

NEGOTIATING SAKINAH IN THE DIGITAL ERA: MARRIAGE PRACTICES OF GENERATION Z IN LEPELLE VILLAGE ROBATAL DISCTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the marriage practices of Generation Z in realizing a sakinah family in Lepelle Village, Robatal District, within the context of digital transformation. Using a qualitative approach with an empirical socio-legal perspective, data were collected from 15 informants through interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal a growing trend of early-age marriage driven by socio-religious norms and digital influence, diverse interpretations of the sakinah family combining religious and modern values, and multidimensional challenges, particularly economic, psychological, and socio-digital factors. Digital media plays an ambivalent role, acting as both a source of guidance and pressure. This study proposes the concept of “negotiated sakinah family formation,” highlighting that family realization is shaped by the interaction of normative, structural, and digital dimensions. The study contributes to bridging normative Islamic family law and empirical social realities in the digital era.

Keywords: Generation Z; sakinah family; early marriage; digital media; socio-legal

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji praktik pernikahan Generasi Z dalam mewujudkan keluarga sakinah di Desa Lepelle, Kecamatan Robatal, dalam konteks transformasi digital. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan perspektif sosio-legal empiris. Data diperoleh dari 15 informan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan pernikahan usia muda yang dipengaruhi norma sosial-keagamaan dan media digital, beragam pemaknaan keluarga sakinah yang menggabungkan nilai religius dan modern, serta tantangan multidimensional berupa faktor ekonomi, psikologis, dan sosial-digital. Media digital memiliki peran ambivalen sebagai sumber pengetahuan sekaligus tekanan. Penelitian ini menawarkan konsep “negosiasi pembentukan keluarga sakinah” yang menegaskan bahwa realisasinya dipengaruhi interaksi dimensi normatif, struktural, dan digital.

Kata Kunci: Generasi Z; keluarga sakinah; pernikahan dini; media digital; sosio-legal

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in the Islamic perspective is not merely understood as a legal bond between a man and a woman, but also as a social institution aimed at forming a harmonious family based on tranquility, affection, and compassion.(Alwani, 2004) This concept is commonly referred to as a *sakinah* family, which describes a household built upon love, responsibility, and commitment to practicing religious values in family life.(Widiantini & Fahmudin, 2024) In the literature of Islamic family law, a *sakinah* family is considered an ideal condition where the relationship between husband and wife (Islam et al., 2019) is harmonious, mutually respectful, and capable of creating psychological and social stability within the household (Fauzan, 2020).(Bargot et al., 2024)

However, social realities indicate that the dynamics of marriage among younger generations have undergone significant changes, particularly among Generation Z.(Nur et al., 2025) (Halilurrahman, 2021) This generation grew up in a digital environment that influences their perspectives on marriage, including perceptions of economic readiness, psychological stability, and expectations toward partners. Several studies show the emergence of hesitation or fear of marriage among Generation Z, influenced by negative narratives on social media, economic concerns, and widespread exposure to marital conflicts in digital spaces(A. Ramadhan et al., 2024) (Oktaviani & Krismono, 2025).

On the other hand, rural communities still maintain strong social and religious values in perceiving marriage as a moral obligation as well as a means to establish a *sakinah* family.(Arifin, 2025) This situation creates an interesting dynamic between the normative values of Islamic family law and the social realities of Generation Z living in the digital era.(A. R. Ramadhan, 2024) Therefore, there exists a gap between the ideal concept of a *sakinah* family in Islamic legal theory and the actual marital practices of young generations in contemporary social life, particularly within local communities such as Lepelle Village in Robatal District.(Septiani, 2025)

Several previous studies have examined the phenomenon of marriage among younger generations from various perspectives.(Adhikari, 2017) For instance, the study conducted by Oktaviani and Krismono (2025) highlighted the “*Marriage is Scary*” phenomenon among Generation Z, which is influenced by social media narratives, economic concerns, and uncertainty about the future.(Utari, 2025) The study found that Generation Z tends to have more complex perceptions of marriage compared to previous generations,

leading many of them to postpone marriage until they feel psychologically and financially prepared. (Herawati et al., 2023)

