

Love, Authority, and Relevance as Analytical Lenses in Pentecostal Leadership for Gen Z Ministry

Twin Yoshua R. Destyanto^{1,2}, Purim Marbun¹

¹Faculty of Theology, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Indonesia Jakarta

²Departement of Industrial Engineering, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta

Correspondence: twin.destyanto@uajy.ac.id

(ORCID Id: 0000-0002-8882-6450)

Abstract: The role-modeling crisis among young people motivates this study to explore how Pentecostal church leadership can effectively engage Generation Z (Gen Z), a demographic known for valuing authenticity, empathy, and relational depth. With Gen Z increasingly present in faith communities, especially among university students, the research investigates how Pentecostal leadership values align with their spiritual and emotional needs. Using a qualitative method, this study combines a literature review with in-depth interviews with six Gen Z members from a Pentecostal church in Yogyakarta. The findings reveal that Gen Z resonates deeply with Spirit-led, inclusive, adaptive, and relational leadership. Respondents emphasized the importance of empathetic leaders who are present in real life and exhibit integrity and humility. They appreciated leadership that empowers participation, respects their individuality, and communicates spiritual truths in relevant ways. The study concludes that effective Pentecostal leadership for Gen Z must move beyond traditional authority-based models to embrace relational ministry grounded in spiritual authenticity. Such an approach not only nurtures personal growth but also fosters lasting engagement and discipleship within the church.

Keywords: adaptive leadership; Generation Z; Pentecostal leadership; youth ministry

Abstrak: Fenomena krisis keteladanan bagi anak muda memotivasi studi ini untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana kepemimpinan gereja Pentakosta dapat secara efektif menjangkau Generasi Z (Gen Z), yaitu sebuah demografi yang dikenal menghargai keautentikan, empati, dan kedalaman relasi. Dengan semakin banyaknya Gen Z yang terlibat dalam komunitas iman, khususnya di kalangan mahasiswa, penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana nilai-nilai kepemimpinan Pentakosta selaras dengan kebutuhan spiritual dan emosional mereka. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dalam studi ini, melalui analisis literatur dan wawancara mendalam dengan enam anggota Gen Z dari sebuah gereja Pentakosta di Yogyakarta. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Gen Z sangat terhubung dengan kepemimpinan yang dipimpin oleh Roh Kudus, inklusif, adaptif, dan relasional. Para responden menekankan pentingnya pemimpin yang empatik, hadir dalam kehidupan nyata, serta menunjukkan integritas dan kerendahan hati. Mereka menghargai kepemimpinan yang memberi ruang partisipasi, menghormati keunikan individu, dan menyampaikan kebenaran spiritual secara relevan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan Pentakosta yang efektif bagi Gen Z perlu melampaui model otoriter tradisional, dan beralih pada pelayanan relasional yang berakar pada keautentikan spiritual. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya membentuk pertumbuhan pribadi, tetapi juga mendorong keterlibatan dan pemuridan yang berkelanjutan dalam gereja.

Kata-kata Kunci: kepemimpinan adaptif; generasi Z; kepemimpinan pentakosta; pelayanan pemuda

Introduction

Leadership within the Pentecostal church tradition exhibits a deep dependence on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.¹ This leadership model is not merely administrative or structural but is spiritual and relational. This condition is shaped by personal experiences with God and a total surrender of life to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Within this framework, leaders are seen as ministry managers and as shepherds moved by divine love to bring God's people into transformative encounter experiences with Christ.² Values such as obedience to the voice of the Spirit, spiritual sensitivity, powerful ministry, and faithfulness in prayer are central to Pentecostal leadership.³ In the context of generational ministry, these values are highly significant because they reflect the active love of God, who desires to reach every level of society, including Generation Z. The love of God, manifested through anointed leaders who are sensitive to the needs of the times, becomes a potential entry point in building connections with this generation that is searching for direction, meaning in life, and authentic faith.

