

The Real-Life Transformation of Generation Z Due to Social Media: A Hadith Living Perspective on Understanding Digital Culture

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ABSTRACT

The development of social media has brought significant changes to the lifestyle of Generation Z as a digital-native generation. Social media functions not only as a means of communication but also influences social behavior, lifestyles, interaction patterns, and religious understanding. This study aims to analyze the transformation of Generation Z's real-life experiences due to social media through the perspective of Living Hadith in understanding digital culture. The research employs a qualitative approach using phenomenological and Living Hadith methods. Data were collected through indirect interviews, questionnaires, and documentation involving Generation Z who actively use social media. The findings reveal that social media has a significant influence on the social and religious behavior of Generation Z. On the one hand, social media serves as an effective medium for disseminating religious values and hadiths to a wider audience; on the other hand, it also contributes to the emergence of individualistic behavior, digital dependency, and a decline in face-to-face social interactions. Living Hadith emerges as a form of actualizing hadith values in digital life through da'wah content, Islamic motivational messages, and religious practices shared on social media platforms. This study emphasizes that Living Hadith remains highly relevant as a moral and social guideline for addressing the challenges of digital culture in the era of Generation Z.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has significantly changed people's lifestyles, especially for Generation Z. This generation is known as digital natives because they grew up with the internet and social media. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have become an inseparable part of Generation Z's daily life. Moreover, digital natives use technology in

ways that are very different from previous generations and may be less skilled in the critical thinking needed to evaluate digital data (Prensky, 2001) Generation Z is a group born during the era of digital technology and internet growth. The main traits of Gen Z are being active on social media, quickly absorbing information, and having a communication style based on digital platforms. Technology offers convenience, but it also leads to the risk of losing valuable human skills in certain contexts. In "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," it is mentioned how important it is to build critical thinking in education, which relates to learning digital literacy to fight against misinformation and digital manipulation (Freire, 2005).

Social media has a big impact on communication patterns, lifestyle, and even religious perspectives. Religious information, including hadiths, is now easily accessible through digital content like dakwah videos, hadith quotes, Islamic podcasts, and religious motivation. This phenomenon shows that hadiths are not just understood textually, but are also alive and practiced in the digital culture of modern society. In hadith studies, this phenomenon is known as the term "living hadith." Data from We Are Social and Hootsuite in the Digital 2023 report shows that internet users in Indonesia have reached over 212.9 million people, with a penetration rate of 77 percent of the total population. Out of this number, around 167 million people actively use social media, which means more than 60 percent of Indonesians now interact in digital spaces every day. This fact shows that social media is not just a means of entertainment, but a new public space that shapes thinking, attitudes, and behavior, including in the realm of religiosity (Tya Nursintia, 2025).

Meanwhile, in January 2024, We Are Social showed that Indonesia had 139 million active social media users. This number is equivalent to 49.9% of the total population. The most used social media platforms are WhatsApp at 90.9%, Instagram at 85.3%, Facebook at 81.6%, and TikTok at 73.5%. Besides these, there are also other platforms like Telegram at 61.3% and Twitter (X) at 57.7%, which have a fairly significant user share (Hurin'in AM, 2025). This data shows that social media usage in Indonesia is growing rapidly, especially among millennials and Generation Z who were born in the tech-savvy era. Social media is a digital platform that allows individuals to communicate, share information, and build social interactions virtually. Social media has a big influence on the formation of identity and the culture of modern society. Social media is part of digital literacy, which is not just about technical skills but also the ability to adapt to constantly evolving changes. It's hoped that using technology can help balance Generation Z's ability to analyze information, be critical, innovative, and improve their personal skills (Murray, 2018).

Living hadith refers to the way society interacts with hadith in social and cultural life. This study doesn't just look at the text of hadith, but also at how hadith is practiced, understood, and applied in daily life (Angelia et al., 2017). In the digital era, living hadith has transformed through social media as a new space for spreading religious values. More than that, social media can create expectations that aren't reflected in reality, giving an illusion that something exists. Living hadith is a study of how hadith is understood, practiced, and alive within community traditions. Living hadith doesn't just focus on the text of the hadith, but also on the social and cultural practices that develop in people's lives. The living hadith tradition shows that understanding hadith isn't only about the textual and normative aspects, but also about how hadith is applied in everyday life by Muslims. In this digital era, the concept of living hadith is going through a new dynamic: hadith is no longer only accessed through books or formal studies, but spreads widely through short posts, videos, image quotes, and various forms of social media content (Iryani & Syam, 2023).

