

The Importance of Developing Online Counseling Services for Family Planning Programs in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT: One of the reasons for the high of contraceptive acceptors drop out is the low number of contraceptive information received by clients. Indonesian Population Demographic Survey in 2017 stated that only 29% of women in Indonesia received contraceptive information including contraceptive side effects, how to deal with side effects, and alternative contraception that can be used. This is due to a limited number of family planning instructors, and a large number of tasks that health workers must carry out, especially midwives as the largest source of contraceptive services in Indonesia. The solution to overcome the low level of contraceptive information services is to build an online counseling service for family planning programs. Online counseling services based on digital technology are flexible and can be accessed by anyone who needs information. For this reason, this technology must be built on an evidence-based basis and a good reputation, so it is hoped that in addition to meeting the need for family planning information, it is also able to change behavior for the use of appropriate contraception.

KEYWORDS: contraception, online counseling, information technology.

Information technology in Indonesia has been widely developed, including information technology for family planning programs. However, information technology utilization is only carried out by a limited group, either by the provider or by the service recipient community. For this reason, researchers are challenged to find out how important information technology needs for family planning programs in Indonesia. One of the family planning programs in Indonesia is counseling and contraception services.

Family planning information service in Indonesia is still low. The Indonesian Population Demographic Survey in 2017 stated that only 29% of women in Indonesia received complete information on contraceptive methods (1). The data is data before the covid-19 pandemic and during the covid-19 pandemic, all access to health facilities including contraceptive services is very limited. So, it is very possible that exposure to information, especially about contraception, will also decrease. Another issue in Indonesia is limited Human Resources (HR) for family planning counselors who have the main task of providing family planning information. Current condition 1 family planning counselor coach 3-4 villages, ideally are to develop at most 2 villages (2). A strategic effort to increase information access is to build online counseling services for family planning programs. Counseling services are needed by Indonesian people. Through community counseling, it can be encouraged to arrange pregnancy intervals and assist prospective acceptors in making decisions on appropriate contraception utilization (3). Counseling services have also been shown to be able to reduce unmet needs and increase contraceptive use (4). Data in Indonesia showed that the prevalence of unplanned pregnancy during the pandemic reached 20.3% (5). For this reason, it is very important to build counseling services to reduce the prevalence of unplanned pregnancies.

Contraception counseling services that have been carried out are face-to-face. With face-to-face counseling, officers can directly see the verbal expressions or movements of the client, so that counselor can easily find out if the material presented has been understood by the client. However, face-to-face counseling has the disadvantage of not being able to reach all people who need information on family planning services, which is due to limited time and distance to visit health facilities conversely, there are limitations of family planning counselors to reach a large number of people, on the other hand, online or digital services can flexible and can reach the wider community (6). For this reason, an alternative strategy that can be implemented is to build online contraceptive services for family planning programs.

Online contraception services for family planning programs are very appropriate to be developed in this digital era. The target of family planning programs in this digital era is the Z generation and the alpha generation who are very adept with technology. For this reason, counseling services can be in the form of applications or web-based counseling services that contain information

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about family planning programs and contraceptive services. Reproductive health is presented attractively with writings, pictures, and videos, also equipped with interactive dialogue between clients and counselors.

Online or digital-based family planning services have been developed in many countries and have proven to be effective. Digital services are easily accepted by the public, relatively low costs can find out information in real-time, and have an impact on knowledge and increase modern contraception utilization (7–10). For these digital-based services to change behavior, these digital services must be easily accessible, evidence-based, and have a good reputation (11).

To realize the online contraceptive service for this family planning program, support from various parties is needed, including program holders, providers, and communities. Policymakers, in this case, the Indonesian National Population and Family Planning Board, must be able to provide breakthroughs to the community so that this counseling service is widely socialized and can be utilized by the community properly.

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