

The FOMO Paradox: Why Gen Z is Well-Connected but Spiritually Disconnected

Ilma Ainun Nazila*¹, Siti Nur Ramadhania¹, Musammil Lateh²

¹Universitas Islam KH Mukhtar Syafaat, Indonesia

²Hatyay University, Thailand

Email: ainunnazila101@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/fiqh.v2i1.999>

Received: 23 August 2025

Revised: 26 December 2025

Accepted: 22 February 2026

Abstract:

This study aims to explore the influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on the search for meaning in life and spirituality among Generation Z, as well as its relationship with anxiety and depression levels. Generation Z is known for its high level of digital connectivity, but it also faces significant challenges to its mental and spiritual well-being. This study uses a phenomenological approach and in-depth interviews to explore participants' subjective experiences. The findings suggest that FOMO is closely related to anxiety, depression, and emotional dissatisfaction arising from excessive social media consumption. Additionally, many Gen Z individuals seek spiritual fulfillment through non-institutional practices, such as mindfulness and meditation, rather than traditional religious ones. These practices are often considered to be more effective in coping with emotional distress compared to prayer or religious rituals. This research contributes to understanding how Generation Z balances the digital world and their spiritual needs. It is recommended that scholars and policymakers integrate secular practices with Islamic spiritual principles to support the psychological and spiritual well-being of Gen Z.

Keywords: *Fear of Missing Out, Generation Z, Anxiety, Depression, Spirituality*

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, is known as the digitally connected generation. They live in a fast-paced world where information and social interactions are readily available on various social media platforms. This technology offers advantages for communication and learning, but it also poses significant challenges for mental health and social well-being (Chakrabarti, 2024; Latupeirissa & Cistadewi, 2025). A phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which refers to anxiety or worry about being left behind in social experiences or in the wake of trending information, is increasingly prevalent among Gen Z. Although they are more connected than previous generations, feelings of emotional and social isolation often arise, which can negatively impact their psychological well-being (Bhat et al., 2024; Vasile et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to investigate how this phenomenon affects their lives as a whole, especially in terms of the search for meaning and spirituality.

The FOMO phenomenon not only creates feelings of anxiety related to social experiences that are left behind, but also related to deeper emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression. Research shows that excessive interaction with social media can

increase feelings of constant anxiety, where individuals feel constantly under pressure to stay engaged with social trends and activities (Anto et al., 2023; Sinha, 2025). This can lead to an inability to enjoy personal time or connect more deeply with oneself. Even in a highly connected world, many members of Gen Z feel an emotional and spiritual void, which they may be trying to fill by seeking deeper meaning in life. This phenomenon is important to understand because of its far-reaching impact on individuals' psychological and spiritual development in the digital age.

This FOMO phenomenon is increasingly common among Gen Z, especially on social media, which is the main channel for their social interaction. Studies show that young people who access platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter more often tend to feel anxiety about lagging behind information and social experiences (Ariefdjohan et al., 2025; Fatuma, 2024). A study in Mexico found that heavy social media use, such as Instagram and TikTok, increased FOMO scores among high school students (Maciel-Saldierna et al., 2024; Olivares-Guido et al., 2024). In addition, this condition is often accompanied by sleep disturbances, emotional tension, and dissatisfaction with daily life. Despite being digitally connected, Gen Z often feels less emotionally and spiritually connected, which can add to the challenges in their quest for life balance.

Many studies have examined the relationship between social media use and mental health, specifically the negative impact caused by FOMO. Most studies attribute this phenomenon to increased levels of anxiety and depression among adolescents and young adults (Korzhina et al., 2022; Rahmani et al., 2024; Rheinberger et al., 2023; Szcześniak et al., 2022). Some research reveals that although Gen Z is more likely to identify themselves as "spiritual," they are often not involved in traditional spiritual practices or institutional religion (Park et al., 2023; J. Wang et al., 2025). Instead, they prefer to seek meaning through non-traditional practices, such as mindfulness, meditation, or even connecting with nature. However, many of these studies have not examined in depth how this FOMO phenomenon affects their spirituality. This shows a gap in existing research, namely a lack of attention to the relationship between FOMO, the search for spirituality, and mental health in Gen Z.

Some previous studies have shown a link between social media use and mental health disorders, but not many have specifically examined how FOMO affects the search for spirituality and the search for meaning in life for Gen Z. Most studies have focused only on the negative impact of social media use, without investigating how the search for meaning in life or spirituality can be a response to feelings of anxiety caused by FOMO (Mirawati et al., 2024; Montag et al., 2023). This research will fill this gap by examining the interaction among FOMO, the pursuit of spirituality, and mental health, and how these three elements contribute to the overall well-being of Gen Z.

