

# Attitude and Intention to Seek Mental Health Support Among Generation Z: Evaluating Instagram's Role as a Mediator

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## ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the relationship between attitudes toward mental health and the intention to seek professional psychological support among Generation Z, with Instagram evaluated as a potential mediating variable. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), this research applies a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design involving 98 Indonesian respondents aged 15–24. The study employs Pearson correlation, validity and reliability tests, and mediation analysis using the Sobel test. Results reveal statistically significant positive relationships between attitude and intention ( $r = 0.442, p < 0.01$ ), attitude and Instagram usage ( $r = 0.373, p < 0.01$ ), and Instagram usage and intention ( $r = 0.436, p < 0.01$ ). However, mediation analysis indicates that Instagram does not significantly mediate the relationship between attitude and intention ( $Z = 0.0734, p > 0.05$ ). While Instagram is widely used by Generation Z for mental health-related content, this study finds that personal attitudes are more influential than platform engagement in shaping help-seeking intentions. The findings highlight the importance of enhancing mental health literacy and reducing stigma through both attitudinal and community-based interventions, with social media serving as a supportive—though not determining—channel. Future research should explore additional mediating factors such as social support, cultural norms, and mental health literacy across various digital platforms.



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## INTRODUCTION

Mental health is defined as a condition in which individuals are free from psychological disturbances such as neurosis or psychosis, enabling effective adaptation to their social environment (Hamid, 2017). Optimal mental health facilitates cognitive clarity, rational decision-making, and the maintenance of healthy interpersonal relationships. Parasuicide, commonly understood as a suicide attempt, encompasses self-injurious behaviors that do not result in death and are frequently interpreted as efforts to attract attention or to simulate a genuine suicide attempt (Rathus & Miller, 2002). Individuals confronted with adverse circumstances may experience psychological responses such as stress, anxiety, or depression. When left unaddressed, these conditions may escalate into clinically significant mental disorders. The capacity for psychological resilience in coping with such stressors is influenced by a range of factors, including early life experiences, sociocultural environment, familial support systems, and individual competencies in emotional regulation and problem-solving (Endriyani et al., 2022).

According to data from the World Health Organization (2024), suicide accounts for approximately 720,000 deaths globally, positioning it as the third leading cause of mortality among individuals aged 18 to 29. This alarming statistic continues to escalate, underscoring the critical need for comprehensive global attention to mental health. Members of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) are particularly vulnerable, frequently experiencing psychological challenges such as anxiety, depression, stress, and psychosomatic symptoms that compromise their overall well-being. These issues are often exacerbated by a lack of effective coping mechanisms for managing stress and navigating life's challenges (Guntur et al., 2022). Existing literature indicates that variations in mental health help-seeking behavior may be attributed to adolescents' reluctance to disclose psychological distress. This tendency is especially prevalent



during early adolescence—a developmental stage characterized by increasing autonomy from parental oversight and a heightened discomfort in discussing sensitive matters such as suicidal ideation (Aulia et al., 2020). Moreover, adolescents experiencing suicidal thoughts are commonly affected by poor mental well-being and insufficient social support systems (Maharani et al., 2024).

A study by Szlyk et al. (2020) underscores the multifaceted challenges encountered by individuals experiencing depression when attempting to access appropriate mental health care. The research identifies key barriers including social stigma, financial limitations, inadequate availability of mental health services, and a general lack of awareness or motivation to pursue treatment. Despite these impediments, the study highlights the growing efficacy of digital platforms as alternative avenues for reaching individuals exhibiting depressive symptoms who are actively seeking support. Digital tools—such as social media, online forums, and mental health applications—provide access to informational resources, facilitate peer support networks, and offer guidance on professional treatment options. These findings illustrate the expanding role of digital interventions in mitigating the disconnect between mental health needs and service accessibility. Furthermore, the study suggests that leveraging online platforms may enhance outreach, promote help-seeking behaviors, and contribute to reducing societal stigma associated with clinical mental health services.

