

## Help-Seeking Determinants for Suicidal Mental Health Risk among Generation Z on Social Media

Ezra Aurelia Glenia Hadi<sup>1</sup>, Rita Destiwati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>ORCID iD: [0009-0000-8050-8987](https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8050-8987), Telkom University, Jl. Telekomunikasi No. 1, Bandung Regency, West Java 40257, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>ORCID iD: [0000-0001-6875-1773](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6875-1773), Telkom University, Jl. Telekomunikasi No. 1, Bandung Regency, West Java 40257, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author, e-mail: [ritadestiwati@telkomuniversity.ac.id](mailto:ritadestiwati@telkomuniversity.ac.id)

### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigated the influence of attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) on help-seeking behavior using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The study also examined whether Instagram use affected the link between intention and seeking for help behavior. Instagram was chosen as the focus platform because its largest user demographic in Indonesia is Generation Z. This research addressed the urgent need to understand help-seeking patterns among Generation Z in the digital era.

**Methods:** A quantitative approach was applied using PLS-SEM. The sample consisted of 400 Generation Z with prior mental health concerns who actively utilized Instagram. The Slovin formula was applied to calculate the sample size at a 95% confidence level. An online questionnaire was utilized to gather the data and analyzed to assess the influence of the three TPB constructs on help-seeking intention and behavior, as well as the moderating effect of Instagram use.

**Findings:** AT, SN, and PBC collectively explained 87% of the variance in help-seeking behavior and 84.4% in intention. However, Instagram use did not significantly moderate the relationship between intention and behavior ( $p=0.321, >0.05$ ).

**Originality:** This research addresses an important gap by examining how routine interaction with digital platforms may facilitate or inhibit the transition from intention to behavior. By applying the TPB framework within a socially and technologically relevant context, this study contributes both conceptually and practically to the understanding of youth mental health behavior.

**Keywords:** Help-seeking Behavior, Generation Z, Suicide Risk, Instagram, Theory of Planned Behavior.

### Introduction

Mental health refers to a condition in which a person is free from psychological disorders--both neurotic and psychotic--that may interfere with their ability to function and adapt effectively within their social environment (Hamid, 2017). It encompasses more than just the lack of mental disorders and also involves the existence of positive psychological well-being, where individuals can manage stress, cope with daily challenges, maintain productivity, and contribute positively to their community (Bahar & Rinaldi, 2021). Mentally healthy individuals are generally able to think clearly, regulate their emotions, make rational decisions, and sustain meaningful relationships with others. Mental health plays a crucial role across all stages of life, but it becomes particularly significant during adolescence, a time characterized by swift changes in physical development, emotions, and social relationships (Wan et al., 2019). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health issues often emerge during late childhood and early adolescence. Among these, depression stands out as one of the most widespread disorders. WHO identifies depression as a significant factor in the worldwide

**Article History:** Received May 17, 2025; Revised June 16, 2025; Accepted December 15, 2025; Published December 29, 2025.

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impact of disease and a major contributor to disability among adolescents (Djohan et al., 2022).

Among young individuals, depression commonly appears through ongoing feelings of sadness, reduced interest in routine activities, trouble focusing, and a tendency to isolate socially. If not addressed, these symptoms can significantly impair academic achievement, everyday functioning, and social connections. Even more concerning, untreated depression may escalate to thoughts of suicide and potentially suicidal actions (Amarasinghe & Agampodi, 2022). The WHO reports that, on a global scale, suicide ranks as the third leading cause of death among adolescents. It is estimated that around 40% of individuals with depression experience suicidal thoughts, while approximately 15% may attempt or complete suicide (Dirgayunita, 2016). These concerning figures highlight the critical importance of implementing early detection, prevention, and intervention efforts that specifically address the distinct psychological and social needs of adolescents. Enhancing mental health literacy, expanding access to professional support, and combating the stigma surrounding mental health issues are essential steps in tackling this significant public health concern.

According to data released by the WHO in 2024, suicide accounted for approximately 720,000 deaths globally, making it rank as the third leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 (WHO, 2013). The number of suicide cases continues to rise annually, highlighting the urgent need for global prioritization of this issue. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is particularly vulnerable to various mental health problems, including anxiety disorders, depression, chronic stress, excessive worry, and psychosomatic symptoms that affect psychological well-being. These issues are often linked to the generation's limited ability to effectively cope with stress, life challenges, and emotional pressures (Guntur et al., 2022). Poor coping strategies among Generation Z can be observed in their distinct communication styles compared to previous generations, different mindsets, high dependence on digital devices and the internet, ambitious personal goals, and multitasking tendencies (Guntur et al., 2022).

A previous diagnosis of mental illness is associated with an increased risk of suicide, in part due to the challenges it poses in managing everyday tasks, maintaining employment, sustaining social connections, and achieving financial stability. As a result, greater levels of functional disruption are correlated with a higher risk of suicidal behavior (Steele et al., 2018). Study conducted by (Shain et al., 2016) in the United States indicated that suicide is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Although genetic and biological factors may contribute, they often interact with psychological and social variables, especially during adolescence. Genetic predispositions can increase susceptibility to depression or other mental illnesses, while biological factors such as chemical imbalances in the brain may affect mood and behavior. Supporting this, Aulia et al. (2020) found that psychological factors are the primary contributors to suicidal ideation among adolescents. These include depression, anxiety, stress, feelings of helplessness, and substance abuse. The way adolescents respond to psychosocial stress varies; some exhibit symptoms of stress or depression, while others appear unaffected (Kwon et al., 2022). Previous research suggests that this variation may stem from adolescents' reluctance to disclose personal problems, particularly during early adolescence when they seek independence from parental control and are less likely to trust others with sensitive issues such as suicidal thoughts (Aulia et al., 2020). In 2017, adolescents diagnosed with a mental disorder at the age of 14 who did not engage with

mental health services over the course of the following year, they were more than seven times as likely to develop clinical depression by age 17, compared to peers who accessed comparable support services, even though both groups exhibited similar initial levels of depressive symptoms (Neufeld et al., 2017).

