



Islamic Counselling in the Generation Z Era: Strategies for Strengthening Work Ethic and Youth Resilience amid Social and Digital Disruption

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technology and social transformation has significantly shaped the mindset, work patterns, and psychological resilience of Generation Z. While the digital era provides broad opportunities for creativity and access to information, it also brings challenges such as value disruption, instant culture, intense competition, and psychosocial vulnerability. This article analyzes the role of Islamic counselling in strengthening the work ethic and resilience of Generation Z amid digital disruption. This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design based on a literature review, drawing upon classical and contemporary sources on Islamic counselling, developmental psychology, and the characteristics of Generation Z. The findings reveal that Islamic counselling contributes to developing a value-oriented work ethic grounded in spiritual principles such as intention (*niyyah*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), excellence (*ihsan*), and responsibility. It also promotes resilience through cultivating meaning in life, patience (*sabr*), reliance on God (*tawakkul*), and awareness of higher purpose. Effective counselling strategies include contextual engagement with digital realities, adaptive media utilization, integration of Qur'anic and Prophetic values in communicative language, and empathetic guidance. Islamic counselling thus serves not only as psychological support but also as a framework for character formation, enabling Generation Z to adapt productively and ethically in a rapidly changing digital society.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology over the past two decades has brought fundamental changes in social structures, communication patterns, and the way individuals perceive work and life. Generation Z—born and raised in a digital environment—experiences socialization processes that differ significantly from previous generations. Instant access to information, visual culture, social media algorithms, and the demand for work flexibility shape a mindset that is fast and adaptive, yet simultaneously prone to distraction, psychological stress, and existential crises (Twenge, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Studies indicate that Gen Z tends to have a short-term orientation, a preference for immediate outcomes, and relatively higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to older generations (Klein, 2022). This condition directly impacts the weakening of sustainable work ethics and the fragility of resilience when facing failure or social pressures.

In this context, the psychosocial challenges of Generation Z are not merely individual but also structural. The instant culture produced by the logic of social media promotes identity formation based on external recognition—such as likes, views, and followers—rather than on process, discipline, and perseverance. This claim is supported by recent studies. For instance, Ananda et al. found that social media significantly shapes Generation Z's identity through mechanisms of social comparison and the pressure to conform to idealised digital standards, leading individuals to adjust their self-presentation in pursuit of validation (Ananda et al., 2024). Similarly, Regita et al. (2024) demonstrate that intensive engagement with social media contributes to the construction of self-perception that is highly dependent on visual representation and public expectations, which may reduce self-confidence and reinforce externally driven self-evaluation. These findings indicate that the digital ecosystem not only facilitates self-expression but also cultivates a fragile identity structure, heavily reliant on instant social approval rather than sustained personal development and intrinsic values. Consequently, a work-meaning crisis emerges, wherein work is perceived merely as a means of quick recognition rather than as a space for the actualization of values and moral responsibility (Harrison et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2020). Social media pressure, symbolic competition, and constant exposure to curated, unfiltered content have been increasingly linked to deeper psychological strain among young people. Recent empirical evidence suggests that these dynamics are not only associated with general anxiety, but also with clinically recognised depressive symptoms such as feelings of worthlessness. A study by Ugwu et al. (2023) found that social comparison on digital platforms is significantly correlated with feelings of worthlessness among young users, indicating that repeated exposure to idealised representations can distort self-evaluation and lower self-worth. Similarly, Lee et al. (2023) show that social media dependency can intensify self-critical thinking, which gradually develops into depressive experiences, including a sense of worthlessness as part of broader emotional distress. Together, these findings illustrate how the competitive and performative nature of social media environments can quietly erode psychological well-being. Conventional technical-psychological counseling alone often falls short because it

does not address deeper dimensions of meaning, values, and life orientation (Hamdan, 2008; Corey, 2017).

Islamic counseling offers an alternative approach that integrates Islamic spiritual values with modern psychological frameworks. This approach not only aims at problem-solving but also at character development, meaning-making, and strengthening transcendental orientation. Values such as *niyyah* (intention), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ihsan* (excellence), *sabr* (patience), and *tawakkul* (reliance on God) provide both ethical and psychological foundations for building a work ethic and resilience (Koenig, 2012; Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). Empirical findings support a positive correlation between spirituality and mental health, as well as individual capacity to cope with life stressors (Seligman, 2011).

Recent developments in Islamic counseling research reveal a significant shift from normative-doctrinal approaches to integrative and contextual approaches. Contemporary studies increasingly combine Qur'anic and hadith principles with humanistic, cognitive, and positive psychology theories. For instance, *tazkiyat al-nafs* can be understood as closely connected to the development of self-regulation and emotional intelligence. Yandri and Juliawati (2025) show that values such as *sabr* and *tawakkul*, within the framework of Islamic counselling, function as adaptive mechanisms that strengthen psychological resilience, particularly in dealing with emotional pressure and crises of meaning. In a similar vein, Halik et al. (2026) show that integrating Islamic values such as *sabr* and *tawakkul* into therapeutic approaches contributes to greater psychological flexibility, reduces stress levels, and helps individuals respond to life pressures in more adaptive and meaningful ways. Meanwhile, studies on work ethic and resilience continue to grow alongside the uncertainty of the modern work environment. One study shows that resilience plays a key role in maintaining individual performance under pressure and rapid change, with psychological adaptability serving as a crucial foundation (Wibowo et al, 2025). In a more practical context, another study finds that resilience helps reduce work-related stress and enables individuals to remain productive in demanding situations (Sakinah, 2024). Work ethic is now understood not only as discipline and productivity but also as the ability to sustain meaning, commitment, and integrity amid change (Creswell, 2014).