In parallel, Guntur et al. (2022) report that university students, particularly those belonging to Generation Z, continue to exhibit high levels of stigma related to mental health. This stigma manifests in two primary forms: internalized stigma and public stigmatization. The study finds that self-stigma remains particularly prevalent among Generation Z students. Self-stigma occurs when individuals not only acknowledge their mental health condition but also internalize and accept the negative stereotypes associated with it. This internalization often leads to feelings of shame, avoidance of professional help, and a deterioration of mental well-being due to the adoption of societal prejudices. Consequently, increasing mental health awareness and education—particularly through interventions tailored to the unique characteristics of Generation Z—is essential for reducing stigma and fostering a more supportive environment for mental health discourse and care.

Research by Onie et al. (2022) reports a national suicide attempt rate of 2.25 per 100,000 population in Indonesia. However, regional disparities are pronounced, with five provinces exhibiting substantially higher rates: West Sulawesi (20.07 per 100,000), Gorontalo (9.09 per 100,000), Bengkulu (8.72 per 100,000), North Sulawesi (7.11 per 100,000), and the Riau Islands (6.62 per 100,000). According to surveillance data from the 2018 Village Potential Survey, a total of 6,013 suicide attempts were recorded nationwide, while police records documented 772 completed suicides during the same period—revealing a striking discrepancy between attempted and completed cases. These data suggest that for every suicide-related fatality, approximately 7.78 non-fatal attempts occur, underscoring the urgent and widespread nature of mental health concerns in the country.

Further data on depression prevalence in Indonesia indicate that Generation Z—defined here as individuals aged 15–24 years—exhibits the highest depression rate among all age groups, with a prevalence of 2% (Thahir et al., 2023). A related study found that only 45% of Generation Z members rated their mental health as good or very good, suggesting a critical need for targeted mental health interventions. In 2022, the overall prevalence of mental disorders in Indonesia was estimated to range between 0.3% and 1%, primarily affecting individuals aged 18 to 45 years (Dewi, 2022). Notably, early-onset cases of schizophrenia have also been documented in individuals as young as 11 to 12 years old. More than 2 million Indonesians are estimated to be living with mental disorders, over 90% of whom are diagnosed with schizophrenia. Complementing this national data, research from the United Kingdom found that the prevalence of severe depressive symptoms among adolescents nearly doubled in 2015 compared to 2005, highlighting a broader global trend in the rising incidence of mental health challenges among youth (Gage & Patalay, 2021).

Generation Z, who are consistently exposed to an overwhelming flow of information via social media platforms, often encounter challenges in accessing accurate mental health messaging and appropriate support mechanisms (Amali & Pudrianisa, 2024). This issue underscores the growing need to strengthen media literacy and critical thinking competencies in order to foster more discerning and responsible social media engagement among digital natives (Widyatama et al., 2023). Furthermore, individual attitudes toward psychological well-being significantly influence the likelihood of seeking professional assistance—an especially pertinent consideration for Generation Z, who frequently rely on platforms such as Instagram as their primary source of health-related information (Mohamad & Abd Mubin, 2023). Negative perceptions of psychological intervention may inhibit the inclination to pursue professional care, whereas positive attitudes have been shown to facilitate help-seeking behaviors (Alluhaibi & Awadalla, 2022). Given Instagram's capacity to disseminate persuasive and targeted mental health content, the platform holds considerable potential to influence Generation Z's attitudes toward help-seeking. Empirical evidence suggests a statistically significant relationship between psychological attitudes, digital platform usage, and the propensity to seek professional help. Consequently, the present study positions attitude as a central variable in understanding help-seeking intentions, with particular attention to the mediating role of digital communication channels in shaping attitudinal responses toward psychological services (Do et al., 2019).

To investigate the factors influencing help-seeking behavior among Generation Z, this study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as its theoretical foundation. TPB posits that individual attitudes toward a given behavior are central predictors of the intention to engage in that behavior, which subsequently influences actual behavior. Within the