Based on Health Ministry of Indonesia, Generation Z (ages 15–24) has the highest prevalence of depression in Indonesia at 2%, they are the least likely to access treatment, with only 10.4% seeking professional help. This untreated depression poses serious risks, including worsening mental health, suicide, substance abuse, and broader social issues. The data also show that 61% of young people with depression reported having suicidal thoughts in the past month, compared to only 1.7% among those without depression (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2023). Higher rates of depression were observed among females, individuals with secondary education, the unemployed, students, and those living in urban areas or from high-income households. Despite the severity, most adolescents do not reluctance to access expert support such as doctors or mental health professionals, but instead turn to teachers, religious or community leaders, and other informal sources. These results emphasize the critical importance of implementing focused interventions to guarantee that Generation Z has timely and adequate access to mental health care. Such efforts may include school-centered programs, community-based screening initiatives, and the expansion of accessible, youth-oriented mental health services aimed at preventing long-term adverse outcomes, especially suicide. Within this age group, the prevalence of depression reaches 2%, making it the highest among all other age brackets. Another study reveals that only 45% of Generation Z members perceive their mental health as good or very good (Thahir et al., 2023). A London-based study additionally found that the prevalence of severe depressive symptoms among adolescents nearly doubled in 2015 compared to 2005, indicating that mental health issues--particularly depression--are becoming increasingly widespread among today's youth (Gage & Patalay, 2021).

At the international level, a study conducted by University College London found that depression rates among Generation Z are two-thirds higher than those in the millennial generation. The rising mental health issues among individuals in this age group are believed to be partly driven by factors like prolonged social media use and heightened social pressure (Thahir et al., 2023). Media exposure has been linked to negative impacts on mental health, such as increased risk of depression, heightened anxiety, and elevated levels of psychological distress (Astuti et al., 2022). However, findings from Szlyk et al. (2020) illustrate how social media can also help reduce barriers to depression treatment by increasing public awareness and understanding of mental health. Intervention strategies may be tailored based on the severity of depressive symptoms. For example, individuals with severe depression are generally more reluctant to seek inpatient care or formal treatment, whereas those with mild depressive symptoms may benefit from digital mental health support, such as mobile apps or online therapy platforms (Szlyk et al., 2020).

In terms of utilizing the internet as a means of seeking help, research by Lu et al., (2021) indicated that individuals with depression are increasingly turning to social media to obtain health-related information and connect with others (Lu et al., 2021). Their study focused on online communities for individuals with depression, which serve as platforms where people with depressive symptoms can access information and provide mutual social support. These online depression communities are now widely regarded as valuable spaces for open discussions about mental health. Lu et al. also recommended further

investigation into how different social media usage patterns can influence the psychological states of users with mild depressive symptoms.

Therefore, this study introduces Instagram as a moderating variable, considering its popularity and widespread use, particularly among younger generations. Instagram was developed to meet the demands of modern society in the digital era, where technology has become an integral part of everyday life. Beyond sharing personal moments through photos and videos, Instagram functions as a space for inspiration, information seeking, and building social connections (Wiranata & Hasanudin, 2023). Its broad user base and ongoing innovation make it a relevant platform not only for personal use but also for professional purposes, including marketing, branding, and education. In this sense, Instagram reflects the increasingly dynamic lifestyles and social needs of contemporary society.



Figure 1. Instagram users in Indonesia in 2023 (source: Pokrop, 2023)

Figure 1 shows that in 2023, the highest proportion of Instagram users in Indonesia fell within the 18–24 age group, with the 25–34 age group ranking second. These age groups fall within the Generation Z category, which in 2025 includes individuals aged 13 to 28 years old, based on the definition of Generation Z as those born between 1997 and 2012 (Dolot, 2018). Social media is proven to provides instant and tailored health insights, going beyond conventional media, while enabling active user engagement and interactive communication (Li & Zheng, 2020).

Research on mental health communication has identified two main functions of social media use. One key function is its role as a source for accessing mental health information, as highlighted in various studies. *Second*, it provides emotional support, as highlighted in other research (Mohamad & Mubin, 2023). Between 2024 and 2025, adolescents—especially those belonging to Generation Z—are increasingly immersed in social media in their daily lives, whether for learning, entertainment, self-presentation, or even seeking health assistance. Adolescents tend to prefer using social media for help-seeking, recognizing that talking to doctors or family members about sensitive or embarrassing issues can be difficult (Vostanis et al., 2013). The concept of ‘help-seeking’ refers to the entire continuum of actions taken, including both the initiation and the ongoing involvement in receiving care or support services (Clement et al., 2015). This view is supported by a participant in O’Reilly’s study conducted in London, participants indicated that social media serves as a more private alternative to traditional help-seeking, with some choosing it over visiting a doctor (O’Reilly et al., 2019). The increasing awareness and accessibility of mental health information among Generation Z presents both opportunities and challenges. By 2020, approximately 81% of Generation Z reported using the internet to seek health-related information, including mental health issues

(Naslund et al., 2020; Normansyah et al., 2024). Young individuals who are facing psychological distress often encounter difficulties in reaching out for support. This hesitation is likely influenced by stigma and unfavorable views related to mental health and the act of seeking help, which influence their avoidance of assistance from others (Salaheddin & Mason, 2016).