This research seeks to fill the gaps in the literature by examining the deeper relationship between FOMO, the search for meaning in life, and mental health among Gen Z. Using a phenomenological approach, this research will explore how this generation seeks the meaning of their lives in the midst of a disruptive digital world, as well as how they manage the negative impact of FOMO through the search for spirituality. The study also focused on how FOMO affects their anxiety and depression levels. It is hoped that this research can provide new insights on how to maintain a balance between the digital world and the search for deeper meaning in their lives.

As an innovative approach, this research will also examine the dimensions of religion and spirituality from a broader perspective. Although many young people today are more likely to move away from institutional religion, they still seek ways to relate to

the spiritual aspects of their lives. This has the potential to create a new paradigm in understanding the balance between technological developments, mental health, and the search for spirituality. This research can contribute to a more holistic approach to supporting Gen Z's well-being, both psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually, by integrating principles that help them address the challenges at hand.

The main question of this study is how FOMO affects the search for meaning in life and spirituality among Gen Z, as well as how this phenomenon relates to their levels of anxiety and depression. By examining the interaction between the three, this research will make a significant contribution to our understanding of the challenges faced by Gen Z. In addition, the results of this research can have important implications for Islamic law, especially in discussing the balance between the digital world and spiritual life, and in supporting the younger generation in living a balanced and meaningful life.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research design for this study adopts a Qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach, which is particularly well-suited to exploring and understanding individuals' lived experiences. Phenomenology is chosen because it focuses on participants' subjective experiences, enabling an in-depth examination of complex phenomena such as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), mental health, and spirituality (Adeniran & Tayo-Ladega, 2024; Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Cheeli, 2024). This approach is ideal for uncovering how Generation Z perceives and experiences these issues, especially in relation to their engagement with social media, mental health concerns, and spiritual pursuits. By utilizing phenomenology, the study seeks to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the essence of these experiences, emphasizing participants' perspectives. This design is crucial for understanding the intricate relationships among FOMO, mental health, and spirituality in Gen Z, where traditional quantitative approaches may overlook the nuance and depth of personal experiences.

Data collection will be conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of Gen Z individuals. This technique allows for both flexibility and structure, ensuring that core themes such as FOMO, mental health, and spirituality are addressed while also providing participants the freedom to discuss aspects of their experiences that they deem significant. Interviews will be conducted either in person or via digital platforms (e.g., Zoom or Skype), depending on participants' availability and geographic location, to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. The sample will consist of individuals aged 18-25 who actively engage with social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook and who also have some interest in spiritual or existential exploration. The sample size will be determined by theoretical saturation, meaning that data collection will continue until no new information emerges from the interviews (Henriksen et al., 2022; Saglam, 2024).

For data analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) will be employed, as it is well-suited to understanding how individuals make sense of their personal experiences. IPA enables the identification of recurring themes emerging from participants' narratives, specifically related to FOMO, mental health, and spirituality (Robinson & Williams, 2024; Squires, 2023). The analysis process will begin with an initial reading and immersion in the interview transcripts, during which the researcher will familiarize themselves with them. Following this, initial themes will be identified by coding the data and focusing on key phrases, concepts, and experiences related to the research

questions. Next, these codes will be grouped into broader, more refined themes that capture the essence of the participants' lived experiences. These themes will be analyzed for connections and meanings, and aligned with the existing literature on the relationship between FOMO, mental health, and spirituality among Gen Z. Finally, the themes will be refined to ensure they address the research questions, with a particular focus on the interplay between FOMO, mental health symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression), and spiritual practices.

While data validity is not a primary concern in qualitative research, the study will ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of its findings through a range of strategies. Triangulation will be applied by drawing from multiple data sources, such as interviews and literature, to cross-check and validate the results. Additionally, member checking will be used, where participants are invited to review the findings to ensure they resonate with their lived experiences. To further ensure the validity of the analysis, peer debriefing will be conducted with colleagues familiar with qualitative research methods who will review and provide feedback on the findings. Lastly, the researcher will engage in reflexivity by maintaining a journal to reflect on their own biases and perspectives, ensuring these do not unduly influence data interpretation. These measures will enhance the rigor of the study and ensure that the findings provide a credible, nuanced understanding of the relationship among FOMO, mental health, and spirituality among Gen Z (Olmsted, 2024; van Haastrecht et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Impact of FOMO on Mental Health and Spiritual Well-being in Gen Z

The phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is defined as a psychological condition characterized by anxiety or distress due to the perceived fear of being left out of social experiences or not being up to date with the latest trends or information. Among Generation Z (Gen Z), this phenomenon has been increasingly linked to excessive social media use. Although social media connects individuals, the data suggests it also contributes to a significant emotional and spiritual disconnect. For this study, FOMO is operationalized as the emotional distress Gen Z feels when they believe they are missing out on social or informational experiences, exacerbated by the constant stream of updates on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. This disconnect is evident in the spiritual void many Gen Z individuals seek to address through non-traditional practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and nature walks, rather than through institutional religion.

