

Unlocking Opportunities In Shaping Gen Z’s Decision Making Based On Moral And Religious Values: A Perspektif From Søren Aabye Kierkegaard

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ABSTRACT

Gen Z has several shortcomings and advantages if not addressed properly can cause problems. This study aims to find simple ways to help Gen Z in making decisions that will always be associated with moral values and faith in the three stages of human existence according to Søren Aabye Kierkegaard. This study uses a qualitative method by looking at written data, describing and concluding to gain additional insights. The study shows that instilling moral values and faith in oneself is very important, involving collaboration between family, education, religion, society and the state. Its implementation requires exemplary behavior and consistency from the relevant parties. Kierkegaard said that humans make their existential leaps in three stages, namely: aesthetic, ethical and religious. The aesthetic stage ignores moral and religious values because it focuses on self-satisfaction. The ethical stage accepts and carries out moral or legal demands and remains steadfast even though life is at stake. The religious stage does what God commands even though it is contrary to moral or legal values. Gen Z must be given the opportunity to make important decisions in life so that those decisions are not at the aesthetic stage but at the ethical and even religious stage. There are not much researches related to the strengths or weaknesses of Gen Z in maintaining moral values and faith. Through more up-to-date approach patterns and personal experiences, Gen Z will make an “existential leap” to the ethical and even religious stage.

Keywords: Gen Z; Values; Existence

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has different opportunities in life to do good and right or evil and wrong. These opportunities can be used for personal gain and interest only through the decisions taken. This is where the freedom to choose and decide needs to be used. However, the freedom to choose and decide is still based on age and level of understanding that is possessed. However, the problem is that many opportunities are not taken simply because someone does not have sufficient knowledge, the ability to analyze and the ability to exercise their right to vote.

Erwin (2019) explains six reasons why someone makes bad decisions, namely: first, decision fatigue, which is fatigue both physically and mentally due to the many decisions that must be made while the decision affects many people. Second, a steady state of distraction that occurs because of the large amount of information that can be received and accessed, many people are in a state that is constantly disturbed by this information so that it is difficult to focus on making decisions. Furthermore, lack of input which means the types of people who are less willing to speak up to convey ideas when a meeting is in progress. The meeting is only monopolized by a few people to express their opinions while others just keep quiet while thinking about possible ideas. Fourth, multitasking that results in decisions being hampered or even unfocused due to the many tasks that must be completed at almost the same time. Fifth, unstable emotions or even in negative conditions can influence someone in making decisions. Finally, analysis paralysis. The more information received, the slower the decisions to be taken.

Yudhoyono (2017) emphasized that there are three things that must be had in facing the challenges of the changing times in making decisions, namely: Intellectual Capacity, Strong Character and Integrity and Leadership Quality. These three things are closely related to the title of this study. Intellectual capacity is very necessary so that someone can understand well what opportunities exist including the positive and negative consequences that may occur. On the other hand, character and integrity are very necessary in making decisions so that the decision will not conflict with moral and religious values. Likewise, leadership quality is needed to dare to make decisions and be ready to take risks.

One of the things that is needed in opening up opportunities so that the younger generation can make decisions is experience. Ramadhan (2024) stated that "decision-making" is not something that is learned even though it is necessary but through experience. The experience in question is that someone is involved (enters the pool) so that they can learn from the experience. This is the same as someone who wants to be good at swimming, so they have to learn to swim in a swimming pool. Ramadhan (2024) also emphasized that mistakes in making decisions can be minimized by thinking before acting (intellectual capacity) and learning from experience (leadership quality).

In the context of Generation Z or Gen Z (born 1997-2012) Djamali (2023) said that there are two things that can help a Gen Z in making decisions. These two things are related to the decision to watch a film which can also be applied to decision making in general. First, subjectivity. This subjectivity is determined by the behavior of certain groups such as the behavior of friends, family, loved ones, coworkers who can influence decision making. Second, many things can influence decision making, including: social media, information technology, communication methods and even social networking.