The counseling paradigm has likewise shifted from curative to preventive and character-strengthening approaches. Counseling is no longer confined to treating psychological disorders but increasingly takes shape as a continuous, preventive form of guidance aimed at strengthening mental and moral resilience. This shift can be seen in recent applied studies, where counseling services are designed not only to respond to problems but to anticipate them. For instance, community-based counselling programmes have been shown to enhance mental health awareness and reduce psychological stress while reinforcing resilience through ongoing engagement (Nurjamilah, 2023). In a similar vein, structured guidance interventions in schools demonstrate that counseling can function as an early preventive strategy, fostering self-control, ethical awareness, and adaptive behaviour before problems escalate (Angelina et al., 2024). For Generation Z,

such preventive approaches are crucial, given early exposure to psychosocial risks in digital spaces. Counseling emphasizing values, meaning, and life purpose is considered more sustainable than interventions focusing solely on symptoms (Hamdan, 2008; Corey, 2017).

Experts in Islamic counseling stress the importance of integrating Qur'anic values with modern psychology in a dialogical rather than subordinative manner. Religious values are not imposed dogmatically but translated into psychologically relevant concepts. For example, *niyyah* corresponds to goal orientation, *amanah* to a sense of responsibility, and *ihsan* to excellence orientation, allowing Islamic values to function as intrinsic motivation rather than merely external control (Koenig, 2012; Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). Empirical studies of Gen Z further justify such approaches, as they are digital natives, visually oriented, accustomed to speed, but relatively vulnerable to stress and identity uncertainty (Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

Global data indicate significant changes in work ethic and mental health among youth. Post-COVID-19 reports show a marked increase in mental health disorders among adolescents and young adults. Meta-analyses estimate that around 32% of children and adolescents experienced depressive symptoms and a similar proportion experienced anxiety during the pandemic, far higher than pre-pandemic levels (Harrison et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2020; WHO, 2024). In the workplace, phenomena such as “quiet quitting” and declining long-term commitment are often associated with psychological fatigue and loss of work meaning, highlighting the inseparable links between work ethic, resilience, and psychological-spiritual dimensions (Twenge, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019).

In the context of *Islamic Counselling in the Generation Z Era*, earlier works tend to circle around moral formation and spiritual grounding as the core pathway for shaping behaviour, yet many of them still sit at a conceptual or value-oriented level rather than engaging with more complex, real-world dynamics. A systematic review of recent Scopus-indexed studies shows that Islamic counselling—particularly models inspired by al-Ghazālī—has been widely discussed as a means to cultivate moral awareness, emotional balance, and behavioural change, but much of the discussion remains focused on internal transformation rather than broader socio-digital contexts (Syukur et al., 2026). Similarly, other studies highlight how concepts such as *taqwa* are framed as psychological constructs linked to self-regulation, emotional control, and well-being, though often within structured educational or therapeutic settings (Rizal & Irman, 2025). Empirical work on school-based Islamic counselling also demonstrates its role in fostering responsibility, empathy, and discipline among students, yet these interventions are largely situated within formal institutions (Sugiyanto et al., 2025). In parallel, research on Islamic counselling communication models emphasises moral dialogue and spiritual guidance as tools for behavioural change, again primarily within controlled environments such as madrasah or classroom settings (Alam, 2026). Taken together, these studies confirm the strong moral-spiritual emphasis of the field, while also revealing its tendency to remain normative and institution-bound.

Previous studies on Islamic counseling and character development emphasize

moral and spiritual values in shaping positive behavior. However, most remain conceptual or normative, focusing on formal educational or religious community settings. Meanwhile, research on youth resilience and work ethic is largely conducted from Western psychological perspectives, emphasizing individual factors like coping skills and self-efficacy but insufficiently integrating spirituality (Hamdan, 2008; Corey, 2017). Studies on digital disruption's impact on Gen Z mental health tend to be problem-oriented, highlighting risks without providing a comprehensive value-based framework (Löchner et al., 2025).

This research gap points to the need for integrative studies connecting Islamic counseling, work ethic, and Gen Z resilience in a concrete socio-digital context. Existing studies often separate spiritual dimensions from digital realities, as if they belong to two different worlds. The novelty of this study lies in developing a conceptual model of Islamic counseling adaptive to Gen Z's social and digital realities, positioning Islamic values as a dialogical source of meaning rather than an antithesis to digital experience (Koenig, 2012; Hamdan, 2008).

