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## Critical Study of Socio-Cultural Impacts of Cosmopolitanism of Generation Z and the Proper Stance for Muslim Youth

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### ABSTRACT

This article delves into the impact of cosmopolitanism on Generation Z, a cohort born into a digitally connected world. It explores how cosmopolitanism influences the perspectives and behaviors of this generation, while proposing strategies grounded in Qur'ānic principles to address these changes. The aim is to elucidate the cognitive disparities between Generation Z and their societal norms, effectively navigating their cosmopolitan shifts. Employing Generational Theory and Social Identity Theory, the article adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. Key challenges identified for this generation include identity crises, diversity and inclusivity, individualism, unrealistic expectations, and increasing dissatisfaction. By dissecting these issues, the article seeks to foster a deeper understanding of Generation Z's mindset and offer guidance on how to navigate the evolving cultural landscape.

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## 1. Introduction

In today's dynamic world, Generation Z finds itself at the intersection of tradition and modernity, grappling with a myriad of social challenges unique to its time. From navigating the complexities of identity in a globalized society to confronting the pressures of social media and technological advancement, this generation faces situations vastly different from its predecessors. In this context, understanding the social challenges, like cosmopolitanism faced by Generation Z from an Islamic perspective, offers a nuanced lens through which to analyze and address contemporary issues. Generation Z, born into a digital age characterized by rapid globalization and shifting societal norms, grapples with unique challenges that intersect with Islamic principles and values. This critical study aims to delve into the complexities of cosmopolitanism as one of these social challenges, exploring its impact on individuals, communities, and the broader society while considering the rich tapestry of Islamic teachings that offer valuable insights and solutions. By examining the intersection of Islamic values with the experiences of Generation Z, we can illuminate pathways towards greater understanding, empathy, and resilience in navigating the complexities of our modern world. Islam, as a comprehensive way of life, offers guidance on matters ranging from personal conduct to societal norms, providing a holistic approach to navigating the complexities of the modern age. By critically examining the social challenges of Generation Z from an Islamic perspective, we not only gain insights into the intersection of faith and contemporary life but also uncover opportunities for dialogue, reconciliation, and collective progress. Through this exploration, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the shared values and aspirations that unite us as members of a global community, transcending boundaries of culture, religion, and generation.

### 1-1. Generation Gap

A generation gap refers to the chasm that separates the beliefs and behaviors belonging to members of two different generations. More specifically, a generation gap can be used to describe the differences in thoughts, actions, and tastes exhibited by members of younger generations versus older ones. The differences may be in politics, values, pop culture, and other areas. While generation gaps have been prevalent throughout all periods of history, the breadth of differences of these gaps has widened in the 20th and 21st centuries (Hayes, 2022).

### 1-2. Generation X, Y and Z

A generation that has entered the realm of maturity is faced with new challenges. The generation born between 1965 and 1980 is called "Generation X." Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 is considered a Millennial, also known as Generation Y, and anyone born from 1997 onward is part of a new generation who came to be called "Generation Z," "the iGeneration," and "Home landers" (Dimock, 2019). The term "Generation Z," colloquially known as "Zoomers," is used to refer to people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The term is modeled on "boomer," a common shortening of "baby boomer," and the earlier use of "zoomer" referred to physically active baby boomers (Merriam-Webster, 2021). It is commonly referred to as "Gen Z," and "Gen Zers" for short. This generation is considered to last until 2012, and after that comes Generation Alpha (Warren, 2024). Gen Zers are the first generation never to know the world without the internet. They are the first generation to have grown up only knowing the world with the possibility of endless information and the infinite connectivity of the digital age (Katz, 2021).

Technology, in particular, the rapid evolution of how people communicate and interact, is another generation-shaping consideration. Generation X grew up as the computer revolution was taking hold, and Millennials came of age during the internet explosion. In this progression, what is unique about Generation Z is that all of the above have been part of their lives from the start. The iPhone launched in 2007; the primary means by which young Americans connected with the web were through mobile devices, Wi-Fi, and high-bandwidth cellular service. Social media, constant connectivity, and on-demand entertainment and communication are innovations introduced at their time. The implications of growing up in an "always on" technological environment are only now coming into focus. Recent research has shown dramatic shifts in youth behaviors, attitudes, and lifestyles – both positive and concerning – for those who came of age in this era (Dimock, 2019).

