

Weaken Generation and the Gaza Lessons

News:

Nearly 10 million Gen Z in Indonesia are unemployed or known as NEET (not in employment, education and training). This fact is based on BPS data (2021-2022) where there were 9,896,019 people in August 2023, which is almost 21% of the total population with a birth range between 1997 and 2012. Indonesia is not alone, in various parts of the world also shows the NEET phenomenon in the youth is an increasing trend. If we look at the data per region, the number of NEET youth throughout the world from 2005 to 2023, the highest is the Arab world (33.28%), followed by Africa (26.11%) then Asia Pacific (21.68%) (Statista Research Department).

Comment:

This is a heavy price that the young Muslim generation must pay due to unsustainable development from the implementation of a liberal capitalist economy. This ideology has created weaken generation - precisely in the midst of technological and material progress. This characterization of NEET is truly paradoxical amidst the consumerist and escapist nature that is also inherent in Gen Z, unemployed but also very consumptive and living in a bubble of imagination. A generation who addicts to games, binge watching, asking parents for money, eating, sleeping and lying around like living corpses who have lack purpose in life.

Millions of teenagers and young people in Indonesia have been targeted to become consumers of entertainment and lifestyle industry from various global technology platforms. Much research has been conducted to observe the behaviour of this generation. For example, their gaming consumption in six ASEAN countries revealed that there are 288.5 million gamers from Gen Z in 2023, and estimated that there will be 344 million in 2027 (Niko Partners, 2023). Another example related to Gen Z behavior in the workplace is findings from Randstad Workmonitor in 2022 which revealed that as many as 41 percent of Gen Z respondents spread across Europe, Asia Pacific and America would rather be unemployed than be trapped in a job that doesn't make them happy. They don't want to sacrifice their happiness and mental health for the sake of work.

Apart from the many observations on the character of Gen Z, we cannot deny that there is a regression in the quality of life faced by Gen Z both in terms of economic, social, environmental and global political conditions. They live in a world order that continues to experience multiple crises. This is exactly what the Qur'an warns about *ma'isyatan danka*, namely the depress life, miserable, their chests are narrow because of their misguidance. **“Whoever turns away from My Reminder will certainly have a miserable life...”** [QS. Tāhā [20]: 124]

This situation is a strong reason why Gaza phenomenon nowadays is gaining a place in the hearts of young people, both in the Islamic world and the West which immersed in secularism. This can be seen from their involvement in the global pro-Palestinian movement in various countries. The resilience factor and life spirit of Gaza people – became an extraordinary attraction for the entire generation of young people in the world whom today live in mental illness, narrowness and emptiness due to secular techno-capitalism ideology.

Uniquely, technology is also the enabler for Gen Z to absorb information about Palestinian developments very quickly. They are increasingly interested in the humanitarian story of Gaza, the mental heroism of the Muslims there, there are shining pearls that the children of Gaza belonged that they want to know about, the teachings of the Islamic Aqeedah which gives life to heart of empty souls. The pearls of Aqidah that Muslims should continue to maintain and echo as fuel for global change; a major change in the world order from darkness to light, from modern ignorance to the glory of Islam. Allah Ta'ala says in Surah An-Nisa' verse 9 **“Let the guardians be as concerned for the orphans as they would if they were to die and leave their own helpless children behind. So let them be mindful of Allah and speak equitably.”**

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