



ADDRESSING THE SPIRITUAL CRISIS OF GENERATION Z: INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Ahmad Firdaus Nur Yahya^{1*}, Norma Ardita², Fadlilatul Muminah³, Ika Auliya Nur Lailinda⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

yahyaanjay157@gmail.com, normaarditaa@gmail.com, fadlilatulmuminah91@gmail.com,
lailinda627@gmail.com

* Corresponding Author

Received: 19-01-2026

Revised: 17-02-2026

Accepted: 30-03-2026

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of spiritual crisis among Generation Z, particularly in Islamic education settings, is becoming increasingly prominent as a result of technological developments and growing social pressures. This crisis leads to a loss of direction in life, emotional instability, and decreased participation in religious activities. This raises the need to explore the factors influencing students' spirituality and effective strategies for reawakening their spiritual awareness. This study aims to identify the forms of spiritual crisis experienced by students at MA NU Nurussalam, analyze the factors contributing to their weak spirituality, and formulate effective spiritual development strategies. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and students. The results indicate that students' spiritual crisis is influenced by internal factors such as lack of motivation and self-awareness, as well as external factors such as academic pressure and the influence of social media. Proposed strategies for rebuilding spiritual awareness include a more contextual approach to religious education, empowering teachers as spiritual role models, and organizing interactive spiritual activities. This study makes an important contribution to understanding the spiritual crisis in Islamic education and offers practical solutions for enhancing students' spirituality in the digital era.

Keywords: *Spiritual Crisis, Generation Z, Islamic Education, Spiritual Guidance, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of spiritual crisis among generation Z is increasingly striking, especially in Islamic educational environments, where most students experience difficulties in maintaining a deep spiritual relationship with God. (Arminah & Romelah, 2025; Rahmawati & Imam Fauji, 2025) . As the times are increasingly dominated by the flow of information and technology, especially social media, this phenomenon is worsening the psychological and emotional conditions of adolescents, including those in madrasas like MA NU Nurussalam. Generation Z, born in a highly open digital era, faces countless pressures, both from the virtual and real world. In recent studies, several researchers have stated that this phenomenon of spiritual disorientation is not just a temporary symptom, but a long process influenced by many factors. Several key factors, such as easy access to social media, a materialistic culture that prioritizes worldly achievements, and a lack of spiritual guidance that is adaptive to current socio-cultural conditions, exacerbate this spiritual crisis (Fauzian & Istianah, 2025; Zubaidi, 2025) .

As digitalization and globalization accelerate, many teenagers feel alienated from the spiritual values they should be learning and practicing. Soleh (2023) revealed that one of the biggest impacts of technological advancement is the decreasing closeness of teenagers to religious teachings, which are often considered outdated or no longer relevant to their lives (Tamphu et al., 2024). Social media, as the primary platform for social interaction for this generation, is often a source of stress and confusion, given the lifestyles presented there tend to be materialistic and hedonistic. This causes teenagers to lose direction, doubt their values, and more often feel an inner emptiness, even though they are involved in various social and academic activities. This decline in spiritual quality not only disrupts their mental and emotional well-being but also threatens the formation of strong character and noble character.

The main problem faced by Generation Z in Islamic educational environments, particularly at MA NU Nurussalam, is the imbalance between formal religious instruction and the implementation of spiritual values in students' daily lives. A decline in enthusiasm for religious activities, a disinterest in collective worship, and a growing individualistic attitude among students further undermine their spiritual awareness. Putra (2024), explained that although religious education is an integral part of the madrasah curriculum, it often focuses solely on the cognitive dimension, neglecting students' emotional and spiritual dimensions. Furthermore, the limited number of role models who can inspire students to live according to religious teachings also exacerbates this situation. Therefore, it is crucial to find solutions that are not solely based on normative religious learning but

also address students' inner selves, which are more relevant to the realities of their daily lives.

One approach that has been widely discussed in the literature is the ruhologi quotient (RQ) approach, which is a spiritual development model that focuses on strengthening personal relationships with God and transcendental awareness. (Rizal & Amaluddin 2025; Zannatunnisya et al. 2024) argue that RQ-based spiritual education can help students build character through a deeper understanding of the values of faith, love, and moral responsibility in real life. This approach prioritizes authentic spiritual experiences, not just religious rituals. With this approach, students are expected to feel positive impacts on their emotional, psychological, and spiritual aspects. (Rizal & Amaluddin, 2025; Zannatunnisya et al. 2024) also emphasize that the application of this model in Islamic educational environments can address the problems faced by Generation Z, by paying more attention to the contextualization of religious teachings in facing the challenges of the modern era.

Before implementing this solution, it is important to first analyze the factors that cause students' weak spiritual awareness. Based on previous research, as explained by (Ahnur et al. 2025 & Suhifatullah 2024) Both internal and external factors play a significant role in shaping students' spiritual well being. Internal factors include low motivation for worship, a lack of self-awareness of the importance of a relationship with God, and a tendency to prioritize worldly pleasures. External factors, on the other hand, include the influence of social media, social pressure, and the inability of educational institutions to provide spiritual guidance relevant to the needs of today's youth. Therefore, a development strategy is needed that addresses not only spirituality but also the social and psychological aspects of students, helping them cope with the pressures of the times and rediscover inner peace through closeness to God.