In the interview with Informant 1, a 22-year-old university student, the participant expressed feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to stay informed about social trends. They noted, "I feel like I'm constantly racing to keep up with what everyone else is doing, especially on Instagram and TikTok. If I don't engage, I feel disconnected, like I'm missing out on life." This statement reflects a deep anxiety linked to social media, emphasizing the participant's struggle to balance real-life experiences with online engagement. Despite acknowledging this emotional strain, the participant revealed their coping mechanism: "I try to center myself through mindfulness exercises or by going for long walks in nature, which helps me feel grounded and at peace, even though it's not really connected to religion." This suggests that, while the participant acknowledges a spiritual void, they seek inner peace outside traditional religious practices.

From an interpretative perspective, Informant 1's response highlights a direct link between FOMO and emotional distress, where the fear of falling behind in social trends generates psychological anxiety. The participant's turn to non-traditional practices, such as mindfulness and nature walks, also speaks to the search for spiritual fulfillment outside institutional religion. This suggests a shift in how spiritual well-being is being addressed by Gen Z, as they opt for more individualized, secular methods of coping with emotional distress.

Similarly, Informant 2, a 20-year-old social media influencer, shared a comparable perspective, stating, "I am always trying to stay updated with everything on TikTok, especially trends or challenges that go viral. If I don't, I feel like I've missed something huge, like I'm not part of the group." This reflects the underlying anxiety linked to FOMO, suggesting that social validation through engagement with viral content becomes crucial to their sense of belonging. However, Informant 2 also expressed a need for spiritual renewal through practices like "praying when I feel anxious or out of control". The participant clarified, "I try to pray more when I get overwhelmed, but it doesn't always help. I also go for runs or meditate to clear my head."

Interpretation of Informant 2's responses further strengthens the relationship between FOMO and mental health challenges, particularly anxiety. Despite engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer, the participant's reliance on secular activities like running and meditation reveals a potential gap in how religious practices might not fully address their emotional or spiritual needs. It also indicates that, for some members of Gen Z, the pursuit of spiritual fulfillment involves blending traditional religious practices with modern methods such as mindfulness or physical activity.

In addition to the interviews, several observations were made about Gen Z's behavior and coping strategies regarding FOMO and spirituality. Many individuals in this cohort were frequently observed engaging with social media, where their interactions seemed driven by a desire for social validation rather than simply communication. However, it was also observed that individuals who expressed high levels of FOMO often turned to activities such as exercise, mindfulness, or creative pursuits as a way to alleviate stress, even though they seldom turned to traditional religious practices for support. These observations indicate a trend where Gen Z individuals are seeking alternative means of finding peace or spirituality, likely due to a perception that traditional religious practices are less relevant or effective in the digital age. This trend warrants further exploration of how *Fiqh* might guide these practices to balance spiritual and emotional well-being.

The data from both informants and observations highlight a significant connection between FOMO and heightened levels of anxiety and depression among Gen Z. The interviews revealed that although many individuals in this generation are aware of the emotional strain caused by social media consumption, they often seek relief through secular practices like mindfulness, nature walks, and physical activity, rather than traditional religious practices. While some participants still engage in religious activities like prayer, these seem to be used more as a supplementary method rather than the primary source of spiritual or emotional comfort. These findings point to a gap in how Gen Z engages with spirituality, suggesting a shift towards more individualized, non-institutional methods of coping with emotional distress.

The data collected reveals a clear pattern in which the fear of missing out (FOMO) drives emotional distress in Gen Z, manifesting as anxiety and depression. However, these emotional struggles are not solely addressed through traditional religious practices;

instead, many individuals rely on secular, non-traditional spiritual practices. This pattern illustrates a broader trend in which Gen Z seeks spiritual fulfillment outside of institutional religion, suggesting a potential disconnect between their religious practices and their emotional and spiritual needs. This finding raises important questions about the role of *Fiqh* in guiding Gen Z’s spiritual well-being, as Islamic teachings emphasize both emotional health and spiritual fulfillment. The need for a more holistic approach to spirituality among Gen Z that incorporates both religious and secular coping mechanisms is a key consideration for Islamic scholars and policymakers.

