

# Phenomena Of Religious Diversity Among Generation Z Students Study Of Religions Faculty Of Ushuluddin And Islamic Studies State Islamic University Of North Sumatra

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## Abstract

This research is motivated by the phenomenon of religious diversity among Generation Z students who live amidst the development of digital technology, rapid information flow, and increasingly plural campus social dynamics. The main issue in this research is how Generation Z students understand, interpret, and express their religion in a digital era that often leads to overlapping religious information. The aim of this research is to describe the forms of religiousness among Generation Z students and to uncover the factors influencing it, both from the digital environment and the campus environment.

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, focusing on the subjective experiences of students in practicing their religiousness. Data is obtained through in-depth interviews with several students from the Religious Studies Program, light observation, and literature studies. The phenomenological approach is used to understand the meanings of religiousness as experienced directly by the students without making normative judgments, allowing the researcher to capture their patterns of religious commitment clearly and authentically.

Research findings indicate that the religiousness of Generation Z students is adaptive, selective, and reflective. Social media has become one of the main sources of religious knowledge, but it also presents challenges in the form of information. Non-credible religiosity. On the other hand, the campus environment plays a significant role in shaping moderate, inclusive, and critical religious attitudes through scientific dialogue and cross-background interactions. Overall, the research results affirm that the religiosity of Generation Z develops through a combination of digital experiences and social experiences on campus, thus forming a dynamic pattern of religiosity that meets the demands of the times.

**Keywords :** Generation Z, Religiosity, Social Media, Religious Studies Students.

Submission	Accepted	Published
04-07-2025	24-11-2025	27-11-2025

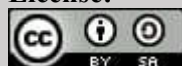
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JSA : Jurnal Studi Agama

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## Introduction

The phenomenon etymologically originates from the Greek word *phainomenon*, which means "what is seen." The meaning of this term has since evolved to include symptoms, facts, realities, events, and even things that can be perceived by the senses, including those that are mystical or supernatural (Mirza & Ali, 2020). A phenomenon does not only refer to a single event but is a series of events and conditions that can be observed and

studied through scientific perspectives or specific disciplines. In the context of religious studies, Ridlwan (2013) emphasizes that phenomena encompass the reality of religious experiences in the consciousness of the actors, and the phenomenology of religion aims to fairly describe those experiences as they are subjectively experienced without immediately judging them with the assimilation of normative theories.

The term "religiosity" linguistically comes from the word "religion" which is given the affixes ke- and an, thus referring to a person's state in practicing religion. In academic studies, religiosity is understood as the state, pattern, and nature of a person in understanding and carrying out religious teachings, which includes the spirit of religiosity, the level of compliance, and a person's daily behavior after adopting a religion. Religiosity also encompasses how religious teachings are understood, experienced, and implemented in the reality of social life (IAIN Kediri, 2023).

Generation can be defined as a group of people who share the same age, year of birth, and location, as well as similar historical experiences that have a significant impact on the growth of the individual. Generation Z is the generation that follows the previous generation, which is the millennial generation. A person referred to as Generation Z is someone born between the years 1997 and 2012, specifically after the millennium generation or Generation Y. In addition, Generation Z is the generation born from 1998 to 2009. Generally, this explanation is correct considering that Generation Z is the generation born after 1996. On average, Generation Z is currently living life in college, while some others have entered the workforce in 2020 (Lingga Sekar et al., 2023).

This Generation Z was born and developed in a technology-driven world. Therefore, Generation Z is often referred to as iGeneration or Net Generation (internet generation). Growing up with technological advancements,

the internet and social media are their daily bread. Generation Z started to recognize the internet as they grew older. Social media has been introduced to them since they were young. Everything that Generation Z does is usually always related to the online world. With the help of technological advancements, they are more capable of multitasking compared to previous generations. Indirectly, this influences their personality and characteristics.

