



Digital dilemma of muslim gen z filters facts, role of Islamic Education mental health

Sakila Karnefa¹, Yudelnilastia², Widia Agustin³, Fina Febriany⁴

Correspondence:

sakilakarnefagmail.com

Affiliation:

Department of Islamic Religious
Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and
Teacher Training, Universitas Islam
Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek
Bukittinggi, Indonesia¹
sakilakarnefa@gmail.com

Department of Islamic Religious
Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and
Teacher Training, Universitas Islam
Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek
Bukittinggi, Indonesia²
yudelnilastia@uinbukittinggi.ac.id

Department of Qur'anic Studies and
Tafsir, Faculty of Ushuluddin, Institut
Agama Islam Sumatera Barat,
Indonesia³
agustinwidia11@gmail.com

Department of Islamic Religious
Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and
Teacher Training, Syekh
Burhanuddin College of Islamic
Education (STIT) Pariaman,
Indonesia⁴
finafebriany230@gmail.com

Abstract

The phenomenon of virtual reality has become inseparable from the daily lives of Indonesian Muslim Gen Z, particularly through social media platforms such as TikTok. Excessive exposure to algorithm-driven content and visual filters significantly impacts mental health, including identity disturbance, anxiety, and social pressure. This study aims to explore how the construction of virtual reality on digital platforms affects the mental health of Muslim Gen Z and how Islamic values serve as a foundation for psychological resilience. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and literature study, this work examines empirical data from 2025, TikTok content trends, and ethical perspectives in Islamic teachings. The findings show that virtual reality does not fully represent real life and creates pressure regarding ideal physical appearance, lifestyle, and achievements. In this context, faith, self-awareness, and Islamic digital literacy become essential pillars in maintaining the mental well-being of Muslim Gen Z. This study is expected to serve as a strategic reference for fostering a healthier and more ethical media culture.

Keywords:

Gen Z; TikTok; Lifestyle; Mental Health; Islamic Education

A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently dominated by Generation Z (born between 1997–2012), accounting for approximately 27.94% of the population, followed by the millennial generation with 25.87%. Both generations fall into the productive age group, which presents an opportunity to accelerate economic growth (Pebriani et al., 2025). They have grown up highly familiar with technology and social media. Many members of Generation Z spend hours on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to interact. However, behind this freedom of expression, social media often turns into a subtle “arena of competition.” The nearly perfect beauty standards and glamorous lifestyles displayed online create immense pressure among teenagers. Many feel the need to follow certain trends to gain acceptance within their social circles. As a result, they often compare themselves with others on social media, which can trigger anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression (Permadi, 2022).

The use of beauty filters on social media has increasingly widened the gap between virtual reality and the real world. The impact of filters on self-confidence is complex. Approximately 60% of respondents reported feeling more confident after uploading photos with filters, as these enhanced appearances are perceived to be more attractive and aligned with prevailing social

media beauty standards (Millenia & Wal Hidayat, 2025). Filter features can smooth the skin, whiten teeth, and dramatically alter facial proportions, making one's on-screen image appear far more ideal than in reality.

A recent study noted that over 90% of young adults aged 18–30 regularly use filters when posting photos; around 75% admitted they could not match their idealized online image, and 60% confessed to feeling distressed as a result. Continuous exposure to these “perfect” faces triggers harmful social comparison, leading to self-dissatisfaction, social anxiety, and body image issues (Kunma Kuku, 2024). Furthermore, the design of social media platforms, such as personalization algorithms and infinite-scroll features is deliberately engineered to maximize user engagement. This addictive design makes it difficult for Gen Z users to detach from digital content, fostering symptoms of fear of missing out (FOMO) and digital addiction, which further exacerbate psychological stress.