Given practical needs, young people require counseling approaches that help them not only "survive" but also "grow" meaningfully. Spirituality-based work ethic becomes critical for balancing productivity demands with mental health and moral integrity. For education, counseling, and contemporary da'wah, this research contributes academically by enriching interdisciplinary perspectives and practically by informing contextual, sustainable guidance strategies for Generation Z (Twenge, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Seligman, 2011).

Based on the above, the research questions focus on: (1) how Islamic counseling strengthens Generation Z's work ethic in the digital disruption era, and (2) strategies for Islamic counseling to build Gen Z resilience in facing socio-digital pressures. The study emphasizes counseling strategies and approaches relevant to Gen Z characteristics, strengthening work ethic and resilience as two primary development dimensions, within inseparable social and digital contexts (Creswell, 2014; Twenge, 2017).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the concepts, meanings, and theoretical constructions of Islamic counselling in strengthening the work ethic and resilience of Generation Z amid social and digital disruption. A qualitative model is chosen because the issues under investigation relate to values, lived experiences, and subjective meaning-making processes that cannot be reduced to statistical figures alone. Qualitative research enables scholars to explore conceptual frameworks, patterns of thought, and interrelationships among ideas holistically and contextually (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive nature of this study emphasizes systematic and analytical explanation of phenomena without manipulating variables, making it suitable for normative-analytical and conceptual inquiry.

The type of research employed is library research, which relies on the exploration, collection, and analysis of relevant written sources. In operational terms, the literature was identified through a structured yet flexible search strategy. Key search terms included combinations such as “Islamic counselling,” “*tazkiyat al-nafs*,” “work ethic,” “resilience,” “Generation Z,” and “digital disruption,” which were entered into major academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and selected national indexing platforms. The search was not conducted as a rigid filtering exercise, but rather as an iterative process—sources were traced forward and backward through citation networks to ensure conceptual continuity. Inclusion criteria prioritised peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and institutional reports published primarily within the last five to seven years, particularly those addressing post-pandemic psychosocial conditions. At the same time, classical Islamic texts were deliberately retained where they provided foundational conceptual clarity, especially in relation to ethical and spiritual constructs. Sources were excluded when they lacked scholarly credibility, showed weak methodological grounding, or did not engage directly with the intersection of counselling, youth, and socio-digital change.

Library research is considered appropriate because the objective of this study is not to test empirical hypotheses but to construct a conceptual synthesis and theoretical framework based on existing literature. According to Zed (2004), library research allows researchers to engage in critical dialogue with scholars across disciplines while identifying trends, gaps, and opportunities for theoretical development. In this context, the library approach provides space to integrate literature on Islamic counselling, modern psychology, Generation Z studies, as well as work ethic and resilience research. What makes this integration particularly important is the need to bridge two bodies of knowledge that are often treated separately: classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary empirical findings emerging in the post-pandemic era.

The approach adopted is interdisciplinary and integrative, combining perspectives from Islamic counselling and contemporary psychology. This approach positions Qur’anic and prophetic values not merely as normative sources but as meaningful frameworks that can be contextually interpreted through the language of modern psychology. Such an integrative perspective aligns with the view that psychosocial phenomena among young generations cannot be understood from a single dimension but require dialogue between spiritual, psychological, and social domains (Creswell, 2014). In practice, classical sources were not placed in opposition to modern studies; rather, they were read alongside recent empirical findings to identify points of convergence—such as between spiritual purification and self-regulation, or between *tawakkul* and adaptive coping.

The research data consist of secondary sources obtained from academic books, national and international journal articles, research reports, and official institutional publications addressing Islamic counselling, characteristics of Generation Z, work ethic, and resilience. Sources are selected selectively based on relevance, credibility, and recency. Classical literature is utilized to strengthen conceptual foundations, while

contemporary works are employed to capture current social and digital dynamics. Particular attention was given to post-pandemic studies, as they offer a more accurate reflection of the current psychological landscape faced by young people.

The data analysis technique combines thematic and interpretative analysis. Thematic analysis is conducted by identifying major themes emerging from the literature, such as Islamic work ethic, spiritual resilience, and digital challenges faced by Generation Z. Rather than treating themes as fixed categories, the analysis followed a process of constant comparison, where ideas were grouped, refined, and sometimes redefined as new patterns emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes are then classified and compared to identify relational patterns and conceptual tendencies. Subsequently, interpretative analysis is applied to critically examine these themes by connecting them with contemporary socio-digital contexts. This stage involves reading across disciplines and situating concepts within lived realities rather than abstract theory alone. Through this combination of thematic and interpretative analysis, the study seeks to produce an in-depth and reflective understanding while offering a relevant and applicable conceptual framework of Islamic counselling for the development of Generation Z (Creswell, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Counselling and the Socio-Digital Challenges of Generation Z

Generation Z represents a demographic cohort that has grown and developed within a social landscape profoundly shaped by digital technology, globalization, and rapid social change. Psychologically, Gen Z is often described as adaptive, open to diversity, and socially aware; however, they also demonstrate relatively higher levels of psychological vulnerability compared to previous generations (Zinurova et al., 2022). Twenge explains that early exposure to digital technology contributes to shorter attention spans, a need for rapid stimulation, and a tendency toward social comparison through digital platforms, which in turn correlates with increased anxiety and decreased subjective well-being (Twenge, 2017). Socially, Gen Z tends to construct identity through virtual spaces, making social relations fluid and symbolic, and heavily influenced by external validation. These characteristics significantly shape how they interpret work, success, and failure.