TPB posits that behavior is driven by the intention behind choosing to engage in or avoid a particular activity. This intention is influenced by three separate factors: AT, SN, and PBC (Ajzen, 1985). TPB suggests that these three cognitive components significantly influence a person's intention, which in turn predicts actual behavior (Mo & Mak, 2009). Accordingly, this study focuses on how these three variables function as independent factors affecting intention (as a mediating variable), which then impacts the final behavioral outcome (dependent variable). According to the TPB, individuals are more likely to perform a specific action when they view it positively, feel supported by influential people around them, and believe they have the necessary means and ability to carry it out (Mak & Davis, 2014). Understanding adolescent attitudes and intentions toward help-seeking is essential, as positive attitudes are often the first step in addressing depression (Do et al., 2019).

TPB argues that attitudes influence behavior through intentions (Ajzen, 1985). Earlier research has shown that having negative perceptions about seeking mental health support are associated with a reduced tendency to seek help (Schnyder et al., 2017). Furthermore, TPB has been shown to explain approximately between 40% and 60% of the variability in help-seeking intentions was accounted for., especially among individuals with mental health concerns (Damghanian & Alijanzadeh, 2018). However, empirical research on how individuals actually seek help is still scarce, as most studies focus only on intention, without examining whether those intentions are translated into action. In reality, actual help-seeking behavior is the most critical outcome in TPB. Even with increased intentions, no meaningful benefit is gained if those intentions fail to result in real action. Therefore, exploring the connection between intention and behavior can provide important understanding for mental health service providers on how to successfully turn intentions into real actions.

Communication science plays a vital role in understanding and influencing help-seeking behavior among suicide-risk Generation Z individuals. Effective communication is essential for conveying mental health information and promoting the importance of seeking support (Nurdiana & Rubino, 2024). In this context, the use of digital and social media--which are key information sources for Generation Z--is particularly crucial. Communication science also helps identify how interpersonal communication barriers, such as the inability to speak openly about mental health challenges can prevent individuals from pursuing professional help (Aryshintana et al., 2023). Moreover, perceived judgment related to mental illness often inhibits efforts to seek assistance. Communication research can inform strategies to reduce stigma through positive narratives and effective educational efforts. Thus, communication plays an essential role in shaping more effective mental health interventions and suicide prevention efforts among Generation Z.

In today's digital era, Generation Z is constantly exposed to diverse information through social media and other platforms, yet they often lack access to targeted mental health messages or effective encouragement to seek help. Effective communication management is needed to develop strategies that deliver clear, impactful mental health messages, while also addressing the barriers that prevent this generation from seeking

assistance. This research is particularly urgent as Generation Z faces increasingly complex pressures--such as digital dependency, social isolation, and other psychosocial challenges--that often worsen their mental health. By applying communication management principles, mental health campaigns, including how to effectively deliver messages that reduce stigma, raise awareness, and ensure reliable access to mental health information. This study also offers a distinctive theoretical enhancing the TPB framework by situating it in the domain of digital health practices among Indonesian Generation Z, specifically through the lens of Instagram use. While TPB has been widely utilized in mental health research, its integration with social media engagement--particularly on a platform predominantly used by Gen Z--remains underexplored. By introducing Instagram use as a moderating variable, this study advances the understanding of how digital platform interaction may influence the translation of help-seeking intentions into actual behavior, particularly in relation to suicidal mental health risk.

This study offers a unique contribution by applying the TPB in a context that remains underexplored--specifically, the actual help-seeking behavior related to mental health among Generation Z, with Instagram use introduced as a moderating factor, an area that has not been examined in previous Indonesian research. The primary objective is to analyze how core psychological components--namely AT, SN, and PBC--influence help-seeking actions for suicidal mental health risks, particularly within the realm of social media. Additionally, the study investigates whether Instagram use moderates the link between an individual's intention and their actual behavior in seeking support. Given the widespread use of Instagram among adolescents, this research addresses an important gap by examining how routine interaction with digital platforms may facilitate or inhibit the transition from intention to behavior. By applying the TPB framework within a socially and technologically relevant context, this study contributes both conceptually and practically to the understanding of youth mental health behavior. The evidence from this study supports the formulation of focused communication strategies addressing mental health by healthcare professionals and governmental agencies, aimed at reducing suicide rates among Generation Z. Given the rising incidence of mental health challenges among youth, these results underscore the urgency of implementing communication-based interventions that are both effective and responsive to the specific needs of this demographic. Such interventions should be designed to align with the media habits, interpersonal communication, and psychological preferences of Generation Z to ensure greater reach and impact.

## Methods

This research adopts a quantitative approach using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the relationships among the core predictors of the Theory of Planned Behavior--attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) as independent variables--and actual help-seeking behavior as the dependent variable. Behavioral intention serves as a mediating factor, while Instagram use is tested as a moderating variable. Data analysis was conducted using the SMART PLS software, which involved assessing both the measurement model (through tests of convergent and discriminant validity) and the structural model (evaluating reliability, path coefficients, and specific indirect effects). A purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting participants who met predetermined inclusion criteria aligned with the study's objectives.

