

# Counselor Competence In Implementing Guidance And Counseling In The Digital Era: Systematic Literature Review

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## ABSTRACT

The development of science and technology in the digital era requires counsellors to adapt to appropriate professional competencies. This article aims to examine what competencies counsellors must have to adapt to technological developments in the digital era. The method used is a systematic literature review of publications including articles in journals, proceedings and book chapters contained in the scopus.com database. The data obtained is then extracted according to the keywords formulated. As a result, in the 2010-2024 period, it was found that there were 73 articles discussing counsellor competence. Multicultural competence (24 articles) was the keyword most studied, followed by pragmatic competence (14 articles) and clinical counselling (5 articles). The conclusion that can be drawn is that it is important to master multicultural competence in the digital era because existing cultural diversity continues to meet one another in the process of interaction on technology platforms. Next, it is highly recommended to improve your multicultural competencies through training so that you can adapt to technological developments and the flow of information in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Counselor Competence, Guidance and Counseling Service, Digital Era

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## Introduction

The existence of counsellors in the national education system is stated as one of the educators parallel to the qualifications of teachers, lecturers, tutors, and instructors (stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 article 1 paragraph 6). With the issuance of this law, it is clear that counsellors have a strategic position as an integral part of education and are unique in carrying out the context of their duties, namely through guidance and counselling services. Arifin and Eti Kartikawati in Tohirin (2014) explained that guidance and counselling officers in educational settings are selected based on qualifications: (1) personality, (2) education, (3) experience, and (4) ability. This competency requires counsellors to have a moral attitude and responsibility, not just limited to knowledge (cognition).

The digital era has changed many aspects of our lives, including how we relate, work and access information (Astutik & Aulina, 2022; Bhakti et al., 2018). Technological developments have opened up new opportunities and had a positive impact on many fields, including the field of counselling. However, this also poses competency challenges for counsellors in facing these changes. One of the main challenges is how counsellors can utilize technology to support their counselling practice (Salsabillah et al., 2024). In the digital era, many tools and applications can be used for communication, such as email, instant messaging, and online counselling sessions. Counselors need to have a solid understanding of how to integrate this technology into their counseling practice, while still prioritizing the privacy and security of client information. In addition, with advances in technology, the information available is abundant. Counsellors need to have skills in filtering and analyzing relevant and reliable information to support the decision-making process in counselling practice. This will ensure that counsellors stay up to date with the latest developments and can provide quality guidance to their clients (Asyri & Asyri, 2024; Rokhimah & Darmawanti, 2013).

Communication skills are also another competency challenge faced by counsellors in this digital era. In communication via digital media, sometimes messages can be easily misinterpreted or lose the verbal and nonverbal nuances necessary to properly understand the client (Astarini & Pasmawati, 2021). Therefore, counsellors need to hone their communication skills and learn to recognize communication signs that may be

missed in digital communication. Apart from that, counsellors in the digital era are also faced with complex ethical challenges (Gresinta & Hidayat, 2024). With easy access to information and the existence of social media, client privacy and confidentiality must receive special attention. Counsellors need to follow ethics and practice standards and have high sensitivity in maintaining client privacy and confidentiality when using technology. Although there are many challenges in facing the digital era, this also provides great opportunities for the development and understanding of counselling practice. Technology can expand access to counseling to individuals who may have difficulty accessing conventional services, such as people who live in remote areas or with limited mobility. It also allows for online support groups that can connect people with the same goals around the world (Kusumawati, 2020).

In facing this digital era, counselors who have adequate knowledge and skills can utilize technology to improve the quality of their counseling practice. With a deep understanding of technology and awareness of the challenges they face, counselors can continue to develop and face change with optimism (Zamroni et al., 2020). The importance of School Counselor mastering digital competencies cannot be ignored in an era of technology that is increasingly developing rapidly (Kholik, 2015; Kusumawati, 2020). The digital era has brought significant changes in the way humans interact, learn and work. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers need to have knowledge and skills that are very relevant to these technological advances.

