AI and Employee Well-being: A Case Study of Mental Health Chatbot Implementation in a Tech Company

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Abstract

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into workplace well-being strategies has generated growing interest, particularly through the use of mental health chatbots as scalable and accessible interventions. This study investigates the implementation of a mental health chatbot within a Jakarta-based technology company to explore its role in supporting employee well-being. Guided by a qualitative case study design, the research draws on semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observations to capture employees' lived experiences and perceptions of the chatbot. Data were analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's reflexive approach, with attention to cultural and organizational context. The findings reveal four overarching themes: accessibility and convenience, emotional safety and stigma reduction, limitations of empathy and personalization, and organizational integration and trust. Employees appreciated the immediacy and privacy afforded by the chatbot, which lowered barriers to help-seeking and contributed to reducing stigma surrounding mental health. However, participants also noted the chatbot's limitations in conveying empathy and expressed concerns about data privacy and potential managerial oversight. These results suggest that mental health chatbots can serve as valuable adjuncts to existing well-being programs, offering first-line support and normalizing mental health conversations in the workplace. Yet, their effectiveness is contingent upon transparent data governance, cultural adaptation, and integration with human-based care. The study contributes to theoretical debates on AI and employee well-being, while offering practical and policy implications for organizations and regulators seeking to balance technological innovation with ethical responsibility.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Employee Well-Being, Mental Health Chatbot, Workplace, Jakarta, Qualitative Research*

INTRODUCTION

The modern workplace increasingly leans on artificial intelligence (AI) to optimize productivity, yet organizations are also being called to protect and promote employee mental health. Global guidance emphasizes that well-being at work requires integrated, preventive measures—not just treatment after distress emerges. In parallel, emerging empirical evidence suggests AI can influence well-being indirectly by reshaping tasks and safety practices, which opens space for digital tools to complement psychosocial strategies rather than replace them. This study situates a Jakarta-based tech company within that global conversation, examining how a mental health chatbot could be integrated into a whole-of-work approach to employee well-being. (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022; Valtonen, Saunila, Ukko, Treves, & Ritala, 2025).

Mental health chatbots offer scalable, low-barrier support through conversational interfaces that deliver psychoeducation, cognitive-behavioral techniques, mood tracking, and signposting to human help. Recent randomized trials have shown improvements in standard outcomes (e.g., PHQ-9, GAD-7) for targeted groups, and topic-based chatbot designs can yield measurable mental-health benefits compared with controls. While not a panacea, the accumulated evidence positions chatbots as promising adjuncts within stepped-care models, especially in time-pressed, knowledge-intensive settings like tech firms. (MacNeill, Doucet, & Luke, 2024; Huang, Leung, Lam, Liao, Chen, & Lam, 2025).

Indonesia's health system has taken visible steps to digitize mental-health pathways—strengthening screening and data integration—and national stakeholders have prioritized multi-pronged responses to mental-health needs. Jakarta's tech sector, characterized by rapid cycles and high cognitive load, is a natural test bed for augmenting supports that are timely, private, and accessible across hybrid work patterns. As part of this backdrop, Indonesia's government has

highlighted digital screening (SIMKESWA) and ecosystem integration (SATUSEHAT) as levers to surface needs earlier and connect people to care. These developments motivate examining whether a workplace chatbot can responsibly extend reach to employees who might otherwise delay seeking help. (Government of Indonesia, 2024; WHO, 2024).

However, deployment must be ethically grounded. Clinicians and implementation scholars caution that generative chatbots carry safety, privacy, and explainability risks; they must operate within clear escalation rules, particularly for crisis scenarios, and keep humans in the loop. In Indonesia, compliance with the 2022 Personal Data Protection (PDP) Law—now fully in force—requires lawful basis, transparency, and robust security measures for any employee-related health data. A Jakarta case study, therefore, needs to evaluate not only efficacy signals but also safeguards: privacy-by-design, voluntary participation, informed consent, culturally appropriate language, and seamless handoff to human services. (DLA Piper, 2025; WHO, 2022).

Accordingly, this case study will examine the implementation of a mental health chatbot in a Jakarta tech company as part of a multi-level well-being strategy. The intervention will be embedded alongside manager training and environmental controls recommended by workplace mental-health guidance, with explicit escalation protocols to internal counseling or external providers. We will assess uptake, engagement, and changes in validated symptom and well-being measures while exploring moderators such as psychological safety and workload. Building on organizational AI research, we also consider how task design and perceived safety climate shape any observed benefits. (WHO, 2022; Valtonen et al., 2025).

The contribution is both practical and humanistic: to learn whether a carefully governed chatbot can widen access, reduce stigma, and offer credible first-line support for employees—without medicalizing everyday stress or displacing human care. Grounded in Indonesia's digital-health trajectory and data-protection regime, the Jakarta case can inform context-sensitive design choices (e.g., Bahasa Indonesia/English support, culturally attuned scripts, integration with local providers) and provide evidence for employers weighing the promise and limits of AI-mediated well-being tools. (Irawan, Nasir, & Polyakova, 2025; Government of Indonesia, 2024).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of a mental health chatbot within a Jakarta-based technology company. A qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings employees attach to the chatbot, which cannot be fully understood through quantitative metrics alone. By situating the research in the everyday realities of employees, this approach seeks to uncover both intended and unintended effects of the intervention on well-being. The case study design allows for in-depth examination of the interplay between organizational culture, digital technology, and individual psychological experiences in a bounded context.