context of this study, attitude is conceptualized as the independent variable, intention to seek mental health support as the mediating variable, and help-seeking behavior as the dependent variable. This theoretical alignment ensures consistency between the conceptual framework and the methodological approach, providing analytical coherence in assessing the role of social media—particularly Instagram—in shaping mental health help-seeking behaviors. According to the TPB, originally developed by Icek Ajzen, attitudes significantly impact behavioral intention, thereby serving as a precursor to action. Empirical evidence supports this model, with prior studies demonstrating that individuals harboring negative attitudes toward mental health treatment are less likely to initiate help-seeking and exhibit lower engagement with available mental health services (Schnyder et al., 2017).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that attitude plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' behavioral intentions toward seeking psychiatric support. A more favorable attitude is associated with a greater likelihood of engaging in help-seeking behaviors, whereas negative attitudes often serve as psychological barriers that inhibit such actions. Consequently, recognizing and addressing these attitudinal factors is critical to advancing mental health awareness and fostering proactive treatment-seeking behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). TPB further asserts that behavioral intentions are most reliably predicted when individuals possess well-defined and specific attitudes toward the target behavior. This framework conceptualizes attitudes as deliberate cognitive evaluations rather than general affective predispositions, thereby positioning them as fundamental predictors of intentional action. The model also emphasizes that the predictive strength of attitudes increases in proportion to their specificity and clarity with respect to the behavioral outcome in question.

This conceptualization underscores how clearly articulated attitudes directly inform and shape individual decision-making processes when evaluating whether to engage in a specific behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior's (TPB) emphasis on attitude specificity elucidates why broad dispositional measures often fall short in capturing the nuanced psychological mechanisms that underpin intentional behaviors in context-specific scenarios (Aronson et al., 2016). These findings highlight the importance of refining and understanding individual attitudes to enhance the predictive accuracy of behavioral outcomes, particularly in domains as critical as health-related decision-making. This is especially pertinent in the context of mental health help-seeking, where personal attitudes serve as central determinants of behavioral intention. The empirical evidence aligns with the core tenets of TPB, which maintains that attitudes toward a specific behavior are foundational to forming intentions to act.

In the contemporary digital age, rapid technological advancements and widespread internet accessibility have substantially reshaped how individuals access mental health information and services. The internet now functions as a principal conduit for mental health support, with social media platforms and dedicated online resources performing multiple roles—from disseminating psychoeducational content and fostering peer support communities to enabling direct interactions with mental health professionals.

The ongoing digital transformation has created new avenues for individuals to seek mental health support, while simultaneously shaping their attitudes and intentions toward help-seeking behaviors. In the context of digital mental healthcare engagement, empirical research by Lu et al. (2021) reveals that individuals experiencing depressive symptoms increasingly rely on social media platforms to access health-related information and engage in mental health-related communication. Their study primarily focused on online depression communities—interactive forums where individuals with similar experiences exchange information and offer mutual support—highlighting these digital spaces as important resources for mental health discourse. Lu et al. further recommended additional investigation into how different patterns of social media usage affect the psychological well-being of individuals with mild depression.

Among various platforms, Instagram—with its visually driven and interactive interface—demonstrates considerable potential as an effective medium for fostering positive attitudes toward psychological well-being and encouraging professional help-seeking behavior. Insights from this research can inform the development of targeted communication strategies by healthcare institutions, social organizations, and governmental agencies, with the aim of reducing suicide risk and promoting mental health support among Generation Z (Naslund et al., 2020). This need is particularly urgent given the increasing incidence of psychological disorders among youth, which calls for communication strategies that are responsive to critical situations and tailored to promote mental resilience.

The rise in mental health awareness and the growing accessibility of online information among Generation Z have produced both opportunities and challenges. Normansyah et al. (2024) report that, as of 2020, approximately 81% of Generation Z individuals used the internet as their primary source for health-related information, including mental health. While this trend signifies an expansion in mental health literacy, it also underscores the need to ensure that digital content is both accurate and trustworthy to support informed and constructive health behaviors.

Building upon these insights, the present study investigates Instagram as a moderating variable, given its pervasive usage across diverse demographic groups. Originally developed to meet the demands of contemporary digital communication, Instagram has evolved beyond a platform for information exchange and social interaction; it now plays an influential role in shaping individual behavior, perceptions, and decision-making processes in everyday life. As a leading social media platform, Instagram provides user-friendly, visually-driven features that facilitate communication,

foster interaction, and offer personalized access to a wide array of content. Its highly interactive interface enhances user engagement, making it particularly attractive to younger demographics.

