

## ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION ETHICS FOR GENERATION Z IN PATUMBAK DISTRICT DELI SERDANG REGENCY

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze the communication ethics of Generation Z in Patumbak District, Deli Serdang Regency, both in direct and digital communication, especially social media, with an approach of ethical values in Islam. Generation Z is known as digital natives who are very close to information technology, but this closeness also influences communication patterns and the application of ethical values. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation, and triangulation of sources is carried out to test the validity of the data. The results of the study indicate a shift in the communication ethics of Generation Z, both in face-to-face interactions that tend to decrease in terms of politeness, empathy, and emotional involvement, as well as in digital communication that is vulnerable to free expression without ethical considerations. In the Islamic context, the principles of qaulan are an important reference in forming polite and civilized communication. Therefore, an understanding of communication ethics based on moral and religious values needs to be strengthened to maintain the quality of communication of Generation Z in the digital era.*

**Keywords:** Communication ethics, Generation Z, digital communication, direct communication, Qaulan

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has experienced rapid progress in recent decades. This progress has created significant changes in various aspects of life, particularly in the way humans communicate. One group heavily impacted by these changes is Generation Z. The Pew Research Center states that Generation Z, or Gen Z, are those born between 1997 and 2012, after the end of the millennial generation, or Generation Y, in 1996 (Dimock, 2019).

This generation is referred to as the "iGeneration," or internet generation, because they grew up closely connected to digital devices and the internet (Putra,



2016, as cited in Arum et al., 2023). This closeness has made Generation Z known as digital natives, for whom the use of digital media is an integral part of their daily lives (Purba et al., 2025).

Internet penetration in Indonesia continues to increase year after year. According to the 2024 Indonesian Internet Penetration Survey released by the Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII), 79.50% of Indonesia's population is connected to the internet. This figure equates to 221,563,479 people out of a total Indonesian population of 278,696,200. Generation Z ranks second in internet penetration in Indonesia, with 87.02% connected and contributing 34.40% to internet usage (APJII, 2024). This data shows that almost all Generation Z members have made the internet a part of their daily lives. This increase in internet penetration reflects the internet's crucial role in various aspects of life, from education and work to entertainment and entertainment, as well as communication.

The ingrained internet use in everyday life makes communication for Generation Z not just an exchange of information, but also a medium for self-expression, freedom of expression, and creativity (Wulandari et al., 2023). As a generation known for its creativity, Generation Z uses digital media as a platform for self-development. Digital media, especially social media, is used by Generation Z to express themselves by creating creative content, providing entertainment, keeping up with current issues, and communicating. Internet use by Generation Z offers many significant benefits, but the high level of digital device use in their daily lives also impacts their social interactions with those around them.

Excessive use of digital devices, such as social media, has resulted in many members of Generation Z experiencing a decline in communication skills and a tendency to become more individualistic. This phenomenon is evident in family interactions, where each member prefers to focus on their individual digital devices rather than communicating face-to-face (Patimah & Herlambang, 2021). Ideally, communal activities that strengthen social ties, such as gatherings with family, friends, and the surrounding community, are hampered by the reduced intensity of face-to-face communication, replaced by interactions on social media.

As a result, challenges to the implementation of communication ethics emerge. In general, ethics is a collection of social norms or guidelines that regulate and guide human behavior toward morality, politeness, and courtesy. Communication is the process of conveying and receiving messages from a communicator to a recipient. Therefore, communication ethics can be interpreted as conveying messages in accordance with prevailing societal norms and values of politeness, thereby achieving mutual understanding between communicating parties (Prof. Hafied Cangara, M.Sc., 2023).

Concerns about the decline in ethical values in Generation Z communication are growing, both in face-to-face communication and through digital media. A study by Arfan Basir, Louisa M. Metekohy, and Fatima Sialana, entitled "Communication



Ethics of Generation Z in the Society 5.0 Era in Kalauli Hamlet," reveals several deviations in communication ethics among Generation Z, one of which is a reduction in empathy and politeness. Generation Z, accustomed to online interactions with quick and discontinuous responses, often experiences a decline in empathy in face-to-face communication. This is demonstrated through behaviors such as interrupting or avoiding eye contact, which in a culture of face-to-face communication are viewed as impolite. Furthermore, a lack of patience in communication and high exposure to digital media lead to a short attention span due to the numerous stimuli from various applications and notifications.

