

THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SHAPING THE CHARACTER OF GENERATION Z IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA

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Abstract

This study discusses the role of Islamic education in shaping the character of Generation Z in the social media era. Generation Z has grown amid the rapid development of digital technology and social media, resulting in characteristics closely related to internet use, digital communication, and fast access to information. On the other hand, the growth of social media has also created several negative impacts, including moral decline, weak communication ethics, consumerist behavior, individualism, and low self-control among young people. This study employs a library research method by reviewing journals and literature related to Islamic education, Generation Z character development, and social media. The findings show that Islamic education has a strategic role in shaping Generation Z character through the internalization of moral values, strengthening spirituality, digital literacy, and learning that adapts to technological development. In addition, social media can be used as a more interactive, attractive, and relevant medium for Islamic Religious Education learning in accordance with the characteristics of Generation Z. Therefore, Islamic education needs to innovate technology-based learning in order to form a generation that is not only excellent in science and technology, but also possesses character, morals, and ethics in accordance with Islamic values.

Keywords: Islamic education, Generation Z, character, social media, digital era

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, consisting of those born from the end of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century, is a group that is strongly influenced by technological development and globalization. They grew up amid rapid digital technological advancement, which has significantly affected their mindset and lifestyle. In the Indonesian context, Generation Z also faces major challenges related to morality, ethics, and leadership character, especially because of rapid social change. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping leadership character and ethics in this generation. Islamic Religious Education has a strategic role in building Generation Z character so that they are not only superior in mastering technology, but also have a strong moral and spiritual foundation. In the social media era, Generation Z tends to be more easily influenced by trends and foreign cultures that are not always in line with Islamic values and Indonesian culture. This condition requires Islamic education to serve as a guide in instilling honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and wisdom in using digital media. Islamic education also plays a role in developing ethical leadership through moral learning, exemplary behavior, and the strengthening of religious values in everyday life (Muhsin & Muhammad Yassir, 2025).

Amid the massive use of social media, various studies reveal serious negative impacts on the mental health and behavior of Generation Z. Research in Indonesia shows that high intensity of social media use is associated with increased anxiety, depression, low self-confidence, and self-concept problems among adolescents and Gen Z university students. In addition, exposure to violent content, pornography, hate speech, cyberbullying, and hedonistic culture can weaken the internalization of moral and religious values taught at school. This condition is worsened by low critical ability in verifying information, causing students to become easily trapped in hoaxes and negative propaganda. This phenomenon shows that social media not only influences the communication patterns of Generation Z, but also shapes their mindset, behavior, and way of viewing life. High dependence on social media may cause young people to seek social validation through the number of likes, comments, and popularity in the

digital world rather than building healthy social relationships in real life. As a result, individualistic attitudes, lack of social empathy, and reduced self-control emerge. In the long term, this condition can affect character formation and weaken students' moral and spiritual values (Yulastri & Ramadhon, 2025). Social media has become an inseparable part of modern life, including in Islamic da'wah and education. Digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter have enabled the dissemination of Islamic teachings with wider and more efficient coverage than conventional methods such as mosque lectures or face-to-face religious gatherings. Social media provides easy access to Islamic information anytime and anywhere, thereby facilitating Generation Z, who tends to rely on technology in seeking knowledge.

Furthermore, the advantages of social media in presenting interactive and visual content, such as short religious lecture videos, Islamic infographics, and online studies, have attracted young people to become more involved in religious learning. The variety of these formats makes the process of da'wah more innovative, easier to understand, and relevant to Generation Z's life. However, the use of social media in da'wah and Islamic education also presents challenges. Easy access to information means that Generation Z not only receives positive content, but also has the potential to be exposed to extreme religious teachings, religious hoaxes, or Islamic understandings that are not in line with moderation values. In addition, social media culture that prioritizes popularity and virality can reduce the depth of religious understanding because da'wah materials are often presented briefly without in-depth study (Nawawi, 2025).

