

The Disorientation of Value Hierarchies among Generation Z in the Digital Age: A Max Schelerian Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the crisis of values, identity, and morality among Generation Z in the digital era through the perspective of Max Scheler's philosophy of values. The study employs a qualitative approach through a literature review of philosophical works, scholarly articles, and previous studies that discuss Generation Z, digital culture, and Max Scheler's theory of values. The findings demonstrate that digital culture encourages Generation Z to construct identity through digital recognition, reinforces the phenomenon of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), and shapes moral orientations that are increasingly influenced by the logic of virality and social validation. From the perspective of Scheler's hierarchy of values, this condition reflects the dominance of values of pleasure and vital values, while spiritual values and holy values occupy increasingly marginalized positions. As a result, a disorientation of value hierarchy emerges and influences how Generation Z understands the self, social relationships, and moral decision-making within digital spaces. This study expands the application of Max Scheler's philosophy of values in Generation Z studies and digital sociology by demonstrating the relationship between digital culture, the transformation of value orientations, and moral crises in contemporary society.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis krisis nilai, identitas, dan moralitas Generasi Z di era digital melalui perspektif filsafat nilai Max Scheler. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik studi kepustakaan terhadap berbagai karya filsafat, artikel ilmiah, dan penelitian yang membahas Generasi Z, budaya digital, serta teori nilai Max Scheler. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa budaya digital mendorong Generasi Z membangun identitas melalui pengakuan digital, memperkuat fenomena *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), serta membentuk orientasi moral yang semakin dipengaruhi oleh logika viralitas dan validasi sosial. Dalam perspektif hierarki nilai Scheler, kondisi tersebut menunjukkan dominasi nilai kenikmatan dan nilai vital yang menempatkan nilai spiritual dan nilai kesucian pada posisi yang semakin terpinggirkan. Akibatnya, terjadi disorientasi hierarki nilai yang memengaruhi cara Generasi Z memaknai diri, relasi sosial, dan keputusan moral di ruang digital. Penelitian ini memperluas penerapan filsafat nilai Max Scheler dalam kajian Generasi Z dan sosiologi digital dengan menunjukkan hubungan antara

budaya digital, transformasi orientasi nilai, dan krisis moral dalam masyarakat kontemporer.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed the way people interact, construct identities, and interpret social life. The internet and social media no longer function merely as communication tools; they have become the primary spaces for constructing social reality in contemporary society (Setia & Dilawati, 2024). In Indonesia, this transformation has occurred on a massive scale. Data from We Are Social indicate that the number of social media users in Indonesia exceeded 139 million in 2024 (Datareportal, 2024), while DataReportal reported that Indonesians spent more than seven hours per day on the internet on average in 2026 (Kemp, 2026). This level of engagement demonstrates that digital space has become an integral part of social life, particularly for Generation Z, who were born and raised in a digital environment (Dimock, 2019).

Generation Z constitutes the largest demographic group in Indonesia. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) reported that Generation Z accounts for 27.94% of Indonesia's total population, or approximately 74.93 million people (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). Demographers and generational researchers popularized the term Generation Z to refer to individuals born after Generation Y or Millennials, generally between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019; Twenge, 2017). Unlike previous generations, Generation Z represents the first generation that has grown up with the internet, social media, and digital technology since childhood. Consequently, many of their social activities, educational experiences, entertainment practices, and identity formation processes take place through intensive engagement with digital environments (Twenge, 2017).

Although digital culture offers various opportunities, it also generates increasingly complex social problems. The emergence of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), viral culture, digital conformity, the pursuit of social validation, and symbolic consumption through social media reflects a shift in value orientation among Generation Z. A survey conducted by DataIndonesia.id involving 300 Generation Z respondents found that 56% had experienced symptoms of mental health problems. On the other hand, the Indonesia Gen Z Report 2024 revealed that 51% of Generation Z respondents identified mental health as one of their primary concerns (DataIndonesia.id, 2023; Widi & Bayu, 2022). The prevalence of digital social pressures, constant connectivity demands, and the need to obtain recognition in virtual spaces indicates that the challenges faced by Generation Z extend beyond mental health issues and encompass deeper crises of identity and value orientation (Stahl & Literat, 2023).