In terms of different generation Z has a variety of attitudes, starting from relaxing to critical of religious teachings. Some Z generations are involved in religious communities that aim to strengthen religious faith and knowledge. However, not a few of them built an exclusive perspective, which is to feel that his religious teachings are the only truth and consider the teachings of other religions. This exclusive attitude has the potential to bring up intolerance, namely the attitude of rejecting even hostile different groups of beliefs (Sukmayadi et al., 2023). Although many of them show a high level of religiosity, this is not always in line with the attitude of tolerance to differences. Therefore, it is important to understand how Genorgi's religious experience in the education environment affects their social attitudes, including the different groups of religion and belief (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2020).

## **Discussion**

### **Understanding Generation Z**

Generation Z is a term addressed to generation born in 1997-2012. Generation Z is those who are born during the development of technologies that are so progressed and rapidly. This generation of Z develops characteristics and abilities is much better than previous generations, millennial generations. If seen, the Z generation is in time of education, even some of them have already entered the world of work. In all aspects of life, the generation of Z can not escape from the use of technology and social media so much. Technology development in

this generation makes life more Instant and various information from various districts in Indonesia, even the world can be accessed so quickly (Theguh Saumanthi & Afrian Square, 2024). Information technology in advanced communication has created unlimited access to various global cultural trends through social media platform such as Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube and others. Until, the global popular culture (pop culture) became the dominant strength in forming the generation of Z developing identity, self-expression, and understanding social values (Fatimah & Santi Aulia Rahma, 2025). In addition, the advantages of the Z generation are the way they think that Open Minded (open) against various different differences d around their environment.

### **Different generation Z**

The closeness of life is an attitude of an unevenity, therefore the closeness of color has the potential and wealth of color and uniqueness. Life in religion Gen Z has social awareness that has been in teenager, they understand and accept social associations of the environment with the concern shown in sight. But the knowledge is not the same, with the presence of technology also transforms the landscape of the younger generation of understanding of the culture and society, the presence of the Internet makes the younger generation to channel mutual communication messages. As according to Shirky the generation as the Generation Internet, it mentions as a symmetrical participle of a person who receives information but they have actions to send information to others (Achmad Tohari, 2024).

Z generation shows religious in the way they understand and respond to social issues in cyberspace. In general, they tend to have a more inclusive and open view of social religion in the digital world compared to the real world. Social media plays a role as an expression space that allows Z genes to voice opinions, show talents and spread positive message messages about

tolerance and inclusion. But the level of their involvement with the issue of religion still varies. Some of them show interest and active involvement in supporting religious through campaigns or educational content, while some tend to be passive or "magger", which reflects the instant lifestyle and minimal in-depth business. Even so, the creative potential of Z generation is quite large, and if directed well, they can become a positive change agent. Gen Z is also aware of the risk of the use of social media such as negative content, hawaks, to unhattrum speech, and some of them emphasize the importance of the use of wise and responsible social media (Shahibatz Zahra Hasanliy et al., 2024)

Pola keberagamaan mahasiswa generasi Z di Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Studi Islam menunjukkan dinamika keagamaan yang khas dan berbeda dari generasi sebelumnya. Berdasarkan wawancara dengan dua narasumber, yaitu Fitri Helmainun Siregar dan Diah Marisah, diketahui bahwa agama tetap memiliki posisi penting dalam kehidupan mereka, namun cara memahami, memaknai, dan mengamalkannya mengalami penyesuaian dengan tuntutan perkembangan zaman. Keduanya memandang agama bukan sebagai doktrin yang kaku, melainkan sebagai pedoman hidup yang membentuk moralitas, mengontrol perilaku, serta menjadi landasan dalam hubungan sosial.

Fitri and Diah agreed that religious teachings were not only realized in the form of formal rituals, but also in everyday social attitudes and actions. Religion for them is a source of value that encourages someone to be honest, trustworthy, responsible, and able to live harmoniously with other people. In practice, these values are reflected in the way they interact, resolve the issue, respect differences, and make decisions involving themselves and the surrounding environment.

