



Integration of Christ's Love in Family Discipleship to Overcome Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in Generation Z

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ABSTRACT: Generation Z (Gen Z) dominates Indonesia's population, numbering 27.94%. Marked by their love for new technologies and fear of becoming "outdated", these traits surely have a good impact on their development. However, these traits rise new negative impact: the fear of missing out (FOMO) which can lead to lower level of life satisfaction, psychological distress, and anxiety. Based on these problems, the study focuses on integrating the love of Christ in family discipleship to overcome FOMO in Gen Z. The authors used qualitative research approach by using literature review. Based on the review of various literature sources and idea framework building, the authors proposed three steps of discipleship in the family according to the love of Christ in overcoming FOMO. Firstly, discipleship is conducted by exposition to *agape* love concept, which has a role in shaping concept of self in the family environment. Gen Z is disciplined by guiding them to receive God's love that provides forgiveness and restoration for sinners. Secondly, discipleship is conducted in family by exposition to *storge* love concept. Parents provide guidance and education lovingly without having to arouse Gen Z's anger. Third, discipleship is conducted by exposition to *philia* love concept, which occurs in an environment of friendship. The family becomes a common place to exhibit Christlikeness in an atmosphere of friendship. Parents become friends to Gen Z and help them experience character and spiritual growth like a friend.

Keywords: Generation Z, FOMO, Discipleship, Family, Love

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2020, the Population Census conducted by the Indonesian government placed Indonesia's population at 271,530,000 people. It was found that Generation Z (Gen Z) comprises the largest population segment, with 75,815,190 people or around 27.94% of the total population. Sociology defines Gen Z as teenagers who are born between 1995-2010 and currently 10-19 years old. Generations before it are designated in similar manner, such as Traditional generation (1922-1945), generation X or the Baby Boomer generation (1946-1965), and generation Y (1966-1994). Meanwhile, those born after 2010 are called

generation Alpha (2011-present) (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi DKI Jakarta, 2021).

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z teenagers have several defining characteristics: they desire multi-tasking careers (doing several activities in one time), seek a lot of experience, like online shopping & new technology, are prone to instant gratification, are familiar with sophisticated gadgets, are active on social media, and are afraid of becoming outdated. One of the technologies desired by Gen Z is smartphones (Prayogo, 2020). This kind of gadget has become part of their lives, which unwittingly creates a generation that does not care about the surrounding environment. It even molds them into being more comfortable to

smartphone use than to do other things, including socializing with others (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016).

Dependence to the internet has become commonplace for many adolescents, especially those living in areas covered by internet services. A report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) noted that 99.16% of teenager's under-19 uses internet (APJII, 2022). In the same survey results, it was found that of all teenager's under-19, those aged 13 years old dominated social media at 57%. Their internet routine consisted of uploading thoughts, ideas, or pictures and stalking which could be done be up to 6 times a day. It is due to the ease of internet access by using smartphones and the low price of internet credit plans for teenagers that this routine can take root.

Cyberspace technology not only has positive impacts, but also negative ones. In this manner, adolescents' characters towards social media have been researched by many. JWT Intelligence stated that a tendency of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is evident in 40% of children who use the internet being researched and that this is categorized as one of the teenage character disorders. FOMO causes anxiety and fear of being left behind by the latest news, which in turn instigates a feeling of antipathy and negativity towards social media. Przybylski et al. (2013) explained that FOMO results in the fear of missing out on breaking news. FOMO has become phenomenal among teenagers, resulting in anxiety if they cannot see or know what their friends or people are doing through social media (Putri et al., 2019).

The use of social media will result in discomfort, explained in three reasons. First, it gives teenagers anxiety, since they are encouraged to create a self-deduced "perfect and ideal" image of themselves for public presentation. Second, since social media presents an opportunity to seek support and reduce anxiety about problems (Wei et al., 2005), it becomes not only a place for them to build

their image, but also a place to lessen rejection from others. Third, due to fear of rejection from parents or friends, Gen Z uses social media to see the activities of people who can potentially reject them (Reed et al., 2015).