### **1-3. Research Methodology**

This article applies a descriptive-analytic method in order to study the impacts of cosmopolitanism on Gen Z, and suggests some solutions. In order to better analyze the issue, a combined framework of the “Generational Theory” with “Social Identity Theory” are applied as the theoretical framework of the study.

### **1-4. Generational Theory**

Generational theory is a framework suggesting that people within a particular age group, or generation, share similar values, beliefs, and behaviors due to their shared experiences during their formative years. It's often used to understand societal changes, cultural shifts, and predict future trends based on generational characteristics (Davis, 2023). One popular theory in this area is Strauss and Howe's generational theory, which identifies recurring generational archetypes throughout history.

William Strauss, a playwright, and Neil Howe, a historian and senior associate for the Global Aging Initiative's Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote a book in 1991 titled “Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069.” They argue that the development of human civilization is heavily affected by, and even mirrors, the transition between different generations of human beings. According to the so-called Strauss-Howe hypothesis, history can be roughly divided into periods of 80 to 100 years. In each period, four generations compete for power, resulting in a crisis moment followed by radical social and political reconstruction (Brinkhof, 2023).

### **1-5. Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, posits that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups. Social identity groups can give you a sense of:

- Belonging: Being part of a group can instill feelings of connection and unity, giving individuals the comforting sense that they're not alone in their experiences or perspectives.
- Purpose: Group affiliations often come with shared goals or missions, which can provide direction and purpose to individual members.
- Self-worth: Affiliating with a group can boost self-esteem as individuals derive pride from group achievements and a positive group image.
- Identity: Groups provide a framework to understand oneself in the context of a larger community. They can help define who you are based on shared attributes, values, or goals (McLeod, 2023).

### **1-6. The Concept of Cosmopolitan**

A cosmopolitan place or society is full of people from many different countries and cultures (Collins Dictionary). The word ‘cosmopolitan,’ which derives from the Greek word *kosmopolitēs* (‘citizen of the world’), has been used to claim that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, are (or can and should be) citizens in a single community (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019). The concept of cosmopolitanism is categorized in various ways:

#### **1-6-1. Moral Cosmopolitanism**

Moral cosmopolitanism is a philosophical perspective that emphasizes the idea that all human beings, regardless of nationality or other affiliations, are entitled to equal moral consideration. It posits that moral principles and obligations extend beyond local or national boundaries and apply universally to all individuals. This perspective often promotes values, such as human rights, justice, and compassion on a global scale.

#### **1-6-2. Political Cosmopolitanism**

Political cosmopolitanism is a perspective that emphasizes the importance of global citizenship and the idea that individuals have responsibilities and rights that transcend national boundaries. Political cosmopolitanism focuses on the idea of global citizenship and the need for international institutions to address global issues and promote justice and equality across borders.

According to some, political cosmopolitanism is best understood as an appendix to moral cosmopolitanism, something patently illustrated in the work of Kant (Etinson, 2017). Immanuel Kant envisioned a world governed by universal hospitality and mutual respect among all humans. His philosophy on cosmopolitanism is primarily articulated in his works, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim," and "Toward Perpetual Peace." According to Kant, all rational beings are members in a single moral community. They are analogous to citizens in the political (republican) sense in that they share the characteristics of freedom, equality, and independence, and live under their own laws (Etinson, 2017). After the Second World War, cosmopolitanism gained a new significance. The foundation of the United Nations and the affirmation of international law as in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and in the new legal category of crimes against humanity were among the events that gave cosmopolitanism a significance and reality that it previously lacked (Delanty, 2009). It should be noted that it is naïve to consider the goal of super powers behind this phenomenon to be merely of humanitarian causes.

### **1-6-3. Cultural Cosmopolitanism**

The influence of social media and the internet on people can be seen as a form of cultural cosmopolitanism. Cultural cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, emphasizes the appreciation and integration of diverse cultural perspectives, promoting tolerance and understanding. Cultural cosmopolitanism is a perspective that values and celebrates cultural diversity, exchange, and hybridity (Etinson, 2017). Cultural cosmopolitanism refers to the idea that individuals are exposed to and engage with diverse cultural influences, ideas, and perspectives from around the world. Social media and the internet facilitate the rapid dissemination of cultural content, allowing people to interact with and consume cultural products and information from different societies and communities. This exposure to diverse cultures can contribute to the development of cosmopolitan attitudes, fostering empathy, understanding, and appreciation for cultural diversity.