Existing literature indicates that top-down and procedural spiritual guidance is insufficiently effective in addressing students' spiritual needs today. A more empathetic and personal approach, one that directly connects students' life experiences with religious teachings, is one viable solution. Furthermore, guidance based on the spiritual quotient (RQ) approach could be a relevant alternative, emphasizing transcendental experiences and strengthening students' personal relationships with God. RQ also provides students with the opportunity to develop their spirituality personally and reflectively, which can strengthen their spiritual resilience amidst the pressures of the times.

Based on this analysis, this study aims to identify the forms of spiritual crisis experienced by students at MA NU Nurussalam, analyze the internal and external factors that influence it, and formulate an effective spiritual development strategy

based on the Islamic education approach and ruhologi quotient. The main questions in this study are: What are the forms of spiritual crisis experienced by generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam? What are the factors that influence the weakness of student spirituality in the madrasah environment? And, what kind of spiritual development strategy is effective in rebuilding the spiritual awareness of generation Z? This study is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of a spiritual development approach in madrasahs, so that it can help students to rediscover inner peace and a deeper meaning in life.

The spiritual crisis among Generation Z, especially within Islamic educational institutions, is becoming a pressing concern, particularly in light of the rapid technological advancements and the pervasive influence of social media. This crisis manifests as a disconnect between religious teachings and the personal spiritual practices of students, which has been exacerbated by a combination of internal and external factors. The growing disorientation in spiritual values among students calls for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges they face and the solutions that can be implemented to address these issues. The purpose of this literature review is to explore the existing body of work on the spiritual crisis of Generation Z, focusing on its root causes, manifestations, and potential strategies for mitigation, particularly in Islamic educational settings.

The Spiritual Crisis Among Generation Z

Generation Z is defined as the cohort of individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, who have been shaped by the rise of digital technology and the omnipresence of social media. As noted by Wulur and Titting (2024), this generation has been immersed in an environment where information is constantly available, but the values that are disseminated are often fragmented and materialistic. The consequence of this is that many young people find themselves in a state of spiritual disorientation, where their personal identities and beliefs are influenced more by external digital pressures than by internal moral or religious convictions.

This disorientation has profound implications for their spiritual well-being, as they are often disconnected from the traditional sources of meaning and identity that religion provides. As Batubara (2024) argue, the overwhelming presence of social media platforms, with their focus on instant gratification, hedonism, and individualism, has contributed to a decline in religious engagement among young people. Moreover, these platforms often promote unrealistic standards of success and happiness, further alienating individuals from deeper, more fulfilling spiritual experiences.

The Role of Educational Institutions in Shaping Spirituality

Educational institutions, particularly Islamic schools and madrasahs, are meant to serve as a foundation for instilling spiritual values and guiding young individuals in their personal development. However, (Irpan & Sain, 2024; Moslimany et al. 2024; Syukri & Sulhiawati 2026) highlight that many Islamic schools still rely on traditional, procedural methods of religious education that focus predominantly on cognitive learning rather than emotional or spiritual engagement. The focus on ritualistic practices and theoretical knowledge often fails to address the real-life struggles and emotional needs of students, resulting in a disconnect between the knowledge imparted and the way it is applied in their daily lives.

Lu (2021) emphasize that this issue arises because the educational environment often lacks the necessary space for students to engage in reflective spiritual practices. The emphasis on academic performance and social pressures can also leave little room for personal reflection and growth. As a result, students may experience a sense of emptiness or spiritual void, as they do not have the support or guidance necessary to navigate the challenges they face, particularly in a rapidly changing world.

Factors Contributing to the Weakening of Spirituality

A variety of factors contribute to the weakening of spirituality among students in Islamic educational settings. One of the primary internal factors is the lack of motivation to engage in religious practices. As Zubaidi (2025) suggest, many students no longer view religious activities such as prayer, reading the Qur'an, or attending religious gatherings as essential to their well-being. Instead, these activities are often seen as burdensome or irrelevant, especially in the face of more immediate and appealing distractions such as social media or entertainment.

External factors also play a significant role in this weakening of spirituality. According to Arya (2024), the individualistic culture fostered by social media creates a sense of isolation among students. This culture encourages self-centeredness and the pursuit of personal goals at the expense of communal values and spiritual connection. The pressures of academic achievement, family expectations, and peer comparisons also contribute to a sense of spiritual neglect, as students struggle to find balance in their lives.

Furthermore, (Hoover 2025; Sugianto 2024) point out that the digital age, while offering access to vast amounts of information, has also made it easier for students to engage in superficial forms of spirituality. Rather than cultivating deep, meaningful connections with their faith, many young people consume religious content passively, often without truly internalizing the teachings or reflecting on their relevance to their own lives. This trend, coupled with the increasing popularity

of secular, materialistic ideologies, has created a spiritual vacuum for many students.

