



DOI: 10.22250/20728662-2025-3-114-124

Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom

REAL Theological Seminary

*Gedung House of Glory Lt 3–4, Jalan Ahmad Yani, Eden Park, Taman Baloi, Batam Kota, Batam, Riau Island, 29444, Republic of Indonesia
jonimanumpakgultom@gmail.com*



Parental Strategies in Forming and Preparing the Role of Generation Z Men as a Spiritual Leader (Imam) in the Christian Family

Abstract. This study aims to explain the strategies of parents in forming and preparing representatives of Generation Z to act as spiritual leaders (*Imams*) in the families they create. Generation Z tends to experience spiritual decadence, weak leadership, and household failure inherited from their parents. Every year more than 1 million of Gen Z leave the Church and no longer adhere to the Christian faith. Nowadays, this generation has become the first one to leave Christianity. This fact has casted doubts upon Generation Z's level of spirituality and ability of being spiritual leaders (*Imams*) in families to be formed. The research is based on the descriptive qualitative approach. The argument is that Generation Z men cannot automatically act as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in families they form despite the fact they were born to righteous Christian families. Generation Z parents are supposed to form and prepare them to act as spiritual leaders (*Imams*). The conclusion is that parents should set an example as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) when the child is still in the womb. The parents should focus on forming righteous commitment, consistency, and integrity so that Generation Z be able to foster families based on the truth of the Gospel.

Key words: generation Z, *Imam*, parent, family, religious leader, spirituality, religious

Джони Манумпак Парулиан Гультон

Богословская семинария REAL

*29444, Республика Индонезия, Батам Кота, Батам, остров Риау, Джалан Ахмад Яни, Эден Парк, Таман Балой, Дом славы Гедунга, Лт 3–4;
jonimanumpakgultom@gmail.com*

Родительские стратегии по формированию и подготовке роли мужчин поколения Z как духовного лидера (имама) в христианской семье

Аннотация. Целью данного исследования является объяснение роли родителей в формировании и подготовке мужчин поколения Z к деятельности в качестве духовного лидера (*имама*) в семьях, которые они создадут. Поколение Z, как правило, испытывает духовный упадок, характеризуется слабым уровнем лидерства и неустойчивостью к бытовым неудачам, что наследуется от их родителей. Более 1 миллиона представителей поколения Z покидают церковь каждый год и больше не придерживаются христианской веры. В наше время, это поколение стало первым, что оставило христианство, тем самым вызывая сомнения в том, что его представители имеют высокий уровень духовности и могут выступать в качестве духовного лидера (*имама*) в семье, которая будет сформирована. Исследование проводится с использованием описательного качественного подхода. Основной тезис исследования заключается в том, что мужчины поколения Z не могут автоматически выступать в качестве духовного лидера (*имама*) в семье только потому, что они родились в благочестивой христианской семье. Родители поколения Z должны подготовить их к деятельности в качестве духовного лидера (*имама*). Основной вывод заключается в том, что родители должны подавать пример духовного лидера (*имама*) с самого момента зачатия ребёнка, концентрируясь на формировании у него верности, последовательности и честности, основанных на благочестии. Это необходимо для того, чтобы данное поколение в будущем могло возглавлять и укреплять свои семьи на основе истин Евангелия.

Ключевые слова: поколение Z, *имам*, родитель, семья, религиозный лидер, духовность, религиозный

Introduction

Family is not an important thing. It is everything. However, Generation Z men who are now adults and preparing to start a household have experienced a decline in spirituality and weakness in spiritual leadership, which raises doubts about being able to act as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family. In terms of identity, Gen Z is the least religious generation yet. More than 34% of Gen Z are religiously unaffiliated [Cox, 2022]. Data from the American Enterprise Institute, reports that 47% of Gen Z have never attended a religious service. Almost half of Gen Z say they have no religious affiliation [Burge, 2022]. Pew Research even noted that 48% of Generation Z have unbiblical views regarding the idea that gay and lesbian couples getting married is something good for society [Parker and Igielnik, 2020]. Research from the Great Opportunity conducted by the Pinetops Foundation reports that more than one million Gen Z leave the Church and no longer adhere to the Christian faith yearly. By 2034, more than 10 million young people will be lost from the spiritual community [Team Sojo.net, 2024]. Research over decades shows that children have spent the first 12 years of their lives filling a spiritual void. And by the age of 13, most of their views are formed so profoundly that they rarely experience significant change [Barna, 2023].

The younger generation is no longer disciplined in practicing the Christian faith and spiritual life but in a non-spiritual digital society. Gen Z needs to be of better spiritual quality and low religious practice. This generation has become the first generation to leave Christianity in this modern era, raising doubts that this generation cannot become spiritual leaders for themselves and can even play a role as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family that will be fostered.

The modern world is experiencing a shift in cultural values from sacred to secular spaces, causing many young people of Gen Z to abandon religious beliefs and close attention to the Church. Moral relativism is a characteristic of Gen Z because the Church's traditional values are not recognized. The consensus of Generation Z is that sincere belief is synonymous with absolute truth [Landrum, 2019]. Other data shows that 66% of young people who grew up in a Christian Church eventually leave the Church, and 35% of Gen Z believes that the Church is irrelevant and hypocritical. As many as 34% of Gen Z identify as agnostic [Kennedy, 2020]. A recent study from the Springtide Research Institute found that this generation rejects traditional religious labels and identifies themselves as non-denominational or interfaith [Castle, 2023]. This generation is disappointed with ineffective, rude, and hypocritical leaders, including their parents. This generation is hungry for sincere, humble, and transparent leadership [Kyle and Patrick, 2023]. It is even worse when the confusing circumstances during the three years after the global pandemic, war, contested elections, rapid inflation, and widespread abuse scandals – create a hunger for identity, purpose, and belonging from Gen Z [Trevin Wax, 2024]. These statistics confirm that this generation is degraded in faith and morals and needs help to help develop their spirituality.