There are several reasons why School counselor need to master digital competencies. First, guidance and counseling teachers who are proficient in using technology can provide more interesting and interactive learning to students (Ureta, 2013). They can use various digital tools such as videos, multimedia presentations and educational games to facilitate an effective learning process. This will not only increase students' interest and motivation in learning, but also stimulate their creativity and critical thinking. Second, guidance and counseling teachers who can use technology well can help students understand and overcome the social and emotional problems they face. In the digital era, students often face various problems such as internet addiction, cyberbullying, and the negative influence of social media. With the knowledge and skills mastered by guidance and counseling teachers, they can provide appropriate guidance and support in dealing with these problems. Digital guidance and counseling teachers can also utilize online platforms to provide counseling services to students who need them (Cobia, 2011). In addition, digitally competent guidance and counseling teachers can provide sustainable self-development (Mensah, 2019). They can follow the latest developments in the field of technology and use them to develop their professional competencies. By continuing to learn new technologies, guidance and counseling teachers can become a source of inspiration and useful knowledge for their students and colleagues (Schmidt, 2018).

It cannot be denied that technology has influenced all aspects of our lives, including the world of education. Therefore, guidance and counseling teachers who can master digital competencies will have a competitive advantage in facilitating learning that focuses on student needs and development (Mesters, 2017). With the right resources and skills, guidance and counseling teachers can play the role demanded by this digital era, namely guiding and preparing students to be ready to face the increasingly complex challenges of the future. In facing the digital era, counselors face various obstacles and challenges in carrying out their duties (Jiang et al., 2018). Although in general technology provides many benefits and convenience in communicating and accessing information, several things pose challenges for counselors.

One of the obstacles faced by counselors in the digital era is dependence on technology. When conducting counseling, technology such as telephone, video calls and email can be very helpful in facilitating communication and opening long-distance counseling services (Kankam & Adinkrah, 2023). However, relying too much on technology can also limit direct interaction and intimacy between counselors and clients. Therefore, counselors must continue to strive to create a calming and in-depth counseling experience, even through existing technology. Apart from that, counselors are also faced with challenges in maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of client information in the digital era (Tien et al., 2009). When conducting online counseling or via messaging applications, there is a risk that the client's personal information can be accessed by unauthorized parties. Therefore, counselors need to take appropriate steps to protect client privacy, such as using secure platforms and adopting strict privacy policies (Muñoz-Martínez et al., 2020).

Another obstacle faced by counselors is the increasing digital interference in clients' lives. The digital era brings many temptations and distractions such as social media, online games, and unhealthy content (Zamroni et al., 2019). This can affect the client's focus and mental health, making the counseling process difficult. Therefore, counselors must become more proactive in helping clients manage technology use and help them create a healthy balance between the digital world and real life (Goodman-Scott et al., 2020). Even though there are obstacles and challenges in facing the digital era, counselors can also see it as an opportunity for innovation and self-development. By utilizing existing technology, counselors can create counseling services that are more flexible and accessible to more people. Apart from that, counselors can also use technology to gain new knowledge and resources in the field of counseling, thereby improving the quality of the services they provide (Wu, 2024).

With an optimistic attitude and a willingness to face challenges, counselors can successfully carry out their duties in facing this digital era (Esther, 2020). Through continuous efforts to improve themselves and adapt to technological developments, counselors can provide counseling services that are relevant and beneficial to people living in a digital world. In facing this increasingly advanced digital era, being an adaptive counselor is

very important (Bidell, 2014). As counselors, we need to be able to keep up with technological developments and adapt our way of working to existing conditions. In this article, we will discuss steps that can be taken to become an adaptive counselor in facing the digital era (Chinn, 2011).

