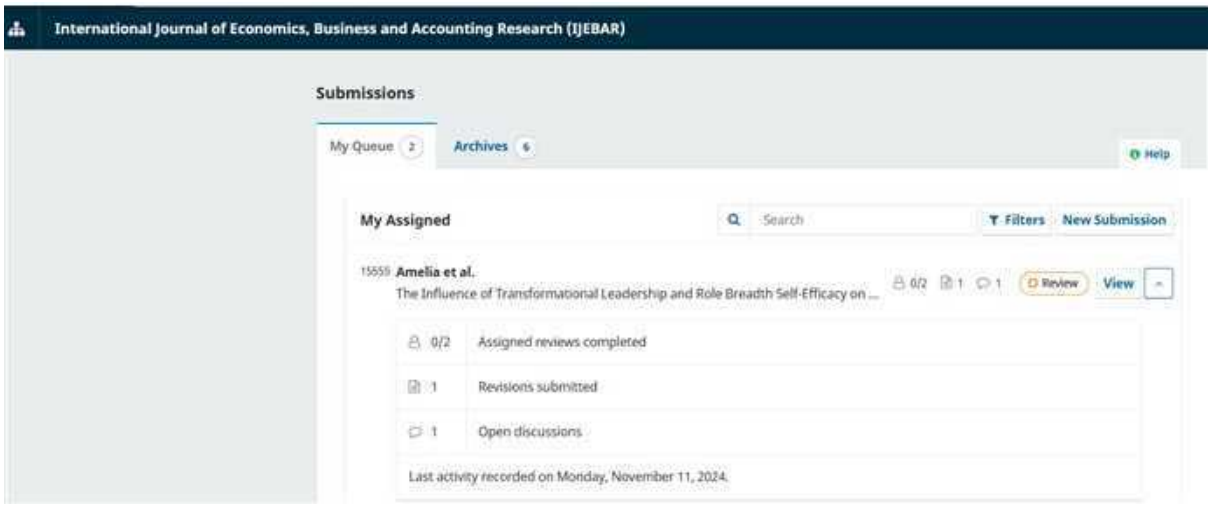

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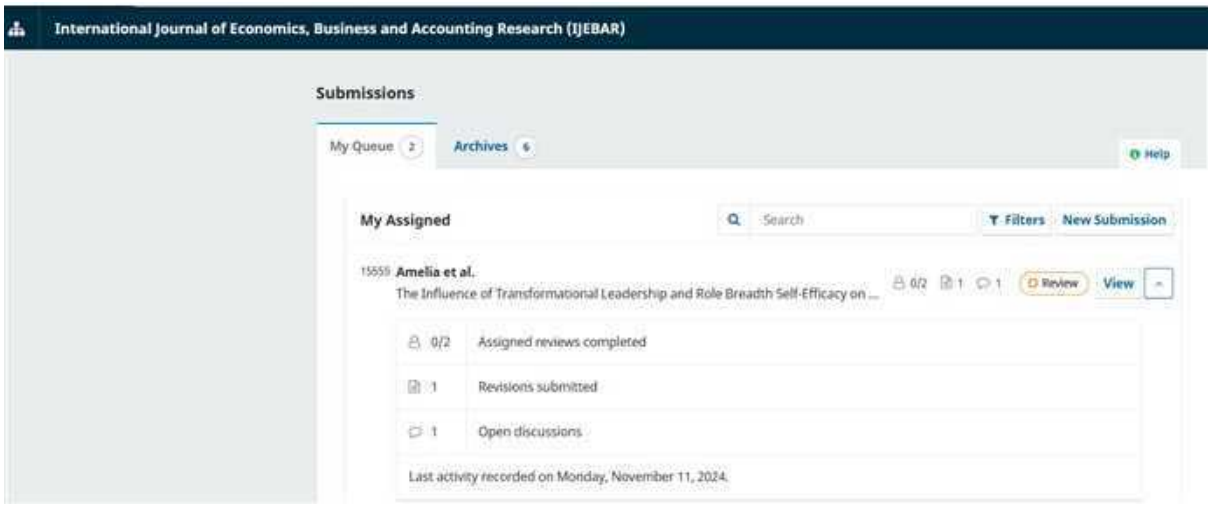
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THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR GENERATION Z

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Abstract: This study examines the role of spiritual practices among Generation Z in their use of social media. The study used a qualitative approach, collecting data through interviews with informants consisting of nine religious education teachers and 20 high school students. The research questions were distributed through Google Forms. The study findings revealed that spiritual practices, including prayer, meditation, and reflective writing, contribute to the development of positive emotions, positive behaviors, and positive social relationships among Generation Z. The development of these three aspects influences their decisions regarding social media use. Positive emotions foster positive behaviors, which in turn influence how Generation Z interacts with others in a positive way. This study offers practical implications for teachers in mentoring Generation Z and for Generation Z themselves, especially in making decisions about social media use. Future research is needed to further explore the role of spiritual practices among Generation Z in their use of social media to provide new insights into the role of spiritual practices in shaping the next generation.