Other studies also discuss Generation Z's perceptions of marriage in the digital era. (Ahmed, 2023) The findings suggest that Generation Z does not reject the institution of marriage; however, they prioritize economic readiness, psychological maturity, and self-development before deciding to marry. (Harits & Reyhan, 2025) This indicates a paradigm shift in viewing marriage, which is no longer seen solely as a social obligation but rather as a personal decision requiring careful planning. (Ellis, n.d.)

Although various studies have examined the phenomenon of Generation Z marriage and the concept of the *sakinah* family separately, there are differences in approaches that have not been fully bridged. On the one hand, studies of Generation Z tend to place marriage within the framework of modern rationality that emphasizes economic, psychological, and individual agency readiness. On the other hand, the study of Islamic family law maintains a normative approach that places marriage as a sacred institution with an orientation on the values of *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah*. The tension between these two approaches suggests that Generation Z's marriage practices cannot be fully explained through just one of these perspectives, but rather require an integrative approach capable of capturing the negotiation process between normative values and contemporary social realities

Meanwhile, research on *sakinah* families generally focuses more on conceptual or normative aspects within the framework of Islamic family law, such as discussions on the *maqasid al-shariah* of family life or the role of religious values in maintaining household harmony. (Izzi et al., 2026) These studies emphasize that a *sakinah* family is formed through principles of affection, responsibility, and spiritual commitment in family life. (Widiantini & Fahmudin, 2024)

Nevertheless, most of these studies tend to focus either on theoretical discussions or general youth phenomena. Research that specifically examines the marital practices of Generation Z within a local community context and their efforts to realize a *sakinah* family remains limited. (Huda, 2023) Therefore, this study offers novelty by empirically examining the marriage practices of Generation Z within the social context of Lepelle Village, Robatal District, and how young couples interpret and strive to achieve a *sakinah* family. (Himah & Bela, 2025)

This study aims to analyze the marriage practices of Generation Z in realizing a *sakinah* family in Lepelle Village, Robatal District. Specifically, this research seeks to explore how Generation Z understands the concept of a *sakinah* family, the factors influencing their decision to marry, and the strategies adopted by young couples to build a harmonious household in accordance with the values of Islamic family law.

Based on the literature review, there is a research gap that has not been explored in depth, namely how Generation Z concretely negotiates the concept of the *sakinah* family in the practice of daily married life, especially in the context of local communities that still have strong religious values. Most of the research still stops at the level of perceptions, discourses, or normative frameworks, and has not empirically examined the practice of value negotiation between Islamic teachings, social pressures, and digital influences in the household lives of Generation Z. Therefore, this study fills this gap by presenting contextual analysis based on social practices at the local level.

This study argues that the marital practices of Generation Z cannot be understood solely through the normative framework of Islamic law, but must also be analyzed through a social perspective that considers cultural changes, the development of digital technology, and the economic dynamics of society. In the context of local communities such as Lepelle Village, Generation Z continues to strive for the realization of a *sakinah* family; however, the process is shaped by various social factors, including the influence of digital media, changing family values, and economic conditions that contribute to new patterns of marital practices.

This study is important because it contributes to the development of Islamic family law studies that are more contextual to the dynamics of younger generations in the digital era. Furthermore, the findings of this research are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the marriage practices of Generation Z and serve as a reference for religious institutions, policymakers, and communities in formulating strategies for fostering *sakinah* families that are relevant to contemporary social changes.