The question is how to help Gen Z in making decisions in their lives which will always be associated with moral values and faith, especially in the existentialist thinking of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard. This is necessary so that decisions taken will not be regretted later because they conflict with moral values and faith so as not to give rise to feelings of guilt and sin.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method. Yoni (2019) concluded that qualitative methods focus on in-depth observations that can produce a more comprehensive

study of a phenomenon. Qualitative research "pays attention to humanism or human individuals and human behavior is the answer to the awareness that all consequences of human actions are affected by the internal aspects of the individual" (Yoni 2019). Researchers will look for data related to the problems discussed from published sources which will then be compiled into a theory that will add insight into the issues discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the report of the Central Statistics Agency (2020) of Indonesia, the number of Gen Z in Indonesia in 2020 was 71,509,082 with a breakdown of 36,791,764 males and 34,717,318 females. Meanwhile, the total population of Indonesia in 2020 was 270,203,917. This means that the number of Gen Z in Indonesia reached 26.46 percent. In 2024, Gen Z will be between 12-27 years old. Thus, the Gen Z population is very dominant and even number 1 in Indonesia. This is a big challenge for families, the religious world, the world of education, the business world, the world of work, society and even the Indonesian government to prepare and utilize Gen Z in creating a better and more advanced social order for the progress of the Indonesian nation and state. There are many challenges faced by Gen Z. The Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Slamet Riyadi, Surakarta (2024) provides examples such as: emotional instability. As a digital native generation, Gen Z is vulnerable to technology addiction and mental health disorders. Gen Z needs to learn to manage emotions and maintain good mental health. The cause is a lack of practical experience, minimal work experience and field practice. As a result, Gen Z is less prepared to face challenges in the world of work. Second, the tight competition in the job market that forces Gen Z to continue to improve their competence and competitiveness, both hard skills and soft skills.

Binus Higher Education (2024) provides four major challenges for Gen Z, namely: first, internet and social media addiction which results in decreased productivity, sleep problems and social isolation and decreased child performance in education. Second, attention disorders due to the amount of constant or unchanging news will affect children's ability to maintain focus and concentration which has an impact on children's academic and cognitive achievements. As a result, children are not used to being diligent in doing something until it is finished and children's attention span becomes short. Third, low self-esteem. What is shown by social media is a perfect life so that Gen Z children feel inadequate and develop low self-esteem. Exposure to content shared on social media often affects how they view and judge themselves. This will trigger dissatisfaction in children which triggers depression and anxiety. Finally, cyberbullying which has the potential to experience psychological problems and even self-destructive behavior.

Yayasan Bangun Kecerdasan Bangsa (2024) added another challenge faced by Gen Z, namely: effective time management. This is due to the habit of multitasking and unlimited access to the internet which can interfere with focus and productivity which can actually cause delays and excessive stress. Second, difficulty in making decisions caused by too many choices and information received which makes someone confused about making decisions. As a result, Gen Z cannot take quick and appropriate steps in certain situations. Third, prone to stress and anxiety. Academic pressure and uncertainty of the future and the modern world cause stress and anxiety.

Wijaya et al. (2023) provided research results related to Gen Z's self-acceptance in the era of social media development that Gen Z "lacks a firm stance and self-confidence." Wijaya et al. (2023) explained that the component with the lowest score is the self-confidence component which has two indicators, namely: having a firm stance and having self-confidence. Both indicators have a low average score. This means that Gen Z lacks a firm stance and self-confidence. The data shows that Gen Z is indeed exposed to the internet with extraordinary intensity. Setiawan (2024) reported that a survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2023 showed that internet penetration had reached 79.5 percent of the total 279.3 million Indonesian population. 87.02 percent of this internet penetration has infiltrated the Gen Z group. In the post-Z generation group or those born after 2013, internet penetration was 48.10 percent. Around 97 percent of the lives of these two groups are spent surfing the internet using (smartphones).