Keywords: Spirituality Practices, Generation Z, Positive Emotions, Positive Behavior, Positive Social Relationships

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1. Introduction

The Central Statistics Agency of Indonesia released statistical data explaining that the composition of the Indonesian population based on age groups is dominated by Generation Z or Gen Z. Gen Z is a generation born between 1997 and 2012 dominating the population of Indonesia with a total of around 74.93 million people, or 27.94% of the population. Gen Z is still in their early teens (Rainer, 2023) . Gen Z is also a generation that was raised with technology as a constant aspect in their environment. This situation has positive and negative impacts on Gen Z (Diaz, 2023) .

The positive impact of social media for Gen Z is that Gen Z can search for all information and even find inner peace through internet connections on social media (Diaz, 2023). The negative impact of using social media for Gen Z is that Gen Z easily falls into judgment or longing for what other people have, becoming jealous because they are not in the stories on social media that they see (Montgomery, 2024). Another negative impact is that Gen Z consumes social media excessively which can cause feelings of dependency, addiction, and

anxiety. It is further explained that information on social media that continuously bombards the senses hinders the individual's ability to connect with themselves (Skylight, 2023) so that it can damage mental health (Harber, 2023).

Individuals can be said to be addicted to social media by reviewing the user's attitude and the number of hours of use. Addiction is seen from the attitude of social media users if social media users have known the negative impacts of social media users, but still continue to use it (Liu & Ma, 2018) . Addiction from the number of hours used if individuals use the internet (social media) for >21 hours per week up to more than 40 hours / week (Ma, 2011). So, the average daily usage is between 3-8 hours a day. Based on the average time of social media use, based on the initial survey of this study, it was found that 99% of Gen Z with an average use of social media of at least four hours per day. This is in accordance with the opinion of Ma (2011) . The initial survey also showed that Gen Z uses social media for more than eight hours and a maximum of 15 hours. Gen Z becomes restless, anxious, and anxious if they do not use social media. There are several ways to overcome this, 1) transforming yourself from the inside out (Editorial Staff, 2004) , 2) reading books about *the inner child* , 3) journaling, and using calming scents (Skylight, 2023), and chewing (Shelton et al., 2020). These methods are spiritual practices (Shelton et al., 2020). Spirituality is a way of finding meaning (Skylight, 2023) that offers a path to greater self-awareness, purpose, and connection with the universe (Skylight, 2024).

Previous research related to spirituality and social media use in Gen Z has been conducted by Beckham explaining that social media and spirituality influence the formation or development of faith in adults in the younger generation in the United States (Beckham, 2021). Research conducted by (Haroon et al., 2020) found that spirituality cannot mediate social media addiction and user psychology, while research by Ibdalsyah et al. (2323) found that social media has a moderate impact on mental health and spiritual intelligence (Ibdalsyah et al., 2023) . Previous studies have different results because the variables are different, namely some place spirituality as an independent variable (Beckham, 2021), as a dependent variable (Ibdalsyah et al., 2023), Ibdalsyah places social media as an independent variable (Ibdalsyah et al., 2023), al., 2023) and as a mediating variable (Haroon et al., 2020). On the one hand, Beckham (2021) provides suggestions for future research to strengthen the understanding of spirituality in the relationship between social media and young people to form spirituality and increase awareness of a belief and identity. Another suggestion made by Huang is that future research on the role of spirituality could take samples outside Pakistan or other countries with different cultural environments. (Huang et al., 2024). This suggestion fills a gap in the research literature that could be filled with research that focuses on the role of spirituality for Gen Z in social media use.