Digital disruption intensifies these characteristics through a logic of speed, instant gratification, and algorithm-driven competition. While digitalized workplaces offer flexibility and creative opportunities, they also generate uncertainty, career fragmentation, and heightened performative pressure. In this context, Gen Z's work ethic often appears suspended between two pulls: the desire for meaningful, flexible work and the quiet pressure to remain constantly visible and productive in digital spaces. A recent study on work-related social media use among Gen Z employees shows how this tension unfolds in practice—young workers seek autonomy and boundary control, yet remain tethered to digital expectations that blur work and personal life, producing subtle forms of strain rather than clear resistance (Untung et al., 2026). Phenomena such as burnout

and quiet quitting can be understood as psychological responses to work systems misaligned with deeper needs for meaning and mental well-being (Seligman, 2011).

The impact of digital disruption on Gen Z's mental health has become a central concern in contemporary psychology. Social comparison theory suggests that high levels of comparison—intensified by social media exposure—are associated with greater anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore, self-determination theory posits that psychological well-being depends on the fulfillment of three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In many cases, digital environments undermine these needs by fostering constant pressure, distraction, and superficial connections. Consequently, Gen Z's resilience—the capacity to adapt, recover, and grow in the face of adversity—often fails to develop optimally despite living in an era rich in informational resources.

In such circumstances, counseling approaches limited to technical psychological strategies may prove insufficient. A more comprehensive framework addressing meaning, values, and life orientation is required. Islamic counselling occupies a strategic position as a transformative and integrative approach, combining Islamic spiritual dimensions with modern psychological frameworks. It not only seeks to reduce psychological symptoms but also to construct meaning structures that guide individuals in interpreting work, challenges, and suffering. Koenig emphasizes that spirituality functions as a powerful coping resource, particularly in confronting chronic stress and life uncertainty (Koenig, 2012).

Theoretically, Islamic counselling can be positioned at the intersection of meaning-centered psychology, positive psychology, and resilience theory. Viktor E. Frankl (2019), through logotherapy, argues that modern psychological problems often stem not merely from intrapsychic conflicts but from existential vacuum—a loss of life meaning. In the context of Generation Z, who live amid information overload and performative digital pressures, this crisis of meaning becomes increasingly evident. Islamic counselling, by emphasizing *niyyah* (intention), transcendental life purpose, and work as an act of worship, functions similarly to logotherapy by helping individuals discover meaning behind suffering, failure, and uncertainty.

Contemporary resilience theory, as developed by Ann S. Masten, views resilience not as an innate trait but as a dynamic process shaped by meaning systems, social relationships, and internal resources—what she terms “ordinary magic.” Islamic values such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *shukr* (gratitude) can be conceptualized as protective factors strengthening psychological resilience (Masten, 2015). Within Islamic counselling, these values are not taught dogmatically but are reflected upon as adaptive strategies for coping with stress, career uncertainty, and socio-digital pressures experienced by Gen Z.

Moreover, Aaron T. Beck's cognitive theory underscores the role of distorted thinking patterns in the emergence of psychological disorders (Beck & Beck, 2011). Islamic counselling can function as a value-based form of cognitive restructuring, wherein irrational beliefs—such as excessive fear of failure or overreliance on social

validation—are reframed within the framework of tawhid (monotheistic worldview), reliance upon God, and redefinition of success and failure. This approach demonstrates that Islamic counselling does not contradict modern psychology but rather enriches cognitive processes with deeper spiritual and existential meaning.

Islamic counselling is also transformative in shifting Gen Z's life orientation from instant gratification toward process-oriented and meaning-centered perspectives. In the era of digital disruption, it may serve as a reflective space where individuals negotiate their digital identities with spiritual values. Such transformation does not imply rejecting technology but guiding its use in alignment with broader life purposes. In this sense, Islamic counselling acts as a bridge between digital realities and existential human needs.

Critically, the relevance of Islamic counselling lies in its capacity to offer an alternative to psychological and materialistic reductionism often present in responses to Gen Z's mental health crisis. When mental health is framed solely in terms of emotional regulation or productivity, the dimension of meaning tends to be overlooked. Islamic counselling reminds us that work ethic and resilience cannot be separated from value orientation and life purpose. Thus, it serves not merely as a reactive response to psychological problems but as a preventive and formative strategy in cultivating a generation characterized by a strong work ethic, resilience, and meaningful engagement amid social and digital disruption (Koenig, 2012; Masten, 2015; Twenge, 2017).

