

Mental Health Support for Gen Z Students: Integrating Tele-Counselling and Digital Well-Being Tools in Schools

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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	
Citation: Asemota. R., Tobins. P. F., & Edinoh. K. (2026). Mental health support for Gen Z students: Integrating tele-counselling and digital well-being tools in schools. UKR Journal of Medicine and Medical Research, 2(4), 80-93.	<i>The increasing prevalence of anxiety, depression, stress, cyberbullying, emotional burnout, and social isolation among Generation Z (Gen Z) students have become a significant concern for educators, counsellors, policymakers, and mental health professionals worldwide. As digital natives, Gen Z students are deeply immersed in technology-mediated environments that shape their social interactions, learning experiences, and psychological well-being. In response to these emerging challenges, schools are increasingly adopting tele-counselling services, digital well-being applications, and online mental health support platforms to enhance student support systems. This study investigated the integration of tele-counselling and digital well-being tools in promoting the mental health of Gen Z students in secondary schools. A descriptive survey research design was employed. The study population comprised teachers, school counsellors, principals, and senior secondary school students drawn from selected secondary schools. Using a stratified random sampling technique, a sample of 450 respondents was selected. Data were collected through the Digital Mental Health Support Questionnaire (DMHSQ) and analysed using mean scores, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and independent sample t-tests. The findings revealed that tele-counselling services significantly improved access to emotional support, reduced the stigma associated with seeking psychological help, and increased students' willingness to utilise counselling services. The study further found that digital well-being tools enhanced students' stress management abilities, emotional regulation, self-awareness, and overall psychological resilience. However, several implementation barriers were identified, including inadequate internet connectivity, limited digital literacy, privacy and confidentiality concerns, insufficient professional training for counsellors, and risks associated with excessive screen exposure. The study concludes that the effective integration of tele-counselling and digital well-being technologies can strengthen school-based mental health support systems when supported by appropriate infrastructure, ethical guidelines, and stakeholder collaboration. The study recommends increased investment in digital counselling infrastructure, continuous professional development for school counsellors, the establishment of comprehensive digital mental health policies, and the promotion of balanced and responsible technology use within educational settings.</i> Keywords: Generation Z, Mental health, Tele-counselling, Digital well-being, School counselling, Educational technology, Emotional support.

Introduction

Mental health has emerged as one of the most pressing educational, social, and public health concerns affecting young people in the twenty-first century. Across the globe, increasing numbers of adolescents are experiencing psychological challenges such as anxiety, depression, emotional distress, loneliness, stress, cyberbullying, academic burnout, and identity-related conflicts. These concerns have attracted growing attention from educators, counsellors, policymakers, and health professionals because of their profound implications for students' academic performance, social development, and overall quality of life. Mental health is no longer viewed merely as the absence of mental illness; rather, it is increasingly recognised as a critical component of students' ability to learn effectively, maintain healthy relationships, cope with life challenges, and achieve their full potential (Eze, Edinoh & Ewhe 2026).

Among contemporary adolescents, Generation Z (Gen Z) generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 represents a unique population whose developmental experiences are closely intertwined with digital technology. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z students have grown up in a world characterised by smartphones, social media platforms, instant messaging applications, online gaming communities, virtual learning environments, and continuous internet connectivity. Their daily lives are shaped by digital interactions that influence how they communicate, learn, form relationships, seek information, and understand themselves. Consequently, technology has become an integral aspect of their educational experiences and personal development.

While digital technologies have created unprecedented opportunities for learning, creativity, collaboration, and social connection, they have also introduced new psychological and emotional challenges. The constant exposure to social media content, online comparisons, cyberbullying, digital surveillance, unrealistic beauty standards, and the pressure to maintain an idealised online identity can negatively affect students' self-esteem and emotional well-being. Research increasingly suggests that excessive screen time and prolonged online engagement may contribute to sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, attention difficulties, social withdrawal, and heightened levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents. For many Gen Z students, the digital environment serves as both a source of support and a source of stress, creating a complex relationship between technology use and mental health outcomes (Igwe, Oche & Edinoh, 2026; Asemota, Edinoh & Attah, 2026).

Educational institutions have become increasingly aware of the need to respond to these emerging mental health

challenges. Schools are no longer expected to focus solely on academic instruction; they are also recognised as important environments for promoting emotional well-being, psychological resilience, and social development. Consequently, school counselling services has assumed a more prominent role in supporting students' mental health needs. However, traditional face-to-face counselling models often face limitations, including insufficient counselling personnel, scheduling constraints, stigma associated with seeking help, and unequal access to mental health resources. These challenges have encouraged educators and mental health professionals to explore innovative approaches that can broaden the reach and effectiveness of student support services, Asemota, Edinoh & Attah (2026); Edinoh, Odili & Wakili (2026).

One such innovation is the integration of tele-counselling and digital well-being tools into school-based mental health programmes. Tele-counselling refers to the delivery of counselling and psychological support services through digital communication technologies such as video conferencing platforms, online chat systems, mobile applications, telephone consultations, and virtual counselling portals. Through these technologies, students can access professional support regardless of geographical location or physical proximity to counselling centres. Tele-counselling has gained increasing acceptance because it offers flexibility, convenience, privacy, and timely intervention, particularly for students who may be reluctant to seek traditional face-to-face counselling, Edinoh, Asemota & Wakili (2026).