Thus, this study is positioned not only as a descriptive study of Generation Z marriage, but as an attempt to bridge the gap between normative approaches in Islamic family law and empirical-sociological approaches in looking at contemporary marriage practices. The main contribution of this research lies in the analysis of the value negotiation process

carried out by Generation Z in realizing the *sakinah* family in the midst of an ever-growing digital and social transformation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with an empirical socio-legal perspective to examine the practice of Generation Z marriages in realizing a *sakinah* family in Lepelle Village, Robatal District (Hidayah, 2019). Qualitative research is used because it enables researchers to understand social phenomena comprehensively by exploring the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of individuals involved in the research context (Lim, 2025). Through this approach, the researcher attempts to analyze how Generation Z couples understand the concept of *sakinah* family and how these values are implemented in their daily marital life within the local socio-cultural environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the context of legal studies, this research falls into the category of empirical legal research, which focuses on observing how legal norms, particularly those related to Islamic family law, operate and are practiced within society (Ali, 2021).

The research was conducted in Lepelle Village, Robatal District, which represents a rural community where religious values, social traditions, and family norms still strongly influence marriage practices. This location was selected because it provides an empirical context in which traditional Islamic values intersect with the lifestyles and perspectives of Generation Z living in the digital era (Owusu, 2025). The data used in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through field research involving **a total of 15 informants**, consisting of **8 Generation Z married couples (as the main informants)**, **3 religious leaders**, **2 community leaders**, and **2 family members** who understand the dynamics of marriage practices in the village. These informants were selected purposively based on their relevance and knowledge regarding the research topic (Sugiyono, 2019). Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from scientific journal articles, books, and other academic publications related to Islamic family law, *sakinah* family concepts, and contemporary marriage practices among young generations (Septiani, 2025).

Data collection in this research was carried out through several techniques, including interviews, observation, and documentation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information regarding the motivations, perceptions, and experiences of Generation Z couples in building family life (Sharma et al., 2022). This interview model

allows flexibility in exploring research issues while maintaining a structured framework of questions relevant to the research objectives (Bryman, 2016). Observation was also conducted to understand the social interactions and cultural practices surrounding marriage and family life in the community. In addition, documentation techniques were used to collect supporting data such as demographic information, marriage records, and other relevant documents related to marriage practices in the research location.

The data obtained from the field were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques (Furidha, 2024). This analysis process involves several stages, including **data coding, categorization, and thematic analysis**. In the initial stage, data coding was conducted by identifying key concepts and recurring patterns emerging from interview transcripts and field notes. These codes were then grouped into broader categories to facilitate the identification of core themes related to the marriage practices of Generation Z in realizing a *sakinah* family. Subsequently, the data are presented systematically to facilitate interpretation and identification of patterns. Finally, conclusions are drawn by interpreting the findings in relation to existing theoretical frameworks and previous studies (Fadhilah et al., 2025; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this research applies triangulation techniques by comparing information obtained from different sources and methods (Laluddin, 2016). Triangulation is essential in qualitative research to strengthen the credibility of research findings and ensure that the conclusions drawn accurately reflect the social reality observed in the field (Donkoh, 2023; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This research was conducted over a period of approximately three months, starting from the data collection phase through interviews and observations to the data analysis and interpretation stages. The duration was considered sufficient to capture in-depth insights into the social and marital dynamics of Generation Z within the research setting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings of this study are structured based on four main empirical evidences that reflect the dynamics of Generation Z marriage practices in Lepelle Village, Robatal District, in realizing a *sakinah* family.

The first finding indicates a significant increase in early-age marriages among Generation Z in Lepelle Village. This not merely demographic but reflects a socio-religious pattern embedded in the local community. Marriage at a young age is widely perceived as a preventive mechanism against moral deviation, particularly in response to the growing influence of digital media that facilitates unrestricted social interaction among youth.

Field data show that many young individuals decide to marry not solely based on personal readiness but due to external pressures such as family encouragement, encouragement, social expectations, and concerns over maintaining moral values. In this context, early marriage functions as both a cultural practice and a form of social control. However, this trend also reveals a structural weakness, as many of these marriages are carried out without sufficient economic stability and psychological preparedness, potentially affecting the long-term realization of a *sakinah* family.