Among youth populations, Instagram is widely utilized for audiovisual communication and is recognized as a preferred social networking site (Triantoro & Pramana, 2024). This widespread adoption positions Instagram as a strategic tool for disseminating mental health information, fostering dialogue, and raising awareness on issues related to psychological well-being. The platform's capacity to connect individuals with supportive communities, influencers, and mental health professionals further reinforces its potential as a medium for shaping attitudes and behaviors concerning mental health help-seeking.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore the moderating role of Instagram in the relationship between individual psychological factors—such as attitudes and intentions—and the propensity to seek mental health support, with a specific focus on Generation Z. By examining this moderating effect, the study seeks to deepen understanding of how digital communication channels influence mental health behaviors in the context of emerging media landscapes.

## METHOD

This research employs a quantitative methodology utilizing a descriptive correlational design to explore the relationship between Attitude (X) and Intention (Y) regarding the pursuit of mental health support, with Instagram (M) serving as a mediating variable. This methodology was chosen to facilitate an objective and structured analysis of the interrelationships among the variables (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2021). The objective of the study is to evaluate both the direct and indirect relationships between individuals' attitudes towards mental health and their readiness to seek professional assistance, while also considering Instagram's psychosocial influence as a digital platform that enhances access to information and support.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data, several statistical analyses are conducted. These include Descriptive Analysis to characterize the data traits, Validity and Reliability Tests to ensure that the research instruments accurately capture the intended variables, and Correlation Tests to quantify the strength of the relationship between attitudes and the intention to seek mental health support. Additionally, to delve deeper into Instagram's potential mediating influence between attitudes towards mental health and help-seeking intentions, a mediation analysis is performed using the Sobel Test. This method was specifically selected to thoroughly assess Instagram's mediating function within the psychological pathway connecting attitude and intention. The Sobel test is employed to evaluate whether the indirect effect of the independent variable (attitude) on the dependent variable (intention) through the mediator (Instagram) is statistically significant. As a recognized analytic technique, the Sobel test determines whether a mediator variable meaningfully clarifies the indirect relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable (Amali & Putri, 2025).

The sampling technique utilized in this study is Purposive Sampling, a non-probability sampling method that selects participants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). The sample criteria include individuals categorized as Generation Z, specifically those born between 1997 and 2012, who have experienced mental health issues such as anxiety disorders, stress, or depression, and who actively engage with Instagram. Generation Z is chosen as the primary focus due to their identity as digital natives, characterized by a high reliance on technology and social media for information and support related to mental health.

According to the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) data from 2020, the Generation Z population in Indonesia is approximately 71,509,082 individuals, representing about 27.94% of the total population (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). This significant figure underscores Generation Z as a vital group for research, particularly regarding their use of social media to tackle mental health challenges.

The sample size for this research was carefully determined using the Slovin formula, a statistically conservative method suitable for finite population studies. This calculation was performed with a rigorous confidence level of 99% ( $\alpha = 0.01$ ), resulting in a required sample size of  $N = 98$  participants. The selected margin of error of 1% ensures high precision in parameter estimation while providing sufficient statistical power ( $1 - \beta > 0.80$ ) to effectively test the hypothesized mediation model, which examines the role of Instagram in the attitude-intention pathway for mental health help-seeking.

The internal consistency of the measurement instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, yielding acceptable values exceeding 0.70 for all constructs. To assess the validity and reliability of the data, the research instrument underwent expert validation and a pilot test involving 30 participants from the target demographic. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha values were 0.905 ( $>0.7$ ) for Attitude, 0.868 ( $>0.7$ ) for Intention, and 0.77 ( $>0.7$ ) for Behavior, indicating substantial reliability across all variables.

This study aims to provide deeper insights into the factors influencing Generation Z's decision-making processes in seeking mental health support, elucidating how social media—particularly Instagram—can enhance or obstruct this process. The findings are expected to provide critical insights for mental health practitioners, healthcare institutions, and policymakers to formulate more effective communication strategies aimed at improving awareness and accessibility of mental health services for Generation Z.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 98 respondents who met the predefined inclusion criteria participated in this study. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. These characteristics, including age range and place of residence, serve to contextualize the sample and provide relevant background for interpreting the study findings.

