
Implementing Religious Moderation in Digital Space: Challenges and Opportunities Z Generation

Mochammad Rizal Ramadhan

State University of Malang, Indonesia

mochammad.ramadhan.fs@um.ac.id

Abdul Basid

State University of Malang, Indonesia

abdul.basid.fs@um.ac.id

Nur Faizin

State University of Malang, Indonesia

nur.faizin.fs@um.ac.id

Abstract

Keywords:
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Generation,
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This article reviews the challenges and opportunities of Z Generation in implementing religious moderation in the digital space. Z Generation is characterized as an open and tolerant generation. Even though it has many negative influences, digital space also has a positive influence on society, especially Generation Z as digital natives in spreading religious moderation. This study used an online survey method for Z generation combined with library research. This discussion examines the many challenges of Z generation in the digital space regarding deviations from religion and opportunities in spreading religious moderation. Given the growing development of extreme/radical group movements in the digital space, to maintain the stability of socio-religious life, it needs to be balanced with polite (moderate) Islamic teachings. Extremism, radicalism and terrorism are ideologies that are contrary to the views of society, so there needs to be a systematic effort to overcome them. Moreover, technological developments, especially in the

digital space, are increasing rapidly. Therefore, this article seeks to explore the important contributions that Generation Z can make as productive consumers of social media to spread and implement religious moderation.

Abstrak

Kata Kunci:
Moderasi
Beragama,
Generasi Z,
Ruang Digital

Artikel ini mengulas tantangan dan peluang generasi Z dalam mengimplementasikan moderasi beragama di ruang digital. Gen Z memiliki ciri sebagai generasi yang terbuka dan toleran. Meskipun memiliki banyak pengaruh negatif, ruang digital juga memberikan pengaruh positif kepada masyarakat khususnya Generasi Z sebagai digital native dalam menyebarkan moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode survei online kepada generasi Z dipadukan dengan metode kepustakaan (library research). Pembahasan ini mengkaji banyaknya tantangan generasi Z dalam ruang digital akan penyimpangan pada agama serta peluang dalam menyebarkan moderasi beragama. Mengingat semakin berkembangnya gerakan kelompok ekstrim/radikal di ruang digital, maka untuk menjaga stabilitas kehidupan sosial-keagamaan, perlu diimbangi dengan ajaran Islam yang santun (moderat). Ekstrimisme, radikalisme dan terorisme merupakan ideologi yang bertentangan dengan pandangan masyarakat, maka perlu ada upaya yang sistematis untuk mengatasinya. Terlebih perkembangan teknologi terutama dalam ruang digital yang semakin pesat. Maka dari itu, artikel ini berupaya menggali kontribusi penting yang dapat dilakukan oleh generasi Z sebagai konsumen produktif media sosial untuk menyebarkan dan mengimplementasikan moderasi beragama.

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Introduction

A good da'wah strategy is preaching that always pays attention to the accuracy of the mission's goals. A preacher needs to know well the people who serve as the target of da'wah, both from cultural aspects, customs, knowledge, and even economic aspects. In each of these conditions, there is a very specific strategy that suits each condition. Technological developments in the field of communication have changed the way humans communicate.

Today almost everyone uses the internet to send, search and read information. Likewise, interacting with most of us is done through social media rather than face-to-face communication. This is very likely to happen, at least influenced by several factors, including the rapid development of information and communication technology, as well as the tendency of Generation Z to rely heavily on media, especially social media. Media can penetrate the boundaries of space and time, which means that even with long distances, communication can still be carried out. Not only that, the media also offers the speed of time in providing various information along with the rapid development of technology (Sutrisno, 2019).

The current condition of our society is amid virtual communication ecstasy, which is used by certain groups to offer ideas, opinions, and fatwas to others without limits. This condition has shifted the moderate understanding of Islam towards non-mainstream, which tends to be exclusive, hard, rigid, and even monopolizes the truth. The created religious narrative has shifted the authority of the Ulama as a reference in understanding digital world texts and then hurts religious structures and narratives. Several groups produce religious content based on a common understanding, thus triggering the growth of identity politics and conflict (Hefni, 2020). In this situation, religious moderation is expected to be a solution. Strengthening the vision of religious moderation can be a starting point to guide and inspire global religious communities that practicing religious education is the same as fulfilling state duties, just as fulfilling state duties is a form of practicing religious education. If achieved, it will be Indonesia's main contribution to world peace.