Strategies of Islamic Counselling in Strengthening Generation Z's Work Ethic

Generation Z lives and works within a digital ecosystem that reshapes motivational patterns, attention structures, and the meaning attributed to work. Therefore, Islamic counselling strategies must begin with the internalization of core values such as *niyyah* (intention), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ihsan* (excellence), and responsibility as foundational orientations for action. From the perspective of contemporary work psychology, this approach corresponds closely with job crafting theory developed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton. Their theory asserts that individuals demonstrate higher engagement and commitment when they are able to interpret their work as part of a meaningful life purpose rather than merely as a structural obligation or financial necessity (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Viewing work as a “calling” has been empirically associated with greater perseverance, job satisfaction, and resilience under pressure.

Within Islamic intellectual tradition, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah reinforces this framework by emphasizing that the value of action is determined by inner intention and ethical consistency (Al-Jawziyyah, 2008). A sincere *niyyah*, he argues, cultivates *mujāhadah* (earnest striving) and moral responsibility, enabling individuals to maintain quality performance even in the absence of external recognition. Similarly, Ibn Miskawayh highlights that moral values must be internalized as stable character dispositions guiding outward behavior consciously and responsibly (Ibn Miskawayh, 1882). For him, virtuous action is defined not merely by outcome but by ethical awareness and intentional integrity. Within this framework, *amanah* and *ihsan* establish standards of work that transcend procedural compliance, moving toward moral and professional excellence.

Practically, the internalization of these values in Islamic counselling cannot be reduced to the mere application of reflective techniques framed in religious terminology; rather, it unfolds as a subtle psychological process in which individuals encounter themselves without the pressure to perform. Practices such as structured *muhasabah*, *niyyah journaling*, and personal *amanah* contracts do open space for reinterpreting work as a moral and spiritual responsibility. However, when these practices are relocated into digital environments, the context shifts in ways that are not neutral. Digital space always carries the latent possibility of being seen, compared, or imagined as an audience-bearing arena. At this point, *muhasabah* risks losing its contemplative depth and gradually turning into a form of self-presentation—no longer oriented toward inner honesty, but toward the management of self-image.

From the perspective of schema theory in cognitive psychology, particularly schema-focused therapy (Young et al., 2006), meaningful behavioral change requires restructuring core schemas related to the self, success, and life values. Yet for Generation Z, the schema of “success as digital visibility” is not merely an internal construct; it is continuously reinforced by the architecture of digital platforms that reward exposure. Consequently, shifting toward “success as *amanah* and *ihsan*” cannot be achieved solely through narrative reframing. It requires the creation of psychological conditions in which individuals feel permitted not to be visible. In this sense, digital *muhasabah* must be intentionally designed as a space that limits exposure—through private reflection, deliberate digital pauses, or formats that do not incentivize sharing—so that reflection remains an inward process rather than a subtle form of social consumption. Without such conditions, the pressure of validation does not disappear; it simply reappears in a more refined form.

Empirical findings in Indonesia reporting reductions in academic anxiety and improvements in psycho-spiritual well-being through *muhasabah*-based interventions (Zakiyah, 2023a, 2023b) remain significant, yet they invite a more careful reading. Their effectiveness likely stems not only from the reflective techniques themselves, but from the relational quality embedded in the counselling process—presence, acceptance, and the experience of being heard without judgment. Here, the limitations of digital interventions become more apparent. While digital media extends accessibility, they do not easily replicate the dimension of *rahmah* that is lived through human interaction. Islamic counselling, at its core, does not operate solely through methods or language, but through a form of presence that calms and a relationship that restores. When this dimension is weakened, interventions risk becoming procedurally correct yet experientially shallow.

The second strategy, which emphasizes engagement with digital realities, also requires a shift from technical framing toward deeper psychological understanding. Bandura’s emphasis on self-regulation and self-efficacy is certainly relevant; however, in the lived experience of Generation Z, the issue is not simply behavioral control, but how individuals make sense of their continuous presence within an unceasing digital flow (Bandura, 1997). Attention management and ethical digital literacy can be helpful, yet

without addressing the underlying need for recognition and the sense of “enoughness,” such control tends to remain temporary. The findings of Suryadi, which indicate improved self-discipline through the integration of religious values and digital literacy, are therefore meaningful but incomplete without considering whether these changes emerge from internal awareness or from adaptation to newly internalized norms (Suryadi, 2023).

Similarly, the use of digital media as a medium for value cultivation must be approached with conceptual caution. While high levels of digital penetration (Kemp, 2024) offer opportunities for scalable interventions, the inherent logic of digital environments—characterized by immediacy, measurability, and comparison—does not always align with processes of internalization that require silence and time. Features such as digital journaling, process-based badges, and peer feedback (Hoo et al., 2020) may support behavioral consistency, yet they also carry the risk of shifting orientation from process to symbolic recognition. Once progress becomes visible and comparable, attention may subtly return to external validation, even within structured systems.

The growing evidence of heightened mental health vulnerability among youth (Racine et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023) further underscores that interventions cannot remain merely technical or informational. What is required is not only stress management, but a reconfiguration of meaning. In the Indonesian context, the effectiveness of reflective religious practices such as *muhasabah*, Islamic journaling, and *istighfar* therapy (Cahyono et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025; Tasyakuranti et al., 2022) suggests that spiritually grounded approaches hold strong potential. Yet this effectiveness appears to be less about the format of the intervention and more about the depth of engagement and the quality of reflective space it creates.

