



## Gen Z Teachers Candidates: Perspective on Early Childhood Moral Religious Values Development

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### Abstract

As teachers and pre-service teachers, Generation Z has unique characteristics. The mindset, interests, and priorities related to religious and moral values in early childhood need to be carefully understood. This study explores qualitative data related to topics of religious and moral values that are of most interest and priority. Data were obtained from 58 (fifty eight) respondents of pre-school teacher bachelor candidates. Respondents were given a structured task in the form of an essay on the priority ideas for developing NAM for early childhood. Completion of tasks is given 7 (seven) days to complete the task. The main analysis was carried out by thematic analysis. The results are categorized into 5 (five) themes and 29 (twenty nine) sub themes. The analysis is carried out in 2 (two) stages. Phase 1 is in the form of grouping data according to Basic Competence (KD) in the aspect of NAM for early childhood. Stage 2 is in the form of determining the topic (correspondence with KD and determining the frequency of occurrence). The themes related to the religious and moral values of early childhood are the most interested and prioritized, namely good behaviour and trust in God, while the least is respect for oneself, others, and the environment. Various factors and typical characteristics of Generation Z are discussed to reveal these findings.

### Kata Kunci

Agama, Moral,  
Generasi Z, PAUD,  
Anak

### Abstrak

Sebagai guru maupun calon guru, generasi Z memiliki karakteristik yang khas. Pola pikir, minat, dan prioritasnya terkait nilai agama dan moral pada anak usia dini perlu dipahami dengan seksama. Penelitian ini menggali data secara kualitatif terkait topik-topik nilai agama dan moral yang paling menjadi minat dan prioritas. Data diperoleh dari 58 (Lima puluh delapan) responden mahasiswa calon guru PAUD jenjang strata 1 (S1). Responden diberikan tugas terstruktur berupa esai mengenai gagasan prioritas pengembangan NAM bagi anak usia dini. Penyelesaian tugas diberikan waktu selama 7 (tujuh) hari untuk menyelesaikan tugas tersebut. Analisis utama dilaksanakan dengan analisis tematik. Hasil dikategorisasikan dalam 5 (lima) tema dan 29 (Dua Puluh sembilan) sub tema. Analisis dilaksanakan dalam 2 (dua) tahap. Tahap 1 berupa pengelompokan data sesuai Kompetensi Dasar (KD) dalam aspek NAM anak usia dini. Tahap 2 berupa penetapan topik (korespondensi dengan KD dan penetapan frekuensi kemunculan). Tema terkait nilai agama dan moral anak usia dini yang paling banyak menjadi minat dan prioritas yaitu berperilaku baik dan mempercayai Tuhan, sedangkan yang paling sedikit adalah menghargai diri sendiri, orang lain, dan lingkungan sekitar. Berbagai faktor dan karakteristik khas generasi Z didiskusikan untuk mengupas temuan tersebut.

## A. Introduction

Generation Z (Gen Z) is termed as the generation born in the range of 1997-2012 (Age range 10-25 years). In Indonesia, this generation is recorded as much as 27.94% of the 270.2 million population (BPS, 2021). As a digital natives, Gen Z has interacted with various forms and devices of highly advanced technology, information, and communication. The situation directly and indirectly affects his mindset and personality (Putra, 2016). At the same time, it distinguishes its characteristics from those of previous generations. (Bencsik et al., 2016 p.91). The rapid influence of social media, as one of the technological products of this digital age, has had a profound impact on the morale of Gen Z. (Patimah & Herlambang, 2021 p.153). On the other hand, it is clearly known that Gen Z has carried out their duties as young teachers and some as prospective teachers who are being prepared to become teachers in various educational institutions in Indonesia.

Looking at prospective teachers from Gen Z circles, of course, provides an understanding that their characteristics are different from previous generations of teachers. With different characteristics, it is necessary to understand the mindset related to the learning process. There has been a lot of research carried out to understand the ins and outs of Gen Z characteristics related to learning in Indonesia. For example, related to increasing teacher competence in the implementation of learning for Gen Z (Kusumaningtyas et al., 2020, p.58; Suhandiah et al., 2019, p.112), development of learning methods for Gen Z (Helaluddin et al., 2019), or the use of technology in learning for Gen Z (Hastini et al., 2020, p.22). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there have been no specific studies that examine the characteristics of prospective ECCE teachers from Gen Z. More specifically, the characteristics of their mindset and interests related to morality and the role of developing aspects of the development of religious and moral values (NAM).

