

Exploring How Digital Literacy Shapes Emotional Maturity in Maintaining Household Stability among Married Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the implications of digital literacy for the emotional maturity of married Generation Z (Gen Z) individuals and how emotional maturity functions as a determinant of household stability, viewed through the lens of hifz al-'aql (safeguarding of reason) as part of maqashid syariah. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed, involving six married Gen Z informants selected through purposive sampling, with marriage duration of no more than five years and recent experience using digital media to address household-related matters. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, supported by source triangulation. The findings show that digital literacy contributes to informants' emotional maturity through a deliberate practice of source verification, which enables digital content to function as a trigger for cognitive pause during conflict and gradually reshapes informants' interpretive framework toward greater empathy for their partner. Although this contribution is conditional on consistent critical filtering, particularly for emotionally charged content. Building on this, emotional maturity was found to determine household stability through more open marital communication, the use of digital content as a shared reference point in resolving disagreement, an orientation toward marriage as a continuous learning process, and the consistent filtering of digital influence through religious and moral values. These findings suggest that digital literacy supports household stability not merely through technical media competence, but through a value-grounded critical capacity that allows Gen Z couples to translate digital information into emotionally mature and religiously congruent marital practice.

Keywords : digital literacy; emotional maturity; household stability; Generation Z; hifz al-'aql; phenomenology.

INTRODUCTION

Islam teaches its followers to be careful and knowledge-based when receiving or spreading information, as explained in QS. Al-Isra verse 36. According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation of this verse, Allah forbids people from following, saying, or doing something without proper knowledge. Hearing, sight, and the heart are gifts that will eventually be accounted for. Humans should therefore critically evaluate information rather than accepting it based solely on assumptions (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Azhim Karya Ibnu Katsir*, n.d.). In the context of digital technology, this verse can be understood as a call to safeguard reason, exercise self-control in receiving and spreading information, and take responsibility for every digital trace and interaction. These values become increasingly relevant amid the rapid development of digital technology in the modern era.

Generation Z (Gen Z) is known as the generation born and raised in the era of digital technology advancement, making their lives closely tied to virtual activity and digital interaction in daily life. In this context digital literacy is defined as an individuals that have an ability to receive, understand, disseminate, and use information through digital devices and the internet in an appropriate and responsible manner (Setiawardani & Robandi, 2021). The high intensity of digital media use also influences character formation, communication styles, and social behaviour patterns that tend to differ from previous generation (Dara Nurhaliza Prihantira & Dharmawan, 2025). This shows that digital literacy is not merely about the ability to access information, but its also connected to individuals emotional readiness in managing responses, communicating, and building healthy social relationships as a foundation for household stability (Wiyogo et al., 2025). In line with this, digital literacy has become an essential skill for Gen Z in filtering and understanding the information they encounter (Maisuroh et al., 2024).

Marital success is not only determined by physical and financial readiness, but also by individuals psychological and emotional readiness. Emotional maturity helps individuals manage their emotions, understand their partners, and deal with conflict within marriage, making it one of the key factors in creating household stability. Conversely, low emotional maturity can increase the risk of household instability. Within interpersonal relationships, emotional maturity refers to an individuals ability to manage emotions, undertand others feelings, and respond appropriately to situation (Gholami Gherashiran et al., 2022). Psychological readiness is likewise an important aspect of marriage readiness among Gen. Herawati's study found that an ideal partners is one who can communicate effectively, demonstrate maturity, and show affection, and that mental readiness is considered essential for facing the various dynamics of married life. These findings suggest a close relationship between psychological readiness, emotional maturity and an individuals ability to build healthy communication, manage conflict, and adapt to family life. Psychological well-being strengthens individuals by helping them function optimally in both personal and social life, indicating that those with strong psychological readiness and emotional maturity are better equipped to maintain marital quality and household stability. Emotional maturity is therefore a key factors in building a harmonious and stable marriage (Herawati et al., 2023). Individuals with this capacity tend to handle pressure and disagreement within the household more contructively, reducing misunderstandings, regulating emotional responses, and minimizing prolonged conflict, consistent with the principle of safeguarding reason (*hifz al aql*) so that individuals can think, behave, and make decisions wisely in emotional regulation and family conflict resolution. Conversely, poor emotional regulation can increase household conflict and reduce the quality and stability of marital relationships . (Parsakia et al., 2024).