Approaches to Spiritual Development in Islamic Education

In response to the spiritual crisis faced by Generation Z, various scholars have proposed new approaches to spiritual education that are more in tune with the realities of contemporary life. One such approach is the concept of Ruhology Quotient (RQ), which focuses on developing a person's spiritual awareness through a personal and transformative relationship with God. According to Sahroni et al. (2024), RQ emphasizes the need for students to engage with their spirituality in a way that is both authentic and reflective. This approach is distinct from traditional methods that focus more on external behaviors and rituals, as it encourages a deeper, more personal experience of faith.

RQ is particularly relevant for today's students because it allows them to explore and develop their spirituality in ways that resonate with their everyday experiences. As Sahroni et al. (2024) argue, it is not enough to teach students about religion in abstract terms; instead, spiritual education must be grounded in their lived experiences. By fostering an understanding of spirituality that is both personal and contextual, RQ offers a pathway for students to integrate religious values into their daily lives, helping them to find meaning and purpose in a world that is often overwhelming and confusing.

The Importance of Role Models in Spiritual Development

Another important aspect of spiritual development in Islamic education is the presence of role models who can inspire students to live according to their faith. Gulo et al. (2024) suggest that the lack of inspirational figures in schools is a key reason for the disconnection students feel towards religious practices. When teachers or mentors fail to model the values they teach, students are less likely to take the lessons seriously. Therefore, the role of educators as spiritual role models is crucial in fostering a genuine sense of religious devotion and commitment among students.

Incorporating mentorship and spiritual guidance into the curriculum, as suggested by Al Ayyubi et al. (2026), can help bridge the gap between theory and practice. When students have access to mentors who model authentic spiritual practices and who are willing to listen to and understand their struggles, they are more likely to develop a deeper connection with their faith. This personal connection can help students navigate the challenges they face, including academic pressures and the distractions of social media, in a way that is grounded in spiritual resilience.

Gaps in Existing Literature and the Need for Further Research

While the literature on the spiritual crisis among Generation Z is growing, several gaps remain that need to be addressed. Most of the existing studies, such as those by (Gulo 2023 & Sahroni et al. 2024), focus primarily on theoretical discussions of spiritual education, with little emphasis on practical solutions for addressing the crisis in real-world settings. Furthermore, there is a lack of research specifically addressing the ways in which Islamic educational institutions can adapt their curricula and teaching methods to meet the needs of today's students, particularly in the context of the digital age.

Additionally, more research is needed to explore the specific factors that contribute to the weakening of spirituality among students in Islamic schools. While studies like those by (Ahnur et al. 2025; Lu, 2021) have identified key factors, such as social media and individualism, there is still a need for more nuanced understanding of how these factors interact and influence students' spiritual development. By addressing these gaps, future research can help to create more effective strategies for revitalizing spiritual education in Islamic schools.

This literature review highlights the significant challenges that Generation Z faces in terms of spiritual development, particularly within the context of Islamic education. The literature identifies a range of factors both internal and external that contribute to the spiritual crisis among students, including the influence of social media, the lack of engaging and reflective spiritual education, and the absence of strong role models. However, it also presents promising solutions, such as the adoption of Ruhology Quotient (RQ) as a model for spiritual development and the integration of mentorship and personal reflection into the educational experience. To address the spiritual needs of today's students, it is essential that educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, rethink their approach to spiritual education and adapt it to the unique challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

METHOD

This study aims to explore the spiritual crisis experienced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam, particularly focusing on how the school environment and external factors such as social media influence their spiritual development. To achieve this, a qualitative research design was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews and direct observations to collect data from a diverse group of participants. The following section outlines the methodology used to gather insights from the headmaster, teachers, and students at MA NU Nurussalam, detailing the selection of participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures.

Participants

The study involved a purposive sampling method, targeting individuals who could provide rich and relevant data regarding the spiritual experiences and challenges faced by students. The participants were selected based on their involvement in religious activities at the school, their role in spiritual guidance, and their firsthand experience of the school's educational environment.

The sample consisted of the following groups: 1) Headmaster: One headmaster from MA NU Nurussalam was interviewed to gain an institutional perspective on the school's approach to spiritual development and the challenges the school faces in fostering students' spirituality. 2) Teachers: Four teachers, specifically those responsible for teaching Islamic subjects (including Religious Education and Islamic Studies), were selected for interviews. These teachers were chosen based on their direct involvement in spiritual education and their ability to offer insight into how spiritual teachings are integrated into the school curriculum. 3) Students: Twelve students from various academic levels at MA NU Nurussalam participated in the study. The students were selected to reflect a diverse range of experiences, including varying levels of engagement with religious practices and differing perspectives on their spiritual experiences within the school setting.

Data Collection

Data was collected through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. This combination of qualitative techniques allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' views and experiences. 1) In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the headmaster, teachers, and students to explore their perceptions of spirituality, the role of religion in education, and the spiritual challenges students face. The interview questions were designed to elicit detailed responses and reflections on the participants' experiences, allowing for an exploration of personal and professional insights into the spiritual crisis among students.