## **2. Cosmopolitan Culture of Gen Z**

The fast developments in IT have paved the path for actualization of cosmopolitan concepts in the world of Generation Z. They tend to be socially aware, conscious (Feger, 2024) and concerned about global issues, such as social justice, and equality. They are more likely to support brands and causes that align with their values. It seems like there's definitely a growing awareness among the new generation about issues like human rights and global inequality (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). There are young people who are using the power of online communities, networks, and learning opportunities to learn, earn money, and pursue their dreams. These young people have to create a cosmopolitan-neoliberal online persona to participate in these online communities (Bhatia, 2024). A Bengali boy, talking about being active online, says "Speak in perfect English. There is a tendency on these Facebook pages to ignore poorly articulated posts. I cannot post a photo of a crowded street outside my neighborhood. I will post a photo of me working on a computer in a nicely designed office for tax." (Bhatia, 2024). Some socio-cultural impacts of cosmopolitanism that work like a double-edged sword, are as follows:

### **2-1. Common Culture and Identity Crisis**

In the past, when someone traveled to a culturally different country, they would often experience significant cultural shock. However, the new generation differs in that when they travel to these same countries, they might observe the differences but also find many commonalities and closeness with their peers in those countries. This is because they have all grown up in a large school, called the internet and social media.

The concept of cosmopolitanism is increasingly relevant in discussions about the younger generations who are often seen as more globally minded and connected than previous cohorts. With access to information through the internet and social media, younger people are often more informed about what's happening around the world and are more inclined to advocate for change and support causes beyond their own borders. They have a relatively common set of values, likes, and dislikes.

Imam Ali elucidates the factors that foster unity among people, citing shared preferences and aversions: the same likes and dislikes. Drawing from the tale of Thamūd, he illustrates how collective

attitudes shape communal outcomes, stating, "O people, what truly unites individuals is their collective likes and dislikes. Though only one person slew Thamūd's camel, Allah punished them all for their complicity. Subsequently, as the Qur'ān (26:157) recounts, 'But they hamstrung her, whereupon they became regretful'" (Al-Sharīf Al-Raḍī, 1993, p. 319). The use of the plural pronoun, "they," instead of "he" emphasizes the societal repercussions of individual actions, underscoring the need for collective responsibility in public conduct. This hadith emphasizes the idea that human interaction extends beyond physical boundaries, forming a society defined by shared values, preferences, and lifestyles. Muslims are encouraged to prioritize this aspect of communal living over merely fulfilling religious duties.

In Shi'a jurisprudence, there's a concept called *Tajārī*, which deals with situations where someone intends to commit a forbidden act but mistakenly doesn't. For instance, if someone intends to drink wine but consumes a different liquid instead, many scholars argue that it's not a sin because the prohibited action didn't occur (Ansārī, 1994). However, in communal matters, mere intention can align someone with the actions of others, as indicated in various Hadiths, such as: "If a man had been killed in the East and a man in the West is pleased with that, he would have been complicit of the murderer in the eyes of God Almighty" (Ibn Bābawayh, 1958).

By understanding the impact of modern products and societal demands, individuals can cultivate a balanced approach to their emotions and judgments. The Prophet's prayer to perceive truth without bias, "O Allah, help me see things as they are" (Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī, 1984, p. 132), underscores the importance of maintaining mental and emotional well-being.