The NAM aspect is one of the dimensions of early childhood development that must be carefully and wisely stimulated. The threat of moral decadence to Gen Z and the role of his profession as an ECCE teacher seems to be one crucial thing to understand. It has been understood theoretically as well as practically, that the formation of religious character of early childhood, depends closely on the role of the family, school, and society. (Purwaningsih & Syamsudin, 2022 p.2449). In the context of the school, the role is mainly represented by the teacher. In summary, teachers have a big hand in the cultivation of NAM for early childhood.

Many important roles of ECCE teachers for the development of early childhood NAM, including morality and other positive characters in general, such as introducing and instilling an attitude of tolerance through various forms of learning activities (Pitaloka et al., 2021), and fostering responsibility (Amini & Mariyati, 2021). All of that, can be realized if teachers and parents always cultivate curiosity, are willing to increase insight and knowledge (Ardiansari & Dimiyati, 2021), synergize in cooperation (Hefniy et al., 2022), carry out supervision (Hamide et al., 2021), dare to package learning and habituation to instillation of attitudes with various innovations (Witasari & Wiyani, 2020 p.59), and the main one appears to be a consistent example in the practice of religious and moral values (Rohmah, 2018).

The lack of understanding of the characteristics of Gen Z Teachers in relation to NAM development has an impact on the difficulty of understanding the direction of early childhood NAM development by teachers of that generation. On the contrary, a good understanding of

the characteristics of prospective teachers towards NAM development has great potential for the successful cultivation of NAM. This study reveals the characteristics of Gen Z teacher candidates in NAM development, especially in specific matters, namely the main topics or themes in the NAM aspect that are the interests and priorities of Gen Z teachers. Furthermore, this study explores the mindset of Gen Z in specific links related to religious and moral values in early childhood which are considered to be priorities for stimulation. Thus, an early picture of the distinctive characteristics of Gen Z teachers can be obtained in looking at religious and moral values in early childhood education. This picture is expected to be a projection for the education and development of ecce teacher candidates in a programmatic and sustainable manner.

## B. Methodology

Respondents in this study were S1 PG PAUD students. *Purposively* Selected (Berg, 2007; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990). The number of respondents involved was 58 people.

**Table 1. Respondent Profile**

Respondent Profile (N=58)			
Sex		Man	Woman
	Sum.	1	57
	Percentage	1,7%	98,3%
Birth (Age)		2002 (19 y.o.)	2003 (18 y.o.)
	Sum.	4	54
	Percentage	6,9 %	93,1%
	Average	18,1 y.o.	

All respondents fully participated in the Values, Religion, and Moral Development course. It is hereinafter referred to as NAM. This course has Weights = 2 credits and is carried out in semester 2 (Two) of the 2021/2022 academic year. This course examines the theoretical and practical aspects of the stages, processes, strategies for instilling values, religion and morals in early childhood. This data was taken at the 8th meeting of the lecture. The first stage of the data collection process is carried out by assigning structured tasks to each respondent. Respondents were given the task of compiling an essay on the idea of NAM development priorities for early childhood. In the preparation of the essay, respondents were given the opportunity to choose 1 (one) basic competence (KD) in the NAM aspect. Respondents were given instructions to choose the KD that was most in demand and became a priority to instill in early childhood. The KDs that can be selected include:

- a. KD 1.1. Trusting God through His Creation.
- b. KD 1.2. Respect for Yourself, others, and the surrounding environment.
- c. KD 2.13. Have behavior that reflects an honest attitude.
- d. KD 3.1. Get to know the daily activities of worship.
- e. KD 4.1. Carry out daily worship activities with the guidance of adults.
- f. KD 3.2. Knowing good behavior and courtesy as a reflection of noble morals.
- g. KD 4.2. Show polite behavior as a reflection of noble morals.