2) The interviews with the headmaster and teachers focused on institutional practices, challenges in promoting spiritual engagement, and the impact of external factors like social media on students' spiritual well-being. The interviews with students, on the other hand, aimed to understand the personal struggles they face in maintaining their spirituality, their perceptions of religious practices in school, and the role of their peers and teachers in shaping their spiritual beliefs. 3) Participant Observation: The researcher engaged in participant observation by attending various school activities related to religious education, such as group prayers, religious study sessions, and spiritual retreats. This allowed for an understanding of the school environment and the students' behavior during religious activities. Observations helped to complement the interview data by providing contextual

insights into the students' engagement with religious practices and the overall school culture.

And 4) Document Analysis: To supplement the primary data from interviews and observations, the researcher also analyzed documents related to the school's curriculum and religious programs. These documents included the Islamic Education curriculum, school policies related to spiritual guidance, and other relevant materials such as activity reports on religious events. This analysis provided an understanding of how spiritual education is formally structured within the school.

Data Analysis

Data collected through interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This process involved transcribing the interviews, organizing the data into categories, and identifying recurring themes and patterns related to students' spiritual experiences and the factors influencing their spirituality. Themes such as "spiritual disconnection," "impact of media," and "role of teachers as spiritual guides" emerged from the analysis and were used to structure the findings of the study.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher employed triangulation by comparing data from different sources (e.g., interviews with students, teachers, and the headmaster) and methods (e.g., interviews and observations). This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the issue, reducing bias and increasing the robustness of the conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the research and their right to confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were also assured that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes and would not affect their standing at the school. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and any identifying information was kept confidential.

The qualitative methodology employed in this study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the spiritual crisis experienced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam. By collecting data through interviews, observations, and document analysis, the research provides a comprehensive view of the challenges and factors influencing students' spirituality. The findings from this study will offer valuable insights into the strategies that can be implemented in Islamic educational settings to address the spiritual needs of students and enhance their overall well-being.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This chapter presents the results of the study conducted on the spiritual crisis among Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam. The findings are based on interviews conducted with the headmaster, four teachers, and twelve students. The results are structured to address the research questions, which are: (1) What are the forms of spiritual crisis experienced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam? (2) What factors influence the weakening of students' spirituality in the school environment? (3) What effective strategies can be implemented to restore spiritual awareness in Generation Z students?

Forms of Spiritual Crisis Among Generation Z Students

The interviews revealed several forms of spiritual crisis experienced by the students at MA NU Nurussalam. These forms were categorized based on the students' personal experiences and perceptions of their spiritual well-being.

a. Loss of Direction and Purpose

The most commonly reported form of spiritual crisis was a sense of loss of direction and purpose. Many students expressed feelings of confusion and a lack of meaning in their lives, despite being involved in daily academic and social activities. This existential void was particularly evident during discussions with the students, where they mentioned struggling with finding balance in their academic responsibilities, social life, and religious obligations.

For example, one student (Fikri, XI IPS 1) shared:

"Sometimes, I feel like I don't know where I'm headed in life. With all the schoolwork piling up and the pressure from social media, it feels like I'm just going through the motions without any real purpose."

The sense of emptiness was linked to a disconnection from spiritual practices, as students increasingly found it difficult to prioritize religious activities such as praying and reading the Qur'an amidst the demands of school and digital distractions.

b. Emotional Instability and Anxiety

Another form of spiritual crisis identified was emotional instability and anxiety. Several students reported feelings of stress, anxiety, and restlessness, which they attributed to the overwhelming pressure of academic performance and the influence of social media. These emotional struggles were often coupled with a lack of coping mechanisms rooted in spiritual practices.

A teacher (Teacher A) explained:

“Many of the students appear anxious, and you can see it in their faces. They seem to be constantly worrying about their grades and their social media presence. This affects their ability to focus on spiritual growth.”

The emotional turbulence experienced by students was often compounded by low spiritual engagement, where students found it difficult to establish a consistent connection with their religious practices.

c. Decline in Religious Participation

A third form of spiritual crisis that emerged was a decline in religious participation. Students reported a decreased interest in participating in collective religious activities such as communal prayers, religious study groups, and spiritual retreats. This disengagement from religious practices was linked to the reduced influence of religious education in their daily lives, as students often felt that the religious teachings were not applicable to their personal experiences.

One student (Ahmad, XII IPS 2) remarked:

“I used to be really enthusiastic about attending religious classes, but now I find myself skipping more often. I feel like the teachings we get don’t really resonate with the things I go through every day.”

The diminishing enthusiasm for religious practices highlighted a significant gap between formal religious education and its real-life application in the students' daily lives.

Factors Influencing the Weakening of Spirituality in Students

Several factors were identified as influencing the weakening of spirituality among students in the school environment. These factors can be classified into internal and external influences.

a. Internal Factors: Lack of Motivation and Self-Awareness

Internal factors played a significant role in the weakening of spirituality among students. Many students admitted to a lack of motivation to engage in religious practices, such as daily prayers and reading the Qur'an. This was partly due to a lack of self-awareness regarding the importance of spiritual connection in maintaining emotional and psychological well-being.

As one student (Rina, XI IPS 1) expressed:

“I know I should pray more and read the Qur’an, but I just don’t feel motivated. It’s hard to focus on those things when my mind is always preoccupied with school and social media.”