The second finding reveals that Generation Z couples in Lepelle Village possess diverse and evolving understandings of the concept of a *sakinah* family. These interpretations are shaped by three main influences: religious teachings, local cultural values, and digital media exposure.

Some couples maintain a normative understanding rooted in Islamic teachings, where a *sakinah* family is defined by tranquility (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*rahmah*), along with adherence to religious obligations. However, other couples reinterpret the concept by incorporating modern relational values such as emotional compatibility, mutual respect, open communication, and personal fulfillment.

The role of digital media is particularly significant in shaping these perspectives. Access to online religious content, motivational narratives, and portrayals of ideal marriages contributes to the formation of hybrid understandings of *sakinah* family. As a result, the concept is no longer singular but becomes dynamic, reflecting a negotiation between classical Islamic ideals and contemporary lifestyle expectations.

A general pattern emerging from the data shows that Generation Z marriage practices in Lepelle Village follow a **“negotiated adaptation pattern”**, in which young

couples continuously adjust between normative religious values and contemporary life demands. This pattern is characterized by three tendencies: (1) the persistence of early marriage as a socially legitimized practice; (2) the transformation of *sakinah* family into a hybrid concept combining religious and modern relational values; and (3) the reliance on external support systems due to limited individual readiness.

This recurring pattern suggests that the realization of a *sakinah* family is not a linear process but rather an **adaptive and dynamic process**, shaped by ongoing negotiation between tradition, religion, and digital modernity.

The third finding highlights various challenges faced by Generation Z couples in their efforts to build a *sakinah* family. These challenges can be categorized into three main aspects: economic, psychological, and socio-digital factors.

Economically, many young couples have not yet achieved financial independence, leading to reliance on parental support. This dependency often limits autonomy in household decision-making and may trigger internal conflict. Psychologically, the lack of emotional maturity and limited experience in managing conflict become significant obstacles. Several informants reported difficulties in communication, emotional control, and role adaptation as husband and wife.

In addition, the influence of social media introduces a complex dimension. While it provides access to knowledge and religious guidance, it also creates unrealistic expectations about marriage. Exposure to idealized lifestyles, relationship comparisons, and viral narratives about marital success or failure often leads to dissatisfaction and pressure within the household. This indicates that digital media functions as both a resource and a risk factor in the realization of a *sakinah* family.

The fourth finding emphasizes the crucial role of social structures in supporting Generation Z marriages. The realization of a *sakinah* family is not solely dependent on the couple but is strongly influenced by external support systems, including family, religious leaders, and the broader community.

Families, particularly parents, play a dominant role as providers of economic assistance and emotional guidance. This support is especially vital for young couples who are still in the early stages of financial and social stability. Religious leaders contribute by offering

premarital counseling, moral direction, and reinforcement of Islamic values, thereby helping couples align their marital practices with religious principles.

Meanwhile, the community functions as a mechanism of social control that maintains collective norms and expectations regarding marriage and family life. Community involvement in social and religious activities also creates an environment that encourages couples to sustain harmony and avoid conflict. This interconnected support system demonstrates that the formation of a *sakinah* family is a collective process, deeply embedded in the socio-cultural context of the village.

The findings reveal a clear causal relationship between socio-cultural pressures, digital influence, and the practice of early marriage among Generation Z. The strong emphasis on moral safeguarding within the community, combined with exposure to unrestricted digital interactions, **causes families and young individuals to perceive marriage as a preventive solution**. However, this decision often occurs **without adequate economic and psychological readiness**, which in turn **leads to new vulnerabilities**, including dependency on parents, marital conflict, and difficulties in achieving a stable *sakinah* family.

Furthermore, the influence of digital media not only shapes perceptions but also **produces a dual effect**. On one hand, access to religious content strengthens the normative understanding of *sakinah* values; on the other hand, exposure to idealized relationships and social comparison **generates unrealistic expectations**, which **causes dissatisfaction and emotional strain within marriage**. This indicates that digital media acts as both a reinforcing and disruptive force in the realization of a *sakinah* family.