Table 1. Ideal Impact of FOMO on Mental Health and Spiritual Well-being

Position of Informant	Interview Excerpt	Indicators
Informant 1	"I feel like I’m constantly racing to keep up with what everyone else is doing... If I don’t engage, I feel disconnected."	Anxiety, Social Disconnect
Informant 1	"I try to center myself through mindfulness exercises or by going for long walks in nature, which helps me feel grounded."	Mindfulness, Non-traditional spirituality
Informant 2	"I am always trying to stay updated with everything on TikTok... If I don’t, I feel like I’ve missed something huge, like I’m not part of the group."	Anxiety, Need for Social Validation
Informant 2	"I try to pray more when I get overwhelmed, but it doesn’t always help. I also go for runs or meditate to clear my head."	Prayer, Secular Coping Mechanisms

Table 1 reflects a significant pattern in the data: although Gen Z individuals experience substantial anxiety and emotional distress due to FOMO, they often rely on secular coping mechanisms such as mindfulness, meditation, and physical activities, rather than traditional religious practices like prayer. The interview excerpts reveal that while some individuals still use prayer for emotional support, it is not always considered sufficient. This suggests a disconnect between their emotional and spiritual needs and the traditional forms of spirituality available to them. This gap indicates that Islamic law may need to explore ways to integrate traditional spiritual practices with modern secular coping methods, enabling Gen Z to navigate the digital age while maintaining emotional and spiritual well-being.

The Role of Non-Institutional Spirituality in Coping with FOMO

The concept of non-institutional spirituality refers to the spiritual practices and beliefs that exist outside of formal religious institutions. For Generation Z (Gen Z), these practices include mindfulness, meditation, and nature walks, which are increasingly embraced as ways to achieve spiritual fulfillment. Despite a significant shift away from traditional institutional religions, Gen Z still seeks meaning and purpose through individualized and often secular spiritual activities. This sub-theme investigates how these practices serve as coping mechanisms for emotional distress, particularly related to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and whether they align with Islamic teachings. The study explores the potential compatibility of these non-institutional spiritual practices with Islamic spirituality, which traditionally emphasizes reflection, connection with nature, and mindfulness, while upholding core religious principles.

In the interview with Informant 1, a 23-year-old university student, the participant discussed their preference for non-institutional spiritual practices to address FOMO. They stated, “I feel more connected when I practice mindfulness and go on long walks in nature.

It's like a way for me to reset, especially when I feel overwhelmed by everything on social media. I'm not sure it's religious, but it helps me find some peace." This comment reveals how mindfulness and nature walks serve as emotional release valves for Informant 1, offering a sense of peace and stability outside of formal religious contexts. When asked if they had considered more traditional forms of spirituality, the participant replied, "I've tried praying, but sometimes I feel like I'm too distracted. I think these mindfulness practices just work better for me." The participant's response highlights the tension between traditional religious practices, often viewed as less adaptable in the fast-paced digital age, and secular, non-institutional spiritual practices that seem better tailored to their emotional and psychological needs.

Interpretation of Informant 1's responses suggests that non-institutional practices are increasingly seen as viable alternatives to traditional religious practices, especially for those dealing with emotional strain like FOMO. While the participant acknowledges the importance of traditional prayer, they appear to find mindfulness and nature walks more effective in addressing their immediate spiritual needs. This observation suggests a generational shift in which spiritual fulfillment is sought outside institutional frameworks, potentially challenging traditional views of spirituality within Islam.

Informant 2, a 21-year-old digital artist, expressed similar sentiments regarding non-institutional spirituality. They shared, "I meditate every day to clear my mind, especially when I feel overwhelmed by the pressure of staying relevant on social media. It gives me some space to breathe and think clearly. I don't always pray, but I feel like this practice helps me spiritually more than anything else." The participant further explained that they had grown up in a religious household but found traditional religious practices less effective in coping with the constant demands of modern life. "Religion was important growing up, but as I got older, I just couldn't connect with it the same way. Meditation has really been a game-changer for me." This statement further underscores the preference for non-traditional spiritual practices as a means of coping with FOMO and maintaining mental well-being.

From an interpretative standpoint, Informant 2's responses highlight the growing appeal of non-institutional spirituality, where practices like meditation are perceived as more accessible and relevant in addressing the emotional and existential challenges faced by Gen Z. These secular practices appear to fill a void where traditional religious frameworks, particularly those found in Islam, may not be as effective in the eyes of younger generations.