Generation Z is raised in a rapidly changing digital environment where access to information is through social media and online platforms, primarily shaping instant and social relationships.⁴ They are known as a generation that is highly aware of their identity, values,

¹ Mookgo Solomon Kgatele, "Leadership by the Spirit in Pentecostalism: A Transformational Pneumatocracy Approach," *Acta Theologica* 44, no. 1 (June 20, 2024): 126–27, <https://doi.org/10.38140/AT.V44I1.7566>; Franklin Markow and Truls Åkerlund, "Pentecostal Leadership: Exploring a Global Phenomenon," *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion* 20, no. 5 (October 1, 2023): 527, <https://doi.org/10.51327/JHKQ5569>; Joshua Daniel Rungsung, *Revisiting Pastoral and Church Leadership: A Holistic Paradigm for Effective Leadership in the 21st Century* (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2024), 37.

² Anggi Maringan Hasiholan and Purim Marbun, "Sinergitas Kepemimpinan Senior Dan Muda Di Gkii Se-Jabodetabek Dalam Menghadapi Dampak Pandemi 19 Dan Disrupsi Era: Sebuah Kajian Kepemimpinan Transformatif," *HARVESTER: Jurnal Teologi Dan Kepemimpinan Kristen* 6, no. 2 (December 21, 2021): 127, <https://doi.org/10.52104/HARVESTER.V6I2.73>.

³ Habtamu Umer, "Holistic Leadership Development: A Biblical Framework for a Transformative Leadership-Followership Process (Habtamu K Umer, 2024), 5; Truls Åkerlund, "Taking Ownership of Our Spirituality: Pentecostal Leaders as Liturgical Directors," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 31, no. 1 (August 20, 2021): 115, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-BJA10020>; Joseph Ignatius Teye Buertery, "Revisiting Pentecostal Spiritualities with Reference to African Traditional Religious Practices and Pentecostal Theologies of Prayer in Ghana," 2023, 170, <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/127301>; Bambang Karsono, Robertus Suraji, and Istianingsih Sastrodiharjo, "The Influence of Leadership Spirituality to Improving the Quality of Higher Education in Indonesia," *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention* 9, no. 01 (2022): 6838.

⁴ Tali Te'eni Harari, Yaron Sela, and Liad Bareket-Bojmel, "Gen Z during the COVID-19 Crisis: A Comparative Analysis of the Differences between Gen Z and Gen X in Resilience, Values and Attitudes," *Current Psychology* 42, no. 28 (October 1, 2023): 24223–25, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S12144-022-03501-4/TABLES/4>; Lucia Kohnová, Ján Papula, and Nikola Salajová, "Generation Z: Education In the World of Digitization for the Future of Organizations," *INTED2021 Proceedings* 1 (March 26, 2021): 10200, <https://doi.org/10.21125/INTED.2021.2126>; Chin Wen Chang and Sheng Hsiung Chang, "The Impact of Digital Disruption: Influences of Digital Media and

and authenticity, are very concerned about social issues and mental health, and has high expectations of authority figures who are present in a real and personal way.⁵ In the context of the church, Gen Z is not looking for leaders who are perfectly charismatic or spectacular in their sermons; instead, they need leaders who can be present, listen, embrace their struggles, and demonstrate real-life examples in their daily lives.⁶ This demands that church leaders possess a more inclusive, communicative, and relational leadership style.⁷ This condition raises a critical question regarding the relevance of existing Pentecostal leadership models in addressing the spiritual and relational needs of Generation Z

On the other hand, some historical dynamics and perceptions have developed in some circles regarding the Pentecostal leadership model, especially within church environments that tend to adhere to centralistic or authoritarian leadership patterns.⁸ In some cases, Pentecostal leadership is perceived as too focused on the primary leader figure, e.g., the senior pastor, who is dominant in decision-making and does not provide sufficient space for young leadership to develop. This approach can create a generational gap within the church, where young people feel not meaningfully involved in church life.⁹ Furthermore, this pattern sometimes fails to build a healthy two-way dialogue between leaders and young congregants,

Social Networks on Forming Digital Natives' Attitude," *SAGE Open* 13, no. 3 (July 1, 2023): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231191741>; Naomi Rebecca Siagian and Nina Yuliana, "The Role of Social Media in Generation Z Communication," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Advanced Research and Innovation* 1, no. 3 (December 24, 2023): 110, <https://doi.org/10.58860/IJARI.V1I3.27>.