No	Research Focus (Evidence)	Empirical Findings	Key Factors	Implications for <i>Sakinah</i> Family
1	Increasing early-age marriage among Gen Z	There is a growing trend of early-age marriages among Generation Z in Lepelle Village. Marriage is often seen as a preventive measure against moral deviation and social risks influenced by digital interaction.	- Cultural norms- Religious values- Family encouragement- Fear of social deviation (media influence)	Early marriage may support moral goals, but lack of readiness can hinder the realization of a stable and harmonious <i>sakinah</i> family.

		However, many marriages occur without adequate readiness.		
2	Diverse understanding of sakinah family	Generation Z couples have varied interpretations of sakinah family. Some emphasize religious values (sakinah, mawaddah, rahmah), while others integrate modern values such as communication, emotional compatibility, and personal happiness.	- Islamic teachings- Local culture- Digital media exposure- Personal experiences	The concept of sakinah family becomes dynamic and hybrid, requiring reinterpretation in line with contemporary social realities.
3	Challenges in building sakinah family	Gen Z couples face significant challenges, especially in economic instability, psychological immaturity, and the influence of social media that creates unrealistic expectations about marriage.	- Economic limitations- Emotional maturity- Lack of marital readiness- Social media influence	These challenges can disrupt family harmony and delay the achievement of sakinah family if not properly managed.
4	Role of family, religious leaders, and community	Family, religious leaders, and community play a crucial role in guiding and supporting young couples. Parents provide financial and emotional support, while religious leaders and community reinforce moral and social norms.	- Family support system- Religious guidance- Social norms and control- Community involvement	Strong social support significantly contributes to maintaining marital stability and helps couples achieve a sakinah family.

Overall, these findings confirm that the practice of marriage among Generation Z in Lepelle Village is characterized by a dynamic interplay between normative Islamic values and contemporary social realities. The increasing trend of early marriage, diverse interpretations of sakinah family, the presence of structural challenges, and the strong role of social support systems collectively illustrate that the realization of a sakinah family is a complex and

negotiated process. It requires not only individual commitment but also the alignment of social, economic, and cultural factors within the community.

Among the various factors identified, three dominant factors significantly influence the success or failure of Generation Z marriages in realizing a *sakinah* family.

First, economic readiness emerges as the most critical factor, as financial instability directly affects household independence, decision-making, and conflict management. *Second*, psychological maturity plays a crucial role in determining the ability of couples to manage emotions, communication, and role adaptation within marriage. *Third*, digital media influence acts as a cross-cutting factor that shapes expectations, perceptions, and relational behavior.

In addition, family support can be considered a moderating factor that either mitigates or reinforces the impact of these dominant variables. Strong family and community support tend to compensate for the lack of economic and psychological readiness, whereas weak support structures often exacerbate marital challenges.

Overall, the integration of these findings demonstrates that the realization of a *sakinah* family among Generation Z is structurally conditioned by a chain of causality, patterned adaptation, and the interaction of dominant factors, rather than merely individual intention or normative compliance.

Discussion

The Increasing Phenomenon of Early-Age Marriage among Generation Z

To strengthen the analytical framework, this study employs three interrelated theoretical perspectives: **socio-legal theory, generational change theory, and digital sociology**. From a socio-legal perspective, marriage practices are not merely understood as the implementation of legal norms, but as socially embedded processes shaped by cultural values, power relations, and institutional structures. This allows the analysis to move beyond normative interpretations of Islamic family law toward examining how such norms are negotiated in everyday life.

Meanwhile, generational change theory explains how Generation Z, as a cohort shaped by digital exposure and socio-economic transformation, develops distinct attitudes toward marriage compared to previous generations. Their marital decisions reflect not only continuity of tradition but also adaptation to new forms of rationality and self-construction.

In addition, digital sociology provides a lens to understand how digital media reshapes social interaction, value formation, and expectations of marriage. Through this perspective, digital platforms are not neutral tools but active agents that construct meanings, influence behavior, and mediate the relationship between religious norms and lived realities.