At this point, the critique that the discussion remains at the level of descriptive strategies becomes particularly relevant. What are presented as “strategies” are, in fact, manifestations of a deeper relational process between external pressures, internal transformation, and behavioral outcomes. Therefore, what is needed is not merely a list of approaches, but a conceptual articulation of how change actually occurs. The model illustrated in the figure begins to address this gap by mapping a process: socio-digital pressures are first translated into reflective needs, which are then processed through cognitive restructuring integrated with *tawhid* and *tawakkul*, and enacted through empathic, *rahmah*-based dialogue. Change, in this framework, does not emerge as an immediate output, but as a gradual reorientation of inner meaning, eventually expressed in a meaning-centered work ethic (*ihsan*) and adaptive resilience (*sabr*).

The model essentially illustrates that Islamic counselling does not operate in a rigid or merely procedural manner, but unfolds through a dynamic interplay between psychological structures and spiritual depth. Pressures emerging from the digital environment are not immediately confronted or resolved; rather, they are first interpreted and transformed into deeper reflective needs. The intervention process does not stop at cognitive change alone, but is grounded in a *tawhid*-oriented perspective that provides meaning and direction to life experiences. At the practical level, transformation does not arise from techniques alone, but from empathic relationships that allow individuals to feel

genuinely understood. The outcome, therefore, is not limited to improved performance but extends to a transformation in how individuals perceive themselves, their work, and their relationship with God.

In this sense, the model shifts the focus away from the technical effectiveness of methods toward the integrity of the overall process. Within the context of Generation Z, Islamic counselling cannot simply adapt itself to digital mediums; it must preserve its essential human dimension—namely, authentic presence, compassion, and the creation of a safe space in which individuals can encounter meaning without feeling compelled to display it.

Conceptual Model of Islamic Counseling for Generation Z

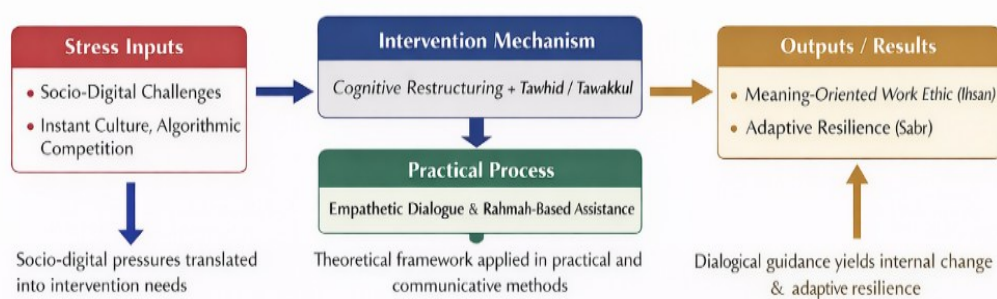


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Islamic Counselling for Generation Z

The Role of Islamic Counselling in Building Generation Z's Resilience

The role of Islamic counselling in fostering Generation Z's resilience has become increasingly crucial amid social uncertainty, rapid technological acceleration, and layered performative pressures. In this context, resilience is not merely understood as the ability to “survive” stress, but as the capacity to construct meaning from adversity, adapt in psychologically healthy ways, and grow morally and spiritually. One of the primary contributions of Islamic counselling lies in strengthening meaning in life and transcendental purpose.

Generation Z often faces a crisis of meaning due to exposure to narrow and instant success narratives in digital spaces. When self-worth is measured through external metrics such as popularity or rapid achievement, minor failures can trigger disproportionate despair. Islamic counselling offers a broader framework of meaning by positioning life as an *amanah* (sacred trust) and a process of devotion. Consequently, difficult experiences are interpreted as part of a meaningful existential journey. This transcendental orientation functions as a psychological anchor that stabilizes emotions and expands hope beyond fluctuating worldly achievements.

Empirical research supports the centrality of meaning in resilience development. A study by Nisma Rasheed, Iram Fatima, and Omama Tariq found that resilience mediates the relationship between meaning in life and mental well-being among

university students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rasheed et al., 2022). Their findings indicate that internalized meaning reduces psychological distress and strengthens long-term well-being.

In practice, meaning enhancement within Islamic counselling is operationalized through value reflection and goal reorientation. Counsellors guide individuals to reflect on fundamental questions such as “What is the purpose of my life and work?” and “How does this hardship connect to a greater life mission?” Such meaning-making processes are consistently associated in psychological literature with resilience and sustained mental health.

Sabr, Tawakkul, and Spiritual Awareness as Adaptive Coping

The values of *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and spiritual awareness play a central role in resilience-building. *Sabr* is not interpreted as passive resignation but as emotional regulation and moral perseverance in the face of adversity. In counselling practice, patience is cultivated as a psychological skill that helps individuals delay impulsive reactions, manage frustration, and remain committed to values despite delayed results.