Similarly, digital well-being tools have emerged as valuable resources for promoting positive mental health among adolescents. These tools include mindfulness applications, mood-tracking platforms, stress-management programmes, meditation software, emotional self-assessment tools, mental health chat bots, and digital self-care resources designed to enhance emotional awareness and psychological resilience. Such technologies encourage students to actively monitor and manage their emotional well-being while fostering healthy digital habits. By providing immediate access to mental health information and coping strategies, digital well-being tools can complement conventional counselling services and support early intervention efforts, Adegboyega, Asemota & Edinoh (2025).

The importance of digital mental health interventions became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. During periods of lockdown, school closures, and social distancing, millions of students experienced increased levels of loneliness, uncertainty, grief, and emotional distress. Educational institutions worldwide rapidly adopted virtual counselling services and online

mental health support systems to address these challenges. The pandemic demonstrated the potential of tele-counselling and digital mental health platforms to maintain continuity of care even when traditional service delivery methods were disrupted. Studies conducted during and after the pandemic has reported increased student engagement with online counselling services and growing acceptance of digital mental health interventions among adolescents, Onyeukwu, Kontagora & Edinoh (2026).

Despite these promising developments, significant concerns remain regarding the implementation and effectiveness of tele-counselling and digital well-being initiatives. Questions persist about the quality of online therapeutic relationships, confidentiality and data security, ethical considerations, digital fatigue, technological dependence, and unequal access to digital resources. Excessive reliance on technology may inadvertently contribute to the very psychological challenges that digital mental health interventions seek to address. Furthermore, disparities in internet connectivity, device availability, and digital literacy may limit the accessibility of these services for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The successful integration of digital mental health support systems therefore requires careful planning, ethical safeguards, professional competence, and adequate technological infrastructure, Asemota, Edinoh & Ifeobu-Emeanu (2026),

In developing countries such as Nigeria, these challenges are often compounded by systemic limitations within educational and mental health sectors. Many schools continue to face shortages of qualified counsellors, inadequate funding for counselling programmes, limited awareness of mental health issues, and persistent social stigma associated with seeking psychological support. Consequently, many students experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties remain underserved. The growing availability of digital technologies, however, presents an opportunity to expand access to mental health services and bridge existing gaps in school counselling provision. Tele-counselling and digital well-being tools may offer practical and cost-effective approaches for reaching students who might otherwise lack access to professional support, Ogunode, Edinoh & Olatunde-Aiyedun (2026).

Although global interest in digital mental health interventions continues to grow, empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness within secondary school environments remains relatively limited, particularly in developing-country contexts. Existing studies have largely focused on higher education settings or general healthcare environments, leaving important questions about their applicability and effectiveness among Gen Z secondary

school students. There is therefore a need for further research to examine how tele-counselling and digital well-being technologies can be effectively integrated into school systems to support adolescent mental health.

Against this background, the present study investigates the integration of tele-counselling and digital well-being tools in supporting the mental health of Generation Z students in schools. The study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the benefits, challenges, and implications of digital mental health interventions for enhancing student well-being and strengthening school counselling services in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

Mental health challenges among Generation Z students have become increasingly prevalent and complex, posing significant concerns for educational institutions, families, and mental health professionals. Many students experience psychological difficulties arising from academic pressure, social comparison, cyberbullying, family instability, emotional isolation, uncertainty about the future, and the pressures associated with maintaining an online presence. These challenges often affect students' academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, and overall well-being. If left unaddressed, mental health problems can lead to long-term educational, social, and psychological consequences.

Although schools are expected to provide counselling and psychosocial support services to students, many educational institutions continue to face substantial barriers in delivering effective mental health care. These barriers include shortages of trained counsellors, inadequate counselling facilities, limited financial resources, poor mental health awareness, and persistent stigma surrounding help-seeking behaviours. Consequently, many students who require psychological support does not receive timely or adequate intervention.

The emergence of tele-counselling services and digital well-being tools offers promising opportunities for expanding access to mental health support within school settings. Through technology-mediated counselling and self-help platforms, students can potentially access support more conveniently, privately, and efficiently. However, concerns regarding accessibility, confidentiality, ethical practices, digital inequality, technological dependence, and implementation effectiveness continue to raise questions about the suitability and sustainability of these interventions in educational environments.

Despite the growing adoption of digital mental health technologies globally, there remains a paucity of empirical research examining their effectiveness in supporting the mental health of Generation Z students within secondary school settings, particularly in developing countries. This

gap in knowledge limits the ability of educators, counsellors, and policymakers to make evidence-based decisions regarding the integration of digital mental health interventions into school support systems. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to investigate the role of tele-counselling and digital well-being tools in supporting the mental health of Generation Z students in schools.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Examine the influence of tele-counselling on students' mental health support accessibility.
2. Determine the relationship between digital well-being tools and emotional regulation among students.
3. Investigate students' perceptions of digital mental health support systems.
4. Identify challenges affecting the integration of tele-counselling in schools.
5. Suggest strategies for improving digital mental health support for Gen Z students.