The study involved participants from Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012. The target population comprised those who had experienced mental health issues--such as anxiety, stress, or depression--and actively used Instagram. According to data (2020) from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*), this generational cohort makes up a significant portion of the national population, Generation Z represents roughly 71.5 million people, making up 27.94% of the nation's population. To calculate an appropriate sample size, this study utilized the Slovin formula, applying a 95% confidence level to ensure statistical precision ( $\alpha=0.05$ ), resulting in a required sample of 400 respondents. This sample size ensures a 5% margin of error, providing robust statistical power ( $1-\beta>0.80$ ) to test the hypothesized mediation and moderation effects. Instrument reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with all constructs showing strong internal consistency: Attitude=0.926; Subjective Norm=0.847; Perceive Control=0.732, Behavioral Intention=0.678, Behavior=0.757, and Instagram=0.776. All exceeding the standard threshold of 0.70. Prior to full-scale distribution, the instrument was validated by experts and pilot-tested on 30 participants from the target population.

**Results**

To provide contextual understanding of the subsequent statistical analyses, this section begins by presenting the demographic and background characteristics of the respondents. These characteristics--such as age, gender, educational background, mental health history, and Instagram usage--provide critical context for interpreting the results linked to attitudes, behavioral intentions, and help-seeking behaviors.

Table 1. Age Distribution of Respondents

No	Age	Amount	Percentage
1.	12	0	0
2.	13	0	0
3.	14	6	1.5
4.	15	3	0.75
5.	16	10	2.5
6.	17	8	2
7.	18	6	1.5
8.	19	18	4.5
9.	20	33	8.25
10.	21	60	15
11.	22	97	24.25
12.	23	64	16
13.	24	33	8.25
14.	25	30	7.5
15.	26	16	4
16.	27	14	3.5
17.	28	2	0.5
Total		400	100

Note: The study was conducted using a sample of 400 participants

Table 1 presents the age distribution of participants in this study. The largest proportion of respondents (24.25%) were 22 years old, suggesting that most individuals in the sample were in the early adulthood stage--an important developmental period for mental health awareness and the emergence of help-seeking tendencies. This group was

followed by participants aged 23 (16%) and 21 (15%), reflecting a concentration of Generation Z individuals within a typical college-age range. The age distribution aligns with the study's focus on digital-native individuals who are highly engaged with social media platforms like Instagram.

Table 2. Percentage of Respondents Gender

No	Gender	Amount	Percentage
1.	Female	275	68.75
2.	Male	125	31.25

Note: Gender is categorized as male and female, based on self-reported data

Table 2 displays the distribution of respondents by gender. The sample was predominantly female, comprising 68.75% of participants, while 31.25% identified as male. This pattern may suggest that females are generally more inclined to engage in research related to mental health, a trend supported by prior studies indicating that women are typically more open to discussing psychological issues and seeking assistance. The findings also reflect a broader shift, compared to earlier generations, current cohorts of adolescent girls exhibit greater levels of internal psychological distress (Bor et al., 2014). Meanwhile, younger males demonstrated increased levels of anticipated stigma regarding help-seeking during the follow-up phase, which subsequently reduced their likelihood of pursuing mental health support at that time (Doll et al., 2021). The gender distribution in this study offers valuable context for understanding the results, especially concerning patterns of social media use and levels of mental health awareness.

Table 3. Variable Operation

No	Variable	Indicator
1.	Attitude (X1)	Cognitive Affective Conative (Suryani, 2013)
2.	Subjective Norm (X2)	Normative Belief Motivation to comply (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975)
3.	Perceive Control (X3)	Control Belief Power of Control Belief (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005)
4.	Intention (Z)	Health literacy Perceptions of family and friends (Li et al., 2022)
5.	Behavior (Y)	Predisposers Supporters Reinforcers (Prasetyo, 2011)
6.	Instagram (M)	Social Presence Media Richness Content Interaction (Kotler & Keller, 2016)

Note: Each variable was assessed the scale ranged from 1 to 5, representing levels of agreement from strong disagreement to strong agreement

Following the variable definitions outlined in Table 3, the next step involves evaluating the measurement and structural components of the model through the Partial

Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique. This process includes two main phases: assessing the outer model to determine the reliability and validity of each construct's indicators, and analyzing the inner model to test the proposed relationships among the latent variables. The results of these analyses are presented in the subsequent sections to assess the model's overall strength and to examine the proposed hypotheses.

The assessment of the measurement model starts by presenting the outer model path diagram, which illustrates the relationships between latent variables and their associated indicators. This visual serves to illustrate the extent to which each indicator accurately represents its underlying construct, a critical aspect in assessing the model's validity and reliability. The figure below displays the outer model path diagram produced through the PLS-SEM method.

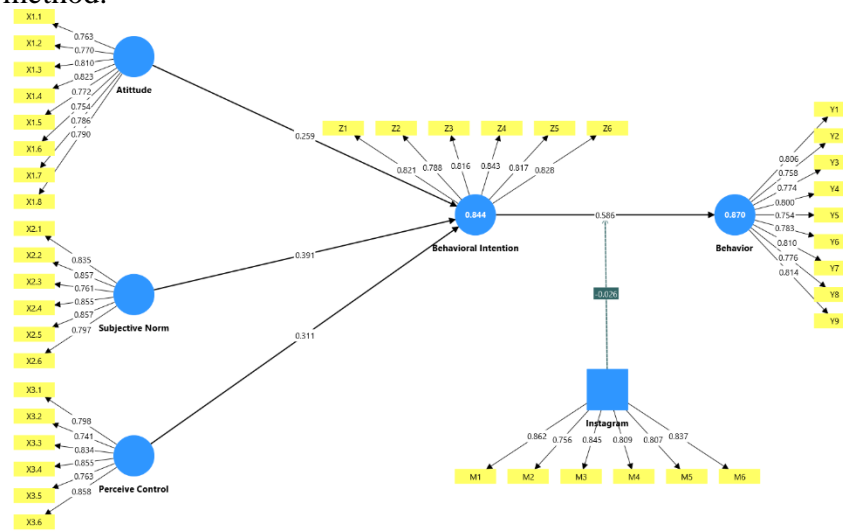


Figure 2. Path diagram outer model (source: Output generated using SmartPLS 4, processed by the Researchers, 2025)

