

Islamic Guidance and Counseling in the Digital Era: Strategies to Strengthen the Mental Health and Spirituality of the Younger Generation

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to communication patterns, social behavior, and the psychological condition of society, particularly the younger generation. Easier access to information and social networks offers considerable benefits, yet it also gives rise to problems such as anxiety, identity crisis, loneliness, digital addiction, and the erosion of spiritual values. This article aims to examine the role and strategies of Islamic guidance and counseling in responding to the mental health and spiritual challenges of young people in the digital era. This study employs a qualitative approach using the library research method on classical and contemporary literature relevant to Islamic guidance and counseling, Islamic psychology, and digital social phenomena. The findings show that Islamic guidance and counseling remain highly relevant through the integration of Qur'anic and Hadith values with modern counseling approaches, the utilization of digital media as a da'wah medium, character strengthening, and synergy among families, educational institutions, and religious counselors. This article is expected to serve as both an academic and practical reference for counselors, religious counselors, and Islamic educators in designing guidance models that are adaptive to the times.

Keywords

Islamic Guidance and Counseling, Digital Era, Mental Health, Spirituality, Young Generation



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INTRODUCTION

The social changes triggered by the development of digital technology have had a significant impact on human life. Social media, the internet, and digital devices have become an integral part of daily activities, especially for the younger generation. This phenomenon not only affects the way we communicate, but also the way we think, behave, and interpret

life. Various studies show the increase in mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, depression, and spiritual crises among adolescents and youth in line with the increasing intensity of digital media use (Aisyaroh, Hudaya, & Supradewi, 2022; Sutrisno, 2022).

The phenomenon of social media addiction, a culture of social comparison, the spread of unverified information, and the weakening of real social relations have also worsened the psychological condition of the younger generation. On the other hand, the rapid flow of religious information that is not always accompanied by a depth of understanding has the potential to cause a shallow spiritual appreciation, even a disorientation of values (Nasution & Fathurrahman, 2023; Handayani & Maulida, 2023). This condition requires the presence of assistance that is not only oriented to psychological aspects, but also spiritual and moral, so that the young generation is able to face the challenges of the times without losing their Islamic identity.

Islamic guidance and counseling are present as one of the strategic efforts to answer this problem. Islamic counseling guidance aims to help individuals achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter through the development of the potential of human nature based on Islamic values. In contrast to secular counseling which tends to focus solely on psychological aspects, Islamic counseling guidance integrates the spiritual dimension as the main foundation for healing and strengthening the soul (Wulandari, 2020; Putri & Marta, 2022). Therefore, an in-depth study is needed on how Islamic guidance and counseling can adapt and contribute effectively in the digital era.

Several previous studies have examined this issue from various perspectives, ranging from the role of social media in the formation of morals (Bahri & Saepul, 2024; Khairunnisa, 2025), the effectiveness of digital da'wah among Muslim adolescents, to an Islamized cognitive-behavioral based spiritual counseling model. However, studies that specifically integrate aspects of mental health, spirituality, and digital-based Islamic counseling guidance strategies comprehensively are still limited. This article seeks to fill this gap by presenting a more complete conceptual framework regarding the roles, strategies, and models of strengthening the mental health and spirituality of the younger generation through Islamic guidance and counseling in the digital era.

Based on this description, the formulation of the problem in this article is: (1) how the role of Islamic guidance and counseling in responding to the mental and spiritual health challenges of the young generation in the digital era; (2) what strategies can be applied so that Islamic counseling guidance is relevant and effective in the digital context; and (3) how the model of integration of the values of the Qur'an and Hadith with modern counseling approaches can be formulated applicatively. The purpose of this article is to examine in depth the role and guidance strategy of Islamic counseling, as well as to offer a collaborative model involving families, educational institutions, and religious extension workers as preventive, curative, and developmental efforts.

THEORETICAL STUDIES

The Concept of Islamic Guidance and Counseling

Islamic guidance and counseling is the process of providing assistance to individuals or groups to be able to understand themselves, their environment, and problems, and make the right decisions in accordance with the guidance of Islamic teachings. The main goal is the realization of a person who has faith, piety, and noble character, who is able to carry out his caliphate function optimally. This guidance process is comprehensive, covering cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions, so it cannot be completely equated with conventional counseling approaches based on secular paradigms (Wulandari, 2020).