Research Questions

1. How does tele-counselling influence mental health support accessibility among students?
2. What relationship exists between digital well-being tools and students' emotional regulation?
3. How do students perceive digital mental health support systems?
4. What challenges affect the integration of tele-counselling in schools?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between tele-counselling and students' willingness to seek psychological support.

H₀₂: Digital well-being tools do not significantly influence students' emotional regulation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how tele-counselling and digital well-being tools influence the mental health of Generation Z students. The theories selected for this study were chosen because they explain the roles of emotional support, technology-mediated interactions, and social connectedness in promoting psychological well-being within digital learning environments. Specifically, Humanistic Theory, Connectivism Theory, and Social

Support Theory offer valuable perspectives for understanding how digital mental health interventions can enhance emotional regulation, help-seeking behaviour, and overall student well-being.

Humanistic Theory

The Humanistic Theory, developed by Carl Rogers, emphasises the inherent potential of individuals to grow, develop, and achieve self-fulfilment when provided with a supportive and accepting environment. According to Rogers, effective counselling occurs when individuals experience empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard from helping professionals. The theory views people as capable of understanding their own challenges and making positive decisions when given appropriate emotional support. In the context of school counselling, students are more likely to discuss personal struggles when they feel understood rather than judged. Tele-counselling platforms can facilitate this process by providing safe and confidential spaces where students can express their thoughts, emotions, and concerns. Through virtual interactions, counsellors can employ active listening, empathy, and person-centred communication strategies that foster emotional growth and self-awareness. This theory is relevant to the present study because tele-counselling seeks to create supportive relationships that encourage Gen Z students to explore their feelings, build resilience, and improve their psychological well-being.

Connectivism Theory

The Connectivism Theory, proposed by George Siemens, explains learning and knowledge acquisition in an age dominated by digital technologies and interconnected networks. The theory argues that learning no longer occurs solely within individuals but is distributed across technological systems, social networks, and digital platforms. Connectivism recognises that access to information and the ability to connect with relevant resources are critical skills in contemporary society. For Generation Z students, who are deeply immersed in digital environments, online platforms often serve as important sources of information, guidance, and social interaction. Digital well-being applications, online counselling services, mental health websites, and virtual support communities represent examples of networked learning environments where students can access mental health resources. Through these interconnected systems, students can develop greater awareness of emotional health, coping strategies, and self-care practices. The theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding how tele-counselling and digital well-being tools can leverage technology to promote mental health support and psychological resilience among students.

Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory emphasises the crucial role of supportive relationships in helping individuals cope with stress, adversity, and emotional difficulties. The theory suggests that people experience better psychological outcomes when they receive emotional, informational, and practical assistance from others. Emotional support includes empathy, care, encouragement, and reassurance, while informational support involves guidance, advice, and access to helpful resources. For adolescents, strong support systems are particularly important because they are navigating significant academic, social, and personal challenges. Tele-counselling and digital mental health platforms can serve as valuable sources of support for students who may lack access to traditional face-to-face counselling services. These technologies enable students to connect with counsellors, mental health professionals, and supportive communities regardless of geographical barriers. By expanding access to emotional and psychological assistance, digital support systems can reduce feelings of isolation, enhance coping abilities, and strengthen students' overall mental well-being. Consequently, Social Support Theory provides a strong foundation for understanding how tele-counselling and digital well-being tools contribute to improve mental health outcomes among Generation Z students.

Literature Review

The mental health of adolescents has become an increasingly important area of research as educational institutions worldwide grapple with rising levels of psychological distress among young people. Recent studies indicate that contemporary adolescents face multiple emotional and social challenges arising from academic demands, family pressures, social expectations, and rapid technological changes. Among Generation Z students, these challenges are often intensified by continuous exposure to digital environments that shape their daily experiences, relationships, and self-perceptions. As a result, researchers, educators, and mental health professionals have devoted considerable attention to understanding the relationship between technology use and adolescent well-being.

One of the most influential contributions to this discourse comes from Twenge (2020), who observed that Generation Z adolescents report significantly higher levels of anxiety, loneliness, depression, and emotional distress compared to previous generations. According to the author, the widespread use of smartphones and social media platforms has altered the way young people interact, communicate, and evaluate themselves. While digital technologies provide opportunities for social connection, they also expose students to constant social comparison,

cyberbullying, unrealistic standards of success, and fear of missing out (FOMO). These experiences can negatively affect self-esteem and contribute to emotional vulnerability. Twenge further argued that excessive engagement with digital media may reduce face-to-face interactions, thereby increasing feelings of isolation and loneliness among adolescents.

In response to growing mental health concerns, tele-counselling has emerged as a promising intervention for improving access to psychological support services. Tele-counselling involves the use of digital communication technologies such as video conferencing, telephone calls, mobile applications, and online chat platforms to deliver counselling services remotely. Studies have consistently shown that tele-counselling helps overcome many of the barriers associated with traditional counselling services. Adolescents who may feel uncomfortable discussing sensitive issues in person often find virtual counselling environments less intimidating and more accessible. Researchers have reported that tele-counselling reduces the stigma associated with seeking psychological help while increasing students' willingness to engage in counselling sessions. The flexibility of online counselling also allows students to access support regardless of location, making mental health services more inclusive and convenient.