In religious moderation, there are principles of balance, simplicity, politeness, and brotherhood. Religious expressions are expressed politely, and religion emphasizes brotherhood. It's okay to be different but still polite, empathetic to each other. The substance of religious moderation has long been practiced by people throughout the archipelago and has become local wisdom that functions as a mechanism for managing diversity (Sila, 2017). In essence,

local wisdom is rooted in religious values such as the treasures of ancestral heritage and has been proven since ancient times to be able to resolve religious conflicts. Religious moderation is a fundamental value that forms the basis and philosophy of the people of the archipelago. This value exists in all religions because all religions teach the same human values.

In addition, the concept of religious moderation strongly supports egalitarian values (musawah) because it does not have discriminatory views on other people. Differences in belief, tradition, religion, language, and ethnicity, as well as differences between groups, are not motives for being arbitrary. In this context, religious moderation can be understood as a middle way to create a peaceful and harmonious life, especially in this multicultural country. Religious moderation can be achieved in various ways, such as cultivating the core values of religious teachings, strengthening devotion to the state, and strengthening tolerance and resistance to all forms of violence in the name of religion. Particularly related to the introduction of important religious values, this is a very important thing to implement in personal and social life as well as in the nation and state.

Research Methods

The method used in this research article is an online survey research method aimed at generation Z. This research is a quantitative study using the same structured/systematic questions to many people, then all answers obtained by the researcher were recorded, processed, and analyzed. These structured/systematic questions are known as questionnaires (Jannah & Prasetyo, 2010). Researchers surveyed in February 2023 using Google Forms for retrieving quantitative data using the same structured questions for everyone. By analyzing how important the role of generation Z is as agents of change and facilitators who influence positive lives and significantly influence efforts to communicate smart Islam (religious moderation) in digital space/social media (Lestari, 2018).

In addition, this study used library research methods (library research) which is based on an analysis of the research literature. Literature research is an activity that is carried out systematically to collect, process, and conclude data using certain methods/techniques to find answers to problems faced through library research (Khatibah, 2011). The approach used is a library approach that looks at data analysis based on written output such as books, and the results of previous research in the form of journal publications and scientific articles.

Result and Discussion

Religious Moderation

Moderation is a word taken from the word moderate. Moderate is an adjective from the word moderation, which means not exaggerating, being, or middle. Religious moderation is an understanding taken from religious norms and rules that are applied in a fair and balanced manner without exaggerating. Moderation in Arabic is " al-wasathiyyah " which comes from the word " wasath " . According to Ibn Assyria wasath has two meanings, namely first, in the language is a position that is in the middle without taking sides with one party. The two perspectives of terminology that moderation is Islamic values that are formed from good thoughts and not exaggerating things. moderation activities can be completed with religious meetings with no restrictions on carrying out these activities because religious moderation is to maintain honesty with one another and not criticize or hurt any religious differences. There are five values of religious moderation, namely fair and balanced, cooperation, mercy, tolerance, and benefit (Sumarto 2021).

The principles of religious moderation

Tawassuth (taking the middle way)

Tawassuth is an attitude in the middle or between two attitudes, namely, not too hard (fundamentalist) and too free (liberalism). With this attitude, Islam can be accepted at all levels of society. In the word of Allah (QS. Al Baqarah/2:143). Meaning: "And thus we made you (Muslims) a middle nation

(just and choice) so that you become witnesses (judgmental measures) of human (attitudes and actions) in general and so that Allah SWT becomes a witness (judgmental measure) of (attitudes and actions) deeds) of all of you". (QS. Al Baqarah/2:143). Tawassuth is included in the attitude of someone who is moderate or in the middle, not too free or not too strict in principle, so that this attitude is easily accepted by all levels of society. The attitude of tawassuth is very easily accepted by all levels of society because it is moderate or in the middle, wise in behaving, and polite in speaking as we know that the diversity of the Indonesian nation with a population of various ethnicities, religions, races, and classes can lead to different attitudes in responding to something or a problem.