Another impact of FOMO is psychological distress. A survey conducted by the Healthy Minds Network for Research on Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health and the American College Health Association on 18,764 Gen Zs found that the prevalence of depression in Gen Z increased during the Covid-19 pandemic by 40.9%. Then within 12 months, it was reported that these respondents exhibited an increase in five features of psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, and stress, increasing by 27.8%, 20.2%, and 34.2% respectively. They reported that these increases affected their academic performance and interfered with their school work. Devi Jatmika 1390 also found that symptoms of depression and anxiety significantly cause psychological distress. Previous research has identified that this indifferent behavior on social relationships with others will impact adolescents' personality and attitudes such as insecurity, internet addiction, game addiction, fear of missing out on information (FOMO), lack of self-control, and anxiety (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019).

In the church, Gen Zs represent the next generation of Christianity in the future. One of the main contributions to solving Gen Z problems is the reactivation of Christian parents' role in discipling the family. Based on a survey conducted by BRC, parents have a huge role (73%) in guiding their children to grow in the faith. In addition to the huge parental role, Christian education also plays a role in directing Gen Zs (Irawan et al., 2018; Research Center, 2018). It is proven to be helpful to direct Gen Zs in dealing with FOMO.

Discipleship in the family is very important in overcoming FOMO. According to research by Haryono (2021), discipleship in the family existed since the New Testament era, as shown in Acts 2:41-47 (Zaluchu, 2019). However, this

discipleship model was prepared and organized by Jesus during His earthly ministry. The model continued to be used in planting churches in Asia Minor and Europe (Acts 16:1-12).

Tafona'o (2016) said that Christian education from family plays a very significant role, especially today. Christian education builds cooperation between family members in shaping the character of adolescents in socializing. Relationships between family members also determine the character growth of today's adolescents, as shown in the way the adolescents imitate or exemplify their parents' behavior towards the circumstances around them (Tafona'o, 2016). Among other things, parents are responsible to disciple children from infancy. In particular, Christian parents should teach their children through the methods taught in the Bible as the basis of Christian education (Diana, 2019; Wesley et al., 2021). Education, including discipleship within the family, is continuous and life-long. Therefore, the most important thing about discipleship in the family is its impact in building foundation for a child's future, a sentiment supported by Hastuti (2013), stating that if parents ignore this, they may allow their children to be educated by the world of technology and will eventually experience very severe FOMO problems.

Gen Z desperately needs discipleship within the family. Parents should build their children according to God's words in character to enable Biblical principles to take root in their life, which in turn will transform them into spiritually mature individuals not only equipped with intelligence but strong character in accordance with God's words (Hartono, 2018). Education principled on God's word helps in forming good character (Darmawan & Objantoro, 2020; Katarina & Darmawan, 2019; Sidjabat, 2011). Results of Christ-centered Christian education in the family are expected to overcome the social problems experienced by Gen Z, one of which is FOMO.

Family is the first place of learning for children. It is an important basis for them to live a life with Biblical values. Parents set examples in the

family and children will follow them, and in process will add them as useful knowledge for his/her own betterment. Parents have responsibility to help their children from an early age is in terms of honesty, integrity, love, and whatsoever things good as written in the Bible, as well as in praise and worship. These influences will create divinely-inspired principles that parents and children will follow, which in turn enable them to build mutual understanding with each other, especially in terms of their shared faith in Jesus. In this kind of environment, the building of good character will be facilitated, resulting in children who can reflect God's character within them.

Based on the explanation above, FOMO is a problem in the world of adolescents and family is an important community that can help them. Inferring the background, it is in the author's understanding and belief that the role of discipleship is very influential in shaping Christlike character in facing problems that exist in Gen Z. Therefore, a research question is raised: How does family discipleship in the family overcome FOMO in Gen Z by integrating the love of Christ? The purpose of this study is to explain the concept of integration the love of Christ in family discipleship to overcoming FOMO in Gen Z.