The role of spirituality can satisfy existing research. This is because spirituality offers a path to self-awareness, knowing one's purpose, and connecting with entities beyond the individual. A balanced spirit can lead to a more fulfilling life (Skylight, 2024). The practice of spirituality, such as prayer, meditation, or affirmations, can invite peace and clarity into an individual's life (Shelton et al., 2020 ; Skylight, 2024). Skylight further explains that providing opportunities for spirituality to develop in an individual can lead to profound individual growth (Skylight, 2024). Thus, spirituality that is practiced can increase emotions, positive attitudes, and understanding of positive relationships with others (Khan et al., 2022) . Regarding Gen Z, 70% need attention and improvement in their mental health, which means they need spiritual help in using social media (Diaz, 2023).

Based on the research findings and opinions of previous researchers, such as Beckham (2021) , Diaz (2023) , Huang et al. (2024) , Skylight (2024), and Shelton et al. (2020) then this study focuses on the role of spirituality in Gen Z in using social media. This study examines how the role of spiritual practices in Gen Z in using social media. Spiritual practices are conveyed through meditation, prayer (Shelton et al., 2020), and writing reflections (Hoppe, 2005). he three spiritual practices became interview materials for informants to confirm the initial findings and reflections written by students as experiences of life struggles related to the use of social media. The question of this study is how the role of practicing spirituality, namely meditation, prayer, and writing reflections in Gen Z increases awareness of their beliefs and identities in using social media. The purpose of this study is to answer the role of spiritual practices including meditation, prayer, and writing reflections on mental health for Gen Z in using social media. The answer to the question in this study is based on the opinion of Khan et al. (2022) that spirituality can increase positive emotions, attitudes, and relationships with others.

2. Literature Rewiev

Gen Z are those born between 1996 - 2012. Those born in that year, on average, are now teenagers or are currently in college. Gen Z itself comes from the word Zoomer because they were born and grew up along with the very rapid development of technology, so they have the opportunity to be able to follow the development of technology and the internet closely (Putra, 2016). As a Gen that grew up closely with the development of technology, Gen Z is accustomed to living in a fast-paced environment and is facilitated in various ways because everything can be accessed through a device called *a smartphone* . Gen Z has the following characteristics: 1) Have no feelings of commitment, be happy with what you have and live for now; 2) Live on the surface or shallow; 3) Live for the moment; 4) Question life; 5) React quickly to everything but can also be an initiator, brave, have the ability to access information and search for content quickly; 6) Having different views from other generations regarding happiness, attention tends to be unfocused, not thinking about consequences, not distinguishing between entertainment and work, and being able to feel at home anywhere (Bencsik & Machova, 2016).

Spirituality refers to the connection with the inner life and is endowed with universal values that transcend egoism and strengthen empathy for all living beings (Zsolnai & Illes, 2017), which becomes cosmic (Spencer, 2012). The essence of spirituality is to seek the meaning and purpose of human existence. Spirituality is interconnected with morality, regret, hope, love, personal growth, trust and optimism. Spirituality is a basic faith in the existence of universal values that help individuals to understand that everything in this universe is interconnected with everything else (Zohar, 2010).

Woodman explains that individuals who are experiencing social media addiction need to have transcendental experiences, spiritual practices, and connections with greater energies beyond themselves (Malhotra, 2024). On the other hand, it must also be realized that spirituality has never looked as pretty as Instagram makes it out to be (Bucans, 2019) . However, spirituality has become a major trend in individuals finding ways to feel more grounded. Other popular methods for Gen Z to gain a sense of spirituality and inner peace are to discover their personality type through psychological quizzes, seek the spiritual value of crystals, and manifest them (Diaz, 2023). Gen Z defines their generation's personality through technology, so Gen Z's continuation with social media has evolved into a new connection with the real world.

Ashmos & Duchon identified spirituality as having three dimensions, namely: *Inner life, Meaning of work* and *Sense of community* (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). *Inner life* is explained as an understanding of divine power, divine purpose in human life, identity and how to use it for a full life. *The meaning of work* will emerge when individuals understand that work has meaning and is part of their life purpose. The *sense of community* is an atmosphere when individuals feel connected to each other and feel part of a community. In this study, only one dimension will be taken that is in accordance with the unit of analysis in this study, namely Gen Z. The dimension taken is the *inner life dimension* which is a dimension related to individual beliefs and identities. To answer the role of spiritual practice, this study uses the theory of Shelton et al. (2020) and Hoppe (2005). The practice of spirituality is shown through prayer and meditation (Shelton et al., 2020), as well as writing reflections (Hoppe, 2005). Regular spiritual practices help individuals to make sense of everyday life and connect themselves to something bigger (Kuckel et al., 2022) and can also build character (Glissman, 2017).