The sub-theme of non-institutional spirituality in the context of coping with FOMO reveals a consistent pathway where Gen Z is increasingly turning to secular practices for emotional and spiritual relief. While traditional religious practices like prayer remain relevant for some, the data suggests that practices such as mindfulness and meditation are seen as more adaptable to the fast-paced, digitally dominated world Gen Z navigates. This shift poses a question for Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) on how to reconcile these secular practices with Islamic teachings. While Islam encourages reflection and mindfulness, there remains a challenge in integrating these practices in a way that does not dilute the essence of Islamic spirituality. This tension between modern, individualized spiritual practices and traditional religious practices represents a crucial area for exploration within Islamic legal scholarship. As illustrated in Figure 1, the bar chart highlights the coping mechanisms Gen Z employs to manage FOMO and its emotional impact. The chart shows that mindfulness and social media engagement are the most commonly used strategies, while prayer appears to be used less frequently than the secular practices.

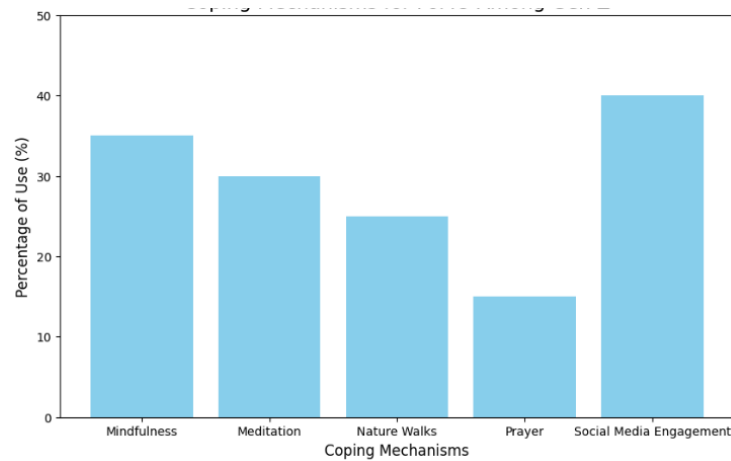


Figure 1. Coping Mechanisms for FOMO Among Gen Z

In observing the broader behaviors of Gen Z, it was apparent that many individuals sought spiritual practices that could be seamlessly integrated into their daily lives, rather than those that required deep commitment or formal ritual. Interviews and direct observations showed that many young people use apps or websites for guided meditation or engage in self-reflection exercises, often taking time out of their busy schedules to practice mindfulness, primarily to relieve anxiety linked to social media. The practice of connecting with nature, such as hiking or outdoor exercise, also emerged as a frequent coping strategy, reflecting a desire to reconnect with the physical world outside the digital sphere. This growing trend suggests that traditional institutional structures of spirituality are less effective for Gen Z in managing modern-day emotional struggles. The observations call for Islamic jurisprudence to address these modern spiritual practices, either recognizing them as compatible with Islamic teachings or offering alternatives that align more closely with traditional religious practices.

The findings from the interviews and observations suggest that Gen Z is increasingly seeking spiritual fulfillment outside of institutional religion, opting for non-institutional spiritual practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and nature walks. These practices serve as coping mechanisms for emotional distress, particularly in response to FOMO, and are often viewed as more accessible and practical than traditional religious practices. While some Gen Z individuals continue to engage in religious practices like prayer, the data suggests these practices may not always provide the immediate relief or connection they seek. This shift presents a challenge for Islamic jurisprudence: integrating modern, secular practices with traditional Islamic spirituality while balancing the emotional benefits of secular mindfulness with the spiritual guidance found in Islamic teachings.

The data reveal a consistent pattern: while still seeking spiritual meaning, Gen Z increasingly favors secular, non-institutional spiritual practices over traditional religious rituals. This shift reflects broader cultural changes and suggests a growing disconnect between religious institutions and the spiritual needs of younger generations. Secular practices, particularly mindfulness and meditation, offer Gen Z immediate relief from the anxieties associated with social media and FOMO. This pattern highlights the need for Islamic law to address how these modern practices can be incorporated into religious life, either by aligning them with Islamic spiritual practices or by offering alternative approaches to addressing the emotional and spiritual void felt by Gen Z.

