



A Depiction of Gen Z's Respect for Nature

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Abstract. Generation Z, a digital generation with a unique view of nature, also has a tolerance for differences. This research aims to describe the perceptions and attitudes of Generation Z towards nature in today's digital age. The research method was an online survey through WhatsApp polling and participant observation of religious students in Samarinda. Research shows that while Generation Z tends to be digitally connected and more focused on technology, they also show a high awareness of environmental issues. They see nature as an essential resource and have engaged in concrete ecological conservation activities such as greening around the environment, where they study and collect crude oil to support the Samarinda government's acquisition of selected garbage sites. Friendship factors, family and habitat environments, immediate experiences with nature, and social media influence play an essential role in shaping their view of nature. Because of Generation Z's high technology adoption rate, their involvement in environmental conservation efforts is more done through online campaigns. The study concludes that Generation Z, a technology generation, still has great potential to be an agent of change in environmental conservation by leveraging technology. Therefore, the green curriculum in formal education is always available so that the green mindset will continue to live within Generation Z with their responsibility to nature.

Keywords: Gen Z, Nature, Respect.

1 Introduction

Facts show that development from the New Order to the Reform Order increased the rate of deforestation in Indonesia. According to Forest Watch Indonesia (2018), this condition places Indonesia as the sixth most significant contributor to carbon gas emissions in the world[1]. This is in line with the results of searches carried out via Google Trend, which shows that in the last five years, searches for the keywords global warming and global warming for all categories of web searches in Indonesia still show a trend that tends to increase, although the frequency in 2021 is lower than in 2020 because it turns out that the topics that are more frequently searched for are environmental damage and environmental degradation[2]. This refers to research by

Sharma and Rani (2020), which states that everyone has felt the negative impact of environmental damage [3]Economic growth in Indonesia causes environmental degradation, eventually making humans aware that the environment and nature must be maintained sustainably for the economic needs of future generations.[4].

From here, the question arises: who is responsible for preserving the environment? In literacy activities about Generation Z in Generation Z at SMK Negeri 1 Cermee, students answered that local communities were accountable for water pollution. Every individual should be aware of the need not to pollute the waters. Building understanding and changing one's perception about something, in this case, environmental sustainability, apparently requires time and actual action[5]. Because concern for the environment is not a single issue, its sustainability is a shared responsibility, including the younger generation in generations Y and Z. Research by Pauw and Van Pategem (2010) states that the younger generation tends to care more about the quality of the environment than their parents, and in addition According to Wesley (2011), the younger generation is also willing to make economic sacrifices for a better environment[6]. The study of Jung et al. (2020); and Sabherwal et al. (2021) found many young people who care about climate change and the environment, such as Greta Thunberg, Delaney Reynolds, Felix Finkbeiner, Aeshnina, Melati Wijsen, and Isabel Wijsen [7]. This means that Generation Y and Generation Z receive a lot of attention in various ways regarding their behavior and thought patterns [8]. In this study, Generation Z's perceptions and attitudes towards nature will be examined. As a generation that is native to the digital era, living online [9] and is termed with kids jaman now [10] with the internet being a basic need [11], [12]Generation Z is faced with many global issues, such as economic recession, same-sex marriage, marijuana addiction, terrorism, gun violence, and global warming. [13]. Research in 2021 states that as the generation that supports the future, generation Z does not understand the importance of protecting the environment or resources to be sustainable [14]. Does this also happen to Generation Z in East Kalimantan, especially students in religious studies programs? Generation Z plays an increasingly important role in climate change communication because they will face the reality of climate change[15].

With the current development of the National Capital Region (IKN) of the Archipelago in East Kalimantan, there will be many changes and impacts on various aspects, namely the economy, politics and environment. Even though we know that East Kalimantan is an area whole of biodiversity, one of which is the Mahakam River, the pollution of which is not recognized by the community[16]Meanwhile, the transfer of IKN in North Penajam Paser and Kutai Kartanegara is an area with many large peatlands, which, as a result of development, could threaten peatland protection.[17]. Concerns about land clearing in building the new capital city are not excessive because Greenpeace data from 2015 to 2019 alone found many hotspots for land and forest fires in East Kalimantan.[18].

2 Literature Review

2.1 Environmental Communication

Studies on environmental communication examine the relationship between communication and human-nature relations. This study's basic premise states that how humans communicate greatly influences their perception of life on earth. According to Littlejohn & Foss (2009), this perception shapes the way individuals define their relationship with nature[19]. Meanwhile, according to Oepen (1996), environmental communication is a plan and strategy through communication processes and media products to support the effectiveness of policy-making, public participation and environmental implementation. In Oepen's understanding, it can be understood that environmental communication is an integrated component of policy because environmental communication is needed to communicate environmental sustainability through appropriate environmental communication strategies and can build public and industry awareness and concern for the environment. In other words, ecological communication, according to Cox (2010), can be used to create understanding regarding environmental problems[20].