As a result of these pressures, mental health disorders among Gen Z are increasing. The 2023 Indonesian Health Survey reported that approximately 5.5% of adolescents (aged 10–17) experience mental health disorders, including depression (1%), anxiety (3.7%), PTSD (0.9%), and ADHD (0.5%) (Hapiti et al., 2025). International findings also indicate that Gen Z social media users tend to experience more anxiety than previous generations. A survey in the United States found that 20% of Gen Z considered Instagram and TikTok to be the most detrimental platforms for mental health. Nearly half of respondents frequently reported stress or anxiety after using social media, and as little as 38 minutes of scrolling could significantly lower their mood (Rosyidah et al., 2025). These data suggest that the psychological burden of digital life clearly affects adolescent mental well-being.

In Indonesia, TikTok has become a dominant platform among Gen Z (Budiarti et al., 2022). According to the Digital 2023 Report, Indonesia had approximately 106.5 million TikTok users as of October 2023, making it the second-largest TikTok user base in the world (RFN Taufik, 2024). Most of these users are Gen Z. A Jakpat survey (2023) reported that 24% of Gen Z rely on TikTok as a daily information source, and 47% spend over one hour per session on the app. On average, Gen Z spends 5.5 hours per day on social media. A study by UIKA (2025) concluded that TikTok can have dual effects: while motivational and educational content tends to be positive, harmful or excessive content negatively impacts Gen Z mental health.

On the other hand, social media also provides space for religious content and Islamic values. Many young preachers now utilize TikTok to disseminate messages through creative and relatable themes relevant to Gen Z's daily lives. Such content can function as a coping mechanism and a source of spiritual strength. A study on Islamic Education students found that watching religious content on TikTok made them feel calmer and more resilient when facing academic and social pressures. This finding aligns with the Varkey Foundation Survey (2017), which reported that over 90% of Indonesian adolescents consider religion important for their happiness. Ironically, however, recent surveys such as I-NAHMS 2023 revealed that one in three adolescents still experience mental health issues, including suicidal thoughts.

These findings indicate that a religious background alone does not automatically protect youth from psychological pressures. Therefore, the role of digital religious content in supporting Gen Z mental health requires deeper investigation. Based on the review above, this study aims to examine the mental well-being of Muslim Gen Z adolescents in Indonesia within the context of the virtual world. The main focus is to understand the tension between digital “filters” that create idealized images and the “facts” of everyday life, as well as their implications for mental health. A descriptive qualitative approach and literature review were chosen to provide an in-depth depiction of this phenomenon based on empirical data and the latest literature.

Previous studies have generally focused on the impact of social media on adolescent mental health but have rarely examined the unique experiences of Muslim Gen Z in the digital era. While many studies have explored digital addiction and body image issues, few have investigated how Muslim youth negotiate identity and spirituality in online environments. Moreover, the “filter versus fact” phenomenon has often been analyzed through psychological or aesthetic lenses, with little attention to Islamic perspectives, particularly *tawhīd* (oneness of God) and *tazkiyatun nafs*

(purification of the soul), as frameworks for understanding digital self-perception and resilience among Muslim Gen Z. This gap highlights the lack of an integrative perspective combining mental health, digital culture, and Islamic education within a single analytical framework.

Therefore, this study introduces its novelty through a holistic approach that integrates psychological, technological, and spiritual perspectives. It explores the tension between “filters” and “facts” in the digital lives of Muslim Gen Z, emphasizing how Islamic educational values, particularly *tawhīd* and *tazkiyatun nafs*, serve as essential foundations for psychological resilience. This framework positions Islamic education not only as a moral compass but also as a psychological safeguard for navigating the pressures of the digital age.

The objectives of this research are (1) to analyze the dynamics of social media use among Muslim Gen Z in relation to self-perception, spirituality, and mental health, (2) to identify the dilemmas faced by Muslim Gen Z between “filters” and “facts,” and (3) to examine the role of Islamic educational values, particularly *tawhid* and *tazkiyatun nafs*, as guiding principles for coping with psychological stress caused by digital realities.

Moreover, this study incorporates recent scientific literature, including Pebriani et al. (2025) from *Prepotif: Jurnal Kesehatan Masyarakat* and Hapiti et al. (2025) from the *Journal Social Society*, both of which offer updated empirical insights into social media use and mental-health patterns among Indonesian Generation Z. The inclusion of these sources ensures that the introductory framework of this article is supported by credible, current, and contextually relevant data, thereby reinforcing the academic foundation for the subsequent analysis. From a practical standpoint, the findings offer valuable guidance for educators, counselors, and digital preachers in developing faith-based digital literacy initiatives that support the emotional stability and spiritual well-being of Muslim Gen Z on a global scale.

B. METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research design. This method was selected because it is suitable for examining complex social and psychological phenomena, especially those related to the mental health of Muslim Gen Z within virtual and digital environments. The research procedure followed a systematic sequence consisting of four stages: (1) data identification, (2) data collection, (3) data classification, and (4) data analysis.

First, during the data identification stage, the researcher determined the keywords, themes, and categories relevant to the study, such as “Muslim Gen Z,” “mental health,” “TikTok usage,” “virtual reality,” and “Islamic perspective on mental well-being.” Second, in the data collection stage, the researcher gathered secondary data from various sources including peer-reviewed journals, research reports from 2025, governmental publications from Indonesian ministries, academic institutional outputs, as well as verses from the Qur’an and authenticated Hadith.

Third, at the data classification stage, all collected documents were sorted based on source type, publication year, thematic relevance, and methodological quality. Documentation instruments and structured literature review guides were used to ensure the process was consistent, organized, and traceable. Finally, in the data analysis stage, the researcher employed content analysis to interpret concepts, patterns, and findings across the selected literature, while integrating Islamic textual evidence to strengthen the interpretation of mental health phenomena among Muslim Gen Z.

This research primarily used Indonesian data sources but also incorporated international literature to enrich the theoretical perspective. The study focused on Muslim Generation Z in Indonesia who actively use social media, especially TikTok. TikTok was selected as the central platform of analysis because, in 2025, it had the highest number of daily active users in Indonesia (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2025), most of whom were aged 16–24.

According to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (2025), exposure to algorithm-driven digital content increasingly influences users’ mental health, particularly regarding social pressure, self-comparison, and identity crises. This study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the construction of virtual reality

affects individual psychology and how Islamic principles can serve as a foundation for developing healthy and spiritually grounded digital awareness. The qualitative descriptive method allowed the researcher to systematically and factually describe how digital reality affects the psychological and spiritual balance of young Muslim users, while the library research approach focused on analyzing various academic literature, journal articles, online publications, and relevant sources from the Qur'an and Hadith.

The data consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were derived from Islamic texts such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and works of classical and contemporary scholars discussing tazkiyatun nafs (self-purification), mental health, and digital behavior from an Islamic perspective. Secondary data were obtained from books, national and international journals, research reports, and online news articles related to the mental health issues of Muslim Gen Z in the digital era. Data collection was carried out through documentation and literature study techniques by reading, selecting, and recording relevant information from various sources. The collected data were categorized into major themes, such as the impact of social media on mental health, the Islamic concept of spiritual tranquility, and religious behavior in digital spaces. The data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and comparison across various disciplines, including psychology, Islamic education, and digital communication.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The Dynamics of Social Media Use among Muslim Gen Z in Relation to Self-Perception, Spirituality, and Mental Health

Social media and digital platforms play a significant role in shaping the understanding of Islam. In the digital era, social media has become a platform that enables users to share content containing information, opinions, and interests across various contexts, including informative, educational, and critical discussions directed toward a broader audience (Zuhri et al., 2024).

In the digital era, Indonesian Muslim Generation Z has become one of the most active user groups of the internet and social media. According to the APJII 2024 survey, the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 221.6 million people, representing 79.5% of the total population—an increase from 64.8% in 2018 (Prasetyo et al., 2024). This rapid growth is not only a technological shift but also carries theoretical implications, particularly regarding how constant digital immersion shapes identity construction, psychological well-being, and social behavior among Muslim Gen Z. The high level of connectivity positions this generation as a digitally embedded cohort, supporting theoretical perspectives that view Gen Z as “digital natives” whose patterns of interaction, self-perception, and mental health are significantly influenced by online environments, especially social media platforms. Thus, the demographic dominance of young internet users provides an essential foundation for understanding the interplay between virtual experiences and the mental health dynamics of Muslim Gen Z in Indonesia.