In practice, Islamic counseling guidance is carried out through three main functions, namely the preventive function (prevention), the curative function (healing or problem solving), and the development function (the development of self-potential). These three functions complement each other and become a frame of reference in designing guidance programs, both individual and group, including in responding to the dynamics of the digital life of today's young generation.

Mental Health in an Islamic Perspective

In the Islamic view, mental health is inseparable from spiritual health. The Qur'an emphasizes that peace of mind (*sakinah*) can be achieved through *dzikrullah*, which is remembering Allah in every situation. Mental disorders are seen as conditions that need to be addressed holistically, encompassing psychological, social, and spiritual aspects at once. This approach is in line with the findings of Putri and Marta (2022) who show that spirituality-based counseling is able to significantly improve students' mental health, because it provides deeper meaning and purpose in life than the psychological approach alone.

The concept of mental health in Islam also emphasizes the importance of a balance between *hablum minallah* (relationship with Allah) and *hablum minannas* (relationship with fellow human beings). Imbalances in one of these dimensions have the potential to give rise to various psychological disorders, such as existential anxiety, void of meaning in life, and identity crises, which are often encountered in the younger generation in the midst of the rapid flow of digital information (Aisyaroh, Hudaya, & Supradewi, 2022).

Spirituality of the Young Generation in the Midst of Digital Currents

The spirituality of today's young generation faces unique challenges because it comes into direct contact with the fast-paced and instant digital culture. On the one hand, easy access to Islamic studies through digital platforms can enrich religious insights; on the other hand, exposure to content that is superficial, unverified, and even contrary to Islamic values can weaken the spiritual foundation if it is not balanced with adequate digital literacy (Sundari, Yusuf, & Ramadhan, 2023; Prasetya, 2024). The younger generation is required to have a strong information filtering power to be able to sort out content that builds and stay away from content that damages their spiritual value.

Characteristics and Challenges of the Digital Era

The digital era is characterized by a rapid flow of information, instant culture, and a high intensity of virtual interaction. This condition has the potential to cause value disorientation,

social media addiction, the phenomenon of fear of missing out (FOMO), and the weakening of real social relationships. Handayani and Maulida (2023) found that the culture of digital consumerism has significantly shaped the morality of Generation Z, while Bahri and Saepul (2024) noted that the intensity of social media use correlates with changes in students' moral patterns and social personalities. These challenges demand a contextual, adaptive, and technology-based approach to guidance without overriding Islamic values that are the main foundation.

Relevant Previous Research

Several previous studies have made important contributions to this study. Wulandari (2020) examined the effectiveness of Islamic counseling in overcoming students' academic stress and found that the spiritual approach was able to significantly reduce stress levels. Rahmah (2021) analyzes the pattern of digital da'wah on the YouTube platform and emphasizes the importance of digital communication competence for dai. Muhid (2021) through a literature review found that the effectiveness of da'wah messages on social media is greatly influenced by the credibility of the communicator and the suitability of the content with the needs of the audience.

Furthermore, Putri and Marta (2022) prove the relevance of spirituality-based counseling for students' mental health, while Aisyaroh, Hudaya, and Supradewi (2022) map the trends of adolescent mental health research in Indonesia and the factors that influence it. Nasution and Fathurrahman (2023) highlight the role of social media in Islamic moral education among Indonesian Muslim adolescents, and Wahid, Firman, and Netrawati (2024) reveal the differences in students' levels of academic self-efficacy and their implications for guidance and counseling services. Khotijah (2024) emphasized the significant role of Islamic guidance and counseling on the spiritual mental health of millennial students, and Khairunnisa (2025) showed that social media has a great influence on the formation of the morals of the younger generation, both in positive and negative directions. These studies are an important foothold for this article in formulating a more comprehensive and adaptive Islamic counseling guidance strategy for the digital context.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method. This method was chosen because the purpose of the research is to review, analyze, and synthesize concepts from various sources of literature, rather than collecting direct field data. Data were obtained from books, articles in national and international scientific journals, the results of previous research, as well as primary sources of Islam such as the Qur'an and Hadith that are relevant to the theme of Islamic counseling guidance, Islamic psychology, mental health, spirituality, and digital social phenomena.