The findings of this study indicate a growing trend of early-age marriage among Generation Z in Lepelle Village, which cannot be separated from the strong influence of socio-cultural constructions and religious values embedded within the community (Thesis, 2025). In this context, marriage is not merely perceived as a private or individual institution, but rather as a social mechanism aimed at preserving collective morality (Masruroh et al., 2025). The expansion of digital technology and social media has increased the intensity of interaction among young people, which is often perceived as a potential threat to moral boundaries. Consequently, early marriage is constructed as a preventive solution to avoid behaviors considered deviant. Thus, the decision to marry at a young age is not solely based on individual readiness, but is also shaped by social pressure, family expectations, and prevailing religious norms (Sadeghian et al., 2025) (Maimun et al., 2019).

From the perspective of Islamic family law, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the concept of *dar' al-mafāsīd* (preventing harm), where marriage is positioned as a means to safeguard individuals from immoral conduct (Izzi et al., 2026). However, a deeper analysis reveals an inherent paradox within this practice. While early marriage is normatively justified as a moral safeguard, it is often not accompanied by sufficient economic stability and psychological maturity. These two aspects are essential components in achieving the objectives of marriage within the framework of *maqāṣīd al-sharī'ah* (Yazīd et al., 2025). As a result, early marriage may shift from being a preventive solution to becoming a source of new challenges within the household (Suryanto., 2025).

Furthermore, when compared to broader generational trends, this finding highlights a distinctive characteristic of Generation Z in Lepelle Village (Monte & Ligacion, 2025). Several studies indicate that Generation Z generally tends to delay marriage due to considerations of education, career development, and financial readiness (Utari, 2025; Ramadhan et al., 2024). In contrast, Generation Z in this local context still prioritizes moral and religious considerations over pragmatic readiness. Therefore, early marriage in Lepelle Village can be understood as a form of negotiation between traditional values and modern rationality, resulting in a unique and context-specific pattern of marital practice.

From a critical socio-legal perspective, early-age marriage in Lepelle Village should not only be viewed as a moral or religious response but also as a **form of structural adaptation to perceived social risks**. While it is normatively justified through the principle of *dar' al-mafāsīd*, this practice simultaneously produces what can be termed a **“structural vulnerability effect.”**

Early marriage, when undertaken without sufficient economic and psychological readiness, shifts risk from the public moral sphere into the private domestic sphere. In other words, the effort to prevent moral deviation may unintentionally **generate new structural risks**, such as economic dependency, limited agency within marriage, and increased potential for domestic conflict.

This finding positions early marriage not merely as a solution, but as a **double-edged institutional practice**, where moral protection is achieved at the cost of long-term household resilience.

Diverse Interpretations of Sakinah Family among Generation Z

The second finding reveals that Generation Z demonstrates diverse interpretations of the concept of a sakinah family, reflecting a broader transformation in the understanding of Islamic family values (Putri et al., 2025). Normatively, a sakinah family is defined as a household characterized by tranquility (*sakinah*), affection (*mawaddah*), and compassion (*rahmah*), grounded in religious teachings. However, this study shows that Generation Z does not interpret this concept in a uniform manner, but rather expands its meaning in accordance with contemporary social realities (Whitwam, 2025).

Some couples still adhere to a normative-religious understanding, emphasizing obedience to Islamic teachings, clear role distribution, and commitment to marital responsibilities (Sciortino et al., 1996). On the other hand, other couples reinterpret the concept of sakinah family by incorporating modern values such as emotional compatibility, open communication, equality, and personal well-being (Irfan, 2025). This indicates that Generation Z actively engages in the reinterpretation of religious concepts, rather than passively accepting them (Tahom & Srisophon, 2025).

