

STUDENT SERVICE MANAGEMENT BASED ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERATION Z IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A CASE STUDY OF STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 2, NORTH ACEH

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ABSTRACT

The rise of Generation Z as the dominant student group in the digital era demands that madrasahs reformulate educational service strategies to become more adaptive, personalized, and participatory. This study aims to formulate a student service management strategy tailored to Generation Z characteristics, using a case study at MAN 2 Aceh Utara. A descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, then examined using thematic analysis. Key findings reveal that: (1) service planning is structurally sound but lacks personalization; (2) digital-based implementation is present but student participation remains low; (3) supervision is overly administrative and lacks contextual relevance; and (4) service development is creative but not yet strategically integrated. This study offers a conceptual framework that integrates Educational Service Management Theory, Generation Z Theory, and Transformational Leadership in Education to build services that are digitally relevant and aligned with Islamic educational values. Its practical contribution lies in promoting personalization, student voice, and transformative leadership in madrasahs. Future research is encouraged to apply and validate this model in various cultural and institutional contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of 21st-century digital transformation, the world of education is facing rapid and dynamic changes. Educational institutions, including madrasahs, are required not only to adapt to developments in information technology but also to be responsive to the characteristics of the generation of students they serve. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is known as “digital natives” who have been familiar with gadgets, the internet, and virtual social interactions as part of their daily lives from an early age (Hernandez-de-Menendez et

al., 2020). The distinctive characteristics of this generation are reflected in their interactive learning styles, preference for fast and visual communication, and expectations for educational services that are personalized, flexible, and technology-based. Therefore, the main challenge for contemporary madrasahs is to design a student service system that is not only effective but also relevant and transformative, in line with the needs and mindset of Generation Z (Maram & Fanani, 2025); (Prayesti et al., 2025).

In Indonesia in particular, various national education policies and regulations have encouraged madrasahs to improve the quality of their digital-based services, with an emphasis on humanistic and learner-centered approaches. The implementation of digital literacy in the management of educational services is no longer optional; rather, it has become an urgent necessity that requires the integration of technology, Islamic values, and the principles of participatory education (Juhairiah et al., 2024); (Kusuma et al., 2025). In this context, educational management plays a crucial role, particularly in providing services to students that encompass academic support, counseling, personal development, and the use of digital technology to facilitate an adaptive and sustainable learning process (Babu et al., 2024).

However, there is a clear gap between policy ideals and the reality of implementation on the ground. Many madrasahs still provide services to students in a conventional manner, relying on routine administrative procedures and a one-size-fits-all approach, without taking into account the complexities of Generation Z, which requires a more individualized, interactive, and contextual approach (Nisa et al., 2024); (Amin & Aman, 2025). This phenomenon can be observed, for example, at State Islamic High School 2 in North Aceh, which despite having achieved significant progress in terms of accreditation (A/95), academic performance, and the management of facilities and infrastructure such as computer labs, multimedia rooms, and personal development programs (Qur'an memorization, sewing skills, and computer technology) it still faces new challenges in managing Generation Z students, who will dominate the student population by 2025.

These challenges are not only technical in nature but also involve managerial and educational leadership dimensions. This reality highlights the need to transform the management of educational services in madrasahs, as emphasized in various recent studies (Khunaivi et al., 2025); (Nikmatullah et al., 2023). In theory, the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling)-based service management model offers a systemic framework for adaptive planning, organized implementation, participatory engagement, and evaluation based on students' needs. However, in practice, service implementation in many madrasahs remains largely administrative and has not yet fully addressed the psychosocial, motivational, and learning style aspects specific to Generation Z (Mursidi et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the theory of transformational leadership in education emphasizes the importance of the role of the madrasah principal as an agent of change who is able to motivate, inspire, and guide the entire educational ecosystem toward innovation and adaptation (Saputro & Arif, 2025). Unfortunately, there are still many madrasah leaders who have not fully integrated this leadership

approach into their services for students. This is due to various factors, ranging from a lack of digital literacy and resistance to change to a lack of technology-based and generational leadership training (Amin & Aman, 2025).

Based on a review of the literature, a number of studies have addressed student service management in general as well as digital transformation in education, but very few have explicitly linked service management approaches to the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z in the context of madrasahs in rural areas (Juhairiah et al., 2024); (Nisa et al., 2024); (Kusuma et al., 2025); (Khunaivi et al., 2025). This creates a significant literature gap, particularly in local contexts such as North Aceh, where cultural values, religiosity, and technological developments interact with one another in the educational process (Khunaivi et al., 2025); (Nikmatullah et al., 2023). This gap in the literature calls for a new approach that is not only normative but also contextual and practical.

