



The Phenomenon of “Jam Koma” Among Generation Z Students: A Phenomenological Study of Digital Fatigue in Jakarta

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Abstract. Generation Z has recently garnered significant public attention, and numerous studies have explored Generation Z from various perspectives, including their performance, attitudes, behavior, and the psychology they experience. This research looks at an interesting phenomenon that occurs in Generation Z in Indonesia, namely “jam koma,” which is defined as a person's physical and mental condition that suddenly loses focus and has a blank mind while doing activities. This research aims to explore the experiences of Generation Z, particularly in dealing with the phenomenon of “jam koma” during their daily activities. The research subjects were Budi Luhur University students who fit the criteria for being categorized as Generation Z. This type of research is interpretive and qualitative, which seeks to understand the social actions of individuals from their perspective, aiming to comprehend aspects of human activity. The research method uses descriptive phenomenology. The findings of this research are that “jam koma” occurs due to physical and mental fatigue, too much time using social media, lack of rest, and an unbalanced lifestyle. The impacts include decreased ability to work, feelings of guilt, stress, and confusion. To overcome this, informants took steps such as resting, exercising, enjoying leisure time, and improving their lifestyle. The research findings show how important self-awareness and self-regulation are to staying mentally healthy and focused in the fast-paced digital age. It is hoped that this study can serve as an initial basis for further research on the mental health of members of the digital generation.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Mental health, Jam Koma, Generation Z

1 Introduction

Today we live in a digital age where information flows continuously, the consequence of this situation is demanding fast-paced work. Currently and in the next few years, the productive age of workers is generation Z (hereinafter Gen Z). The flood of information, social pressure, academic demands, and work can cause physical and mental fatigue. One of the symptoms of this disease among Gen Z in Indonesia is called “Jam Koma”, where a person suddenly loses focus during activities, experiencing a blank mind.

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N. A. Ishak et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Cross- Disciplinary Academic Research 2025 - Track 3 Advances in Humanities, Education, Teaching, Learning and Arts (ICAR-T3 2025)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 1006,

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6239-662-3_22

“Jam Koma” are often associated with cognitive fatigue or brain fatigue. Cognitive is all brain functions that make a person able to carry out activities or daily life well. According to doctor Lahargo (2024) “In some circumstances this cognitive function can be impaired, for example physical fatigue, irregular diet, lack of sleep, stress, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, dementia, and others,” (Oktaviani, 2023).

According to Dr. Dharmawan Ardi Purnama, cognitive fatigue occurs when the brain's ability to concentrate decreases drastically, causing the mind to go blank. In addition to cognitive fatigue, there is also the term mental fatigue, which involves aspects of a person's emotions, soul, thoughts, and behavior (kompas.com). This cognitive fatigue condition is in line with the Cognitive Load Theory developed by John Sweller (1988), this theory emphasizes that human working memory capacity is limited and can be burdened when they receive too much information at once. If the human brain is forced to complete very complicated tasks with a high level of frequency, it will inevitably get tired. The demands of digital multitasking for Gen Z can decrease mental work and cause “Jam Koma”.

Social circles are also affected by the “Jam Koma”. Individuals trapped in the shackles of mental fatigue tend to withdraw, building thick walls around themselves. Hindered social interactions further exacerbate isolation, making them feel alien in a crowd. Like a battery that is constantly forced to work without rest, their brain eventually runs out of power. The ‘empty’ sensation and difficulty concentrating that accompanies ‘coma hours’ is a reflection of the psychological burden faced by them.

Generation Z are people born between 1994-1997 and 2000-2012 (Dabija & Lung, 2019 in Razali & Olifia 2023: 51) This generation is the first generation to grow up with access to the internet and digital technology which greatly affects the way they interact with their surroundings. Generation Z, who have grown up in the fast-paced digital age, experience “Jam koma” with a unique intensity. Immersed in a never-ending sea of information and demands, their brains are like machines forced to go the extra mile. The need to always be online and responsive to notifications that come and go creates a kind of deep mental fatigue, as if their brains are drowning in an endless digital maze.