Strategic and effective environmental communication is a complete process that can increase public awareness about environmental issues and mobilize society to be actively involved in realizing concrete and sustainable social change. Social media and large-scale and massive social-environmental activism networks play a role in gathering attention and support. According to Pezullo and Cox (2018), environmental communication functions to define and determine ecological problems or issues that are being faced through verbal and non-verbal interactions, as well as deciding what and how actions should be taken[21]. In short, environmental communication is the exchange of environmental information, knowledge and even wisdom which leads to mutual understanding between the parties[22].

2.2 Talcott Parsons Social Action

According to Weber, individual action is a rational social action. Actions carried out by individuals due to a stimulus are mechanical actions, while behavior is a mental process that is active and creative[23]. Talcott Parsons' social action is a development of Max Weber's theory of action. The social system, cultural system, and personality system of each individual influence individual and group actions. Social actions are holistic but also individualistic[24].

3 Research Method

The approach in this research is descriptive qualitative. The aim of qualitative research, according to Kriyantono (2014), is to explain a phenomenon in as much depth as possible by collecting in-depth data[25]. This online research used WhatsApp polls of 53 Islamic Communications and Broadcasting religious students regarding their attitudes toward animals. Participant observations were carried out when collecting

used cooking oil and planting tree seedlings. Meanwhile, interviews were used to make smokeless waste-burning stoves for Da'wah Management students and collect plastic waste bottles in waste banks by Al-Quran and Tafsir Science students. Apart from documentation obtained from previous research [26] related to the natural actions of religious students in Samarinda who use social media more to translate their environmentally friendly ideas and mindsets to preserve the environment and also use other references. The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis which, according to Holloway & Todres (2003) is a generic skill for most qualitative analysis methods where thematic analysis in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) can explain the extent to which a phenomenon occurs through the researcher's eyes[27].

4 Results and Discussion

Environmental management is one of the targets of sustainable development [28] as in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a global commitment based on six basic principles, namely people, planet or earth, prosperity, peace, justice and cooperation, based on a balance of economic, social and environmental dimensions[29]. This means that humans play an essential role in maintaining and protecting the planet called Earth, where humans live and reside as assigned in the holy book Al-Quran, not destroying it[30].

Several things were found in a study on the perceptions and attitudes of religious studies program students in Samarinda who are Generation Z in protecting nature from the WhatsApp poll, which asked about their interactions and how they treated the animals. They could see that 43 students shared water with their pets when drinking water was in short supply. Meanwhile, 9 students decided to drink it themselves. Only one student chose to give his drinking water to his pet. Participant observations were carried out on the same informants who filled out WhatsApp polls when they collected used cooking oil, planted tree seedlings, and collected used plastic bottle waste to donate to plastic banks. In-depth interviews were conducted with a team of three students making smokeless waste-burning stoves even though they had not made it perfectly yet. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with two students for the team initiating the segregated plastic waste bins that the Indonesian plastic bank donated. This is in line with what Susila Wibawa (2019) said: that the responsibility for environmental protection and management is not solely the responsibility of the government or state alone, but community participation is essential in maintaining and monitoring the environment so that it can be better and healthier[31].

Different from students in Depok[32] who know about climate change but don't find out through gadgets with their networks and quotas because they think there is no strong attraction for this information even though the impact is there and real around us. Religious studies program students have begun to implement the duties of the caliphate as stated in their holy book. The values in Islam are pioneers in environmental management as a manifestation of love for the universe and protecting the environment[33]. They also have an ecological commitment, such as the Vishu Thaineetham initiative in planting trees [34] also, the belief that there is a way out of environmental problems that are experiencing damage, as believed by 69% of the

young generation in Germany, young people in Sweden and America[35] as well as Generation Z in Colombia, Mexico and Brazil[36].

Even though in their actions, they still do it partially. Each study program has not collaborated in action but has taken action separately. This means that collaborating in groups such as the Muslim Green Generation and the like becomes more substantial and more organized because it turns out that agency influences how their voices are heard in official forums, as experienced by Youth NGOs[37]. But at least they are at the stage of realizing that their generation is the generation most affected by climate change and also the generation that will be tasked with dealing with the impacts of climate change[38], [39].

5 Conclusion

Religious studies program students who are generation Z, native citizens of the digital era, still have great potential to become agents of change in environmental conservation by utilizing technology. Therefore, the green curriculum outlined in courses that are pro-environmental sustainability in formal education is still considered important, so its availability must continue even though there is a general review of the curriculum created and implemented by the study program. The goal is for the green mindset to continue to live in Generation Z.

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