However, social media also brings negative impacts on the real life of Generation Z, such as decreased face-to-face social interactions, the emergence of a consumerist culture, digital addiction, and

even moral crises due to uncontrolled content. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed on how living hadith can serve as a moral and social guide for Generation Z in dealing with digital culture. Miski revealed that there is a change in religiosity that is starting to enter a virtualization phase. The phenomenon of posting hadiths is concrete evidence of the creation of a new digital piety bond that we usually encounter in offline spaces (Miski and Hamdan, 2021). This phenomenon has certainly become a habit displayed in digital spaces. Hadith is not just textual; it becomes a core guideline that is aligned with digital developments.

Digital culture is a way of life influenced by the development of digital technology and the internet. This culture brings changes to communication patterns, social interactions, and even religious practices. Hadiths are no longer only studied in formal education settings but are also widely shared online through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and religious podcasts. This shows how the values of hadiths “live” in cyberspace and become a part of the digital culture of Muslims. However, this openness of information also brings risks, such as the spread of fake hadiths (*maudhu'*) and incorrect interpretations due to the public's lack of religious literacy (Hasanah, 2022). Based on this phenomenon, this study aims to analyze the transformation of the real-life experiences of Generation Z due to social media through the perspective of living hadiths in understanding digital culture.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenology methods and a living hadith study. The phenomenology approach is used to understand the social experiences of Generation Z in using social media and digital culture, while the living hadith study is used to analyze the implementation of hadith in digital life. The research subjects are Generation Z aged 15–25 who are active on social media. Data collection techniques are carried out through indirect interviews, questionnaires, digital observation, and documentation. Observations are made on respondents' social media activities and social behavior. Questionnaires are distributed to get data related to understanding hadith, social media use, and changes in social behavior (Digital Culture). Documentation in the form of screenshots of hadith content and digital activities is used as supporting data. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model in (Sugiyono, 2015), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Drawing conclusions in qualitative research involves describing all the subcategories of themes listed, along with interviews. Once explained, the research results need to be presented to answer the research questions based on the aspects, components, factors, and dimensions of the study.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research results show that social media has a significant impact on the real-life of Generation Z. This influence is seen in changes in communication patterns, lifestyle, and social interactions. Most informants are more active in communicating through social media than in direct interactions. Moreover, social media shapes a culture of social validation through the number of likes, followers, and comments. This condition affects the psychology and behavior patterns of Generation Z in everyday life. Social media not only influences social aspects but also the religiosity of Generation Z. Religious content on social media provides easy access to religious knowledge. Many Generation Z individuals gain spiritual motivation through preaching videos, hadith quotes, and online studies. However, this transformation also brings about the phenomenon of virtual religiosity, which is religious practice more prominently displayed on social media than actually implemented in real life.

Gen Z Digital Culture

Digital culture is a form of behavior, habits, norms, and ways of interacting that are formed in daily life. Generation Z is a generation that has grown up with technological developments like the internet, social media, and other digital devices that have become an integral part of daily activities. Digital culture is reflected in everyday life, and through informal interview data and distributed questionnaires, several different responses were obtained. Based on the respondents' feedback, social media has varying levels of influence on Generation Z's lifestyle. Most respondents revealed that social media has a quite significant to very significant impact on their lives. This influence is seen in easy access to information, changes in communication patterns, the ability to follow current trends, and fulfilling entertainment needs. Some respondents briefly said that social media can help them get information quickly and stay up to date with the latest developments, making social media an important part of their daily activities.

In addition, some respondents rated the impact of social media as not very significant because they use it according to its intended functions, namely as a means of communication, catching up on news, seeking information, and entertainment. This group tends to be able to control their social media use, so it doesn't greatly influence their lifestyle or behavior patterns. These findings suggest that the level of social media influence is highly affected by how individuals utilize these digital platforms. While there are positive impacts, some respondents also reported negative effects from using social media. One common impact is reduced control over device usage time, causing users to spend more time on social media than planned. Initially, they only intended to use social media to refresh their minds, but it can stretch on endlessly. This condition indicates that social media has the potential to cause addiction if it is not used properly and in a controlled way.