METHOD

This research is qualitative and employs literature review. It was carried out by collecting literature sources, both primary and secondary. This study categorizes data according to search results and compiles them in a descriptive presentation. Later stages saw the processing of data and/or referenced citations for display as research results, the processed research results' summarizing into complete information, and its interpretation to draw conclusions (Darmalaksana et al., 2018). Thematic descriptive presentation was used to make it easier for readers to understand the ideas in this study. Zaluchu (2021) stated that humanities observes the occurring phenomenon in the world and has a nature of creativity, flexibility, and openness to other

sources. Therefore, various relevant sources are used in this study so as to produce sharper and new ideas, because they are open to interaction with various sources.

Previous research has dug deep the problems of today's adolescents so that they can explore the findings and explore the actions taken. This can create opportunities for further research with theoretical results and tentative conclusions. This study focuses on finding discipleship actions that can be done in the family after reviewing various relevant literature sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing various relevant literature sources, there are some important principles about integrating the love of Christ in family discipleship to overcome FOMO in Gen Z.

Discipling with *agape*

A person with FOMO has lower levels of life satisfaction or continues to feel less self-esteem due to his/her constant self-comparison of his/her own life to others. Researches in this field showed that chronic FOMO can affect an individual's ability to stay up to date and to interact on social media (Maysitoh et al., 2020). FOMO also resulted in feelings of anxiety in one's life (Rahayuningsih & Sumaryanti, 2022). Based on these results, it is apparent that Gen Zs with FOMO needs life satisfaction, namely love. Thus, family discipleship needs to integrate a perfect love, namely *agape*. *Agape*, or unconditional love, is the most noble concept of love as referred to by the Bible.

The Bible shows the concept of God's love in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). The parable depicts a father's attitude towards his youngest son who had left home and spent his inheritance lavishly. The youngest child's return did not make him angry, but made him welcome the son warmly and joyfully. When faced with similar situation, parents in general will feel angry at their children who make mistakes. The father's attitude in the parable of the prodigal son illustrates sincere

love, since it is expressed not within the boundaries of family relationship but transcends it. The parable as told by Luke 15:11–32 portrays God as the father and humans as the son. In the parable, God awaits humans with love, forgiveness, and the gift of new life (Burke, 2013; Chandra, 2021). The father's reunion with his youngest child shows his attitudes of loving the child and rebuilding the child's self-concept. The son is neither a servant nor the successor of power and property to his father, but is a part of the whole family.

Gunawan (2020) explained that *agape* is characterized by its prioritization of happiness for others, selflessness, and recompense of evil deeds not by similar one, but by good deeds. This concept is visibly illustrated further in God's forgiveness to sinful humans through Jesus' sacrifice. Humans who sin should receive punishment for their sins, but in God's grace humans are forgiven by God through the sacrificial work, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In view of FOMO, it is strongly suggested for *agape* to be integrated, even prioritized in family discipleship. Wei et al., (2005) explained that Gen Zs with FOMO use social media as an effort to reduce anxiety about problems. If so, *agape* that forgives and gives hope should be highlighted so that anxiety problems can be overcome (Berkhof & Til, 2013; Gaskin, 2023).

In creating a healthy Christian family, one should be built on a solid foundation. Many Christian families are fragile because their faith is built on the basis of material benefits. A solid foundation for building a Christian family is *agape* love concept. Without this, families will be fragile and easily broken. Love should not be understood as expressing kind words and sentiments but also showing actions in daily life. Love must always be the foundation of Christian family life in order to create healthy Christian families which in turn influence the church to be the light and salt of this world (Gunawan, 2020). Through *agape*-integrating discipleship, Gen Zs with FOMO are enabled to obtain life satisfaction. An *agape*-integrated

discipleship illustrates the one that should be present in the family of God.