The majority of these new users are Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), accounting for 34.4% of total internet users. Further APJII data show platform preferences among Gen Z: approximately 51.9% of respondents regularly access Instagram, followed by Facebook (51.6%) and TikTok (46.8%), while other platforms such as Twitter/X and LinkedIn record significantly lower engagement. These factors illustrate that the virtual realm has become the primary sphere of activity for young people. Moreover, the IDN Times–Katadata survey (May–July 2023) revealed that 73% of Gen Z consider social media their main source of news, while traditional media are increasingly abandoned. This condition creates a new reality in which Gen Z spends most of their time online, continuously exposed to various types of content, including news, entertainment, and education.

The social media preferences of Indonesian Gen Z, based on the APJII 2024 survey, show that Instagram (51.9%), Facebook (51.6%), TikTok (46.8%), and YouTube (38.6%) are the most popular platforms. This data reflects the dominance of visual and short-video platforms among Muslim Gen Z youth. The open and unrestricted access to the digital world enables them to easily obtain various kinds of information, including religious knowledge. A study by Al-Rasikh (UII,

2024) revealed that social media has now become the primary platform for Gen Z to learn and disseminate Islamic teachings (Muhammad A.D.H et al., 2025). Young Muslim influencers actively share content such as sermons, discussions, and Islamic lifestyle tips in creative ways. However, this freedom of access also brings serious psychological and social consequences. This pattern of media consumption indicates that TikTok is not merely a space for entertainment but has evolved into an arena for constructing social and religious identity (Novnariza et al., 2025).

This phenomenon presents a paradox. On one hand, short-video platforms provide a positive space for Islamic preaching and da'wah. On the other hand, algorithms that emphasize digital filters trigger excessive social comparison. Muslim Gen Z often find themselves caught between the desire to appear religious and the pressure to conform to idealized visual trends shaped by filters (Cybersmile, 2025). The use of facial filters has become a new psychological phenomenon. A 2025 national survey reported that 72% of TikTok users aged 16–24 use filters at least once a day, while 54% feel insecure about uploading videos without them (Novnariza et al., 2025). This dependency is associated with mild body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), a condition in which individuals become obsessively focused on minor physical imperfections that are exaggerated in their perception (Cybersmile, 2025).

The mental health of Muslim Gen Z in the digital era faces unique pressures such as anxiety, social pressure, and feelings of low self-esteem caused by extensive social media exposure and constant social comparison. From an Islamic perspective, mental health management is viewed holistically through strengthening one's relationship with Allah (taqarrub), and by practicing patience (sabr), trust in God (tawakkal), gratitude (syukr), repentance (istighfar), and maintaining personal balance. This Islamic approach serves as an effective spiritual and emotional foundation to cope with modern life pressures while providing moral guidance that helps preserve mental well-being and achieve inner peace. The use of social media is also encouraged to be directed toward positive and constructive content that enhances spirituality and mental resilience, thereby avoiding negative influences such as misinformation and toxic content (Wardana et al., 2024).