From the perspective of digital sociology, scholars do not view technology as a neutral instrument but rather as a social structure that shapes social relations, identity, and human morality. Lupton (2017) argues that digital society produces new forms of social experience that influence how individuals understand themselves, their bodies, social relationships, and life values. These transformations indicate that digital culture carries consequences that are not only technological but also philosophical because it affects how individuals determine what they consider good, important, and valuable in social life.

Studies on Generation Z and digital culture have developed along several major trends. First, researchers have examined the formation of Generation Z identity within digital spaces. Côté (2018) demonstrated that identity crises remain a significant issue for young people in the twenty-first century. Stahl and Literat (2023) found that social media, particularly TikTok, functions as a collective space for Generation Z identity formation through self-representation and the negotiation of social meaning. Although these studies explain how digital environments shape youth identity, they provide limited discussion of the philosophical implications of identity formation for individual value orientations.

Second, scholars have investigated morality and values among Generation Z. Sajjadi et al. (2024) examined moral issues among Generation Z within the context of contemporary social change. Weber (2025) analyzed Generation Z's level of moral reasoning and found variations in moral capacity based on certain demographic factors. Azimi et al. (2022) explored shifts in the value orientations of Generations Y and Z during periods of crisis. Meanwhile, Djafarova and Foots (2022) demonstrated that ethical values influence Generation Z's consumption behavior. Although these studies address morality and values, most rely on psychological, behavioral, and consumer-oriented approaches and therefore do not examine the hierarchy of values that underlies Generation Z's actions.

Third, researchers have explored Generation Z's responses to global social change. Hernandez-Arriaza et al. (2026) showed that Generation Z demonstrates complex attitudes toward environmental issues, globalization, immigration, feminism, and capitalism. These findings indicate that Generation Z actively responds to contemporary social transformations. However, these studies emphasize social and political attitudes rather than analyzing the value sources that shape Generation Z's worldview.

Based on this literature review, a significant research gap remains. Most previous studies explain Generation Z through the perspectives of psychology, digital communication, consumer behavior, and mental health. Research that connects digital culture with value crises through a philosophical framework remains relatively limited. Yet phenomena such as *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), the pursuit of social validation, digital conformity, and identity crises fundamentally relate to shifts in value orientation that shape individual behavior. Therefore, scholars need a theoretical approach that can explain the value structures underlying Generation Z's behavior in the digital era.

This study aims to analyze the crisis of values, identity, and morality among Generation Z in the digital era through the perspective of Max Scheler's philosophy of values. Specifically, the study seeks to explain how digital culture shapes Generation Z's value orientations and how Scheler's hierarchy of values can help explain these dynamics.

This study argues that digital culture encourages Generation Z to prioritize values of pleasure and vital values, which manifest through the pursuit of popularity, social validation, digital visibility, and the satisfaction of immediate needs through social media. According to Max Scheler (1973), these values occupy lower positions within the hierarchy of values than spiritual values and holy values, which are oriented toward truth, justice, moral responsibility, and transcendent relationships. The dominance of digital culture, which emphasizes social recognition and instant gratification, leads Generation Z to interpret value primarily through pragmatic benefits and short-term emotional responses. Consequently, this tendency reduces the depth of reflection on higher spiritual and moral values. Therefore, this study seeks to demonstrate that identity crises, the phenomenon of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), and the moral vulnerability of Generation Z are not merely psychological or social issues but also reflect a disorientation of value hierarchy as explained in Max Scheler's philosophy of values.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of the phenomena of value crises, identity crises, and moral crises among Generation Z in the digital era, as represented in various studies on digital culture, social media, *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), and the social behavior of Generation Z in Indonesia. The study also employs Max Scheler's hierarchy of values as an analytical framework to understand these phenomena.

This study employs a qualitative approach (Cresswell, 2014; Djunatan et al., 2024; Ziaul Haq & Setia, 2024). The researchers selected this approach because the study aims to understand the meanings, value orientations, and moral dynamics that emerge in the lives of Generation Z in the digital era. Through a qualitative approach, the study can examine social phenomena in depth by emphasizing the interpretation of meanings and values that underlie social behavior.

The study uses both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data consist of Max Scheler's philosophical works on value theory, particularly *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values* (1973). The secondary data derive from journal articles, books, research reports, and

statistical data that discuss Generation Z, digital culture, social media, digital identity, FoMO, and youth morality.