The research question addressed in this study is: How can student service management strategies be effectively designed and implemented in the context of Generation Z's characteristics in the digital age, specifically at State Senior High School 2, North Aceh? This issue is important because it concerns the future effectiveness of the madrasah education system in nurturing a generation that will become the nation's future leaders, particularly in regions undergoing digital transformation, such as North Aceh.

Therefore, this study is academically significant because it offers a novel approach in the form of the integration or combination of three major theories Educational Service Management, the Theory of Generation Z, and Transformational Leadership in Education to develop a contextual managerial framework for student services (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020); (Babu et al., 2024); (Saputro & Arif, 2025). In practical terms, the findings of this study are expected to serve as the basis for internal policy-making at madrasahs in designing service systems that are more adaptive, personalized, and competitive in the digital age. This model can also be replicated at other madrasahs with similar characteristics, thereby making a significant contribution to the formulation of character-based educational policies for the next generation (Rogers, 1983).

By combining theoretical analysis, field observations, and critical reflection on the state of student services at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Aceh Utara, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of madrasah management practices based on generational characteristics. The key innovation proposed is a Gen Z-based student service management model tailored to local needs, the potential for digitalization, and transformational leadership (Rogers, 1983). This

study also addresses the need for an updated student service system that is not only informative but also transformative.

This study's general objective is to analyze and formulate a student service management strategy based on the characteristics of Generation Z in a digital context at State Islamic High School 2, North Aceh, in order to improve the effectiveness of student guidance, personalized services, and the school's adaptation to changing times.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design to understand student service management strategies based on Generation Z characteristics in a digital context at State Islamic High School 2, North Aceh. This approach was chosen because it aims to explore in depth the meanings, values, and experiences of participants in a specific educational institution, such as one grounded in local values and religiosity (Creswell, 2013). The case study design is considered appropriate for addressing the question of "how" managerial processes are carried out in a complex and dynamic social environment, and it allows for a rich exploration of the context and practices of student service management (Yin, 2003); (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This study also adopts a naturalistic paradigm that emphasizes direct interaction between the researcher and participants in a natural setting without manipulating variables (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); (Ritzer, 2007). This paradigm views social reality as a subjective construction that must be understood from the participants' emic perspective through a reflective and participatory process. Therefore, the researcher serves as the primary instrument in the collection, interpretation, and validation of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The unit of analysis in this study is the practice of digital-based student service management, which encompasses four main dimensions: service planning, implementation, monitoring, and development. The focus of observation is directed at the key actors in the madrasah service system, namely the madrasah principal, guidance and counseling (BK) teachers, and Generation Z students as service users. The main informants consisted of madrasah principals, guidance and counseling teachers, and several student representatives from Generation Z. Observations were conducted to examine counseling activities, self-development activities, and the madrasah's use of digital platforms. Meanwhile, documentation was collected from internal policy archives, student service program reports, and the digital devices and media used in service delivery.

The data collection methods consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Informants were

selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the delivery of student services and their interactions with the madrasah's digital platform (Miles et al., 2014). Interviews were conducted with the madrasah principal, guidance counselors, and student representatives from Generation Z. Observations were used to monitor counseling and self-development activities, while documentation included student service policy records and the digital media used.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach as developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The stages in this process include: (1) familiarization with the data; (2) initial coding; (3) identification of themes; (4) review of themes; (5) definition of themes; and (6) development of thematic narratives. This analysis allows researchers to identify patterns and meanings emerging from participants' experiences as well as the social dynamics involved in the implementation of digital-based student service management.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, source triangulation (between informants and data types) and methodological triangulation (interviews, observations, and documentation) were conducted, along with data confirmation (member checking) with informants to ensure that the researchers' interpretations aligned with the reality they experienced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); (Agostinho, 2005). The validity of the findings is further supported by field notes, critical reflections, and an audit trail of the data, as recommended in naturalistic research (Guba, 1981); (Janesick, 2001); (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This methodology is consistent with previous studies that have examined the transformation of madrasah management in the digital age, technology-based approaches to student services, and the integration of cultural values into educational practices (Saputro & Arif, 2025); (Khunaivi et al., 2025); (Nisa et al., 2024); (Kusuma et al., 2025). Thus, this approach is believed to be relevant for exploring student service management strategies in the context of madrasah digitization in rural areas, particularly at State Senior High School 2 in North Aceh.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study reveals four key findings regarding student service management practices tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Aceh Utara. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and internal documentation, which were analyzed using a naturalistic approach through an intrinsic case study methodology. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); (Creswell, 2013)