Education certainly focuses on students, who have different characteristics across generations. Learning also needs to consider cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects; however, in practice, education that focuses on the affective aspect or behavior and feelings has not always received priority. Today, changes occur in many dimensions of life, one of which is the era of Generation Z, bringing both positive and negative impacts. In the face of rapid changes in science and technology, society must prepare for various challenges, especially in education, by developing strong student characteristics through character education. One effective approach to building good character is Islamic Religious Education, because it has a major role in forming Generation Z character. Islamic Religious Education does not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also on shaping attitudes and behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings. Values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and discipline become an important foundation in student character development. In the digital era, the challenges are increasingly complex, including technology misuse, unhealthy information, and instant culture that can damage the morals of young people. Therefore, the integration of Islamic Religious Education and technology becomes a necessity to maintain and shape strong and adaptive student character (Azzahra et al., 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on Islamic education and Generation Z emphasizes that character formation cannot be separated from the rapid development of digital culture. Generation Z is often described as a digital-native generation because their daily lives are closely connected with the internet, mobile devices, and social networking platforms. This condition provides opportunities for fast access to knowledge, but also creates risks when students are exposed to information that conflicts with moral and religious values. Islamic education is viewed as a moral and spiritual foundation that can guide students in responding to globalization and the digital environment. Through the internalization of akhlaq, religious awareness, responsibility, tolerance, and digital ethics, Islamic education helps students develop critical and reflective attitudes toward the content they consume and share online. Previous studies also indicate that social media can be integrated into Islamic education when it is designed as a learning medium rather than used merely as a communication tool. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other digital applications can support visual, interactive, and flexible learning. However, the integration of these platforms must be accompanied by guidance from teachers, parents, and educational institutions so that the values delivered remain contextual, moderate, and aligned with Islamic teachings.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research type with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a research method that aims to understand social phenomena deeply based on the perspective of research subjects. The descriptive approach is used to describe the conditions, views, and experiences of young people regarding Islamic education in the digital era in a systematic and factual manner. This method was chosen because the research focuses on understanding the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of young people in utilizing digital technology as a medium for Islamic education learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Generation Z and the Influence of Social Media

Generation Z, often referred to as digital natives, is a generation born and raised amid the development of digital technology and the internet. The main characteristics of this generation include multitasking ability, high digital connectedness, and ease in accessing information quickly and widely. They are accustomed to using various technological devices such as smartphones, laptops, and social media in daily activities. In addition, Generation Z has the ability to build strong social networks through digital platforms, so social interaction is no longer limited by space and time. On the other hand, rapid technological development also creates specific challenges for Generation Z, especially in moral and spiritual aspects.

The high intensity of social media use can influence the mindset, behavior, and life values of young people. Unlimited access to information often exposes them to various negative contents, such as hate speech, consumerist culture, and behavior that deviates from moral and religious values. This condition shows that although Generation Z has advantages in mastering technology and accessing global information, they still need strong character guidance in order to filter negative influences from the digital world (Arminah & Romelah, 2025).

Thus, an integrative model of Islamic education for Generation Z combines Islamic values with modern technology, character learning, digital literacy, contextual learning, and collaborative cooperation. This approach is important because Generation Z lives in an environment that is strongly influenced by technological development and the rapid flow of global information. Therefore, Islamic education is no longer sufficient when delivered only through conventional methods; it also needs to adapt to the learning patterns of the digital generation, which are more interactive, visual, and technology based. In addition, character learning in Islamic education functions as a moral foundation so that Generation Z is not only superior intellectually and technologically, but also has good morals. Amid the many negative influences of social media, such as individualism, hedonism, and the spread of information without ethics, Islamic education plays a role in instilling honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and wise attitudes in using digital technology.

Islamic education faces both challenges and major opportunities in dealing with the character of Generation Z in the social media era. Generation Z tends to be more interested in learning that is practical, fast, and digital based. Therefore, innovative educational approaches are needed so that Islamic values can continue to be well received. The integration of technology in Islamic education is not merely an effort to follow the times, but also a strategy to build moral and spiritual awareness among young people amid the heavy flow of digital information. In this way, Islamic education functions not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as an effort to form a generation that is intelligent, characterized, and able to use technology responsibly in accordance with Islamic values (Muhalli, 2023).

2. The Nature of Islamic Education in Character Formation

Islamic education has a very important role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation, including Generation Z, who currently face various challenges, especially in the digital era that is full of information and external influences. Islamic education has a strategic role in shaping the morals of Generation Z in the digital era. Through the internalization of noble moral values, spiritual awareness, social responsibility, and proper understanding of ethics and morality in technology, Islamic education guides young people to become individuals with strong character, responsibility, and the ability to face the challenges of the times wisely. Therefore, Islamic education does not only focus on intellectual aspects, but also on balanced character and moral formation, which will lead Generation Z to become individuals who are beneficial to themselves, their families, society, and religion. The position of religious education in the millennial era functions as a bridge to protect children from various negative actions, especially in the millennial era (Naylatul Fadhilah, Aini Yusra Usriadi, 2025).