Tawazun (Balance)

Tawazun is a view of balance not getting out of the predetermined line. The term tawazun comes from the word mizan which means scales. But in the understanding of the context of moderation, mizan is not interpreted as a tool or object used to weigh but justice in all aspects of life, both related to the world and related to eternal life in the hereafter. In the Word of Allah SWT (QS. Al-Hadid: 25) Meaning: "Indeed we have sent our messengers with clear evidence of truth, and we have sent down with them the Book and the balance (justice) so that humans can act fairly. And We created iron which has great power and many benefits for mankind, and so that Allah will know who helps His (religion) and His messengers even though (Allah) does not see him. Indeed, Allah is Strong, Mighty." (QS. Al-Hadid: 25)

Al- I'tidal (straight and firm)

The term I'tidal comes from the Arabic word, namely fair, which means equal. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, fair means not one-sided, not arbitrary. I'tidal is a view that places something in its place, divides it according to its portion, exercises rights, and fulfills obligations. As Muslim, we are ordered to be fair to anyone in any case and are ordered to always do Ihsan with anyone. Because justice is a noble value of religious teachings. In the Word of Allah SWT

(QS. Al-Maidah: 8) Meaning: "O you who believe, be you as enforcers of justice because Allah (when) bear witness fairly. And let not your hatred of a people encourage you to act unjustly. Be fair. Because (fair) is closer to piety. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is All-Knowing of what you do." (Al-Maidah: 8)

Tasamuh (tolerance)

Tasamuh in Arabic comes from the word samhun, which means ease. Meanwhile, according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, tolerance means respecting, allowing, allowing something different or contrary to one's own convictions. So it can be concluded that tolerance is the behavior of respecting other people's stances; respecting does not mean correcting or agreeing to follow and justify it. In the Word of God (QS. Thaha: 44) Meaning: "Then speak both of you to him (Pharaoh) in gentle words, hopefully, he is aware or afraid.

Musawah (equation)

Musawah means equality; in Islam, people have never been distinguished from a personal perspective. All humans have the same degree as other humans regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, rank, tradition, or culture because everything has been determined by the creator. Humans do not have the right to change the provisions that have been set. Word of Allah SWT in Surah Al Hujurat verse 13 as follows: Meaning: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from a male and a female, then We made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Truly Allah is All-Knowing, All-Conscientious." (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13)

Shura (Discussion)

Shura comes from the word Syawara yusawiru, which means giving an explanation, stating or taking something. In moderation, deliberation is a solution to minimize and eliminate prejudice and disputes between individuals or groups because deliberation can establish communication, openness, and freedom of opinion as well as a friendly medium so that close brotherhood and unity will be established in ukhuwah Islamiyah, ukhuwah wathaniyah , ukhuwah basyariyah , and human brotherhood. In the Word of Allah SWT in

Surat Asy-Shura verse 38 as follows: Meaning: "And (for) those who accept (obey) God's call and pray, while their affairs are (decided) by deliberation between them; and they spend part of the sustenance that We give them." (Surah Asy-Shura: 38)

Ishlah (Reformation)

In Arabic, Ishlah means to repair or reconcile. The principle of shura (deliberation), that is, every problem is resolved by way of deliberation to reach a consensus with the principle of placing benefit above all else. In Ishlah, moderation means prioritizing reformative principles to achieve a better condition that accommodates changes and progress of the times based on the general benefit (*maslahah*) . ammah) by sticking to the principle of al-muhafadzah 'ala al-qadimi al-shalih wow al-akhdzu bi al so be al-ashla . In the Word of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 224: Meaning: "Do not make (name) Allah in your oath as a hindrance from doing good, being pious, and creating peace among people. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

Awlawiyah (Put Priority)

Awlawiyah puts everything in its position and follows its proportions, so it does not end what should take precedence or prioritize what should be ended, and does not minimize big matters or magnify small matters.

