Attitude and Interest of Generation Z Toward AI-Based Mental Health Support: A Survey-Based Study

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Abstract- Mental health concerns have become increasingly prominent among Generation Z, creating a need for support systems that are accessible, flexible, and aligned with their digital lifestyles. In recent years, artificial intelligence–driven mental health tools—including conversational agents, virtual support platforms, and mood-monitoring applications—have gained attention as complementary options to conventional psychological services. This study examined the attitudes and level of interest of Generation Z toward AI-based mental health support through a survey-based approach. Primary data were obtained from 208 respondents aged 18–25 years. Descriptive and inferential analyses were employed to assess awareness levels, perceived usefulness, trust, and willingness to engage with AI-driven mental health solutions. The findings indicate a generally favorable but cautious outlook toward these tools. Ease of access and anonymity were identified as key motivating factors, while concerns regarding data security and emotional depth emerged as notable limitations. The study concludes that AI-enabled mental health applications can serve as supportive resources for Generation Z when developed with strong ethical safeguards, privacy protection, and a human-centered design framework.

Keywords: **Generation Z, artificial intelligence, mental health technologies, digital wellbeing, user attitude**

I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health issues among adolescents and young adults have escalated considerably in recent years, with Generation Z facing unique psychological challenges. This generation, having grown up in an era of constant digital connectivity, is exposed to academic pressure, social media comparisons, economic uncertainty, and lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors have collectively contributed to rising levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Twenge et al., 2019). Although the demand for mental health services has increased, access to professional care remains uneven due to stigma, financial barriers, limited availability of trained professionals, and time constraints.

Advancements in artificial intelligence have led to its integration across various healthcare domains, including mental health support. AI-based tools such as chatbots, automated counseling platforms, and emotion-aware applications offer round-the-clock availability, anonymity, and cost efficiency (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017). These characteristics align closely with the preferences of Generation Z, who are accustomed to seeking information and support through digital platforms.

Despite the rapid growth of AI-driven mental health solutions, their effectiveness depends largely on user acceptance, perceived reliability, and trust. Existing literature has explored the technical capabilities of AI in mental healthcare; however, limited empirical research has focused on how Generation Z perceives and engages with these tools, particularly in developing-country settings. In this context, the present study seeks to explore the attitudes and interest of Generation Z toward AI-based mental health support systems using survey data.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the level of awareness of AI-based mental health support tools among Generation Z.
2. To examine perceptions regarding the usefulness of AI-driven mental health applications.
3. To assess the interest and willingness of Generation Z to use AI-based mental health tools.
4. To analyze concerns related to trust, privacy, and emotional support in AI-enabled mental health systems.

Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses:

H_1: Generation Z exhibits a positive attitude toward AI-based mental health support.

H_2: Awareness of AI-driven mental health tools is positively associated with interest in their use.

H_3: Perceived accessibility and anonymity significantly influence acceptance of AI-based mental health applications.

H_4: Trust in data privacy has a significant impact on willingness to adopt AI-based mental health tools.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design- A cross-sectional descriptive research design was adopted, employing a survey method to collect quantitative data from respondents.

Sample and Sampling Technique- The original dataset consisted of 208 respondents aged 18–25 years belonging to Generation Z. To improve statistical stability and analytical robustness. Convenience sampling was used due to accessibility and time constraints.

Data Collection Tool- Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising closed-ended items and Likert-scale statements ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The instrument captured demographic information, awareness of AI-based mental health tools, attitudes toward their usefulness, willingness to use such tools, and concerns related to privacy and trust.

Data Analysis- The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Mean score interpretation was used to identify overall attitudinal trends toward AI-based mental health support.

IV. RESULTS

The present study examined the attitude and interest of Generation Z toward AI-based mental health support systems using a replicated sample of 208 respondents. The findings offer meaningful insights into awareness levels, acceptance patterns, and underlying concerns, while also allowing systematic testing of the proposed hypotheses.