Both speakers also emphasized that the different generation Z-generation pattern was

greatly influenced by the development of digital technology. Social media such as Youtube, Tiktok, Instagram, and Podcasts are a source of religious information that is easily accessible, diverse, and fast. Through these platforms, they observe lectures and content from various scholars with extensive patterns of thought, ranging from textual, rational, moderate, and contemporary. However, Fitri and Diah did not accept any information raw. Both display selective attitudes by comparing various views, adjusting them with lecture material, and consider it through personal experience.

consider it through personal experience. On the other hand, the inclusive closeness also appears in the way they face social unity. Fitri and Diah deliver that their neighborhood envy is very heterogeneous, both in terms of religion, culture, family background, and a look. The unsteadiness does not cause distance, but it has developed tolerance, open, and not easy judgment. They are accustomed to dialogue about the difference in confidence without imposing personal views. For them, the difference is a reasonable thing in the lives of the Majemuk community. The academic environment in the study of religious study studies is a common control in forming a moderate pattern of wellness on students. Through lecture points such as religious comparisons, contemporary religious studies, and interdama dialogue, students are introduced to broader approaches in understanding religion. The learning process that is dialogue and openly encourages critical thinking students and see what is fulfillment. Student organizations such as Himasaa and the Cross Product Discussion forum also complement their religious experiences practically, so the value of tolerance and coexistence is not only learned, but also practiced.

However, Fitri and Diah admit that the digital era brings its own challenges in understanding religion. Many religious content is viral but not credible, provocative, or

superficial science. Fast information often makes some students difficult distinguish between religious teachings valid with personal opinions that cannot be accounted for. This challenge is exacerbated by an instant culture attached to the generation of Z, so that religious learning is sometimes done quickly and inadequate (Interview with Fitri and Diah, November 6, 2025). Despite facing these challenges, the two resources still demonstrate a strong commitment to make religion as a meaningful life guide. They try to keep religion not only as formal identity, but as a value that shapes character, morality, and the ability to live peacefully with various groups of community. This shows that the religious generation of Z students are adaptive, reflective, and moving towards moderation that are relevant to modern life.

### **Social dynamics and religious interactions on campus**

Campus becomes a social space that brings students with diverse background, culture and spiritual experiences. In the UIN Religious Study Program, North Sumatra, the diversity is not only seemed to be a social identity, but also an important part of the process of forming a student's perspective on religion. Based on interviews with two speakers, namely Yuli Latriana Nasution and Ayunda Holy Aulia, the interactions they experience in lectures, organizations, and informal discussions have a significant influence on their religious patterns as part of the generation of Z.

The two narasources explain that students come from different family backgrounds and religious environments. Some grow in religious and disciplined families in practice of worship, while others are in a more flexible environment in the adoption of religious teachings. When they gathered in the plural campus environment in mind, the pattern of closeness experienced adaptation. They learn that religion is not just a ritual, but also how a person mends a difference, understands the uniformity, and in the religion of religion in the context of the

changing modern life. Discussion space in the classroom becomes the most visible place in describing the dynamics of the closeness. Dialogis lecture points encourage students to argue, criticize, and analyze religious phenomena from various perspectives. According to Yuli and Ayunda, this process helps them develop more mature, open, and not easily stuck in exclusive and fanaticism. Learning is no longer one direction, but it is the process of intellectual dialogue that develops critical understanding.

In addition to academic space, organizational activities such as HiMasaa, religious UKM, and the discussion community are important containers in forming social dynamics of religious. Yuli and Ayunda said that through their organization learned to manage differences of opinion, practicing tolerance, and working with students who have a diverse background. This activity teaches them that religion is not only understood in theory, but also must be realized in social practices that prioritize ethics, empathy, and togetherness (interview with Yuli and Ayunda, November 6, 2025).

However, the dynamics of closeness do not always run smoothly. The two Narasources admit the difference in religious views that sometimes trigger friction, especially when there are friends who are too stiff or feel that their understanding is the most true. However, this challenge is part of the scenery. They learn that religion is not just about feeling true, but also about the ability to listen, understand, and appreciate different views.