Social media can be broadly defined as a collection of interactive Internet applications that facilitate the creation (collaborative or individual), curation, and sharing of user-generated content. Examples of social media *platforms* are numerous and varied. They include *Facebook, Friendster*, Wikipedia, dating sites, *Craigslist*, recipe sharing sites (e.g., allrecipes.com), YouTube, and Instagram. All social media platforms share the characteristics mentioned above, but are unique from each other in many ways. In particular, platforms often have different architectures, structures, norms, and user bases.

In an attempt to distinguish between different types of social media *platforms*, scholars have distinguished and labeled several subsets of social media, with a particular emphasis on social networking sites. Boyd and Ellison (2007) explicitly distinguish social networking sites from social networking sites. They argue that social networking implies meeting new people and making new connections, which contrasts with actual user practices. Specifically, users of social networking sites tend to interact with existing—rather than new—social media contacts. Examples of social networking sites include *Facebook,* Myspace*,* YouTube, and Live Journal. A second subcategory of social media consists of microblogging sites. These allow users to distribute short messages to a wide audience, often through links and images.

Such sites have explicit limits on the number of characters or content allowed per message. *Twitter,* the major microblogging site in the United States, and Weibo, a Chinese microblogging network, limit each message to 140 characters. Vine, Twitter's video app, limits clips to 6 seconds. In addition to the social media label, the contemporary Internet—characterized by interactivity and user-generated content—is also known as "Web 2.0." Some argue that the latest era of digital technology, characterized by user collaboration and cooperation, can be labeled "Web 3.0." Others, however, argue that Web 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 are better understood as variations in user practices rather than technological capabilities. Most relevant are social media users, who may engage in participatory and collaborative activities online, as well as utilizing social media platforms to send email-type messages, or engage in asynchronous discussions, both of which characterized the Web 1.0 era (Barassi & Treré, 2012).

The relationship between spirituality and social media is also a topic that needs to be explored (Wood et al., 2016) . Gen Z is identified as a generation that lives in the moment, is less committed, and has its own opinions (Bencsik & Machova, 2016) and while the use of social networking sites continues to increase (Foley, 2015) . The practice of spirituality can overcome social media addiction (Malhotra, 2024) because spirituality can build positive emotions, behaviors, and positive social relationships (Khan et al., 2022) . Individuals can be

said to have positive emotions if the individual has a joyful, forgiving, and empathetic attitude (Moore et al., 2024) . Signs or characteristics of individuals who have a positive attitude are individuals who have compassion, enthusiasm, participation, and provide comfort (Pittinsky et al., 2011) . The characteristics of individuals who have positive social relationships are that they make friends easily and are able to accept their friends' weaknesses (Pittinsky et al., 2011)

3. Research Methods

This research is a qualitative study with observation and interview data collection methods. The observation method is carried out by visiting the research location to find out the environmental situation, activities, and identification of the findings obtained. The interview method is carried out to interview informants openly or directly. Interviews were aimed at several informants, namely religious education subject teachers in various cities in Indonesia. There were nine religious education teachers interviewed from schools that had superior accreditation with more than 500 students. The selection of these informants was based on the following considerations: 1) religious education subject teachers have direct interaction with Gen Z; 2) religious education subject teachers have a role in introducing and even teaching spiritual practices, which include prayer, meditation, and writing reflections. This interview is needed to support the initial findings carried out based on a survey with the results that 99% of students experience social media addiction. This research question is answered through a qualitative method with a relational approach. This method was chosen because it aims to research human phenomena and investigate interpretations or interpretations and meanings that have not been understood and require exploration.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result

The results of the pre-research were conducted through direct observation to schools in Surabaya, while for schools outside Surabaya, it was conducted through telephone interviews and utilizing Google. Most schools have implementations of spiritual practices including prayer, copying, and writing reflections. The implementation of spiritual practices is carried out to implement workplace spirituality or spirituality implemented at the research site.

From the interview results, it was obtained that prayers were held to start and end activities. There were also prayers for certain activities, such as the commemoration of the school's patron day. Daily prayers to open and end activities that were carried out spontaneously without the help of prayer texts. Prayers for special activities that were carried out specifically were also prepared specifically by compiling prayers according to the purpose of the activity. Prayers led by students or teachers were carried out in turns. To facilitate the implementation of prayers, the homeroom teacher helped his students to prepare them in advance.