Table 2. The Role of Non-Institutional Spirituality in Coping with FOMO

Position of Informant	Interview Excerpt	Indicators
Informant 1	"I feel more connected when I practice mindfulness and go on long walks in nature. It's like a way for me to reset, especially when I feel overwhelmed by everything on social media."	Mindfulness, Nature Walks, Emotional Relief
Informant 1	"I've tried praying, but sometimes I feel like I'm too distracted. I think this mindfulness practices just work better for me."	Difficulty in Prayer, Preference for Secular Practices
Informant 2	"I meditate every day to clear my mind, especially when I feel overwhelmed by the pressure of staying relevant on social media."	Meditation, Anxiety Relief
Informant 2	"Religion was important growing up, but as I got older, I just couldn't connect with it the same way. Meditation has really been a game-changer for me."	Disconnection from Religion, Preference for Meditation

Table 2 highlights a clear trend where Gen Z individuals are turning to secular, non-institutional spiritual practices to cope with FOMO and emotional distress. Both informants emphasized the effectiveness of mindfulness and meditation in managing anxiety, with Informant 1 specifically indicating that these practices were more effective than traditional prayer. Informant 2 also expressed a similar sentiment, stating that their connection to religion had diminished over time, while practices such as meditation had become more meaningful. These patterns suggest that while traditional religious practices remain important for some, they may not provide the same immediate relief for others, underscoring the need for Islamic jurisprudence to address evolving spiritual needs. The findings also indicate that secular spiritual practices can serve as a valuable complement to traditional religious practices, provided they align with the core principles of Islamic spirituality.

Balancing Digital Engagement with Religious and Social Obligations

The balance between digital engagement and religious and social obligations refers to the challenge Generation Z (Gen Z) faces in managing their use of digital technologies, particularly social media, to support their mental health, emotional well-being, and spiritual needs. The constant connectivity afforded by the digital world often leads to a disconnection from oneself and from spiritual fulfillment. The struggle to balance *Dunya* (worldly life) with *Akhirah* (the hereafter) is central to Islamic teachings, which provide clear guidelines for maintaining both mental and emotional well-being through practices such as prayer, charity, and community involvement. This research explores how Gen Z navigates this balance and discusses the potential role of Islamic law (*Fiqh*) in guiding them. Specifically, it highlights the need for practical approaches, such as limiting screen time or encouraging digital detox practices, to help Gen Z align their digital habits with their religious obligations and ensure that their pursuit of worldly trends does not overshadow their spiritual duties.

Table 3. Balancing Digital Engagement with Religious and Social Obligations

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"I feel like I'm always on my phone, checking social media. But I try to pray regularly to keep myself grounded."	Struggle with digital engagement, Commitment to prayer	Informant 1 (22-year-old university student)

"It's hard to focus on my religious duties with everything going on online. Sometimes I just need to take a break from it all."	Difficulty focusing on religious duties, Desire for digital detox	Informant 2 (21-year-old social media influencer)
"I try to limit my screen time, especially before prayer. It helps me maintain balance between my spiritual and social lives."	Digital detox, Balancing spirituality with social engagement	Informant 3 (23-year-old graduate student)
"Sometimes I feel guilty for spending so much time online. I wish I could balance my social media use with more meaningful activities."	Guilt about excessive screen time, Desire for balance	Informant 4 (20-year-old digital content creator)

The data presented in Table 3 indicate a widespread struggle among Gen Z to balance digital engagement with religious and social responsibilities. Several participants reported feeling overwhelmed by the constant pressure to stay connected through social media, which detracts from their ability to focus on religious obligations. For example, Informant 1 acknowledged the challenge of balancing screen time with religious duties, stating that they "try to pray regularly to keep myself grounded." This suggests an awareness of the need to maintain a spiritual connection despite the distractions posed by digital media. Similarly, Informant 2 expressed difficulty focusing on religious duties amid the constant influx of online information and social media demands, revealing a common conflict between the spiritual and digital realms. The desire for a digital detox and the need to find balance between these two spheres emerge as key themes in their responses..

The responses from Informant 3 and Informant 4 highlight the importance of digital detox practices in maintaining this balance. Informant 3, for instance, specifically mentioned limiting screen time, particularly before prayer, as a way to preserve their spiritual focus and commitment. This indicates a conscious effort to manage digital engagement in a way that enhances rather than hinders religious and spiritual practices. Meanwhile, Informant 4 expressed guilt about excessive time spent online and a desire to engage in more meaningful activities. This reflects a broader existential concern among Gen Z about finding balance in their lives and aligning their digital habits with their spiritual and social values.