The data collection procedure is carried out through three stages, namely: (1) literature search using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Garuda, and Sinta, with relevant keywords; (2) literature selection based on the criteria of theme relevance, up-to-date

(prioritized publication in the last five years), and credibility of sources; and (3) descriptive-analytical analysis and data synthesis to find concepts, strategies, and practical relevance for the development of Islamic counseling guidance models in the digital era. The analysis is carried out by content analysis techniques, which identify the main themes, group them into conceptual categories, and then interpret them within the framework of Islamic counseling guidance.

To maintain the validity of the data, this study applies the source triangulation technique, which is comparing and confirming findings from various classical and contemporary literature in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding and is not biased in one perspective only. The limitation of this research lies in its conceptual nature, so the resulting findings need to be followed up with empirical research to test the effectiveness of the model offered in a specific field context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Islamic Counseling Guidance in the Digital Era

Islamic counseling guidance plays a role as a preventive, curative, and developmental means in responding to the mental and spiritual health challenges of the young generation in the digital era. Preventively, Islamic counseling can provide moral-based digital literacy and value education, for example through debriefing on social media ethics, strengthening awareness of the negative impact of content that is not in accordance with sharia, and instilling the habit of *tabayyun* (clarification) before disseminating information. This preventive function is important considering that the younger generation spends most of their time in the digital space, so early intervention is the key to preventing psychological and spiritual disorders.

Curatively, Islamic counseling helps individuals overcome psychological and spiritual problems that have arisen, such as anxiety, loneliness in the midst of digital crowds, and identity crises due to excessive social comparison. This curative approach is carried out through individual and group counseling based on Islamic values, by emphasizing the process of repentance, *muhasabah* (self-introspection), and strengthening *tawakal* as part of the healing process. In terms of development, Islamic guidance encourages positive self-actualization, namely helping the younger generation find the potential and meaning of life that is in harmony with Islamic values, so that they are able to contribute productively in the digital space, for example through creative *da'wah* content or social movements based on Islamic values.

Challenges of Mental and Spiritual Health of the Young Generation in the Digital Era

This study identifies a number of key challenges faced by young people in the digital era. First, social media addiction which has an impact on decreased productivity, sleep disturbances, and weakening of real social interaction. Second, the phenomenon of social comparison that triggers feelings of inferiority, anxiety, and dissatisfaction with one's own life. Third, excessive exposure to information (information overload) which can cause mental

fatigue or digital fatigue. Fourth, the shallowness of spiritual appreciation due to the consumption of instant religious content without deepening its meaning, as found by Sundari, Yusuf, and Ramadhan (2023) and Prasetia (2024) in their study of digital religious literacy.

These challenges, if not responded to appropriately, have the potential to cause an Islamic identity crisis in the younger generation, where they have difficulty balancing the demands of digital existence with the Islamic values they adhere. Data from various studies show that the younger generation who have a strong spiritual attachment tends to be more resilient in facing psychological pressure due to the use of digital media, compared to those who have little spiritual foundation (Putri & Marta, 2022; Khotijah, 2024).

Digital Approach Strategy in Islamic Counseling

The use of digital media such as social media, podcasts, and online platforms can be an effective means of Islamic guidance and counseling. Extension workers are required to have digital competence so that Islamic messages can be conveyed in an attractive, relevant, and easily accessible manner by the younger generation. This strategy includes several things, including: first, the packaging of da'wah content that is contextual and based on the psychological needs of the younger generation, for example content on stress management from an Islamic perspective or tips for maintaining mental health based on dhikr. Second, the use of interactive multimedia formats such as short videos, infographics, and podcasts that are more familiar with the information consumption style of generation Z (Rahmah, 2021; Nasution & Fathurrahman, 2023).

Third, the development of a digital community as a space for consultation and venting based on Islamic values, which allows the younger generation to receive more personalized and sustainable assistance. Fourth, strengthening collaboration with public figures or content creators who have Islamic credibility to expand the reach of da'wah more effectively. Fifth, the application of the ethical principles of digital da'wah, namely conveying messages politely, moderately, and not provocatively, in order to maintain audience trust and prevent polarization and misunderstandings in the digital public space (Muhid, 2021).