The *respondents* were given 7 (seven) days to complete this *structured task*. This is intended to provide sufficient time for respondents to contemplate, reduce the pressure of the task load, and comfort in parsing ideas. Tasks that have been completed, generate *raw data*. The data is then analyzed through 2 (two) stages. First, identify and *group the data according to the selected KD*. This process generates *KD frequency* data. Next the data were analyzed thematically (Braun et al., 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006) to establish *the topics* to be implemented according to the selected KD. In this process, 2 (two) types of data are generated, namely 1) *KD-appropriate topic* data and 2) *Topic frequency* data. All of these stages can illustrate the interests and priority scales of KD and early childhood NAM development topics.

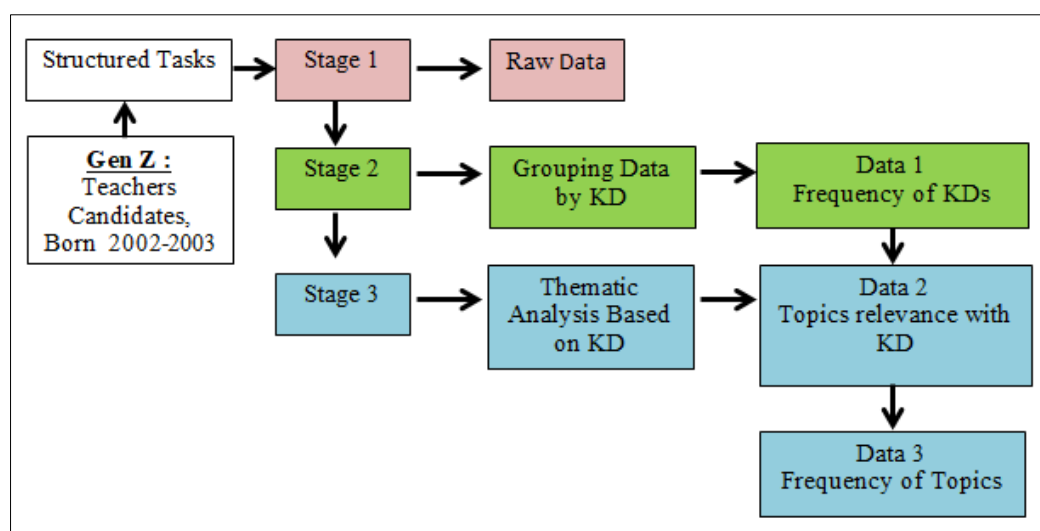


Figure 1. Analysis Data Flowchart

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Results

In the context of early childhood education, each aspect of development contains 4 (four) core competencies (IP). It consists of KI-1 spiritual attitude core competencies, KI-2 social attitude core competencies, KI-3 knowledge core competencies, and KI-4 skill core competencies. All of them represent the integrity of competency development in early childhood. The achievement of all these core competencies reflects the successful achievement of STPPA (Child Development Achievement Level Standard). It is important to highlight, that according to the guidelines and context of structured tasks in this study KI-3 and KI-4 are written in pairs. That is, knowledge and skills always go hand in hand. The acquisition of knowledge is ideally continuous with skills. On the contrary, to achieve a skilled degree there needs to be ideal foundations of knowledge.

Each KI is then operationalized in the form of KD, which is distributed in 6 (six) aspects of early childhood development. In the NAM aspect, there are 7 (seven) KDs that can be chosen by respondents as the respondent's foothold in completing their structured tasks. The frequency of selection of each KD is presented in Table 1. Meanwhile, the distribution and frequency of topic selection in each KD is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Recapitulation of KIs and KDs on NAM**

No	KIs	KDs	N	%
1	KI-3 Core Competencies of knowledge	3.2. Knowing good behavior as reflection of noble morals	22	38
2	KI-4 Core Competencies of skills	4.2. Showing polite behavior as a reflection of noble morals		
3	KI-1 Core Competencies of spiritual attitude	1.1. Believing in the existence of God through His creation.	13	22
4	KI-3 Core Competencies of knowledge	3.1. Knowing the daily activities of worship.	12	21
5	KI-4 Core Competencies of skills	4.1. Conducting daily worship activities with the guidance of adults.		
6	KI-2 Core Competencies of social attitude	2.13. Showing an honest attitude	9	16
7	KI-1 Core Competencies of spiritual attitude	1.2 Respecting yourself, others, and the surrounding environment in gratitude to God.	2	3
		Sum.	58	100