Meanwhile, regarding the advantages of Gen Z, Yayasan Bangun Kecerdasan Bangsa (2024) provides several things: first, technology literate because Gen Z has the ability to use digital tools that make it easier to obtain information and solve problems. Second, creative and innovative in utilizing and developing. Gen Z has the ability to think out of the box and create something new. Furthermore, care about social problems by showing sensitivity to climate issues, gender equality and mental health. Gen Z is active in social movements and voices its opinions. Fourth, Gen Z shows high tolerance for differences. This is because Gen Z grew up in a diverse environment both culturally and globally. Differences in race, religion and sexual orientation are easily accepted. Fifth, flexibility. Gen Z has a high ability to adapt in dealing with rapid changes. Changes can occur in the world of work, education and personal life. Sixth, Non-Hierarchical. Gen Z prefers a relaxed and democratic work environment with leadership based on trust and cooperation. Finally, financial awareness. Careful financial management and interest in investment and future savings. Financial stability is a priority.

In the context of using the Paylater application, Sitepu and Fadila (2024) concluded that Gen Z is also interested in using the Paylater application. This is in accordance with the characteristics of Gen Z who are very attached to digital and fast and simple methods. The study was conducted on 85 Gen Z with the results: 61 people use the Paylater application and 24 people do not use it. Of the 85 respondents, 49.2 percent are aged 11-21 years and 50.8 percent are aged 22-26 years. The majority of Paylater users are women (68.9 percent). Finally, the intensity of Paylater usage among Gen Z tends to be low, with the majority of respondents only using this service once. Gen Z tends to use Paylater for non-productive purchases, especially products such as skincare.

Meanwhile, in the context of using social media applications, Wijaya et al., (2023) concluded that Gen Z prefers TikTok to Facebook. This is because TikTok's features provide more access to express identity or self-identity in all aspects. This disclosure of self-identity includes self-existence, emotions, social life, especially views on oneself. The impact is an assessment in terms of self-acceptance. Wijaya et al., (2023) stated that Gen Z "has knowledge of their shortcomings, knows how to overcome their shortcomings, understands their limitations, views shortcomings as something normal, accepts input from others, and considers criticism from others can help individuals become better." Wijaya et al. (2023) concluded that Gen Z can understand their limitations and know a broad perspective of themselves but does not make Gen Z think they are useless. Gen Z is aware of their assets and accepts themselves.

Moral values and faith are very important for living a good life because they influence each other. Moral values are guidelines that help someone decide what is right and what is wrong. Some examples of moral values are acceptance, charity, compassion, cooperation, and honesty. Faith, family, education, society and culture can shape moral values. Abun et al. (2014) conveyed that moral values are very important for regulating human behavior.

Fraenkel (1977) quoted by Syaifeie (2020) defines value as "an idea-a concept-about what someone thinks is important in life. When a person values something, he or she seems it worthy while-worth having, worth doing, or worth trying to obtain. The study of values is usually divided into the areas of aesthetics and ethics. Aesthetics refers to the study and justification of human beings consider beautiful-what they enjoy. Ethics refers to the study and justification of conduct-how people behave. At the base study of ethics is the question of morals-the reflective consideration of what is right and wrong.”

Elsayed et al. (2023) emphasize that ethics and moral values are principles or beliefs that guide behavior and decision making. Moral values are important for every individual to live in harmony with others and make ethical choices. This confirms that moral values are very much needed in decision making. Elsayed (2023) further stated that it is important for parents, educators and religious leaders to collaborate in promoting positive values and ethical behavior.

Christien et al. (2022) emphasized that the progress of the era has resulted in a high moral and religious crisis among children from early age to adulthood. This happens because of the lack of commitment, teachings and education provided in capital and faith values. Gen Z is very attached to social media which can access all kinds of influences, both positive and negative, easily. That is why it is important to emphasize moral values and faith in Gen Z.

Abun, et al. (2014) raises an important question regarding countries dominated by certain religions that do not reduce crime. “Many wonder why self-confessed religious nations such as Christian nations, Islam nations, Hinduism nations, have not become better countries in terms of morality such as corruption, killings, gambling, cheating, abortions, and many more immoralities. Those immoralities raise questions in the minds of many people: does religion have no influence to the moral life of people? At the same time, some nations that claim to have no religion, they are advanced and less corrupt. Such a picture deserves to be investigated.” This is a challenge in itself to the existence of religion in families, communities and countries because countries that are regulated or dominated by a particular belief or religion should have better social life than those that are not.