Juridically, the formation of a harmonious family in Indonesia is governed by Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage and the Complication of Islamic Law (KHI), both of

which serve as normative foundations for household life. Article 1 of the Marriage Law states that marriage is a physical and spiritual bond between a man and a woman as husband and wife, aimed at building an eternal and happy family based on belief in Allah. This shows that marriage is understood not merely as a formal legal relationship, but also as an emotional, social, and spiritual bond requiring shared responsibility between husband and wife in building a stable harmonious household. Article 77 paragraph (2) of the Compilation of Islamic Law states that husband and wife are obliged to love, respect, remain faithful to, and support one another physically and emotionally. This provision reflects that marital relationships are built upon cooperation, emotional support, and balanced responsibilities between spouses. Therefore, household harmony depends not only on the fulfilment of marital obligations but also on the quality of the emotional bond between partners in navigating the various dynamics of family life. In addition, article 3 of the Compilation of Islamic Law affirms that the purpose of marriage is to achieve a *sakinah* (peaceful), *mawaddah* (loving), and *rahmah* (compassionate) household. A concept reflecting the importance of tranquillity, affection, and mutual empathy and respect within family life. Couples are thus expected to possess psychological readiness and emotional maturity in order to build healthy communication, manage conflict maturely, and sustain relational stability. From a legal psychological perspective, the marital relationship should not be viewed solely through normative legal aspects. But also through the emotional and psychological well-being of couples in achieving a harmonious and sustainable marriage (*Compilation of Islamic Law*).

The development of digital media has brought significant changes to Gen Z's interpersonal communication patterns, as this generation has grown up alongside rapid technological advancement. The high intensity of digital media use has made virtual communication an important part of daily life, shaping how individuals interact, express themselves, and build social relationships (Lutfiah et al., 2024) found that digital media use is not solely a matter of technical skill, but is also linked to individuals ability to manage emotions, build healthy communication, and interact wisely in digital spaces. Therefore, digital literacy may serve as an important factor in strengthening emotional readiness and fostering harmonious interpersonal relationships.

Changing patterns of interaction in the digital era have also influenced how individuals express emotions and build interpersonal relationships. For Gen Z, social media and various digital platforms are not merely communication tools but also shape emotional conditions and social behavior. Digital media use that is not balanced with adequate digital literacy and emotional regulation skills can lead to impulsive behavior, communication misunderstandings, and conflict in both interpersonal relationships and household life. Managing digital media use while regulating emotional responses is therefore essential to maintaining relational harmony and household stability. (Verma et al., 2024).

Several prior studies have shown that digital technology development influences Gen Z's communication patterns, interpersonal behavior, and emotional conditions (Lutfiah et al., 2024) explained that digital media use has changed Gen Z's interpersonal communication behavior, although face-to-face communication is still considered important in building social relationships. This is consistent with findings from (Muhamad Syarif Hidayatullah et al., 2024) who showed that digital media use shapes Gen Z's communication interaction patterns through social media, chat groups, and various virtual platforms that influence how individuals engage with their social environment. According to (Setiani et al., 2026) explained that the transformation of communication in the digital era has caused significant changes in Gen Z's social interaction, including reduced face-to-face communication and increased reliance on virtual communication. (Irma, 2026) also found that social media plays a role in shaping interpersonal patterns, trust, and self-disclosure among individuals building social relationships in digital spaces. Meanwhile (Gholami Gherashiran et al., 2022) showed that emotional maturity relates to an individuals ability to understand, control, and appropriately express emotions in interpersonal relationships a finding reinforced by (Herawati et al., 2023) who explained that emotional maturity and psychological readiness are key factors in maintaining marital quality and supporting a harmonious household. Taken together, these studies suggest that digital media use, interpersonal communication, and emotional maturity are closely related to the quality of individuals' social relationships. However, research that comprehensively integrates digital literacy and emotional maturity in maintaining household stability among Gen Z remains relatively limited.