The digital lifestyle that has become Generation Z's identity has created a modern paradox: the more connected they are, the more isolated they feel. The “Jam koma” is a manifestation of deep soul fatigue, a silent cry from a generation that is searching for balance amidst the hustle and bustle of the times. This phenomenon invites us to reflect on the meaning of “being human” in the digital age. The “Jam koma” also has the potential to disrupt Generation Z's mental health. The inability of the brain to rest and recover optimally can trigger symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. Feelings of frustration due to difficulty in concentrating and high demands from the surrounding environment can further worsen their mental health conditions.

The impact of “Jam Koma” also extends to social relationships. Individuals who frequently experience “Jam Koma” tend to find it more difficult to establish quality interactions with others. The inability to focus on conversations, understand the emotions of others, and provide appropriate responses can hinder the formation of healthy and meaningful relationships.

In order to support and strengthen the discussion in this study, it is necessary to conduct a literature review of previous research related to Gen Z behaviour and related to “Jam Koma” or cognitive fatigue.

Research that examines the positive and negative impacts of technology and social media use on Generation Z, as well as strategies to maintain mental health in the digital era compiled by Syari Fitrah Rayaginansih, Siti Cahyati, Irfan Fariza (2024). Literature study was used to collect and analyse information from various sources. This research highlights the importance of understanding the impact of technology on Generation Z's mental health and developing strategies to maintain a balanced life in the digital era. The results show that overuse of technology and social media can increase anxiety, stress, cyberbullying and other mental health issues.

Another study raised the theme of Digital Burnout and Mental Health: Evaluating Interventions in Gen Z Populations compiled by Mudasir Ashraf (2024). Highlighting the widespread phenomenon of digital burnout among Gen Z. using quantitative and qualitative mixed methods to produce maximum data. The research findings show that techniques such as mindfulness sessions and even short digital detoxes tend to break down the symptoms of burnout and provide a good boost to overall health. The research also shows that mental health support specifically tailored to the unique challenges faced by Gen Z in a relentlessly digital world is key.

Other studies have examined cognitive fatigue in relation to the well-being and academic performance of university students (Smith, 2018). The results of the study show that mental fatigue is also associated with poorer academic performance. These findings confirm results from laboratories, operational environments, and workplaces showing that fatigue can lead to decreased performance. This literature review discusses mental fatigue associated with the academic performance of university students, but none of them are related to the concept of “Jam Koma” and do not make it the subject of research. This study specifically aims to explore the passive and unproductive conditions of Generation Z, known as “Jam Koma”.

Previous studies have not explored the subjective experiences of individuals related to “Jam Koma”. This study uses a phenomenological approach that will reveal the background, and meaning of the phenomenon of “Jam Koma” by Gen Z individuals. whereby phenomenological research is theoretically based on the premise that social reality needs to be understood from the perspective of individuals who experience it directly in order to understand the deepest meaning of an individual's life experience of a particular phenomenon (Aflah&Murhayati, 2025).

Based on the research background described above, the questions in this study are: How do Generation Z students experience the phenomenon of ‘Jam Koma’ in their daily activities? The objectives of this study are to explore the experiences of Generation Z students in dealing with ‘Jam Koma’ in their daily activities.

The results of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding and awareness of the importance of maintaining mental health and staying focused amid the demands of digitalization, and also become an initial reference for further research on the phenomenon of “coma hours” and other generation Z mental issues.

2 Methodology

This type of research is interpretive qualitative, which is research that seeks to understand the social actions of individuals who aim to understand aspects of human activity from their perspective. The research method uses descriptive phenomenology, which is the purpose of phenomenology: a description of the phenomenon, and not to explain the phenomenon. Phenomena in any aspect, such as emotions, thoughts, and human actions that occur as they are (Sudarsyah, 2013).

Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy that focuses on understanding how individuals experience the world and how they interpret these experiences. This approach is used to explore and understand the meaning of the subjective experiences of Generation Z students in dealing with the “Jam Koma” phenomenon.

The subjects of this research are students of Budi Luhur University who fall into the Gen Z category, namely students born in 1997-2012. who have experienced the condition of “Jam Koma”. The informant selection technique was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, with the following criteria: Active students (semester 3 and above) who have experienced a sudden loss of focus during activities, and are willing to be interviewed in depth. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation (data has been repeated, and no new information has emerged).

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with semi-structured guidelines and non-participatory observation of informants' expressions and behaviors when recounting their experiences.

There are at least four stages in phenomenological research data analysis

1. Bracketing, the process of identifying the phenomenon or symptom being studied
2. Intuiting, the process whereby researchers are open to the meanings associated with the phenomenon by those who have experienced it, thereby producing a general understanding of the phenomenon being studied.
3. Analysing, a process that involves other processes including coding, categorisation and understanding the meaning of the phenomenon.
4. Describing, at this stage, the researcher comes to understand and define the phenomenon being studied or examined. (Hans, 2022)

3 Results and Discussion

“Jam koma” is a colloquial term used among Indonesian Gen Z to describe a sudden and brief state of mental blankness or cognitive shutdown, often experienced in the middle of an activity. It is characterized by a temporary loss of focus, a sense of detachment from the present moment, and in some cases, forgetting what one was just doing or thinking.

Although the term literally translates to "coma clock" or "coma hour" in English, it is not related to any medical coma. Rather, it metaphorically represents a time when the

mind unexpectedly "goes offline" (similar to a system freeze) often triggered by overstimulation, fatigue, or multitasking in digital and academic environments.

This phenomenon has become a distinctive cultural expression among Gen Z in Indonesia, reflecting their lived experiences in high-pressure, hyper-connected routines.

3.1 Data Analysis

Based on the results of interviews, obtained from informants conducted separately from different times and locations, researchers created categories such as, understanding of the term "jam koma", symptoms and triggers of "jam koma" conditions, impacts and strategies to overcome "jam koma", perceptions and interpretations of individuals as informants.

3.2 Understanding the Concept of "Jam Koma"

Cognitive Disruption

All informants described jam koma as a condition marked by mental blankness, cognitive freezing, and an inability to sustain focus. This shared perception highlights the centrality of disrupted cognitive function in defining the phenomenon. One participant explained, *"I once suddenly went blank, I felt that my brain was not functioning, suddenly I was silent"* (Informant 1). Such accounts illustrate an acute interruption of thought processes, suggesting a momentary collapse of executive functioning.

Loss of Focus and Productivity

Several participants emphasized the experience as equivalent to a sudden and involuntary loss of focus. As noted by Informants 2 and 4, *"Jam koma is the same as losing focus... I very often feel a loss of focus during activities."* This framing points to perceived productivity loss, reinforcing the interpretation that jam koma is not merely a lapse in attention but a disruption that carries tangible consequences for task completion.

Coping through Disengagement

For some, the experience was accompanied by behavioral responses such as distraction or withdrawal. Informant 3 reflected, *"I often feel a sudden loss of focus. While doing something, suddenly my brain freezes, I can't think, I just want to scroll through my phone or even daydream blankly."* This suggests that jam koma may be intertwined with maladaptive coping strategies, where digital media use or passive disengagement temporarily substitutes for cognitive effort.

Taken together, these narratives underscore that jam koma is not only a subjective experience of blankness but also a phenomenon with broader implications for concentration, productivity, and behavioral regulation.

3.3 Symptoms of the “Jam Koma” Condition

Cognitive Blankness and Processing Failure

Informants consistently described jam koma as a disruption of mental activity characterized by a blank mind and the inability to process information. One participant explained, “*What I feel is that my mind is blank and I’m very unfocused. Sometimes I also feel anxious and emotional*” (Informant 2). This highlights not only a cognitive standstill but also the emotional distress that may accompany it, suggesting an overlap between cognitive fatigue and affective instability.