The conclusion is that moral values and faith are very important for a person to be able to live well because he does what is good and right. Moral values are influenced by family background, education, culture, environment/community and the religion that is embraced. Gen Z needs to instill moral and religious values in themselves because Gen Z lives in an era where information is so freely accessible. If someone does not have strong moral values and faith in themselves, then there will be a tendency to act and behave in ways that violate the moral values and faith they adhere to. In the context of Indonesia, with the number of Gen Z reaching 71 million people, what will the Indonesian state and society look like in ten or twenty years when Gen Z reaches the age of 40-50 years and above?

Setiawan (2024) reported how difficult it is for Gen Z to maintain moral values and faith in their lives: First, according to the Head of PPATK Ivan Yustiavandana, as many as 191,380 children in the 17-19 age range were involved in online gambling with 2.1 million transactions

reaching IDR 282 billion. As many as 1,160 children under the age of 11 are known to have made 22,000 online gambling transactions with a transaction value of at least IDR 3 billion. Furthermore, there are 4,514 children aged 11-16 years who made 45,000 online gambling transactions worth a total of IDR 7.9 billion. All of them are school-age children who are studying in education or are being prepared to become future leaders of Indonesia. Fourth, the involvement of children in online gambling is part of the giant online gambling ecosystem that has generated 168 million transactions worth a total of IDR 327 trillion throughout 2023. Fifth, the Chairperson of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) Ai Maryati revealed that since 2021-2023 the number of complaints from children who were victims of pornography and cybercrime to her party was 481 cases. The other 431 cases were complaints from children who were victims of exploitation and child trafficking. The majority of all these cases occurred due to the misuse of digital technology and smartphones that were not in accordance with the child's development phase.

Meanwhile, in the context of radicalism, Hakim (2022) reported the statement of the Head of the Indonesian National Counterterrorism Agency that "the index of potential radicalism in Indonesia in 2019 was at 38.4 percent and fell to 12.2 percent in 2020 to 2021. Of this index, the percentage of young generation Z aged 14 to 19 years and millennials aged 20 to 39 years dominated, reaching more than 50 percent. 'And most of Generation Z and millennials are women."

Elly et al. (2024) noted the report of the National Human Rights Commission reported that in the context of Online Gender-Based Violence (KBGO) as follows: "The 2023 Annual Report found that the age range of KBGO perpetrators had the following percentages: 17% or 595 of 3442 cases were perpetrators aged 18-24 years, and 16% or 565 cases of perpetrators aged 25-40 years (the age range of Gen Z in 2023 is 11-26 years)." So it is clear that there is a big problem within Gen Z regarding the implementation of moral values and faith within themselves.

A Danish philosopher named Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) concluded three phases of existence which are three attitudes towards life, namely: aesthetic attitude, ethical attitude and religious attitude (Kierkegaard, 2009). Kierkegaard in each phase raises one figure as a model like a morality tale: Don Juan (aesthetic), Socrates (ethical) and Abraham (religious). Each of these figures conveys a concrete emotional force as each phase unfolds. Everyone can be in any of these attitudes and can move to a higher stage by taking the "existential leap" and the "leap of faith."

In this discussion, a summary of the three existentialist attitudes of humans according to Kierkegaard will be presented based on Pardosi's dissertation (2020). Pardosi (2020) summarizes what Hardiman (2011) summarizes regarding the aesthetic attitude according to Kierkegaard by presenting the characters: Don Juan, Faust and Ahasuerus. "Don Juan (Mozart's opera) is a character who does not know reflection so he does not know sin and guilt. Don Juan's existence is moments that can be enjoyed and that will continue to repeat. As a result, boredom and despair arise. Meanwhile, Faust (a character created by Goethe) actually represents boredom itself because the character faces many challenges and always has doubts in him whether he will achieve happiness even though these challenges can be overcome. Finally, Ahasuerus (the Wandering Jew) is a person who does not believe in humans or God.

Ahasuerus is the personification of despair because his life has no direction, no hope and no peace."