Table 1 Respondent Characteristics

Attribute	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	65.31%
	Male	34.69%
Age	14 - 17	3.06%
	18 - 21	23.47%
	22 - 24	68.37%
	25 - 27	5.10%
Residence	Bali	2.04%
	Banda Aceh	1.02%
	Bandung	37.76%
	Banyuwangi	1.02%
	Bekasi	1.02%
	Cimahi	4.08%
	Cirebon	1.02%
	Indramayu	1.02%
	Jakarta	4.08%
	Jambi	13.27%
	Kab. Bogor	1.02%
	Kediri	1.02%
	Kota Bogor	4.08%
	Kuningan	1.02%
	Madiun	1.02%
	Malang	1.02%
Mataram	3.06%	
Medan	6.12%	
Padang	2.04%	
Pekanbaru	3.06%	
Sumedang	5.10%	
Tangerang	2.04%	
Yogyakarta	3.06%	

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the majority of respondents in this study are female, comprising 64% of the total sample. The most prevalent age group is 22 years old, representing 50% of all participants. Regarding domicile, the highest concentration of respondents resides in Bandung, accounting for 37% of the total. These findings suggest that the dominant profile of participants in this study consists of 22-year-old females living in Bandung.

To ensure the measurement instrument's accuracy and consistency, validity and reliability tests were conducted. The outcomes of these assessments are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 Results of Validity and Reliability Testing

Variable	Item	Pearson Correlation	R-Table	Cronbach Alpha	Details
Attitude (X)	X1	0.716	0.1671	0.776	Valid and Reliable
	X2	0.761			
	X3	0.835			
	X4	0.682			
	X5	0.645			
	X6	0.791			
	X7	0.808			
	X8	0.633			
	X9	0.792			
Intention (Y)	Y1	0.415	0.1671	0.760	Valid and Reliable
	Y2	0.604			
	Y3	0.505			
	Y4	0.721			
	Y5	0.665			
	Y6	0.685			
	Y7	0.687			
	Y8	0.681			
	Y9	0.785			
	Y10	0.744			
Instagram (M)	M1	0.690	0.1671	0.773	Valid and Reliable
	M2	0.731			
	M3	0.772			
	M4	0.657			
	M5	0.648			
	M6	0.792			
	M7	0.756			
	M8	0.793			
	M9	0.742			
	M10	0.736			

As shown in Table 2, all research items associated with each variable meet the established criteria for both validity and reliability. This confirms that the measurement instrument employed in the study is both consistent and accurate in capturing the constructs under investigation. Consequently, all items are deemed suitable for inclusion in subsequent stages of the research analysis.

Descriptive statistical analysis was then performed to summarize the central tendencies and distribution patterns of the primary variables examined in this study. The results of this analysis are presented below.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistical Test

Variable	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitude	98	9	45	30.70	7.003
Intention	98	19	50	38.24	6.511
Instagram	98	10	50	34.91	7.616

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for each variable, including the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values. The Attitude variable ranges from 9 to 45, with a mean score of 30.70 (SD = 7.003). Scores for the Intention variable span from 19 to 50, with a mean of 38.24 (SD = 6.511). The Instagram variable shows a range from 10 to 50, with a mean of 34.91 (SD = 7.662). These results indicate a moderate to high average tendency across all three

variables, accompanied by observable variability in respondents' scores. Importantly, no outliers or extreme values were detected in the dataset.

To examine the strength and direction of the relationships among the primary variables, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results are summarized below.

Table 4 Correlation Test

		Attitude	Intention	Instagram
Attitude	r	1	0.442	0.737
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
Intention	r	0.442	1	0.436
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
Instagram	r	0.737	0.436	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

The results of the correlation analysis, as presented in Table 4, were conducted to examine the presence and direction of statistically significant associations among the three key variables: Attitude (X), Instagram (M), and Intention (Y). The analysis indicates that all relationships are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level. The strongest correlation is observed between Attitude and Instagram ( $r = 0.737$ ), suggesting that individuals' perceptions of Instagram are substantially influenced by their attitudes toward mental health. Additionally, the correlations between Instagram and Intention ( $r = 0.436$ ), and between Attitude and Intention ( $r = 0.442$ ), demonstrate moderate strength, highlighting the significant role of both factors in shaping individuals' decisions to seek mental health support.