One survey data recorded that 37.6% of marriages end in divorce. About one in two children will likely come from their parent's divorce. A total of 21% of children are raised without a father figure and function, and this hurts psychological and mental development. Children are more likely to experience behavioural problems if their married parents decide to divorce when the child is between the ages of 7 and 14 [Lazic, 2023]. The impact on children from broken homes can affect the child's growth and development, behavioural patterns, child psychology, and changes in sensitivity (Ariyanto, 2023). The basic assumption is that if many children become victims of parental divorce, then it will have a negative impact in the long term, especially later when they build a household.

Joni's research refers to the development of the spiritual quality of Gen Z in producing Christian influencers on social media to anticipate the problem of loneliness and make this generation more spiritual with solid leadership [Joni Gultom, 2022]. Jacobs et al, stated that extraordinary individual leadership and aspiring social groups are complementary forces in the 21st century. The leadership process raises awareness of social potential, projects organizational ideas, and mobilizes global social energy and resources. In essence, leadership is a catalyst for rapid global social evolution [Jacobs, Kiniger-Passigli, Chikvaidze, 2019]. Sari and Yuliana's research shows that authoritarian commu-

nication patterns tend to make Gen Z feel depressed and inferior. At the same time, open and empathetic communication patterns make children feel comfortable telling stories and being open with their parents [Sari and Yuliana, 2023]. Barrie et al, reflect on the role of communication technology in families playing a diverse role across generations. It is influenced by the complexity of family life, experience of using technology, and intergenerational communication norms [Barrie, Bartkowski, Haverda, 2019]. Kristyowati stated that Gen Z needs spiritual services by utilizing Artificial Intelligence and building personal branding design for creative worship patterns, teaching biblical doctrine, and forming a solid faith and mentality [Kristyowati, 2021]. No research has discussed parental strategies in shaping and preparing Gen Z men to be a spiritual leader of the families they will form.

This study aims to explain the parents' strategy in forming and preparing Gen Z men to act as spiritual leaders in the family that will be formed. The argument is that an adult male from Gen Z cannot automatically become a spiritual leader in the family just because he comes from a good Christian family and parents. Gen Z parents must be able to play a maximum role in providing an example of the role of a spiritual leader in the family and teaching superior spiritual leadership to their children, not just handing over the children to the Church or other spiritual institutions. The construction is 1) Parents have acted as priests since early on, even when the children are still in their mother's womb. 2) Parents focus on the growth of spiritual character, especially in leading and fostering the family. 3) Parents form commitment, consistency, and integrity based on biblical leadership.

Method

The research approach is qualitative, and the method used is descriptive, using a literature study. The author first describes the characteristics and spiritual conditions of Gen Z. Then, the discussion continues by explaining the father's role as a priest in the family, including his primary duties and characteristics. Furthermore, the researcher provides examples of male figures in the Bible who failed to form family spirituality, which is continued by explaining the theological study of the role of a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family. The last part describes the parents' strategy in building and preparing the role of a spiritual leader in the family through early role models, character building, and divine leadership, and the formation of commitment, consistency, and integrity to produce conclusions.

Findings and Results

Generation Z, digital natives, have never known a world without the internet, mobile phones, and social media. This generation, apart from being non-religious and feeling insecure, is growing intellectually faster than previous generations. This generation comprises 26% of the global population, projected to produce 27% of the workforce by 2025 [Maya, 2022]. Gen Z, digital natives, has never known a world without the internet, mobile phones, and social media. This generation, apart from being non-religious and feeling insecure, is growing intellectually faster than previous generations. This generation comprises 26% of the global population, projected to produce 27% of the workforce by 2025 [Lucchetti G, HG and ALG, 2021]. This generation has even made this media space like a new religion by abandoning the previous traditional religion [Rumbiak, 2020]. Almost half of this generation has entered the productive age, and the rest will be able to enter the workforce in the coming years [Team Thriving Center, 2023]. The statistics themselves show that 75% of this Gen is still single. That means that 25% have already entered marriage. This generation was born in 1997-2012, indicating that the oldest Gen Z is around 27. It means that in the coming years, adult men of Gen Z will have worked, have a more established life, and be ready to start a family. Although 83% of Gen Z plan to marry someday, 85% feel marriage is unnecessary for a fulfilling and committed relationship [Team, 2023].

In a Christian family, a father is not only the head of the family but also plays a role as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) for his wife and children. Ephesians 5:23–25 states that a father is an adult man who is the head of his wife and loves her with all his heart, just as Christ loves the Church. Meanwhile, in I Corinthians 11: 3, Paul mentions the leadership structure established in the family that the head of the woman is the man, and the head of the man is Christ. The emphasis is that a husband must lead his family by imitating Christ, the highest spiritual leader. Even in I Timothy 3:4–5, Paul explicitly provides the

qualifications of a Church overseer, namely a husband who can lead his family well in moral and spiritual quality. The Apostle Peter emphasized that a husband must live wisely with his wife and honour her as a fellow heir. The husband's leadership must be wise, full of respect, and recognize the high dignity of his wife (1 Pet 3: 4). Research data also shows that the relationship between a father and his child is very influential. By being warmer, more accepting, and communicating openly with the child, the father will strengthen the child's leadership [Jang, 2015].