The dosens also play an important role in maintaining the harmony of dynamics of the closeness of students. Through an inclusive and dialogue learning approach, the dosage does not only teach religious texts, but also instills the values of wisdom in the differences in propagation. Yuli and Ayunda assessed that the dosage of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and the Islamic Studies emphasize the importance of

moderate moderation, namely an extreme, non-exclusive attitude, and keep in accordance with the principles of the Shari'a without ignoring the social context. From the continuous interaction process on campus, it seems that the pattern of generation of generation does not grow individually, but is formed through sustainable social experiences. Campuses are an important space in developing religious identities, social awareness, and sight of the more adultery. The closeness of the Z generation students grew as a dynamic social process, moving, and continuing to experience the need for life experience and the environment that influenced it.

### **The influence of technology and social media on the religious patterns of the generation of Z**

Development of digital technology and social media has a very strong influence in forming a view and the religious practices of the generation of Z. Generation students are different from the previous generation who obtain religious knowledge through direct recitation, face-to-face lectures, or family traditions, generation Z students access more religious knowledge through open virtual spaces, fast, and can be accessed anytime. It is also recognized by Fadila and spiritually, which conveys that almost every day they come into contact with religious content through a platform such as Youtube, Tiktok, Instagram, and podcasts. The content is present in various forms, ranging from short lectures, Islamic motivation, theological discussions, to religious analysis of the academic perspective. This convenience gives them a broad opportunity to learn, interpret, and deepen the teachings of religion as needed and personal interest.

However, Fadila and Spiritual confirms that the ease of access has two sides. On the one hand, social media makes it easier for religious learning processes because the presentation is lighter, visual, and easy to understand. Religious leaders such as Gus Baha, Ustad Adi Hidayat, and Ustad Abdul Somad are important



references for some students because of their obedient delivery and close to the context of everyday life. Social media also allows students to compare various religious views so that the understanding formed becomes more reflective and not limited to one school.

On the other hand, the two speakers realize that social media is also a vulnerable space for misinformation and the dissemination of scientific understanding of religion. Many viral content that further features provocative or emotional submission styles compared to the accuracy of the arguments. This condition often makes students confused between authentic religious teachings and personal opinions that are biased or contain certain interests. Fadila and spiritually recognize that differences of opinion between religious leaders on social media also often cause confusion and debate among students (interviews with Fadila and Rohani, November 6, 2025).

In addition, the speed of information flow makes the process of understanding religion often become instant, not through gradual learning such as formal academic studies or academic discussions. This phenomenon produces a tendency of some students to faster quote information without understanding the context in depth. This challenge becomes more complex when contradictory religious content is between a character with other figures. Nevertheless, Fadila and Spiritual assesses Generasi Z students at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic studies have quite good selective abilities in filtering digital information. They did not necessarily accept all the content encountered, but returned it to the academic discussion, the explanation of lecturers, and scientific studies on campus. For them, social media is not positioned as a source of absolute truth, but as a learning room that needs to be tested, weighed, and compared.

In the end, social media became an integral part of the development of the Disagreement of the Generation of Z. Digital platform not only a

source of religious knowledge, but also the expression room, a place to build religious identity, and the arena formed a virtual religious community. Difficult generation Z is formed through a combination of tradition, text, and social interaction in digital space that keeps changing, liquid, and very dynamic.

According to Mr. Jufri Naldo as the chairman of the Study Program of Religion, Technology and Social Media has a very big influence on the Genurlogical Pattern of Z. In this digital era, Z genes tend to build religious understanding through social media content, such as short videos, motivational quotes, or Instant lectures circulating on the digital platform. This condition causes religious learning processes no longer sourced from teachers or religious leaders who have the authority and depth of science. As a result, their religious understanding becomes not established, superficial, and lacks a strong foundation (interview with Jufri Naldo, November 19, 2025).