Several studies including Asemota, Edinoh & Attah(2026), have highlighted the effectiveness of tele-counselling in promoting emotional well-being among students. Research conducted in both secondary schools and higher education institutions indicates that online counselling services contribute to reduced levels of anxiety, stress, and emotional distress. Students frequently report feeling more comfortable sharing personal concerns through digital platforms because of the perceived privacy and anonymity they provide. Furthermore, tele-counselling enables timely intervention during periods of crisis, ensuring that students receive support when they need it most. This increased accessibility has become particularly valuable in regions where shortages of professional counsellors limit the availability of traditional face-to-face services.

Adegboyega, Asemota & Edinoh (2025). Also affirmed that, beyond tele-counselling, digital well-being tools have gained widespread recognition as important resources for supporting adolescent mental health. Digital well-being tools include mindfulness applications, mood-tracking software, meditation platforms, emotional self-regulation programmes, stress-management applications, and online therapy services. These technologies are designed to help users monitor their emotional states, develop healthy coping strategies, and maintain balanced technology use. Educational institutions increasingly incorporate such tools

into student support programmes as part of broader efforts to promote psychological well-being and resilience.

Research findings suggest that digital well-being interventions can positively influence students' emotional development and coping abilities. Mindfulness applications, for example, have been associated with reduced stress levels, improved concentration, and enhanced emotional regulation. Mood-tracking platforms enable students to become more aware of emotional patterns and identify potential triggers of distress. Similarly, self-guided mental health programmes provide practical techniques for managing anxiety, building resilience, and fostering positive mental health habits. These benefits are particularly relevant for Generation Z students, who are generally comfortable navigating digital platforms and may be more receptive to technology-based mental health interventions than traditional approaches.

The integration of technology into school counselling services has also transformed communication between counsellors and students. Research on school-based mental health programmes demonstrates that digital technologies facilitate more frequent and flexible interactions, enabling counsellors to provide support beyond conventional office hours. Through messaging systems, virtual consultations, and online support platforms, students can access assistance whenever emotional challenges arise. This expanded accessibility is especially beneficial for students living in remote areas or attending schools with limited counselling resources. Consequently, technology-enhanced counselling services have been identified as an effective strategy for extending the reach of mental health support within educational settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of tele-counselling and digital mental health interventions worldwide. During periods of school closure and social isolation, educational institutions increasingly relied on virtual counselling services to address rising levels of anxiety, uncertainty, grief, and emotional distress among students. Emerging evidence suggests that many students adapted positively to online counselling environments and appreciated the continuity of care provided through digital platforms. The pandemic demonstrated that technology can play a critical role in maintaining mental health services during emergencies and disruptions to traditional educational systems.

Despite these advantages, scholars have also identified several concerns regarding the increasing reliance on digital mental health technologies. One major issue is the potential for excessive screen exposure, which may contribute to digital fatigue, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, and reduced physical activity. Adolescents already spend substantial portions of their day engaging with digital

devices for academic, social, and recreational purposes. The addition of technology-based counselling services may inadvertently increase overall screen time, potentially undermining some aspects of well-being. Researchers therefore emphasise the need for balanced implementation strategies that promote healthy technology use while minimising negative effects.

Privacy and confidentiality represent another significant concern within tele-counselling systems. Mental health services often involve the disclosure of highly sensitive personal information, making data protection a critical requirement. Scholars have raised concerns about the security of digital counselling platforms and the potential risks associated with unauthorised access, data breaches, or misuse of personal information. Ensuring confidentiality is particularly important when working with adolescents, whose trust in counselling services may depend heavily on perceptions of privacy and safety. Consequently, effective digital mental health programmes must incorporate strong ethical guidelines, secure technological infrastructure, and clear data protection policies.

The successful implementation of tele-counselling also depends largely on the digital competence of counsellors and educators. Recent studies emphasise that school counsellors require specialised training in online communication skills, digital ethics, virtual therapeutic techniques, and technology management. Traditional counselling skills alone may not be sufficient for effective online service delivery. Counsellors must be able to establish rapport, maintain professional boundaries, and manage emotional interactions within digital environments. Continuous professional development is therefore essential for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of technology-mediated counselling services.

In many developing countries, infrastructural limitations continue to present significant barriers to the implementation of digital mental health interventions. Unstable internet connectivity, inadequate technological devices, unreliable electricity supply, and limited digital literacy often restrict students' access to online support services. Digital inequality remains a major concern, as students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds may lack the resources necessary to benefit fully from technology-based mental health programmes. These challenges highlight the importance of addressing broader infrastructural and policy issues when promoting digital mental health initiatives, Edinoh, Oche & Omolabake (2024).

