



TRANSFORMATION OF BPI SERVICES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A CASE STUDY OF PREVENTIVE AND CURATIVE MENTAL HEALTH EFFORTS AMONG GENERATION Z STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF DA'WAH

Muhammad Radja Muhibbullah¹, Ira Wirtati²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: muhammad012212068@uinsu.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the digital transformation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling (Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam/BPI) services in preventive and curative mental health efforts among Generation Z students at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN Sumatera Utara. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings show that BPI services have shifted from conventional face-to-face counseling to cyber-counseling through platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Zoom, which are more flexible, accessible, and perceived as more private by students. Preventive efforts are implemented through digital da'wah literacy, including educational content on stress management, gratitude, patience, and Islamic self-strengthening, while curative efforts are carried out through spiritually based online counseling, such as Qur'anic motivation, prayer guidance, and digital religious reflection. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating that the digital transformation of BPI is not merely a technical shift of communication media, but an integrative service model that combines preventive mental resilience and curative spiritual intervention within a digital environment. This study contributes to the development of an adaptive and value-based Islamic counseling framework for higher education, while also highlighting key challenges, including limited nonverbal communication, response time constraints, absence of standard operating procedures, and concerns over data confidentiality.

Keywords: digital transformation; Islamic guidance and counseling; cyber-counseling; mental health; Generation Z,

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z grew up in a digital ecosystem that shaped how they interact, obtain information, express themselves, and respond to social and academic pressures. The intense use of social media, visual-based communication, and near-continuous connectivity have led this generation of students to adopt a different lifestyle than previous generations. On the one hand, digital spaces open up opportunities for learning,

networking, and self-actualization; however, on the other hand, these same spaces also increase exposure to cyberbullying, fear of missing out, social anxiety, and performative pressures, all of which impact students' mental health (Hidayat et al., 2024; Nofita Rahmawati, 2025). In this context, student mental health issues can no longer be understood solely as individual issues, but rather as socio-psychological phenomena influenced by digital culture.

From an Islamic perspective, mental health is not only defined as the absence of psychological disorders, but also as the achievement of peace of mind, inner balance, and the individual's ability to maintain harmony between reason, emotions, and spirituality. Therefore, addressing mental health issues cannot simply rely on a technical psychological approach; it also requires strengthening the values of faith, the meaning of life, and spiritual awareness as sources of inner resilience (Ariadi, 2019; Hasyim, 2024). Islamic Counseling Guidance (BPI) is crucial in this context because it serves not only as a means of resolving problems after a crisis occurs but also as a preventative tool for building mental resilience based on Islamic values.

However, BPI services in higher education settings are often still carried out using conventional methods, relying on formal face-to-face meetings, spatial constraints, and limited service time. This model does not always align with the communication characteristics of Generation Z, who are more familiar with digital media, more comfortable communicating personal issues through virtual spaces, and tend to avoid situations perceived as socially stigmatizing. In this context, digital transformation opens up new possibilities for BPI services through cyber-counseling, the use of social media, instant messaging applications, and online conferencing platforms that are more flexible, fast, and accessible (Nurrohman & Mujahidin, 2022; Yulia, 2023). This transformation requires BPI to not only shift media but also adapt communication strategies, intervention methods, and counselor-client relationship patterns.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the importance of a religious approach in maintaining mental health and the potential of online services to support psychological well-being. Aqilah (2023) emphasized that Islamic religious counseling helps final-year students build emotional stability through internalizing patience, trust in God, and dhikr (remembrance of God). Mulawarman et al. (2022) demonstrated that online counseling offers advantages in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and openness to counselees. Meanwhile, Muslimah et al. (2024) found that Islamic counseling is effective in helping students overcome stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem through spiritual strengthening and emotional support. However, these studies generally only partially discuss Islamic counseling or online counseling, without specifically examining the transformation of BPI services as an institutional model that integrates preventive and curative mental health functions within the digital ecosystem, particularly for Generation Z students at Islamic religious universities.