1. Service Planning: Improving, but Not Yet Personalized

The initial findings indicate that student service planning at State Madrasah Aliyah 2 in North Aceh has been carried out systematically through well-documented annual strategic programs, as reflected in the consistency of the scheduling of activities and planning documents (Ogunsola et al., 2024). According to (Jaleel et al., 2025) These administrative aspects form a stable structural foundation, but they do not automatically guarantee the overall success of the services. The main shortcoming of the service programs at State Islamic High School 2 in North Aceh lies in the lack of integration of students' individual needs into the planning process. The programs currently in place remain homogeneous and do not yet reflect the diversity of learning styles and the unique preferences of today's Generation Z (Nisa et al., 2024). *"We develop our program at the beginning of each year, but so far there has been no specific assessment of students' individual needs. The schedule is already in place, but it's still general,"* said the principal of State Senior High School of North Aceh Number 2 (Wawancara, 2025)

As emphasized by (Strauss & Howe, 1991), Generation Z has characteristics that are very different from those of previous generations; they are more individualistic, digital natives, and have high expectations regarding relevance, personalization, and active engagement in the learning process. (Seemiller & Grace, 2016) He added that this generation not only wants to be actively involved in learning, but also demands a space that allows for self-development in line with their personal interests and aspirations. *"The self-development program at school is good, but I feel like it's not for me. It doesn't align with my interests,"* said an 11th-grade student (Wawancara, 2025). When the service approach fails to address these needs, students' emotional engagement with the program tends to be low, which ultimately affects the overall effectiveness of the program's implementation (Babu et al., 2024).

The importance of prioritizing a personalized service approach is further reinforced by the learner-centered paradigm (Ryndak & Saldaeva, 2020), where mapping students' interests and aspirations serves as the primary basis for planning. Differentiated services have been shown to increase student engagement and a sense of ownership toward educational institutions (Markina & Mollá, 2022). In this context, a one-size-fits-all approach such as generic leadership training and motivational seminars is no longer sufficient (Ogunsola et al., 2024); (Nisa et al., 2024).

The digital age calls for educational designs that are flexible and adaptable to the characteristics of learners (Agostinho, 2005). The service programs at State Islamic High School Number 2 in North

Aceh, which are still one-size-fits-all and not tailored to individual needs, do not meet Generation Z's expectations for a relevant and authentic learning experience (Karashchuk et al., 2020); (Álvarez, 2024). Dalam kerangka Strauss-Howe, Generasi Z merupakan generasi yang berada pada fase yang menuntut pencarian makna, relevansi, dan keaslian dalam proses pendidikannya (Strauss & Howe, 1991). The transformation of educational services is not just a matter of technical digitization, but also a reorientation toward students as unique individuals (Nikmatullah et al., 2023); (Nisa et al., 2024). Unfortunately, this transformation has not yet fully led to personalized services, whether in the curriculum or in support systems such as counseling. *"Most of the programs we run are still based on templates from previous years,"* explained the student affairs teacher (Wawancara, 2025).

(Gorton & Snowden, 1993) It is important to remember that service planning must be dynamic and adapt to changes in students' characteristics. When students feel that there is no connection between the program and their personal aspirations, disengagement will set in and have a negative impact on their motivation and academic achievement (Braun & Clarke, 2006b). Therefore, a more personalized service planning strategy is needed. One recommended approach is to develop self-development programs based on an assessment of each student's individual interests and potential, as emphasized by (Rogers, 1983) in the theory of innovation diffusion. This can be implemented by integrating individual counseling sessions, student interest surveys, and the use of artificial intelligence-based technology to design adaptive learning profiles (Agostinho, 2005); (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

However, implementing this approach faces serious challenges; for example, a shortage of teachers and a lack of institutional support often pose major obstacles to the implementation of a learner-centered approach (Markina & Mollá, 2022); . External collaboration with alumni, industry, and nongovernmental organizations is a strategic solution that can enrich the variety and scope of services (Ogunsola et al., 2024); (McGaha, 2018) regarding opportunities for personal development. *"There are some students who don't seem enthusiastic about personal development activities. When I asked them, they said the activities didn't match their interests,"* said a homeroom teacher for the 11th-grade science class (Wawancara, 2025).

In the context of Islamic education, service planning must also take into account transformative and spiritual values. Digital-based services must be able to reflect Islamic values as well as students' personal characteristics (Nikmatullah et al., 2023); (Nisa et al., 2024). This is in line with the view that (Agostinho, 2005), which emphasizes the importance of designing services that address students' emotional

and social dimensions in order to foster students' agency or responsibility for their own learning.