This lack of motivation was linked to a disconnect from the deeper meaning of religious practices, where students viewed religious activities more as rituals to be performed rather than as a means of personal reflection and spiritual growth.

b. External Factors: Influence of Social Media and Academic Pressure

External factors were also significant in influencing the weakening of spirituality. The influence of social media was frequently mentioned as a major disruptor of spiritual well-being. Students reported spending excessive amounts of time on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, which they acknowledged contributed to feelings of comparison, inadequacy, and materialism.

One teacher (Teacher B) noted:

“Social media has become a huge distraction for our students. It creates a false sense of what success and happiness look like, making it harder for them to focus on spiritual growth.”

Additionally, the pressure of academic performance was seen as a key external factor. Many students felt overwhelmed by the need to excel in their studies, which often led to neglecting religious activities.

A student (Dina, XI IPS 2) shared:

“The pressure to do well in school leaves me feeling drained. I don’t have the energy to focus on spiritual practices when I’m constantly thinking about assignments and exams.”

These external pressures created an environment where students struggled to prioritize spirituality amidst the demands of school and social media.

Effective Strategies for Restoring Spiritual Awareness in Generation Z

In response to the spiritual crisis, several strategies were proposed by the participants to restore spiritual awareness among students. These strategies focused on creating an environment that fosters personal reflection, meaningful engagement with religion, and supportive spiritual guidance.

a. Contextual and Reflective Religious Education

A common suggestion for improving spiritual engagement was the implementation of contextual religious education that directly addresses the challenges and realities faced by students. Teachers and students alike emphasized the importance of making religious teachings more relevant to the students' daily experiences, particularly in relation to issues like social media use, academic pressure, and personal identity.

As one teacher (Teacher C) explained:

“Religious lessons need to be tailored to the real struggles students face today, such as dealing with the pressures of social media or balancing academics and faith. When students see the connection between what they learn and their daily lives, they are more likely to engage.”

b. Role of Teachers as Spiritual Mentors

The role of teachers as spiritual mentors was also identified as a critical strategy. Teachers who act as role models for spiritual practices, demonstrate

empathy, and create open spaces for students to discuss their struggles were seen as vital in rebuilding students' spiritual engagement.

One student (Ika, XII IPS 1) shared:

"It helps when teachers talk to us about more than just academics. When they show us how they live their faith, it inspires me to do the same."

Teachers who integrated spiritual guidance into their daily interactions with students were seen as playing an essential role in restoring spiritual awareness and providing a sense of direction.

c. Spiritual Retreats and Interactive Activities

Additionally, students and teachers suggested organizing spiritual retreats and interactive religious activities that go beyond traditional classroom settings. These activities, such as spiritual retreats, mentorship programs, and group discussions, were viewed as opportunities for students to engage with their faith in a more personal and reflective manner.

One teacher (Teacher D) suggested:

"We could hold more spiritual retreats or activities where students can reflect on their faith away from the distractions of daily life. These events allow students to deepen their spiritual understanding and connect with each other in meaningful ways."

These initiatives were viewed as effective in fostering a more authentic connection with spirituality, helping students navigate their personal challenges while strengthening their relationship with God.

Summary of Results

The results of this study highlight the multifaceted nature of the spiritual crisis faced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam. The primary forms of this crisis include a loss of direction, emotional instability, and a decline in religious participation. The weakening of spirituality was found to be influenced by both internal factors, such as lack of motivation and self-awareness, and external factors, including the influence of social media and academic pressure.

In response to these challenges, several strategies were identified as effective in restoring spiritual awareness among students. These strategies include contextualizing religious education, empowering teachers as spiritual mentors, and offering interactive spiritual activities. These findings suggest that a holistic approach that integrates both academic and spiritual development is essential for fostering a resilient and meaningful spiritual identity in Generation Z students.

Table 1. Themes from Interview Data

Theme	Frequency	Interpretation
Loss of Direction	10	Many students express feeling lost and disconnected from their spiritual path.
Emotional Instability	8	Anxiety, stress, and a lack of emotional stability are linked to spiritual disengagement.
Decline in Religious Participation	12	A significant reduction in interest in religious activities and communal worship.
Influence of Social Media	15	Social media distractions lead to feelings of inadequacy and materialism.
Academic Pressure	9	Academic demands contribute to neglecting spiritual practices.
Need for Contextual Religious Education	13	Students and teachers emphasize the importance of making religious teachings more applicable to daily life.
Role of Teachers as Mentors	14	Teachers acting as spiritual guides is seen as a crucial factor in spiritual restoration.
Interactive Spiritual Activities	11	Spiritual retreats and interactive events are recommended to enhance spiritual engagement.

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings from the study on the spiritual crisis faced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam. The discussion integrates the results with relevant theoretical frameworks and existing literature on spirituality, education, and youth development. This section will focus on the themes of spiritual crisis, the factors influencing spirituality, and the proposed strategies for restoring spiritual awareness among students. Through a synthesis of the data, theoretical insights, and previous research, the discussion seeks to highlight both commonalities and discrepancies in the findings, emphasizing the novelty of this study's contributions.