The researchers collected data through a library research method. They gathered various sources that were relevant to the research focus and then conducted data identification, selection, classification, and documentation according to the study themes. The researchers selected the literature based on its substantive relevance, source credibility, and relationship to the concepts of values, identity, morality, and digital culture.

The researchers analyzed the data using interpretive analysis based on Max Scheler's theory of values. The analysis proceeded through several stages, including data reduction, thematic categorization, conceptual interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Subsequently, the researchers analyzed the various phenomena identified in the literature through Scheler's hierarchy of values to explain the relationship between digital culture, identity crises, and the transformation of Generation Z's value orientations in the digital era.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Max Scheler's Philosophy of Values and the Hierarchy of Values in Human Life

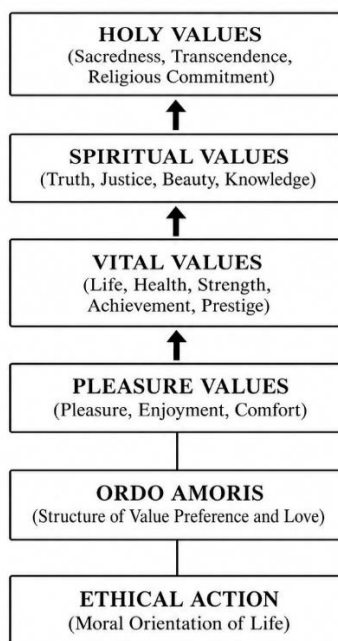
Max Scheler (1874–1928) was one of the leading figures of German phenomenology who developed the philosophy of values (axiology) and material value ethics. Unlike Immanuel Kant's formal ethics, which emphasizes reason and universal moral obligation, Scheler argued that human beings recognize values through affective experience and emotional intuition. According to Scheler, values are neither created by individuals nor by society; rather, they possess an objective existence that human beings can apprehend through experience (Scheler, 1973). Therefore, human actions are fundamentally influenced by the way individuals perceive, experience, and position values in their lives (Schutz, 1970).

In Scheler's view, values are objective and independent of human subjective interests. People do not regard an action as valuable because they desire it; instead, they regard it as valuable because the value already exists and can be recognized through affective experience. Consequently, the ethical quality of human life depends on the individual's ability to perceive and actualize values appropriately. Sosa et al. (2023) explains that the relationship between emotion and value in Scheler's thought is intentional in nature, meaning that emotions function as a medium through which human beings understand the meaning of values embedded in reality. This perspective positions emotional experience not as the opposite of rationality but as an essential foundation for the formation of moral life.

Another important concept in Scheler's philosophy is *ordo amoris*, or the order of love. Scheler (1973) explains that every individual possesses a structure of value preferences that shapes the way they love, choose, and act within social life. *Ordo amoris* reflects the arrangement of values that an individual considers important and serves as the basis of that person's moral orientation. When individuals place lower values above higher values, value disorientation occurs and may lead to a moral crisis. Owens (1968) emphasizes that ethical action in Scheler's perspective depends not only on knowledge of the good but also on the individual's ability to direct love and value preferences appropriately.

To explain the qualitative differences among values, Scheler developed the concept of a hierarchical order of values arranged in ascending levels (see Figure 1). The first level consists of values of pleasure (*pleasure values*), which relate to pleasure and displeasure. The second level consists of vital values (*vital values*), which relate to life, health, success, strength, and social prestige. The third level consists of spiritual values (*spiritual values*), which encompass truth, justice, beauty, and knowledge. The highest level consists of holy values (*holy values*), which relate to religious experience, devotion, and the relationship between human beings and the transcendent (M. Frings, 1997; Scheler, 1973). This hierarchy indicates that the quality of human life depends on the individual's ability to orient oneself toward higher values. In the context of this study, Scheler's hierarchy of values serves as an analytical framework for understanding how digital culture influences the value orientations, identity formation processes, and morality of Generation Z in the digital era.