In face-to-face communication, this condition is reflected in restlessness, impatience, and a tendency to lose focus, for example, by checking one's phone while communicating (Basir et al., 2025). Ideally, face-to-face communication should involve mutual attention to the other person to ensure the message is understood correctly and prevent misunderstandings (Zis et al., 2021).

Concerns about communication etiquette among Generation Z arise not only during face-to-face communication but also in the realm of digital communication. According to Microsoft's 2020 Digital Civility Index (DCI) survey, Indonesia ranked 29th out of 32 countries in terms of global internet user civility, with an index score of 76. This indicates that Indonesian netizens are considered the most impolite in Southeast Asia. This low ranking is due to high exposure to negative content online, such as the spread of false information (hoaxes), hate speech, discriminatory acts, and bullying. Among these factors, the spread of hoaxes is a major trigger (Utami et al., 2024). The Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) also recorded more than 1,700 violations of the ITE Law, the majority related to hoaxes and hate speech. This reflects a serious digital ethics crisis, particularly among the younger generation (Aulia & Christin, 2024).

This phenomenon indicates a shift in the application of ethical communication values among Generation Z, both in person and through digital media. This situation risks disrupting the quality of interactions and social relationships, particularly in Generation Z's daily communication. Therefore, it is crucial to improve Generation Z's understanding of communication ethics, including awareness of moral values in various forms of interaction, both in person and digitally. Furthermore, not only is communication ethics literacy necessary for Generation Z, but an understanding of intergenerational communication patterns needs to be learned by all levels of society.

From an Islamic perspective, communication ethics is strongly emphasized in the Quran and Hadith. Islam teaches its followers to guard their tongues, to speak kindly or remain silent, to respect their parents, and to prohibit backbiting and slander. The Quran teaches six ethical principles of verbal communication, known as qaulan: Qaulan Sadidan, Qaulan Ma'rufan, Qaulan Balighan, Qaulan Maysuran, Qaulan Layyinan, and Qaulan Karima (Dr. Khairul Hamim, 2022).



The principles of Islamic communication ethics are highly relevant for understanding communication ethics among Generation Z, who have grown up in the digital era. As digital natives, Generation Z is accustomed to the rapid flow of information and the widespread use of technology. This dynamic environment creates dynamic communication patterns but also has the potential to erode ethical values, especially if not grounded in solid moral and religious values. In this regard, Islamic communication ethics serve as a crucial foundation for developing responsible, polite, and civilized communication behavior.

This study aims to analyze how the communication ethics of Generation Z in Patumbak District, Deli Serdang Regency, with an approach based on the principles of communication ethics in Islam. Patumbak District is a semi-urban area located on the outskirts of Medan City. As a transitional area between rural and urban areas, Patumbak District has unique socio-cultural characteristics, where traditional and religious values are still deeply rooted, but are also faced with high penetration of digital technology. This condition provides an interesting space to study the dynamics of communication ethics of Generation Z in the region. Based on the background description that has been presented, therefore the researcher took the title of the scientific paper "Analysis of Communication Ethics for Generation Z in Patumbak District, Deli Serdang Regency".

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of communication ethics occurring among Generation Z, both directly and indirectly (through social media) in Patumbak District, Deli Serdang Regency. According to Creswell, qualitative research is an approach to investigate and understand the meanings rooted in individual or group humanitarian and social issues (Tamaulina Br. Sembiring et al., 2024). The researcher aimed to explore the meaning of communication patterns and ethical communication values based on the experiences of informants.

The research was conducted in Patumbak District, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, which consists of eight villages: Patumbak Satu, Patumbak Dua, Patumbak Kampung, Lantasan Baru, Lantasan Lama, Marindal Satu, Marindal Dua, and Sigara-gara.

According to data from the Deli Serdang Statistics Agency (BPS) (2022), there are approximately 26,911 Generation Z individuals living in the Patumbak District (BPS Deli Serdang Regency, 2022). The informant selection technique used purposive sampling, which is a technique for deliberately selecting research subjects based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus (Tamaulina Br. Sembiring et al., 2024). The subjects in this study were Generation Z, namely individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019), who reside in the



Patumbak District. In addition, the researchers also interviewed religious leaders and educators to enrich the perspectives supporting the analysis (Dalimunthe et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2025)

The object of this research is communication ethics, both in direct (face-to-face) and indirect (social media) communication, as it occurs in the daily lives of Generation Z.