Planning services based on Gen Z characteristics is not merely a technical necessity, but a fundamental strategy for building an inclusive, flexible, and meaningful learning ecosystem. A holistic approach, program personalization, and external collaboration are the three main pillars of reforming madrasah educational services in the digital age (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). *"We don't yet have complete data on students' interests. Sometimes it's based only on observations or brief Q&A sessions during counseling,"* said the guidance counselor at State Islamic High School No 2 North Aceh (Wawancara, 2025).

A structured individual counseling system is essential to this personalized service. The integration of emotional, spiritual, and academic aspects has been shown to have a significant impact on students' mental readiness and academic success (Nemashakwe & Mpofu, 2025). Practices such as regular one-on-one consultations, homeroom teachers' reflections, and student involvement in developing personal growth plans should be part of the madrasah's service design. *"I'd like there to be a specific time to talk with teachers about my aspirations and personal issues, but so far there haven't been any such sessions,"* said a 10th-grade student (Wawancara, 2025). Based on interviews with guidance counselors, *"Our counseling approach is more reactive. Students come to us when they have a problem, not for the purpose of self-development,"* explained one of the guidance counselors. (Wawancara, 2025). This confirms that the counseling component has not yet been integrated into the strategic planning for self-development services.

However, a realistic assessment of internal challenges remains important. A thematic assessment that acknowledges the social realities of the institution needs to be part of the ongoing reflection process (Braun & Clarke, 2006b). In this regard, a sustainable collaborative strategy with external stakeholders is essential to address resource constraints and deliver transformative and context-specific educational services. *"We realize there is still much room for improvement. The challenges lie primarily in the number of staff and teachers' time constraints,"* said the Deputy Principal for Student Affairs (Wawancara, 2025).

2. Service Delivery: Technologically Adaptive but with Limited Participation

Research findings indicate that the use of technology in delivering educational services has become an integral part of educational management practices in the digital age. Various platforms, such as e-learning, academic information systems, and social media, have been widely adopted as tools for communication, reporting, and the delivery of learning materials. However, although technology

has permeated nearly every aspect of educational services, student involvement in the development and evaluation of digital-based educational services remains limited to passive participation. In many cases, students tend to be merely recipients of information, with no opportunity to contribute to the design or evaluation of the services they use (Febaliza et al., 2025). *"We were only told to log in to the e-learning platform to check our assignments, but we were never asked for our opinion on whether the system was helpful or not,"* said one of the 11th-grade students (Wawancara, 2025).

This situation highlights a gap between the potential of digital technology as an enabler of participatory learning and the reality of its implementation, which remains predominantly administratively oriented. Generation Z, known as digital natives, tends to use technology primarily to access information rather than as a tool for active participation in the learning process and service development (Duterte, 2024); (Balalle, 2024). Digital platforms, which are ideally designed to encourage collaboration and discussion, are instead often used merely as tools for collecting assignments or submitting reports, without any pedagogical strategy capable of fostering critical engagement among students. *"We use digital platforms every day, but only to take attendance or check announcements. We're never invited to participate in discussions using technology,"* said a 12th-grade student. (Wawancara, 2025).

In the context of guidance and counseling (BK) services, the phenomenon of students' passive involvement is becoming increasingly apparent. Teachers acknowledge that the level of student participation in the development of service programs remains very low. Although digital systems such as surveys and assessments have been used, student participation is still limited to filling out data forms without the opportunity to provide substantive feedback on the content or design of the services developed for them. Even in the implementation of the Smart Digital Interactive Service, which is considered effective and easily accessible, opportunities for student participation have not been fully developed (Ristianti et al., 2025). This situation indicates a gap between technological innovation and the fundamental principles of guidance, which are oriented toward active participation and the individual needs of students. The ongoing digital transformation has not yet been fully accompanied by a paradigm shift that promotes student agency and ownership of the educational service process (Balalle, 2024). *"We once filled out a survey about school services, but it was all multiple-choice questions there was no place to write our opinions,"* said an 11th-grade student (Wawancara, 2025).

Limited student participation in guidance and counseling services reflects broader challenges in implementing inclusive and participatory educational

services. A similar phenomenon is also found in Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs and pesantren, particularly the State Senior High School 2 in North Aceh. Although various forms of digitization have been implemented—such as a Learning Management System (LMS) and digital attendance tracking—their use remains limited to technical and administrative purposes. Research on the transformation of Islamic education indicates that technology has not yet been utilized as a tool for student empowerment, but rather merely as an instrument for improving the efficiency of the educational process (Nikmatullah et al., 2023); (Kusuma et al., 2025). As a result, students or boarding school students are not yet fully involved in educational decision-making processes that directly affect their learning experiences. *“When we have ideas for guidance and counseling activities, we’re not sure who to share them with. It feels like we’re not involved in the process,”* said a female student from 10th grade (Wawancara, 2025).