In a cosmopolitan context, individuals are often exposed to a wide array of cultural influences from around the world. Here, a prevalent issue that arises for individuals from non-European and underdeveloped communities is that they are gradually distancing themselves from their social traditions. They are adapting to the norms and standards of hegemonic countries. This exposure can lead to an identity crisis as people navigate the complexities of multiple cultural identities and experiences. There's a risk of cultural homogenization, where diverse cultural practices and traditions are diluted or standardized to fit into a more globalized framework. This can lead to the loss of unique cultural identities and traditions as they become overshadowed by more dominant or popular cultural trends. Although the online space is not specific to Western culture, and all societies can have their impact on it, the problem here is that the extent of this influence is not equal for player. Western societies, as the pioneers of modern civilization, have a greater influence on other societies, while Asians and Africans are more often recipients and susceptible to influence rather than exerting influence. As a result, people may feel a sense of cultural loss or erosion of their heritage. This can diminish the richness and diversity of human experience, as well as undermine the preservation of traditional knowledge, languages, and customs. Individuals may struggle to reconcile conflicting cultural norms, values, and expectations, which can create internal tension and confusion about who they are and where they belong.

This results in generation Z experiencing internal rifts and fractures within their society and place of residence, leaning more towards the virtual space. Especially since there are many individuals who develop cognitive disorders and unrealistic perceptions about the Western world, the virtual world makes them feel alienated in their traditional societies or disregard their social traditions and customs. While one should not exaggerate the influence of the virtual world, these impacts cannot be ignored.

Protecting the new generation from the negative impacts of excessive social media and cellphone use involves fostering healthy habits and open communication, encouraging balanced screen time, and promoting offline activities. Additionally, setting boundaries and leading by example can help guide individuals toward a healthier relationship with technology.

Teaching critical thinking about online content and maintaining dialogue about values and cultural heritage play important roles. From a Qur'ānic perspective, grounding oneself in spiritual principles can offer stability amid cultural diversity. Encouraging self-reflection and seeking knowledge can help navigate identity crises. The Qur'ān emphasizes the importance of self-reflection in numerous verses. For example, in Surah Al-Hashr (Qur'ān 59:18), it states: "O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do." This verse encourages believers to reflect on their actions and their

consequences, urging them to be mindful of their deeds and their accountability before Allah. As we will explain, engaging in a supportive community will also help.

The educational system should prioritize addressing this issue, recognizing the significance of understanding media influence and promoting personal and cultural well-being. Integrating lessons on social media into the school curriculum is crucial. As Imam Ali stated, “Get with the times,” (Al-Āmidī Al-Tamīmī, 1989, p. 34) underlining the importance of adapting to the present era and remaining relevant in contemporary contexts.

## **2-2. People of Diversity and Inclusivity**

Regarding the above-mentioned point that they have access to the world outside their geographical borders, generation Z values diversity and inclusivity. They are more open to different cultures, identities, and lifestyles, and they expect organizations and institutions to prioritize diversity and inclusion. The racial justice protests of 2020 in the USA were predominantly led by those in their 20s (comprising Millennials and Gen Z) and were notable for their racial diversity. For example, the author, Earl Ofari Hutchinson, who lived through racial unrest in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1990s, stated that this is what made 2020 different. “The current civil unrest looks like a little United Nations, with more whites and other ethnic groups,” he said in June 2020. “The new equation that’s there today but was absent in 1965 and 1992 is that young whites are feeling the same rage” (Jean, 2023, p. 349). Gen Z is also bringing an unprecedented amount of attention to diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation. Like many young generations before them, they have confounded older generations by using technologies (TikTok, Snapchat) and languages (enby, pansexual) their parents barely understand—not to mention tinting their hair to colors of the rainbow (Jean, 2023). Therefore, in many ways, there does appear to be an increasing sense of international awareness and concern for the well-being of individuals in other countries among the new generation. Pro-Palestinian protests that were started from university campuses in America, and escalated in April 2024 (Associated Press, 2024) can also be studied from this aspect. A highly ground-breaking event of a historical importance happened in May 2024 when the term “Digitine” was coined. It is the abbreviation of “digital guillotine,” that went viral in the wake of the 2024 Met Gala. It has been used by many social media users as a call to unfollow or block celebrities who have not been vocal about their stance on the Israel-Hamas war (Lowe, 2024). They are all the descendants of an extended family growing on WhatsApp, Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube. Hence, they have many things in common.

The advantages of this spectrum of diverse colors are cultural understanding, and interconnectedness, while the disadvantages might include loss of traditional values. In a cosmopolitan culture, people might face challenges related to identity and sense of belonging. With exposure to diverse cultures, individuals may struggle to maintain a strong sense of their own cultural identity. The rapid pace of globalization can, sometimes, result in the erosion of local traditions and values, leaving individuals feeling disconnected or lost in a sea of global influences. Additionally, cultural clashes and misunderstandings can arise in cosmopolitan environments, leading to tension and conflict among groups with different beliefs and practices.