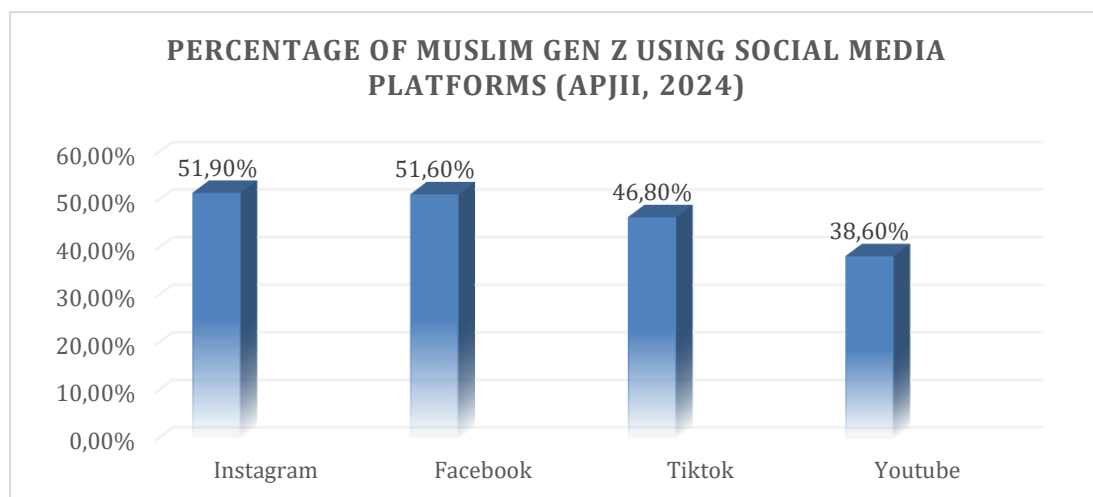


Figure 1. *Percentage Of Muslim Gen Z Using Social Media Platforms (APJII, 2024)*
Subsection of the first findings

Social media preferences among Indonesian Muslim Gen Z indicate the dominance of several key platforms. Instagram is the most widely used platform, with 51.9% of respondents, followed by Facebook at 51.6%. TikTok ranks third with 46.8%, while YouTube is used by 38.6% of respondents. These data show that although all these platforms are popular, Instagram and Facebook remain the primary choices for Gen Z in accessing social media, whereas TikTok and YouTube are relatively less accessed, though still significant. This trend reflects Gen Z's tendency to choose platforms that allow direct social interaction and the sharing of visual content.

The Dilemma Faced by Muslim Gen Z Between Filters and Reality

Generation Z has a distinct way of communicating in the digital era. Growing up amid rapid technological advancements, their interactions and communication patterns are significantly influenced. A defining characteristic of Generation Z communication is their intensive use of social media. They are highly familiar with platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X, which they use to share information, build relationships, and shape their personal identities. Short and engaging content is their primary preference (Afsari, 2024).

One of the negative impacts of excessive social media use is an increased risk of mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and psychological stress. The rise in social media usage also contributes to greater social media addiction among users. High levels of social media engagement carry the risk of spreading negative content, fake news, and hate speech. Furthermore, social media can negatively affect mental health by influencing self-image and potentially leading to harmful interactions, such as self-harm behaviors and cyberbullying (Nuryanti, 2023).

Gen Z is highly familiar with filter features that can enhance appearance, alter facial features, or create an image that significantly differs from reality. On the positive side, using filters can temporarily boost self-confidence by allowing users to appear more 'perfect' on social media. However, research indicates that approximately 40% of them feel dissatisfied and experience low self-esteem after realizing the discrepancy between the filtered image and their actual physical appearance (Banoet, 2025). A study conducted in Pangkalpinang (2024) found a positive correlation between the intensity of filter usage and social anxiety among Muslim adolescents (Novnariza et al., 2025).

This dilemma also exposes Muslim Gen Z to social pressures to constantly meet standards of beauty, popularity, and trends that are often unrealistic. The phenomenon of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and lifestyle standards created through viral content make it difficult for them to distinguish which trends are appropriate to follow according to Islamic values and which are merely global social demands that conflict with religious teachings (Dwi Arista et al., 2025).

This dilemma affects mental health, manifesting as anxiety and depression due to feelings of inadequacy or insecurity, and disrupts the process of forming an authentic and Islamic self-identity (Millenia & Wal Hidayat, 2025). Excessive social media use, particularly the use of digital filters, has a significant negative impact on the mental health of Gen Z, as indicated by increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Nabila Hani Puspita Bhakti, 2025). It also affects the development of an authentic Islamic identity, as users struggle to reconcile the ideal self-image portrayed on social media with their actual reality. This situation creates internal conflict and emotional imbalance, posing a challenge for Gen Z in developing a true and spiritually strong personality. In other words, Muslim Gen Z faces a dilemma between presenting an idealized image through filters and the challenge of remaining authentic according to reality, while striving to uphold Islamic values in a fast-paced and highly digital information environment.