Figure 2 shows convergent validity relies on the idea that indicators measuring the same construct should be highly correlated with one another. In SmartPLS analysis, the convergent validity of reflective indicators can be assessed through their loading factor values. Generally, a loading factor greater than 0.7 is generally preferred for confirmatory research, whereas values ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 are deemed acceptable for exploratory research. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a key metric used to evaluate convergent validity, with a threshold of 0.5 or higher indicating that the construct has adequate convergent validity (Ghozali & Latan, 2015). Based on Table 4 below, all indicators listed show values above 0.5, and are therefore considered valid. The AVE value specifically assesses convergent validity, and when it exceeds 0.5, the model is deemed to have sufficient convergent validity (Ghozali, 2021). The AVE output can be found in the following table.

Table 4. Loading Factor

Items	Loading Factor	Items	Loading Factor
AT1	0.764	IN3	0.816
AT2	0.775	IN4	0.843
AT3	0.809	IN5	0.815
AT4	0.820	IN6	0.832
AT5	0.776	BV1	0.807

AT6	0.753	BV2	0.758
AT7	0.785	BV3	0.774
AT8	0.787	BV4	0.801
SN1	0.836	BV5	0.754
SN2	0.856	BV6	0.784
SN3	0.761	BV7	0.808
SN4	0.858	BV8	0.776
SN5	0.856	BV9	0.813
SN6	0.793	IG1	0.863
PBC1	0.792	IG2	0.759
PBC2	0.743	IG3	0.847
PBC3	0.833	IG4	0.805
PBC4	0.854	IG5	0.806
PBC5	0.768	IG6	0.836
PBC6	0.860	IG x IN	1000
IN1	0.822		
IN2	0.785		

Note: Loadings above 0.70 indicate acceptable indicator reliability (AT=Attitude, SN=Subjective Norms, PBC=Perceive Behavioral Control, IN=Intention; BV=Behavior; IG=Instagram)

Table 4 presents each variable's loading factor. After assessing convergent validity, it is essential to evaluate the reliability of the constructs to ensure consistency in measurement. Reliability testing determines whether the indicators used in the study consistently measure the intended latent variables. This study assesses construct reliability through two key measures: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The results of this reliability evaluation are summarized in the table below.

Table 5. Composite reliability

	CR
Attitude	0.911
Behavior	0.923
Instagram	0.904
Intention	0.902
Perceive Control	0.897
Subjective Norm	0.909

Note: (CR=Composite reliability) values were calculated to assess the internal consistency of each construct, with a threshold of  $\geq 0.70$  as suggested by (Hair et al., 2022)

As shown in Table 5, the reliability analysis demonstrates that all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.7. These results meet the acceptable criteria, indicating that each construct possesses adequate internal consistency and can be considered reliable for further analysis.

Table 6. R-square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Behavior	0.87	0.869
Intention	0.844	0.842

Note: The R-square indicates the variance explained by the predictors, while the adjusted R-square refines this by considering the number of predictors used. According to the R-Square values obtained using SmartPLS 4.0, as presented in

Table 6, the Behavior construct has an R-Square of 0.87, and the Intention construct holds an R-Square of 0.844. Both values surpass the 0.67 threshold, reflecting strong predictive accuracy. This indicates that the Behavior construct is substantially explained by AT, SN, and PBC, although a portion of its variance is likely attributable to other variables not examined in this study. Similarly, the three predictors explain 84.4% of the variance in Intention, while the remaining 15.6% may be attributed to other external variables not included in this study’s model.

Table 7. Path coefficients

	$\beta$	M	STDEV	T-statistics	P values
Attitude -> Intention	0.259	0.26	0.049	5.333	0
Subjective Norm -> Intention	0.391	0.39	0.061	6.453	0
Perceive Control -> Intention	0.311	0.311	0.051	6.077	0
Intention -> Behavior	0.586	0.587	0.046	12.881	0
Instagram -> Behavior	0.368	0.369	0.045	8.178	0
Instagram x Intention -> Behavior	-0.026	-0.025	0.026	0.993	0.321

Note:  $\beta$ =Coefficients; M=Mean; STDEV=Standard deviation

As shown in Table 7, the path analysis demonstrates that all key components of the TPB significantly guide the development of intent to seek help and the execution of that behavior among Generation Z individuals facing suicide risk. Attitude toward obtaining psychological support has a notable and positive influence on intention, This is supported by a path coefficient of 0.259, a t-statistic of 5.333 (exceeding the threshold of 1.96), and a p-value of 0, suggesting that more favorable perceptions of help-seeking are significantly linked to stronger intentions to engage in such behavior. Similarly, SN exerts a meaningful positive effect on IN ( $\beta=0.391$ ;  $t=6.453$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), suggesting that encouragement or approval from peers and significant others plays a crucial role in motivating individuals to consider seeking professional help. Furthermore, PBC also has a substantial impact on intention ( $\beta=0.311$ ;  $t=6.077$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), implying that when individuals feel capable of accessing mental health resources, they demonstrate a greater likelihood of forming intentions aligned with that competence. Collectively, these findings affirm the predictive capability of the TPB model within the context of mental health help-seeking among at-risk youth.