Figure 1. Max Scheler’s Hierarchy of Values and *Ordo Amoris*



Source: Scheler (1973)

Figure 1 illustrates that Max Scheler’s philosophy of values organizes values into a hierarchical structure that ranges from values of pleasure (*pleasure values*), vital values (*vital values*), and spiritual values (*spiritual values*) to holy values (*holy values*). This hierarchy suggests that the quality of human moral life depends on the ability to prioritize higher values over values that are temporary and pragmatic in nature. Within this framework, the concept of *ordo amoris* explains that human actions emerge from a structure of value preferences that shapes individual choices, attitudes, and life orientations. Therefore, Scheler’s thought provides a relevant analytical foundation for understanding how digital culture influences the value orientations of Generation Z, particularly when the pursuit of social validation, popularity, and instant gratification has the potential to shift attention away from higher spiritual and moral values.

Digital Culture and the Identity Crisis of Generation Z in Indonesia

Generation Z represents the demographic group that interacts most intensively with digital technology in everyday life. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) reported that Generation Z accounts for 27.94% of Indonesia’s total population. DataReportal (2025) data indicate that visual-based and short-video platforms dominate social media use in Indonesia. YouTube has 143 million users, TikTok has 108 million users, and Instagram has 103 million users (see Table 1). The dominance of these platforms indicates that social interaction, particularly among younger generations, increasingly occurs through digital media that emphasize visibility, self-representation, and audience recognition. This condition reinforces the role of social media as the primary arena for identity formation among Generation Z in the digital era.

Table 1. Social Media Platform Users in Indonesia, 2025

Platform	Number of Users (Millions)	Percentage of Population (%)
YouTube	143	50.2
TikTok	108	37.9*
Instagram	103	36.3
Facebook	122	43.0
LinkedIn	33	11.6
X (Twitter)	25.2	8.8
Messenger	25.6	9.0

Source: DataReportal Indonesia, 2025.

Generation Z's digital identity develops through an ongoing process of self-representation on social media. Yoanita et al. (2022) demonstrated that Generation Z actively manages multiple Instagram accounts to present different identities according to the characteristics of their respective audiences. This practice illustrates that digital identity remains flexible and undergoes continuous negotiation based on users' social needs. Hanafi et al. (2026) explained that digital interaction plays a crucial role in the construction of Generation Z's identity because the process of self-formation occurs through symbolic exchange, social responses, and recognition from other users. In this context, people no longer understand identity as a stable entity; instead, they view it as a social project that individuals continuously produce and reproduce through digital interaction.

TikTok strengthens this process through an algorithmic system that connects individual identity to digital visibility. Stahl and Literat (2023) explained that TikTok functions as a collective space for Generation Z identity formation through the simultaneous production and consumption of content. In the Indonesian context, Azis (2025) showed that Generation Z uses TikTok as a space for negotiating cultural identity, expressing the self, and seeking social meaning. The *For You Page* (FYP) system encourages users to continuously adapt their content to audience preferences in order to gain more views, comments, and followers. As a result, identity increasingly depends on digital public responses rather than on deeper personal reflection.

The visual culture that develops on social media further reinforces this orientation. Prianti and Athique (2026) showed that Instagram has become an important space for Indonesian youth to construct identity through visual aesthetics, lifestyle, and cultural representation. Various trends, such as *aesthetic lifestyle*, digital fashion, and symbolic consumption, have emerged as part of self-branding strategies in digital spaces. This phenomenon appears in Generation Z's growing attention to visual attributes that they perceive as capable of enhancing the symbolic value of identity, such as the use of particular fashion accessories (Mayor & Santosa, 2023) and modifications of *kebaya* designs that align with the aesthetic preferences of younger generations (Russanti et al., 2026). Hidayati (2025) explained that Generation Z's digital consumption practices not only fulfill economic needs but also function as a means of expressing identity, emotions, and a sense of belonging to specific social groups.

The pursuit of social recognition through digital media has also generated the increasingly common phenomenon of *flexing* in the lives of Generation Z. This practice reflects a tendency to display symbols of luxury, economic success, and consumerist lifestyles as sources of social legitimacy (Budiman, 2023). The case of Indra Kenz, who built an image as a *crazy rich* figure through Instagram and various digital platforms, illustrates how representations of wealth can generate social influence and public trust before later being exposed as part of an illegal investment scheme (Zulfikar, 2022). A similar phenomenon appeared in the case of a TikTok user in Bogor who regularly shared content about the construction of a luxury home, private vehicles, and various other assets until the house became the target of a robbery that resulted in fatalities (Aida & Pratiwi, 2023). These incidents demonstrate that digital identity not only generates social recognition but also creates tangible social risks (Info Seputar Jombang, 2024).