Pardosi (2020) emphasized that "the motto of human life in the aesthetic stage is 'immediate pleasure' or momentary while thinking about tomorrow. Moral standards in situations like this do not apply, solid principles are not owned and discomfort and boredom are the main fears faced (Hardiman, 201). This situation occurs because humans are controlled by sexual instincts (libido), by the principles of hedonistic pleasure, and have a tendency to act according to mood (Abidin, 2009). Humans in the aesthetic stage also face the Either/or dilemma so that humans must choose whether to continue living in such a state or jump to a higher level through a free choice. The free choice to fill freedom is called 'existing' (Hamersma, 1983).

The second stage is the ethical stage. Humans must make an existential leap from the aesthetic stage to the ethical stage. Kierkegaard presents the figure of Socrates. Pardosi (2020) concludes that for Kierkegaard, "to move towards an authentic personal existence, to become a Christian, means to move beyond the realm of the aesthetic stage and towards the ethical. Ethical life recognizes the importance of choice. One accepts one's duty as a moral actor who sets aside many of one's desires or impulses, one's reckless 'freedom', and heeds one's conscience, takes responsibility, and fulfills one's moral obligations (Kierkegaard, 2007). The prototype of this stage is Socrates. The reason is because of Socrates' firm decision to sacrifice himself by drinking poison to uphold his belief in the very noble values of humanity. Socrates realized the role of individual autonomy in accepting the truth because based on his personal beliefs he rejected any power or system of power that was considered contrary to universal human values (Abidin: 2009)." Pardosi (2020) summarizes as conveyed by Hamesrma (1983) some of the characteristics of ethical humans, namely: "humans who accept moral rules, accept the interests of conscience and give direction to their lives. The characteristic of this stage is accepting the bonds of marriage as opposed to the aesthetic stage which rejects the bonds of marriage. In the ethical stage, humans acknowledge their weaknesses but are not yet aware of sin. Humans acknowledge their weaknesses but do not realize that they cannot overcome these weaknesses with their own strength."

Pardosi (2020) concluded that "humans in the ethical stage also face the same situation as aesthetic humans, namely despair that ends in disappointment. This is because the ethical choices made are ultimately realized as mere thoughts so that humans will never achieve self-fulfillment with the ethical 'goodness' they do. When this despair really happens, then the ethical human will connect himself directly with God and take a 'leap of faith' to the stage of religious humans (Vardy, 2001)."

The final stage is the religious stage. Pardosi (2020) concludes that Kierkegaard "believed that life must ultimately be lived on another level: the religious sphere. A person lives religiously when he realizes that ethical life is not enough to solve the puzzles and choices of life (Kierkegaard, 2007). Humans in the ethical stage must retake their 'existential leap' but are more commonly referred to as 'leaps of faith' which are non-rational and are usually called conversion. Humans in the ethical stage are still confined within themselves even though they try to achieve universal moral principles, but they remain immanent because they only rely on the power of their reason (Hardiman, 2011). Humans in the religious stage are alone before God like Abraham because religious life is a paradoxical life. Religious humans in the context

of Søren Kierkegaard's Christianity are humans who believe that God shows Himself once in a while, namely in Jesus (Hamersma, 1983).” The prototype of this religious stage is Abraham.

Kierkegaard (2007), as summarized by Pardosi (2020) “illustrates the difference between the ethical and religious stages through the story of Abraham, ‘the father of all who believe.’ This story is recorded in the Bible in Genesis chapter 22. Abraham, a pious man, is an example of faith because instead of heeding the moral law – ‘Thou shalt not murder’ (Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17) – Abraham heeded God’s command to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham acted as a righteous individual because of his relationship with God, not with the moral law. This was the main thing in Abraham’s life. Abraham did not only perceive God through morality or reduce God to the moral law. Abraham, as a man of faith, made everything, including his ethical actions, to God. Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac for the sake of his own relationship with God. Abraham acted because God commanded him to act. Abraham, in this condition, stood before God, answering to no one but God. Hardiman (2011: 219) explains that Abraham did not fulfill universal moral principles like Socrates who sacrificed himself for the sake of those principles. Instead, Abraham entered an 'absolute paradox', namely realizing his limitations but precisely in his limitations he placed himself in a relationship with the Infinite.”