During observations, it became evident that many young individuals from Gen Z engage in habitual social media use, often viewing it as a necessary part of their social lives and career development. However, as noted during informal discussions with participants, there is a growing sense of unease about how this constant connectivity affects their emotional and spiritual well-being. Many participants reported feeling guilty for spending long hours on social media and expressed a desire to reclaim control over their time. This aligns with the interview data, in which participants expressed a desire to incorporate more meaningful activities, such as prayer and self-reflection, into their daily routines. The observation highlights a key tension between the digital world and the need for spiritual growth and emotional well-being.

The findings from the interviews and observations reinforce the central theme of balancing digital engagement with religious obligations. Gen Z individuals recognize the value of staying connected in the digital world but also acknowledge the negative impact of excessive social media use on their ability to focus on religious duties and personal well-being. The interviews highlight a clear desire for digital detox practices, such as limiting screen time, which participants believe can help them maintain a healthier balance between their social and spiritual lives. This points to the need for more structured guidance, possibly within the framework of Islamic law, on how to effectively manage digital engagement without compromising religious or spiritual responsibilities.

The data reveal a consistent pattern in which Gen Z feels the weight of digital overload, which complicates their ability to engage fully with their religious practices. However, many participants actively seek ways to balance their digital lives with their spiritual needs, particularly through digital detox methods like limiting screen time before prayer or engaging in more meaningful offline activities. The participants' acknowledgment of this struggle suggests an emerging need for Islamic scholars to provide practical solutions, grounded in Islamic principles, to help Gen Z better balance their digital engagement and spiritual obligations. These findings underscore the relevance of Islamic guidance in managing the challenges posed by the digital age.

Table 4. Balancing Digital Engagement with Religious and Social Obligations

Position of Informant	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Informant 1	"I feel like I'm always on my phone, checking social media. But I try to pray regularly to keep myself grounded."	Struggle with digital engagement, Commitment to prayer
Informant 2	"It's hard to focus on my religious duties with everything going on online. Sometimes I just need to take a break from it all."	Difficulty focusing on religious duties, Desire for digital detox
Informant 3	"I try to limit my screen time, especially before prayer. It helps me maintain balance between my spiritual and social lives."	Digital detox: Balancing spirituality with social engagement
Informant 4	"Sometimes I feel guilty for spending so much time online. I wish I could balance my social media use with more meaningful activities."	Guilt about excessive screen time, Desire for balance

Table 4 illustrates how participants experience a conflict between digital engagement and religious obligations. Informant 1 acknowledges the struggle between screen time and religious duties but actively attempts to ground themselves through prayer. This suggests an awareness of the need for spiritual balance, though digital distractions challenge it. Informant 2 reports difficulty focusing on religious duties due to digital engagement, highlighting the psychological toll of constant online presence. Meanwhile, Informants 3 and 4 emphasize the role of digital detox in regaining control of their time and achieving spiritual balance. Their desire to spend more time on meaningful activities (such as prayer and offline engagement) points to a need for effective strategies to help them reclaim balance between worldly life (*Dunya*) and the hereafter (*Akhirah*).

The data shows that while Gen Z individuals feel the need to stay connected digitally, they are also aware of the need to manage screen time to maintain a balance with their religious obligations and spiritual well-being. The common pattern is a desire for more meaningful offline activities and a digital detox to create space for spiritual and emotional rejuvenation. This aligns with the broader cultural and spiritual need for Islamic guidance on navigating the digital age while upholding religious principles.

Discussion

The findings of this study on Generation Z's (Gen Z) engagement with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), mental health, and spirituality present both parallels and contrasts with existing literature. First, the data aligns with previous research on FOMO's impact on mental health and social well-being, particularly its role in fostering anxiety, depression, and emotional disconnection in digitally connected generations (Bano & Bano, 2025; Panwar, 2024). This study's results indicate that Gen Z is highly impacted by FOMO, much

like the findings in Przybylski et al.'s study, where high social media usage was linked to anxiety and emotional distress. Similarly, the struggle for emotional fulfillment through secular practices such as mindfulness and nature walks mirrors findings from studies by (Hajdini & Iaia, 2024; Z. Wang et al., 2024), which found that many young people turn to non-religious methods to cope with the pressures of digital overload. However, this study also highlights a more pronounced generational shift, with mindfulness, meditation, and nature walks emerging as primary coping mechanisms over traditional religious practices. This contrasts with earlier literature suggesting that religious involvement would provide a counterbalance to digital disconnection (Obadia, 2024; Syvertsen, 2023).