Dependence on digital recognition becomes increasingly visible when people measure success by the number of followers, views, and social media interactions they receive. Reports indicated that a 24-year-old woman in Bogor experienced depression after repeatedly conducting TikTok live streams without attracting the number of viewers she expected (Aida & Pratiwi, 2023). This condition demonstrates that digital validation has become an important component of self-esteem formation among some young people. Social media no longer merely provides a space for social interaction; it has also become an arena of symbolic competition that shapes how individuals perceive their own value.

These conditions indicate that Generation Z increasingly constructs identity through mechanisms of digital recognition. Individuals gain social legitimacy through visibility, popularity, and audience responses mediated by digital platform algorithms. Consequently, identity no longer centers on personal experience and self-reflection but on the ability to maintain one's existence within a highly competitive digital environment. Under these circumstances, social media functions as a new social arena that determines how Generation Z understands themselves, builds social relationships, and obtains recognition within digital society.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and the Dominance of Pleasure Values in the Lives of Generation Z

Digital culture has created a fast-paced social environment that positions constant connectivity as a fundamental necessity of everyday life. Generation Z has grown up within a digital ecosystem that allows them to access information, trends, entertainment, and social interactions in real time. This condition has given rise to the phenomenon of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), which refers to feelings of anxiety that emerge when individuals believe they are missing experiences, information, or activities occurring within digital environments. Hinduan et al. (2020) explained that digital technology strongly influences the characteristics of Indonesian Generation Z, causing their social decisions, consumption patterns, and lifestyles to become increasingly connected to developments in social media. As a result, digital engagement no longer functions merely as a communication activity but also serves as a source of social recognition and psychological satisfaction.

FoMO encourages Generation Z to continuously follow trends that emerge on social media. TikTok has become one of the primary platforms accelerating the spread of these trends through an algorithmic system that promotes viral content to millions of users within a short period. This phenomenon appears in the emergence of various challenges that attract massive participation in pursuit of public attention. One extreme example is the *Blackout Challenge*, which claimed another victim in 2025 when a 12-year-old child in the United Kingdom died after participating in a challenge that involved holding one's breath until losing consciousness (Azizah, 2025). A similar phenomenon previously occurred in Indonesia through the *Malaikat Maut* challenge, in which a teenager in Bekasi died after being struck by a truck while creating TikTok content aimed at achieving popularity and virality (CNN Indonesia, 2021). These cases demonstrate that the desire to gain social attention in digital spaces can outweigh considerations of risk and personal safety.

The tendency to follow trends also appears in Generation Z's relationship with influencers and digital content creators. Social media has created a social environment that positions influencers as key references for lifestyle choices, consumption patterns, and definitions of success. Hidayati (2025) showed that Generation Z's digital consumption closely relates to their need for identity, emotional fulfillment, and a sense of belonging to particular social groups. Prianti and Athique (2026) also explained that Instagram's visual culture encourages young people to adjust their lifestyles and self-representations according to aesthetic standards that develop within digital spaces. In this context, people often measure the value of an activity by the level of popularity, visibility, and social acceptance it generates through digital media.

Another phenomenon that has emerged among Generation Z is the growing popularity of *healing* as a response to social and psychological pressures. A survey conducted by DataIndonesia.id found that 56% of Generation Z respondents had experienced symptoms of mental health problems (DataIndonesia.id, 2023). Among these respondents, 59.52% chose traveling or *healing* as their primary strategy for coping with stress, while 55.95% preferred pursuing hobbies and 48.21% chose to draw closer to God. These findings indicate that the pursuit of emotional comfort has become an important aspect of Generation Z's lives. However, in practice, the concept of *healing* often shifts into a form of consumer-oriented activity that social media promotes as a symbol of lifestyle and happiness.

Digital consumer culture further reinforces this tendency. Indonesia's Financial Services Authority (*Otoritas Jasa Keuangan*—OJK) reported that Generation Z and Millennials accounted for 37.17% of problematic online lending debt (see Table 2) (Gandhi, 2024). Individuals use a portion of this debt to satisfy consumer desires, follow lifestyle trends, and finance recreational activities associated with the concept of *self-healing*. This condition demonstrates that pleasure, emotional comfort, and social recognition have increasingly become primary considerations in the economic decisions of younger generations. Dwidienawati et al. (2025) also found that the well-being of Generation Z is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, including social pressure, digital environments, and evolving societal expectations.