Agape's integration in family discipleship to overcome FOMO implies a prioritization of forgiveness in discipling. Forgiveness based on the love of Christ results in the restoration of self-concept. Sin causes human's self-concept to be corrupted, which in turn causes psychological problems, one of them is anxiety about not being able to keep up with others. Because of sin, humans lost the image and likeness of God, which necessitates God as the True Image to be present in the world and to sacrifice Himself to effect human restoration (Angeline & Ronda, 2011; Hoekema, 2009). Self-concept damage causes mistreatment to oneself, one of which is FOMO, which therefore necessitates a discipleship approach that instills God's forgiveness in sinful humans to overcome it. Nggebu (2022) explained that parents' role is central in the formation of self-concept. In this case, the self-concept formation in the family environment is done by guiding adolescents to receive God's love and to express their love by loving like God who unconditionally love sinful humans. Thus, adolescents are helped to recover the right, God-centered self-concept to overcome FOMO.

Discipling with *Storge*

FOMO induces psychological distress. Based on a survey conducted by the Healthy Minds Network for Research on Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health and the American College Health Association on 18,764 Gen Zs, depression increased during the Covid-19 pandemic by 40.9% (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). Other symptoms of psychological distress include feelings of loneliness, helplessness, anger, fear, insomnia, avoiding stress, nightmares, dizziness, and palpitations (Hayran & Anik, 2021; Rifaya, 2022; Tatlı & Ergin, 2022). The causes of such symptoms are triggered by stressors in the form of uncertainty, loss of control, helplessness, negative perception (Trikusuma & Hendriani, 2021).

It is thus necessary for family discipleship to integrate values of *storge* concept of love, since it is the classification of love present in family. *Storge*, while primarily is the love parents give to their children and vice versa, also covers their children's children and future generations. The Bible in Ephesians 6:4 provides a model of this concept's application. Henry (1706, 2015) explained that Ephesians 6:4 instructs believer to disciple their children without arousing anger and exercising inappropriate violence & strict regimen but with love, tenderness, and compassion. In this manner, Ephesians 6:4 agrees with the notion that youths are educated in a family atmosphere through discipline and necessary improvements (O'Brien, 1999, 2013; Patty et al., 2020; Roy & Yosef, 2019; Waharman, 2018). In addition, Henry (1706, 2015) also explained about Ephesians 6:4 that parents not only raise them physically, but also bring them in doctrine and counsel. This means that in a family setting, youths are educated as human beings, in doctrine and counsel. Youth are also disciplined to become Christians in the light of God's word so as to become Christlike.

The above explanation implies that parents are responsible for loving their children. *Storge* represents an intimate loving relationship established in a family or household. Parents have a very important role in loving their children deeply, in which they should continue to train their children to apply deeply the value of compassion. By presenting the teachings of God's word lovingly, it results in the internalization of Christian values. Thorough application of family sentimental values to children will certainly affect their character and future, especially in their ability to love and support each other. In this case, parents also need to understand their child's personality so that the child can apply lessons they learned. In applying parental affection, parents need wisdom in its absolute. Love itself is good; it is transformed into harm by its inappropriate application. Parents should teach love in the family to mirror the love of Jesus, which regardless of who receives it or to whom it is directed, should be

applied unto others (Ndolu et al., 2020). The love given by parents makes Gen Zs strong and protected from FOMO and its impacts. It is therefore illustrating discipleship in an intact family.

Discipling with *phileo*

FOMO effects include loneliness, anxiety, and fear of being left behind by latest happenings which can skepticize them to social media. In her research, Rifaya (2022) found early adult TikTok users' loneliness level is parallel to their sense of FOMO, meaning that the more lonely one is, the higher his/her FOMO sense will be, and vice versa. Przybylski et al. (2013) stated that FOMO induces fear of missing out on the latest happenings, especially information from friends. This condition can interfere with a person's mental health and spiritual life. In terms of loneliness, it can initiate rise to a damaged self-concept that gives rise to self-destructive behaviors (Atkinson et al., 2010; Sulistyorini & Sabarisman, 2017). Therefore, one that has this condition requires help so as to avoid self-destructive behavior. Family is the closest social environment and has an important role in providing help.