Islam emphasizes the values of izzah (self-respect) and akhlakul karimah (noble character). Dependence on social media may lead Gen Z to seek external validation and risk losing their authentic Muslim identity (Ari Fajar Isbakhi et al., 2025).

Islamic Education as the Foundation of Values to Overcome Psychological Pressure in Muslim Gen Z, Including Tauhid and Tazkiyatun Nafs

Islamic education plays a crucial role as a foundation of values for addressing the psychological pressures faced by Muslim Gen Z, particularly through the concepts of Tawhid and Tazkiyatun Nafs (purification of the soul). It is instrumental in developing the emotional intelligence of Gen Z adolescents (Nasikhin et al., 2025). Through learning Islamic values, adolescents are taught to recognize, manage, and express their emotions in a healthy manner. Islamic education instills deep faith-based principles, such as belief in Allah's power, prayer, and acts of worship, as means of strengthening the soul. This spiritual intelligence provides adolescents with a solid inner strength to face various life challenges. With a strong spiritual foundation, they are better able to find meaning and purpose in life, thereby reducing the risks of

stress, anxiety, and depression commonly experienced by today's youth (Rahmawati, Umi Habibah, 2021).

A study conducted in Pangkalpinang (2024) found a positive correlation between the intensity of filter usage and social anxiety among Muslim adolescents (Novnariza et al., 2025). This phenomenon aligns with Allah's statement in QS. At-Tin, verse 4: 'Indeed, We created man in the best form.' The verse emphasizes that true standards of beauty are determined by Allah, not digital filters. On average, Indonesian Gen Z spends 5–6 hours per day on social media, with TikTok being the dominant platform (Jackpat, 2025). A UGM study (2025) indicated that Muslim adolescents who use TikTok for more than 3 hours per day are 1.8 times more likely to experience anxiety compared to those using it less than 1 hour (Novnariza et al., 2025). TikTok's algorithm employs a machine learning-based recommendation system that continuously presents content according to user interests, creating a filter bubble (Waqiati, 2023).

This situation gives rise to FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). A survey conducted by the IDN Research Institute (2025) found that 64% of Gen Z fear missing out on trends if they do not access TikTok for even a single day (Cybersmile, 2025), particularly in the context of TikTok usage, which encourages them to remain constantly connected to trends and digital interactions.

Islam serves as a crucial means of internalizing positive values to achieve a mental revolution, as it inherently has the capacity to rectify all forms of personality flaws (Karim, 2021). Historically, from its very inception, Islam improved the beliefs and socio-cultural structures of the Jahiliyyah society during the time of the Prophet. Islam also plays a substantial role in purifying the soul, known as Tazkiyatun Nafs, which can be formulated as a method for cleansing that nurtures the innate potential (fitrah) of human beings. Tazkiyatun Nafs can serve as a method that upholds and strengthens Islamic values.

Tazkiyah al-Nafs can be understood in two ways: purification and healing. Terminologically, it is perceived as a process of cleansing the soul from various forms of spiritual ailments by embodying the names and attributes of Allah as moral qualities (takhalluq), so that ultimately tazkiyah involves tathahhur (purification), tahaqquq (realization), and takhalluq (moral cultivation). Consequently, the tazkiyah process improves human behavior towards higher levels of personality and character through an approach centered on Allah. Through tazkiyah, individuals are guided to their innate fitrah, encompassing guidance in Tawhid, faith, Islamic practice, and ihsan (excellence in worship and conduct). This process is accompanied by various efforts aimed at providing guidance, strengthening personal potential, and enhancing spiritual quality as well as the practice of Islamic teachings (Karim, 2021).