Spiritual Crisis and the Disconnect from Religious Practices

The study revealed that the primary forms of spiritual crisis among Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam were a loss of direction, emotional instability, and a decline in religious participation. These findings align with the growing body of literature on the spiritual crisis of Generation Z, which has been identified as a cohort grappling with existential challenges in the face of modern pressures (Ihsan et al., 2025). Many students in this study expressed feelings of confusion about their life's purpose, a symptom commonly associated with what Frankl (1984) terms "existential vacuum," where individuals struggle to find meaning in their lives, particularly when external distractions or pressures dominate their attention.

The loss of direction reported by students can also be linked to a broader trend of disconnection from traditional sources of meaning, including religion and spirituality. This trend has been widely discussed in the context of youth and modernity, with several studies pointing out how modernity, including the rapid pace of technological advancements, has led to a decrease in religious engagement (Ihsan et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025). The findings of this study confirm that Generation Z students, despite their heavy involvement in academic and social activities, often lack a deep sense of spiritual fulfillment, which, according to (Gulo, 2023), is critical for developing resilience against the pressures of modern life.

The decline in religious participation observed in this study also mirrors trends identified in previous research. Arya (2024) argue that the disengagement from religious practices among young people is not merely a trend but a sign of a deeper existential crisis. In this study, students reported a diminishing interest in participating in religious activities, such as communal prayers and Qur'an reading, which are central to spiritual development in Islamic education. This decline in participation can be understood as part of the broader cultural shift where spirituality is increasingly viewed as disconnected from everyday life, particularly in educational settings (Ihsan et al., 2025).

Internal and External Factors Influencing Spirituality

The weakening of spirituality among the students at MA NU Nurussalam was influenced by both internal and external factors. These factors were consistent with existing literature, which identifies the impact of internal motivations, psychological state, and external pressures such as social media and academic demands (Gulo, 2023; Sahroni et al., 2024). Internally, the lack of motivation to engage in spiritual practices was a significant factor. As noted by several students in the interviews, the pressure to perform academically and the overwhelming influence of social media created a disconnect from spiritual goals. This aligns with findings from Sahroni et al. (2024), who argue that young people's internal struggle with spiritual engagement is often exacerbated by the external allure of material success and instant gratification offered by digital platforms.

Social media's role in the weakening of spirituality is also a key external factor that emerged from the study. Students reported feeling the influence of social media in shaping their values and aspirations (Hasyim et al., 2025). Hoover (2025) assert that the pervasive nature of social media fosters an individualistic culture that promotes self-fulfillment and material success, rather than spiritual growth. In this study, students' reliance on digital escapism to cope with academic and emotional stress reflects a pattern identified by Gulo (2023), where social media is often used as a superficial outlet to mask deeper emotional and spiritual struggles. This finding

supports the notion that digital spaces, while offering instant gratification, do not provide the profound sense of purpose and spiritual grounding that religious practices can offer.

The academic pressures faced by students also contributed significantly to the weakening of their spiritual connection (Ayyubi et al., 2025). As discussed in the literature, the stress related to academic achievement often leads to neglect of spiritual practices, as students prioritize their studies over their religious obligations. In the context of this study, students reported feeling too exhausted and overwhelmed by academic responsibilities to engage in spiritual practices, which they described as "time-consuming" and "distracting from schoolwork." This reflects a broader trend observed in youth studies, where academic success is often seen as the primary goal, with spirituality taking a backseat Ihsan et al. (2025; Sari et al. (2025).

Effective Strategies for Restoring Spiritual Awareness

The strategies proposed by students and teachers in this study to restore spiritual awareness reflect an increasing call for more contextualized and reflective religious education. The notion of contextualizing religious education to meet the needs of contemporary youth is not new. In fact, it has been advocated by numerous scholars, including Sahroni et al. (2024), who argue that religious education should be responsive to the specific challenges students face today, such as navigating the pressures of social media and academic life. This study's findings reinforce this argument, as students emphasized the need for religious education to address real-life issues such as stress management, digital media consumption, and maintaining a healthy balance between academic and spiritual life.

Moreover, the idea of empowering teachers as spiritual mentors aligns with the growing emphasis on teacher-student relationships in the educational literature. According to Gulo (2023), teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' spiritual lives by not only teaching religious knowledge but also by serving as role models and guides. The students in this study suggested that when teachers openly demonstrate their own spiritual commitment and offer personal guidance, they can foster a more profound connection to religious practices (Fauzi et al., 2025). This aligns with findings from Ihsan et al. (2025); Sari et al. (2025), who emphasize the importance of mentorship in spiritual development, noting that students are more likely to engage with their faith when they have a trusted adult to guide them.

The recommendation for spiritual retreats and interactive religious activities also reflects a broader shift in educational approaches that value experiential learning and personal reflection. Several studies, including those by Gulo (2023; Sahroni et al. (2024), highlight the importance of activities that allow students to

experience spirituality outside the classroom, where they can reflect and deepen their understanding of faith. This study's findings support the idea that spiritual retreats, mentoring programs, and interactive discussions offer students opportunities to reconnect with their spiritual selves in a more personal and engaging way.