Although various studies have examined digital literacy, emotional maturity, and household stability, research linking all three aspects simultaneously among Gen Z remains scarce. Gen Z is a generation that has grown up amid rapid digital technological advancement, giving it distinct communication characteristics, interaction patterns, and emotional challenges compared to previous generations. This indicates the need for further research to explain the relationship between digital literacy and emotional maturity in supporting household stability among Gen Z. Furthermore, studies examining the relationship among these three variables through the perspective of safeguarding reason (*hifz al-'aql*) as part of *maqashid syariah* remain rarely found. The novelty of this study lies in integrating digital literacy and emotional maturity, as the factor shaping emotional readiness, with household stability within a single analytical framework focused on Gen Z, viewed through the lens of *hifz al-'aql* emotional well-being and family stability. This framework seeks to understand how the ability to think rationally, regulate emotions, and make wise decisions contributes to household stability in the digital era.

Based on the above, this study aims to analyze the implications of digital literacy for the emotional maturity of Gen Z and examine how emotional maturity function as a determinant of household stability among married Gen Z couples.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of married Generation Z individuals in utilizing digital literacy and its contribution to emotional maturity in maintaining household stability. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it aims to understand lived experiences and the meanings participants assign to the phenomenon being studied.

Research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, a method of selecting informants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives (Patton, 2015). The conclusion criteria applied in this study were: (1) married members of Gen Z, (2) a marriage duration of no more than five years, and (3) had used digital media to seek information or solution related to household life within the previous six months. Seven potential participants were initially identified and screened from these criteria. One participant was excluded after screening because their marriage duration exceeded the five-year threshold, despite meeting the other two criteria. Consequently, six participants met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis (Phoebe Ramadina Pambudi & Yudiana Ratnasari, 2024). This number is consistent with the characteristics of phenomenological research, which typically involves a small number of participants in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences (John W. Creswell, 2018a).

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allow the researcher to explore informants' experiences, views, and meanings in depth (John W. Creswell, 2018b). Secondary data were collected from scholarly journals, books, and previous studies discussing digital literacy, emotional maturity, and household stability which served to support, contextualize, and strengthen the interpretation of the primary data obtained through interviews. The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, (Miles et al., 2014) which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed source triangulation techniques (Denzin, 1978).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Overview

Six informants met all inclusion criteria and were in the final analysis (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of Informants

Code	Age	Marriage Duration	Occupation	Daily Internet Use
AZ	25	2 years	Housewife	4–6 hours
SL	24	1 year 3 months	Interior Designer	7–9 hours
UM	26	6 months	Housewife	7–9 hours
PW	26	2 years	Housewife	4 hours
N1	25	5 years	Housewife	10 hours
NB	24	1 year	Housewife	4–6 hours

CHAPTER 1: Implications of Digital Literacy for the Emotional Maturity of Gen Z

1.1 Selective Verification as a Practice of Safeguarding Reason (Hifz al-‘Aql)

Across nearly all informants, digital literacy did not manifest merely as the ability to access information, but as a deliberate practice of filtering it before allowing it to shape their beliefs or actions. Informants described concrete verification habits: checking the credibility of the speaker, cross-referencing multiple platforms, reading audience comments, and deferring only to recognized experts (religious scholars, psychologists, doctors) on matters they considered consequential. This pattern indicates that for these informants, digital literacy functions less as passive consumption and more as an active cognitive filter precisely the disposition Ibn Kathir's exegesis of QS. Al-Isra: 36 describes as accountability for what one hears, sees, and internalizes.