Mr. Jufri Naldo explained that the worship carried out by many members of Gen Z was often driven by trends, the environment of association, or just following a friend, not on the basis of deep understanding. The lack of interaction with competent teachers causes them to be unable to absorb the meaning of worship in full. This has an impact on spiritual values that are not embedded in everyday behavior. Worship that should form morals, ethics, and respect actually did not have a significant influence on their attitude. This phenomenon appears in reduced manners and ethics, especially in the relationship between students and lecturers, where Z genes look more brave against or do not respect the academic authorities.

He added that actually Gen Z was not fully prepared to use technology intensively. Their ability to filter information is considered very thin compared to the previous generation. Social media provides a very broad space for

negative content, misinformation, and instant mindset that is easily absorbed by Gen Z. They are forced to live side by side with adequate mental readiness technology, so that their psychological capacity weakens and is easily affected by unhealthy digital currents. This helps influence their distance depth.

In the past five years, Z genes rely on IT and social media as a learning source, including in religious matters. This dependence causes them to lose the opportunity to obtain character education, moral value, and morals that are traditionally given through direct interaction with the teacher. Therefore, Mr. Jufri Naldo stressed the importance of returning religious learning processes to competent teachers or supervisors. According to him, humans as a source of science are more comprehensive because they not only convey knowledge, but also form spiritual maturity, attitudes, and maturity - something that cannot be fully given by technology and artificial intelligence.

### **The formation of religious attitudes within the campus environment**

The establishment of a generation of generation of generations can not be released from the campus environment as social, intellectual, and cultural space that affects how to think and behave them. Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic studies, especially the study of religious studies, are one of the space that actively formed the orientation of stubbornness through learning process, scientific interaction, and an academic atmosphere open to differences. The Princess as a married Narasource revealed that the ministry of the ministry had a significant role in expanding the religious vision of students (interviews with Princess, November 6, 2025). Lecture points such as religious comparisons, contemporary religious studies, religious philosophies, and interlocutational dialogues provide opportunities for students to learn religion not only from an internal point of view,

but also through social perspectives, historical, philosophical, even politics. This kind of learning encourages students not only to memorize religious teachings, but understand the reasons, contexts, and meaning behind the teachings.

This situation forms a reflective, rational, and moderative religious pattern. Students are invited to question, study, and criticize a religious understanding before accepting it as truth. This critical attitude is not intended to weaken faith, but actually strengthens confidence through the intellectual proof. Thus, religion is not only present as a symbol or formal identity, but as a value system that is truly understood and lived. In addition to the academic process in the class, the role of lecturers is also very decisive in the formation of student religious attitudes. Putri considers that lecturers in the Ushuluddin faculty and Islamic science studies are inclusive and balanced religious forces. They not only teach religious texts, but also associate it with social problems, community plurality, and the context of modern life. Approaches like this help students see religion as a teaching that is Ruhul's relevant life in answering the challenges of digital era, globalization, and cultural diversity.

The lecturer not only acts as a teacher, but also a role model. Pantyun, open in discussion, does not judge differences, and is able to place religion in humanity frame into a form of exemplary and internalized by daughters and other students. This is the example of which later becomes the basis for the formation of student religious characters, namely accustomed to being wise, moderate, and able to appreciate the diversity of views. Outside of classrooms, student organizations such as Student Association of Religious Studies (HIMasaa), Cross Religious Discussion Communities, and Intellectual Study Forums become social spaces that strengthen religious experience practically. Through activities such

as cross-faith dialogue, discussion of contemporary religious issues, book studies, and community service, students learn how religious teachings are applied directly in a plural real life. The daughter said that involvement in this organization helps students realize that religious is not only personal matters, but is related to social relations and responsibilities of maintaining society harmony.

Thus, the campus is not only a study room of religious science, but also a religious identity formation room. The identity of the religious generation of Z students on campus is not something passively inherited, but built through sustainable social, reflection and social experiences. This shows that the campus functions as an important agent in instilling religious moderating values, intellectual openness, and maturity of religious attitudes that are ready to be implemented in diverse people's lives.