These findings suggest that favorable attitudes toward mental health and positive perceptions of Instagram are associated with a greater intention to seek professional psychological assistance. The data support the presence of a significant relationship among Attitude, Instagram usage, and Intention to seek mental health services, reinforcing the potential role of Instagram as a mediating variable within this process.

To further investigate this mediating role, a mediation analysis was conducted using the Sobel Test. The proposed model posits Instagram (M) as an intermediary in the relationship between Attitude (X) and Intention (Y). The analysis utilized regression coefficient values and standard errors obtained from prior regression results. The coefficient for the relationship between Attitude and Instagram was  $A = 0.801$  with a standard error of  $SE_A = 0.075$ . Additionally, the coefficients for the relationship between Instagram and Intention, and Attitude and Intention were  $B = 0.207$  with  $SE_B = 0.114$ . Based on these values, the mediation model is established as follows:

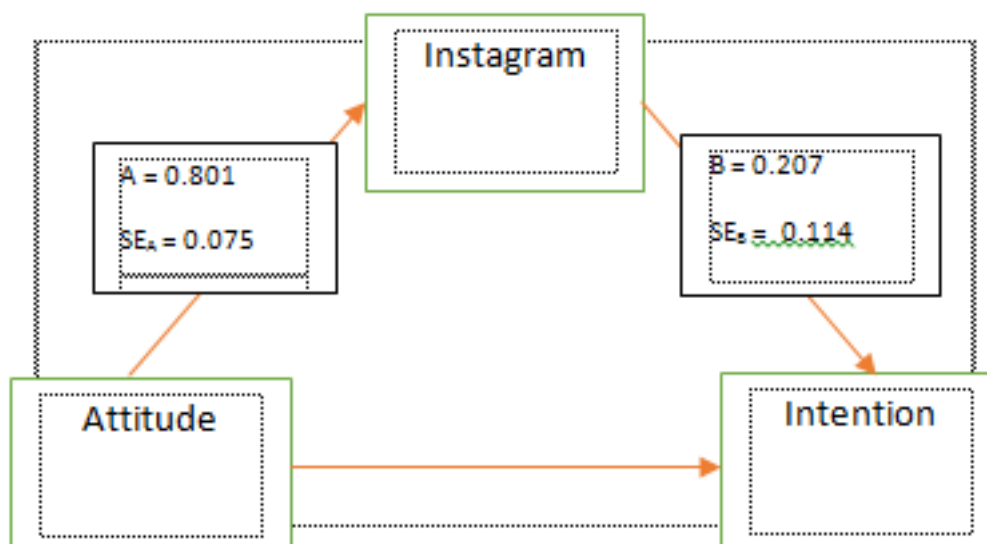


Figure 1 Mediator Model

Following the identification of the proposed mediator model and the determination of regression coefficients and standard errors for the three variables, the next analytical step involves calculating the Sobel Test Statistic (Z). This test evaluates the significance of the indirect effect of the independent variable (Attitude) on the dependent variable

(Intention) through the mediating variable (Instagram). The Sobel Test Statistic is computed using the following formula:

$$Z = \frac{a \cdot b}{\sqrt{b^2 \cdot SEa^2 + a^2 \cdot SEb^2}}$$

The results of the Sobel Test calculation yielded a Z value of 0.0734 ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that Instagram does not mediate the relationship between Attitude and Intention. While Attitude significantly predicts Instagram usage ( $a = 0.801$ ), the indirect effect of Attitude on Intention through Instagram was not statistically significant, as evidenced by the low Z value ( $Z = 0.0734$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that Instagram does not serve as a mediating variable in the relationship between individuals' attitudes toward mental health and their behavioral intentions to seek professional support.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate a statistically significant association between attitudes toward mental health help-seeking and Instagram usage patterns in relation to behavioral intentions among Generation Z. This is consistent with theoretical models suggesting that attitudinal dispositions toward digital platforms influence usage intentions, thereby shaping patterns of sustained engagement (Pratiwi, 2016). Users' perceptions—whether positive or negative—toward Instagram influence their willingness to engage with the platform. However, a favorable attitude toward a digital product or service does not necessarily translate into a strong or consistent behavioral intention to use it. Various factors, including the perceived urgency of need, intrinsic motivation, and external influences, may affect whether a positive attitude results in sustained intention and actual usage behavior (Ekawati, 2022).