AZ (25 years old, 2 years of marriage, housewife) explained that she deliberately restricts herself to expert sources for matters concerning marital rights and obligations:

“For household matters related to rights and obligations, or other important things, I limit myself to taking information only from experts. For example religious scholars or psychologists, who are genuinely knowledgeable in their field... if it’s just someones personal story or venting, I might just read it, without making it a reference to follow.” (AZ. Interview transcript)

A similar pattern of triangulating sources before accepting information was described by NI (25 years old, 5 years of marriage, housewife):

“I usually filter it again, is this relevant to my household or not? Can it be applied or not? I usually don’t rely on just one source;

I look for it on other platforms too, to see whether it's actually true, and I usually check the comments as well to see other people's opinions." (N1, interview transcript)

UM (26 years old, 6 months of marriage, housewife) added a similar verification routine centered on the credibility of the source itself:

"The way we ensure the truth of information we get from the internet is by looking at the source, on YouTube we pay close attention to who is speaking and which account is posting it... We only take information from sources we already trust; anything still doubtful, we usually skip and look for another answer." (UM, interview transcript)

This finding is consistent with (Setiawardani & Robandi, 2021) conceptualization of digital literacy as the capacity to receive, understand, disseminate, and use digital information appropriately and responsibly not the mere ability to access it. It also aligns directly with the interpretive principle drawn from QS. Al-Isra: 36 discussed in the Introduction: that hearing, sight, and reasoning are faculties for which the individual will be held accountable, and therefore should not be exercised carelessly. The informants verification behaviors checking sources, cross-referencing platforms, and deferring selectively to recognized authorities can thus be read as a lived, everyday enactment of *hifz al-'aql* (safeguarding of reason) within a digital environment.

Taken together, the findings above suggest that digital literacy among these informants functions as a gatekeeping mechanism rather than an open channel of influence: informants actively filter, verify, and selectively adopt information, which positions them as discerning consumers of digital content rather than passive recipients a disposition that appears to be a precondition for the more advanced emotional-regulation patterns discussed in the following sub-theme.

1.2 Digital Content as a Trigger for Cognitive Pause and Emotional Regulation

Beyond filtering information, several informants described digital content functioning as an external prompt that interrupted reactive emotional impulses during conflict, creating a pause between stimulus (a partner's irritating behavior) and response (anger, defensiveness). This suggests that digital literacy's emotional value lies not only in what information is consumed, but in when it is recalled often spontaneously, at the exact moment of emotional escalation.

AZ described this as an almost automatic recall of previously absorbed religious content during conflict:

"Several times, when there's a conflict and I feel that I'm the one at fault, or that it shouldn't be a big deal, the urge to

apologize first and to swallow my pride suddenly comes up and somehow fragments of religious talks or their lessons just stick with me." (AZ, interview transcript)

PW (26 years old, 2 years of marriage, housewife who relies heavily on ChatGPT during her long-distance marriage, described a more structured, tool-mediated version of the same pause:

"Because we're long-distance, every problem feels harder... If I use GPT, it's like telling a story to a person and it can push back on me too. I'm told to think, take a deep breath... told to remember happy moments, and if I'm really stressed, it directly tells me to contact an expert." (PW, interview transcript)

N1 described a self-initiated withdrawal-and-reflect strategy that she attributed partly to what she had absorbed from digital content:

"When there's a conflict, I usually choose to avoid it first, stay quiet, think, calm myself down while looking for distraction on my phone. Once I'm calm, then I can think and oh, this is where I was wrong, this needs fixing, this needs to be talked through." (N1, interview transcript)

These findings correspond with (Verma et al., 2024) discussion of digital emotion regulation, which notes that digital media use is linked not merely to technical competence but to an individual's capacity to manage emotions and communicate wisely in digital spaces. They also resonate with (Gholami Gherashiran et al., 2022) definition of emotional maturity as the ability to manage emotions, understand others feelings, and respond appropriately to a given situation and use pause-then-respond pattern observed here is a behavioral marker of exactly this capacity.

Across these experiences, a consistent pattern emerges: digital content can function as an emotional regulation scaffold, creating space between emotional impulses and behavioral responses through religious teachings, structured AI dialogue, or self-directed reflection habits. This pattern may be understood in relation to the principle of *hifz al-'aql*, particularly the use of reason to regulate impulses before they translate into action.

