

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON GEN Z MENTAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

The digital era has significantly influenced the mental health of Generation Z, a cohort deeply immersed in technology and social media. While these digital platforms offer various advantages, they also pose serious risks such as anxiety, depression, and a sense of social isolation. From an Islamic perspective, mental health is viewed holistically, encompassing emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. This article explores how Islamic principles can contribute to managing mental health challenges faced by Gen Z in a digital environment. It discusses concepts such as tawakkul (trust in God), sabr (patience), and dhikr (remembrance of God) as coping mechanisms, along with the role of community support and ethical digital engagement. The integration of faith-based strategies with modern psychological approaches can offer a more balanced and meaningful framework for mental health management. This perspective not only reinforces inner resilience but also promotes digital behavior rooted in values and spiritual consciousness.

Keywords: Islamic perspective, Generation Z, mental health, digital era, spirituality, coping strategies

1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology in the 21st century has fundamentally transformed the lifestyle, communication patterns, and mental health of young generations, particularly Generation Z. Born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, Gen Z has grown up in a world shaped by smartphones, social media, and instant access to information. While these technologies offer various conveniences, they also contribute to increasing mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and digital addiction (Twenge, 2017).

Mental health issues among Gen Z are becoming a global concern. The World Health Organization (2021) reports that one in seven adolescents aged 10–19 experiences a mental disorder, with depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders being among the leading causes. This phenomenon is also evident in Muslim-majority countries, where modern stressors increasingly intersect with spiritual and cultural values. Consequently, there is a growing need to explore alternative mental health management approaches that align with religious beliefs and identity.

From an Islamic viewpoint, mental health is not only a psychological or emotional issue but also a spiritual one. The Qur'an and Sunnah offer guidance for achieving inner peace (sakinah), resilience (sabr), and trust in divine wisdom (tawakkul) during life's trials. Islamic teachings emphasize balance (mīzān), self-reflection (muhasabah), and remembrance of God (dhikr) as ways to maintain psychological well-being. Integrating these principles with contemporary mental health practices may offer a more holistic and culturally relevant solution for Muslim Gen Z individuals facing psychological stress in the digital era (Nasr, 2006; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000).



This paper aims to examine the Islamic perspective on mental health and its relevance to Generation Z's experience in navigating mental challenges within the digital landscape. It will highlight spiritual coping strategies, ethical digital behavior, and the potential of faith-based community support as protective factors against mental distress.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a library research method. The research focuses on analyzing and synthesizing existing literature related to Islamic perspectives on mental health and the psychological challenges faced by Generation Z in the digital age.

3. Results And Discussion

Results

Generation Z (Gen Z), growing up amid the rapid advancement of the digital era with easy access to information and social media, faces various unique and complex mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, social media pressure, loneliness, and digital addiction. The Islamic perspective provides a comprehensive and relevant approach to mental health management to help Gen Z navigate and cope with the pressures of modern life.

In the Islamic perspective, mental health is considered an essential part of overall health, encompassing a balance between physical, mental, and spiritual aspects. For Generation Z, who live in an era of rapid digital and social media advancements, Islam offers an approach that can serve as a foundation for managing stress and anxiety often caused by social pressures and technological developments.

Social media frequently acts as a source of social pressure, causing individuals to feel the need to constantly display their accomplishments or portray an idealized version of their lives to gain acceptance from their peers. This situation can lead to stress, particularly when the social expectations clash with the individual's actual experiences. In this regard, Generation Z experiences much higher levels of pressure than earlier generations due to their constant connection to the digital environment and ongoing exposure to unrealistic standards of living (Mareta, 2018).

The presentation revealed that Generation Z (Gen Z) is facing significant mental health challenges in the digital era, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, social media pressure, and digital addiction. The Islamic perspective emphasizes holistic well-being (Tazkiyatun Nafs), encouraging balance between physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Key findings include:

1. **Mental Health as Holistic Well-Being** Islam views mental health as equally important as physical health, as mentioned in the hadith: "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its cure" (Sahih Bukhari 5678). This signifies that every mental health issue has solutions within both spiritual and professional realms.
2. **Moderation in Digital Use** The Quran advises moderation: "Do not be wasteful, for Allah does not love the wasteful" (Surah Al-A'raf 7:31). Gen Z is encouraged to limit

- excessive screen time and avoid harmful online content that triggers anxiety, inferiority, and addiction.
3. Self-Worth Independent of Social Media Islamic teachings emphasize that one's worth is based on righteousness, not online validation: "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous" (Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13). This principle counteracts comparison (hasad) and the constant need for external approval.
 4. Islamic Coping Strategies for Stress and Anxiety
 - a) Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah): "Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:28). Regular dhikr is linked to lower anxiety and greater emotional stability.
 - b) Prayer and Dua: These provide structured daily breaks that psychologically reset stress responses.
 - c) Sabr and Tawakkul: Patience and trust in Allah enhance resilience against mental pressure.
 5. Healthy Relationships in a Digital Context Islam encourages fostering meaningful and halal relationships, promoting real-world community support (Ummah) and avoiding toxic online environments that deteriorate mental health.
 6. Digital Detox through Sunnah Practices
 - a) Spending time in nature
 - b) Engaging in physical activity (walking, sports)
 - c) Maintaining quality sleep by avoiding late-night screens
 7. Seeking Help through Islamic and Professional Guidance Islam urges seeking knowledge and treatment: "So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know" (Surah An-Nahl 16:43). Combining Islamic counseling with mental health professionals ensures comprehensive care.