It is important to actively update our knowledge and skills regarding technology. The digital era provides many new opportunities and challenges in providing counseling, including through telecounseling, online counseling, and mental health applications (Fatimah et al., 2024; Hidayah et al., 2023; Karami, 2020). By understanding and using relevant technology, we can increase the accessibility of counseling services and expand our reach to help more clients. In addition, being an adaptive counselor requires us to learn ethics and confidentiality in involving technology (Folastri et al., 2023; Ramli et al., 2023). We need to understand how to protect client privacy in the use of technology and ensure data security. Following professional ethical guidelines and standards in conducting counseling practices via technology is critical to ensuring integrity and trust in our profession (Dagang, 2014). In addition, as adaptive counselors, we must be open and ready to learn from our own experiences and those of fellow professionals. Facing new challenges in this digital era, there may be errors or uncertainties that we face (Aditama et al., 2023; Musthofa et al., 2024). However, with an open attitude and high curiosity, we can continue to learn and improve the quality of our services. Equally important, being an adaptive counselor means maintaining strong relationships with our clients. Although technology may make access to counseling easier, it is still important to ensure that the relationship between counselor and client remains intimate and apply the principles of effective therapy (Primasari et al., 2021; Ramdani et al., 2020; Ramli et al., 2023). Using technology wisely to facilitate and support the in-person counseling process will help maintain the quality of these relationships (Deroche, 2020).

Becoming an adaptive counselor in facing the digital era is an inevitable need. By updating knowledge and skills, understanding ethics and confidentiality in the use of technology, continuing to learn from experience, and maintaining strong relationships with clients, we can carry out effective and relevant counseling practices in this digital era. With optimism and a spirit of innovation, we can grow and develop as counselors who are adaptive and able to provide quality counseling services.

### Method

In preparing this article, a systematic literature review method was used. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a research method used to compile and analyze relevant studies in a particular research topic (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). SLR is conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of research that has been conducted previously, as well as to identify gaps in knowledge and areas of research that remain unexplored. This method allows researchers to organize existing evidence systematically and objectively, using predetermined steps.

Table 1. Competency Keyword Grouping

Keyword	Information of Competence
Addiction	Counseling for addicts or addicts on certain subjects
Assessment	Counselor skills in carrying out, using and interpreting psychological assessment instruments
Attitudinal	The counselor's skills in displaying an acceptable attitude and accepting the client
Career Counseling	Counselor skills in conducting career counseling
Clinic	Counselor skills in conducting clinical counseling for those experiencing acute mental health disorders, excessive anxiety disorders, and other anxiety disorders caused by physical illness or other serious trauma
Community Development	The counselor's ability and skills in developing community capabilities and providing community service without material tendencies
Emotional	The counselor is able to manage his own emotions and help the counselor manage his emotions
Higher Education Counseling	Counseling in higher education
Inclusive Counseling	Counseling for children with special needs
Motivational	The counselor's ability to motivate clients
Multicultural	Counseling by utilizing the cultural diversity that exists around it, including dealing with clients with different cultural backgrounds
Networking Competence	Counselor's ability to build collaborative networks for professional strengthening
Pragmatic Competence	General skills in counseling
Spiritual	Counseling by utilizing spiritual and transpersonal dimensions

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Information of Competence</b>
Technological Competence	Ability to utilize technology to optimize counseling services
Transgender Counseling	Counseling for LGBT

The SLR process begins with formulating a clear and well-defined research question. Then, researchers conducted a thorough literature search using relevant scientific databases. Study selection was carried out based on previously established inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as relevance to the research topic, research methods used, and study quality. After that, the researcher extracts data from the selected studies, such as information about samples, methods and research results. The results of data extraction were then analyzed systematically, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative analysis involves organizing and synopsis of the main findings in the selected studies. The main goal of quantitative analysis is to synthesize numerical data from relevant studies, such as calculating averages or percentages of research parameters. The results of this SLR are used to draw solid, fact-based conclusions. Through systematic SLR, researchers can identify knowledge gaps and propose future research directions that need to be explored. SLR also helps literature users, such as practitioners, in accessing existing findings and applying them to their practice (You et al., 2024).