1.3 Reframing the Partner's Behavior: from irritaton to Empathy

A distinct pattern emerged in which digital content did not simply calm emotions in the moment, but permanently shifted informants interpretive framework for their partner's behavior. Moving from a personalized, blame-oriented reading ("he doesn't care") toward a normalized, empathetic one ("this is just how men are; it's not really about me").

SL (24 years old, 1 year 3 months of marriage, interior designer) described how a specific piece of content changed her interpretation of her husband's seemingly disinterested reaction:

"I once saw content from Dr. Aisyah Dahlan about husbands... it turns out men need time to review what they've done and plan what to do next, and they don't like being asked too many questions right away and so now, when my husband comes home from work and I want to talk on and on, I wait for him to start talking first." (SL, interview transcript)

UM described a comparable shift toward normalization:

"I feel calmer now, because when my husband does something small that I don't really like, I realize that it's simply the nature of men and it's not just my husband so that it isn't actually a big problem." (UM, interview transcript)

This reframing pattern is consistent with (Herawati et al., 2023) finding that an ideal partner is understood as someone who communicates effectively, and that mental readiness including the capacity to interpret a partner's behavior charitably is an essential to navigating the dynamics of married life. It also reflects the broader claim in the Introduction that psychological readiness and emotional maturity are closely tied to the ability to build healthy communication and adapt to family life.

Digital content contributes to emotional readiness not only by regulating momentary reactions but by reshaping the underlying cognitive schema through which informants interpret their partner into a deeper and more durable form of emotional maturation than simple mood management.

1.4 The Boundary Condition: Unfiltered Content as a Source of Distrust (Disconfirming case)

The emotional effects of digital content varied across informants. One informant's account represents an important disconfirming case, demonstrating how the same media environment can erode rather than strengthen emotional stability when digital content is consumed without the critical filtering emphasized earlier.

SL recounted how a recurring content narrative nearly damaged her trust in her husband:

"Content that had a somewhat negative impact on my relationship was the kind with the narrative that 'all men will eventually cheat.' Honestly, because there was so much of that kind of content, it made me anxious, made me distrust my husband, and I found myself wanting to secretly check his phone — until I realized it was becoming toxic. Eventually we talked it through about building trust, but still needing boundaries so we could both feel comfortable." (SL, interview transcript)

This finding is consistent with (Parsakia et al., 2024) observation that poor emotional regulation can increase household conflict and reduce

marital quality and stability. In this case, poor emotional regulation was arguably triggered rather than resolved by the digital content itself. This finding nuances the broader pattern identified across the preceding findings: the protective effect of digital literacy on emotional maturity is not automatic, but contingent on the consistent application of critical filtering practices, including when engaging with emotionally charged relational content rather than only practical or religious guidance.

In response to the first research question, this study finds that digital literacy shapes Gen Z informants' emotional maturity in three interrelated ways: through a deliberate practice of source verification that mirrors the Qur'anic principle of *hifz al-'aql*, which in turn enables digital content to function as a trigger for cognitive pause and emotional regulation during conflict, and gradually reshapes informants' interpretive framework toward greater empathy for their partner. However, this contribution is not unconditional where critical filtering is not applied, particularly to emotionally charged content, digital media can instead generate distrust and conflict. Digital literacy, therefore, functions as emotional scaffolding for Gen Z informants only insofar as it is exercised with the same selectivity and critical awareness identified as its foundational practice.

CHAPTER 2: Emotional Maturity as a Determinant of Household Stability among Married Gen Z Couples

2.1 Emotional Maturity as a Catalyst for Open Marital Communication

Informants consistently linked their growing emotional maturity to a concrete, observable shift in how they communicate with their partner: a move from guarded or one-sided exchanges toward more open, joint discussion. Rather than remaining an abstract internal trait, emotional maturity appears to translate directly into behavioral change within the marital relationship — most visibly in increased willingness to discuss sensitive topics together and to actively seek the partner's perspective.