Table 2. The Impacts of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Pleasure-Oriented Values among Generation Z

No.	Phenomenon	Statistical Data/Case	Impact
1	<i>Blackout Challenge</i> on TikTok	One 12-year-old child died in the United Kingdom (2025)	Safety risks resulting from participation in viral trends
2	<i>Malaikat Maut</i> Challenge on TikTok	One teenager in Bekasi died while creating viral content	Risk-taking behavior driven by the pursuit of digital popularity
3	Mental Health Problems	56% of Generation Z respondents reported experiencing symptoms of mental health problems	Psychological vulnerability resulting from social and digital pressures
4	<i>Healing</i> as a Coping Mechanism	59.52% of respondents chose traveling or <i>healing</i> to cope with mental stress	The pursuit of emotional comfort as a primary life priority
5	Non-Performing Online Loans	Generation Z and Millennials accounted for 37.17% of problematic online lending debt	Excessive consumption and financial pressure

Source: DataIndonesia.id, 2023; Financial Services Authority (Otoritas Jasa Keuangan—OJK), 2024; various media reports and studies analyzed in this research.

The dominance of digital culture not only shapes consumption patterns but also influences how Generation Z interprets life experiences. Continuous digital interaction encourages individuals to pursue experiences that appear attractive, viral, and capable of providing instant gratification. Participation in social media trends, dependence on digital validation, and the pursuit of experiences that enhance social visibility indicate that digital spaces have become the primary arena for shaping the value orientations of younger generations. In this context, FoMO does not merely reflect social anxiety; it also reveals a transformation of value orientation that increasingly centers on immediate experiences, social recognition, and emotional satisfaction derived from digital culture.

Morality of Generation Z in the Digital Era: Between Social Validation and Ethical Reflection

The development of social media has transformed the way Generation Z understands and expresses moral judgments in public spaces. Digital platforms no longer function solely as communication tools; they have also become arenas for producing opinions, making social judgments, and administering public punishment. In an environment characterized by rapid information flows and viral culture, the boundaries between criticism, social oversight, and digital harassment often become blurred. As a result, social media dynamics, audience responses, and algorithmic logic that prioritize engagement increasingly influence moral decisions more than deep ethical reflection.

One of the most prominent issues is the growing prevalence of cyberbullying among young people. Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs reported that 48% of Indonesian children have experienced digital bullying (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Digital Republik Indonesia, 2025). This finding is reinforced by a survey conducted by the Center for Digital Society (CfDS) involving 3,077 junior and senior high school students, which found that 45.35% of respondents had experienced cyberbullying, with social media serving as the primary setting for such incidents (Sucahyo, 2021). This phenomenon indicates that digital spaces have not yet become entirely safe social environments for young people. Bullying conducted through comments, posts, and private messages often produces serious psychological consequences because it occurs publicly and can be witnessed simultaneously by large numbers of users.

Digital shaming culture has also expanded through the phenomenon of *cancel culture*. This practice emerges when individuals or groups collectively impose social sanctions on a person whom they perceive to have committed a moral, political, or social wrongdoing. Putri et al. (2024) explained that *cancel culture* spreads rapidly through social media because these platforms enable users to construct collective opinions quickly without adequate verification processes. Roldan et al. (2024) found that

Generation Z tends to support such practices based on the belief that individuals who commit wrongdoing should face social consequences. In the Indonesian context, Yudha et al. (2025) demonstrated that cancellation culture often develops into digital outrage that intensifies polarization and social distrust. Consequently, moral judgment no longer relies primarily on dialogue and clarification but instead depends on an issue's ability to become viral and attract public support.

This phenomenon is closely related to the growth of *viral justice*. Kharisma (2025) explained that Indonesian digital society has become increasingly familiar with the principle of "no viral, no justice," which reflects the belief that a case will receive attention and resolution only if it becomes viral on social media. Jalli (2025) showed that the logic of *viral justice* has spread widely throughout Southeast Asia through TikTok and various other digital platforms. On the one hand, this phenomenon can increase public participation in monitoring social issues. On the other hand, it can also generate premature judgments, the dissemination of unverified information, and *doxing* practices that expose personal identities without consent. Under these conditions, public opinion in digital spaces often determines standards of right and wrong rather than objective ethical processes.