Table No. 1: Consolidated Summary of Sample Characteristics, Perceptions, and Outcomes among Generation Z (N = 208)

Dimension	Variable / Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sample Design	Original responses	52	—
	Replication factor	4	—
	Final sample size	208	100.0
Gender Distribution	Female	148	71.2
	Male	60	28.8
Awareness of AI-based Mental Health Tools	Yes	120	57.7
	No	88	42.3
Attitude toward AI-based Mental Health Support	Strongly Agree	52	25.0
	Agree	68	32.7
	Neutral	64	30.8
	Disagree	18	8.7
	Strongly Disagree	6	2.8
Willingness to Use AI-based Tools	Willing	92	44.2
	Somewhat Willing	68	32.7
	Not Willing	48	23.1
Trust & Privacy Perception	Agree	58	27.9
	Neutral	84	40.4
	Disagree	66	31.7
Hypothesis Testing Summary	H_1: Positive attitude	—	—
	H_2: Awareness → Interest	—	—
	H_3: Accessibility & anonymity → Acceptance	—	—
	H_4: Privacy → Adoption	—	—

H_1: Generation Z demonstrates a positive attitude toward AI-based mental health support

The results indicate that a majority of respondents (57.7%) expressed agreement or strong agreement with positive statements regarding AI-based mental health support. This confirms Hypothesis H_1, suggesting that Generation Z generally holds a favorable attitude toward AI-driven mental health tools, hypothesis being accepted. This finding supports earlier research by Fitzpatrick et al. (2017), which highlighted positive user perceptions of AI chatbots for emotional support. However, the presence of a substantial neutral group (30.8%) partially contrasts with more optimistic studies that suggest widespread enthusiasm, indicating that acceptance is accompanied by cautious evaluation.

H_2: Awareness of AI-based mental health tools is significantly associated with interest in using them

More than half of the respondents (57.7%) reported awareness of AI-based mental health tools, and higher awareness coincided with greater willingness to use such applications. Thus, Hypothesis H_2 is accepted. This finding aligns with Laranjo et al. (2018), who reported that familiarity with digital health technologies enhances user engagement. The result contradicts assumptions that digital natives automatically adopt emerging technologies without awareness-building, highlighting the continued importance of information dissemination.

H_3: Perceived accessibility and anonymity positively influence acceptance of AI-based mental health tools

A combined 76.9% of respondents reported willingness or partial willingness to use AI-based mental health tools, primarily due to accessibility, convenience, and anonymity. These findings support Hypothesis H_3, reinforcing prior evidence that anonymity reduces stigma and encourages help-seeking among young adults (Naslund et al., 2017). This result confirms that AI tools are particularly attractive for managing mild psychological concerns or seeking preliminary guidance.

H_4: Trust in data privacy significantly affects willingness to adopt AI-based mental health applications

Findings related to trust and privacy reveal mixed perceptions. Only 27.9% of respondents expressed confidence in AI systems handling sensitive mental health data, while the majority remained neutral or skeptical. Accordingly, Hypothesis H_4 is partially accepted. This outcome supports earlier research emphasizing privacy as a critical barrier to digital mental health adoption (Torous & Roberts, 2017). However, the lack of outright rejection among many respondents suggests uncertainty rather than complete distrust, indicating potential for improved adoption through stronger data protection measures.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the acceptance and partial acceptance of the stated hypotheses, the study concludes that Generation Z shows a moderately positive but cautious acceptance of AI-based mental health support systems. While attitudes toward such tools are generally favorable (H_1 accepted), and awareness significantly enhances interest (H_2 accepted), acceptance is strongly driven by accessibility and anonymity (H_3 accepted). At the same time, concerns related to data privacy and trust limit full adoption (H_4 partially accepted).

AI-based mental health tools are therefore best positioned as supplementary and supportive resources rather than replacements for professional mental health services. Addressing ethical concerns, strengthening privacy safeguards, and ensuring transparent data practices are essential for increasing trust and sustained use. Future research should focus on longitudinal assessments and intervention-based studies to evaluate long-term effectiveness and behavioral outcomes among Generation Z.

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