Novelty of This Study

While previous research has extensively explored the concept of spiritual crises in the context of modern youth (Hasibuan et al., 2024; Gulo et al., 2024), this study contributes new insights by focusing specifically on Islamic educational settings in Indonesia, where the interplay between traditional religious teachings and modern pressures is particularly pronounced. The novelty of this study lies in its contextualized approach, which not only addresses the spiritual struggles of Generation Z students but also proposes practical, implementable strategies tailored to the unique challenges they face in a rapidly changing digital and educational environment. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the role of teachers as spiritual role models, a perspective that is often underrepresented in existing literature. The integration of teacher-student relationships into the spiritual development process highlights an underexplored aspect of spiritual education that could lead to more effective approaches in addressing the spiritual needs of young people.

This study provides valuable insights into the spiritual crisis faced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam and the factors contributing to their weakening spirituality. The findings confirm existing literature on the influence of modern pressures, including social media and academic stress, on students' spiritual well-being. However, the study also offers novel contributions by highlighting the importance of contextualizing religious education and empowering teachers to serve as spiritual mentors. These strategies are crucial for restoring spiritual awareness among students and fostering a more meaningful engagement with their faith. Ultimately, this study underscores the need for an educational approach that balances academic achievement with the cultivation of spiritual and emotional well-being.

Table 2. Novel Contributions of This Study

Contribution	Comparison	Novelty
Contextualizing religious education	Existing literature emphasizes traditional methods (Ahnur et al., 2025; Gulo, 2023)	Proposes a more tailored, relevant approach to meet students' real-life challenges
Role of teachers as spiritual mentors	Previous studies highlight teacher-student relationships but focus more on academic guidance (Sahroni et al., 2024)	Emphasizes teachers' dual role as academic and spiritual mentors
Spiritual retreats and interactive activities	Some studies mention retreats (Ihsan et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025)	Proposes practical, experiential spiritual activities that engage students in meaningful reflection and connection with their faith

CONCLUSION

This study explored the spiritual crisis faced by Generation Z students at MA NU Nurussalam, focusing on their emotional, psychological, and religious challenges in a rapidly evolving educational and digital landscape. The primary findings indicate that students experience a loss of direction and purpose, emotional instability, and a decline in religious participation. These crises are largely driven by both internal factors, such as lack of motivation and self-awareness, and external pressures, including the pervasive influence of social media and academic stress. The study further identified that current religious education practices fail to address the real-life challenges students face, contributing to their disengagement from spirituality. Effective strategies proposed include contextualizing religious education, empowering teachers as spiritual mentors, and providing experiential spiritual activities such as retreats.

The implications of these findings underscore the need for Islamic educational institutions to reevaluate their approach to spiritual development. By integrating more relevant and reflective religious teachings that address the complexities of modern youth, schools can help bridge the gap between formal religious education and personal spiritual experiences. Furthermore, the importance of teachers serving as spiritual role models highlights the crucial role educators play not only in academic guidance but also in fostering spiritual growth. These strategies offer a path forward in enhancing the spiritual resilience of

students, enabling them to navigate the challenges of contemporary life while maintaining a strong connection to their faith.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the spiritual crisis of Generation Z, particularly within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. It adds new insights into the practical strategies that can be implemented in educational settings to improve students' spiritual engagement. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single institution, and future research could explore a broader range of schools to determine whether these findings are generalizable. Additionally, further investigation into the long-term effects of these proposed strategies on students' spiritual development would be valuable. The study encourages further research into the integration of technology and spirituality, as well as the development of comprehensive, contextually relevant spiritual curricula that resonate with the unique challenges faced by today's youth.

REFERENCES

- Ahnur, T. P., Pratiwi, D. F., & Hariry, S. (2025). Faktor Internal dan Eksternal sebagai Pemicu Gangguan dalam Perkembangan Jiwa Keagamaan Remaja: Antara Krisis, Ketaatan Ekstrem, dan Fanatisme. *JIMU: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisipliner*, 3(3), 1663–1671. <https://doi.org/https://ojs.smkmerahputih.com/index.php/jimu/article/view/910>
- Al Ayyubi, I. I., Prayetno, E., Noerzanah, F., & Rahmawati, S. (2026). Maths In The Qur'an: Should The MI Curriculum Adopt An Islamisation Of Science Approach? *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 2(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71305/ijir.v2i1.235>
- Arminah, A., & Romelah, R. (2025). Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Islam bagi Generasi Z di Tengah Arus Globalisasi. *Arini: Jurnal Ilmiah Dan Karya Inovasi Guru*, 2(2), 349–366. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.71153/arini.v2i2.442>
- Arya, E. S. (2024). Social Media's Role in Shifting Cultures: From Collective Roots to Individual Branches. *Available at SSRN 4785094*.
- Ayyubi, I. I. Al, Nurhikmah, Fitriani, N., Putra, A. L. T., & Hidayatullah, M. B. (2025). The Effect Of LEGO Games On Early Childhood Spatial Ability In Understanding Mathematical Concepts. *IJEL: International Journal of Education and Learning*, 1(1), 13–38. <https://journal.berkahopungpungan.com/index.php/IJEL/article/view/57>
- Batubara, A. (2024). The Role of FoMO and Hedonism in Shaping Consumptive Behaviors and Religious Adherence Among Sibolga's Muslim Millennials.