The data presentation in table 1 shows a recapitulation of data based on the implementation of stage 2 of the research flow (grouping of KD data and obtaining the distribution of KD selection frequency). The data includes 7 (seven) KDs arranged sequentially from the most selected (in demand and priority) by respondents to the least. The final number is 58 (100%), meaning that all respondents involved in this study completed structured tasks according to the instructions given. The data on KI-3 and KI-4 are presented in pairs, so there is only 1 (one) number and percentage that appears in the table. Next, Table 1 shows that overall the KDs related to the NAM aspect were selected by respondents in the process of working on structured tasks. None of the KDs has a number and percentage gain equal to 0 (zero).

KD. 3.2.-4.2 are the basic competencies that are most in demand or considered to be the most priority (38%) by respondents to be stimulated in early childhood. This KD contains competencies in the form of knowledge and skills about good behavior and manners adapted to local religions and customs (for example: procedures for speaking politely, how to walk past parents, how to ask for help, how to express gratitude after getting help, prayer procedures, eating procedures, greeting procedures, how to dress, want to help friends, parents, and teachers).

The almost balanced percentage gain occurred in KD 1.1. (22%) and KD 3.1.-4.1. (21%). KD1.1. is a competence in the form of an attitude of believing in the existence of God. In this competence, it is characterized by the behavior of children who are accustomed to knowing the nature of God as creators, accustomed to knowing God's creations, accustomed to saying sentences of amazement when seeing God's creation, accustomed to carrying out daily worship. KD 3.2.-4.2 is a competence in the form of knowledge and skills related to daily worship activities according to the religion of each child which can be in the form of prayers, getting to know daily worship, getting to know religious holidays and worship related to the big day, places of worship, and religious figures in accordance with their religion.

KD 2.3. (16%) ranked second most among the selected KDs. This KD is a competence that shows an honest attitude. This competence is reflected in the behavior of the child who is accustomed to speaking according to facts, not cheating in words and deeds, not lying,

respecting the possession of others, returning objects that are not his right, understanding the limits of the do's and not allowed to do, frankly, the child is happy to do things according to rules or agreements, and recognizes the advantages of himself or his friend.

The data showing the least frequency of selection is KD 1.2. (3%). This KD contains competencies in the form of an attitude of respect for self, others and the environment. This competence can be seen from the behavior of a child who is accustomed to taking care of personal hygiene, is accustomed to not hurting himself or friends, is accustomed to respecting friends (not making fun), is accustomed to respect for teachers and parents, is accustomed to guarding and caring for plants, as well as pets.

In the instructions provided in the structured task, respondents can choose the NAM topic freely. The topics that can be chosen are topics that correspond to the components of the topic on each KD. This selection can be based on the early childhood attitude planting manual included in the structured task (See. Fidesrinur et al., 2018). In such structured tasks, there are topics that are mentioned explicitly or implicitly. For topics that are mentioned implicitly, it is necessary to carry out analysis and determination of topics relevant to KD (Phase 3 of the research flow). The results of mapping topics relevant to KD in NAM are tabulated in table 3.