Islamic education has an important function as a moral fortress amid the rapid development of technology and social media. Generation Z, who live in a digital environment, are very vulnerable to negative influences such as moral crisis, declining communication ethics, consumerist behavior, and weak self-control. Therefore, Islamic education needs to present approaches that are relevant to the development of the times so that Islamic values can be applied in daily life. Through strengthening morals, digital literacy, and contextual learning, Islamic education can help Generation Z use technology wisely while maintaining balance among intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. Generation Z has a very close relationship with digital technological development. Their lives, which have been accustomed to the internet, social media, and various digital applications since childhood,

give them high adaptability to changing times. This ability is one of the strengths of Generation Z because they can obtain information quickly, build communication without boundaries, and develop creativity through digital technology. However, the tendency of Generation Z to prefer short and instant information can make them more likely to accept viral opinions than conduct critical review of information sources. This condition can affect how they understand the values of diversity and tolerance in social life. If not guided properly, excessive use of social media can lead to fanaticism, lack of social empathy, and weakened values of religious moderation (Radiatun Mardiah & Dinizen, 2025).

3. The Role of Islamic Education in the Social Media Era

Integrating social media into Generation Z learning can be understood as using social media in the learning of students who belong to the Generation Z age group, where social media is utilized as effectively as possible to achieve educational goals. The use of social media in learning should not be limited to mere usage; it must be truly integrated. In other words, social media must be carefully designed so that social media and learning become one unit. The use of social media in learning must also be equipped with proper learning steps that have been well prepared, so that learning runs according to the lesson plan. The social media discussed in this article are platforms popular in Indonesia and widely used by Generation Z, namely Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Nasution, 2020).

Social media is an online platform that enables users to participate, share, and create content such as blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds. The most commonly used types of social media around the world include blogs, social networks, and wikis. Social media supports personal interaction and uses web-based technology that turns communication into interactive dialogue. Social media has become an integral part of modern life and is increasingly important in education. Social media enables students to develop technical and social skills that are essential in the digital era. Students learn to adapt and interact with peers, strengthening friendships. Social media also facilitates the expansion of friendship networks without requiring direct meetings and makes it easier to find new people through online communities. As friendship networks grow, students become more motivated, particularly in self-development through relationships and feedback from new friends. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram improve the quality of friendship by fostering care and empathy. Thus, social media in learning does not only include learning materials, but also provides infrastructure, information, and tools for creating and delivering content (Khafifatu Syahraini, Askari Zakariah, 2024).

4. Islamic Education Strategies in Facing Digital Challenges

Islamic education plays a very important role in overcoming the moral crisis experienced by Generation Z in the era of digital globalization. By integrating Islamic teachings that prioritize morality, social responsibility, digital ethics, and closeness to God, Islamic education can help form young people with strong morality, critical thinking, and responsibility in every action. Islamic education provides a strong foundation for facing the challenges of the times and guides Generation Z to live with positive values that are aligned with religious and humanitarian teachings. This means that the starting point is education that prepares humans to become responsible individuals and social beings who have a sense of togetherness in realizing a peaceful, orderly, and advanced life, where moral goodness, such as truth, justice, and compassion, can be upheld so that physical and spiritual welfare can be enjoyed together (Cantri Maesak, Opik Taupik Kurahman, 2025).

To overcome these challenges, this study identifies several strategies that can be implemented by Islamic educational institutions. One strategy is to increase the awareness and understanding of teachers and management staff regarding the importance of character education through training and workshops. Training focused on developing teacher competence in teaching character values can help teachers integrate character education into every aspect of learning. Another strategy is to increase parental and community involvement in character education programs. Through collaboration among schools, parents, and communities, character education can be implemented more effectively. Parental involvement in school activities, such as supervising extracurricular and religious programs, can strengthen the character values taught at school.

Parental involvement in children's education is very important in supporting character development. In addition, schools can use approaches that are more relevant and attractive to Generation Z in teaching character education. The use of technology and social media, which are integral parts of Generation Z's life, can be an effective tool in delivering character values. For example, schools can create engaging and educational digital content about character values that students can access through digital platforms. The use of technology in education must be adjusted to the characteristics and preferences of the generation being taught (Hasan, 2024).

Discussion

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, has unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They are known as digital natives because they grew up amid rapid technological and social media development. This condition makes Generation Z highly familiar and skilled in using digital devices and various online platforms. In addition, Generation Z tends to be pragmatic and realistic, especially in viewing education and careers, with an orientation toward practical results that are relevant to future needs. Generation Z also has a high level of concern for social and environmental issues. They uphold values of openness, tolerance, and inclusiveness toward diversity in gender, culture, and social background. This attitude reflects Generation Z's efforts to create a more open society that respects differences.