From the verses above, we can take several important emphases of the duties of a spiritual leader; namely, first, they are spiritual leaders who guide their wives and children in prayer and worship. A spiritual leader directs all family members to maturity in faith and the teachings of Christ. Second, a spiritual leader sets an example of love, which means they are responsible for sacrificing themselves, not being selfish, and always putting their family first. Third, a spiritual leader has a relatively strong understanding of the principles of the truth of God's Word and can make decisions that bring goodness to the family. And fourth, a spiritual leader is a protector and supervisor. It means they protect the family from physical harm or spiritual disturbance and can provide for their needs. However, the most important thing is that a spiritual leader encourages growth towards maturity of faith that involves all family members in the introduction to the Bible and Church services. The role of a person as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family is a lifelong commitment and is related to the proper response to God's cultural mission. For someone to become an effective spiritual leader, he must have a vision of attachment that is big, planned, focused, and with an eternal purpose [Perangin-Angin, Yeniretnowati, 2021]. The role of a father in the family is not only to be a link between descendants but also a provider. But the most important thing is that they love, train each member, and become a model for their family [Sulaiman, Efendi, 2020].

Examples of the Failure of the Father's Role as a Spiritual Leader (*Imam*) in the Bible

Since birth, Generation Z has experienced many family conflicts, such as divorce cases, quarrels or disputes, and lack of parental responsibility, resulting in a tolerance gap between them. This generation seems to inherit the failure of parents, especially a father called "fatherless". On average, people who do not have parents have a lack of self-confidence, withdraw from socializing, tend to abuse drugs, tend to commit crimes and violence, have mental health problems, and depression in education, especially during the golden years, namely between the ages of 7–8 to 14–15 years (CNN, 2021). Fatherlessness is mainly caused by divorce cases and children born out of wedlock [Team Father.com, <https://fathers.com/statistics-and-research/contributors-to-fatherlessness/>]. In addition, Gen Z itself has experienced quite worrying mental problems. Generation Z is reported to have severe mental health and a much higher level of loneliness [Blake, 2024]. Even the faith of this generation is shallow compared to the growing Christianity [Kennedy, 2020]. Gen Z has slowly but surely left the foundation of fundamental and traditional Christianity and has begun to transform into the logic of the global world and technology.

Although the position of men and women is equal in the eyes of God, both have different roles in the family. The Bible shows the person's father as the central figure who becomes a priest and role model in the family. However, many fathers have lost their role as spiritual leaders. So many young people of Gen Z are very disappointed and have lost their role models. It has created quite worrying wounds and trauma. The term often used is transgenerational trauma, which has a harmful impact, namely domestic violence. Bad experiences are carried into a child's subconscious into adulthood. Second, children psychologically feel their parents' absence, which affects emotions and openness. Third, poor communication is characterized by blaming, belittling, comparing, and avoiding problems. This poor interaction can last for a long time and cause conflict. The next thing is a reasonably contrasting gap regarding values, aspirations, and hopes in the family, which can ignite prolonged strife. In addition, the occurrence of severe mental disorders that can affect health, quality of life, and psychological risks in the next generation (Marschall, 2024).

Parents need to create a particular momentum so that the hearts of the children are returned to the fathers and the fathers are returned to the hearts of their children (Mal 4:1–6). At least the Bible tells four examples of husbands or parents who lost their role

as priests for their families and children. They failed to be maximum spiritual leaders for their children. The first incident is the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam failed to be a spiritual leader for Eve when Adam was not beside her when she was tempted by the snake (Gen 3; Eph 5:25–27). Adam acted as God's representative and became the head of his wife Eve. Adam was the holder of the highest mandate over the Garden of Eden. Adam met the Father directly at a certain time in a special and continuous way, and Eve did not experience that. However, Eve had to act as a friend her who supported her husband in fulfilling the Word (Gen 2; 15–18). When the devil tempted Eve, the devil tried first to create an imbalance in Adam's leadership as a spiritual leader. Adam had two failures, First, Adam acted passively and did not try to find out and rebuke Eve about her mistake in taking and eating the forbidden fruit. Adam did not ask about the origin of the fruit and let himself be carried away by the attraction of the good and evil fruit (Gen 3:6). Second, Adam and Eve lost focus in their respective roles. Adam, as a spiritual leader, did not remind Eve of the guidance of the Word. Finally, both of them fell into sin and lost the glory of God. If in the Church, God places the Pastor as the head, then a father is a spiritual leader and becomes the main example in the family who makes the highest decisions but also functions as a protector and defender in any difficult situation.

Another story is the story of Ananias who dragged his wife Sapphira to death for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1–11). There are two important lessons that can be learned from this story, first: Ananias taught dishonesty. Ananias as a spiritual leader taught his wife Sapphira to lie to Peter about the proceeds from the sale of the land. Second, Ananias gave an example of falsehood, not sincerity. When Ananias and Sapphira, who were part of the early Church and grew greatly in integrity and unity of heart, behaved selfishly and falsely. A spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family is obliged to be a person with the best integrity for his wife and children in all situations and conditions. The next story is King Ahab who failed to become head of the family and was taken over by his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 21: 25). Ahab was a king of Israel who had the highest authority over a nation, but submitted to the advice and decisions of his wife Jezebel. Ahab's mistakes need to be emphasized. First, Ahab was the seventh king of Israel, who inherited disloyalty from God. The kings of Israel before him also did the same thing. Second, Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the King of Sidon, who was a nation hated by God and also an enemy of the nation of Israel. Even Jezebel was a very cruel woman who killed the prophets of God in her time. However, Ahab never rebuked his wife and allowed the death of God's prophet. The third thing is that Ahab was a Jew but also worshiped the idol of Sidon, namely the God Baal. Ahab even helped build a temple for Baal because he followed his wife's advice.