Based on this gap, there is a need to examine how the transformation of BPI services is implemented in the real world within higher education settings, rather than simply as a normative discourse about service digitalization. The Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UIN North Sumatra is an important context for this study because it lies at the intersection of strengthening da'wah values, developing future Islamic counselors, and adapting to the realities of student digital communication. Therefore, the main research question is how BPI services are transformed in the digital era, how these

services are implemented in preventive and curative mental health efforts for Generation Z students, and what factors support and hinder their effectiveness in practice (Mukhlis & Syahrul Munir, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to position the digital transformation of BPI not merely as a shift in communication channels from face-to-face to online media, but as an integrative service model that brings together da'wah, Islamic counseling, and mental health interventions within a contextual preventive-curative framework for Generation Z. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the transformation of the form of BPI services in the digital era, examine the implementation of its preventive and curative functions on student mental health, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors that influence its sustainability. Academically, this research is expected to strengthen the development of digital BPI studies in Islamic higher education, while practically, the research findings can form the basis for the development of BPI services that are more adaptive, safe, and relevant to the needs of contemporary students.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative study using a case study approach. This approach was used to gain a deeper understanding of contextual social phenomena, particularly regarding the transformation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BPI) services in the digital era in addressing the mental health of Generation Z students. Through the case study, researchers were able to holistically explore empirical realities based on the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of informants within the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication. This approach enabled a more in-depth analysis of the dynamics of digital BPI service implementation, including methods, media, and their impact on preventive and curative student mental health efforts.

The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants: active students of the Faculty of Da'wah representing Generation Z who have or are currently accessing digital BPI services, as well as lecturers or practitioners of Islamic guidance and counseling who play a role in the implementation of these services (Faulkner and Trotter 2017). Secondary data were collected through a documentary study that included archives of counseling services, digital-based mental health educational content on the faculty's official platform, and scientific literature relevant to the study's focus. Data collection techniques included participant observation of digital counseling activities such as discussion groups on instant messaging apps or social media, structured interviews to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and psychological needs, and documentation in both physical and digital formats.

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction to identify relevant and essential information, presenting the data in the form of thematic descriptive narratives, and drawing interpretive and credible conclusions (Miles et al. 2021). Data validity was ensured through triangulation techniques, including source triangulation by comparing student and lecturer perspectives, and technical triangulation by confirming interview results with digital observation findings and supporting documents. This methodological

procedure is expected to produce a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of BPI's service transformation in carrying out preventive and curative functions for student mental health issues in the digital era.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Transformation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling Services: From Conventional to Digital

Research findings indicate that Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BPI) services at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UINSU are no longer solely conducted through formal face-to-face meetings, but have shifted to a more flexible service format through digital media. Based on observations and interviews, this change is evident in the way students access assistance. Previously, students had to visit the lecturer's or counselor's office in person, but now more often through personal communication on WhatsApp. Students tend to use text messages as the initial gateway to convey academic concerns, emotional distress, or sensitive personal issues. This shift demonstrates that the digitalization of services is not only a change in the medium but also a shift in the interaction patterns between service providers and students as recipients.

Field findings also show that the transformation of BPI services has occurred across a variety of platforms and communication formats. WhatsApp is the most dominant medium, perceived as fast, simple, and familiar to students' daily lives. Meanwhile, Zoom and Google Meet are used when guidance requires longer, more structured interactions, or involves multiple participants in group counseling sessions. On the other hand, Instagram and TikTok have begun to be utilized as platforms for disseminating preventative messages, particularly through educational content on academic stress, spiritual strengthening, and Islamic motivation. Thus, BPI services are no longer simply available when students present with problems, but are also actively present in the digital spaces they access daily.

Another change is evident in how students perceive the counseling space. While conventional counseling spaces are often perceived as formal, stiff, and sometimes awkward, digital services offer students a safer space to open up. Informants' narratives suggest a tendency toward text-based communication, as students can choose their words more carefully, don't feel like they're being "judged," and don't have to express their emotions directly with the counselor. This has led some students to feel more confident in discussing issues they previously harbored, including academic anxiety, family conflict, and social relationship stress. These findings confirm that digital transformation has shifted BPI services to better align with Generation Z's communication culture, which prioritizes privacy, speed, and accessibility.

Overall, field findings indicate that the transformation of BPI services from conventional to digital is taking place across three main dimensions: service media, communication patterns, and the psychological experiences of service users. Digitalization has made BPI services more accessible, more responsive, and more in line with the communication habits of today's students. However, the most important aspect of this change is the emergence of a service model that is more adaptive to students' needs, as assistance no longer requires formal meetings but can instead begin with simple interactions in familiar digital spaces. Thus, this transformation demonstrates that BPI

services are moving from a formal, institutional model to one that is more fluid, communicative, and relevant to the realities of Generation Z students' lives.