Tazkiyatun Nafs is an effort to maintain the purity of the learners' selves, emphasizing the educational aspect of moral character. The foundation for implementing this as a method can be found in the Qur'an and Hadith. Allah states the following:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ﴿٩١﴾

"Indeed, successful is the one who purifies the soul, and indeed, failure is the one who corrupts it." (QS. Ash-Shams [91]: 9-10)

The verse emphasizes that the process of purifying the soul brings success and prosperity, whereas those who defile it suffer great loss. The basis for this can also be found in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (al-Qusyairi, 2006), as follows:

From Zaid bin Arqam RA, he said, 'I will not tell you except what the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to say in his supplication: "O Allah, my Lord, I seek refuge in You from weakness, laziness, fear, miserliness, senility, and the punishment of the grave. O Allah, my Lord, grant piety to my soul, purify it, for indeed You are the best of those who purify it, and You are its Guardian. O Allah, my Lord, I seek refuge in You from useless knowledge, a heart that does not humble itself, a soul that is never satisfied, and supplications that are not answered.'" (HR. Muslim).

This Hadith demonstrates the process of self-purification taught by the Prophet Muhammad, indicating that every Muslim should continuously seek refuge in Allah from negative

mental tendencies, including all forms of personal weakness, laziness, fear, miserliness, and senility. This phenomenon aligns with another Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

"بَادِرُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ فَتَنَّا كَقَطْعِ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ، يُصْبِحُ الرَّجُلُ مُؤْمِنًا وَيُمْسِي كَافِرًا أَوْ يُمْسِي مُؤْمِنًا وَيُصْبِحُ كَافِرًا، يَبِيعُ دِينَهُ بِعَرَضٍ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا".

"Narrated from Abu Hurairah RA, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Hasten to do good deeds before the coming of tribulations like a dark, pitch-black night. One may be a believer in the morning and a disbeliever by the evening, or a believer in the evening and a disbeliever by the morning. He sells his religion for worldly pleasures.' (HR. Muslim).

This Hadith emphasizes that external pressures, including those from the digital world, can influence the stability of faith and mental well-being. Despite its risks, TikTok also serves as a platform for creative da'wah. A study by UII (2024) found that short da'wah content (1–3 minutes) achieved an engagement rate of 48%, higher than entertainment content at 35% (Jamal, 2025). Islamic content functions as a coping mechanism against digital pressures. Research shows that students and university learners who regularly watch da'wah on TikTok feel calmer and more resilient in facing social pressures.

Generation Z, born and raised amid digitalization, faces a paradoxical reality (Mustofa et al., 2022). On one hand, the digital world offers space for expression, connectivity, and unlimited access to information. On the other hand, it also becomes a stage for social anxiety, unhealthy comparisons, and identity crises that erode mental health. For Muslim Gen Z, these challenges are even more complex, as they must confront digital pressures while striving to maintain the integrity of their faith in a space that often lacks moral boundaries (Maharani et al., 2025). The digital world, particularly social media, has created a fertile ecosystem for the emergence of mental health issues. For Gen Z, the main concerns are:

Culture of Comparison and Damaged Self-Worth: Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are filled with narratives of success, beauty, and curated happiness. Everyone becomes a 'social climber' in their own way, showcasing their best moments often enhanced with filters and editing. The Qur'an has warned about this in Surah An-Najm, verse 32:

فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى

"...So do not claim purity for yourselves. He knows best who is truly conscious of Allah (the God-fearing).' (Surah An-Najm, verse 32)".

This verse teaches not to be trapped in self-assessments based on external views or superficial praise. Gen Z, who constantly compare the 'backstage' of their real lives with the 'highlight reels' of others on social media, are vulnerable to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and anxiety (Zula, 2024).

FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and Inauthentic Life

The urge to stay constantly connected and the fear of missing trends trigger persistent anxiety (Khairunnisa et al., 2025). Gen Z feels compelled to follow every challenge, music trend, or lifestyle to be accepted. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave profound advice: 'Whoever imitates a people is one of them.' (HR. Abu Dawud). In a negative context, this Hadith serves as a warning: if Gen Z imitates a hedonistic, materialistic, and non-Sharia-compliant lifestyle merely because it is trendy online, they risk losing their identity as a Muslim. Good mental health begins with living authentically, aligned with one's values and beliefs.