Testimonies from guidance counselors further reinforce these findings. *“We distribute digital questionnaires, but students rarely voice their opinions about the content of the services,”* said one guidance counsellor (Wawancara, 2025). This statement underscores the low effectiveness of the participatory mechanisms provided through digital platforms. Although the technical tools are available, there is no specific strategy to ensure that students’ voices are truly heard and taken into account in the development of services. *“Digital attendance is certainly convenient, but it’s no different from a paper attendance book, because we don’t feel involved in anything,”* explained one student from the science track (Wawancara, 2025).

To optimize the potential of technology, a paradigm shift is needed from a technology-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. One recommended strategy is to involve students as co-creators in the process of developing digital educational services (Ryndak & Saldaeva, 2020). This approach can be implemented through digital forums, feedback loops, and participatory program design that involves students from the planning stage through evaluation. In this way, digital platforms can evolve into spaces for dialogue that foster reflective and collaborative learning, rather than serving merely as administrative tools. *“We distribute digital questionnaires, but students rarely voice their opinions about the content of the services,”* said a guidance counselor at State Islamic High School 2, North Aceh (Wawancara, 2025).

Furthermore, low student participation is also influenced by the still-traditional leadership styles and managerial approaches of educational institutions. Many teachers and policymakers still view students as objects of service rather than as stakeholders. From the perspective of Educational Service Management, educational services should be

responsive and participatory, with students recognized as key stakeholders in the education system (Gorton & Snowden, 1993). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of teachers and school administrators to apply technology based on a collaborative and inclusive approach at every stage of the educational process. *“Sometimes we want to suggest features or activities for the school app, but we don’t know where to submit them,”* said a 12th-grade student (Wawancara, 2025).

Finally, the naturalistic approach to e-learning development emphasizes that the effectiveness of technology can only be achieved when accompanied by an understanding of the social context, cultural values, and authentic participation of users (Agostinho, 2005). This means that student participation should not be interpreted merely as physical attendance or simply access to an online platform, but rather as a meaningful contribution to the learning process and decision-making regarding the delivery of educational services as a whole. *“There was an online training session once, but we just watched a video. There was no Q&A session or discussion,”* said an 11th-grade student while describing his experience (Wawancara, 2025).

3. Service Oversight: Formalities-Driven and Lacking Context

Supervision of educational services at State Senior High School 2 in North Aceh is still dominated by a formalistic and administrative approach, which leaves little room for pedagogical reflection and responsiveness to students’ actual needs. This type of supervision tends to be trapped in the logic of reporting and documentation, without truly assessing the extent to which these services have a tangible impact on students (Gordon, 2019); (Balalle, 2024).

Field findings reveal that most students do not understand the purpose of the services available at school, such as the guidance and counseling program. One student stated, *“I never knew what the guidance and counseling room at school was actually for. No one ever explained it to me, and I thought it was only for students with problems.”* (Wawancara, 2025). Many students don’t even know who their counselor is or how that service is supposed to help them (Bryson, 2016); (Mitra, 2008). *“I don’t know who our guidance counselor is. Maybe there is one, but I’ve never been asked to talk about personal issues or my plans for the future,”* said one of the 11th-grade students (Wawancara, 2025). This reflects a gap in perception and communication between program organizers and beneficiaries—a situation that can reduce the effectiveness of educational services (Sewell et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a one-size-fits-all approach to supervision often overlooks the social, cultural, and geographic contexts in which services are provided. Programs designed for urban settings, for example, cannot simply be applied in rural areas without

adaptation. Students in rural areas often need programs focused on practical skills or technological literacy, rather than general counseling services, which tend to be abstract (Vossoughi et al., 2021); (Carrington et al., 2024); (Menon, 2024). One teacher said, *"We need basic technology training for our students, because many of them aren't used to digital devices. General counseling alone isn't enough."* (Wawancara, 2025).