Autopilot State and Detachment

A prominent symptom mentioned by participants was the sense of functioning on “autopilot.” Informant 3 described the experience as, “*When I experience it, it feels like I’m in auto-pilot mode. My body is sitting but not doing anything. My mind is blank, my eyes are looking at the screen but I don’t know what to type. My emotions are also flat, like I have no motivation. I’m not sad, but I’m also not happy. I’m just blank.*” Such accounts indicate a state of dissociation from ongoing tasks, where individuals remain physically present but are psychologically disengaged.

Emotional Neutrality and Variability

While some informants reported anxiety or emotional flatness, others emphasized that jam koma did not significantly affect their emotions. For instance, Informants 1 and 4 stated, “*When I’m in the ‘jam koma’, I mostly just daydream, so my mind is blank. It doesn’t affect my body or emotions.*” This variation suggests that the emotional dimension of jam koma may differ across individuals, possibly influenced by coping styles, task demands, or baseline emotional regulation. These findings indicate that jam koma manifests as a temporary disturbance of consciousness and attentional control, with diverse emotional correlates. Such symptoms are particularly relevant for schools and universities, where they may hinder learning and academic performance, as well as for mental health practitioners seeking to design interventions that address attention fatigue and emotional regulation in the digital era.

3.4 Triggers for “Jam Koma”

Physical and Mental Fatigue

Several informants identified fatigue as a primary trigger of jam koma. Informant 2 stated, “*In my opinion, it is due to physical fatigue or possibly mental fatigue.*” Such accounts highlight the close association between exhaustion and the onset of attentional lapses, suggesting that depleted energy resources significantly impair cognitive functioning.

Boredom and Digital Distraction

Boredom, combined with constant exposure to digital notifications, was also reported as a major contributing factor. Informants 3 and 4 explained, *“Usually it’s a combination of being tired, bored, and distracted by the phone. Especially if there are lots of group notifications that aren’t important, it immediately breaks your focus... In my opinion, the main factor for losing focus is boredom and fatigue.”* These descriptions underscore how external stimuli, particularly from gadgets and social media, can accelerate the collapse of focus, reinforcing the role of digital environments in shaping attentional stability.

Biological and Lifestyle Factors

In addition to psychological triggers, some informants emphasized biological aspects such as dehydration, lack of rest, and insufficient oxygen intake. As one participant explained, *“Sometimes when we’re oxygen-deprived or dehydrated, our brains slow down. If we lack oxygen, our brain can’t function fully. Maybe in my case, it’s a combination of both or just one of them”* (Informant 1). This perspective points to the interplay between physiological states and cognitive performance, indicating that jam koma is not solely a psychological condition but also influenced by lifestyle and biological health factors. The triggers of jam koma reflect a multidimensional interaction between fatigue, digital distraction, and physiological needs. Recognizing these triggers has practical implications: in schools and universities, adjustments to learning schedules and reduced digital overload could help mitigate focus decline, while in mental health interventions, addressing both behavioral and lifestyle factors may provide more holistic strategies for managing attention fatigue.

3.5 The Impact of “Jam Koma”

Perceived Loss of Time

The most dominant impact reported by participants was the sudden perception of lost time. As one informant explained, *“It’s clear, as I explained at the beginning. It feels like a loss of time because it happens suddenly, just like that, it’s gone”* (Informant 1). This illustrates how jam koma episodes disrupt temporal awareness, leaving individuals with a sense that valuable time has slipped away without purposeful activity.

Task Disruption and Productivity Decline

Beyond the loss of time, informants described difficulties in completing tasks. Informant 3 reflected, *“The effect is clear; work gets delayed. Sometimes I even get frustrated with myself, thinking, ‘Why am I so lazy?’ There’s also a sense of guilt for wasting time. Then it gets more stressful as the deadline approaches.”* Similarly, Informant 2 stated,

“I feel lazy to continue working and sometimes get frustrated.” These accounts highlight a cycle in which disrupted focus undermines productivity, which in turn generates negative self-evaluations.