Tathawwur Wa Ibtikar (Dynamic and Innovative)

Tathawwur Wa Ibtikar means dynamic and innovative, which is an attitude of always being open to making and creating changes that are better following the times that aim for the benefit of the people. Over time, changes in all aspects of people's lives have become an absolute thing due to changes and developments in the modern era.

Tahadhdhur (Civilized)

Tahadhdhur upholds *akhlakul karimah*, character, identity, and integrity as *khairu ummah* in the life of humanity and civilization.

Get to know Society 5.0

The industrial revolution is a fundamental change in the way of life of humans and work processes, where there are advances in information technology that can integrate real life with digital and impact scientific disciplines. It's not over yet about the uproar of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, which coincided with the development of the era of disruption. Where this era resulted in radical changes in all areas of life, including the field of religious life (Saifuddin, 2019). We are struck by a concept of a new society with names Society 5.0, which is a real movement marked by increasingly sophisticated developments in information and technology (Ramadhan, 2021).

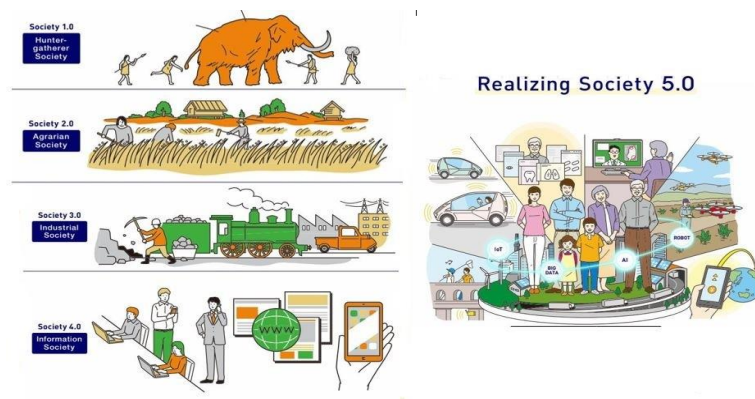


Illustration of stages of society

Source: <https://socs.binus.ac.id/2020/11/01/siapkah-indonesia-menyosong-society-5-0-dengan-seiring-perkembangan-big-data-yang-makin-pesat/>

The concept of Society 5.0 appears in "Basic Policy on Economics and Fiscal Management and Reform 2016", which is a core part of the strategic plan taken by the Japanese Cabinet in anticipation of global trends due to the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Society 5.0 was proposed in the 5th Science and Technology Basic Plan as the future society that Japan aspires to. This concept follows the stages of society, starting from the hunting society (Society 1.0), then the agricultural society (Society 2.0), the industrial society (Society 3.0), and the information society (Society 4.0) (Prima, 2019).

The Industrial Revolution 4.0 has spawned various innovations in the industrial world and society in general. Society 5.0 is the answer to the challenges

of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era accompanied by disruption, where the world is full of turmoil, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Society 5.0 describes a society that can solve various challenges and social problems by utilizing various innovations that were born in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0, such as the Internet of Things (internet for everything), Artificial Intelligence (artificial intelligence), Big Data (large amounts of data), and robots to improve the quality of human life (Astuti, Fitriani, Novianti, & Puspita, 2020). Society 5.0 will be human-centered, which balances economic progress with solving social problems by a system that integrates cyberspace with the physical/real world.

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Digital Space in the Age of Society 5.0

Society 5.0 will be integrated with technology a lot, unfortunately, there are too many conveniences in various ways provided. One does not need to bother to get access to whatever one wants; everything becomes faster, even instant (Haqqi & Wijayati, 2019). Society 5.0 is an era where all technology is part of humans. The internet is not only used to get information but to live life. In the digital space, there is information technology which has a very vital role in accelerating the folding of space and time. The rise of virtual worlds that are easy to access can lead people to paradoxical or conflicting problems, both from a state, social or religious perspective. Digital space has a big influence on society, both on a small and large scale (Hefni, 2020). The positive and negative influences of digital space depend on its users where digital users are meant, in this case (in the era of society 5.0), to include people of all ages, from children, adolescents, adults, parents, and some elderly people.