The main database used in compiling this article is scopus.com from 2010-2024. The keyword chosen was "counselor competence" with search concentration on articles in journals, book chapters and published proceedings. The search results are then extracted to obtain selected articles according to the specified objectives. Next, a deeper analysis was carried out regarding the substance of the articles and publications obtained to find out what kind of counselor competence is actually expected in this digital era.

## Result and Discuss

### **Result**

In-depth search results on the scopus.com data base with a limit of 2010-2024. As a result, 73 articles were found that discussed counselor competencies that were really needed in the 2010-2024 period. Extraction is carried out by grouping competencies as in table 1.

The results of the findings of the 73 articles were then extracted with detailed keywords as in table 2.

Table 2. Article extraction results

<b>Keyword</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>
Addiction	2
Assessment	2
Attitudinal	1
Career Counseling	3
Clinic	5
Community Development	1
Emotional	1
Higher Education Counseling	2
Inclusive Counseling	4
Motivational	2
Multicultural	24
Networking Competence	1
Pragmatic Competence	14
Spiritual	3
Technological Competence	4
Transgender Counseling	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

Based on Table 2, multicultural competency is the competency that is considered most frequently researched and can be interpreted as being very needed in the digital era. This is shown by the existence of 24 publications that research and study counselors' multicultural competence. Furthermore, pragmatic competence or general competence in the counseling process following counseling techniques and approaches is considered the second most needed competence by counselors so that it is not eroded by developments over time. This is shown by 14 publications that study and research pragmatic skills in counseling.

Another competency needed in the digital era is the competency to carry out clinical counseling. This is shown by the existence of 5 studies that consider clinical competence to be one of the essential things for counselors to master. Next, competence in conducting counseling for clients with special needs (inclusive) is considered to support the competence that counselors must master. Counseling for the LGBT community also does not escape studies to develop counselor competency. Finally, competence in using technology in the counseling process is also considered essential in developing professional counselor competence. However, there are not too many articles or research that examine this. It is understandable because some experts believe that technology is only considered a counseling aid and not a significant determinant of success in counseling. You can observe the network between publication keywords in Figure 1.