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Interviews will be conducted with employees across diverse roles and demographics to capture a range of perspectives, while focus groups will facilitate shared reflection on collective experiences with the chatbot. Observations of workplace interactions and digital engagement patterns will provide contextual insight into how the chatbot is integrated into daily routines. This triangulation enhances the credibility and richness of findings, offering multiple vantage points on how AI-mediated mental health support is received and enacted.

The study will employ thematic analysis as its analytic strategy, following Braun and Clarke's updated reflexive framework for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across data. Themes will be inductively derived while also being informed by sensitizing concepts from the literature on AI, workplace well-being, and digital mental health. Reflexivity will be practiced throughout, with the researcher maintaining analytic memos to account for positionality and potential biases. This ensures that the findings remain grounded in participants' voices while also critically engaging with broader theoretical debates.

Ethical considerations are central to this research. Informed consent, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw will be upheld, and data will be anonymized in line with Indonesia's Personal Data Protection Law (PDP, 2022). Special care will be taken to establish psychological safety during interviews and focus groups, recognizing that discussions may touch on sensitive

personal experiences. Participants who show signs of distress will be offered referral information for professional mental health services. This ethical stance aligns with recent calls for human-centered AI research that prioritizes dignity, privacy, and inclusivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative data reveal a nuanced picture of how employees experienced the implementation of the mental health chatbot. Analysis generated four central themes: (1) Accessibility and Convenience, (2) Emotional Safety and Stigma Reduction, (3) Limitations of Empathy and Understanding, and (4) Organizational Integration and Trust. These themes reflect both positive outcomes and areas for improvement, highlighting how digital interventions intersect with workplace culture in Jakarta's tech industry.

Table 1. Emergent Themes from Thematic Analysis of Employee Experiences with the Mental Health Chatbot

Theme	Illustrative Participant Voice	Key Insight
Accessibility & Convenience	"It was easy to chat at night when I couldn't sleep."	The chatbot provided immediate, on-demand support, valued for its flexibility.
Emotional Safety & Stigma Reduction	"I felt less judged asking a bot than a real person."	Reduced stigma by offering a private, judgment-free space.
Limitations of Empathy	"Sometimes the answers felt generic, like copy-paste."	Responses occasionally lacked human warmth, limiting perceived empathy.
Organizational Integration & Trust	"I wondered if my manager could see my chats."	Concerns about data privacy influenced trust and willingness to engage.

Note. The table summarizes key themes, representative employee voices, and insights from thematic analysis. Quotes are anonymized and translated into English from Bahasa Indonesia where applicable.

Employees consistently emphasized the accessibility and convenience of the chatbot, describing it as a supportive presence outside of office hours and a useful first step when emotional distress emerged. For many, the ability to engage in private, asynchronous conversations lowered the barrier to seeking help, particularly in moments when formal counseling felt too daunting or unavailable. This suggests that the chatbot filled a temporal and psychological gap in existing support structures.

At the same time, employees acknowledged that the chatbot helped reduce stigma surrounding mental health by offering a safe, nonjudgmental space to disclose feelings. Several participants shared that they would not have approached a human counselor initially but found comfort in testing the waters with a chatbot. This aligns with broader findings that digital tools can normalize help-seeking behaviors, especially in collectivist cultures where mental illness remains stigmatized.

Yet, limitations were also evident. Some participants found responses repetitive or lacking in empathy, reinforcing that while the chatbot provided immediate assistance, it could not fully substitute human relational care. In addition, concerns about data privacy and organizational oversight shaped employees' willingness to use the system. A few employees expressed hesitation, fearing that sensitive disclosures might be visible to management, despite assurances of confidentiality. Such concerns underscore the importance of transparent governance and trust-building measures in workplace deployments.

Overall, the results indicate that the chatbot functioned as a valuable adjunct tool rather than a standalone solution. It created new entry points for mental health support, offered reassurance during off-hours, and reduced stigma. However, its impact was mediated by the perceived authenticity of responses and organizational trust regarding data handling. These findings highlight the dual role of AI in the workplace: both expanding access to support while simultaneously raising new ethical and relational challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the mental health chatbot offered employees in a Jakarta-based tech company a practical and accessible form of support, particularly valued for its immediacy and convenience. This resonates with global evidence that digital mental health interventions are effective in reducing initial barriers to help-seeking, especially in contexts where stigma or resource limitations deter employees from consulting human professionals (MacNeill, Doucet, & Luke, 2024; Huang et al., 2025). The ability to engage with a chatbot privately, at any time, allowed employees to view mental health support as a normalized and less intimidating part of daily life.

