxiety is the most common mental health disorder experienced by Generation Z (Kaligis et al., 2021) and the results of a survey conducted by the Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), which stated that anxiety is the most common psychological disorder experienced by adolescents (Center for Reproductive Health, University of Queensland, & Johns Bloomberg Hopkins School of Public Health, 2022).

Anxiety in Generation Z can be triggered by several factors, ranging from negative childhood experiences, family neglect, authoritarian parenting, high academic demands, bullying, concerns about the future, and their constantly connected lives (Cahyani & Putri, 2024). The inherent FOMO characteristic of Generation Z is also one of the causes of anxiety in this generation. Therefore, good self-control in technology use is necessary to prevent FOMO from occurring (Zhafirah, Kosasih, & Zakariyya, 2023).

Other psychological disorders experienced by respondents include depression and stress. While these disorders are not as common as those with anxiety, they should not be underestimated. Furthermore, they are currently in adolescence, a period of storm and stress, making them susceptible to stress (Dianovinina, 2018), which, if left untreated, can trigger depression and other health problems (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Mental Health Information-Seeking Behavior of Generation Z

This study uses the theory developed by David Ellis to examine the mental health information-seeking behavior of Generation Z. Based on the descriptive analysis, it was found that the mental health information-seeking behavior of Generation Z is in the Good category with an average score of 3.12. Of the eight characteristics in David Ellis's theory, the results indicate that Generation Z exhibits good behavior in each characteristic, with a breakdown of starting (score 3.06), chaining (score 3.04), browsing (score 3.14), differentiating (score 3.25), monitoring (score 3.15), extracting (score 2.96), verifying (score 3.20), and ending (score 3.15).

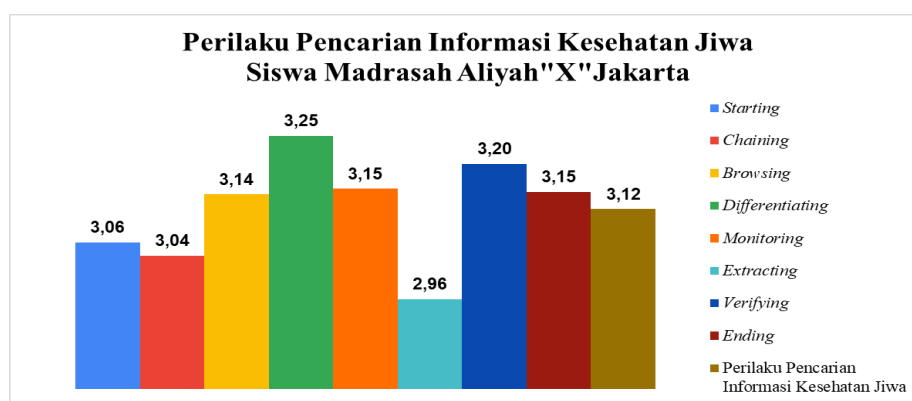


Figure 2. Mental health information seeking behavior score of students at Madrasah Aliyah "X" Jakarta

Mental health information-seeking behavior is the act of someone seeking information related to mental health. Generation Z's search for mental health information is conducted through the internet, an integral part of their lives. This internet search is preferred by Generation Z due to its speed and ease compared to seeking information through print media (Erlianti, 2020). This mental health information-seeking behavior begins with gathering initial information related to mental health by searching in books or articles, asking someone they believe can provide a general overview of mental health, such as a health expert, or someone Generation Z considers helpful in their search, such as a teacher or friend. The initial information gathering process before conducting an information search is known as the "starting" stage. Furthermore, determining topics related to the mental health information they wish to research is also carried out during this starting stage.

After obtaining initial information related to mental health, the next stage is "chaining." Chaining is the information-seeking stage carried out by tracing citation chains or bibliographies contained in references, such as books or articles, obtained during the starting stage. This process is useful for finding information sources relevant to the topic being sought, namely mental health.