Emotional Consequences and Psychological Pressure

In addition to practical setbacks, jam koma was reported to produce emotional consequences such as frustration, disappointment, guilt, and even confusion. As Informant 4 described, *“After experiencing the jam koma, I feel confused.”* Such reactions suggest that the phenomenon not only disrupts task performance but also contributes to emotional dysregulation and psychological strain. These findings indicate that jam koma affects both productivity and emotional well-being, creating a ripple effect in which disrupted focus leads to self-criticism and heightened stress. From a practical standpoint, these impacts underscore the importance of designing interventions in schools and universities that help students manage focus and time effectively, while in mental health settings, targeted strategies can be developed to address the guilt, stress, and emotional exhaustion associated with repeated jam koma experiences.

3.6 Strategies for Overcoming “Jam Koma”

Rest and Recovery

Several participants emphasized the importance of rest as a way to counteract jam koma. Informant 3 explained, *“I usually stop first, take a break, watch funny videos, or listen to music. Sometimes I also make a small list to stay focused. If it’s really bad, I usually take a short nap; when I wake up, my mind is usually fresher.”* These strategies illustrate how temporary disengagement from tasks can serve as a reset mechanism, allowing cognitive resources to recover and focus to be restored.

Physical Activity and Hydration

Other participants highlighted the role of physical health in mitigating jam koma. Informant 2 noted, *“I usually exercise to keep my mind and body fresh.”* Similarly, Informant 1 reflected, *“When we lack hydration or oxygen, it causes a pause in the brain. So, maybe drink more water and exercise more to improve oxygen circulation.”* These perspectives emphasize the biological underpinnings of cognitive function, suggesting that maintaining adequate hydration and incorporating physical movement are practical strategies to reduce cognitive fatigue.

Sensory Stimulation and Mood Regulation

Some informants identified music as a coping strategy. Informant 4 shared, *“For me personally, the way to overcome jam koma is by listening to music.”* This indicates that sensory stimulation, particularly through auditory input, may enhance mood and re-engage attention, thereby facilitating a smoother transition out of the jam koma state.

Collectively, these findings suggest that strategies for overcoming jam koma involve a combination of rest, physical activity, biological regulation, and mood enhancement. In practice, these insights may inform schools and universities to encourage structured breaks, promote hydration and physical movement in classrooms, and normalize non-academic coping strategies such as music for maintaining focus. In mental health contexts, these strategies can be further integrated into interventions aimed at helping individuals develop personalized routines to manage attention fatigue more effectively.

3.7 Informants' Perceptions and Interpretations

The informants agreed that the phenomenon of “jam koma” does not only occur among Generation Z. However, the informants acknowledged that Generation Z is more likely to experience this phenomenon due to their high intensity of gadget use. This shows that the phenomenon of “jam koma” is not exclusive to a particular generation. Rather, a lifestyle that is more intensely tied to technology can increase the likelihood of “jam koma,” especially among Generation Z. The interpretations of Generation Z students who served as informants in this study can be categorized as follows.

Table 1. Another term for “jam koma”

Mental freeze	A state in which the brain feels “stuck,” unable to think clearly, or stops responding normally.
Blank	A blank mind, not knowing what to do
Auto pilot	Doing something unconsciously
Lose focus	Unable to concentrate properly

Source : Author, 2025

As shown in Table 1, the term “jam koma” is commonly interpreted as a form of cognitive disruption, including mental freeze, blankness, autopilot behavior, and loss of focus. This interpretation shows that the informants consciously recognize this condition as a form of consciousness disturbance and temporary cognitive decline.

“I feel like my brain isn't working, it just suddenly goes blank. My brain freezes... I just want to scroll through my phone or stare into space.”

“My emotions are flat, like I have no enthusiasm. I just go blank. Sometimes I even get annoyed with myself... getting more stressed because the deadline is getting closer.”