**Table 3. Recapitulation of NAM-related Topics**

KDs and Topics	N	%
3.2. Knowing good behavior as a reflection of noble morals		
4.2. Showing polite behavior as a reflection of noble morals		
1. Behave politely and caringly through his words and deeds spontaneously (e.g.: saying sorry, excuse me, thank you).	10	17.4
2. Have knowledge and skills about how to speak politely In accordance with local religions and customs	5	8.6
3. Want to help parents, educators, and friends.	5	8.6
4. Have knowledge and skills about the ordinances of greeting.	2	3.4
5. Have knowledge and skills about how to ask for help.	0	0.0
6. Have knowledge and skills about the ordinances of prayer..	0	0.0
7. Have knowledge and skills about how to eat.	0	0.0
8. Have knowledge and skills about dress code.	0	0.0
		38.0
1.1. Believing in the existence of God through His creation		
1. Used to knowing God's creations.	9	15.8
2. Used to knowing the nature of God as a creator	2	3.4
3. Used to saying sentences of amazement when looking at God's creation.	2	3.4
4. Used to carrying out daily worship such as prayers, fasting, Sunday services, and others.	0	0.0
		22.6
3.1. Get to know the daily activities of worship		
4.1. Conducting daily worship activities with the guidance of adults		
1. Perform worship according to their religion (e.g.: prayer before starting and finishing activities)	8	13.9
2. Saying short prayers	3	5.1
3. Behaving in accordance with the teachings of the religion he adheres to (e.g.: not lying, not fighting)	1	1.7

4.	Mentioning the great days of religion	0	0.0
5.	Mentioning places of worship of other religions	0	0.0
6.	Retelling of religious figures (e.g. prophets)	0	0.0
			20,7
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2.13. Have behavior that reflects an honest attitude			
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1.	Used to speaking according to facts, not lying, being straightforward, and not cheating in words and deeds.	4	6.8
2.	Accustomed to returning objects that are not his right.	3	5.1
3.	It's good to do things according to rules or agreements.	2	3.4
4.	Used to appreciating the ownership of others.	0	0.0
5.	Understand the limits of the do's and don'ts.	0	0.0
6.	Willing to admit the strengths of himself or his friend.	0	0.0
			15.3
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1.2 Respecting yourself, others, and the surrounding environment in gratitude to God			
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1.	Used to keeping and caring for plants, as well as pets.	2	3.4
2.	Used to taking care of personal hygiene.	0	0.0
3.	Used not to hurt yourself or friends.	0	0.0
4.	Used to respecting friends (not making fun).	0	0.0
5.	Used to respect for teachers and parents.	0	0.0
			3.4
Sum.		58	100

In KD 3.2.-4.2. 4 (four) topics were selected, which included: ber behaved politely and caringly through his words and deeds spontaneously (17.4%), m. knowledge and skills about the procedures for speaking politely in accordance with local religions and customs (8.6%), mau helping parents, educators, and friends (8.6%), and m have knowledge and skills about the procedure for greeting (3.4%). Selected topics in KD 1.1. including: accustomed to knowing God's creations (15.8%), accustomed to knowing the nature of God as creator (3.4%), accustomed to saying sentences of amazement when seeing God's creation (3.4%).

Performing worship according to their religion (13.9%) was the most chosen topic in KD 3.1.-4.1. Next, the topics that are the priority in this KD are: saying short prayers (5.1%) and behaving in accordance with the religious teachings they adhere to (1.7%). On KD 2.13. has behavior that reflects an honest attitude, the most chosen topic is to be accustomed to speaking according to facts, not lying, frankly, and not cheating in words or deeds. Subsequently, accustomed to returning objects that are not his right (5.1%), and happy to do things according to rules or agreements (3.4%). The least chosen basic competencies are 1.2 respecting oneself, others, and the surrounding environment as gratitude to God. The topic chosen on this KD is accustomed to keeping and caring for plants, as well as pets (3.4%).

## 2. Discussion

The study set the main goal to describe KD and NAM-related Topics that are the interests or priorities of prospective ECCE teachers of generation Z. Approximately 38% of respondents chose KD 3.2-4.2 Knowing and behaving well (polite) as a reflection of noble morals. In the context of this study, the social and cultural background of the respondents came entirely from domestic (Indonesian) families and the majority were descendants of Javanese families. These



two things, which are strong predictors for the growth and development of the respondent's mindset to make KD and related topics of good behavior (polite) become a priority for the majority of respondents.

These results are consistent with previous studies that explain that, generation Z perceives that the process of socialization of certain values comes from parents (families) (Alfaruqy, 2022, p. 84). Thus, it is worth stating that a polite mindset in various forms of behavior can be firmly attached to prospective Gen Z teachers according to the context of their socio-cultural background, especially their family origins. However, the background of the school origin, for example: Senior High School (SMA) with *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) or the level of education of parents do not include social backgrounds that affect a person's moral reasoning (Ichsan, 2016).