The role of digital media is particularly significant in shaping this diversity of understanding (Montgomery, 2018). As digital natives, Generation Z has broad access to various sources of information, including religious teachings, relationship advice, and representations of ideal marriages (Bethle, 2025). Digital platforms not only disseminate

knowledge but also construct social expectations about what constitutes a successful marriage (G. A. Ramadhan & Dharma, 2026). Research suggests that exposure to digital content contributes to the formation of hybrid perspectives that combine religious values with elements of popular culture (Hasan et al., 2023) (Rahmawati, 2025). Therefore, the concept of a *sakinah* family among Generation Z becomes dynamic, fluid, and continuously negotiated within the intersection of religion, culture, and digital influence (Zatalini, 2024).

From the perspective of digital sociology, the role of digital media in shaping Generation Z marriage practices is fundamentally ambivalent. On one hand, digital platforms function as spaces of knowledge production, providing access to religious teachings, marital guidance, and inspirational narratives that reinforce the ideal of a *sakinah* family.

On the other hand, digital media simultaneously acts as a source of symbolic pressure and distortion, where curated representations of ideal relationships create unrealistic expectations. This condition leads to what can be described as “digital dissonance”, a gap between imagined marital ideals and lived experiences.

As a result, digital media does not simply support or hinder marriage, but rather reconfigures the very meaning of marital success, placing Generation Z in a continuous process of comparison, negotiation, and self-evaluation.

Challenges in Realizing a *Sakinah* Family

The findings also reveal that Generation Z faces various multidimensional challenges in their efforts to realize a *sakinah* family (Bin Syed Musa & Anak Freddie Mail, 2024). One of the most significant challenges is economic instability, as many young couples enter marriage without adequate financial independence (Duncan & Hoffman, 1985). This lack of economic readiness not only affects the fulfillment of basic household needs but also influences power relations and decision-making dynamics within the family (Oyediran & Odusola, 2004). Dependence on parents often creates additional pressure, including external intervention in domestic matters, which may lead to conflicts (Journal, 2025).

In addition to economic factors, psychological readiness emerges as a critical issue. Many young couples lack emotional maturity and experience difficulties in managing conflicts, communicating effectively, and adapting to their new roles as spouses (Lxxiv, 2021). This condition indicates that marital readiness is not solely determined by legal or biological maturity, but also by psychological and emotional preparedness (Margareta & Paeng, 2025).

This finding is consistent with previous studies highlighting that psychological readiness plays a crucial role in determining marital stability (Margareta & Paeng, 2025) (Yusuf, 2025). Moreover, the influence of social media further complicates these challenges. Social media not only serves as a source of information but also shapes expectations about marriage (Ehoro & Badey, 2021). The portrayal of idealized relationships often creates unrealistic standards that are difficult to achieve in real life, leading to dissatisfaction and social comparison (Rifka Alkhilyatul Ma'rifat, I Made Suraharta, 2024). At the same time, exposure to narratives of marital conflict and divorce contributes to anxiety toward marriage, as reflected in the "Marriage is Scary" phenomenon (Abrar et al., 2025) (Oktaviani & Krismono, 2025). Thus, social media plays an ambivalent role, functioning both as a source of education and as a source of psychological pressure in marital life.

The Role of Family, Religious Leaders, and Community

The findings further emphasize the crucial role of family, religious leaders, and the community in guiding Generation Z couples toward achieving a *sakinah* family (Bin Syed Musa & Anak Freddie Mail, 2024). Marriage, in this context, is not an isolated individual relationship but is deeply embedded within a broader social structure. Families, particularly parents, serve as the primary support system, providing both financial assistance and emotional guidance (Broadhurst, 2003). This support is especially important for young couples who are still in the early stages of building economic stability (Markman et al., 2022).

Religious leaders also play a strategic role in providing normative guidance and reinforcing Islamic values in marital life (Alwani, 2004). Through religious teachings, counseling, and premarital education, they help couples understand their roles and responsibilities within the framework of Islamic family law (Kamarusdiana et al., 2022). This role becomes essential in bridging the gap between the ideal concept of *sakinah* family and its practical implementation in everyday life (Fauzan & Amroni, 2020). Studies show that effective religious guidance significantly contributes to improving marital quality and reducing potential conflicts (Aman et al., 2021) (Zulkarnaen, 2025).