Within African educational contexts, mental health services remain relatively underdeveloped despite increasing awareness of adolescent psychological challenges. Many schools continue to face shortages of trained counsellors,

inadequate funding, and limited institutional support for mental health programmes. Additionally, cultural beliefs and social stigma surrounding counselling frequently discourage students from seeking professional psychological assistance. As a result, many adolescents experiencing emotional difficulties remain unsupported. In this context, tele-counselling platforms may provide alternative pathways for accessing mental health services. The anonymity, convenience, and flexibility associated with digital counselling can encourage students who might otherwise avoid traditional counselling settings to seek help.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that tele-counselling and digital well-being tools offer considerable potential for improving mental health support among Generation Z students. Evidence suggests that these interventions enhance access to counselling services, promote emotional resilience, strengthen self-awareness, and support stress management. Nevertheless, concerns relating to screen fatigue, privacy, digital inequality, and professional preparedness highlight the need for thoughtful and ethical implementation. The literature therefore underscores the importance of balancing technological innovation with human connection to ensure that digital mental health interventions effectively contribute to the well-being of students in contemporary educational environments.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the integration of tele-counselling and digital well-being tools in supporting the mental health of Generation Z students in secondary schools. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain information directly from respondents regarding their experiences, perceptions, and attitudes toward digital mental health support systems. The design also provided an opportunity to collect data from a relatively large population and describe existing conditions without manipulating any variables. Through this approach, the study was able to examine the effectiveness, benefits, and challenges associated with tele-counselling and digital well-being interventions within school environments.

Population of the Study

The population for the study comprised secondary school students, school counsellors, teachers, and principals from selected secondary schools. These categories of respondents were considered suitable because they are directly involved in students' educational experiences and mental health support systems. Students provided information regarding their experiences with digital mental

health services, while counsellors, teachers, and principals offered professional perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of such interventions within schools.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of 450 respondents were selected for the study using a stratified random sampling technique. The stratification ensured that all relevant stakeholder groups were adequately represented in the sample. This approach enhanced the representativeness of the study and increased the reliability of the findings by minimising sampling bias.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Respondent Category	Frequency
Students	320
Teachers	80
Counsellors	30
Principals	20
Total	450

Interpretation of Table 1

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents who participated in the study. Students constituted the largest proportion of the sample, accounting for 320 respondents (71.1%). Teachers represented 80 respondents (17.8%), while counsellors and principals accounted for 30 (6.7%) and 20 (4.4%) respondents respectively. The high representation of students was necessary because they are the primary beneficiaries of tele-counselling and digital well-being programmes. The inclusion of teachers, counsellors, and principals ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives regarding the implementation and effectiveness of digital mental health support systems in schools.

Instrumentation

Data for the study were collected using three research instruments developed by the researcher:

- 1. Digital Mental Health Support Questionnaire (DMHSQ)
- 2. Student Emotional Well-Being Scale (SEWS)
- 3. Tele-Counselling Perception Inventory (TCPI)

The instruments contained structured items designed to measure respondents' perceptions regarding tele-counselling services, digital well-being tools, emotional regulation, and implementation challenges. The instruments were subjected to expert validation to ensure content relevance and clarity. To establish reliability, the instruments were pilot-tested among respondents outside

the study sample. The internal consistency of the instruments was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88. This value indicates a high level of reliability and demonstrates that the instruments were suitable for data collection.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Mean scores and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions,

while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between digital well-being tools and emotional regulation. Independent sample t-test was used where necessary to examine differences between groups.

A decision benchmark of 2.50 was adopted for interpreting the mean scores. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as 'Agree,' while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as 'Disagree.'

Results

Table 2: Influence of Tele-Counselling on Students' Mental Health Support

Variable	Mean	SD	Decision
Tele-counselling improves counselling accessibility	3.89	0.69	Agree
Students feel more comfortable seeking online support	3.83	0.71	Agree
Tele-counselling reduces counselling stigma	3.76	0.74	Agree
Online counselling improves emotional support	3.85	0.68	Agree
Tele-counselling encourages help-seeking behaviour	3.79	0.72	Agree

Interpretation of Table 2

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that respondents strongly agreed that tele-counselling positively influences students' mental health support. The highest mean score ($M = 3.89$) was recorded for improved counselling accessibility, suggesting that tele-counselling makes psychological services more available to students. Respondents also agreed that online counselling enhances

emotional support ($M = 3.85$) and increases students' comfort in seeking help ($M = 3.83$). Furthermore, tele-counselling was perceived to reduce stigma associated with counselling and encourage help-seeking behaviour. Since all mean scores exceeded the benchmark of 2.50, the findings suggest that tele-counselling serves as an effective mechanism for improving access to mental health services among Generation Z students.