Therefore, a paradigm shift is needed from a control-based monitoring approach to a collaboration-based approach. A participatory monitoring model allows students to participate in the process of evaluating and developing services, thereby increasing the relevance and effectiveness of the program (Wolf et al., 2024); (Mitra, 2008). Model *"Students as Partners,"* developed by (Bryson, 2016) and a participatory evaluation framework from (Boyce et al., 2025) This demonstrates that student involvement increases a sense of ownership, active participation, and trust in educational institutions. One student said, *"When we're involved in planning school activities, we feel more motivated to participate. It feels like it's our own program."* (Wawancara, 2025)

Furthermore, student participation has been shown to strengthen trust between students and the school. When students feel that their voices are heard and their experiences are used as the basis for improving services, their engagement increases significantly (Regassa & Mamo, 2024). In this context, supervision is not merely a control mechanism, but also a means of fostering dialogue and building mutual trust between students and educational institutions.

Supervision that is overly rigid, bureaucratic, and out of touch with the local context has the potential to hinder the achievement of the goals of an inclusive and relevant educational system. Conversely, an approach that emphasizes student engagement, local relevance, and experience-based quality assessment will foster the creation of a more humane, responsive, and transformative educational system.

4. Service Development: Creative but Not Yet Integrated

In the face of the challenges of globalization and the accelerating pace of digital transformation, madrasahs are required not only to provide innovative educational services but also to design a system of inter-program integration that is strategic, sustainable, and oriented toward the needs of 21st-century students. At State Senior Islamic High School 2 in North Aceh, programs such as IT training, the Quran memorization program, and sewing skills have been actively and independently implemented. However, field findings indicate that these three programs have not yet been integrated into either the formal curriculum framework or a comprehensive institutional strategy. This was

confirmed by a statement from the Deputy Head of Curriculum: *"These skills programs have been running every year, but we haven't yet incorporated them into the formal curriculum because there isn't a framework that unifies all these services."* (Wawancara, Waka Kurikulum, 2025). This statement indicates that there is currently no comprehensive institutional planning to bridge the gap between teachers' innovations and the madrasah's strategic direction as an institution. This lack of integration reflects coordination challenges between units and weak vertical alignment between individual initiatives and structural decision-making (Oktafia et al., 2021).

In the context of education based on the values of justice and equitable access to services, (Mursidi et al., 2021) emphasizes that 21st-century Islamic education management must establish an interconnected and inclusive system of services to address the needs of the millennial generation in an equitable and comprehensive manner. The social reality of Generation Z as the dominant group of students in madrasahs further underscores the need for contextual, meaningful, and integrated services (Seemiller & Grace, 2016) explains that Generation Z has high expectations for learning experiences that are personalized, digital-native, and relevant to real life, so fragmented educational services can hinder the effectiveness of learning. This is also emphasized in the review (Spencer, 2019), which states that the lack of coherence in educational programs risks alienating students from the learning process because it does not align with their expectations regarding the meaning of learning and active engagement.

This situation is clearly evident on the ground, where the sewing skills program at the madrasah is still operating with limited support. A skills teacher explained: *"We run the sewing program on our own. The school only provides sewing machines, while students must purchase other essential supplies such as fabric, thread, and measuring tools themselves because there is no specific budget allocation from the madrasah."* (Wawancara, Guru Keterampilan, 2025). This statement highlights the potential for innovation at the operational level; however, without institutional support, such innovation risks stagnating and failing to have a systemic impact. (Rahmawati et al., 2024) dan (Salter et al., 2014) This shows that in various technology-based schools in Southeast Asia, many teacher-led initiatives fail to become institutionalized due to a lack of managerial support systems and funding.

Transformational leadership is needed to bridge this gap, with madrasah principals acting not only as facilitators of innovation but also as architects of a collaborative and adaptive education system (Cahyono, 2024); (McGaha, 2018). When students were asked about the integration of services, one of them said, *"If the tahfidz program is combined with Arabic language classes or practical life skills, we'll*

understand it better and be more enthusiastic about participating" (Wawancara, Siswa, 2025). This indicates that students are also aware of the importance of cross curricular synergy in creating a holistic learning experience. The characteristics of Gen Z which call for personalized, meaningful, and digitally connected learning underscores the importance of shifting to an integrated service approach rather than a fragmented one (Seemiller & Grace, 2016); (Koneski, 2021).

For this reason, restructuring the service system is an urgent necessity. An effective strategy for managing educational innovation must involve an integrated curriculum development unit that consolidates various programs through a collaborative approach among teachers, madrasah administrators, and students. As stated by the Deputy Head of Curriculum: *"We are still struggling to integrate all these programs into a single system because there are no Standard Operating Procedures or a dedicated unit to manage them"* (Wawancara, Waka Kurikulum, 2025). In this regard, the literature supports the importance of multistakeholder collaboration, strengthening institutional standard operating procedures, and external partnerships as keys to the success of service integration (Salter et al., 2014); (Cahyono, 2024); (Rahmawati et al., 2024). The virtual boarding school model developed by (Mursidi et al., 2021) It even emphasizes that the integration of religious education, life skills, and digital technology is a key step toward an inclusive, equitable, and competitive Islamic education in the context of the realities facing the new generation.