Digital space illustration

Source: <https://adv.kompas.id/read/ruang-digital-Jadi-reality-kebudayaan-baru-2/>

Advances in technology and information are a means of conveying opinions to everyone. Communication technology with various kinds of social media has given freedom to each individual to express his opinion. The development of information technology media is characterized by various problems. The existence of restrictions on human rights in various aspects is a form of control to avoid brutal and overreaching freedoms within the scope of society and the digital space (Nasution, 2020). Entering the current era of Society

5.0, you must be no stranger to social media as a means of communication, information, entertainment, and other things. From easy access to information and easy communication, almost all communication processes, both in individual and mass units, can occur directly, such as in group conversations or feeds in the comments column. The limitless capacity of social media is what will shape interaction/communication. This kind of thing can happen through several social media accounts, be it Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, and other media; directly/indirectly, it will be able to be consumed by the wider community/public.

Digital space has a character that can elevate conversation/communication both individually and in groups so that there are no barriers. This kind of interaction is termed by Robert et al. with the word interactivity, meaning, in this case, it is an interaction that is not only limited to involving physical or social aspects/face-to-face interactions but also technical and textual activities. Besides that, since the presence of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, it has changed, even shutting down several sectors/fields of human activity. Human activity moves from physical contact to social media, from offline to online, both in terms of education, development, economy, buying, and selling, including in the realm of da'wah. Until now, da'wah activities in the digital space are still a trend in their own right and are changing platforms by utilizing technological advances (Azisi & Syam, 2022).

Generation Z

The world's ever-expanding population creates generations. Starting from the baby generation boom (1946-1960) to the generation that plays an important role today, namely. Generation Z or Z (1995-2010). Generation Z is the first generation exposed to technology from an early age. The technology is in the form of computers or other electronic media such as mobile phones, internet networks, and even social media applications. Generation Z grew up on the social web, they are digital-centric, and technology is their identity. Born and raised along with advances in the digital world, this makes Gen Z different from

previous generations. A very striking difference from Generation Z to other generations is the use of cell phones (Firamadhina & Krisnani, 2020).

Often the term generation Z is used as a continuation of the millennial generation. Generation Z is a generation that is very tech- savvy or net generation. They are used to communicating via the internet, WA, Facebook , Instagram , Twitter , etc. When they are born and develop into humans, they are already in the advancement of digital technology, which is characterized by speed and convenience. In the 2020s, Indonesia already has a population of 50% from the millennial generation, and in 2030 the number will be 70% in productive age. Thus, the influence of technology has influenced the formation of their personality. With the advances in digital technology above, all processes can be carried out very quickly, very easily, and with that, individuals compete with other individuals in a very tight global world. In this era, the most successful individuals are the most informed. This is because it is easy to access information. But on the other hand, such a powerful flow of information in cyberspace can sweep away any individual who does not have a strong and firm handle (Ridwan & Mansur, 2022).

Challenges of Generation Z in the Digital Space

Of the many things that we can find in the digital space, we have seen and felt the positive influence of the digital space, especially in this increasingly modern era. The digital space provides rapid progress starting from the economic, social, political, and religious fields. But there are also not a few negative influences from the digital space, none other than negative things that are not justified in religious teachings. According to survey data that researchers have obtained, 84% of people (gen Z) stated that they often encounter things that deviate from religion in the digital space. Some examples are negative posts (opening genitalia, dating, and drinking), physical violence, bullying, LGBT, sexual harassment, and even burning the Koran on social media on issues of radicalism which can express hatred towards others if allowed to continue. Many

people are willing to upload other bad things with the aim of just wanting to go viral, even with videos that contain sensation.

With digitalization in the era of society 5.0, everything is increasingly a challenge for the realization of a complete understanding of understanding of religious moderation (Ramadan, 2022). In this digital era, religious moderation can or has the opportunity to make someone make a mistake; they become fanatical about something and think something else is bad and not good. But on the other hand, if someone has good knowledge and can find out the truth about something, then he understands and respects the existing religion without having to see other things as something bad or wrong. For religious moderation in this digital era to be able to sort and choose things as best as possible so that misunderstandings do not occur between one another, in-depth knowledge is needed to facilitate the handling of unwanted things.