A comparative study by Muhammad Hisyam Syafii and Husain Azhari highlights patience as a culturally embedded coping mechanism that enhances psychological endurance among Muslim students (Syafii and Azhari, 2024).

Tawakkul complements patience by introducing a transcendental dimension of trust—believing that ultimate outcomes rest with God after maximum effort has been exerted. This belief reduces excessive anxiety and over-control tendencies frequently experienced by Generation Z in competitive environments. Broader coping research, such as the study by Sarah Javed and Heena Parveen, confirms that adaptive coping strategies significantly buffer stress during crises (Javed and Parveen, 2021).

Spiritually integrated therapeutic models further support this integration. Metin Çınaroğlu (2024), writing in *Din ve İnsan Dergisi*, explains how Islamically modified cognitive behavioral therapy strengthens both emotional regulation and spiritual well-being. Likewise, Sharifah Nadirah Syed Zainal Ariff demonstrates that integrating CBT with Islamic principles enhances psychological and spiritual outcomes (Ariff, 2025).

Empathic and Continuous Accompaniment

Beyond value internalization, Islamic counselling emphasizes empathic and sustained accompaniment. Generation Z lives in a paradoxical relational environment—digitally hyperconnected yet emotionally vulnerable to isolation. Empathic support restores psychological safety and self-confidence. In Islamic counselling, empathy reflects not only a communication skill but a moral stance grounded in compassion (*rahmah*).

Anthropological research by Sabnum Dharamsi and Giulia Liberatore underscores how transcendence and relational ethics shape Islamic counselling practice (Dharamsi and Liberatore, 2024). Moreover, a meta-analysis by Cong Fu et al. demonstrates that strength-based and capacity-building interventions significantly enhance adolescent mental health and resilience (Cong Fu et al., 2025).

Spiritual care research also provides supporting evidence. Aan Nuraeni et al found that Islamic spiritual care is associated with reduced depressive symptoms and improved quality of life (Nuraeni et al., 2024). Similarly, Gazanfer Anlı highlights the positive impact of faith-based positive psychology practices in Muslim communities (Anlı, 2025).

The Role of Islamic Counselling in Building Generation Z's Resilience

The role of Islamic counselling in fostering the resilience of Generation Z has become increasingly crucial within a social landscape characterized by uncertainty, rapid technological acceleration, and layered performative pressures. In this context, resilience is not merely understood as the ability to “survive” stress, but as the capacity to interpret difficult experiences meaningfully, adapt in healthy ways, and grow morally and spiritually. One of the primary contributions of Islamic counselling lies in strengthening meaning in life and transcendental purpose.

Generation Z frequently encounters a crisis of meaning due to exposure to narrow and instant narratives of success in digital spaces. When self-worth is measured through external metrics such as popularity or rapid achievement, minor failures may trigger disproportionate despair. Islamic counselling offers a broader framework of meaning by positioning life as an *amanah* (trust) and a process of devotion, enabling individuals to interpret hardship as part of a meaningful existential journey. This transcendental orientation functions as a psychological anchor that stabilizes emotions and expands horizons of hope, since life goals are not confined to fluctuating worldly achievements (Nuraeni et al., 2024; Dharamsi & Liberatore, 2024; Syahir et al., 2025).

The strengthening of meaning in Islamic counselling is not abstract, but operationalized through value reflection and the reorientation of life goals. Counsellors assist individuals in reflecting on fundamental questions such as “For what purpose do I live and work?” and “How is this difficult experience connected to a greater life purpose?” This process reinforces meaning-making, which psychological literature has shown to correlate positively with resilience and long-term mental well-being (Rasheed, Fatima, & Tariq, 2022). When meaning in life is internalized, social pressures—whether academic failure, career uncertainty, or social stigma—are no longer perceived as total threats to identity, but rather as situational challenges that can be confronted and learned from. Strength-based approaches further demonstrate that capacity-building interventions enhance adolescents’ mental health and resilience, supporting the importance of structured developmental guidance (Fu et al., 2025).

Values such as *sabr* (patience), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and spiritual awareness play a central role as foundations of resilience in Islamic counselling. Patience is not understood as passivity or acceptance without effort, but as emotional regulation and moral perseverance in facing adversity. In counselling practice, *sabr* is conceptualized as a psychological skill that helps individuals delay impulsive reactions, manage frustration, and maintain commitment to values even when results are not yet visible. *Tawakkul* complements patience with a transcendental dimension of trust—the belief that final outcomes rest in God’s will after maximum effort has been exerted. This belief reduces excessive anxiety and over-control, which are frequently experienced by Generation Z,

particularly within contexts of intense social and economic competition (Urooj et al., 2025).