The final story is about the priest Eli, who failed to be the best parent for his children (1Sam 2:12–17, 22–25; Lev 7:3–34). Eli, the priest understood and took full responsibility as a high priest in his time. Perhaps Eli had tried his best to teach his children about God's law. However, it turns out that the family leadership has a dilemma: there is no attention, he is too patient with his sons, and he does not provide the necessary discipline. The priest Eli failed in his cause to support true and pure worship of God when his own two sons were directly involved in violating God's laws regarding holiness and sacrifice for a long period of time. Without the role of a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family, a rebellious generation begins to emerge (1 Sam 2:29; Eph 6:4). A spiritual leader (*Imam*) must be able to show the family and children the main spiritual character and integrity to have. Joni refers to the actions in teaching and mentoring, acting as a friend and a parent, and being an example and role model. Until one day, parents prepare and release their children to become new spiritual leaders [Gultom and Sophia, 2022].

The Theological Basic of a Spiritual Leader (*Imam*)

The position of a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family is a spiritual position that has been given to men since the Old Testament era from the time of Moses. It is based on the fact that men were created before women (Gen 2:21–23). Aaron, as the High Priest, also received a task from God to pass on the position of priest to his children (Numbers 3:10). In the Israelite family, the parent figure, in addition to being the head of the family, is also a spiritual leader) as the leading educator of the family's spirituality (Pro 12:7; Eph 6; 4). I Corinthians 11: 3 explains that the head of the woman is the man, and the head of the man is Christ. God entrusts a man as a parent in the household to carry out the role

of a spiritual leader who represents Christ in his family. He brings sacrifices to God with thanksgiving and intercessory prayers and opens the way for salvation for children to be able to apply true faith in life. As a spiritual leader, a father must live with love like God's love for His congregation, and parents must teach the love of the Heavenly Father through daily life practices. Parents must maximize the teaching of love and faith in Christ in the family, and this cannot be replaced by Church institutions such as Sunday schools or other spiritual communities.

Moreover, the study results show the Millennial Generation's prominent position as a new religious authority and curator of information for Gen Z, so they resist certain religious doctrines. The role of a successful spiritual leader in the household will continue in the congregation's leadership in the Church, community environment, nation, and state [Epafras et al., 2021]. The role of the old father as a true spiritual leader is the perfect picture of God, which should have been the target to be achieved by every Christian man who will form a family and become the head of the household.

There are several criteria for a man to be prepared to become a spiritual leader; namely, first, they certainly have a deep quality relationship with God. An adult man must be able to find true happiness only in the love of Christ alone (Gen 1:26–27; 22; Matt 22:37; Mark 1:35; Jer 29:13; Rom 8). Suppose a man seeks true love through his partner. In that case, he will never feel satisfied and happy because his partner has many limitations and shortcomings – children from more spiritual and religious families who provide comfort, presence, and duality score higher [Moore et al., 2016]. A deep relationship between a man and God is dynamic, involving obedience, love, a sincere search for God, and a life led by the Holy Spirit. Second, an adult man realizes that he will become the head of the household with spiritual and physical responsibilities that take work. Therefore, a man must have a sufficient mentality by continuing to renew his mind (Rom 12:2), focusing on sound, authentic, and positive things (Phil 4:8), and continuing to try to have the mind of Christ (1Cor 2:16). A good mentality requires discipline and control of the mind (2Cor 10:5), and must add humility, gratitude, and faith (Phil 2:5–8; 1 Thess 5:16–18; Matt 17:20). Third, adult men are prepared to have commitment and character in ethical norms amid society in a balanced way and have good emotional health. He has the correct principles of life-based on the Gospel and does not depend on anyone except God. A life that has peace in overcoming anxiety (John 14:27), relies on God (1Pet 5:7), and is always filled with the truth of the Word (Psalm 11:105). Philippians 4:6–7 mentions the action for someone to express their desires in prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving always. Even Paul taught us always to be aware of being equipped with the spirit that awakens power, love, and self-discipline (2 Tim 1:7). Fourth, of course, an adult man is proactive and dares to take risks that arise in the family. He must be able to find the best and wisest solution, even in urgent situations. Finally, an adult man must live honestly and with high integrity. The family respects him. All of these things can be obtained when an adult man lives in the example of Christ (Matt 20:25–28).

The Role of Parents as a Spiritual Leader (*Imam*) Begins When Child is still in the Womb

The role of parents is very crucial in building a family. A spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family is tasked with guiding children in moral development and the development of children's sexual identity and self-image from an early age. The influence of parenting itself has been carried out since the process in the womb. Parenting begins before birth. The emotional state of a pregnant mother can affect her child through fetal programming, prenatal bonding, and relationships with postnatal mood and parenting. The father is also an essential determinant of the mother's emotional state [Glover, Capron, 2017]. One characteristic of parenting itself is communication. Communication between parents and children often becomes rigid due to the authoritarian pattern that parents have applied since childhood. Generation Z feels pressured.