- Abrahamic Religions: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama*, 4(2), 150–159.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22373/arj.v4i2.25710>
- Fauzi, H. A. H., Al Ayyubi, I. I., Nurhikmah, Prayetno, E., & Al-Ghatnaini, R. A. S. (2025). Optimizing the Role of Operators in Management Information Systems (MIS) at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Arrukhshatul'ulum. *Journal of Nusantara Education*, 4(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.57176/jn.v4i2.134>
- Fauzian, R., & Istianah, R. (2025). *Pendidikan Islam Dan Tantangan Era Globalisasi: Dinamika Ekonomi, Sosial, Budaya, Politik, Dan Reorientasi Kebijakan*. CV. Intake Pustaka.
- Gulo, R. P. (2023). Peran generasi Z dalam mengekspansi misiologi di era Society 5.0. *Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen*, 2(1), 132–137.
- Hasyim, Ramlan, Safitri, D., Fitriizki, S. D. N., Nurhikmah, & Elysa, R. N. (2025). Introducing Hajj Values to Early Childhood Through Experiential Learning at the Sudiang Ka'bah Replica. *Jurnal Al Burhan*, 5(1), 143–154. <https://doi.org/10.58988/jab.v5i1.412>
- Hoover, S. M. (2025). *Religion in the Media Age*. Routledge.
- Ihsan, F. A., Aulia, D., Puspita, D. P., Yanti, A. S., & Juliani, J. (2025). Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam dalam Menghadapi Generasi Z. *Mesada: Journal of Innovative Research*, 2(2), 1456–1468. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61253/fdb0m956>
- Irpan, I., & Sain, Z. H. (2024). The Crucial Role Of Islamic Religious Education In Shaping Children's Character: Psychological And Spiritual Review. *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, Dan Agama*, 16(1), 383–392. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v16i1.4902>
- Lu, J. I. (2021). Educational Models Of Spiritual Formation n Theological Education: Introspection-Based Spiritual Formation. *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 24(1), 28–41. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12560>
- Moslimany, R., Otaibi, A., & Shaikh, F. (2024). Designing A Holistic Curriculum: Challenges and Opportunities in Islamic Education. *Journal on Islamic Studies*, 1(1), 52–73. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35335/beztg009>
- Putra, K. S. (2024). Konsep Pendidikan Spiritual Imam Al-Ghazali dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam. *Jurnal Ilmiah Guru Madrasah*, 3(2), 104–117. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.69548/jigm.v3i2.44>
- Rahmawati, U. H., & Imam Fauji, L. (2025). Peran pendidikan Islam kontekstual dalam mendukung kesehatan mental remaja generasi-Z. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(2), 240–245. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v10i02.27090>

- Rizal, M., & Amaluddin, A. (2025). Membangun Generasi Tangguh melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Kecerdasan Spiritual. *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education*, 1(2), 124–135. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.64690/jhuse.v1i2.201>
- Sahroni, S., Anwar, F., Sari, N. H., & Martini, T. (2024). Membangun Karakter Dan Spiritual Gen Z Di Lingkungan Pendidikan Perspektif Ruhologi Quotient. *Aktualita: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 14(1), 68–80. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54459/aktualita.v14i1.675>
- Sari, H. P., Husna, S., & Siregar, R. (2025). Peran Pendidikan Islam dalam Mengatasi Dampak Negatif Globalisasi terhadap Karakter Generasi Z. *QOSIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial & Humaniora*, 3(2), 790–800. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61104/jq.v3i2.1143>
- Soleh, M. S. (2023). Youth, Religion, and Pop Culture: Modernitas Dalam Gaya Hidup Hedonisme Remaja Dan Budaya Populer Versus Eksistensi Agama Jaman Now. *SEMAR: Jurnal Sosial Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 1(2), 35–44. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59966/semar.v1i02.303>
- Sugianto, E. (2024). The Role Of Islamic Religious Education In The Development Of Students Spirituality And Morality In The Digitalization Era: Case Study Of Students At Universitas Pertiba Pangkalpinang. *Jurnal Sustainable*, 7(2), 412–422. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32923/kjmp.v7i2.5135>
- Suhifatullah, M. I. (2024). *Menggali Potensi Batin: Manajemen Stratejik Pendidikan Karakter untuk Meningkatkan Kecerdasan Spiritual Siswa*. Mega Press Nusantara.
- Syukri, M., & Sulhiawati, E. (2026). A Contextual Approach in Islamic Religious Education Learning. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Science*, 2(1), 37–53.
- Tamphu, S., Suyitno, I., Susanto, G., Budiana, N., Salim, M. R., Nurhikmah, & Purnawati, W. (2024). Building bridges to the future of learning: Exploring artificial intelligence research using R-Studio assisted bibliometrics. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2417623>
- Zannatunnisya, Z., Parapat, A., Harahap, A. S., & Rambe, A. (2024). *Pendidikan Karakter Untuk Anak Usia Dini: Integrasi Nilai Spiritual*. PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.
- Zubaidi, M. A. (2025). *Pendidikan Islam 5.0: Integrasi Spiritualitas Dan Teknologi Di Era Disrupsi*. Zahir Publishing.