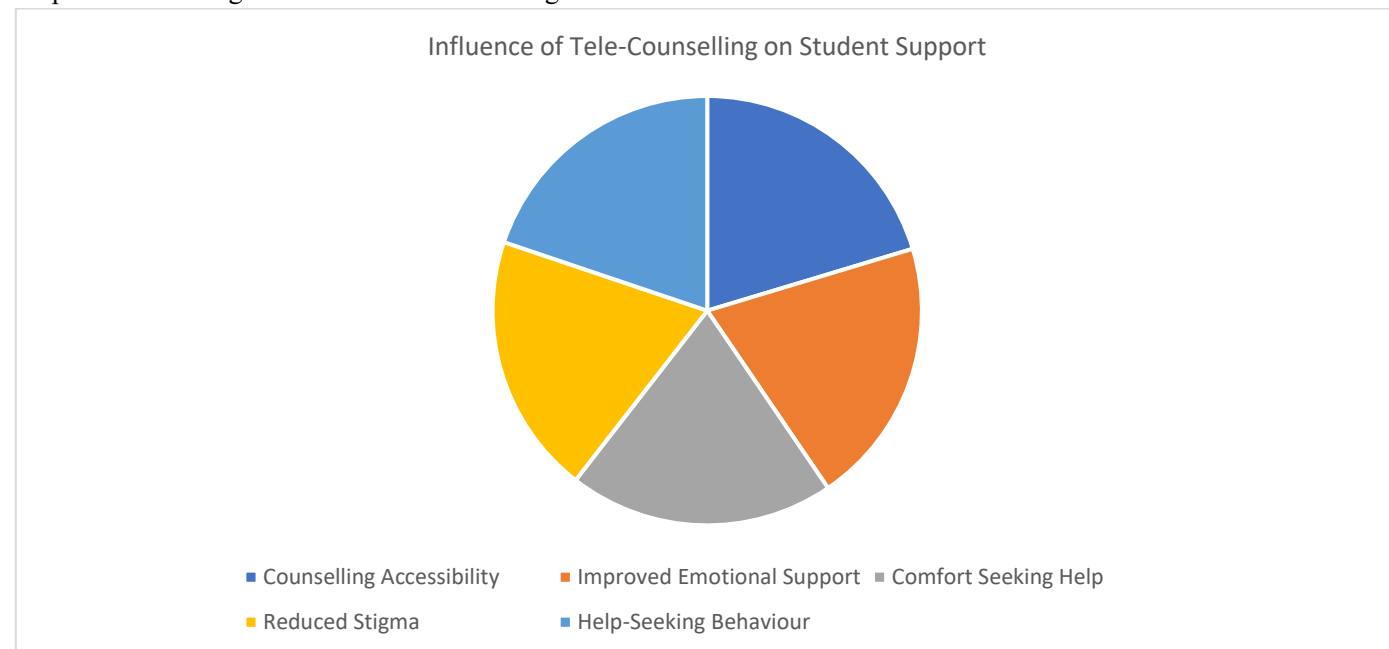


Chart 1: Influence of Tele-Counselling on Student Support

Interpretation of Chart 1

Chart 1 visually illustrates the positive influence of tele-counselling on students' mental health support. Counselling accessibility received the highest rating, followed closely by improved emotional support and increased comfort in

seeking help. Reduced stigma and enhanced help-seeking behaviour also recorded strong ratings. The chart clearly demonstrates that tele-counselling contributes significantly to making mental health services more approachable, accessible, and acceptable to students.

Table 3: Relationship Between Digital Well-Being Tools and Emotional Regulation

Variable	r	p-value	Decision
Digital Well-Being Tools & Emotional Regulation	0.81	0.001	Significant

Interpretation of Table 3

Table 3 reveals a strong positive relationship between the use of digital well-being tools and students' emotional regulation ($r = 0.81$). The obtained p-value of 0.001 is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This means that increased utilisation of digital well-being tools is associated

with improved emotional regulation among students. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding suggests that digital tools such as mindfulness applications, emotional tracking systems, and stress-management platforms can play an important role in helping students manage emotions effectively and develop healthier coping mechanisms.

Table 4: Students' Perceptions of Digital Mental Health Support Systems

Variable	Mean	Decision
Digital support systems are convenient	3.87	Agree
Online counselling increases confidentiality	3.71	Agree
Students prefer flexible counselling platforms	3.79	Agree
Digital tools improve stress management	3.83	Agree

Interpretation of Table 4

The results indicate that students hold favourable perceptions of digital mental health support systems. The highest mean score ($M = 3.87$) was recorded for convenience, suggesting that students appreciate the ease of accessing digital support services. Respondents also agreed

that digital tools improve stress management ($M = 3.83$) and that flexible counselling platforms better suit their needs ($M = 3.79$). Additionally, students perceived online counselling as enhancing confidentiality ($M = 3.71$). These findings imply that digital mental health systems are widely accepted by students and may increase engagement with counselling services.

Table 5: Challenges Affecting Tele-Counselling Integration

Challenge	Mean	Decision
Poor internet connectivity	3.92	Agree
Privacy and confidentiality concerns	3.88	Agree
Excessive screen exposure	3.81	Agree
Limited counsellor training	3.77	Agree
Inadequate digital infrastructure	3.85	Agree

Interpretation of Table 5

Table 5 highlights the major barriers affecting the successful integration of tele-counselling and digital mental health services in schools. Poor internet connectivity emerged as the most significant challenge ($M = 3.92$), indicating that unreliable internet access remains a major obstacle to digital service delivery. Privacy and

confidentiality concerns ($M = 3.88$) and inadequate digital infrastructure ($M = 3.85$) were also identified as critical issues. Respondents further agreed that excessive screen exposure and limited counsellor training hinder effective implementation. The findings suggest that although tele-counselling offers substantial benefits, addressing infrastructural, technical, and professional challenges is necessary for its long-term success.