Pursing on the topic of priority is to behave politely, especially through words, is also relevant to some studies related to civility in recent years (Lihat misalnya : Fitri et al., 2020, p. 31; Noor & Qomariyah, 2019, p. 248; Tubi et al., 2021, p. 26). Thus, language politeness is something that is perceived to be important for and in its relation to Gen Z subjects.

Another interesting finding in this study is that respondents placed the highest interest in the topic of knowing God's creation (KD 1.1) and conducting daily worship according to their religion (KD 3.1.-4.1.) This confirms the findings of previous studies, that active, contextual, and inquiry learning strategies are very appropriate to be implemented to generation Z (Shodiq, 2020, p. 204). Keywords in KD 1.1. is *to know God's creation*, a matter related to the process of contextual learning and inquiry. In KD 3.1-4.1 contains *keywords do*, this is relevant to active learning. Thus, the learning characteristics of prospective Gen Z teachers can be stated, very fond of learning activities based on active, contextual and inquiry learning.

Other research results that should be watched out for are related to the results that appeared in KD 2.13. and KD 1.2. These two KDs are KDs that are less in demand by respondents. In this KD, it contains competencies related to honesty and respect for both oneself, others and the environment. These two components, seem to be in line with the information that in generation Z there have been indications of the fading of *Pancasila's* values (Wahyuni et al., 2021, p. 9061). In the current situation, the speed of access and dissemination of information, also has the potential to encourage the growth of intolerant and antisocial behavior. (Kusuma, 2019, p. 273). Of course it has been understood, the values of *Pancasila* are very related to honesty and respect (tolerance, tolerance). This is an important fact as well as should be a concern for efforts to nurture Gen Z teacher candidates.

In terms of the task of carrying out the development and stimulation of early childhood NAM, the results of this study seem to be a good indicator for early childhood education in the future. Teachers are one of the key factors for the successful cultivation of noble morals. (Ayu & Junaidah, 2019; Inawati, 2017; Jumiatmoko & Hanafi, 2020; Juwita, 2018; Rohmah, 2018). Teachers candidates with an interest in the cultivation of noble morals have the potential to be an example of behavior that reflects noble morals for early childhood. Regarding the educational process for Gen Z teacher candidates, these findings are very relevant to recommendations related to efforts to maintain knowledge and skills in behaving in accordance with the morals of "East Culture" (*Budaya Ketimuran*) (Juwita, 2018) as a bastion of moral



decline. Furthermore, the sense of nationalism needs to be improved in Generation Z because they are easily accepting of foreign cultures and understandings (Wulandari et al., 2021).

The differences in times and generations require that the process of fostering Gen Z ethics be carried out innovatively (Miftakhuddin, 2020; Saraswati, 2020), integrating relevant media, tools, and sources (Saxena & Mishra, 2021), and integrating modern technology (Szabó et al., 2021; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Finally, the culture of evaluating the quality of character development (character evaluation instrument) must also be well prepared so that the quality and morality of Gen Z teacher candidates are maintained in accordance with their national cultural roots.

#### D. Conclusion and Recommendation

Gen Z views that belief in God Almighty and behaving well are two components of religious and moral values that are priorities to be developed in early childhood. Meanwhile, an attitude of respect for oneself, others and the surrounding environment fills the smallest portion of the priority of religious and moral values that must be developed in early childhood. This fact is a good sign that the spiritual foundation of Gen Z in fostering the NAM aspect is very strong. Nevertheless, in terms of horizontal relations both with oneself, others, and the environment needs more attention. As a very diverse nation, the harmony of social interaction is a value that should be maintained and improved. Cultivating and nurturing the spirit of tolerance should be a greater concern for Gen Z and later generations. In order to get a more complete picture of gen Z teacher candidates, similar research can be carried out with other approaches and a more diverse sample or respondent. Thus, the representative profile of Gen Z's mindset and moral reasoning in the context of ECCE is better understood.

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