Thinking practices are implemented in religious subjects, the implementation of classical counselling guidance, and during guardianship hours. Meditation is led by the teacher concerned according to its implementation. Meditation carried out during religious subjects is led by the religious teacher. Likewise, savings carried out during classical counselling guidance are led by the counselling guidance teacher and savings carried out during guardianship hours are led by the homeroom teacher. To facilitate editing practices, the teachers concerned are given training. In addition, there are schools that conduct meditation with all students and teachers and education personnel periodically, namely twice a month.

Spirituality practice by writing reflections is generally carried out at the end of each subject. In addition, writing reflections is also carried out during guardianship hours. Writing

reflections is guided by the subject teacher concerned and the homeroom teacher. Reflection guides are prepared together by the teachers and homeroom teachers. Reflections at the end of the subject are related to the subject concerned. Reflections during guardianship hours are related to the students' life experiences for one week. The experiences reflected include things that cause joy, sorrow, smoothness and difficulties or obstacles experienced, the meaning found behind all life events, and intentions that will be carried out during the following week.

The spirituality data of the park in terms of benefits and roles can be seen in Table 1 below. The data on the benefits of spiritual practices, namely prayer, copying, and writing reflections collected from the results of interviews with Respondents (R) 1-9 and the role of spiritual practices in the use of social media are conclusions from the opinions of generation Z that reflect high school students.

Table 1. Benefits of Spiritual Practice

Spirituality Practices	Benefit	Role in Social Media Usage
Prayer	1. Providing peace of mind (R1-9) 2. Strengthening faith and hope (R1-9)	1. Provide reminders to students when they are going to do something, including when they are going to open social media (D1). 2. Calm and reassure yourself about the choices you make (D2) 3. Surrender the decisions that have been taken to God (D3). 4. Encourage positive thinking including in the use of social media (D4). 5. Be *a co-pilot* in decision making (D5).
Meditation	1. Cultivate a relaxed situation (R1-R9) 2. Shaping student character (R1-R9) 3. To shape students to increasingly understand the meaning of being a good person and helping each other to develop intellectually and socially (R5) 4. Helping students understand and manage emotions (R5, R6, R7, R9) 5. Encourage students to become more aware and feel the presence of God 6. Encourage students to pray more diligently, be responsible and study hard (R7, R9).	1. making the heart and mind calm then encourages students to start by meditating first when making decisions, including when using social media (M1) 2. Helps prepare the heart for a day's journey (M2) 3. Helping students to focus including in decision making (M3).

Writing a reflection	1. Helping students understand the use of social media and determining when to use social media (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7,R8) 2. Helping students have self-awareness, understanding the correct values in various things, especially in the use of social media (R6) 3. Helping students to choose and sort out what is good and what is bad for them so that students are able to determine priorities in life including the use of social media (R9)	1. Provide a reminder by reopening the previous reflection writing (MR1). 2. Facilitates decision making because after reflection the mind becomes clear so it is easy to make decisions (MR2). 3. Reading creativity is included in decision-making skills in the world of social media (MR3). 4. Improving the ability to adapt to changes in life, especially developments in information technology (MR4)

Source: Author (2024)

4.2. Discussion

Based on a survey at the beginning of this study, it was found that 99% of Gen Z are addicted to social media. Judging from the number of hours of use, Gen Z uses social media for an average of at least four hours per day and this is already an Addiction (Liu & Ma, 2018) . Spirituality can overcome these things (Malhotra, 2024) . With the practice of spirituality, it is hoped that Gen Z will have positive emotions, behavior, and social relationships (Khan et al., 2022) . From the data obtained, spiritual practices including prayer, meditation, and writing reflections have a positive impact on students (Table 1).