The data collection techniques in this study consist of: Unstructured Observation, Unstructured observation is conducted without the use of specific guidelines. This observation aims to capture natural communication behavior, both in social environments and on social media. This observation allows researchers to capture ongoing situations and provide a realistic picture of events occurring in the field (Sahir, 2021). Unstructured Interviews, Unstructured interviews are a free-form interview method, in which researchers do not use systematic and detailed interview guidelines in the data collection process (Dr. Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2023). Unstructured interviews allow researchers to dig deeper into information based on the experiences and broad perspectives of informants. Documentation, Documentation is conducted by collecting interview transcripts, field notes, and screenshots or documentation of digital activities relevant to the context of communication ethics.

According to Miles and Huberman (1992), qualitative data analysis consists of three main stages that occur simultaneously (Hardani, S.Pd. et al., 2020):

1. Data Reduction, which is the process of filtering, simplifying, and organizing data to focus on relevant information, thus facilitating further analysis.
2. Data Presentation, which is the arrangement of data in narrative form, tables, or charts to facilitate understanding and formulate subsequent analysis steps.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification, which is the initial conclusions tested through a continuous verification process. If supported by valid and consistent data, the conclusions are considered credible and in line with the focus and objectives of the research.

To test the credibility (validity) of the data, this study used source triangulation techniques, namely comparing, correcting, and verifying information obtained from various types of informants, including Generation Z, religious leaders, and educators. Furthermore, researchers also conducted technical triangulation by using various methods on the same data source, such as interviews, observations, and documentation, to ensure the consistency and validity of the information collected. If discrepancies in the results were found, researchers conducted further clarification to assess the validity of each piece of data based on context and perspective (Murdiyanto, 2020).



### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

#### **Generation Z Communication Patterns**

Generation Z is a generation that grew up and developed alongside the rapid advancement of digital technology. This situation has shaped Generation Z's unique characteristics, significantly different from those of previous generations. Based on research by Bencsik & Machova (2016), Generation Z has distinct characteristics compared to previous generations, particularly in terms of perspectives, social relationships, life goals, and approaches to technology and life values. Generation Z's social relationships are more familiar with virtual communication, with interactions tending to be shallow and lacking emotional engagement (Humaizi et al., 2024).

Generation Z is a digital generation that is highly adaptable, courageous, and open to change. However, it also faces challenges in terms of discipline, consistency, depth of thought and action, and direct social interactions, especially in communication. Generation Z's communication patterns in Patumbak District reflect the social transformation influenced by information and communication technology. Digital communication has become Generation Z's primary choice for interaction, characterized by an informal (casual) language style, the use of slang, and free expression and a more open communication style.

Generation Z's preference for digital communication also creates a gap in face-to-face interactions. Many within Generation Z feel more confident when expressing opinions through social media, but feel awkward or uncomfortable in face-to-face conversations with others. This shift indicates a decline in interpersonal communication skills that require eye contact, body language, and empathy. As a result, in certain social situations, their responses to their conversation partners can be inappropriate, both emotionally and ethically (Dalimunthe et al., 2025).

Overall, it can be concluded that Generation Z's communication patterns in Patumbak District demonstrate that while Generation Z excels in flexibility and technological adaptability, they also face serious challenges in maintaining the quality of face-to-face communication. On the one hand, they are highly expressive and adapt quickly to the digital space, but on the other hand, there has been a shift in the application of communication ethics due to the reduction in face-to-face communication (Rambe et al., 2025).

#### **Generation Z's Direct Communication Ethics**

The direct communication ethics observed among Generation Z in Patumbak District demonstrate a complex trend. The shift in values in the ethical practices of direct communication practiced by Generation Z cannot be generalized. Research shows that some members of Generation Z still maintain and apply values of politeness and ethics when communicating with their parents, especially older



ones. However, many also ignore norms and ethics in communication, such as interrupting, speaking without paying attention to the other person, and using a casual tone of voice. However, almost all Generation Z members recognize the importance of ethics in communication, especially with older people. However, this awareness is not yet fully reflected in their daily behavior. This reflects a shift in values in the ethical practices of direct communication among Generation Z members, influenced by technology.