#### Reflection, Challenges, and Hope of the Dignity of the Generation of Z Students

Reflection of the Pattern of Ms. Z-generation students in the Ushuluddin faculty and Islamic studies show that religion still has an important position in their lives. Despite living in a fast, open, open digital era, and influenced by global culture, students still make religion as reference to the value and basis of the formation of identity. This can be seen from the narrative of two speakers, namely Herviani and Alea, which confirms that religion is not just a formal identity, but the guidelines of life that make up attitudes, behavior, and how to think in living everyday life.

However, this religious commitment is faced with various complex challenges. The main challenge felt by Herviani and Alea is flooding information (information overload) in the digital space. Social media, online lectures,

and a widespread religious platform indeed provide an opportunity to access religious knowledge quickly and varied. However, not all information comes from credible religious authorities. Many content is emotionally presented, persuasive, or follow the algorithm trend, but it is less strong in terms of scientific methodology. This condition often causes confusion in distinguishing between religious teachings that rely on scientific traditions with subjective opinions or certain propaganda.

The other challenge lies in an instant culture that develops in the digital era. Herviani and Alea revealed that the flow of information flow often formed a compact and more accelerated religious learning pattern. Some students tend to understand religion through short video pieces or light lectures without studying primary sources or scientific references in depth. The process of deepening religion that should be done through studies, discussions, and critical readings become marginalized. This situation has the potential to create a superficial, emotional, and lack of strong religious understanding of the epistemological foundation. Despite facing these challenges, Herviani and Alea showed great expectations in the Z-generation of differentiation patterns. They presented adaptive capabilities in filtering digital influences. Religious information received is not directly trusted, but passes through the verification process, comparison, and alignment with the academic values they learn on campus. These critical awareness brings them to a more rational, open, and reflective religious way (interview with Herviani and Alea, November 6, 2025).

Both also hope that the different generation Z in the future emphasizes aspects of spirituality, humanity, and social justice, not just doctrinal debates. They want religion understood as the teachings that prioritize love (Rahmah), appreciation for human dignity, and the ability to coexist in diversity. In the campus



context, Herviani and ALEA hope the open and polite official dialogue will continue to be developed. Academic programs and organizational activities that grow moderation, tolerance, and empathy are considered very important to be maintained.

Overall, reflection on the differentiation patterns of generation Z students showed adaptive, critical and moderation oriented dynamics. Although the digital era presents a big challenge, students still have the ability to maintain religion as a relevant and meaningful life guidelines. With the support of a conducive campus environment, comprehensive religious education, and a continuous culture of dialogue, the different generation of Z has great potential to be the foundation in building social harmony and the integrity of the future of religious life.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the overall results of the study, it can be concluded that the differentiation of the Genurgical Student Z in the Study Program of the UIN Religion of North Sumatra is formed through a meeting between digital experiences, social experiences on campus, as well as the religious understanding they build privately. Their religious tends to be dynamic, adaptive, and reflective, but at the same time face a challenge that is not light.

Technology and social media are the most dominant factors in influencing the way Z gene understands and studies religious teachings. Access fast and diverse religious information makes them more critical and selective. However, the swift flow of digital information also triggers the emergence of superficial religious understanding, not systematic, and vulnerable to misinformation. The lack of connection with teachers or religious leaders who have the scientific authority as emphasized by Mr. Jufri Naldo caused some of the Z gene to be less able to explore the meaning of worship in whole, so that spiritual values that should be reflected in morals and ethics did not always appear in Daily behavior. On the other

hand, the campus environment plays an important role in balancing the influence of social media. Academic learning, critical discussions, cross-religious and cultural interactions, and the prescription lecturers help students build moderate, rational and inclusive religious understanding. The campus became a space for forming religious characters that were not only ritual-based, but also intellectual-based, ethics, and humanity

Thus, the religious generation of Z students are not a static form of religious form, but a process that continues to develop along with the challenges of the times. Digital literacy capabilities are needed, the depth of religious science, and assistance from teachers and academic environments so that their religious understanding is growing more mature, balanced, and able to become a foundation for building peaceful, tolerant, and sacrificial social life.

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