The culture of attention-seeking has also encouraged the emergence of various forms of content that ignore moral considerations in pursuit of high numbers of views and interactions. Practices such as social pranks, the exploitation of poverty, family conflict content, and live broadcasts that display individual suffering frequently serve as strategies for attracting public attention (Nusantara TV, 2025b). Algorithmic systems reward content that generates high engagement, thereby encouraging some users to produce increasingly sensational material. This phenomenon appears in numerous prank cases that eventually resulted in legal proceedings, including Ferdian Paleka's act of distributing food packages filled with garbage to vulnerable groups, Edo Dwi Putra's distribution of sacrificial meat packages containing garbage to community members, and Galih Loss's repeated production of prank content that harmed the public in pursuit of digital popularity (Tempo.co, 2024).

A similar tendency appears in the exploitation of poverty on social media. A survey conducted among students at Universitas Gadjah Mada found that 97% of respondents had watched TikTok live streams featuring extreme actions, such as mud bathing or displaying conditions of poverty to obtain virtual gifts from viewers (Rohmi, 2023). This phenomenon, often referred to as *online begging*, demonstrates that suffering and poverty can be commodified into digital content that generates economic profit. Under these circumstances, humanitarian values, empathy, and social responsibility frequently become subordinate to the pursuit of virality, financial gain, and public recognition in digital spaces.

A tragic case in Banyuwangi in 2025 illustrates how digital interactions can escalate into real-world violence. A young man lost his life following a conflict that began with an inappropriate comment made during a TikTok live stream hosted by the perpetrator's partner (Nusantara TV, 2025a). This incident demonstrates that digital communication does not always remain confined to virtual spaces; it can directly affect social relationships and produce serious consequences. Similar cases indicate that social media functions not only as a space for expression but also as an arena that can amplify conflict, anger, and aggressive behavior when users fail to balance their actions with adequate ethical awareness.

These conditions indicate that digital mechanisms increasingly shape the morality of Generation Z through an emphasis on visibility, popularity, and public response. Moral judgment often shifts from considerations of right and wrong toward considerations of what is viral and what is not (Awaliyah, 2024). Within a social environment that depends heavily on algorithmic systems, individuals face pressure to adjust their behavior to the expectations of digital audiences in order to maintain social recognition. As a result, ethical reflection—which requires empathy, responsibility, and deep moral consideration—often gives way to the pursuit of attention and validation within digital spaces.

Discussion

Digital culture has transformed the way Generation Z constructs identity, interprets life experiences, and makes moral decisions. These changes involve not only the development of communication technology but also the transformation of the value orientations that underlie social action. From the perspective of Max Scheler (1973), human beings do not act solely on the basis of

rationality; rather, they act according to value preferences that shape their *ordo amoris*, or order of love. This value structure determines what individuals consider important, valuable, and worthy of pursuit in life. When social media positions popularity, visibility, and social validation as indicators of success, individual value orientations tend to shift toward the lower levels of Scheler's hierarchy, particularly values of pleasure (*pleasure values*) and vital values (*vital values*).

This tendency becomes evident in the way Generation Z constructs digital identities. Various practices of self-branding, social media identity management, the pursuit of public recognition, and dependence on audience responses indicate that external mechanisms increasingly shape identity more than personal reflection. Within Scheler's framework, this condition reflects a transformation of *ordo amoris* from an orientation centered on spiritual values to an orientation centered on social acceptance and public recognition. Individuals no longer understand identity as a process of seeking authentic self-meaning; instead, they treat it as a social construction that they continuously adjust to the expectations of digital audiences. This analysis extends previous studies on Generation Z's identity crisis, which have primarily relied on developmental psychology and digital communication perspectives (Côté, 2018; Stahl & Literat, 2023). Identity issues in the digital era involve not only processes of self-representation but also transformations in the value structures that underlie identity formation.