Moving from intention to actual behavior, the results reveal a strong link between intention and subsequent behavior ( $\beta=0.586$ ;  $t=12.881$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), confirming that a stronger intention leads to a higher likelihood of engaging in help-seeking behavior. Moreover, the analysis indicates that Instagram usage has a direct and statistically significant impact on help-seeking behavior ( $\beta=0.368$ ;  $t=8.178$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), implying that active and intentional interaction with mental health-related content on the platform enhances the likelihood of individuals seeking support. On the other hand, Instagram's role as a moderating variable shows no statistically significant role in the connection between intention and actual behavior ( $\beta=-0.026$ ;  $t=0.993$ ;  $p=0.321$ ), meaning that the platform neither amplifies nor diminishes the effect of intention on actual help-seeking behavior. These findings collectively reinforce the relevance of TPB in understanding digital mental health behavior, while also revealing that platform engagement alone may not bridge the intention–behavior gap.

Table 8. Specific indirect effect

	$\beta$	M	STDEV	T statistics	P values
Attitude -> Intention -> Behavior	0.152	0.152	0.031	4.937	0.000

Subjective Norm -> Intention -> Behavior	0.229	0.229	0.040	5.674	0.000
Perceive Control -> Intention -> Behavior	0.182	0.182	0.033	5.499	0.000

Note: Its confirming the mediating role of intention in the structural model ( $\beta$ = Coefficients; M= Mean; STDEV= Standard deviation)

As shown in [Table 8](#), the mediation analysis highlights the pivotal function of intention as a linking mechanism between the core constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the actual help-seeking actions of Generation Z individuals facing suicide risk. The mediation analysis reveals that the indirect effect of attitude on help-seeking behavior through intention is both positive and proves to be statistically significant, with a coefficient value of 0.152, a t-value of 4.937 (exceeding 1.96), and a p-value of 0. These results suggest that a favorable attitude contributes to the formation of intention, which subsequently leads to behavioral action. Similarly, subjective norms show a meaningful indirect relationship with behavior through IN ( $\beta=0.229$ ;  $t=5.674$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), indicating that perceived social approval or encouragement influences actual help-seeking when mediated by intention. Additionally, perceived behavioral control also demonstrates a significant positive indirect effect ( $\beta=0.182$ ;  $t=5.499$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), implying that individuals who believe they have the ability and resources are more prone to pursue mental health support based on their stated intentions. Collectively, these outcomes reinforce the mediating function of intention as proposed by the TPB and highlight its relevance in explaining how psychological and social factors shape behavior, particularly within the framework of digital mental health engagement.

Table 9. Simultaneous F test

	Sum square	df	Mean square	F	P value
Total	11589.240	399	0.000	0.000	0.000
Error	3470.519	396	8.764	0.000	0.000
Regression	8118.721	3	2706.240	308.793	0.000

Note: Sum Square=total variance; df=indicates degrees of freedom; Mean Square=variance estimate; F=tests model fit; P value=significance ( $< 0.05$ =significant)

Based on [Table 9](#), the result of the F-test for simultaneous effects shows a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This result supports the acceptance of  $H_{10}$  and the rejection of the  $H_0$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that AT, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control jointly have a positive and significant influence on the behavior of seeking mental health support among Generation Z individuals at risk of suicide.

## Discussion

These findings align with the idea that a positive attitude toward help-seeking--especially via platforms like Instagram--is shaped more by personal comfort and belief in its benefits than by social pressure or stigma ([Mojtabai et al., 2016](#)). The descriptive data further show that Generation Z tends to feel emotionally comfortable exploring mental health topics via Instagram and has a rational understanding of its importance. When attitudes are rooted in self-acceptance rather than fear of negative judgment, the motivation to act--such as seeking, saving, or sharing mental health content--increases. Thus, Instagram may serve as a supportive and stigma-free space for Generation Z to meet their psychological needs. Interpretively, this reflects a shift in Generation Z's perception toward greater openness about mental health. However, the effect size

indicates that attitude alone is not the sole determinant of intention—other factors like SN and PBC also likely play significant roles.

Their intention to seek help is also influenced by how much they value and are willing to align themselves with these perspectives. Previous research supports this, showing that 55% of 60 respondents who experienced psychological issues did not seek professional help, instead relying on support from close contacts like friends and family (Sitanggang & Sudagijono, 2022). This highlights the crucial role of subjective norms in shaping intention. Within the TPB framework, this is closely related to normative belief—how strongly individuals believe that important people in their lives support or discourage help-seeking. If they perceive that friends or family do not recommend, downplay, or lack awareness of the benefits of expert intervention, their likelihood of seeking help may diminish—even when psychological needs are pressing. Moreover, when motivation to comply is high, individuals tend to follow the opinions or behaviors of those around them, even if such guidance may not be medically appropriate.

Unlike two previous studies conducted in China and Australia—indicating that perceived behavioral control did not meaningfully influence students' willingness to seek assistance in those cultural contexts—this study highlights how cultural and psychosocial differences may influence the role of PBC in shaping behavioral intentions. In a 2017 study involving Chinese students, PBC was not found to directly influence intention. However, its mediating role was evident through bootstrapping analysis, indicating that PBC may contribute indirectly through interactions with other components of the TPB, particularly SN (Li et al., 2017). In that context, external factors like family expectations appeared more dominant than individual perceptions of behavioral control. When analyzed alongside SN, PBC's influence was diminished due to strong social pressures. Similarly, in an Australian study, PBC similarly demonstrated an insignificant direct influence on help-seeking intention. In that case, AT toward mental health services was the only significant direct predictor (Li et al., 2018). This suggests that decision-making among Australian students was more individually driven, relying more on personal evaluation than external influences or perceived control.