Meanwhile, the community functions as a mechanism of social control that maintains harmony and stability through shared norms and collective expectations (Hossain et al., 2025). A supportive social environment encourages couples to sustain harmonious relationships and discourages behaviors that may disrupt family stability (Guin, 2024). Interestingly, Generation Z does not entirely reject these traditional authorities but instead engages in a process of adaptation and reinterpretation (Banda, 2024). They tend to accept

religious and cultural values while simultaneously adjusting them to fit their contemporary realities(Condorelli, 2018). This demonstrates that Generation Z exhibits a reflective and adaptive character, integrating traditional values with modern perspectives(Hrp & Badawi, 2011).

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the practice of marriage among Generation Z in Lepelle Village is the result of a complex negotiation between Islamic normative values, socio-economic conditions, and digital modernity. The increasing trend of early marriage, diverse interpretations of *sakinah* family, various challenges in marital life, and the significant role of social support systems all indicate that the realization of a *sakinah* family is not a simple or linear process.

Therefore, Islamic family law should not be approached solely from a normative perspective but must also incorporate contextual and socio-legal considerations. An integrative approach that combines religious principles, social realities, and psychological dimensions is essential in addressing the challenges faced by Generation Z. Such an approach will ensure that the concept of *sakinah* family is not only ideal in theory but also achievable and sustainable in practice.

This study takes a critical position by arguing that the realization of a *sakinah* family among Generation Z cannot be fully explained by normative religious compliance alone. Instead, it must be understood as a negotiated outcome shaped by structural conditions, generational shifts, and digital influence.

Thus, rather than viewing Generation Z as deviating from Islamic values, this study demonstrates that they are actively reinterpreting and contextualizing those values within their socio-economic and digital realities. This repositioning challenges the binary opposition between “ideal” and “deviant” marriage practices, and instead highlights the complexity of contemporary Muslim family life.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the practice of marriage among Generation Z in Lepelle Village, Robatal District, is not merely a continuation of normative Islamic family values, but rather a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between socio-cultural structures, generational transformation, and digital influence. The findings reveal that early-age marriage, diverse interpretations of the *sakinah* family, multidimensional challenges, and

strong social support systems collectively form a pattern of “negotiated adaptation,” in which young couples continuously balance religious ideals with contemporary realities.

From a socio-legal perspective, this study confirms that marriage practices cannot be understood solely as the application of Islamic legal norms, but must be analyzed as socially embedded phenomena influenced by structural conditions such as economic readiness, psychological maturity, and community expectations. The study also highlights that early marriage, while normatively justified as a moral safeguard, simultaneously produces structural vulnerabilities when not supported by adequate preparedness. In addition, digital media emerges as an ambivalent force that both reinforces religious values and generates unrealistic expectations, thereby reshaping the meaning and experience of marital life among Generation Z.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic family law by proposing a conceptual understanding of **“negotiated sakinah family formation,”** which emphasizes that the realization of a sakinah family is not a fixed or linear outcome, but a continuum shaped by ongoing negotiation between normative, structural, and digital dimensions. This contribution bridges the gap between normative legal approaches and empirical-sociological perspectives, offering a more contextual and adaptive framework for understanding contemporary Muslim family life.

Practically, the findings imply the need for more integrative strategies in promoting sakinah families, particularly through strengthening premarital education, improving economic and psychological preparedness among young couples, and enhancing digital literacy to mitigate the negative effects of social media. Religious institutions, policymakers, and communities are encouraged to adopt context-sensitive approaches that align Islamic values with the realities of Generation Z in the digital era.

However, this study is limited to a specific local context, which may not fully represent the diversity of Generation Z experiences in other regions. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore comparative studies across different socio-cultural settings, as well as to examine the long-term sustainability of sakinah family formation in the context of rapid digital transformation.

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