EXPLORING THE KEY FACTORS SHAPING MENTAL HEALTH IN GEN Z: A SCOPING REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012. Mental health refers to the emotional, psychological, and social conditions that affect how individuals think, feel, and behave. This generation tends to be independent, creative, unique characteristic and highly socially aware. However, they are also vulnerable to social and mental pressures due to the complex demands of life, which causes Generation Z to face specific challenges affecting their mental health. This scoping review discusses the factors influencing the mental health of Gen Z in the digital era. Articles were searched using databases including ScienceDirect, PubMed, Google Scholar, and ProQuest, focusing on publications from 2021 to 2025. The authors selected and analyzed articles using the PRISMA framework based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search across several electronic databases revealed 538 research articles. After screening, a total of 15 articles were analyzed. The results identified factors influencing the mental health of Gen Z, such as social support (emotional, instrumental, informational, and friendship support), family environment, work-related stress, personal issues, exposure to negative content on social media (including cyberbullying, fake news, and body shaming), online gaming, technology use, and coping mechanisms. Gaining insight into the factors influencing the mental health of Gen Z can help in preventing mental and emotional disorders and support the promotion of overall well-being.

Keywords: factors, gen z, mental health

ABSTRAK

Generasi Z (Gen Z) merujuk pada individu yang lahir antara tahun 1997 dan 2012. Kesehatan mental mengacu pada kondisi emosional, psikologis, dan sosial yang memengaruhi cara individu berpikir, merasakan, dan berperilaku. Generasi ini cenderung mandiri, kreatif, memiliki karakteristik unik, dan sangat sadar secara sosial. Namun, mereka juga rentan terhadap tekanan sosial dan mental akibat tuntutan hidup yang kompleks, yang menyebabkan Generasi Z menghadapi tantangan tertentu yang memengaruhi kesehatan mental mereka. Tinjauan cakupan ini membahas faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi kesehatan mental Gen Z di era digital. Artikel dicari menggunakan basis data ScienceDirect, PubMed, Google Scholar, dan ProQuest, dengan fokus pada publikasi dari tahun 2021 hingga 2025. Penulis memilih dan menganalisis artikel menggunakan kerangka PRISMA berdasarkan kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi yang telah ditentukan. Pencarian di beberapa basis data elektronik mengungkapkan 538 artikel penelitian. Setelah disaring, total sebanyak 15 artikel dianalisis. Hasilnya mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesehatan mental Generasi Z, seperti dukungan sosial (dukungan emosional, instrumental, informasi, dan persahabatan), lingkungan keluarga, stres terkait pekerjaan, masalah pribadi, paparan konten negatif di media sosial (termasuk perundungan siber, berita palsu, dan *body shaming*), permainan daring, penggunaan teknologi, dan mekanisme koping. Memperoleh wawasan tentang faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kesehatan mental Generasi Z dapat membantu mencegah gangguan mental dan emosional serta mendukung promosi kesejahteraan secara keseluruhan.

Kata kunci: faktor, generasi z, kesehatan mental

INTRODUCTION

Gen Z is a generation born from 1997 to 2012 (Sabillillah et al., 2025). Mental health is one of the main issues that has received attention from Generation Z, according to a survey conducted by the IDN Research Institute involving 51% of respondents. The study highlighted that the negative stigma against mental health is still very strong, which causes individuals with mental health disorders to often not get enough support and are often given bad judgment. This challenge is increasingly complex because the existing stigma is a barrier to individuals to seek help or support (Purnama & Farhannaya, 2020). Gen z itself has characteristics in the form of someone who is digital, where gen z never limits themselves in activities and scope between the real world and the virtual world, hyper-customization, where gen z wants to show the advantages or uniqueness they have as the identity they use, are realistic, have a high curiosity *Fear of Missing Out* (FOMO), gen z does not want to be left behind by current trends or issues that can ultimately hinder and harm their work results, are open, independent and like to try new things (Sekar Arum et al., 2023).

Gen Z is a generation that grew up in the rapid development of digital technology and social media. This condition affects the way they interact, both virtually and directly. Social interaction on social media has become an inseparable part of Gen Z's daily life, which has an impact on their mental health (Sao et al., 2024). While technology provides many benefits, such as ease of communication and access to information, the impact on Gen Z's mental health cannot be underestimated. Increased use of social media has been shown to be closely linked to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders among adolescents. Exposure to cyberbullying, unrealistic beauty standards, and the pressure to always appear perfect online, also contribute to decreased self-esteem and increased stress among Gen Z (Liu et al, 2021). These negative mental health impacts not only affect their emotional well-being, but also their daily lives, including social relationships, academic performance, and even the quality of future employment. Gen Z who experience mental disorders tend to have more difficulty in social interactions in person and are more likely to feel isolated. In addition, high academic pressure often coupled with anxiety about the future can lead to burnout and an inability to face life's challenges. In some cases, this condition can lead to decreased productivity and difficulty in achieving their life goals, both in education and work (Budiman et al, 2021).