Implementation of Digital Preventive and Curative Efforts

Research results indicate that the implementation of digital Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BPI) services at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UINSU, follows a continuous pattern of prevention and treatment. In practice, the preventive approach is implemented not through formal services that require students to come for consultations, but through the regular dissemination of educational messages in digital spaces familiar to students. Instagram and WhatsApp groups serve as primary channels for instilling Islamic-based mental-strengthening values, such as patience in the face of academic pressure, gratitude to reduce insecurity, and husnuzan (a sense of self-worth) in responding to failure and uncertainty. These findings demonstrate that the BPI's preventive function is being implemented actively, systematically, and closely related to students' daily lives.

Field observations revealed that this preventive content serves not only as informational material but also as a form of mild psychological intervention that is frequently present in students' digital spaces. Delivering messages through infographics, short videos, and daily reminders makes Islamic guidance values more easily accepted than formal lectures, which often feel out of step with Generation Z's communication rhythm. Students don't have to enter a counseling room to receive initial reinforcement, as preventative messages are already present on their social media feeds and communication channels. Thus, the preventive efforts within the faculty's digital BPI appear to be shifting from a reactive to an anticipatory approach, namely building students' mental resilience before problems develop into more serious disorders.

Curative efforts are implemented through cyber-counseling, which is more personalized, private, and responsive. When students begin to experience excessive anxiety, emotional distress, or mild psychological symptoms, services are provided through direct digital communication, primarily through private chats, voice notes, or online meetings. In this practice, counselors not only provide an initial emotional response but also integrate spiritual interventions into the mentoring process. These interventions include providing motivational verses from the Quran and providing strengthening verses such as QS. Al-Insyirah or Al-Baqarah: 286, prayer guides, murattal recordings, and reflective guidance help students calm themselves. These findings indicate that the curative function of digital BPI services goes beyond supportive communication, but also strives to provide psychological recovery grounded in spiritual strengthening.

The implementation of digital preventive and curative approaches within BPI services creates a mentoring ecosystem that is more adaptive to the needs of Generation Z students. Preventive efforts work at the level of awareness-building, value reinforcement, and early prevention of mental distress, while curative efforts serve as a space for support when students enter a phase of psychological crisis. These two approaches complement each other because students not only receive advice after experiencing problems but also gain ongoing mental and spiritual resources through the digital space they access daily. With this pattern, BPI services in the digital era are beginning to demonstrate a significant

shift: from episodic and formal services to mentoring that is more accessible, more immediate, and more relevant to the lived experiences of contemporary students.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Transformation

Research results indicate that the transformation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BPI) services from conventional to digital models at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UINSU, was supported by relatively conducive internal conditions. The most prominent supporting factor was the high digital literacy of students, as members of Generation Z. Students are generally accustomed to using various digital communication platforms for both academic and personal activities, so adapting to BPI services based on WhatsApp, Zoom, or social media did not require a complex adjustment process. In this context, service transformation can occur more quickly because the media used are already part of students' daily habits.

Furthermore, field findings indicate that the success of the transformation is also supported by the availability of technological infrastructure and the academic openness of lecturers and counselors. Access to the campus internet network and smartphone ownership by almost all students are essential prerequisites for implementing digital services practically and sustainably. At the same time, BPI lecturers demonstrate a fairly open attitude to change, particularly in their willingness to move away from service patterns that rely solely on formal face-to-face meetings. This openness demonstrates that transformation is driven not only by technological demands, but also by pedagogical and religious awareness that guidance services must keep up with the times to remain relevant to students. Support from campus religious culture also strengthens this process, as spiritual guidance materials delivered through digital media remain within the values accepted by students.

However, this study also found that the transformation of digital BPI services still faces several significant obstacles. The first obstacle is service time management, particularly slow responses in digital communications. Unlike face-to-face counseling, which has a clear schedule, online communications tend to occur without firm time limits, so counselors' responses are highly dependent on personal availability. In situations where students are experiencing acute psychological distress, delayed responses can erode trust and reduce the effectiveness of counseling. The second obstacle is the limited ability of nonverbal communication. Text-based interactions prevent counselors from always capturing expressions, intonation, or gestures, which are crucial for understanding the client's emotional depth. As a result, the process of empathy and problem understanding is sometimes less complete than in-person services.