Challenges Affecting Digital Mental Health Integration

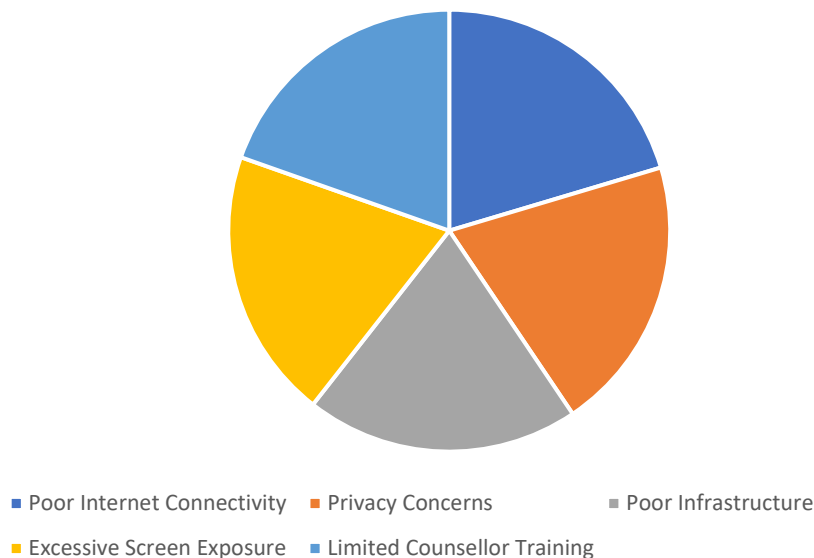


Chart 2: Challenges Affecting Digital Mental Health Integration

Interpretation of Chart 2

Chart 2 provides a visual representation of the challenges affecting digital mental health integration in schools. Poor internet connectivity stands out as the most prominent barrier, followed closely by privacy concerns and inadequate infrastructure. Excessive screen exposure and insufficient counsellor training also pose notable challenges. The chart underscores the importance of investing in reliable technological infrastructure, strengthening data protection measures, and providing professional development opportunities for counsellors to ensure effective implementation of tele-counselling services.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that tele-counselling significantly improves students' access to mental health support services. Respondents indicated that digital counselling platforms make it easier for students to seek psychological assistance when facing emotional, academic, or social challenges. This finding is particularly important because many adolescents often hesitate to seek help through conventional counselling channels due to fear of judgement, embarrassment, or social stigma. The flexibility offered by tele-counselling enables students to access support at convenient times and locations, thereby reducing barriers associated with traditional counselling services. Furthermore, the perceived anonymity and privacy of online platforms appear to encourage greater openness during counselling interactions. These findings support the growing body of literature suggesting that tele-mental health services enhance access to psychological care, particularly among adolescents and young adults who are

already accustomed to communicating through digital technologies. The findings also reinforce the argument that digital counselling platforms can play a critical role in bridging existing gaps in school-based mental health service delivery.

The study further revealed a strong positive relationship between digital well-being tools and emotional regulation among Generation Z students. The high correlation coefficient obtained in the study suggests that students who actively engage with digital mental health resources are more likely to develop healthier emotional coping strategies. Respondents reported that tools such as mindfulness applications, mood-tracking systems, meditation platforms, stress-management programmes, and emotional self-monitoring applications helped them become more aware of their emotional states and better equipped to manage stress. This finding highlights the growing potential of technology-assisted interventions in fostering emotional intelligence and psychological resilience among young people. In an era where adolescents frequently encounter academic pressure, social comparison, and digital stress, access to self-guided emotional support tools can contribute significantly to positive mental health outcomes. The finding is consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated the effectiveness of digital well-being interventions in improving emotional awareness, reducing stress levels, and promoting psychological well-being among students.

Another important finding of the study is the generally positive perception of digital mental health support systems among students. Respondents viewed tele-counselling and digital well-being platforms as convenient, accessible, and

responsive to their needs. Many students reported feeling more comfortable discussing sensitive personal issues through online platforms than in traditional face-to-face counselling settings. This preference may reflect the communication patterns of Generation Z, who have grown up in technology-rich environments and often feel more confident interacting through digital channels. Additionally, students perceived online counselling systems as providing greater confidentiality and privacy, factors that are particularly important in contexts where mental health issues remain highly stigmatised. The positive perception recorded in this study suggests that digital mental health services have the potential to increase student engagement with counselling programmes and encourage earlier intervention for psychological difficulties. By creating supportive and non-threatening environments, digital counselling systems may help reduce the barriers that prevent many students from seeking professional help.

Despite the numerous benefits identified, the study also revealed several challenges affecting the effective integration of tele-counselling and digital mental health support systems within schools. Poor internet connectivity emerged as one of the most significant barriers, limiting students' ability to access online counselling services consistently. Inadequate digital infrastructure, including insufficient technological devices and unreliable power supply, further constrained the effectiveness of digital interventions. Privacy and confidentiality concerns were also identified as major obstacles. Students and educators expressed concerns regarding the protection of sensitive personal information shared through online platforms. Furthermore, limited professional training among counsellors was found to affect the quality of digital counselling services. These findings mirror broader challenges associated with educational technology adoption in many developing countries, where infrastructural limitations and digital inequality continue to restrict access to technology-based services. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive investments in technological infrastructure, cybersecurity measures, and professional capacity building to maximise the benefits of tele-counselling initiatives.