A study shows that intensive use of social media has the potential to trigger anxiety and stress due to social pressure and exposure to content that shows a high standard of living (Yuliati, 2020). Generation Z tends to be more susceptible to work-related anxiety. It is known that Gen Z students who do not have jobs after graduating are more likely to experience mental health problems (Matilda et al., 2025). In adulthood, they begin to find their purpose in life, build harmonious relationships with their families, are able to cope with emotional stress due to self-change triggered by certain situations, and feel that their social life has meaning. They also have values that serve as guidelines in living their lives (Budiman et al., 2021). The impact of mental health disorders on Gen Z can be long-term, disrupting personal development, and preventing the achievement of life goals. Mental problems that are not handled properly can cause difficulties in adapting to various challenges in life, both in social relationships, education, and work. Therefore, it is important to provide better mental health support for Gen Z, both in the family, school, and community environments, and help them develop skills to manage stress and anxiety.

A holistic approach to mental health, understanding the factors that cause and

impact it, will help them live more balanced and productive lives, and reduce the increase in mental health disorders among

Gen Z, so they can face life in a healthier and more mentally sound way.

METHODS

A scoping review was comprehensively conducted to select articles discussing factors affecting the mental health of gen z. Articles were sourced from ScienceDirect, PubMed, Google Scholar, and ProQuest, focusing on publications from 2021 to 2025 . The search used keywords with a Boolean search like Gen Z, Mental Health, Factors to obtain relevant articles according to study objectives.

Scientific article search was limited with inclusion criteria of online published articles were (i) The research over the last five years (2021-2025), an original article. The data-based literature search was

literature reviewed to obtain empirical evidence regarding factors affecting mental health of gen z. Exclusion criteria are (i) Articles reviewed and Qualitative research The studies obtained from several electronic databases revealed 538 research articles. After removing duplicates, 425 articles were also reviewed based on the full text of the article. Finally, 15 articles from databases that were previously identified. The preferred reporting items for systematic reviews methodology (PRISMA) was applied, and below is the PRISMA flow chart of this current study as shown in Figure 1.
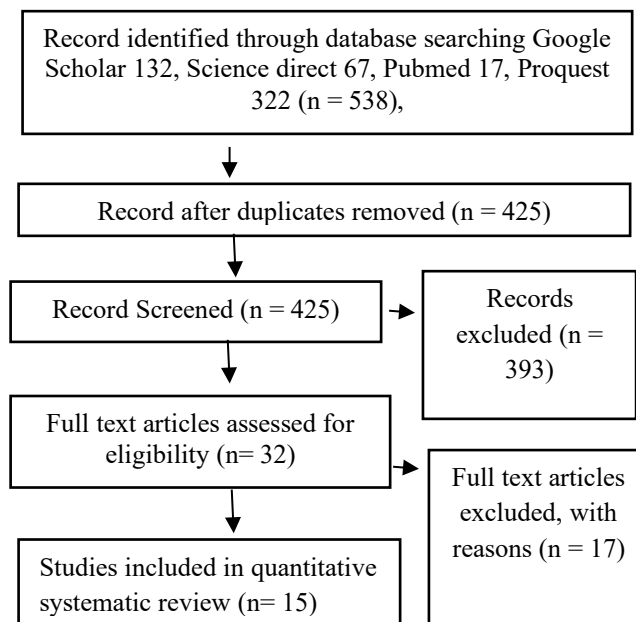

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram Identified Studies for Literature Identification

RESULTS

No	Study Reference	Findings
`1	(Achmad & Padang, 2024)	Support social (support emotional, instrumental support, support information and support friendship) affects the mental health of Gen Z
2	(Era Mutiara Pertiwi, Dewi Retno Suminar, 2022)	Social media is influential to price self and well-being gen z psychology
3	(Alanzi et al., 2023)	Use of AI (technology) affect mental health of Gen z
4	(Dwidienawati et al., 2025)	Technology influence mental health (anxiety and stress)
5	(G. Srivastava & Pachauri, 2023)	Support social and extroversion, have connection positive with gen z mental wellbeing
6	(Sabillillah et al., 2025)	Exposure content negative , such as cyberbullying, news fake , and body shaming, against level anxiety , depression , and stress
7	(Sharma et al., 2020)	Social media influence welfare social
8	(Setiawati, 2024)	Social media have negative and positive impacts towards mental health
9	(Tang et al., 2024)	Social media has a negative impact on the health of Gen Z netizens
10	(Liu et al., 2021)	Social media give negative impact on mental health, intensity usage and information negative
11	(Ariana et al., 2024)	Social media influential to image body
12	(Sao et al., 2024)	Social media is influential on Mental Health
13	(Zulkarnain et al., 2024)	Online games and social media own influence big to interaction social and mental health of Generation Z
14	(Iskandar, 2025)	Healing has influence positive and significant to the mental condition of Generation Z and improving balance emotional
15	(Zaman, 2024)	Healing has influence positive and significant to the mental condition of Generation Z and improving balance emotional

