

## **Online Counseling as a Service in College: A Generation Z Perspective**

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Received on 02 September 2022, Revised on 15 November 2022

Published on 2 December 2022

**Abstract:** Online counseling is a service provided to students for the academic success of students in college. This research is a type of *survey* research where the research object is the young generation aged 15-25 years. The number of research subjects was 561 people consisting of students and university students. The data collection technique uses questionnaires to obtain data on the needs of Generation Z for online counseling. Scores are graded in percentages and grouped by “important” categories. The results showed that Generation Z’s need for online counseling was “urgently needed”. The findings of this study show that 93.7% of Generation Z (538 respondents) want online counseling as a *support system* for their learning success in college as much. They are comfortable doing online counseling through *WhatUp* social media as many as 69.9% (401 respondents) and Video Call media as much as 18.5% (106 respondents). The problem they wanted to address when doing online counseling was the most learning problems with 33.6% (193 respondents). Generation Z feels offline counseling is more convenient 65.9% (378 respondents) compared to online counseling 34.1% (196 respondents). Thus, universities can consider the needs of Generation Z for online counseling services.

**Keywords:** College, Generation Z, Online Counseling

## A. Introduction

Online counseling is a very important support system for academic development in higher education (Hanley & Wyatt, 2021; Oti & Pitt, 2021). Research shows that online counseling can efficiently reduce mental stress and anxiety among students (Yurayat & Seechaliao, 2022). The University of San Diego offers online Counselling that provides contemporary mental health practices (Departemen of Counseling & School Psychology, 2023). It can be concluded that online counseling has been recognized as a *system of support* that is very meaningful for the academic development of students in higher education (Ardi et al., 2013).

Online counseling offers several benefits to students, including accessibility, convenience, and privacy. Online counseling services can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection, making it easier for students to seek help wherever they are (Ierardi et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022). Students can schedule appointments at times that work best for them, without having to go to a counseling center. In addition, online counseling can be more confidential and protect students' privacy and confidentiality, especially for those who may be concerned about mental health stigma or live in close-knit communities (Liu & Liu, 2022). Online counseling can also help students cope with stress, understand themselves better, and find their life direction (Celia et al., 2022; Novella et al., 2022). A study found that online cognitive-behavioral therapy was as effective as face-to-face visits for college students with mental health problems (Hedman-Lagerlöf et al., 2023).

In college, online counseling can help students overcome various academic problems they face such as learning difficulties, anxiety when facing tests, adjustments to the learning process in college, and time management (Gilmore et al., 2022). Counselors can share strategies and advice that are useful for overcoming academic challenges and improving student performance. Online counseling can also provide emotional support and mental well-being to students. College is a challenging transition for many people, and online counseling can provide a comfortable place for students to have a dialogue about their mental stress, anxiety, mental distress, or other issues that can affect their well-being (Stavropoulos et al., 2022; Wells, 2021).

Online counseling can help students improve academic skills such as stress

management, efficient communication, problem-solving, and decision-making (Suryahadikusumah & Nadya, 2020; Yurayat & Tuklang, 2023) Counselors can share tutorials and strategies specific to help students improve these skills. In addition, online counseling can help students design their careers after graduation(Zammitti et al., 2023). Counselors can share data about the job market, help students identify their attention and abilities, and share support in finding a suitable job or internship(Ananda et al., 2023). Online counseling must be done by a trained and licensed counselor. Students also need to use other energy sources available in large academies, such as academic ministries, career centers, and other academic services. The collaboration of these various services can help students achieve maximum academic development.

Generation Z generally refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012. They have unique needs in college that are different from previous generations(Turner & Turner, 2018). Currently, the most dominant Generation Z is in college(Ang et al., 2022). Generation Z grew up with technology and is accustomed to easy access to information and online services(Kim et al., 2022; Mihelič et al., 2022; Singh & Dangmei, 2016; Stahl & Literat, 2022). Online counseling allows them to access mental and emotional help without having to go to a specific office or physical location. They can access counseling sessions through their own devices such as smartphones or computers with internet connections.

Generation Z is often more comfortable communicating personal issues online than in person. In online counseling sessions, they may maintain a higher level of anonymity and privacy, which may make them feel safer and open to sharing their experiences. Online counseling allows Generation Z to arrange counseling sessions according to their own schedule. They can avoid travel time constraints and choose a time that suits their daily activities, such as after school, in the evening, or on weekends. This flexibility helps them utilize their time more effectively. In the digital age, generation Z is accustomed to instant and fast communication(Wang et al., 2022).

With online counseling, they can communicate via text message, live chat, or video call in real time. A quick response from counselors can help meet their need for faster and more practical support. Online counseling provides access to abundant resources online. Generation Z can easily find additional information, educational materials, or reading materials. They can also use mental health apps

or online platforms specifically designed for counseling and get additional support through online support groups(Ramli et al., 2021). Generation Z is used to digital communication and may find it more comfortable to interact via text message or video call rather than in-person communication(Sgt & Craig, 2020). Online counseling allows them to communicate according to their communication preferences, which can increase the engagement and effectiveness of counseling sessions(Henry & Timm-Davis, 2023).

Based on an initial survey of Generation Z in Bengkulu province, it was found that as many as 404 respondents, or 70.4% of Z grass had never conducted online counseling. While 170 respondents or 29.6% of them have done online counseling, it is important to examine more deeply the needs of Generation Z for online counseling. This study aims to determine the needs of Generation Z for online counseling which can be a reference for counselors in providing counseling services to Generation Z as a *support system* in higher education.