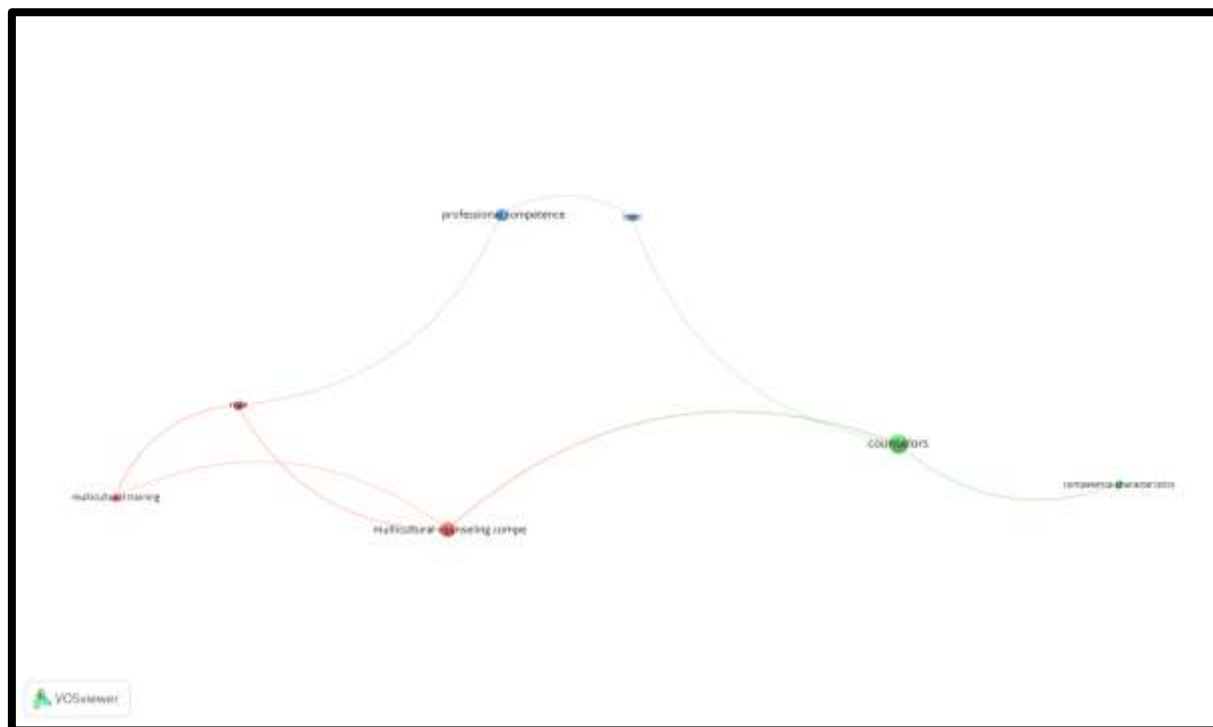


Figure 1. Relationship between keywords in counselor competency publications

Based on Figure 1, it is known that multicultural training and multicultural competence are the keywords most often associated with essential competencies for professional development and counselor competency characteristics. This shows that intercultural meetings and the use of cultural elements in the counseling process have become a new spirit in the development of professional counselor services. Counselors must anticipate the patterns of multicultural meetings that occur due to globalization through the process of improving the quality of multicultural counseling services.

#### Discuss

Multicultural competence is essential for counselors. In an increasingly global and diverse world, understanding and being able to work with individuals from various cultural backgrounds is critical to providing practical therapeutic assistance (DeBlaere et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2019). Multicultural competency opens the door to a deeper understanding of the different cultures, beliefs, values, and life experiences of clients who come to counseling services (Aditama et al., 2023; Pionera et al., 2020; Suartama et al., 2019). Multicultural competence allows counselors to avoid prejudice and negative stereotypes against certain groups (Nelson, 2015). In their work, counselors must see each individual as unique and valuable without letting their personal biases interfere with the quality of the help provided (Shen, 2015). Awareness of one's possible cultural prejudices and taking steps to counter those prejudices is an integral part of multicultural competence (Wong et al., 2013).

Multicultural competency allows counselors to understand and respect cultural differences in counseling services (Peterson et al., 2019; Winograd & Tryon, 2009). The counselor must be able to adapt the approach and methods used according to the client's cultural background so that the client feels accepted and well-understood. For example, the counselor must respect the client's religious values and beliefs and not try to change them if they are not directly related to the client's problem. Multicultural competency also allows counselors to understand how culture and cultural factors can influence clients' understanding and reactions to their problems (Kuo, 2023; Winograd & Tryon, 2009). Counselors must know that clients' cultural norms and experiences may influence their perceptions of issues and preferences when obtaining therapeutic help. By understanding the client's cultural context, counselors can provide better and more relevant support. Multicultural competence is an essential aspect of counseling practice (Carrola et al., 2012; Johannessen & Skeie, 2019). Viewing clients through a lens sensitive to cultural differences and respecting their cultural

background is critical to providing effective and holistic therapeutic assistance. Counselors with multicultural competence will be able to help clients face their life challenges inclusively, filled with understanding and following the client's values (Kravia & Pagliano, 2016; Shen, 2015).

In the field of counseling, mastery of core competencies is very important. Core competencies refer to several basic skills and knowledge counselors must have in carrying out their duties (Gupta, 2019). Mastery of core competencies will help counselors provide quality services to their clients. Mastery of core competencies allows counselors to understand counseling principles and theories properly. Counselors can apply appropriate and practical approaches to helping their clients by understanding these principles (Guigno et al., 2015). Apart from that, knowledge of counseling theories will also help counselors understand the various problems faced by clients and the best way to handle them.