Hate speech between people is difficult to control. It's as if throwing hate speech is normal for society, including Generation Z, even though this can lead to conflict between individuals and even a group. This can happen because hate speech uses offensive language or even using language that should not be spoken by an individual to attack another person. The conflicts that have been mentioned are enough to make some parties uneasy because of the lack of awareness and sensitivity of social media users in using public spaces. Activities that occur on social media are not personal, but the public can find out everything through digital footprints (Rahii, 2021).

Entering the present era, communication tools are not only limited to print media (posters, banners, newspapers, magazines, etc.). Along with the times, information, communication, and social media have also developed. In its development, we can find many conveniences, starting from seeking access to information and communication. As a result of this effect, almost all communication processes, both individual units and masses, can take place directly. Therefore, the technological system that educates and disciplines religious life becomes an arena of controversy that must be overcome and

controlled by religious narratives based on religious moderation. The younger generation (gen Z) should take part in spreading ideas and thoughts on religious moderation using some content such as content on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or publishing studies and research on religious harmony.



Illustration of various types of social media

Source: <https://www.pngdownload.id/png-nxd7s0/download.html>

Opportunity for Gen Z to Spread Religious Moderation

Talking about generation Z, of course, they are closely involved in the world of academia, organizations, and participation in various activities and communities. Their participation is not only beneficial for each individual but also for the state, nation, and society. With today's technological advances, there is no doubt that generation Z has smartphones and is active in social networks to communicate/view/share and individually seek sources of information, news, and religious studies. Therefore, the Z generation, especially those who are involved in the academic world, both religious and general, besides being required to adapt to the rapid advancement of technology, also have challenges in stemming the movement of extremism-radicalism-conservatism on social media (Thoyyib, 2018), namely by spread the nets of religious moderation. Or, more simply interpreted by following polite and reputable Islam, Islam that is intelligent, not oppressive, and Islam that does not spread insults.

As the younger generation who are of course, very proficient and unfamiliar with social media, of course, we can take advantage of this

opportunity to convey good religious moderation with media that is easy to find, interesting, creative, and the message to be conveyed is also guaranteed. One of them is by maximizing da'wah videos in the digital era, such as lecture studies, religious-themed educational content, and so on. According to the results of research by PPIM UIN Jakarta, there are 180 Youtube videos and 1,237 Instagram content of the hijrah movement, which tend to lead to conservative narratives, whether in the form of text, images or videos (PPIM, 2022). This shows that many people, or Gen Z have started trying to spread religious moderation through social media, which has a wide and easy scope.

Survey data that researchers have obtained states that 75% of Gen Z think that the spread of true and good religious moderation is very effective if you can take advantage of the opportunities that exist in today's increasingly advanced digital space. Given that at this time, digital footprints are very sad and scary, and there is a lot of use of social media that is against religion. To encourage moderate Islam (wasatiyah) in the media, the steps are as follows: moderation-oriented narratives on social media in the form of writing, pictures, and videos, Creating creative content (writing, images, videos) about religious moderation for various digital platforms around the world, Collaborating with certain communities/institutions in implementing moderate religious messages on social media, The steps above can be applied on various digital platforms (Tiktok , Instagram, Website , Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, etc.).

In addition, we can use social media as a medium for campaigning and outreach about implementing religious moderation in digital space, based on surveys that researchers have conducted, there are many ideas for implementing moderation with various methods, both through interesting content, making articles about wise attitudes in religion, and make digital posters using the Canva application, Adobe Premium which are then distributed on Instagram , Twitter , Facebook or other social media . Therefore, our role as a young generation of intellectuals is very important as a mover who has advantages in managing social

media will add to the power of broadcasting religious moderation to be more creative, massive and suppress the movement of conservative groups.

Conclusion

Moderation is an understanding of religious norms and rules that are applied in a fair and balanced manner without exaggerating. Religious moderation can be achieved in various ways. In the Era of Society 5.0, many things are integrated with technology; the unlimited internet is not only a source of information but also a means of living life. The ease of accessing everything has many negative influences, which are a challenge for the younger generation, especially generation Z. On the other hand, digital space has many positive influences depending on its users. Religious moderation is a solution to many problems. In this case, generation Z has an important role as well as a great opportunity in managing digital space.

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