Interestingly, some of the other respondents showed a selective attitude in consuming social media content. They preferred content that is inspirational, educational, and motivating because it is considered able to refresh the mind and provide benefits for self-development. This shows that Generation Z is not just a passive consumer of social media, but also able to filter information and content that fits their needs and values. Overall, the data shows that social media has become an important part of Generation Z's life. Its influence can be seen in communication, access to information, entertainment, trend formation, and even time management. However, the level of influence varies for each individual, depending on how intensely they use it, the purpose of their use, and their ability to control and filter the content they consume. That way, social media can be a useful tool for Generation Z if used wisely, critically, and in moderation. The phenomenon of digital entertainment needs to be understood in the context of Islamic character education. The environment plays an important role in instilling media literacy based on hadith, which is the ability to select entertainment with spiritual and ethical awareness. By equipping Generation Z with an understanding of hadiths about entertainment, they will be more capable of self-control, balancing enjoyment with responsibility, and using social media as a tool for tarbiyah (Zahra, 2025).

Technology Usage Intensity

Based on the data obtained, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok are the social media platforms most used by Gen Z respondents. Almost all respondents mentioned Instagram and WhatsApp as the social media they use in their daily lives. Instagram is used to share information, follow trends, and interact with friends and communities, while WhatsApp is more commonly used for personal or group communication needs, whether in the context of education, work, or social relationships. Besides Instagram and WhatsApp, TikTok is also a very popular platform among respondents. The presence of

TikTok shows Gen Z's high interest in short videos that are informative, educational, or entertaining. This platform has become one of the main sources for getting the latest information, keeping up with digital trends, and expressing creativity. TikTok's popularity reflects changes in Gen Z's media consumption habits, as they tend to like visual content that's quick, engaging, and easy to understand.

Some respondents also still use other platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter (X), Telegram, and Line. YouTube is used to access more in-depth video content, like learning, tutorials, and entertainment. Meanwhile, even though Facebook isn't as popular as Instagram and TikTok, some respondents still use it to interact within certain communities. Twitter (X) serves as a way to follow updates and current issues in real-time, while Telegram and Line are used as alternative communication tools and for sharing information within certain groups. Overall, the data shows that Gen Z tends to use more than one social media platform simultaneously. This indicates that each platform has different functions depending on the user's needs, like communication (WhatsApp, Telegram, Line), entertainment and trends (TikTok, Instagram), information searching (YouTube, Twitter/X), and broader social interaction (Facebook). These findings show that Gen Z's digital life is highly integrated with various social media platforms that complement each other in fulfilling communication, information, entertainment, and self-expression needs. The intensity of social media use is done every day, meaning that the usage can exceed 3 hours a day. Respondents revealed that they use more than two digital platforms daily. Of course, this usage affects how social media is utilized for entertainment and other needs. Social media is also used to make communication easier and smoother.

Life Transformation of Generation Z

Digital transformation has brought significant changes in both education and religious understanding for Generation Z. This generation, born and raised in the digital era, shows different characteristics in the way they absorb and process information. They are more responsive to multimedia content, like learning videos and interactive simulations, which are an integral part of their learning process. Digital transformation has created a more dynamic and accessible learning environment, where information can be easily accessed through various digital platforms. This phenomenon shows that digitalization has become a major catalyst in transforming learning. However, on the other hand, this easy access also poses challenges in terms of verifying the authenticity of sources and the depth of spiritual understanding. main in learning transformation. But on the other hand, this ease of access also raises challenges in terms of verifying the authenticity of sources and the depth of spiritual understanding.

From a religious perspective, this event is supported by modern social and communication theories. One of them is the Uses and Gratifications Theory presented by Blumler and Katz (1974), which explains that individuals use media to fulfill certain needs such as entertainment, social interaction, or self-recognition (Jayanti, 2025). That influence has already become a stimulus built into the mindset and is then manifested in behavior. Social media can affect the way young people understand religion. The huge influence of social media on daily behavior can create a more secular and materialistic mindset, which sometimes conflicts with religious teachings. Generation Z, who grew up with technology, are often more influenced by global trends and popular culture that are more worldly, rather than the deeper and more traditional religious values. This can reduce their interest in seriously studying religion, because they are more attracted to the instant and entertaining things offered by social media.

The presence of content that doesn't align with religious values is also a significant challenge. The internet makes it easy to access all kinds of material, including vulgar, violent, or content that goes against Islamic principles. Easy access to this kind of content can affect how Gen Z sees things and behaves, so they need guidance in choosing content that is appropriate and matches the values they follow. Feeling powerless in the face of negative information is also a big concern. Not all young people have the skills to critically evaluate information, and many of them might not yet be able to differentiate between reliable and unreliable sources. Critical thinking skills are really important, especially in an era where information spreads super fast (Hastini et al., 2020).