Overall, these findings emphasize that PBC is not a universal predictor of help-seeking intention. Its effectiveness largely depends on the sociocultural context and prevailing value systems within a given population. This aligns with Ajzen's (1991) assertion that the relative contributions of AT, subjective norm, and PBC to behavioral intention could be influenced by the type of behavior and the particular characteristics of the target population.

Within the TPB framework, intention is regarded as the primary predictor of behavior—including related to efforts to obtain psychological assistance (Ajzen, 1991). Evidence from the analysis indicates a notable positive connection between behavioral intention and actual help-seeking actions, indicating that individuals with a strong intention to seek help are more inclined to follow through with that behavior. These findings are consistent with prior research conducted in Japan, which demonstrated that an individual's subjective sense of need—or a individual's understanding of the importance of seeking support—plays an essential role in determining both intention and behavior toward mental health service use (Nagai, 2015). Nagai's research also identified a positive correlation between depressive symptoms and the act of seeking help. Notably, although depression can diminish the intention to pursue support—often due to a sense of hopelessness—actual help-seeking behavior may still occur, it may simultaneously lead to actual help-seeking behavior, especially when symptoms persist and emotional distress

intensifies. Encouraging greater intention among young people to access support services plays a vital role in bridging the gap between awareness and action. Since improving help-seeking behavior contributes to the broader accessibility of evidence-based mental health care, this area remains a key priority in health service research and intervention strategies (Kaess & Bauer, 2019). This paradox suggests that, although depression can initially suppress one's intention, it may later act as a trigger for seeking assistance. Thus, a strong intention may ultimately translate into real actions when the psychological need becomes urgent, reinforcing the idea that intention have a central function in facilitating access when estimating the tendency to pursue mental health assistance.

Supporting this, Birnbaum et al., (2016) found that in today's digital era, social networking platforms have a central function in facilitating access to mental health support. Previous research conducted in Australia in 2007 indicated that individuals aged 12 to 24 who became aware of mental health concerns tended to exhibit particular patterns of response, they are more inclined to seek non-professional assistance instead of clinical or expert help (Rickwood et al., 2007). This supports Birnbaum's findings, which revealed that U.S. college students often view platforms like Instagram and Facebook as safe spaces to express their emotions and needs without fear of stigma or recognition. Such informal approaches are seen as protective strategies against potential social judgment (Birnbaum et al., 2016).

Supporting this view, a study carried out by (Gere et al., 2020) found that female undergraduate students were more active in using social media as a means of seeking emotional support, driven by factors such as anonymity, safety, and stigma avoidance. Notably, this study's sample also consisted of a female majority (68.75%), with many reporting experiences of stress or depression. These results are consistent with earlier studies highlighting the increasing reliance on digital platforms for seeking mental health support. The emotional nature of mental health issues, combined with the comfort of a virtual, non-judgmental environment, encourages Generation Z to turn to digital platforms. This supports the notion that social media, particularly Instagram, can function as a relevant alternative avenue for seeking psychological assistance within a digitally evolving landscape and Industry 4.0 era. Online interventions show benefits for student mental health, and Instagram has potential as an informal support space (Harrer et al., 2019). However, the findings revealed that Instagram use had no significant moderating effect on the relationship between intention and help-seeking behavior. This highlights the need for more targeted strategies to make social media platforms more effective in driving actual behavioral change.

The presence of Instagram does not strengthen the connection between the motivation to seek help and its real-world implementation--in fact, it slightly weakens the relationship, although the effect is minimal and not statistically significant. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that while interactive online platforms like Instagram have the potential to influence intentions to seek mental health support, empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness as a moderating factor remains inconsistent (Goodwin & Behan, 2023). Their study also emphasized the need for cautious interpretation due to limitations such as small sample sizes and uncontrolled confounding variables. Therefore, although social media is often viewed as a promising space for psychological support, this research indicates that its role in bridging intention to actual behavior requires further exploration, particularly within the framework of the TPB. Considering the growing influence of social media and the significant global burden caused by depression, the positive link observed in the relationship between how often

social media is used and the severity of depressive symptoms highlights the need for further investigation and targeted intervention. However, the present findings indicate that Instagram does not serve affecting the relationship between one's intention and their actual help-seeking actions for mental health support, suggesting that its role may be more complex and not directly supportive in transforming intention into real action (Lin et al., 2016). These results underscore a discrepancy between adolescent's mental health needs and their actual behaviors in seeking help (Zhao et al., 2025). While individual-level obstacles are prevalent, broader contextual and systemic factors--such as the dynamics within digital platforms like Instagram--also influence whether and how college students act on their intentions to seek support.