This generation, which grew up in a digital ecosystem, tends to be more accustomed to technology-based communication, creating an imbalance in their ability to communicate directly. Based on interviews, Generation Z admitted that they often feel awkward when having to speak directly, especially in formal forums or with those perceived as older. When communicating face-to-face, they often lack eye contact, fail to listen attentively, or respond inappropriately. This behavior demonstrates weak interpersonal communication skills, which should be the foundation of social interaction.

Other findings indicate that basic etiquette such as greeting politely, waiting one's turn to speak, not using mobile phones while someone is speaking, and using language appropriate to the situation are still not consistently practiced. In informal situations, Generation Z tends to feel no need to watch their language or intonation. Most of them consider relaxed, non-distant communication to be a form of intimacy, but are unaware that such behavior can be considered impolite according to local societal norms. This suggests that the line between intimacy and impoliteness is often blurred in their understanding. While these behaviors are not always intended to be impolite, they nevertheless indicate a decreased sensitivity to communication etiquette that respects others.

Furthermore, in face-to-face communication, nonverbal expressions such as smiles, nods, or supportive facial expressions tend to be passive. This can sometimes make their communication seem bland or indifferent, even though they may not mean it. The lack of direct interaction in their daily lives, which has been largely replaced by digital communication, has weakened fundamental social skills.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the direct communication etiquette of Generation Z in Patumbak District is undergoing a shift, both in terms of language, attitudes, and understanding of politeness norms, especially when communicating. Factors that may contribute to this condition include a lack of social control within their social circles and the high influence of digital communication, which prioritizes speed and free expression. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed from various parties to revive the values of polite, empathetic, and civilized communication in the daily lives of the younger generation.



### **Generation Z Digital Communication Ethics**

The development of information and communication technology has created a new space for social interaction, where Generation Z, as the younger generation born and raised in the digital era, utilizes social media as their primary means of communication.

Research shows that Generation Z in Patumbak District utilizes social media not only for communication but also as a platform for self-expression and entertainment. However, in practice, they often lack awareness of the ethics of communicating on digital media, particularly regarding language use. This is due to a bias between familiarity and politeness in their understanding. Slang, insults, sarcasm, and even hate speech are frequently encountered in their interactions in digital spaces. The open nature of social media seems to be a boundaryless space, not directly regulated by social norms or religious values.

Furthermore, many members of Generation Z stated that they feel more comfortable and confident communicating online than face-to-face. The freedom offered by social media encourages them to express their opinions spontaneously, without considering the emotional impact on others. This attitude demonstrates a lack of ethical considerations in their communication processes.

Another phenomenon identified is Generation Z's still-low ability to verify information before sharing it. Impulsive comments on issues that are not necessarily valid are common. Some members of Generation Z acknowledge that they are aware of the negative impact of their comments, but still view social media as a free, unrestricted space.

Based on these overall findings, it can be concluded that Generation Z's communication practices on social media are still in an exploratory phase, strongly influenced by freedom of expression. However, this expression is not yet balanced with a sound understanding and application of ethical values and digital literacy. Therefore, synergy from various parties is needed to instill the values of polite, empathetic, and responsible communication in the digital space. Thus, social media becomes not only a means of communication but also a vehicle for moral character formation.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Generation Z in Patumbak District exhibits communication patterns that are heavily influenced by the development of digital technology. Although Generation Z excels in the use of social media and virtual communication, there has been a shift in the quality of direct communication, particularly in aspects of politeness, empathy, and appropriate language use. In digital communication, this generation tends to express themselves freely without adequate ethical controls, such as the use of casual language, the dissemination of unverified information, and a lack of



awareness of the emotional impact on others. On the other hand, most Generation Z are aware of the importance of ethics, but have not been fully able to apply them consistently in their daily lives. The principles of communication ethics in Islam are highly relevant as a foundation for developing polite, responsible, and civilized communication characters amidst the massive flow of digitalization. Seeing this shift in communication ethics among Generation Z in Patumbak District, serious efforts are needed to re-instill the values of polite, empathetic, and civilized communication. Generation Z needs to be encouraged to increase awareness of the importance of ethics in communication, both in person and through digital media, by understanding that every message conveyed carries a moral responsibility to the recipient. Through the synergy of various parties in providing role models and fostering communication ethics for Generation Z, it is hoped that Generation Z will be able to communicate wisely amidst the flow of digitalization without losing the roots of ethics and morality.

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