Spiritual awareness—expressed through reflection, prayer, and self-evaluation—helps individuals maintain inner balance and strengthen their sense of connection to a source of meaning beyond the self. Integrative approaches that combine cognitive-behavioral strategies with Islamic principles demonstrate how spiritual values can be harmonized with psychological techniques to foster both psychological and spiritual well-being (Çımaroğlu, 2024; Ariff, 2025). Additionally, Islamic perspectives on mental health emphasize the importance of spiritual grounding in maintaining psychological stability, reinforcing the role of faith-based reflection in emotional resilience (Rofiqul, 2025)

Psychologically, the integration of *sabr* (patience) and *tawakkul* (trust in God) functions as an adaptive coping mechanism. Individuals learn to distinguish between aspects of life that can be controlled through effort and those that must be accepted with openness and trust. This distinction is crucial in preventing mental exhaustion caused by perfectionistic demands and the illusion of total control often reinforced by digital culture. Studies on adaptive coping strategies emphasize the importance of constructive emotional regulation and trust-based frameworks in mitigating stress (Javed & Parveen, 2021; Graziani et al., 2023). In Islamic psychology, patience is explicitly conceptualized as a coping mechanism that strengthens emotional endurance and cognitive balance (Syafii & Azhari, 2024).

Spiritual awareness also serves as a buffer against chronic stress, as it provides contemplative space that enables individuals to process negative emotions in healthier and more meaningful ways. Positive psychology practices within Muslim communities highlight the role of spiritual grounding in enhancing psychological resilience and well-being (Anlı, 2025). In this sense, the resilience cultivated through Islamic counselling is not solely psychological but also moral and existential.

Beyond value reinforcement, Islamic counselling emphasizes the importance of empathetic and continuous accompaniment in addressing social pressures. Generation Z lives in a relationally paradoxical environment: highly connected digitally, yet frequently experiencing loneliness and emotional alienation. Empathetic support becomes a key element in restoring psychological safety and self-confidence. In Islamic counselling, empathy is not merely understood as a communication skill but as a moral stance that reflects *rahmah* (compassion) and care. The counsellor functions as a significant other who provides a safe space for clients to express vulnerability without fear of judgment, allowing authentic healing and growth to occur (Suhertina, 2025).

The continuity of accompaniment is also a crucial factor in building long-term resilience. The social pressures faced by Generation Z are recurrent and dynamic, making one-time interventions often insufficient. Islamic counselling views guidance as an ongoing developmental process rather than a temporary response to a crisis. Through consistent mentoring, counsellors help clients monitor personal development, reflect on progress, and adjust coping strategies in response to changing life contexts. This approach strengthens self-efficacy and a sense of competence, as individuals feel supported while

remaining responsible for their own growth (Azizah et al., 2025; Aprilianti, 2024). Moreover, empirical observations of student well-being indicate that sustained psychosocial and spiritual support contributes to healthier adaptation in academic environments (Haryanto, 2025).

By integrating the strengthening of life meaning, the internalization of *sabr* (patience) and *tawakkul* (trust in God), and sustained empathetic guidance, Islamic counselling functions as a holistic resilience approach. The resilience cultivated is not limited to the ability to withstand pressure, but extends to Generation Z's capacity to reconstruct life goals, maintain mental health, and engage in social and professional life in more meaningful ways. In the context of ongoing social and digital disruption, this role positions Islamic counselling as a strategic instrument for nurturing a generation that is psychologically strong, morally mature, and spiritually grounded.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that Islamic counselling plays a significant role as a framework for cultivating work ethic and resilience among Generation Z amid increasingly complex social and digital disruptions. The main findings indicate that the challenges faced by Generation Z—such as a crisis of work meaning, instant culture, social validation pressure, and heightened psychological vulnerability—cannot be adequately addressed through purely technical and individualistic counselling approaches.

The discussion highlights that strengthening life meaning and transcendental purpose constitutes the primary foundation for building sustainable resilience. When work is understood as an *amanah* (trust) and a form of devotion, Generation Z's motivational orientation shifts from dependence on external recognition toward more stable intrinsic commitment. The internalization of values such as *niyyah* (intention), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ihsan* (excellence), *sabr*, and *tawakkul* theoretically functions as mechanisms of emotional regulation, self-control, and resilience in the face of failure and uncertainty.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of a contextual and dialogical Islamic counselling approach, particularly in responding to digital realities. Counselling that adapts to platform culture—by utilizing digital media as a means of reflection, value formation, and guidance—opens opportunities for broader outreach while strengthening continuity of intervention. Empathetic and sustained accompaniment emerges as a key factor in building psychological safety, self-confidence, and self-efficacy among Generation Z, especially within increasingly fluid and fragmented social relationships. Thus, Islamic counselling is positioned not merely as a curative intervention but as a preventive and formative strategy that addresses psychological, moral, and spiritual dimensions in an integrated manner.

In summary, the theoretical implication of this study lies in reinforcing an integrative paradigm of Islamic counselling that is relevant to contemporary psychology, while its practical implication calls for the development of youth mentoring policies and programs that are value-based and adaptive to technological change. A limitation of this

study is its conceptual nature; therefore, future research is recommended to empirically test this Islamic counselling model across more diverse contexts.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used ChatGPT and Gemini to assist in the initial exploration of references and the structuring of the review framework. AI was utilized to identify relevant Scopus-indexed studies, which were subsequently verified through Publish or Perish, Google Scholar, Crossref, and Consensus. In addition, AI supported the organization of the discussion to ensure a more systematic structure. All outputs were carefully reviewed, edited, and validated by the author(s), who assume full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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