Previous findings on the discrepancy between intention and behavior--particularly in relation to the severity of depressive symptoms--provide important context for analyzing Intention's mediating influence in the connection between AT and seek for help behavior. Subclinical depression was associated with increased intention to seek professional help among participants, yet exhibited lower levels of actual help-seeking behavior (Baldofski et al., 2024). This supports the TPB's assertion that intention is a key mediator between attitude and behavior. However, the effectiveness of this mediation can vary based on individual psychological conditions--particularly when it comes to positive attitudes. In other words, even with a favorable view toward seeking help, a person may not consistently develop strong intentions to act, especially when facing serious psychological distress such as clinical depression. Therefore, the relationship between attitude, intention, and behavior cannot be understood in purely linear terms. Individual factors that may hinder the transition from intention to action need to be considered. Additionally, when individuals engage with platforms like Instagram as an initial space for communication, social media may either facilitate or hinder the translation of intention into behavior. This implies that online interpersonal exchanges may either facilitate or hinder behavior, depending on how individuals respond and the overall quality of engagement within the digital environment.

This strong intention, even without corresponding behavior, reflects the influence of subjective norms. These individuals may feel that important people in their lives expect them to seek help, even if they have not acted on it yet. This illustrates how subjective norms can precede and help shape intention before behavior occurs. These findings support the idea that interpersonal and social communication that carries normative support plays a crucial role in fostering intention, which may eventually lead to real action (Burlison, 2011). The stronger the social encouragement--such as approval, advice, or expressed expectations--the more likely it indicates the probability that a person will decide to seek assistance. However, without strong intention, social pressure alone is often not enough to drive actual behavior. Therefore, communication strategies focused on encouraging individuals to seek assistance for mental health concerns must consider how social norms are formed and conveyed, particularly among younger groups like Generation Z, who tend to be highly responsive to social influences. This highlights the need to build a positive collective narrative that portrays help-seeking as a socially accepted--and even encouraged--action.

The strong intention identified among individuals with mild depressive symptoms reflects a relatively high sense of perceived behavioral control. When such intention is consistently established, it enhances the chance that the individual will seek assistance at a future time. These findings highlight the central role of intention as a mediating factor within the TPB framework and emphasize the need for targeted interventions that

reinforce perceived behavioral control--such as through mental health awareness initiatives or by enhancing accessibility to clear and user-friendly support services. PBC, the tendency to seek help was positively correlated with both action-oriented intentions and consistent behavioral planning, while factors such as self-stigma and perceived barriers showed a negative association with such behavior (Lin et al., 2020).

These findings further affirm the core assumptions of the TPB, which posits that AT, SN, and PBC play essential roles in shaping both behavioral intentions and actual actions. The results indicate that a positive mindset toward help-seeking, social encouragement from influential others (SN), and self-efficacy in accessing mental health services (PBC) collectively contribute to individuals' decisions to pursue psychological support. This outcome is consistent with earlier studies that have shown intention to be strongly predicted by favorable attitudes and prior behavioral patterns, while subjective norms predominantly influence the tendency to seek out relevant information. Nonetheless, despite its strengths, the TPB framework has certain limitations, particularly in its capacity to fully account for actual behavioral outcome (Lores et al., 2025). Such results are in agreement with earlier research showing that the TPB can explain a wide range of variance in help-seeking intentions--ranging from 7% to 93% (Adams et al., 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that the TPB offers a relevant and robust predictive framework for understanding and designing interventions related to help-seeking behaviors in young populations vulnerable to suicide risk.

While this study offers valuable insights, certain limitations must be recognized. Relying on self-reported responses introduces the possibility of bias, especially stemming from participants' desire to present themselves favorably or difficulties in recalling information accurately. While Instagram was chosen for its high usage among Generation Z, the absence of comparisons with other social media platforms restricts the broader applicability of the findings across different digital environments. Additionally, the sample consisted solely of active Instagram users with previous mental health experiences, which may not adequately reflect the diversity of the broader Generation Z demographic. Lastly, the moderating role of Instagram use may have been affected by unaccounted variables, such as the nature of content engagement or individual differences in digital literacy.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that AT, SN, and PBC significantly influence the plan to engage with mental health support services, which in turn predicts actual help-seeking behavior among Generation Z individuals at risk of suicide. The analysis shows that these three TPB constructs collectively account for 84.4% of the variance in intention and 87% in behavior, underscoring the strength of the model. A positive attitude, support from one's social environment, and confidence in accessing mental health services are key enablers of this behavior. These findings imply that interventions targeting all three elements simultaneously are likely to be more effective in promoting help-seeking among youth. Moreover, the study highlights the impact of Instagram use as an immediate factor in predicting help-seeking actions, though its moderating effect was found to be non-significant, revealing the layered connection between online activity and behavioral responses. Theoretically, this research extends the application of the TPB to a digital mental health context, offering a framework relevant for both scholars and practitioners. Future research could build upon this by exploring different social media platforms, applying longitudinal designs to assess causal relationships, and incorporating qualitative

approaches to deepen the understanding of help-seeking dynamics in diverse youth populations.

### Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that no potential conflicts--financial, personal, or professional--interfered with the research process, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of this study. This research was carried out independently, without any external funding or sponsorship that could compromise its objectivity or integrity. Additionally, the authors affirm that they have no affiliations or relationships with any organizations or individuals that could be seen as potential conflicts of interest. The findings and conclusions presented are solely based on the collected data and evidence, free from any undue influence or bias. Throughout the research and publication process, strict adherence to transparency and ethical standards has been upheld.

### Acknowledgements

The researcher sincerely thanks the thesis advisors for their guidance and support throughout this study. Gratitude is extended to all respondents for their valuable participation, which made this research possible. The author also extends appreciation to the Master of Communication Studies program at Telkom University for fostering a supportive academic atmosphere. The researcher extends heartfelt thanks to supportive family members and friends who stood by with patience during trying times. Their continuous encouragement played an essential role in enabling the completion of this research.

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