The phenomena of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), viral culture, and the tendency to follow digital trends demonstrate the dominance of values of pleasure in the lives of Generation Z. Scheler (1973) explained that values of pleasure relate to the pursuit of experiences that generate enjoyment and the avoidance of discomfort. Within the context of digital culture, these experiences manifest through endless content consumption, participation in viral trends, constant connectivity, and the pursuit of experiences that provide immediate emotional gratification. At the same time, vital values such as prestige, social influence, and public visibility occupy increasingly important positions in the lives of young people. This condition helps explain why many digital activities focus on achieving popularity and social recognition. These findings complement the studies of Azimi et al. (2022), Djafarova and Fouts (2022), and Sajjadi et al. (2024), which identified shifts in Generation Z's value orientations but did not explain how these transformations occur within a deeper hierarchy of values.

A similar transformation also appears in the moral practices of Generation Z within digital spaces. Phenomena such as cyberbullying, *cancel culture*, *viral justice*, *doxing*, and the production of content that exploits human suffering demonstrate that the logic of virality and digital platform algorithms increasingly influences moral judgment. Under these circumstances, standards of right and wrong often shift toward standards of what is viral and what is not. This shift reflects a weakening orientation toward spiritual values, which Scheler associated with truth, justice, respect for human dignity, and ethical responsibility. When public attention becomes the primary objective, the need to secure audience engagement tends to override moral reflection. This analysis extends Weber's (2025) findings on Generation Z's moral reasoning by demonstrating that moral issues involve not only an individual's capacity to make ethical decisions but also the value structures shaped by the digital environments in which individuals interact.

These findings indicate that Generation Z's identity crisis, FoMO, and moral vulnerability ultimately stem from a disorientation of the hierarchy of values. Digital culture does not eliminate spiritual values and holy values; rather, it increasingly marginalizes them as values of pleasure and vital values receive reinforcement through social media algorithms. In Scheler's terminology, this condition reflects a transformation of *ordo amoris*, namely a shift in the arrangement of values that individuals adopt as their primary life orientation. As a result, individuals become more likely to measure success through popularity, follower counts, and public responses than through the pursuit of truth, wisdom, moral responsibility, or transcendent relationships.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study lies in its effort to expand the application of Max Scheler's philosophy of values within digital sociology. Unlike previous studies that explained Generation Z through psychological approaches, consumer behavior, digital communication, or sociopolitical attitudes (Djafarova & Fouts, 2022; Hernandez-Arriaza et al., 2026; Weber, 2025), this study demonstrates that digital culture operates through mechanisms that shape and reproduce value orientations. Therefore, FoMO, the pursuit of social validation, identity crises, and moral vulnerability should not be understood solely as matters of individual behavior. Instead, they represent manifestations

of changes in the hierarchy of values within contemporary digital society. This perspective demonstrates that Scheler's theory of value hierarchy remains relevant for explaining the dynamics of twenty-first-century social life while also providing a new interpretation of the relationship between digital technology, culture, and the moral transformation of younger generations.

4. CONCLUSION

Digital culture has influenced the way Generation Z constructs identity, interprets social experiences, and determines moral orientations in everyday life. The phenomena of *Fear of Missing Out* (FoMO), the pursuit of social validation, viral culture, and dependence on digital recognition indicate that the lives of young people are increasingly guided by values of pleasure and vital values that emphasize enjoyment, popularity, and social visibility. From the perspective of Max Scheler's philosophy of values, this condition reflects a disorientation of the hierarchy of values, whereby lower values occupy dominant positions while spiritual values and holy values become increasingly marginalized in the processes of identity formation and moral decision-making.

The primary contribution of this study lies in its effort to expand the application of Max Scheler's philosophy of values within digital sociology and Generation Z studies. This study demonstrates that identity crises, FoMO, and moral vulnerability should not be understood solely as psychological issues or forms of social behavior; rather, they represent manifestations of transformations in the structure of values within digital society. Consequently, this research offers a new conceptual perspective that explains how social media and digital algorithms shape the *ordo amoris*, or value orientation, of younger generations in the digital era.

This study has limitations because it relies on a literature review approach, which prevents the analysis from capturing the direct empirical experiences of Generation Z. Future studies can extend this research by employing fieldwork, in-depth interviews, or digital ethnography to understand how value internalization occurs in the everyday lives of Generation Z. Future research may also explore the roles of families, educational institutions, religious communities, and digital platforms in shaping the value orientations of younger generations in contemporary society.

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