The study additionally highlighted excessive screen exposure as a significant concern associated with digital mental health interventions. Although digital platforms provide valuable opportunities for emotional support and psychological assistance, respondents acknowledged that prolonged technology use may contribute to digital fatigue, sleep disturbances, eye strain, and emotional exhaustion. This finding reflects an important paradox within contemporary mental health support systems. While

technology serves as a powerful tool for delivering counselling services, excessive engagement with digital devices may simultaneously contribute to some of the psychological challenges experienced by adolescents. Existing research has similarly warned that excessive screen time can negatively affect sleep quality, concentration, physical activity, and overall well-being. Therefore, while digital mental health tools offer considerable advantages, their use must be carefully balanced to prevent unintended negative consequences.

Another notable implication of the findings is the importance of maintaining a human-centred approach to mental health support. Although tele-counselling expands access to services and enhances convenience, the findings suggest that technology alone cannot fully address students' emotional and psychological needs. Meaningful relationships with counsellors, teachers, parents, and peers remain essential components of effective mental health support. Students often require empathy, understanding, emotional validation, and personal connection—qualities that are most effectively fostered through genuine human interaction. Consequently, digital technologies should be viewed as complementary tools that strengthen existing support systems rather than as replacements for traditional counselling relationships. Successful implementation therefore requires a balanced model that integrates technological innovation with compassionate and personalized care.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that tele-counselling and digital well-being tools possess significant potential for strengthening school-based mental health support systems. When appropriately implemented, these technologies can improve accessibility, encourage help-seeking behaviour, enhance emotional regulation, and reduce barriers associated with mental health stigma. However, their effectiveness depends largely on the availability of adequate infrastructure, professional expertise, ethical safeguards, and balanced usage practices. The study therefore contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of digital mental health interventions within educational settings while emphasising the need for responsible and inclusive implementation strategies.

Conclusion

This study examined the integration of tele-counselling and digital well-being tools in supporting the mental health of Generation Z students within secondary school environments. The findings provide compelling evidence that digital mental health interventions can play a significant role in improving students' psychological well-being and access to support services. Tele-counselling was found to enhance accessibility to counselling services,

reduce the stigma associated with seeking psychological help, and encourage greater willingness among students to seek emotional support. Similarly, digital well-being tools contributed positively to emotional regulation, stress management, self-awareness, and psychological resilience.

The study further revealed that students generally hold favourable perceptions of digital mental health support systems due to their convenience, flexibility, accessibility, and perceived confidentiality. These findings suggest that technology-based interventions are particularly suited to the needs and preferences of Generation Z students, who are highly familiar with digital communication environments. As schools continue to respond to increasing mental health challenges among adolescents, digital support systems offer valuable opportunities for expanding the reach and effectiveness of counselling services.

Nevertheless, the study identified critical challenges that may hinder successful implementation. Issues relating to poor internet connectivity, inadequate technological infrastructure, privacy concerns, excessive screen exposure, and insufficient counsellor training remain significant barriers to effective digital mental health service delivery. Addressing these challenges is essential if schools are to fully realise the benefits of tele-counselling and digital well-being technologies.

The study therefore concludes that tele-counselling and digital well-being tools can significantly strengthen school-based mental health support systems when implemented within a comprehensive, ethical, and student-centred framework. Effective mental health support in the digital age requires not only technological innovation but also sustained human connection, professional competence, and institutional commitment. Schools must strive to create integrated support systems that combine the accessibility of digital technologies with the empathy and personal engagement that characterise effective counselling practice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Establishment of Tele-Counselling Facilities: Schools should establish dedicated tele-counselling centres equipped with secure digital communication technologies to facilitate confidential and accessible mental health support services for students.
2. Improvement of Digital Infrastructure: Governments, educational authorities, and relevant stakeholders should invest in reliable internet connectivity, stable power supply, and modern technological infrastructure to support effective

implementation of digital mental health programmes.

3. Professional Development for Counsellors: School counsellors should receive continuous training on tele-counselling practices, digital communication skills, online therapeutic techniques, cybersecurity awareness, and ethical issues relating to virtual counselling.
4. Development of Digital Mental Health Policies: Educational institutions should formulate comprehensive policies that address privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, data protection, and ethical standards in digital counselling environments.
5. Integration of Digital Well-Being Education: Schools should incorporate digital well-being education into the curriculum to help students develop healthy technology habits, emotional regulation skills, and responsible digital citizenship.
6. Strengthening Stakeholder Collaboration: Parents, teachers, counsellors, school administrators, and community organisations should work collaboratively to create supportive environments that promote students' mental health and responsible technology use.
7. Adoption of Hybrid Counselling Models: Schools should combine tele-counselling services with traditional face-to-face counselling approaches to ensure that students benefit from both technological accessibility and meaningful interpersonal support.
8. Promotion of Responsible Technology Use: Students should be educated on the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline activities to reduce the risks associated with excessive screen exposure and digital fatigue.
9. Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: Schools should periodically assess the effectiveness of tele-counselling programmes and digital well-being initiatives to identify challenges, measure outcomes, and make necessary improvements.
10. Expansion of Mental Health Awareness Campaigns: Educational institutions should organise awareness programmes aimed at reducing mental health stigma, encouraging help-seeking behaviour, and promoting positive attitudes toward counselling services among students.

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