The next stage in seeking mental health information is browsing. Browsing, in this case, is a semi-structured information search process that leads to specific information. Among Generation Z, this activity is carried out online by typing keywords into Google/Yahoo search boxes. These keywords are related to the mental health information sought. This internet browsing will bring up a variety of articles and journals from various websites. However, to ensure accurate information is obtained, Generation Z agrees that they will select articles and journals from official health websites related to mental health. They will then skim the articles and journals by their titles, tables of contents, and abstracts to identify the topics they are seeking.

Several articles and journals obtained during the browsing stage must be selected to determine which ones best suit the mental health information sought. The process of selecting articles and journals to obtain relevant and valid information is called the differentiating stage. In this study, differentiating was an indicator of mental health information-seeking behavior, with the highest average score of 3.25. This means that the majority of Generation Z agrees that selecting valid and relevant information is crucial when searching for mental health information. Differentiating is a crucial step because articles/journals obtained through browsing are only briefly reviewed, not fully comprehending their content. Therefore, the information contained within them may not be relevant to what they are searching for. This selection of articles/journals is done by comparing them with other articles from different websites.

After differentiating, the next step is monitoring. Monitoring is the activity of monitoring the development of information from sources selected through the differentiating process. This monitoring is carried out by double-checking the mental health information obtained for changes or updates. This monitoring is crucial for Generation Z because they place a high value on the currency and credibility of mental health information, as evidenced by the majority of respondents who agreed with the second statement in the monitoring indicator.

Articles/journals that have undergone monitoring are then subjected to a more in-depth information extraction process to better focus on the targeted mental health information sought. This extraction process can be performed by grouping the obtained mental health information into storage folders. This is useful so that when they want to use the information later, they don't have to search for it again, which can be time-consuming. However, in this study, many

respondents still failed to save the information they obtained into folders, resulting in the extraction indicator, which received the lowest average score among the eight indicators. This aligns with previous research by Fatimahtus Zahro et al. (2022), where extracting also received the lowest score in information-seeking behavior (Wahyudin, Mudawamah, & Puspitadewi, 2022).

The next stage is verification, where information seekers, in this case Generation Z, double-check the obtained mental health information to ensure it aligns with their needs and makes it easier to understand. The final stage of the mental health information search process is ending. An information search can be considered complete when the necessary information has been found and meets the information seeker's mental health needs. Ultimately, Generation Z ends their internet search for mental health information by exiting the website they opened during the search process.

Based on the above description, we can conclude that Generation Z at Madrasah Aliyah "X" Jakarta exhibits mental health information-seeking behavior consistent with David Ellis's information-seeking behavior theory. This structured mental health information-seeking behavior is crucial for Generation Z to adopt to prevent the phenomenon of repetitive searching (cyberchondria), which can lead to excessive worry or anxiety related to their mental health (McMullan, Berle, Arnáez, & Starcevic, 2019).

Within the madrasah environment, it is crucial to develop digital literacy programs that focus not only on technical skills but also instill ethical and safety values in the use of technology. Madrasahs can play a role by providing counseling services and guiding students in understanding and appropriately utilizing mental health information. Furthermore, active support from teachers and parents is essential for students to use technology wisely and maintain their mental health. Through the implementation of digital literacy programs integrated into learning activities, students can be trained to think critically about the information they encounter online and understand the psychological impacts of digital media use. With this comprehensive approach, madrasahs can become spaces that support the healthy growth of Generation Z, in line with Indonesia's increasingly digital and complex socio-cultural context.

The Influence of Demographic Characteristics, Digital Literacy, and Psychological Conditions on Mental Health Information-Seeking Behavior among Generation Z

The demographic characteristics tested in this study were age, gender, and education level. Based on the results of the T-test, the Sig. values obtained for the three demographic characteristics were 0.659 (age), 0.027 (gender), and 0.680 (education level). These results indicate that only gender influences health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z, as the Sig. of 0.027 is <0.05 . Compared with previous research that found that age, gender, and education influence health information-seeking behavior (Wang et al., 2020) and (Tariku Seboka et al., 2022), the results of this study align with the statement that only gender influences mental health information-seeking behavior.

Based on the regression coefficient value for the gender variable obtained from the T-test, which is -0.230, Generation Z males have better health information-seeking behavior than Generation Z females. This can be concluded because male gender in this study is symbolized by the number 1, while female gender is symbolized by the number 2. Therefore, when included in the existing regression equation, Generation Z females will have a lower health information-seeking behavior score than males.