SL (24 years old, 1 year 3 months of marriage, interior designer) described this shift as a joint habit that developed over time:

"My husband and I ended up discussing more, and searching for information together from social media about communication, finances, pregnancy, and so on. As for the change itself, it's more about our communication becoming more open, and trying to understand each other's point of view." (SL, interview transcript)

NB (24 years old, 1 year of marriage, housewife) reported a comparable outcome in terms of mutual understanding:

"What I feel, from using social media, is that my relationship with my husband has become one where we can understand each other better." (NB, interview transcript)

This finding aligns with (Herawati et al., 2023) conclusion that an ideal partner is one who can communicate effectively and demonstrate maturity, and that this capacity is central to navigating married life. It is also consistent with (Lutfiah et al., 2024) observation that digital media use has altered Gen Z's interpersonal communication behavior, although face-to-face interaction remains an important complement rather than a replacement.

2.2 Digital Content as a Shared Reference Point for Resolving Disagreement

At the interpersonal level, several informants described using digital content as a shared, external reference during disagreements with their partner — a common ground both parties could appeal to, which appeared to reduce the ego-driven escalation that often accompanies purely personal arguments.

UM (26 years old, 6 months of marriage, housewife) described how references to religious lectures or social media posts became a normal part of the couple's negotiation process:

"The opinions we express are, to a certain extent, influenced by what we have seen or read on social media about household life and communication. In our discussions we often say, 'I once saw a lecture by Ustaz so-and-so,' or 'I once saw a post on Instagram that said it should be like this' so I think social media does have an influence on how we face conflict and communicate with each other." (UM, interview transcript)

SL described a similar pattern specifically for value-laden or parenting-related disagreements, where the couple would consult recognized experts before reconciling their positions:

"If it's about differences in opinion on how to live life that's based on religion, or opinions about parenting, we very often search for it on social media — looking for it from the experts. If it's about religion, we usually go to videos of trustworthy religious teachers, and if it's about parenting we look for an obstetrician or pediatrician or someone in that field. Usually after we get the information, we share it with each other and find a middle ground." (SL, interview transcript)

This pattern reflects the obligation articulated in Article 77 paragraph (2) of the Compilation of Islamic Law, which states that husband and wife are obliged to love, respect, remain faithful to, and support one another. A provision that, as noted in the Introduction, reflects

marital relationships built upon cooperation and balanced responsibility. Using a shared, externally validated reference point appears to operationalize this cooperative obligation in a very concrete, everyday way.

2.3 Continous Learning as the Engine of Long-Term Household Stability

A number of informants did not describe their engagement with digital content as a one-time solution to a specific problem, but as part of an ongoing, open-ended learning process one that several explicitly linked to their religious or spiritual life, and that in some cases substituted for offline access to religious education.

AZ (25 years old, 2 years of marriage, housewife), a new mother who is currently unable to regularly attend in-person religious study circles, described social media as filling that gap:

"We humans are right one day and crooked the next, so we need frequent reminders. I think the knowledge that's spread on social media can be a daily reminder for myself... especially since I'm a new mother who hasn't been able to go back to the mosque to recharge my faith directly at a study circle, so social media has really helped me." (AZ, interview transcript)

N1 (25 years old, 5 years of marriage, housewife), the informant with the longest marriage duration in this study, framed this learning process as still ongoing even after several years of marriage:

"Digital media has really, really helped me a lot, and it depends on how we use it — what I search for and what I learn as it passes by... it really influences how a household can better understand how to be a wife, as time goes on, I still keep learning." (N1, interview transcript)

This finding corresponds with (Maisuroh et al., 2024) framing of digital literacy as an evolving skill for filtering and understanding information rather than a fixed competency, and echoes the Introduction's discussion of Article 3 of the Compilation of Islamic Law, which frames the *sakinah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahmah* household as an ongoing condition to be sustained rather than a status achieved once at the point of marriage. It is further supported by (Larasati & Fernando, 2025) who found that Instagram can function as a flexible, participatory, and community-based space for informal religious education among Muslim women, where religious learning emerges through shared personal experience and emotional support rather than formal instruction closely paralleling AZ's use of social media as a substitute for in-person religious study circles.

2.4 Value-Based Filtering as a Safeguard for Household Stability

Even as informants relied heavily on digital sources to build emotional maturity and improve communication, several were explicit that this reliance was bounded by religious or moral considerations — meaning digital influence on the household was not accepted unconditionally, but was screened against a pre-existing value framework.