Diversity and inclusion can be the positive outcomes of cosmopolitanism, promoting acceptance and understanding of different cultures, ideas, and identities. On the other hand, as it was mentioned, there might be identity crisis when individuals struggle to reconcile their personal identity with the multitude of cultural influences around them, leading to confusion or a sense of identity loss. For example, an individual born to immigrant parents in a cosmopolitan city may struggle to navigate between the cultural norms of their heritage and those of the society they live in. They may feel torn between embracing their family's traditions and assimilating into mainstream culture. This conflict can lead to feelings of confusion, self-doubt, or alienation as they grapple with questions of identity and belonging. The similar story can occur to individuals living in a culturally cosmopolitan world primarily shaped by the internet and social media.

## **2-3. Individualism**

While valuing collaboration and community, Generation Z also emphasizes individuality and self-expression; i.e., they are interested in conveying their thoughts, feelings, and identity to others through various forms of communication, such as speech, writing, art, fashion, or behavior. This involves

expressing one's unique personality, emotions, beliefs, and experiences in a way that reflects individuality. Self-expression is a fundamental aspect of human communication and plays a crucial role in forming connections with others, asserting autonomy, and fostering personal growth and fulfillment. There are several sociological and cultural studies exploring the shift towards individuality and self-expression in contemporary societies. One notable reference is "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" by Erving Goffman, which discusses how individuals manage their identities in social interactions. Additionally, "The Culture of Narcissism" by Christopher Lasch examines the rise of self-centeredness and individualism in modern culture. These works provide valuable perspectives on the cultural and societal factors, influencing the new generation's openness to individuality and self-expression.

The Qur'ānic approach to individualism is nuanced, emphasizing a balance between individual responsibility and community welfare. Here are some key aspects of this balance.

Self-expression can, indeed, have both positive and negative implications. While it empowers individuals to assert their identities and share their perspectives, it also renders them vulnerable to external influences, including propaganda from other countries or sources. In an interconnected world, where information spreads rapidly through social media and the internet, young people may be exposed to misleading or manipulative messages that can shape their beliefs and behaviors.

### **2-3-1. The Qur'ānic Approach to Individualism**

The Qur'ān strives to strike a balance between personal development and communal well-being, a necessary element for the well-being of both the individual and the community.

### **2-3-2. Individual Responsibility and Accountability According to the Qur'ān**

The Qur'ān highlights the importance of personal responsibility and individual accountability before God. Each person is responsible for their own actions and will be judged accordingly. This is evident in verses like:

"No soul does evil except against itself, and no bearer shall bear another's burden" (Qur'ān 6:164).

"Whoever acts righteously, does so for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is to its detriment, and your Lord is not tyrannical to the servants." (Qur'ān 41:46).

The Qur'ān also acknowledges the importance of personal freedom and the autonomy of conscience, stressing that faith should not be compelled. This is reflected in the verse:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (Qur'ān 2:256).

### **2-3-3. Community and Social Responsibility According to the Qur'ān**

While individual accountability is of paramount importance, the Qur'ān also underscores the significance of community and collective responsibility.

- Believers are urged to support one another and work towards the common good:

"Cooperate in piety and God wariness, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (Qur'ān 5:2).

"The faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore, make peace between your brothers and be wary of Allah, so that you may receive (His) mercy" (Qur'ān 49:10).

- Justice and Equity:

The Qur'ān advocates for social justice and equity, ensuring that individuals' deeds contribute positively to the well-being of society. It emphasizes the need for fairness and the protection of the rights of all individuals:

"O, you who have faith! Be maintainers of justice and witnesses for the sake of Allah, even if it should be against yourselves or (your) parents and near relatives" (Qur'ān 4:135).

- Balance between Individual and Collective Needs:

The Qur'ān promotes a balanced approach, where individual interests do not overshadow communal well-being, and vice versa. It encourages believers to seek personal growth while being mindful of their responsibilities towards others:

"Seek the abode of the Hereafter, while not forgetting your share of this world. Be good (to others) just as Allah has been good to you, and do not try to cause corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like the corrupters" (Qur'ān 28:77).