The findings suggest that, although Instagram does not function as a direct mediator between attitudes and help-seeking intentions, it nonetheless plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and raising awareness about mental health. This indicates that the platform contributes indirectly by fostering a more informed and supportive environment regarding mental health concerns. These findings are consistent with the work of Hamzah and Putri (2022), who emphasize the capacity of social media to prompt self-diagnosis behaviors. While increased awareness through such platforms can be beneficial, it also presents risks of misinformation in the absence of professional guidance. Therefore, regulatory measures should be implemented to ensure the accuracy and reliability of mental health-related content disseminated on social media. Such efforts are essential to optimizing user engagement, promoting evidence-based treatment-seeking behaviors, and improving therapeutic outcomes (Hamzah & Putri, 2022).

Given the ease of information sharing, social media platforms serve as valuable tools for destigmatizing mental health conditions and facilitating access to support services and professional care. However, to maximize these benefits, it is imperative to ensure that the information shared is both accurate and accountable (Gobel et al., 2023). Supporting this view, research by Goodwin and Behan (2023) in Ireland underscores the influential role of mass media and digital platforms in promoting mental health help-seeking behaviors. Various media forms—including social media, online forums, and public awareness campaigns—have been shown to enhance mental health literacy, reduce stigma, and improve accessibility to resources. By offering educational content and sharing personal narratives of individuals who have sought professional support, the media can contribute to reshaping public attitudes and normalizing discussions around mental health, thereby fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment for those in need.

The findings indicate that although Instagram does not serve as a direct mediator in the relationship between attitudes and help-seeking intentions, it nonetheless exerts a significant influence on shaping public perceptions and enhancing awareness of mental health. This suggests that Instagram contributes indirectly by cultivating a more informed and supportive digital environment surrounding mental health issues. These results align with the study by Hamzah and Putri (2022), which highlights the role of social media in encouraging self-diagnosis. While this phenomenon can facilitate greater awareness and early identification of symptoms, it also carries the risk of misinformation when professional guidance is lacking. To address this challenge, it is essential to implement targeted regulatory measures that ensure the accuracy and reliability of mental health-related content circulated through social media platforms. Such measures are crucial for optimizing user engagement, encouraging evidence-based help-seeking behavior, and enhancing therapeutic outcomes.

Given the ease of content dissemination, social media platforms have emerged as vital instruments for destigmatizing mental illness and improving access to support services and professional care. However, these benefits can only be realized when the information disseminated is credible and responsibly managed (Gobel et al., 2023). Supporting this perspective, Goodwin and Behan (2023) underscore the influential role of mass media and digital platforms in facilitating mental health help-seeking behavior. Across various formats—ranging from social media and online forums to public awareness campaigns—media have been shown to improve mental health literacy, reduce stigma, and expand access to care. By providing educational resources and amplifying personal narratives of individuals who have sought help, media platforms can positively shift societal attitudes and normalize mental health discourse, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and supportive environment for those experiencing psychological distress.



The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) has been widely recognized as an effective framework for understanding help-seeking behavior, particularly among individuals at risk of experiencing anxiety or depression. TPB posits that attitudes toward help-seeking, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control collectively shape an individual's intention to seek mental health support. When individuals hold positive perceptions of professional help, receive social encouragement, and believe they possess the capacity to access and utilize mental health services, they are more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors (Mak & Davis, 2014). These theoretical propositions are supported by empirical findings from Damghanian and Alijanzadeh (2019), whose research in Iran underscored the importance of reducing stigma and addressing perceived barriers in mental health interventions. Their study found that self-stigma and negative cognitive appraisals of mental health services significantly diminished help-seeking intentions, particularly among individuals exhibiting symptoms of anxiety and depression. The authors emphasized that clinicians and mental health professionals should simultaneously address both intrapersonal and structural barriers when designing interventions (Damghanian & Alijanzadeh, 2018).

In addition to internalized stigma, external barriers such as social evaluation apprehension, concerns about privacy, and distrust in institutional credibility may further inhibit individuals from pursuing mental health support. Consequently, the implementation of comprehensive strategies—including targeted psychoeducation, public awareness campaigns, and culturally sensitive programming—is essential for reducing stigma, correcting misconceptions, and ultimately increasing help-seeking behaviors.