PW (26 years old, 2 years of marriage, housewife), who relies on ChatGPT for relationship guidance during a long-distance marriage, was explicit about this boundary:

"Even though GPT and other social media are helpful, we still have to be selective, because sometimes there's content that doesn't align with our religion or our faith." (PW, interview transcript)

NB expressed a comparable orientation in more general terms:

"My message is: be wise in choosing information." (NB, interview transcript)

This finding is consistent with the maqashid syariah principle of *hifz al-'aql* discussed in the Introduction, which frames safeguarding reason as encompassing not only critical evaluation of factual accuracy but also alignment with religious and moral norms. It also reflects Article 1 of the Marriage Law, which defines marriage as a union grounded in belief in Allah. Suggesting that, for these informants, digital literacy supports household stability precisely because it is filtered through, rather than allowed to override, that religious foundation.

In response to the second research question, The findings collectively reveal that emotional maturity functions as a determinant of household stability among married Gen Z informants through a visible shift toward more open, joint marital communication; the use of digital content as a shared, externally validated reference point that helps couples resolve disagreement cooperatively rather than combatively; an orientation toward marriage as a continuous learning process, in which digital media partly substitutes for offline access to religious or educational guidance; and the consistent filtering of digital influence through a religious and moral value framework, which prevents digitally sourced ideas from destabilizing the household's normative foundation. Household stability, in this sense, is not a static outcome of emotional maturity but an ongoing, actively maintained condition that couples sustain by continuing to communicate openly, consult shared references, keep learning, and filter what they adopt from digital media against their religious values.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the implications of digital literacy for the emotional maturity of Gen Z and to examine how emotional maturity functions as a determinant of household stability among married Gen Z couples. Based on the experiences of six married Gen Z informants, the findings show that digital literacy contributes to emotional maturity through a deliberate practice of source verification, which functions as a lived enactment of *hifz al-'aql* (safeguarding of reason). This selective engagement with digital content allows it to serve as a trigger for cognitive pause during conflict, gradually reshapes informants' interpretive framework toward greater empathy for their partner, and there by strengthens their capacity for emotional regulation. This contribution, however, is conditional: where critical filtering is not consistently applied, particularly to emotionally provocative content, digital media can instead generate distrust and conflict rather than composure.

Building on this emotional maturity, the study further found that it functions as a determinant of household stability through four interrelated mechanisms: increasingly open and joint marital communication, the use of digital content as a shared reference point for resolving disagreement cooperatively, an orientation toward marriage as a continuous learning process in which digital media partly substitutes for offline religious guidance, and the consistent filtering of digital influence through a religious and moral value framework. Household stability among these informants therefore emerges not as a fixed outcome, but as an ongoing condition actively sustained through the interaction of digital literacy, emotional maturity, and religiously grounded self-regulation.

Theoretically, these findings extend the existing literature on digital literacy and emotional maturity by demonstrating that the two are not merely correlated but functionally linked: digital literacy practices operationalize the emotional maturity that prior studies (Gholami Gherashiran et al., 2022; Herawati et al., 2023) identify as central to marital quality, while also grounding this maturity within the *maqashid syariah* principle of *hifz al-'aql*. The study also nuances this relationship by showing that its protective effect on household stability is conditional on critical, value-based filtering rather than digital media use as such.

Practically, these findings suggest that digital literacy education for young married couples should go beyond technical skills in using digital platforms, and should instead cultivate critical evaluation habits verifying sources, comparing information across platforms, and filtering content against religious and moral values. As the mechanism through which digital media use can genuinely support emotional maturity and household stability, rather than undermine it.

This study is limited by its small, purposive sample of six informants and its reliance on self-reported interview data, which may not capture the perspectives of both spouses within each couple or account for variation across different socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. Future research may build on these

findings by including both husbands and wives as paired informants, by employing longitudinal designs to observe how the relationship between digital literacy, emotional maturity, and household stability develops over the course of a marriage, and by examining this relationship across more diverse Gen Z populations.

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