Discussion

This study reveals four main aspects of student service management practices tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z at State Islamic High School 2 in North Aceh, namely: planning, implementation, supervision, and service development. Each aspect not only describes actual practices at the school but also illustrates the extent to which Educational Service Management theory, Generation Z theory, and Transformational Leadership theory can explain the dynamics of these services. The results of the study indicate that although the madrasah has digitized its services, this transformation remains partial and has not yet fully addressed the needs of Generation Z, which are more visual, interactive, and experience-based (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020).

a. Service Planning: Improving, but Not Yet Personalized

Student service planning at MAN 2 Aceh Utara has demonstrated a systematic approach in documenting annual programs, guidance and counseling activities, and additional services such as Quran memorization and skills training. However, the approach used tends to be general and does not yet fully reflect the unique characteristics of Generation Z, who tend to seek personalization in the

educational process (Seemiller & Grace, 2016); (Álvarez, 2024). This gap indicates that, although the structural aspects have been established, the personalization dimension has not yet been integrated into the early stages of planning.

According to (McGaha, 2018), Personalized service is crucial in modern education management because Gen Z has high expectations for personal control and flexibility. This is reinforced by (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020) which emphasizes the need for technology-based innovation in responding to the needs of the digital-native generation. (Agostinho, 2005) It also points out that the naturalistic approach used in e-learning must take into account the social and personal contexts of learners in order to provide a relevant and meaningful learning experience.

(Gorton & Snowden, 1993) Within the framework of Educational Service Management Theory, it is emphasized that effective educational planning must be based on students' actual needs, not merely on administrative procedures. In this context, it is important to systematically map students' needs, learning styles, and potential. This is consistent with the findings (Markina & Mollá, 2022), which shows that a learner-centered teaching approach significantly increases student participation and satisfaction because it takes their individual preferences into account.

(Prayesti et al., 2025) It also emphasizes that madrasahs particularly MAN 2 Aceh Utara still tend to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to designing services, without taking into account the diverse digital preferences and personal characteristics of Gen Z students. As a result, the services provided have not yet been able to foster emotional closeness and a deep engagement with learning which are, in fact, crucial for a generation born in this era of digital connectivity.

b. Service Delivery: Technologically Adaptive but with Limited Participation

The delivery of services to students reflects an adaptation to digitalization, such as the use of the Zoom platform for counseling and social media for publicizing activities. This is consistent with the findings of the study (Babu et al., 2024) which states that Gen Z is highly likely to use AI and digital platforms to find academic solutions. Furthermore, (Ristianti et al., 2025) emphasizes the importance of developing interactive digital services to support counseling services in higher education, the relevance of which can be extended to the madrasah level as a way for educational institutions to prepare for the needs of the digital generation.

(Balalle, 2024) also found that the effectiveness of technology-based education is largely determined by the extent to which gamification, interactivity, and personalization are implemented—not merely by the digitization of teaching aids. Therefore, the implementation of

services in madrasahs that focus solely on platforms without in-depth design has not fully addressed the engagement needs of Gen Z students.

However, student participation in decision-making regarding services remains low. (Mitra, 2008) dan (Boyce et al., 2025) emphasizes the importance of student voice in creating meaningful educational services. Research also shows that student engagement can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility (Bryson, 2016); (Vossoughi et al., 2021). (Bryson, 2016) specifically states that engagement is optimal when students are not merely the recipients of services, but also active partners in their design and implementation.

Digitization does not automatically lead to active participation unless it is accompanied by a structured participatory design (Wolf et al., 2024); (Sewell et al., 2020). In this context, the approach to implementation in madrasahs needs to shift from merely utilizing technology to empowering students by involving them in designing, evaluating, and refining the services provided.

c. Service Oversight: Formalities-Driven and Lacking Context

Program monitoring focuses more on administrative aspects, such as activity reports and routine supervision. This, however, reflects a strong structure (Gorton & Snowden, 1993), but overlooks the reflective and participatory aspects of educational oversight (Gordon, 2019); (Regassa & Mamo, 2024). (Gordon, 2019) emphasizes that effective oversight must include in-depth instructional supervision and reflective dialogue among stakeholders. Similarly, (Regassa & Mamo, 2024) shows that oversight that focuses solely on procedural compliance tends to fail to substantially improve service quality.