Meanwhile, open and empirical communication makes children feel comfortable and close to their parents [Adawiyyah, 2024]. The emotional bond between children in the womb and their parents is a solid foundation for dealing with pressure and temptations from the surrounding environment in the future. The interaction that is built can open up more fluid communication and help children understand family values, social norms,

and the consequences of behavior that is full of risk. The role of parents as spiritual leaders (*Imam*) in the family begins with acts of praise, worship, and prayer. Not only should parents be the best role models for their children since they are in the womb, but parents should also be teachers of praise and worship and continuously pray for them. It anticipates concerns about the decline of both practices that cause a loss of sensitivity to the supernatural dimension of children's faith since childhood. Prayer with praise and worship are a commitment to gratitude and awakening faith. Several goals are to be achieved: parents create a solid spiritual foundation. Building a spiritual bond from the womb makes it easier for them to obey and commit. The next thing is to connect children with the tradition of faith. Parents introduce children to the liturgy and traditions of Christianity to connect them to the values and practices of fundamental faith. Barna mentions four concrete steps, namely starting by helping them commit to becoming Jesus' disciples. The next step is to guide them in exploring biblical principles towards correct and holistic thinking. Then, the action facilitates obedience through gospel values, and finally, it introduces personal accountability and stability regarding essential values in life that strengthen growth [Barna, 2023]. When parents ask for God's blessings and protection, parents ask for a peaceful, calm, and positive atmosphere that influences children's emotional and spiritual development from the womb.

A spiritual leader (*Imam*)'s second role is mentoring and teaching the Christian faith. Deuteronomy 6:6–7 explains that parents teach about the truth and show the right path at home and when traveling. However, parents must always discipline with love and follow the correct pattern because discipline builds children's character from an early age (Pro 22:6). Parents also show a strong capacity for faith so that it can be imitated and emulated by children. How a grandmother and continued by a mother became the heir of faith for Timothy (2Tim 1:5). Parents must learn to listen attentively, understand the child's perspective, and provide wise views without judgment [Adawiyah, 2024]. Christian education is considered one of the approaches that can provide a solid moral foundation for Gen Z parents who face various pressures and temptations in their environment. Even parents can build interactions with young people through open communication, active supervision of children, and teaching healthy relationships and spiritual education. Zega wrote that parents must be able to teach their children Christian religious education as a strong foundation of faith, more than the faith education that exists in schools [Zega, 2021].

Generation Z in Spiritual Character Growth and Leadership in Building a Family

Parents are responsible for shaping their children's character from the beginning. Several studies even state that the formation of children's character begins in the womb. Parents build character, and a relevant approach is needed but rooted in solid principles of faith. One strategy that parents can use is building open communication. Since the womb, parents give time and attention to talk to the baby in the womb specifically. Parents provide guidance and understanding and educate them in God's teachings and advice (Pro 4:1–2; 22:6; Eph 6:4; Col. 3:21). Never assume that s cannot be taught. Babies have strong sensitivity and sensory. Saputra said that educational development begins from birth. Babies will grow into normal and healthy children when they know people, voices, objects, jokes, and conversations around them [Saputra, 2019]. Relational discipleship is about conveying knowledge and helping children develop critical thinking and spiritual discernment from an early age. When a child reaches age 6, parents must be able to answer difficult questions. They teach spiritual discipline and explore slightly complex theology. This action catalyzes a more profound, stronger, and more active faith. Extraordinary individual leadership is a complementary force in the 21st century. The leadership process raises awareness of potentials, projects ideas, and mobilizes energy and resources. In essence, leadership catalyzes social evolution [Jacobs, Kiniger-Passigli, Chikvaidze, 2019].

The second thing is that parents provide emotional and spiritual support. Parents help their children find strength in prayer and faith and provide spiritual guidance to grow in a personal relationship with God. This generation is vulnerable to loneliness, anxiety, and depression. Therefore, parental communication patterns play an essential role [Sari, Yuliana, 2023]. The third thing is to provide understanding and responsibility. Parents teach and instill their identity as children of God. Parents open up understanding about the

role of priests in the family. One crucial example is premarital counseling. The Church has conditioned premarital counseling as a mandatory process that couples must follow before being blessed. However, parents can teach the basics of marriage personally and deeply through life experiences. There are too many essential things in building a household that can be shared directly from parents' lives. The role of the family is essential in achieving the developmental task of preparing for marriage for generations. Attention to parents is a crucial element behind the behavior of this couple's marriage [Yuen, 2018]. And the fourth is character building through spiritual experiences. Involve Gen Z in spiritual services from an early age, especially in the family and Church environment. Parents encourage them to enter the community to develop concern, empathy, and leadership. Parents provide appropriate responsibilities for their age to participate in intentional leadership, such as leading worship, sharing the Word of God, or sharing testimonies. Gen Z craves respect that does not belittle their abilities or readiness but addresses their concerns and helps lay the foundation for a strong, resilient faith that can withstand the world's challenges [Brumett, 2022]. What should be remembered in this character formation is recognizing the challenges and digital influences that are before them massively. Parents help them filter information wisely and according to the Christian faith. The digitalization era has opened up human space, and people's mindsets are trapped between material needs and the desire for existence, which can present complex situations [Rahmawati, Ruslan, Bandarsyah, 2021]. Parents always accompany them to be able to use relevant technology and media to strengthen the principles of faith until these children can be responsible.