Gen Z needs to understand the understanding of these three stages of human existence so that the decisions that will be taken are no longer aesthetic decisions to satisfy physical desires but are at the ethical and even religious stages. How to prepare Gen Z to survive at the ethical stage and jump to the religious stage.

RESULT OF THE STUDY

Many solutions have been presented to help the Gen Z generation to have a commitment to moral values and faith. The solution starts in the family, society, education and religion. All of these components have their respective roles, although the first basis for instilling moral values and faith is in the family. Role models and consistency are very important in the family, education, society and religion. Role models and consistency from parents, educators and religious and community leaders are required.

Gen Z looks to these "educator" groups. Family, religion, education, society and the state must collaborate in instilling moral values and faith. The values of honesty, responsibility, tolerance, politeness, love and hard work can be interesting discussion topics for Gen Z. UNICEF and UNESCO have implemented a program called Living Values Education which is a solution to the current moral decadence. Living Values Education is a character education activity by nurturing the heart and educating the mind with resources and workshops. This global movement has been followed by almost 30 countries that emphasize "life values that are attempted to build a world civilization that loves peace, has respect and tolerance, responsibility and cooperation, happiness and honesty, humility and simplicity, and freedom and unity" (Patimah, 2021).

However, what Rizqi (2024) said is interesting that: first, Gen Z is a critical and selective consumer (Gen Z tends to focus on the ethics and values of the product-producing company rather than the product itself. Gen Z is also a smart consumer because they tend to do research first before buying a product and who produces the product). Second, committed social activists (Gen Z often use social media to voice what is happening in society and even get directly

involved so that the issues voiced go viral). Finally, active social media users (Gen Z relies on social media to learn, find information and even shop). Here it can be concluded that Gen Z has a fanatical and loyal attitude towards something. Gen Z is not the passive type but wants to be involved.

The process of becoming a fanatic is not easy but requires a process through observation and research. The same process also occurs in captivating Gen Z in moral values and faith. This is what Gen Z observes from the "educators" in the family, education, religion and society. Gen Z observes the lives of these "educators" both through direct and indirect contact (social media). When the observation is sufficient, a decision will be made whether to accept and live the example given or not. Therefore, the delivery of moral values and faith must be short and concise like Gen Z who enjoys enjoying TikTok social media. The delivery is no longer long theories, boring conversations, but must follow the Gen Z pattern, namely through social media, short, live, interesting, sometimes humorous.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

Gen Z has its own strengths and weaknesses. If these strengths and weaknesses are not managed properly, they can cause problems now and in the future. That is why instilling moral values and faith in oneself is very important. Instilling moral values and faith involves collaboration between family, education, religion, society and the state. However, its implementation requires exemplary behavior and consistency from the relevant parties. These are not just theories but real practices from the "educators."

In Kierkegaard's thinking, humans exist or make existential leaps in three attitudes/stages, namely the aesthetic stage, the ethical stage and the religious stage. The aesthetic stage ignores moral and religious values because it focuses on self-satisfaction or lust. The ethical stage accepts and carries out moral or legal demands and remains steadfast in understanding these moral or legal values even though life is at stake. While the religious stage does what God commands even though it conflicts with existing moral or legal values because humans at the religious stage only obey God's commands even though those commands conflict with legal or moral and religious values. That is why Gen Z must be given opportunities to make important decisions in life so that those decisions are not in the realm of the aesthetic stage but jump to the ethical and even religious stage. Indeed, in making these leaps there must be a sense of disappointment with one's condition, feeling that something is lacking in oneself, so that a desire to be better and better arises. Gen Z must be allowed to become human beings who exist in taking opportunities.

Many studies have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of Gen Z but not much research has been done regarding Gen Z's strengths or weaknesses in maintaining the moral values and faith they have so that the decisions taken do not conflict with the moral values and faith they have. It is hoped that through more up-to-date approaches according to the times, Gen Z will make their own "existential leap" to the ethical and even religious stage. The result is that negative behavior from Gen Z will decrease and their future will be brighter.

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