Interestingly, other studies suggest that certain stereotypical beliefs about mental disorders, such as viewing them as dangerous or unpredictable, may function paradoxically to prompt help-seeking behaviors. For instance, Yap et al. (2011) found that although these beliefs may appear stigmatizing, they can also motivate individuals to seek professional help out of concern or perceived severity. These insights are congruent with the findings of the present study, which demonstrated that individual attitudes toward mental health help-seeking directly predict behavioral intentions to seek support, with no significant mediating effect from social media platforms such as Instagram. In other words, decisions to seek help are primarily influenced by personal attitudinal factors rather than digital platform engagement. This highlights the critical importance of fostering favorable attitudes toward mental health services, as intrinsic beliefs and perceptions exert a more profound influence on help-seeking behaviors than external digital influences.

The findings underscore the critical need to promote favorable perceptions of professional help-seeking across multiple communication channels, particularly digital platforms. Given Generation Z's documented reliance on social media for information consumption and interpersonal engagement, Instagram emerges as a potentially influential medium for the dissemination of mental health awareness and support. However, the study concurrently emphasizes that while platforms such as Instagram offer valuable opportunities for mental health engagement and education, their effective use demands strict adherence to evidence-based content standards, active oversight by qualified mental health professionals, and the implementation of robust information verification mechanisms. Collectively, these findings suggest that optimal outreach strategies targeting this demographic must integrate both attitude-focused interventions and carefully regulated digital media engagement. Through the strategic integration of digital platforms into mental health initiatives, practitioners, policymakers, and educators can collaborate to foster open dialogue, reduce stigma, and encourage timely help-seeking behaviors among young individuals.

In conclusion, the study affirms that attitude is a significant predictor of the intention to seek mental health support among at-risk members of Generation Z. However, this relationship is not mediated by Instagram, indicating that social media platforms may not directly influence the pathway between individual attitudes and help-seeking decisions. This result highlights the necessity of identifying alternative mediators that may exert a more substantial influence on help-seeking behaviors within this population. Factors such as perceived social support, mental health literacy, cultural norms, and offline interpersonal interactions may hold greater relevance in shaping the decision to pursue professional assistance. Accordingly, further research is warranted to explore these potential mediators and to develop more comprehensive, evidence-informed intervention strategies aimed at enhancing help-seeking behavior among Generation Z.

## CONCLUSION

The findings revealed a statistically significant, moderate, and positive relationship between Attitude (X) and Intention (Y) to seek mental health support, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.442$  at a significance level of  $p < 0.01$ . A similarly significant association was observed between Attitude (X) and Instagram (M), with a correlation of  $r = 0.373$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). These results suggest that individuals with more favorable attitudes toward seeking mental health assistance are more likely to express a strong intention to do so. Additionally, those with positive mental health attitudes tend to engage with Instagram as a platform for accessing related information and support.

However, mediation analysis did not reveal a statistically significant mediating role for Instagram in the relationship between Attitude (X) and Intention (Y). This indicates that while attitudes and intentions are positively correlated, the presence of Instagram neither enhances nor attenuates this relationship. These findings imply that, although social media can serve as a useful tool for mental health information and support, an individual's personal attitude remains the primary

driver of help-seeking behavior. When individuals already hold positive attitudes toward professional support, they are likely to act upon their intentions regardless of their level of engagement with digital platforms.

Moreover, this study highlights the critical role of social support in promoting proactive mental health behaviors. Support from family, peers, and community networks may exert a more substantial influence on help-seeking behaviors than social media engagement alone. Accordingly, these findings offer valuable implications for the design of mental health promotion programs. Interventions should prioritize the strengthening of social support systems—whether through educational campaigns, the cultivation of supportive community structures, or the strategic use of social media for psychoeducational dissemination and mental health literacy enhancement. When appropriately managed, digital platforms can be optimized to serve as psychologically safe, accessible environments for disseminating evidence-based information and facilitating supportive interaction.

Given the evolving nature of digital engagement, future research should explore comparative analyses of different platforms—including Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube—to examine how each uniquely influences mental health help-seeking attitudes and intentions.

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