Protective Factors	Risk Factors
1. Social support a. Emotional support b. Instrumental support c. Information support d. Friendship support 2. Coping mechanisms: Healing	1. Social media in the form of exposure to negative content (cyberbullying, fake news, and body shaming) 2. Technology 3. Online game

Figure 2. Summary of Selected Studies (n=15)

DISCUSSION

Protective factors include social support, emotional support, instrumental support, information support, friendship support: family environment, work and close friends, coping mechanisms: healing. Social support is an individual's perception of the sense of comfort, attention, appreciation, information, and assistance received from others. Thus, social support can be interpreted as a form of help or assistance provided by people closest to them, such as family, friends, best friends, or people around them, in the form of care, attention, comfort, affection, and support when someone faces problems that cannot be solved alone and feel difficult (Achmad & Padang, 2024; Setiyawan & Astuti, 2024).

Social support plays an important role in helping someone overcome mental health problems. This social support refers to the assistance provided by the surrounding environment when someone faces difficulties that cannot be solved alone. Through social support, an individual's mental health can be maintained. This is in line with the view of Santrock (2007), who stated that in early adulthood, support from peers is one of the main sources in overcoming psychological stress. This means that when someone faces mental health problems such as stress, social support from the environment can help overcome them. Forms of social support can be in the form of emotional support, appreciation, practical assistance, and information (Achmad & Padang, 2024).

Emotional support in the form of empathy, affection, and attention from those closest to you has been shown to be very important in reducing career-related stress in early adulthood (Robbani et al., 2025) showing that individuals who receive emotional support are able to influence a person's self-esteem. This is supported by the findings of (Prasetio & Triwahyuni, 2022), which found that emotional support has a positive effect on psychological

disorders experienced by students. individuals facing a quarter-life crisis. In addition to reducing stress, emotional support also plays a role in increasing self-confidence and self-esteem. Based on research by Wijaya and Saprowi (2022), individuals who feel emotionally supported tend to have a more optimistic view of themselves and the future, which makes them better prepared to face career challenges and life changes.

Instrumental support includes practical assistance such as financial support, information, and other resources, and also plays an important role in reducing career stress in young adults (Robbani et al., 2025). Instrumental support can help the recovery process of adolescents who are victims of verbal violence, who often have low self-esteem, so that their mental health and self-acceptance can improve over time. (Pambudi et al., 2023).

Informational support helps individuals cope with stress and challenges of everyday life. This support can help adolescents prepare themselves for their roles (Agustini & Wahyungsih, 2023). Informational support in mental health refers to the provision of knowledge, advice, and guidance that helps individuals understand their psychological conditions and make informed decisions about coping or seeking treatment. This support can include psychoeducation about symptoms, available therapies, coping strategies, and resources for professional help. Research shows that informational support reduces uncertainty, enhances a sense of control, and promotes better psychological adjustment, especially during stressful or traumatic experiences (Thoits, 2011). Meta-analytic evidence also indicates that access to accurate mental-health information is positively associated with overall mental well-being and improved coping outcomes (Harandi, Taghinasab, & Nayeri, 2017). Lack of information can cause adolescents to be unaware of the health problems they may face, including

mental health. Informational support can be received directly (face-to-face) or indirectly through searching for the desired information. Informational support can help individuals make better decisions, develop effective coping strategies, increase self-confidence and self-esteem (Robbani et al., 2025).

Peer support includes positive social relationships from peers, also has an important role in reducing stress and coping mechanisms (Robbani et al., 2025). Research conducted by (Liyanovitasari & Setyoningrum, 2023) states the relationship between emotional support from peers and adolescent self-concept. Support from peers, in the form of encouragement, attention, appreciation, and affection, makes adolescents feel loved, appreciated, and cared for. If individuals feel accepted and appreciated positively, they will tend to develop positive attitudes towards themselves, accept and appreciate themselves more.