Prayer in Gen Z towards the use of social media that has a positive role. The results of previous studies show that individuals who like to pray will be able to overcome social media addiction as stated by (Malhotra, 2024) because spirituality can build emotions, positive behavior, and positive social relationships (Khan et al., 2022). The results of this study support the results of previous studies because the results of this study show that it can foster positive emotions through a calm attitude (R1-R9; D2), strong in faith and hope (R1-R9), submitting decisions that have been taken to God (D3), and being a reminder (D1) or co-pilot (D5) in using social media. The findings of this study show a difference in atmosphere with previous research conducted in 2009, namely that religious individuals tend not to be members of social networking sites, and visit these sites less often (Smith & Snell, 2009) . Gen Z in 2024, even though they are religious by practicing good prayer spirituality, still cannot be separated from social media. The role of practicing the spirituality of prayer is not as a firm stance between yes and no but as a co-pilot or reminder when Gen Z uses social media. The role of prayer as a guide is not as a way to take a firm stance not to use social media. Prayer as a spiritual practice also contributes to the development of positive attitudes shown through prayer encouraging positive thinking (D4) and submitting decisions that have been taken to God (D3). Positive social relationships can also be achieved through prayer expressed through prayer as a reminder (D1) or *co-pilot* (D5). Prayer as a reminder or *co-pilot* will certainly be related to decision making related to oneself and others. Positive social relationships through prayer shown by attitudes when uploading statuses on social media consider the impact on others. Prayer becomes a guide for Gen Z in using social media because the fruit of practicing prayer in the use of social media as a reminder, provides peace and confidence in the decisions taken, fosters an attitude of surrender to God, and provides encouragement to think positively.

This study found that editing has a positive impact on students' emotions, behavior, and social relationships. Meditation builds positive emotions because meditation can 1) Foster a relaxed situation (R1-R9); 2) Help students understand and manage emotions (R5, R6, R7, R9); 3) Encourage students to be more aware and feel the presence of God; 4) Make the heart and mind calm, then encourage students when they are going to make decisions preceded by social media first, including deciding on the use of social media (M1); and 5) Help prepare the heart for a one-day trip (M2). Meditation also encourages students to have positive behavior because meditation can 1) Form students' character (R1-R9); 2) Help students become focused including in making decisions (M3). 3) Encourage students to be more diligent in praying, responsible, and diligent in studying (R7, R9). Related to positive social relationships, it can also be built through editing that is sent with the role of editing that forms student to be able to understand articles to become good people and help each other to develop intellectually and socially (R5). The results of this study support the opinion that spirituality refers to a relationship with the inner life that goes beyond egoism (Zsolnai & Illes, 2017). The essence of spirituality is to seek the meaning and purpose of human existence (Zohar, 2010) which can be achieved through positive emotions, positive behavior, and positive social relationships. A relaxed self-situation, good character with the ability to understand and manage feelings, diligent prayer and study, and responsibility are capital in behaving positively and relating to others positively by willingly helping one another. This is in accordance with the essence of spirituality which seeks the meaning and purpose of human existence with beliefs that help individuals to understand that everything is interconnected with one another (Zohar, 2010).

Related to the spiritual practice of writing reflections also helps Gen Z in using social media. Positive emotions can be built through the spiritual practice of writing reflections because writing can help students have self-awareness, understand the right values in various things, especially in the use of social media (R6). Positive behavior is built through writing reflections because writing reflections can 1) Help students to choose and sort out what is good and what is bad for themselves so that students are able to determine priorities in life including the use of social media (R9); 2) Help students understand the use of social media and determine when to use social media (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8); 3) Facilitate students in making decisions because after meditation the mind becomes clear so that it is easy to make decisions (MR2); 4) Provide reminders by reopening previous reflection writings (MR1); 5) Develop creativity including decision-making skills in the world of social media (MR3). Writing reflections can also build positive social relationships because writing reflections can improve students' ability to adapt to changes in life, especially the development of information technology (MR4). These findings support previous research, namely that the practice of spirituality in writing reflections can be a means of transforming oneself from the inside out (Editorial Staff, 2004), and 2) calming (Skylight, 2023). Spirituality is a way of finding meaning (Skylight, 2023) that offers a path to greater self-awareness, purpose, and connection with others and the universe (Skylight, 2024). When Gen Z comes to the meaning of spirituality and is carried out, of course Gen Z will be wise in using social media and can reduce the time spent using social media so that addiction to social media can be overcome.

The findings of this study indicate that spiritual practices including prayer, meditation, and writing reflections have a positive role in Gen Z in social use. The third practice of spirituality can build Gen Z to increasingly develop positive emotions, positive behavior, and positive social relationships. Spiritual practices must be carried out continuously and faithfully so that they become Gen Z habits which ultimately make Gen Z increasingly feel the role of spirituality. This research requires further research presented in the form of suggestions for

further research. First, this research uses a qualitative research approach, so further research can use quantitative methods so that the measurement can be clearer. Second, the practice of spirituality in Gen Z still needs to be deepened so that the impact on Gen Z on the use of social media can be felt more comprehensively.

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