The Qur'ānic approach towards individualism emphasizes personal accountability and freedom while also stressing the importance of social responsibility, justice, and the welfare of the community. This balanced perspective encourages individuals to strive for personal excellence and righteousness, ensuring their actions benefit both themselves and society. They are obliged to keep their collective character while taking care of their personal well-being.

Concerning the negative implications of individualism, it's important for individuals to critically evaluate the information they encounter and to be aware of potential biases or agendas behind certain messages. Education on media literacy and critical thinking skills can help young people navigate the digital landscape more effectively and resist undue influence. Critical thinking involves analyzing information, considering various perspectives, and making informed decisions. In many places, the Qur'ān refers to the importance of critical thinking:

“O, you who have faith! If a profligate (person) should bring you some news, verify it, lest you harm on some people out of ignorance, and then become regretful for what you have done.” (Qur'ān 49:6)

There is a verse from the Qur'ān that emphasizes collective thinking and consultation:

“Those who answer their Lord, maintain prayer, and whose affairs are by counsel among themselves, and they spend out of what We have provided them with.” (Qur'ān 42:38)

This verse underscores the importance of consultation and collective decision-making among believers, highlighting the value of working together and seeking counsel from one another in matters of importance.

In practice, many verses emphasize the importance of community and altruism over individualism and selfishness. One such verse is:

“And in whose wealth, there is a known right for the beggar and the deprived” (Qur'ān 70:24-25). This verse highlights the obligation to share one's wealth with those in need, emphasizing the importance of communal responsibility and selflessness over individual accumulation.

Another verse addressing the concept of selfishness and individualism is:

“And those who are saved from their own greed, it is those who will be the felicitous” (Qur'ān 59:9).

This verse encourages believers to guard against the selfish inclinations of their souls and to strive for generosity and selflessness, implying that success lies in overcoming individualistic tendencies.

In Islam, community and collective responsibility are highly emphasized. Many verses in the Qur'ān encourage believers to come together in prayer, fasting, and other acts of worship. This emphasis on communal activities fosters unity, support, and a sense of belonging among Muslims. It also reinforces the idea that individuals are part of a larger community and have a responsibility to contribute positively to it. This collective approach not only strengthens faith but also promotes social cohesion and mutual assistance within the Muslim community. The Qur'ān reads:

“You are the best nation (ever) brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right (Ma'ruf) and forbid what is wrong (Munkar)” (Qur'ān 3: 110).

In Islam, the concept of “nation” is highly valued. Muslims are referred to as the “best nation” in the aforementioned verse because they enjoin good and forbid evil. This concept emphasizes the importance of caring for the community. By doing so, Muslims strive to create a society that upholds moral values and fosters positive behavior. This responsibility not only strengthens the bond among believers but also contributes to the betterment of society as a whole. It reflects Islam's emphasis on social and collective well-being.

Typically, "Ma'ruf and Munkar" are translated as "good and bad," which doesn't fully capture their meanings. Therefore, the phrase "enjoining what is good and forbidding evil" doesn't accurately convey this Qur'ānic concept. Ma'ruf isn't just any good deed but an action widely recognized as good by society. Similarly, Munkar is an act universally acknowledged as evil. Essentially, society must first establish clear standards of right and wrong, and then individuals must feel compelled to promote good and discourage evil. Ultimately, such a society would be protected against the negative influences of occupying cultures. Of course, observing these teachings in the modern life seems very hard and challenging, and the Muslim societies must be well trained for it; something absent in many such societies.

Additionally, fostering open dialogue and promoting diverse viewpoints can encourage a more balanced and informed approach to self-expression within the new generation. The Qur'ān gives glad



tidings to those “who listen to the word (of Allah) and follow the best (sense) of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect (Qur’ān 39: 18).