Another equally significant obstacle is ethical and institutional issues. The use of third-party platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram raises concerns regarding the confidentiality of students' personal data, particularly when the communication content concerns psychological issues, family issues, or sensitive personal experiences. Furthermore, the absence of standard operating procedures (SOPs) governing service ethics, limits of responsibility, case handling procedures, and data protection mechanisms indicates that the transformation of BPI services at this faculty is still in the practical adaptation stage, not yet fully established as a professional institutional system. Thus, field findings demonstrate that the success of BPI's digital transformation depends not

only on technological and user readiness but also requires strengthening regulations, service governance, and ethical assurance to ensure its sustainability.

Discussion

The Dialectic of Technology and Da'wah: The Transformation of Islamic Education (BPI) Services

The transformation of Islamic Education (BPI) services at the Faculty of Da'wah (Da'wah) at UINSU (State Islamic University) demonstrates the adaptation of da'wah instruments to current developments. Research findings regarding the use of WhatsApp and Instagram align with Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) theory, where technology acts as an intermediary for guidance messages. Theoretically, this represents an innovation in the Irsyad Al-Nafsy (soul guidance) method (Ariadi 2019).

The transition from physical to digital spaces has impacted the psychology of Generation Z students, who have digital-first tendencies. The success of this transformation demonstrates that Islamic guidance is not static. The ease of access offered by digital media has successfully broken down the "bureaucratic wall" and the negative stigma surrounding counseling, allowing students to feel like they have a spiritual companion always at their fingertips.

Preventive-Curative Synergy in the Digital Ecosystem

The implementation of preventive efforts through Islamic educational content on social media is a modern form of the Mau'idzah Hasanah method (Ritonga 2019). Values such as patience, gratitude, and husnuzan (religious devotion) disseminated through infographics are not merely visual content, but rather a revelation-based cognitive intervention. This is relevant to the concept of Tahshun (fortification) in the Islamic Counseling Institute (BPI), where students' souls are equipped with a monotheistic mindset before facing social pressures in the virtual world.

From a curative perspective, the use of the Tazkiyatun Nafs technique textually demonstrates that the process of purifying the soul is not limited to physical encounters. Providing Qur'anic motivation and prayer guidance via chat functions as Psychological First Aid, providing instant calm (tuma'ninah) (Kalra et al. 2024). This discussion emphasizes that despite the modern nature of the media used, the essence of healing in BPI remains rooted in the authority of sacred texts and profound spiritual guidance.

Evaluating the Professionalism of Digital Islamic Counseling

While this transformation has had positive impacts, obstacles such as slow response times and the absence of non-verbal communication (body language) are critical. In BPI theory, empathy (tafahum) is built through an inner connection between counselor and client. The loss of facial expression in digital spaces can diminish the quality of emotional warmth in counseling.

Furthermore, the absence of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) at the Faculty of Da'wah, UINSU, indicates that this transformation is still at the organic-spontaneous stage, not yet at the institutional-professional stage. The issue of data confidentiality (privacy) poses a significant ethical challenge. Going forward, to maintain the dignity of BPI as a

professional discipline, it is necessary to integrate the wisdom of Islamic guidance with strict cyber ethics, so that digital counseling services are not only technically effective but also safe according to Islamic law and sharia (Ariadi 2019).

Synthesis: Building Mental Resilience in FDK Students

Overall, the transformation of BPI services in the digital era has created a new model for addressing the mental health of Generation Z. This service has successfully built mental resilience in students by bringing religion closer to their most frequented space: their smartphones. This success solidifies the Faculty of Da'wah, UINSU, as an institution capable of synergizing technology with prophetic values to create mentally healthy and spiritually resilient students.

4. CONCLUSION

The transformation of Islamic Guidance and Counseling (BPI) services in the digital era for students of the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at UINSU shows a significant shift from conventional counseling models to Computer-Mediated Communication-based cyber-counseling practices that are more adaptive to the characteristics of Generation Z. The use of digital platforms such as social media and communication applications not only expands service access but is also effective in reducing psychological stigma and accelerating emotional support through the integration of spiritual values in preventive and curative mental health efforts. The high digital literacy of students and the openness of educators are the main supporting factors for the success of this transformation, although still faced with challenges such as limited service response, minimal non-verbal communication, and the lack of structured standard operating procedures and data security systems. These findings emphasize that institutional strengthening and methodological innovation are key to optimizing the effectiveness of digital BPI services as a strategy for sustainable student mental health development.

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