## **B. Methods**

This research uses a survey method by distributing google forms to 574 Generation Z respondents aged 15-20 years as many. It consisted of 114 females and 163 males. Data is collected through questionnaires and then data is analyzed using percentage techniques.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **Result**

In Table 1 below, the results of the processing of research questionnaires on the needs of Generation Z for online counseling are presented.

**Table 1. Results of Research Questionnaire Processing  
Generation Z's Need for Online Counseling**

<b>No</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Alternative answers</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Thinking about doing counseling online	Ever thought of	412	71,8%
		Never thought of	162	28,2%
2	Online counseling media	WhatUp	401	69,9%
		Video Call	106	18,5%
		E-mail	31	5,4%
		Inbox	9	1,6%
		Zoom	4	0,7%
		Cell	1	0,2%
		Not with any media	1	0,2%
3	Problems submitted through online counseling	Friendship problems	79	13,8%
		Family matters	81	14,1%
		Love problems	19	3,3%
		Economic problems	69	12%
		Work problems	43	7,5%
		Learning problems	193	33,6%
		Matters of worship	30	5,2%
		All the problems that are being felt	2	0,3%
4	Online counseling is needed today	Yes	394	68,9%
		Not	180	31,4%
5	Comfort of Counseling	Online	196	34,1%
		Offline	378	65,9%
6	Confused about whom to counsel online with	Yes	461	80,3%
		Not	113	19,7%
7	Online counseling is an important tool in college	Yes	516	89,9%
		Not	58	10,1%
8	Obstacles in Online counseling	Signal	144	25,1%
		Quota	159	27,7%
		Facilities	30	5,2%
		Doubts with the counselor	216	37,6%
		Self-doubt	1	0,2%
9	Online counseling is a <i>support system</i> for student academic success in higher education	Concealment	1	0,2%
		Yes	538	93,7%
		Not	36	6,3%

Based on the processing of research questionnaires, it can be seen that Generation Z wants online counseling as a *support system* for their learning

success in higher education as many as 93.7% (538 respondents). Generation Z has thought about doing online counseling as many as 71.8% (412 respondents). They are comfortable doing online counseling through *WhatUp* social media as many as 69.9% (401 respondents) and Video Call media as much as 18.5% (106 respondents). The problems they want to convey when doing online counseling are most learning problems with 33.6% (193 respondents), family problems as much as 14.1%, (81 respondents), friendship problems as many as 13.8% (79 respondents), economic problems as much as 12% (69 respondents), work problems as much as 7.5% (43 respondents), love problems as much as 3.3% (19 respondents), worship problems 5.2% (30 respondents).

Generation Z feels that online counseling is urgently needed today as many as 68.9% (394 respondents) and as many as 31.4% (180 respondents) do not need online counseling. Generation Z feels offline counseling is more convenient 65.9% (378 respondents) compared to online counseling 34.1% (196 respondents). Generation Z feels confused about who to go online counseling with, as many as 80.3% (461 respondents) and as many as 19.7% (113 respondents) do not feel confused about who to want online counseling with. As many as 89.9% of Generation Z feel online counseling is an important tool for them in higher education and they consider the biggest obstacle in online counseling is doubt with counselors as many as 37.6% (216 respondents), while other obstacles are signals as much as 25.1% (144 respondents), quota as much as 27.7% (159 respondents) and absence of cellphones/laptops as much as 5.2% (30 respondents).

## **Discussion**

Online counseling is a meaningful tool for Generation Z as part of their academic success support system in higher education. Although online counseling is very suitable for the personality of Generation Z, it is meaningful to note that online counseling may not be suitable for every person or every type of problem. Online counseling can eliminate nonverbal aspects of communication, such as body language and facial expressions, that can share meaningful data with the counselor about the client's emotional state. This limitation can affect the counselor's ability to master and respond appropriately to the experiences and feelings of Generation Z (McKnight, 2021).

Not only that, generation Z who live in areas with limited internet access or abnormal connections may experience obstacles in accessing online counseling unchanged. Connection instability can disrupt the counseling stage and reduce the effectiveness of interaction between counselors and clients. Although online counseling offers the privacy and anonymity that Generation Z craves, there is a risk of individual data leaks or personal breaches that can be intertwined online. Generation Z may feel hesitant or unsafe about giving details about their individual online counseling because of concerns about the security of their information (Ardi et al., 2017).

Some Generation Z may feel more connected individually and emotionally in face-to-face interactions than in online communication. Online counseling may not share the same level of interpersonal familiarity as face-to-face counseling, which can influence Generation Z's ability to feel truly connected and get the support they need. When counseling is attempted face-to-face, it can be easier for counselors to calculate the client's emotional response through facial expressions and body language. However, in online counseling, these evaluations can be more difficult to try, so counselors may need bonus efforts to master and respond correctly to the feelings of Generation Z (Hedman-Lagerlöf et al., 2023; Ierardi et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022).

## **D. Conclusion**

The findings of this study show that 93.7% of Generation Z (538 respondents) want online counseling as a *support system* for their learning success in college as much. They are comfortable doing online counseling through *WhatsApp* social media as many as 69.9% (401 respondents) and Video Call media as much as 18.5% (106 respondents). The problem they wanted to address when doing online counseling was the most learning problems with 33.6% (193 respondents). Generation Z feels offline counseling is more convenient 65.9% (378 respondents) compared to online counseling 34.1% (196 respondents). Thus, universities can consider the needs of Generation Z for online counseling services.

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