It is in this view that values in *phileo* love concept should be integrated in family discipleship. *Phileo* is a concept of love happening between friends or siblings. It is different from the unconditional *agape*, in which it involves acts of giving and receiving. This concept is described as having kindness and generosity as its features (Oematan, 2022). Other features are mutual beneficence, mutual pleasing, and mutual admiration, or in other words, reciprocity. *Phileo* describes the loving relationship between Christ and His disciples and friends (Susanti, 2020). Through *phileo*-integrating discipleship, one can help Gen Z to build self-concept and social behavior so as to avoid FOMO.

Ellithorpe (2022) described that friendship is an informal relationship, varying in level of commitment and without emotional attachment. In principle however, friendship is a chosen or

voluntary relationship with mutual benefits in mind. There are no emotion bonds in this relationship. Ellithorpe (2022) also explained the nature of friendship "as innate to being human, to the human vocation, and to life within the broader community". Friendship can be understood as being human in one's vocation to relate in his/her community without being bound by commitment or emotional attachment but being mutually beneficial, pleasant, and admiring. Based on this understanding, *phileo*-integrating discipleship is one that occurs in an environment of mutual influence as a community.

Family relationship should not only be understood as parent-children or sibling relationships, but friendly relationships as well. Family discipleship is one carried out in friendliness to guide adolescents to face their anxiety and fear about various problems. It is similar to what Jesus did to His disciples outside the Twelve Disciples circle. There were times when He interacted with His other disciples to ease their anxiety over life's struggles, showing that Jesus set an example of discipling the disciples in a more fluid and open friendly atmosphere (Frazee & Noland, 2016; Karnawati et al., 2019; Kristanti et al., 2020). After His resurrection, Jesus met with the disciples and ate together in an atmosphere of more open relationship. In this situation, the disciples were not feeling forced, but were conscious in having a relationship with Christ. This atmosphere encourages the disciples to become stronger.

Psychologically, there are times when adolescents want to interact in a more open and free relationship. In research conducted by Mary et al. (2022) on college students, it was found that a dialogical and friendly learning approach successfully helped the process of internalizing knowledge about sin and humans. Based on this principle, family at any time need to change their atmosphere of relationships to be more fluid, which means a loving and more friendly one. Family has a power to internalize their values to their adolescents (Santrock, 1999), and this friendlier approach makes it easier for them to do it. In addition, parents

need to create an atmosphere open to sharing information so as to avoid their adolescents' anxiety of losing information, as Reed (2015) argued that excessive use of social media occurs because of fear of rejection from parents or friends. Adolescents use social media to see the activities of people who could potentially reject them (Reed et al., 2015). Therefore, parents should make home a friendly and accepting place to them.

Hence, it is these components that ensures a discipleship process that leads to Christlikeness to work well. By being friends, parents can open boundaries that hinder relationships and openness. Jesus exemplified the way to present an atmosphere of friendship that changes one's self-concept and life values. In His encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus did not present Himself like other religious leaders who judged sinners (Karnawati et al., 2020), but differently with the love of friendship which then opens a dialogue towards restoration of the Samaritan's self-concept and life values. This

same pattern can be exercised by integrating *phileo* in family discipleship.

CONCLUSION

Family discipleship by parents centered on the love of Christ is important in shaping Gen Z to avoid Fear of Missing Out. In overcoming this problem, youths are disciplined through the love of Christ, understood in three concepts: *agape*, *storge*, and *phileo*. The *agape* concept is used in discipleship to form the youth's self-concept. Parents lead their youths to receive God's love, which in turn will restore their self-concept. The *storge* love concept is important, as the Bible emphasizes its role in guiding children. In applying *storge* concept, parents educate their children to become Christlike with warmth and without arousing anger. *Phileo* is important in building a friendly atmosphere in the family dynamics. Parents position themselves as their children's friends & equal partners in learning together from God's word, not as a superior in a parent-child hierarchy.

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