They realize this condition cannot be ignored; they need strategies to eliminate “jam koma,” as leaving it unaddressed will inevitably hinder performance both at school and in other activities. This awareness holds significant importance, serving as motivation to improve lifestyle habits to avoid falling into “jam koma.”

The phenomenon of “jam koma” is a term that is not yet widely known by the general public. Among Gen Z, particularly students at Budi Luhur University who

served as informants for this study, the condition in question is understood as a state of “blankness,” “mental freeze,” or “inability to focus.” In other words, although the terminology varies, they have experienced this phenomenon in their daily lives. They experience fairly consistent symptoms, such as a blank mind, inability to process information, a sense of unconsciousness or operating on autopilot, and flat emotions or even a lack of feeling. This condition indicates a temporary disruption in cognitive and emotional functions, leading to a decrease in awareness during activities.

The most commonly cited triggers for “jam koma” are physical and mental fatigue, as reported by all informants. Heavy academic workloads, distractions from gadgets, exposure to social media, and lack of rest also contribute to this condition. These findings align with research indicating that “globally, the average person in 2020 spent nearly seven hours per day using technological devices, with many people tending to make their phone the first thing they reach for in the morning and the last thing they put down at night” (Vialle et al., 2023).

In particular, an informant named Mahesa added that dehydration and lack of oxygen can also be contributing factors. The combination of these various triggers shows that “jam koma” is the result of physical tension, mental stress, and an unbalanced lifestyle. Excessive use of social media

The impacts felt are quite significant, such as wasted time, difficulties in completing tasks, and the emergence of feelings of frustration, disappointment, and self-blame.

This has raised concerns among some users about the dangers of excessive technology use, which can affect physical, psychological, and social health. To address “jam koma”, informants have implemented several adaptive strategies, focusing on self-awareness rather than resignation. To address this condition, informants reported implementing various adaptive strategies based on self-awareness and self-regulation. As presented in Table 2, these strategies include getting enough rest, engaging in physical activity, listening to music, creating to-do lists, and pursuing hobbies.

Table 2. Strategies for overcoming “jam koma”

Get enough rest/sleep
Sports
Entertainment/listening to music
Creating a to-do list
Hobby

Source : Author, 2025

These strategies are a form of awareness to recognise one's condition and restore focus independently.

4 Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight *jam koma* as more than a fleeting distraction; it represents a generational and cultural phenomenon that reflects how cognitive fatigue, digital saturation, and lifestyle factors intersect in shaping Gen Z's mental focus. Rather than framing it solely as an individual lapse, *jam koma* should be understood within the broader discourse of cognitive psychology and mental health, particularly in relation to theories of attention, executive functioning, and self-regulation. For mental health research, this phenomenon opens avenues to examine how recurring attention lapses contribute to stress, guilt, and reduced well-being, thereby informing interventions that address both cognitive and emotional resilience. For educational institutions, the findings emphasize the need to design learning environments that align with natural attention cycles, integrate proactive well-being initiatives, and cultivate strategies of self-awareness and regulation. In this way, *jam koma* serves as both a practical and theoretical entry point for understanding how contemporary challenges affect productivity, learning, and psychological health in the digital era.

5 Recommendations

Future studies on the *jam koma* phenomenon should expand beyond qualitative inquiry by incorporating quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to measure its prevalence and patterns across different age groups. Including participants from diverse educational, occupational, and socio-cultural backgrounds would also provide a more representative understanding of its triggers, symptoms, and impacts. Moreover, further research should explore in greater depth the relationship between digital media use, lifestyle factors, and the emergence of *jam koma*, given that informants consistently highlighted these as primary influences.

The practical implications of such studies are significant. For schools and universities, evidence-based insights could inform the development of learning schedules and classroom strategies that account for natural attention cycles, while for mental health practitioners, they may guide interventions targeting cognitive fatigue, emotional regulation, and healthier technology use. In this way, future research has the potential to contribute not only to academic theory but also to actionable strategies that support focus, productivity, and well-being in everyday contexts.

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