Gen Z in Building Commitment, Consistency, and Integrity

Parents build commitment, consistency, and integrity in Generation Z to become the foundation of mentality in the family's spiritual leader (*Imam*) role. Parents provide an example of a loving marriage commitment to Gen Z. Marital adjustments over time cannot indicate whether a couple has succeeded in maintaining their bond. New or old marriages will end if there is a lack of commitment, leading to a decision to end the marriage. Building commitment is first built by an excellent self-concept to accept the shortcomings of one's partner. Fadli said that a positive self-concept is an internal factor determining a marriage commitment's strength. This self-image is reflected in the roles and obligations taken by men as autonomous individuals towards themselves, as husbands towards their wives, and as fathers towards their children [Fadhli, 2021]. Marriage commitment is also built on openness and forgiveness (Col 3:13; Ephesians 4:32; Prov 28:13; 1Jo 1: 9). Parents need to avoid pretense. Parents place Agape love as a bond that unites and controls each other so as not to hurt and destroy each other's feelings amid family challenges and problems. To create a harmonious family, all family members must love, respect, and care for each other, which is the foundation of living together. In addition, loving each other ensures good communication and cooperation in the family, creating harmony and happiness [Deak, Haans, Olsin, Siwalete, 2022]. The third thing in building commitment is establishing a family vision and values. Parents set goals together with the family so that family members can cooperate. Open discussions involving all family members provide a sense of belonging and responsibility. Parents teach commitment by giving respect and appreciation to family members. Support and appreciation for children are needed, as they have an essential meaning and contribution to the family. Parents consciously give the best response to Gen Z, especially when facing faith-based solid obstacles. Parents train themselves to control emotions. Often, parents fail to manage emotions so that they cause unnecessary chaos and are visible in front of their children. Parents need to train Gen Z's commitment by increasing personal independence. Gen Z can develop inner peace and focus on finding solutions when facing pressure but remain in the priestly task. Parenting patterns based on Christian faith that emphasize the importance of actions to pass on faith must be carried out to the next generation. In the 21st century, parents play the most crucial role in passing on the Christian faith to children [Vandiano, 2020].

The next part is that parents train Generation Z's consistency by practicing leadership in the context of family, community, and Church. Action begins with consistency in behavior, such as words that match actions. Parents become important role models in the Christian faith when they consistently maintain spiritual things such as worship, prayer, Bible reading, and discipline. A worship design that includes leading praise and

opening prayer (initial activity), prayer, preaching of God's Word, reflection (core activity), intercessory prayer and offering, and closing (final activity) as a learning model in core activities. By empowering family members, children actively participate in discussions, express opinions, and conduct Bible searches [Warwer, 2023]. Parents also need to be consistent with family routines agreed upon together, such as spiritual activities, vacations, or academic Bible studies. Parents set consistent boundaries regarding using social media technology at the dinner table when talking and in worship meetings. Allow children to actively and consistently participate in specific tasks at home or other daily tasks. Parents can even provide opportunities to be involved in the core management of a particular community. Parents can also offer opportunities for Gen Z to learn from spiritual leaders, books, and leadership seminars so that this generation has more inspiration and knowledge. In addition, train children to apply open and relevant communication about the meaning of consistency in spiritual and daily life so that they are more motivated. Parents also consistently give awards and recognition for the obedience, commitment, and success achieved by Gen Z. In this consistent training, patience and perseverance are needed. Parents need to adjust the character and needs of each child. Farel said there is a relationship between the consistency of the quality of wisdom with decision-making and personality evaluation in forming a wise person's integrity [Farel Yosua Sualang, 2023].

The next part is parents forming integrity. They train Gen Z to have high integrity where words, actions, and faith are in harmony to create a strong foundation for authentic leadership. Authentic leadership will be sharpened when it intersects with souls in service. Parents continue to demonstrate high integrity values that are to be emulated in honesty, sincerity, and daily responsibility. Integrity is built with Biblical education that emphasizes divine principles. Accountability and correct moral ethics in social media, communities, and daily relationships are essential to remember. Parents remain disciplined, even in routine spiritual activities, by managing time management and commitment so that Gen Z is established in resolving conflicts and making decisions. Family and community support are very influential in forming integrity and divine leadership. Barbera, Shi, Agarwal, et al. stated that intergenerational solidarity and value-based leadership theory, and through interpretive qualitative analysis, family religious values enhance their cohesion and are manifested in their leadership style, leading to business outcomes [Barbera et al., 2020]. It means that a father who acts as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in the family can positively contribute to the family's business and the simple daily life of the family.

Conclusion

This study is essential to remind us that the spiritual life of children begins in the family, and the best Christian family comes from parents. The vital role of parents is that of a father who becomes a spiritual leader (*Imam*) for the family. An adult male from Generation Z cannot automatically act as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) in a family that will be formed because he comes from a good Christian family and parents. This study provides several parental approaches to creating and preparing Generation Z as a spiritual leader (*Imam*) whose can form a happy family and build their spirituality well. Parents have acted as priests since early on, focus on the growth of spiritual character, and form commitment, consistency- integrity. If a father, the head of the family, fails to become a spiritual leader (*Imam*) for the children, then the children tend to inherit failure in forming a spiritual family. This study still needs to be refined and is open to further research to obtain more satisfying results.

References

1. Adawiyah R. *Menghadapi Tantangan Generasi Z: Mengapa Parenting Anak Sejak Dini Penting untuk Menghindari Pergaulan Bebas* [Facing Generation Z Challenges: Why Early Parenting is Important to Avoid Free Association], www.psga.uin-malang.ac.id. 2024. Available at: <https://psga.uin-malang.ac.id/alda/tajuk-rencana/menghadapi-tantangan-generasi-z-mengapa-parenting-anak-sejak-dini-penting-untuk-menghindari-pergaulan-bebas/> (accessed on July 15, 2024).
2. Ariyanto K. Dampak Keluarga Broken Home Terhadap Anak [The Impact of Broken Homes on Children]. *Metta : Jurnal Ilmu Multidisiplin*. 2023, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 15–23.