## **2-4. Unrealistic Expectations and Growing Dissatisfaction**

Cosmopolitanism exposes people to diverse ideas and lifestyles from around the world, often through social media. This exposure can, sometimes, lead to unrealistic expectations, causing dissatisfaction with one's own circumstances. As Housel says, happiness is just resulting minus expectations (Housel, 2020). “True happiness is not derived from having everything we desire, rather from the alignment between what we expect and experience” (Oppong, 2023). The issue stems from the discrepancy between the idealized portrayals of life on social media and the realities that individuals experience in their own lives. When people are constantly bombarded with images and stories showcasing luxurious lifestyles, extravagant travel, and seemingly perfect relationships, it can create a distorted perception of what is considered normal or achievable. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy, dissatisfaction, and even depression when individuals compare their own lives to these unrealistic standards.

Moreover, as people become more connected globally, they may develop aspirations and desires that are influenced by cultures and lifestyles highly different from their own. For example, someone living in a rural village may see images of urban livings or affluent lifestyles on social media and begin to desire similar experiences, even though they may be unrealistic or incompatible with their current circumstances. This discrepancy between expectations fueled by media and the reality of one's own life can create a sense of dissonance and dissatisfaction.

It's important for individuals to find a balance between appreciating global perspectives and grounding themselves in their own realities, finding fulfillment in both. It's important for individuals to critically evaluate the messages they consume from media sources and to cultivate gratitude and contentment with their own lives, while also pursuing realistic goals and aspirations. Such comparisons put individuals constantly in greed and unhappiness. Contentment involves mastering the art of finding joy in life; someone who is content seeks pleasure regardless of circumstances and endeavors to alleviate sorrows. Material possessions are often pursued in the pursuit of happiness and contentment. As a skilled chef creating a delicious dish from humble ingredients, a content individual can derive satisfaction from any situation. Conversely, discontentment may drive a person to greed and, even, criminal behavior in pursuit of desires. However, a content person is adept at pursuing goals while finding fulfillment in their achievements (Āghā Mohammadī, 2021). Imam Ali (a.s) succinctly emphasized contentment as the key to happy life (Al-Sharīf Al-Raḍī, 1993). Moreover, cultivating critical media literacy empowers individuals to discern between idealized portrayals and the nuanced realities of life.

## **3. Conclusion**

The accessibility of the internet and social media has enabled Generation Z to connect globally, leading to the phenomenon of cultural cosmopolitanism. This has both positive and negative implications. On the positive side, it enhances awareness and responsibility towards global issues, such as climate change and human rights. However, it also brings about negative effects such as:

- Identity crises: as individuals navigate between their real-life cultural norms and the borderless virtual world, leading to a challenge to their native traditions and values. Additionally, the pressure to conform to certain cultural ideals or stereotypes can exacerbate feelings of insecurity and identity fragmentation. As a result, some individuals in cosmopolitan societies may grapple with questions of self-identity, sense of belonging, and authenticity. To mitigate these adverse effects, societies need to take proactive measures.
- Diversity and inclusion: generation Z values diversity and inclusion, as evidenced by their involvement in racial justice protests and their embrace of varied cultures and identities. Its challenges include cultural understanding and interconnectedness, but also potential identity crises and conflicts arising from cultural clashes. The rise of digital platforms further shapes this generation's worldview, blurring traditional boundaries and emphasizing global connectivity.
- Individualism: in conclusion, the article highlights the intricate relationship between individualism and community values, particularly as observed in Generation Z. While emphasizing self-expression and uniqueness, this generation also values collaboration and

community welfare. Sociological studies provide insights into this cultural shift, shedding light on the complexities of modern individualism. The Qur'ānic perspective adds nuances, advocating for a balance between individual responsibility and communal well-being. However, there is the potential pitfalls of excessive self-expression, particularly in the digital age where misinformation and external influences can shape beliefs and behaviors.

- Cosmopolitanism, particularly through social media, exposes individuals to diverse lifestyles, fostering unrealistic expectations. This leads to dissatisfaction as people compare their lives to idealized portrayals on social platforms, often leading to feelings of inadequacy and depression. Global connectivity further influences aspirations, sometimes leading individuals to desire lifestyles incompatible with their own realities. To counteract this, individuals should balance global perspectives with appreciation for their own circumstances, cultivating gratitude and contentment while pursuing realistic goals. Contentment, as emphasized by Imam Ali, is key to a fulfilling life, enabling individuals to find joy regardless of circumstances. Cultivating critical media literacy is essential in discerning between idealized representations and the complexities of real life.

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