Cyberbullying and the Widespread Impact of Digital Speech

In the digital world, words can become weapons. Malicious comments, body shaming, hate speech, and cancel culture can leave deep mental scars (Wardana et al., 2024). The Qur'an

emphasizes communication ethics, even in stressful contexts. Allah Almighty states in Surah Fussilat, verse 34:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“And not equal are the good and the evil. Repel [evil] by that which is better; then the one between whom and you there was enmity will become as though he was a devoted friend.’ (Surah Fussilat, verse 34)”.

This serves as guidance to respond to hatred with goodness, rather than reciprocating with hostility. Additionally, the concepts of qawlun sadidun (truthful speech) and qawlun ma'rufun (good speech) from Surah An-Nisa, verses 9 and 5, should serve as guiding principles. Every comment, share, and like constitutes a form of 'digital speech' for which one will be held accountable.

Overstimulation and Spiritual Emptiness: Endless scrolling, constant notifications, and an overwhelming flood of information create mental clutter that severs an individual's connection with inner peace and their relationship with God. Allah SWT reminds us in Surah Ar-Ra'd, verse 28:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“(It is) those who believe and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Remember, only through the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquility.”

The peace that Gen Z seeks through doomscrolling can truly only be found in the remembrance of Allah (dhikrullah). The virtual reality often distances us from this awareness, while the Qur'an invites us to occasionally “log off” and reconnect with the most fundamental connection: our relationship with Allah SWT.

The Mental Context of Gen Z: Doomscrolling the habit of continuously consuming negative news and overstimulation from endless notifications have led to anxiety, fear, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Gen Z often seeks escape by scrolling even more, when in fact, what they are truly searching for is peace of mind. Social media should be used wisely and in moderation, not endlessly scrolling until losing track of time (Zhao et al., 2024).

D. CONCLUSION

This study examined the complex interplay between digital behavior and mental health among Muslim Generation Z through a descriptive qualitative approach using library-based analysis. Findings indicate that platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube function as double-edged spaces, simultaneously fostering creativity and social expression while intensifying overstimulation, social comparison, identity confusion, and compulsive doomscrolling, which elevates anxiety, fear, and cognitive fatigue. From an Islamic perspective, spiritual consciousness and self-regulation function as essential mediators, where the principles of *tabayyun* (verification of information), *wara'* (self-restraint), and *tazkiyatun nafs* (self-purification) serve as ethical guidelines for mindful digital behavior. The practical implications of these principles can be directly applied by Muslim Gen Z for instance, by cultivating the habit of verifying content authenticity before sharing, regulating screen time to prevent mental fatigue, and establishing spiritual routines that help balance psychological and spiritual well-being. Moreover, these principles can guide educators, parents, and policymakers in developing Islamic value based digital literacy programs, such as modules on information verification, digital well-being education, and ethical guidelines for responsible social media engagement.

However, this study has several limitations. As a library-based research design, it relies entirely on secondary sources and does not include empirical field data. Additionally, the digital behavior of Muslim Gen Z evolves rapidly, meaning that some findings may require periodic updates in line with the fast-changing nature of social media platforms.

Faith-based filters, including the intention (**niyyah**) behind online activity and critical assessment of information, cultivate digital resilience and protect mental well-being, aligning behavior with moral and spiritual values. Emotional regulation, self-awareness, and engagement in positive digital content, supported by Islamic education and mentorship, serve as protective mechanisms against digital fatigue, fostering tranquility (**sakinah**) and spiritual balance.

By integrating Islamic pedagogy with digital literacy, Muslim Gen Z can navigate social media consciously, transforming it into a platform for reflection, ethical engagement, and social empowerment rather than stress and distraction. This study contributes to the field by highlighting the unique role of Islamic principles in mediating digital mental health, providing a framework that connects spirituality, psychology, and education in understanding Gen Z's digital experiences.

Finally, mental health in the digital era emerges as a multidimensional construct requiring the synthesis of psychology, spirituality, and education, where technology becomes a tool for soul purification rather than self-destruction. Future research could explore platform-specific interventions for digital tazkiyah, the long-term effects of faith-based digital practices, and strategies to promote mindful social media engagement among adolescents across different cultural contexts.

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