3. Barbera F. *et al.* The Family That Prays Together Stays Together: Toward a Process Model of Religious Value Transmission in Family Firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*. 2020, vol. 163, no. 4, pp. 661–673.
4. Barna G. *Release # 02 : Four 'Disciple-Making Practices' to Shape Children into 'Spiritual Champions' More about the book*. 2023. Available at: https://www.arizonachristian.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CRC_RSC_Release_2.pdf.
5. Barrie C.K., Bartkowski J.P., Haverda T. The digital divide among parents and their emerging adult children: Intergenerational accounts of technologically assisted family communication. *Social Sciences*. 2019, vol. 8 no. 3, pp. 1–30.
6. Blake S. *Gen Z Has a Loneliness Problem*, *www.newsweek.com*. 2024. Available at: <https://www.newsweek.com/generation-genz-loneliness-problem-mental-health-1877013> (accessed on May 27, 2024).
7. Brumett A. *Don't Underestimate the Younger Generation*, *www.renew.org*. 2022. Available at: <https://renew.org/dont-underestimate-the-younger-generation/> (accessed on July 16, 2024).
8. Burge R.P. *Gen Z and Religion in 2021*, *religioninpublic.blog*. 2022. Available at: <https://religioninpublic.blog/2022/06/15/gen-z-and-religion-in-2021/> (accessed on July 21, 2022).
9. Castle R. *Gen Z 'more spiritual' than Millennials — yet more suspicious of denominations*, *nypost.com*. 2023. Available at: <https://nypost.com/2023/05/27/why-gen-z-is-more-spiritual-and-religious-than-millennials/> (accessed on June 24, 2024).
10. CNN T. *Fatherless, Ketika Ayah "Tak Hadir" di Kehidupan Anak [Fatherless, When Father is "Not Present" in Child's Life]*, *CNN Indonesia*. 2021. Available at: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/gaya-hidup/20210331171003-277-624531/fatherless-ketika-ayah-tak-hadir-di-kehidupan-anak> (accessed on January 25, 2022).
11. Cox D. A. *Generation Z and the Future of Faith in America*, *www.americansurveycenter.org*. 2022. Available at: <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/generation-z-future-of-faith/> (accessed on September 14, 2024).
12. Deak V., Haans J., Olsin O., Siwalete R. Membangun Keluarga Kristen yang Bahagia dan Sehat. *Formosa Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*. 2022, vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 1303–1310.
13. Epafra L. *et al.* Transitional Religiosity: The Religion of Generation Z. *Proceedings of the 3rd International Symposium on Religious Life*. 2023, pp. 247–256.
14. Fadhli A. Melalaikan Tanggung Jawab Sebagai Bentuk Ingkarnya Laki-Laki Merawat Komitmen Perkawinan.[Neglecting Responsibilities as a Form of Men's Refusal to Maintain Marital Commitments]. *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Sosial Dan Eksakta*. 2022, vol.1, no.1, pp. 35–46.
15. Farel Yosua Sualang. Keterikatan Pengambilan Keputusan, Konsistensi Sifat-Sifat Bijak dan Evaluasi Karakter dalam Pembentukan Integritas (Paralelisme Amsal 28:6; 19:1). *Diagnosis*. 2023, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 22–37.
16. Glover V. and Capron, L. Prenatal parenting. *Current Opinion in Psychology*. 2017, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 66–70.
17. Gultom J.M.P., Sophia S. Kedudukan Bapa Rohani dalam Penggembalaan Generasi Digital menurut 1 Korintus 4:14–21 [The Position of the Spiritual Father in Shepherding the Digital Generation according to 1 Corinthians 4:14–21]. *Gracia Deo*. 2022, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 291–314.
18. Jacobs G., Kiniger-Passigli D., Chikvaidze D. Global Leadership in the 21 st Century. *Cadmus*. 2019, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 10–34.
19. Jang Y.A. Effects of Paternal Parenting Behaviors, Child-Rearing Involvement, and Father-Child Communication Perceived by Children on Their Leadership. *The Korean Journal of Community Living Science*. 2015, vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 617–632.
20. Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom. Misi Gereja dalam Pengembangan Praktek Penginjilan Pribadi dan Pemuridan Generasi Z [Church Mission in the Development of Personal Evangelism Practices and Generation Z Discipleship]. *Manna Rafflesia*. 2022, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 358–377.
21. Kennedy B. *Cultivating Faith in the Lost Generation Z*, *shorelineknox.com*. 2020. Available at: <https://www.shorelineknox.com/blog/2020/1/21/cultivating-faith-in-the-lost-generation-z> (accessed on July 9, 2022).
22. Kristyowati Y. Generasi 'Z' Dan Strategi Melayaninya [Generation 'Z' and Strategies to Serve It]. *Ambassadors: Journal of Theology and Christian Education*. 2021, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 23–34.
23. Kyle R., Patrick, M. *5 Reasons Gen Z Is Primed for Spiritual Renewal*, *www.thegospelcoalition.org*. 2023. Available at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/gen-z-primed-spiritual-renewal/> (accessed on July 16, 2024).
24. Landrum T. *Gen Z is spiritually illiterate and abandoning church: How did we get here?*, *www.kentuckytoday.com*. 2019. Available at: https://www.kentuckytoday.com/baptist-life/gen-z-is-spiritually-illiterate-and-abandoning-church-how-did-we-get-here/article_ea994828-6cd4-5fbd-8352-496ef3eb9c8e.html (accessed on July 8, 2022).
25. Lazic M. *13 Saddening Children of Divorce Statistics for 2022*, *legaljobs.io*. 2023. Available at: <https://legaljobs.io/blog/children-of-divorce-statistics> (accessed on August 20, 2024).