Integration of Qur'an and Hadith Values with Modern Counseling

The Islamic guidance approach needs to integrate the values of the Qur'an and Hadith with modern counseling techniques, such as Islamized cognitive-behavioral counseling (Islamic Cognitive Behavioral Counseling). This integration allows for a more comprehensive and contextual approach to the problem, as it combines the power of empirically tested modern therapeutic techniques with a spiritual depth that is a source of meaning and peace of mind for the younger generation of Muslims.

This integration model can be realized through a few practical steps. First, identify the negative mindset (cognitive distortion) experienced by the client, then restructure with the values of monotheism, such as the belief that every test contains wisdom and Allah's help is always near. Second, the use of dhikr and prayer as spiritual relaxation techniques that are psychologically proven to be able to reduce cortisol levels and calm the nervous system.

Third, the application of the concept of muhasabah as a form of self-monitoring that is commonly used in cognitive-behavioral therapy, but framed in the spirit of self-introspection according to Islamic teachings. This kind of integrative approach has proven to be relevant in various studies on spiritual counseling for the younger generation of Muslims (Putri & Marta, 2022; Wulandari, 2020).

Collaborative Model: Synergy of Families, Educational Institutions, and Religious Extension Workers

The effectiveness of Islamic guidance and counseling in the digital era cannot be achieved optimally if it only relies on the role of religious extension workers alone. A collaborative model is needed that involves three main pillars, namely the family, educational institutions, and religious extension workers. The family plays a role as the first environment in instilling Islamic values and supervising the use of digital media from an early age. Educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, play a role in providing a moral-based digital literacy curriculum and counseling guidance services that are integrated with Islamic values. The religious extension workers play the role of facilitators who bridge the spiritual needs of the younger generation with a contextual and technology-based approach.

The synergy of these three pillars is important considering that the complexity of digital challenges faced by the younger generation cannot be partially solved. This cross-sector collaboration is also in line with the findings of Bahri and Saepul (2024) which affirm the importance of the role of family and the educational environment in shaping students' social personalities amid the rapid flow of social media. With this collaborative model, efforts to strengthen the mental health and spirituality of the younger generation can run in a sustainable and more impactful manner.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study have a number of practical implications. For counselors and religious extension workers, it is necessary to improve digital competence in a sustainable manner through training in da'wah content creation, social media management, and a basic understanding of modern counseling techniques that can be Islamized. For educational institutions, especially Islamic-based universities and schools, it is necessary to develop moral-based digital literacy programs that are integrated into the curriculum, as well as Islamic counseling guidance services that are easily accessible to the younger generation, both offline and online.

For policymakers, it is necessary to support regulations and provide digital platforms that are friendly to Islamic values as an alternative space for the younger generation to access content that is educational and healthy mentally and spiritually. As for the next researcher, this conceptual study needs to be followed up with empirical research, both through a quantitative approach to test the effectiveness of a digital-based Islamic counseling model, as well as a qualitative approach to explore the experiences of the younger generation in more depth.

Study Limitations

As with literature study-based studies in general, this article has a number of limitations that need to be considered. First, the findings presented are conceptual and have not been empirically tested in certain groups of young generations, so the effectiveness of the strategies offered still requires field verification. Second, the diversity of characteristics of the young generation based on social background, culture, and level of religiosity can affect the relevance of the application of the formulated guidance model, so that contextual adjustments are needed in each community or institution that adopts it. Third, the development of highly dynamic digital technology requires regular review updates, considering that the platforms and digital interaction patterns of the younger generation can change in a relatively short time.

However, these limitations do not reduce the contribution of this study as an initial conceptual framework that can be used as a reference for further research, both quantitative to test the effectiveness of digital-based Islamic counseling models, and qualitative to explore the subjective experiences of the younger generation in undergoing the process of Islamic guidance and counseling in the digital space.

CONCLUSION

Islamic guidance and counseling have very strong relevance in facing the mental and spiritual health challenges of the younger generation in the digital era. Through a holistic approach that includes preventive, curative, and developmental functions, the integration of Qur'an and Hadith values with modern counseling techniques, the strategic use of digital media, and synergy between families, educational institutions, and religious extension workers, Islamic counseling guidance can be an effective and actual solution. It is necessary to improve the competence of extension workers, institutional support, and the development of adaptive and sustainable guidance models so that the young generation is able to face the dynamics of the digital era without losing their mental health and the depth of Islamic spirituality.

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