Living Hadith on Social Media

The phenomenon of living hadith is seen in the practice of spreading hadith through social media. Hadith is used as captions, motivational content, and even as a guide for social behavior. Living hadith has transformed from traditional study settings to digital spaces that are more flexible and easily accessible. The concept of Living Hadith refers to bringing hadith to life by applying it in everyday contexts, so that hadith is not only seen as a religious text but also as a guide for life that can be adjusted to the situation and needs of the times (Iffah, 2021). This means that the rise of social media has become an important factor in the application of hadith, which of course is adapted to the development of the digital world. Based on respondent data, the understanding and practice of hadith values in social media use tend to focus on aspects like verifying information, maintaining speech or communication ethics, and being cautious in sharing information. Most respondents stated that they try to scrutinize information they receive before trusting or sharing it with others. This is reflected in statements such as 'being more careful in receiving and sharing information,' 'not spreading information that is not yet verified,' and 'being cautious when sharing information through social media.' These findings show an awareness of applying hadith values that emphasize checking the truth of news before spreading it, thereby avoiding the dissemination of false information or hoaxes.

Other respondents also showed the application of hadith values in the form of maintaining communication ethics in the digital space. Some respondents mentioned not making negative comments, avoiding hate speech, being careful with words, and not talking too much about unimportant things. These attitudes reflect an effort to implement hadith teachings about the importance of speaking good words or remaining silent. However, there were some respondents who answered "no", "don't know", or "not really", indicating that not all respondents consciously relate their social media activities to hadith values. Overall, the data shows that Generation Z tends to apply hadith values in digital culture through wise social media behavior, especially in maintaining communication ethics, verifying information, and avoiding the spread of useless or incorrect content. This practice shows that social media has become a new space for the actualization of hadith in the lives of Generation Z. Hadith is not only studied, but also practiced through the culture of sharing Islamic content and digital preaching. As stated in the following hadith:



Figure 2. A post from the @thesunnah_path account

"It is enough for someone to be called a liar when he tells everything he hears" (HR. Muslim). This hadith serves as a reminder for social media users not to easily spread news that may not be true. This means that every social media user, especially Generation Z, can be careful in processing news or information obtained on social media. Living hadith has important relevance in building moral and digital ethics awareness for Generation Z. Hadith values such as honesty, simplicity, communication ethics, and maintaining social relationships can serve as a guide for using social media wisely. Thus, living hadith can act as a moral control in facing the negative impacts of digital culture.



Gambar 1. Postingan dari akun @albinaa.ibs

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent" (HR. Bukhari & Muslim). This hadith shows that there is guidance for social media users to maintain ethics online. Sometimes comments on social media are not accompanied by kind words, and in such cases, it's better to just stay silent. Of course, the hadith gives a clear picture for users to spread goodness, positive moral messages, and reminders of social etiquette so that people can use social media in the best way possible. It's not uncommon to find some hadith quotes on social media that can certainly be shared to spread good values.



Figure 2. A post from the @himatektro_usk account

"You should be honest, because honesty will lead to goodness, and goodness will lead to paradise." (Hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). This hadith is often seen in the form of visual infographics shared by certain account owners as a reminder for social media users, especially Generation Z, to always maintain social ethics. Azmi states that living hadith as an ethical guide on social media provides a framework for thinking, behaving, and reflecting Islamic values in the digital environment. By applying principles such as honesty, patience, mutual respect, and verification (tabayyun), Generation Z can use social media as a tool to spread goodness and create a healthy and harmonious interaction

space (Azmi Fauziah Suanda, 2024). This kind of digital culture will certainly be a positive aspect of social media use. It becomes a shield in building a stronger foundation for digital culture.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the transformation of Generation Z's life through social media has seen changes in communication, social behavior, lifestyle, interaction patterns, as well as religious understanding gained. This digital culture shows that social media can be a useful tool for Generation Z if used wisely, critically, and proportionally. This means that the use of social media that shapes digital culture depends on how careful one is when using it. Social media used by Generation Z includes YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter (X), Telegram, and Line. The use of these media varies depending on the needs and relevance in daily life. Social media encourages young people to continuously self-evaluate so that its use aligns with its purpose. Of course, this usage reflects each Generation Z's self-image to maintain it properly.

The concept of Living Hadith refers to bringing hadiths to life through their application in everyday contexts, so that hadiths are not only seen as religious texts but also as life guides that can be adapted to the situations and needs of the times. Social media has become a new space for the actualization of hadiths in the lives of Generation Z. Hadiths are not just studied, but also practiced through the culture of sharing Islamic content and digital da'wah. These findings provide insight into the study of living hadiths in relation to digital culture. This study also has limitations, which can be turned into recommendations for future research, such as expanding the distribution of questionnaires, and the research could be conducted quantitatively.

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