26. Lucchetti G., HG K., ALG L. Spirituality, Religiousness, and Mental Health: A Review of the Current Scientific Evidence. *World Journal Clinic Cases*. 2021, vol. 9, no. 26, pp. 7620–7631.
27. Marschall A. *Understanding Intergenerational Trauma and Its Effects on Mental Health*, www.verywellmind.com. 2024. Available at: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-intergenerational-trauma-5211898> (accessed on August 20, 2024).
28. Maya. *Generation Z Statistics*, truelist.co. 2022. Available at: <https://truelist.co/blog/generation-z-statistics/#:~:text=Generation Z has become about,40%25 of the nation's consumers.> (accessed on August 4, 2022).
29. Moore K. et al. Children's spiritual lives: The development of a children's spirituality measure. *Religions*. 2016, vol. 7, no. 8, pp. 1–11.
30. Parker K., Igielnik R. *On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Gen Z So Far*, www.pewresearch.org. 2020. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/> (accessed on July 18, 2022).
31. Perangin-Angin Y.H., Yenirenowati T. A. Kajian Teologis Peran Kepala Keluarga Kristen [Theological Study of the Role of the Head of the Christian Family]. *Shamayim*. 2021, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 157–173.
32. Rahmawati M., Ruslan A., Bandarsyah D. The Era of Society 5.0 as the unification of humans and technology: A literature review on materialism and existentialism. *Jurnal Sosiologi Dialektika*. 2021, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 151–162.
33. Rumbiak A.K. Teologi Ibadah dan Spiritualitas Generasi Milenial [Theology of Worship and Spirituality of the Millennial Generation]. *Amreta*. 2020, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 64–100.
34. Saputra A. Pendidikan Anak Pada Usia Dini [Early Childhood Education]. *At-Ta'dib: Jurnal Ilmiah Prodi Pendidikan Agama Islam*. 2019, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 192–209.
35. Sari R.A.P., Yuliana N. Pola Komunikasi Orang Tua pada Anak Generasi Z terhadap Kesehatan Mental Anak [Parental Communication Patterns with Generation Z Children on Children's Mental Health]. *Triwikrama*. 2023, vol. 2, no. 9, pp. 41–50.
36. Sulaiman M.R., Efendi D.A. *Mengenal Tipe Suami Fatherless, Apa Dampaknya Bagi Tumbuh Kembang Anak? [Getting to Know the Type of Fatherless Husband, What Impact Does it Have on Children's Growth and Development?]*, suara.com. 2020. Available at: <https://www.suara.com/health/2020/09/10/182157/mengenal-tipe-suami-fatherless-apa-dampaknya-bagi-tumbuh-kembang-anak?page=all> (accessed on January 25, 2022).
37. Team Father.com. *Contributors to Fatherlessness*, fathers.com. 2018. Available at: <https://fathers.com/statistics-and-research/contributors-to-fatherlessness/> (accessed on January 25, 2022).
38. Team Sojo.net. *Is Gen Z the Faithless Generation?*, sojo.net. 2024. Available at: <https://sojo.net/articles/sponsored/1-million-leaving-church-every-year-gen-z-faithless-generation> (accessed on July 17, 2024).
39. Team Thriving Center of Psych. *Do Not: Gen Z, Millennials Shifting Expectations About Marriage In 2023*, [www.thrivingcenterofpsych.com](http://thrivingcenterofpsych.com). 2023. Available at: <https://thrivingcenterofpsych.com/blog/millennials-gen-z-marriage-expectations-statistics/> (accessed on July 16, 2024).
40. Trevin Wax. *Rumblings of Revival Among Gen Z?*, www.thegospelcoalition.org. 2024. Available at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/rumblings-revival-gen-z/> (accessed on July 16, 2024).
41. Vandiano V. Signifikansi Konsep Christian Nurture Menurut Horace Bushnell Bagi Keluarga Kristen [The Significance of the Concept of Christian Nurture According to Horace Bushnell for Christian Families]. *Real Didache: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen*. 2020, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 39–45.
42. Warwer F. Pembelajaran Berbasis Masalah: Diajukan Sebagai Model Kajian Alkitab dalam Ibadah Keluarga [Problem Based Learning: Proposed as a Model for Bible Study in Family Worship]. *Diagesis*. 2023, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 59–74.
43. Yuen K.M. A Study on How Newlyweds Handle the Difference with Parents on Wedding Arrangements and Its Implication for Services in Hong Kong. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2018, vol. 12, no.1, pp. 183–191.
44. Zega Y.K. Pendidikan Agama Kristen dalam Keluarga : Upaya Membangun Spiritualitas Remaja Generasi Z [Christian Religious Education in the Family: Efforts to Build Spirituality in Generation Z Adolescents]. *Jurnal Luxnos*. 2021, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 105–116.

Submitted for publication: February 12, 2025.

Accepted for publication: March 11, 2025.

Published: September 30, 2025.