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FlexMinda: CAN AI CHANGE THE WAY WE DELIVER MENTAL HEALTHCARE?

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MENTAL health is no longer an issue discussed only in hospitals or clinics. An increasing number of Malaysians face stress, anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion associated with workplace demands, economic challenges and rapidly changing lifestyles. Although public awareness has improved, many still seek help only when their condition has become severe. Fear of stigma, uncertainty about where to seek support, limited time and restricted access to appropriate services remain barriers to early intervention.

Against this backdrop, digital technology offers new opportunities to extend mental health support beyond traditional healthcare settings. One question is increasingly relevant: Can artificial intelligence (AI) assist in mental healthcare?

The answer is yes—but AI is not a replacement for psychiatrists, psychologists or counsellors. Rather, it can serve as a complementary tool to expand access to reliable information, promote mental health awareness, facilitate early screening and encourage individuals to seek professional help before their problems become more complex.

Recognising this need, FlexMinda, an AI-powered mobile application, was developed by the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine and Hospital Al-Sultan Abdullah, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). The platform



> Recognising this need, FlexMinda, an AI-powered mobile application, was developed by the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine and Hospital Al-Sultan Abdullah, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). The platform supports mental well-being through psychoeducation, mental health screening, mood monitoring, self-management modules and AI-assisted support.

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A key consideration in its development was the Malaysian context. FlexMinda was designed around the cultural, linguistic and social needs of local users, with the aim of making digital mental health support more relevant, accessible and acceptable.

The project also took a needs-driven approach. Rather than asking, "What technology can we use?", the team began by asking, "What are the real problems faced by patients and healthcare professionals?" Psychiatrists, psycho–logists, researchers, technology experts and end users



FLEXMINDA Poster.

worked together to develop features that are technologically capable while remaining practical and clinically relevant.

The use of AI in mental healthcare also raises important questions about trust, ethics and privacy. Mental health information is highly sensitive, making responsible development and protection of personal data essential. FlexMinda has therefore been developed according to responsible AI principles, with its components undergoing research, ethical review and clinical evaluation before implementation. These safeguards reflect an important principle in digital healthcare: technological capability must be matched by clinical relevance, ethical oversight and patient safety.

FlexMinda has received national and international recognition, including selection as a recipient of the National Intellectual Property Award (AHIN) and awards at international innovation competitions. These achievements demonstrate the potential of locally developed research to translate into digital solutions with societal and commercial value.

Ultimately, the future of mental healthcare is unlikely to depend on AI alone. Its value lies in how responsibly it can complement healthcare professionals, improve access to information and support, and encourage earlier engagement with appropriate care. Technology should serve human well-being. With FlexMinda now available free through the Google Play Store and Apple App Store, the initiative aims to contribute to a more accessible, trusted and inclusive digital mental health ecosystem for Malaysians.

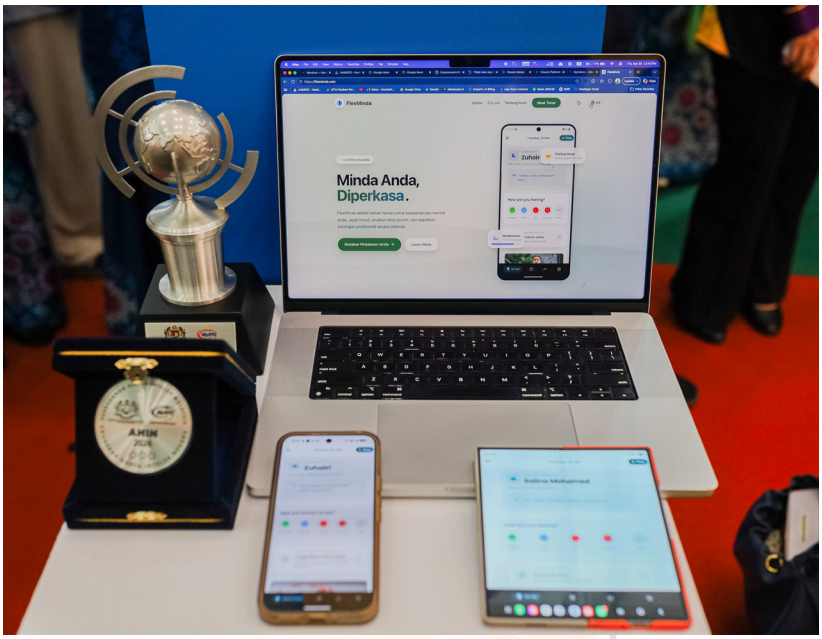




THE FlexMinda team receiving the Silver Award at NADI Kreatif (Hak Cipta), with a cash prize of RM7,500.



FlexMinda showcased at the NADI Kreatif (Hak Cipta) exhibition.



FlexMinda, a digital mental health platform accessible across multiple devices.