Mastering core competencies also involves practical skills that a counselor must have (Slaten & Baskin, 2014). Skills such as active listening, providing guidance, asking relevant questions, and summarizing are fundamental skills in counseling. By mastering these skills, counselors can build strong, trusting relationships with their clients, which will aid the client's process of change and recovery. Mastery of core competencies also helps counselors recognize and manage the non-technical aspects of counseling practice wisely. Professional ethics, confidentiality, cultural diversity, and social justice are examples of non-technical aspects a counselor must consider (Whiston & Aricak, 2008). By understanding and properly managing these non-technical aspects, counselors can avoid conflict and ensure their clients get the protection and support they need. Mastery of core competencies is the key to a counselor's success. By mastering core competencies, counselors will not only be able to provide quality counseling services to clients. Still, they will also be able to build strong and trusting relationships with their clients. Therefore, every counselor needs to continue to develop and improve their mastery of core counseling competencies (Irvine et al., 2021; Lambie & Stickl Haugen, 2021).

Mastery of clinical counseling competencies is essential for counselors. These skills cover various aspects, ranging from knowledge and understanding of counseling theories and methods to forming a good therapeutic relationship with clients to carrying out effective interventions (Duindam et al., 2022; Morgan-Bathke et al., 2023). Mastery of clinical counseling competencies enables counselors to provide optimal services to clients. With extensive knowledge of counseling theories and methods, counselors can choose the approach that best suits the client's needs and characteristics. This ability is critical so the counseling process can run effectively, provide real client benefits, and help them achieve the desired changes (Rodda et al., 2019; Zhang, 2020). Mastery of clinical counseling competencies also helps counselors in forming good therapeutic relationships with clients. A good therapeutic relationship is an important factor in the success of the counseling process. Counselors who can listen empathetically, provide full support, and understand clients' experiences and feelings can help clients feel safe and confident in sharing their problems (Diallo, 2013). Thus, counseling can be a comfortable place for clients to explore and express feelings and find solutions.

Mastery of clinical counseling competencies also gives counselors high confidence in implementing effective interventions. Counselors who have good counseling technique skills can facilitate the process of self-exploration and reflection, help clients formulate goals and change strategies, and provide the support needed (Meniru & Schwartz, 2018). With these skills, counselors can confidently guide and accompany clients on their journey toward change for the better. Mastery of clinical counseling competencies is a key factor for counselors in providing quality services to clients. With good knowledge, skills, and understanding of counseling theories and methods, counselors can form good therapeutic relationships with clients and carry out effective interventions (Thong et al., 2018). Mastering clinical counseling competencies ensures that counselors can provide optimal services, help clients achieve desired changes, and improve their quality of life.

Counseling competency for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) is becoming increasingly important in the context of developing an inclusive and just society (Curtis, 2013). In recent years, attention to LGBT issues has increased significantly at the national and international levels. Therefore, counselors need to have special competencies in helping LGBT individuals overcome the mental and emotional challenges they may face. One of the important competencies for a counselor is understanding specific issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity (Devlin et al., 2023; Kennedy & Baker, 2014). Counselors need to have a deep understanding of sexual and gender diversity and realize that people have various life experiences and perceptions regarding LGBT. With this understanding, counselors can create a safe and understanding space for LGBT individuals seeking support (Suprina et al., 2019).