In terms of spiritual fulfillment, the findings underscore a significant departure from conventional religious practices, a trend that has become more prominent in recent years. As observed by (Nasution, 2025), Gen Z is less likely to engage in institutional religious practices and more likely to seek spirituality outside traditional structures. The present study builds on this by showing that Gen Z individuals tend to rely more on non-institutional practices, such as mindfulness, meditation, and connection with nature, as part of their coping mechanisms for FOMO. While these secular practices align with the growing trend of individualized spirituality discussed by Al-Farsi (2022), they pose a challenge for Islamic jurisprudence in integrating them with Islamic spirituality. Unlike traditional practices that emphasize connection to *Allah* (God) through rituals such as *Salah* (prayer), the pursuit of meaning through secular methods might not fully satisfy the spiritual needs highlighted in Islamic teachings. This divergence requires deeper exploration into whether Islamic law can adapt to these practices while retaining the core principles of faith and spirituality.

The study's implications extend beyond theoretical insights into practical solutions for Gen Z's digital engagement and spiritual well-being. The findings suggest that Islamic scholars could play a crucial role in balancing *Dunya* (worldly life) and *Akhirah* (the hereafter) by offering guidance on screen-time management and digital detox practices. This aligns with recommendations from Johnson & Mora (2025), who advocate for healthier digital engagement practices to mitigate the adverse effects of excessive social media use. In practical terms, Gen Z could benefit from Islamic teachings that encourage mindfulness and self-reflection, both of which have spiritual and psychological benefits that can help restore balance in their lives. For example, Islamic principles such as *Zikr* (remembrance of God) or *Salah* could be integrated with modern mindfulness practices to offer holistic approaches to managing FOMO, fostering a deeper connection to the spiritual and emotional dimensions of well-being.

The findings also present significant implications for the theory of spirituality and mental health in the context of digital engagement. Previous studies suggest that blending secular and religious practices, such as mindfulness and religious rituals, can foster a more comprehensive approach to managing mental health (Dubey et al., 2025; Husgafvel & Utriainen, 2023; Plante, 2024). The integration of secular spiritual practices within Islamic frameworks is one of the key theoretical contributions of this study. It suggests a need for a reconceptualization of spirituality in the digital age, one that acknowledges the psychological benefits of secular practices while ensuring their alignment with Islamic principles. Moreover, addressing this gap in Islamic scholarship could lead to the development of *Fiqh*-based strategies that guide Gen Z in navigating the digital landscape without compromising their spiritual and religious obligations. These findings challenge traditional approaches to spirituality and invite further research into the compatibility of modern mindfulness practices with religious teachings, while respecting the integrity of both.

Finally, the practical implications of these findings underscore the importance of creating balanced digital engagement strategies for Gen Z. The growing preference for secular spiritual practices over traditional religious rituals calls for interventions that integrate religious and secular approaches to mental health. For instance, community-based initiatives that encourage digital detoxes during prayer times or set aside specific periods for spiritual reflection could help mitigate the effects of excessive social media engagement. Islamic scholars and community leaders could lead these initiatives, ensuring they resonate with Gen Z's needs while remaining true to Islamic teachings. In this way, Gen Z can be guided toward a holistic approach to mental health, balancing both *Dunya* and *Akhirah* in their pursuit of spiritual and emotional well-being.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that Generation Z's struggle with the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is significantly linked to emotional distress, primarily manifested as anxiety and depression. While Gen Z is highly connected through social media, they experience a notable disconnect from their spirituality and emotional well-being. This research highlights how non-institutional spiritual practices like mindfulness, meditation, and nature walks are increasingly favored as coping mechanisms over traditional religious practices. This shift presents a key lesson: Gen Z is seeking spiritual fulfillment outside institutional frameworks, challenging traditional views of spirituality in Islamic teachings. The study also underscores the need for Islamic scholars and policymakers to develop a holistic approach to address both spiritual and mental health needs by integrating modern practices with Islamic principles.

The strength of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the evolving relationship among spirituality, mental health, and digital engagement among Gen Z. It offers valuable insights into how secular and religious practices can complement each other, particularly in helping young individuals navigate the challenges posed by modern technology. However, the study has limitations, including a relatively small sample size and a focus on young people's experiences in urban settings, which may not fully represent the broader diversity of Gen Z. Future research could explore the role of cultural differences and geographical factors in shaping Gen Z's engagement with both digital media and spiritual practices. Additionally, further investigation into integrating secular mindfulness practices with Islamic spirituality would yield more practical *Fiqh*-based strategies for managing digital engagement while upholding spiritual and religious obligations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors express their sincere gratitude to Universitas Islam Mukhtar Syafaat for supporting this research. Appreciation is also extended to all Generation Z participants who willingly shared their experiences and perspectives during the interview process. The authors are grateful to colleagues and reviewers for their constructive feedback, which significantly improved the quality and clarity of this study.

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