Healing is a coping mechanism used to stabilize mental health that can be done formally through therapy or informally through calming and enjoyable activities such as vacations. Healing helps overcome emotional burdens and build psychological resilience (Iskandar, 2025). Healing is related to emotional intelligence, which strengthens mental health and well-being in the long term. Mental condition refers to the stability of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in dealing with life's pressures. A healthy mental condition is characterized by the ability to adapt, maintain social relationships, and manage emotions and stress (WHO, 2022).

Risk factors include social media in the form of exposure to negative content (cyberbullying, fake news, and body shaming), technology and online games. Social media is one of the factors that can disrupt the mental health of Gen Z. Continuous exposure to social media over a long period of time can cause stress, cognitive fatigue and emotional fatigue (Matilda et al., 2025).

The negative impacts of social media itself include anxiety, which occurs when users feel pressured to show an unrealistic self-image or pursue a standard of perfection that is difficult to achieve on social media (Sao et al., 2024). The pressure to meet these expectations can trigger feelings of anxiety (Era Mutiara Pertiwi, Dewi Retno Suminar, 2022). Depression is a result of social media use, which is caused by the difficulty in building authentic relationships with others. Users often focus more on the image of success and happiness on social media, rather than showing their true selves . The phenomenon of ideal life that is often promoted on social media, such as career achievements, luxury vacations, and physical appearance, has become a worrying issue (Tang et al., 2024). Generation Z tends to feel anxious and depressed when they compare their lives to unrealistic images of life. The pressure to maintain a perfect image in cyberspace, which is usually judged by the number of 'likes', comments, and followers, only makes these feelings worse (Setiawati, 2024). Intensive social media use also increases the risk of cyberbullying, indicating the need for action to address this issue. Generation Z, who spend a lot of time on digital platforms, are often victims of cyberbullying in the form of negative comments, spreading gossip, or threats. These experiences can have major psychological impacts, including decreased self-esteem and mental health disorders (Aprilia et al., 2020; Matilda et al., 2025).

The results of a study conducted by (M. A. Srivastava et al., 2025) stated that although most gen z have good sleep patterns (more than 6 hours), more than 50% spend more than 3 hours per day in front of their cellphone screens, which are often related to work or addiction. Understanding unrealistic standards on social media can trigger feelings of inadequacy and identity crises (Era Mutiara Pertiwi, Dewi Retno Suminar, 2022). Generation Z may feel pressured to meet

unreasonable expectations, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, the fear of missing out (FoMO) can add to stress when they see others involved in events or activities that they do not experience (Hasna Farida et al., 2021; Sekar Arum et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important for individuals to realize the importance of 'digital disconnection' as a crucial step in achieving peace and freedom from the negative impacts of excessive digital use. This concept can be understood as digital detoxification, which is a strategy that involves consciously stopping digital activities to improve mental well-being and productivity (Aulia et al., 2019).

The development of technology has had a diverse impact on the quality of life and mental health of Generation Z, with easy access to mental health support becoming increasingly important amidst the pressures of modern life. Technology plays a major role in helping Generation Z build and maintain social connections, especially in an era where face-to-face interaction is often not possible. Technology allows them to communicate directly, see facial expressions, and hear the tone of voice, which provides a more personal experience than just text messaging. While there are sometimes challenges in maintaining a balance between online and real-world relationships, in circumstances like this technology becomes at risk of disrupting mental health (Sari et al., 2024).

Online games can be one of the causes of someone reducing their social interactions (Zulkarnain et al., 2024). Online games are a type of digital game that allows players to connect via the internet, and can be played on computers, smartphones, or other devices (Fajar et al., 2024). Games are activities that aim to seek entertainment, either through physical or mental competition, with certain rules, and sometimes also aim to win prizes. Video games that rely on the internet have become a global phenomenon that is very popular among various age groups, especially among generation Z. Online games allow players to interact in real-time with other players around the world.

According to MD Griffiths (2009), someone who is addicted to online games will show several signs, including: 1) Salience, which is always thinking about online games all day long; 2) Conflict, which affects interpersonal relationships with others; 3) Tolerance, which means playing games more often with high intensity; 4) Mood Modifications, which relates to changes in emotions experienced when playing games; 5) Withdrawal, which causes anxiety if not playing online games; 6) Relapse and Reinstatement, which is the tendency to play excessively after a period of not playing; and 7) Problem, which shows a negative impact on other activities due to online games (Ibnu et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Gen Z mental health is influenced by various factors, both protective and risk factors. Protective factors such as social support from family, friends, and the work environment, as well as effective coping mechanisms, can help strengthen their mental health. Conversely, risk factors such as exposure to negative content on social media (such as cyberbullying, fake news,

and body shaming), as well as addiction to technology and online games, can worsen their mental health. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness of these factors and provide appropriate support, so that Gen Z can better manage stress and life challenges, and maintain their mental well-being.

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