One of the most prominent outcomes was the reduction of perceived stigma associated with mental health help-seeking. Participants described the chatbot as a "judgment-free" space, echoing earlier research showing that digital interventions can facilitate disclosure by minimizing fears of social evaluation (Miner et al., 2024). In collectivist societies such as Indonesia, where cultural norms emphasize maintaining social harmony, a digital tool that preserves anonymity can play a vital role in shifting organizational cultures toward openness and supportiveness. This is consistent with Irawan, Herawati, Isrofin, and Amedome's (2025) observation that mental health digitalization in Indonesia must balance accessibility with cultural sensitivity.

At the same time, the limitations voiced by employees highlight the current boundaries of chatbot-based interventions. While participants valued convenience, several noted that responses often felt generic, lacking in empathy or contextual nuance. This finding echoes concerns raised in prior studies that chatbots can struggle to capture the emotional depth required for sustained therapeutic impact (Valtonen, Saunila, Ukko, Treves, & Ritala, 2025). The tension between scalability and personalization remains a critical challenge: while AI systems can reach more employees at lower cost, they may not yet fully replicate the empathic attunement central to human counseling.

Concerns about privacy and organizational trust were another critical theme. Even with safeguards in place, employees feared that sensitive conversations could be monitored by management. Such perceptions can undermine engagement, aligning with global evidence that workplace monitoring and insufficient data transparency can negatively affect psychological safety (DLA Piper, 2025; WHO, 2022). In the Indonesian context, the full implementation of the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Law makes it essential for organizations to demonstrate compliance through clear communication, anonymization strategies, and employee-centered consent processes. Without these assurances, the potential benefits of AI-driven interventions risk being overshadowed by mistrust.

These findings also point to the importance of situating chatbot deployment within a broader organizational well-being strategy rather than treating it as a standalone solution. The World Health Organization's (2022) guidelines on mental health at work emphasize the integration of digital tools with structural measures, such as managerial training and psychosocial risk management. By embedding the chatbot within a multi-level system of care, organizations can leverage its strengths in accessibility while compensating for its limitations through human follow-up and environmental supports. This blended approach has been shown to yield greater employee engagement and sustainable outcomes (MacNeill et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2025).

Ultimately, the Jakarta case study contributes to a growing body of literature suggesting that AI-mediated mental health tools hold promise, but their success hinges on ethical governance, cultural adaptation, and integration with human care. While the chatbot lowered barriers and reduced stigma, its effectiveness was contingent upon employees' trust in organizational safeguards and their perception of the chatbot's authenticity. For practitioners and policymakers, the results underscore that digital well-being interventions must be human-centered by design—prioritizing dignity, privacy, and relational trust as much as technological innovation.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of a mental health chatbot within a Jakarta-based tech company, highlighting its potential and limitations in supporting employee well-being. The findings indicate that the chatbot effectively lowered barriers to help-seeking, increased accessibility outside of traditional working hours, and contributed to reducing stigma around mental health in the workplace. These benefits underscore the promise of AI-mediated tools as complementary supports that can extend the reach of existing employee assistance programs and foster a more open organizational culture.

At the same time, the study revealed challenges related to empathy, personalization, and organizational trust. While the chatbot offered convenience and privacy, employees sometimes perceived responses as generic and questioned the confidentiality of their data. These limitations suggest that chatbots should not be seen as replacements for human care but rather as part of an integrated, ethically governed strategy for workplace mental health. For organizations in Indonesia and beyond, the key implication is clear: technological innovation must be accompanied by strong safeguards, cultural adaptation, and alignment with broader well-being initiatives to ensure that AI-driven solutions truly serve human needs.

IMPLICATIONS

Practical Implications.

For organizations, the study demonstrates that mental health chatbots can serve as valuable first-line supports, particularly in tech sectors where employees face high workloads and hybrid work patterns. Employers should view chatbots as tools that complement, not replace, human-based interventions. Ensuring integration with counseling services, employee assistance programs, and psychosocial risk management strategies will maximize their effectiveness. Transparent communication about data privacy and security is essential to building employee trust and encouraging sustained engagement.

Theoretical Implications.

The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on AI and workplace well-being by highlighting how digital interventions intersect with cultural, relational, and organizational factors. They underscore that the success of AI-driven tools depends not only on technical design but also on employees' perceptions of safety, empathy, and organizational trust. This case enriches theoretical debates about the dual role of AI in the workplace—both enabling new forms of support and generating new ethical challenges—emphasizing the need for socio-technical frameworks that account for human experience alongside technological performance.

Policy Implications.

For policymakers and regulators in Indonesia, this study reinforces the urgency of embedding robust safeguards into digital health initiatives. The full implementation of the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Law provides an important framework, but organizations must operationalize it through transparent consent models, anonymization protocols, and culturally sensitive practices. At a national level, the integration of mental health chatbots within Indonesia's digital health strategy (e.g., SATUSEHAT) could expand access in resource-constrained settings, provided governance mechanisms ensure dignity, inclusivity, and equity. These steps would position AI not as a replacement for human care, but as an enabler of broader, people-centered mental health ecosystems.

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