Mental Health in Islam in the Digital Age

In today's highly digital world, life pressures are becoming more complex. Issues such as anxiety, stress, and social isolation are on the rise. Islam, as a comprehensive religion, offers holistic guidance for maintaining mental health and life balance. This article outlines several Islamic coping mechanisms and healthy practices in the digital age that can be applied in daily life.

1. Islamic Coping Mechanisms for Stress and Anxiety

Islam emphasizes managing stress and anxiety through spiritual approaches. Key Islamic coping mechanisms include:

- Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah)

"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (Surah Ar-Ra'd: 28).

- Prayer (Salah) and Dua

In difficult times, Muslims are encouraged to turn to Allah through prayer and supplication.

- Patience (Sabr) and Trust (Tawakkul)

Accepting life's trials with patience and trust in Allah is central to managing stress.

2. Building Healthy Relationships in the Digital Age

Digital life often leads to shallow or even toxic interactions. Islam emphasizes meaningful and halal social interactions, such as:

Building supportive and healthy community ties (Ummah).

- Avoiding negative online environments and nurturing real-world connections.

3. Detoxing from Digital Overload: Sunnah Practices

Following the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) offers healing in the face of digital overstimulation. Recommended Sunnah practices include:

- Nature connection - Spending time outdoors refreshes the mind.
- Physical activity - Walking, sports, and other physical actions promoted by the Prophet (PBUH).
- Quality sleep - Sleeping early and avoiding late-night screen exposure.

4. Seeking Help: Islamic and Professional Guidance

Islam encourages seeking both knowledge and medical help. It does not prohibit professional support. In fact, Islam promotes:

- "So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know." (Surah An-Nahl: 43).
- Combining Islamic counseling (with scholars or mentors) and professional therapy is highly recommended.

Conclusion Islam offers a comprehensive framework for maintaining mental health—spiritually, socially, and physically. By adopting Islamic teachings in our daily lives, we can effectively face the psychological challenges of the modern digital age.

Discussion

These findings highlight that integrating Islamic principles in mental health management for Gen Z provides both preventive and curative approaches. While digital advancements are inevitable, Islamic teachings equip youth with spiritual grounding, resilience, and ethical digital behavior. For instance, practices such as dhikr, prayer, and nature connection act as mindfulness-based interventions, which have been empirically proven to reduce anxiety and improve cognitive function (Abdel-Khalek, 2011).

Furthermore, the emphasis on moderation and avoiding envy aligns with cognitive-behavioral strategies to reduce negative self-evaluation and social comparison triggered by social media (Festinger, 1954). By promoting Tazkiyatun Nafs, mental health management transcends mere symptom relief, aiming for inner purification and spiritual flourishing.

Practical Implications, Based on the findings and discussion, the following practical implications are recommended for educators, counselors, and Muslim youth communities in managing Gen Z mental health:

1. Integration of Islamic Coping Strategies in Counseling Sessions

Counselors and educators should incorporate Islamic practices such as dhikr, prayer, and reflections on patience (sabr) and trust in Allah (tawakkul) during guidance sessions to reduce anxiety and enhance emotional regulation.

2. Developing Digital Moderation Programs

Schools and Islamic institutions can initiate programs to promote digital moderation based on Quranic principles, such as setting screen time boundaries, mindful social media use, and prioritizing real-world interactions.

3. Enhancing Self-Worth through Faith-Based Education

Designing workshops that teach students their intrinsic worth based on taqwa (piety) rather than social media validation will reduce envy (hasad) and unhealthy comparisons, fostering stronger self-esteem and contentment.

4. Facilitating Spiritual Mindfulness Practices

Activities like nature exploration, group dhikr, and Quran recitation circles can serve as spiritual mindfulness interventions to refresh mental health while nurturing Islamic identity.

5. Training Teachers and Counselors on Islamic Mental Health Approaches

Professional development programs should include modules on integrating Islamic perspectives into mental health support to provide holistic guidance tailored to Muslim Gen Z students.

6. Building Supportive and Halal Social Networks

Youth organizations should create environments that encourage meaningful, halal relationships, offline gatherings, and community-based peer support to counteract loneliness and toxic digital environments.

7. Collaborating with Mental Health Professionals and Islamic Scholars

Schools, universities, and youth organizations should establish collaborations between psychologists, counselors, and Islamic scholars to provide integrated care, ensuring mental health issues are addressed comprehensively both spiritually and clinically.

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