Good counseling competency also involves an unprejudiced and non-discriminatory attitude toward LGBT individuals. Counselors must be able to eliminate their personal biases and create a supportive climate in counseling sessions. Counselors need to recognize and respect individual uniqueness without providing moral or judgmental evaluations (Ali, 2019). In addition, counselors also need to have good knowledge of social and legal issues related to LGBT. They must be able to provide accurate information and guidance regarding the rights of LGBT individuals, including access to health services, education, and employment. By having this knowledge, counselors can empower and help LGBT individuals advocate for their rights (Moe, 2015). Counseling competencies for LGBT people also include the ability to identify and handle crisis situations that may arise due to discrimination or violence against LGBT individuals. Counselors must be able to provide emotional support and effective coping strategies to help LGBT individuals deal with difficult situations and promote their sense of security and well-being. Counseling competency for LGBT is important and



indispensable in ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, can receive appropriate counseling care and have a positive impact on their quality of life. By having competent counselors in this matter, it is hoped that a more inclusive society will be created and uphold the values of justice for all individuals, without exception (Guth, 2022).

The use of technology in counseling has significant advantages, such as expanding access and enriching the counseling experience for individuals. One of the main advantages of using technology in counseling is increased accessibility. In the digital era, counseling can be done through online platforms or counseling applications, allowing individuals to access counseling services anywhere and at any time (Dwivedi et al., 2020). This is especially beneficial for those living in remote areas or with limited mobility. Additionally, by using technology, counselors can help individuals who are far away by providing remote counseling via video conference or text messaging. Another advantage of using technology in counseling is its ability to create a safe and comfortable environment for individuals seeking help. Some people may feel more comfortable communicating via text message or email rather than face-to-face with a counselor. In an environment that feels more anonymous and free from pressure, individuals tend to share their personal problems more efficiently and open themselves to the counseling process. Apart from that, using technology in counseling can also enrich the counseling experience. Using technology, counselors can use online resources, such as short videos, presentations, or interactive modules, to strengthen understanding and provide supporting materials to clients. This can increase the effectiveness of counseling and help individuals understand and overcome their problems in a better way (Morales, 2023).

However, it is important to remember that the use of technology in counseling also has several disadvantages that need to be considered. One of the main drawbacks is the lack of physical, face-to-face interaction between counselors and clients. This loss of interaction can affect the counselor's ability to read the client's body language and facial expressions, which are important factors in the counseling process (Wilczenski & Coomey, 2006). Additionally, the use of technology can also cause security and privacy issues. In the connected digital era, vulnerability to data leaks or misuse of personal information is real. Counselors need to take appropriate steps to protect the integrity and confidentiality of client data in order to provide security guarantees. The use of technology in counseling in the digital era has significant advantages in increasing accessibility, creating a safe environment, and enriching the counseling experience (Wang et al., 2022). However, it is important to remain aware of existing weaknesses, such as lack of physical interaction and privacy security issues. By paying attention to and addressing these weaknesses, the use of technology in counseling can become an effective tool to assist individuals in achieving mental and emotional well-being (Astarini & Pasmawati, 2021; Fadhilah et al., 2022; Hidayah, 2015; Reile & Harris-Bowsley, 2000; Sutijono & Farid, 2018).

## Conclusion

The multicultural competency of counselors in the digital era is that they must have a deep understanding of cultural diversity and the ability to use digital technology effectively. The digital era has brought technological developments that have changed how we work and communicate in various fields, including counseling. In the digital era, counselors must be highly aware of cultural diversity, sensitivity to differences, and the ability to adapt to continuous technological changes. They must be able to establish effective relationships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds by respecting differences and understanding the norms and values that apply to each culture. The ability to use digital technology is also an important competency for counselors in the digital era. They need to master communication skills via social media, video conferencing, and other online platforms to be able to provide support and guidance to clients effectively. Digital technology can also be a very useful tool in providing greater accessibility to individuals who need counseling assistance, especially for those who live in remote areas or have limited access. Multicultural skills and mastery of digital technology are two very important competencies for counselors in the digital era. Cultural plurality and diversity are increasingly becoming factors that must be considered in providing effective and relevant counseling services for each individual. At the same time, digital technology opens up new opportunities to provide better accessibility and quality of service to individuals in need. With multicultural competence and proficiency in using digital technology, counselors can become effective agents of change in supporting the advancement of counseling services in this digital era.

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