Furthermore, supervision has not yet adopted a collaborative approach that allows students to voice their experiences in the service process. (Bryson, 2016) points out that, in the context of student partnership, supervision must involve students as active partners so that service development is contextual and relevant to their needs. This is also supported by (Wolf et al., 2024), who emphasize the importance of participatory oversight design in community-based school settings as a strategy to enhance trust and accountability in services. (Creswell, 2013) and (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) emphasizes the importance of trustworthiness and credibility in naturalistic research, which also applies in the context of values-based monitoring. This means that monitoring that does not incorporate the students' perspectives is unable to fully capture the effectiveness of services, as it assesses them solely from a bureaucratic, surface-level perspective and fails to grasp the holistic meaning of the students' experiences.

d. Service Development: Creative but Not Yet Integrated

Development programs such as Quran memorization, digital skills, and life skills have become innovative efforts by madrasahs to adapt to the needs of Gen Z. However, these initiatives do not yet have an integrated strategic framework that aligns the institutional vision, student characteristics, and the dynamics of the digital age (Kusuma et al., 2025); (Rahmawati et al., 2024). This approach remains sector-specific and lacks integration into a sustainable service management system.

(Khunaivi et al., 2025) emphasizes the importance of synergy between traditional Islamic values and a technological approach in shaping students' character in a holistic manner. This requires a framework of transformational leadership that focuses not only on program innovation, but also on the internalization of values, student empowerment, and inspiring a vision for the future (Cahyono, 2024); (Carrington et al., 2024); (Menon, 2024). (Carrington et al., 2024) It even asserts that transformational leadership in inclusive education can facilitate a shift in organizational culture toward more responsive and collaborative service.

Furthermore, (Salter et al., 2014) highlight that Bass & Avolio's Full Range Leadership Model empirically demonstrates a positive relationship between transformational leadership style and students' moral development and active participation in the context of educational services. The development of these services requires not only top-down policies but also interactive relationships and student agency in the process. In this context, it is important to adopt the feedback-relationship approach proposed by (Vossoughi et al., 2021), that is, development based on mutual interaction between educators and students within an ethical and political framework. Without space for dialogue and critical participation, innovation will remain nothing more than a programmatic slogan that is disconnected from the realities of daily teaching and service.

4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that student service management at State Islamic High School 2 North Aceh has shown progress in addressing the dynamics of Generation Z in the digital age, yet it still faces structural and cultural challenges. Overall, the services have entered a transitional phase toward a more adaptive approach, but they are not yet fully integrated with the personal needs and aspirations of this new generation of students.

First, regarding service planning, there is institutional awareness to develop annual programs, guidance and counseling activities, as well as skills and religious services. However, such planning tends to be general in nature and is not yet based on a needs assessment specific to Generation Z's characteristics, which demand personalization, flexibility, and a digital orientation. In line with the findings of (Markina & Mollá, 2022), effective educational

planning requires mapping needs based on the cognitive, social, and digital dynamics of today's students.

Second, in the delivery of services, adaptations to technology have been made, including the use of digital platforms such as Zoom and social media for counseling services and the promotion of activities. However, this digitization has not been accompanied by increased student participation in the design and evaluation of services. In fact, as stated by (Bryson, 2016) and (Balalle, 2024), Active student engagement is a prerequisite for meaningful and sustainable educational services.

Third, when it comes to service supervision, current practices tend to be formalistic and administrative. Supervision is focused more on procedural compliance and reporting than on ethical reflection and dialogue involving students and teachers as the subjects of supervision. This perspective is in line with the criticism (Gordon, 2019) and (Regassa & Mamo, 2024) toward supervision that emphasizes procedural compliance but neglects the context of participatory learning.

Fourth, in terms of service development, innovations such as the tahfidz program, digital skills training, and character-building initiatives have been introduced. However, these initiatives lack a strategic foundation that links the institution's vision, transformational leadership, and the characteristics of Gen Z. As demonstrated by (Salter et al., 2014) and (Carrington et al., 2024), The development of effective services requires the integration of values, vision, and practices that empower students through a transformative approach.

The results of this study indicate that State Islamic High School 2 of North Aceh has begun taking steps toward service reform tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z, but is still in the early stages. Structured improvement efforts are needed in the areas of needs-based planning, participatory implementation, reflective monitoring, and transformative development. This reform will be more meaningful if supported by leadership that is technologically adaptive, sensitive to changing values, and attentive to the voices of students as the primary subjects of education in the digital age.

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