Men's attitudes toward better technology use compared to women (Cai, Fan, & Du, 2017), coupled with the assumption that men should not be weak and should be independent (Idham, Rahayu, As-Sahih, Muhiddin, & Sumantri, 2019), may be reasons why they have better mental health information-seeking behavior than women. This is further reinforced by the fact that the majority of adolescent boys are reluctant to seek professional health help, thus opting for effective online search for mental health information (Ellis et al., 2013). This is because if they do not conduct their search effectively, their goal of finding solutions to their mental health problems will not be achieved.

Based on the results of the T-test, it was found that digital literacy has a partial influence on mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z, as evidenced by a significance value of 0.000 (Sig. <0.05). This aligns with previous research conducted by Nurul Hafidhah (2020) and Irmawarni (2022), which stated that digital literacy influences information-seeking behavior (Hafidhah, 2020) (Irmawarni, 2022).

The effect of digital literacy on mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z is positive, as indicated by a regression coefficient of 0.375. This suggests that the better the digital literacy skills possessed, the better the internet-seeking behavior of mental health information among Generation Z.

Psychological conditions are one factor influencing a person's information-seeking behavior, according to Wilson. Wilson stated that someone experiencing anxiety will exhibit different information-seeking behavior than someone in a normal state. However, this study found results that contradict Wilson's statement: psychological conditions have no effect on mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z.

Although the results of this study contradict Wilson's theory (Wilson, 2022), they align with the results of a study entitled "Implementation of Clean and Healthy Living, Information-Seeking Behavior, and Public Mental Health at the Beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic," which stated that there was no significant correlation between information-seeking behavior and common mental health disorders (depression, anxiety, and stress) (Syafitri et al., 2021).

Based on the results of the multiple linear regression test (F-test) (collectively), a significance value of $0.000 < 0.005$ was found. It can be concluded that H_0 is rejected and H_4 is accepted. This means that demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level), digital literacy, and psychological conditions simultaneously influence mental health information-seeking behavior. The magnitude of the influence of demographic characteristics, digital literacy, and psychological conditions on mental health information-seeking behavior was 42.1%.

CONCLUSION

Gender is a demographic characteristic that has an influence on mental health information seeking behavior among Generation Z, which is indicated by a Sig. $0.027 < 0.05$. Generation Z males have better mental health information seeking behavior than females. Digital literacy influences mental health information seeking behavior among Generation Z. This is indicated by a Sig. $0.00 < 0.05$ and a regression coefficient of 0.366. Psychological conditions do not influence mental health information seeking behavior among Generation Z. Demographic characteristics, digital literacy, and psychological conditions simultaneously influence 42.1% of mental health information seeking behavior among Generation Z.

SUGGESTION

Students should be able to utilize the counseling guidance available at madrasas to help them deal with the problems they experience so that they do not drag on and disrupt their psychological well-being. Madrasas are also expected to provide outreach regarding healthy coping mechanisms that they can use when experiencing a problem, such as keeping themselves busy with things they enjoy, practicing relaxation techniques, self-care, exercising, journaling, etc. Furthermore, madrasas are also expected to create a digital literacy training model for students so that their digital literacy skills, which are currently in the good category, can be maintained and even improved to excellent. This study has limitations in that it was only conducted in one school, so the results cannot be generalized widely to diverse populations. Therefore, it is hoped that future researchers are expected to conduct further research with a wider coverage of locations, a more heterogeneous population, and testing other variables not yet examined in this study to obtain a more comprehensive picture of mental health information-seeking behavior among Generation Z in Indonesia.

THANK YOU-NOTE

The authors sincerely express their gratitude to the Directorate of Research and Community Service (DPPM), Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (Kemdiktisaintek), Republic of Indonesia, for funding this research through the 2025 BIMA Grant under the Early Career Lecturer Research (PDP) Scheme. Special thanks are extended to Esa Unggul University for institutional and ethical support throughout the study process. Appreciation is also conveyed to the students and teachers of Madrasah Aliyah "X" Jakarta for their valuable participation and cooperation, which greatly contributed to the completion of this research.

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