The rapid development of technology and information flow also brings specific challenges for Generation Z. Easy access to various information through digital media makes them vulnerable to content that is not always aligned with moral and spiritual values. This condition can create confusion in determining which values should become guidelines for life. Therefore, Islamic education plays an important role in providing clear, contextual, and relevant understanding so that students can properly understand and internalize religious teachings. In line with this, Paulo Freire emphasized that education should encourage students to think critically and reflectively about various values they receive. Thus, students are expected to be wiser in filtering information and facing various influences that develop in the digital era (Zahra Nur Azizah, Wiwin Luqna Hunaida, 2025).

The positive influence of social media is that it has become a medium of education and creativity that benefits children's intellectual and cognitive abilities. Social media focuses on the psychological aspect of increasing knowledge. Students can gain much new knowledge through social media in a pleasant and accessible way. Social media may also influence mental performance and can become an enjoyable way for students to reduce boredom and fatigue. Some students even make new friends through digital applications.

The negative influence of social media is reflected in its impact on student attitudes and behavior. Common examples include being rude to teachers, parents, or peers, showing impolite behavior, or playing with mobile phones without opening books. Current learning systems also allow students to bring phones to school and use them during lessons. In this context, changes in student attitudes and behavior occur because of environmental stimulation and influence. The observed behavioral changes are related to environmental factors and technological progress that increase student involvement in social networks, supported by the availability of various types of social networks for each student and the nature of their learning activities (Thufail Afif Abdullah, 2024).

In addition, Islamic education can utilize social media as an effective learning medium for Generation Z. The characteristics of Generation Z, who prefer visual, interactive, and flexible learning, make social media an attractive educational medium. Nasution (2020) explains that social media integration in learning can help create a learning process that is more relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp can be used to deliver Islamic Religious Education materials through learning videos, Islamic infographics, online studies, and interactive discussions. In this way, religious learning becomes more attractive and easier for students to understand.

Islamic education also has a major role in building Generation Z spiritual awareness. The fast-paced digital life often makes young people focus more on entertainment and popularity on social media than on developing their spirituality. Islamic education is present to instill awareness that life is not only oriented toward worldly matters, but also toward responsibility to Allah SWT and fellow human beings. Through the habituation of worship, strengthening of morals, and internalization of religious values, Islamic education helps Generation Z develop self-control in using social media in a healthy and moral way.

The character of Generation Z in the social media era is marked by their ability to adapt quickly to technological development and global information flows. This generation grows up in a digital environment that makes social media an important part of daily life, both in communication, learning, and building social relationships. This condition gives Generation Z broad insight, open-mindedness, and the ability to interact globally without spatial or temporal limitations. However, the rapid flow of globalization and social media can also influence the identity, behavior patterns, and moral values of young people if not balanced with strong character education. Islamic education plays an important role in shaping Generation Z character so that they can face global challenges without losing their Islamic identity. Islamic education needs to provide curricula and learning materials that are relevant to the development of the times so that students are not only superior in science and technology, but also have good morals, faith, and social responsibility. With adaptive, inclusive, and Islamic-value-based approaches, Generation Z can grow into a generation that is critical, wise in using social media, and able to

participate actively in global life without abandoning moral and spiritual values (Khoirunnisa, Herlini Puspika Sari, Syuhadatul Husna, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Generation Z is a generation that grew up amid the rapid development of digital technology and social media, giving them characteristics that differ from previous generations. Their ability to access information quickly, adapt to technology, and build social relationships through digital media is one of their main strengths. However, the swift flow of information and intensive use of social media also bring various challenges, such as moral crisis, declining communication ethics, consumerist behavior, low self-control, and weakening spiritual and social values. In facing these conditions, Islamic education has a very important role in shaping the character of Generation Z in the social media era. Islamic education does not only function as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a moral fortress through the internalization of moral values, social responsibility, tolerance, spiritual awareness, and ethics in using digital technology. Through adaptive, contextual, and technology-based approaches, Islamic education can help Generation Z use social media wisely without losing their Islamic identity. The use of social media as a learning medium can be an effective strategy to increase students' interest and understanding of Islamic Religious Education. The use of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp in the learning process can create learning that is more interactive, attractive, and aligned with Generation Z's characteristics, which favor visual and flexible learning. However, the use of social media still requires supervision and guidance from teachers, parents, and society so that students are not easily influenced by negative content and the misuse of technology.

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