⁵ Edigius Paulus Banu et al., "Deconstructing Generation Z's Self-Awareness through Problem-Solving Techniques in Group Guidance," *Buletin Konseling Inovatif* 5, no. 1 (February 5, 2025): 42, <https://doi.org/10.17977/UM059V5I12025P40-49>; Mora A. Reinka, Stephenie R. Chaudoir, and Diane M. Quinn, "Millennials Versus Gen Z: Have Perceptions and Outcomes of Concealable Stigmatized Identities Changed Over Time?," *Stigma and Health*, February 15, 2024, 461, <https://doi.org/10.1037/SAH0000515>.

⁶ Bill George and Zach Clayton, *True North, Emerging Leader Edition: Leading Authentically in Today's Workplace* (John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 142; Heather E McGowan and Chris Shipley, *The Empathy Advantage: Leading the Empowered Workforce* (John Wiley & Sons, 2023), 120.

⁷ Khalid Rasheed Memon and Say Keat Ooi, "Investigating the Relationship Between Relational Leadership and Employees' Promotive Voice Behavior," *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 36, no. 2 (June 1, 2024): 190, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10672-023-09441-W/FIGURES/1>; Yoshie Tomozumi Nakamura and Julia Milner, "Inclusive Leadership via Empathic Communication," *Organizational Dynamics* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGADYN.2023.100957>.

⁸ Judith Mwenje, "An Investigation of the Leadership Styles of Pentecostal Church Leaders in Zimbabwe," *African Journal of Business Management* 10, no. 3 (February 14, 2016): 56, <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM2015.7882>; Albert Lee Crout, "Development of Future Leaders in the Christian Church," *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects* (Liberty University, 2021), <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3020>.

⁹ Holly Catterton Allen and Jason Brian Santos, "Intergenerational Ministry — a Forty-Year Perspective: 1980–2020," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 3 (December 1, 2020): 1980, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891320949558;REQUESTEDJOURNAL:JOURNAL:CEJA;WEBSITE:WEBSITE:SAGE;WGROUP:STRING:PUBLICATION>; Kimion Tagwirei, "Battling with the Baton: (Dis)Connecting Today and Tomorrow's Leaders in African Pentecostalism," *HTS Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 4–5, <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V79I1.9179>.

precisely what Gen Z needs. They tend to question authority that is not transparent and does not demonstrate openness. Therefore, leadership models that do not accommodate their voices and participation are often considered irrelevant.

Unfortunately, until now, there has been limited scientific or theological research specifically addressing how the values of Pentecostal leadership can be implemented contextually in ministry to Gen Z, particularly within the context of churches where most of the congregation are university students. Given the rapid dynamics of generational change and the importance of the church leadership adapting to these changes, this gap is essential. There hasn't been much research exploring the spiritual experiences of Gen Z in Pentecostal churches and how they understand and respond to existing leadership styles. Similarly, limited studies explore their expectations of an ideal spiritual leader who can guide them in their faith journey amidst the challenges of the times.

This article argues that Pentecostal leadership in ministry to Generation Z cannot be adequately understood through programmatic effectiveness or implementation strategies alone but must be examined as a theological configuration shaped by relational love, spiritually mediated authority, and contextual relevance. Focusing on Pentecostal churches with predominantly university-student congregations, the study offers an interpretive analysis of how these leadership values are experienced, negotiated, and contested by Gen Z congregants. Rather than prioritizing managerial outcomes, this research engages leadership as a theological and relational phenomenon, illuminating how Gen Z perceptions of spiritual leadership reflect broader shifts in authority, authenticity, and meaning within contemporary Pentecostalism.

This study employed a qualitative research method, comprising two approaches: a literature review and the depth-interview approach.¹⁰ The literature review was conducted to identify the elements of Pentecostal leadership characteristics. This part was done by analyzing previous research findings and leadership literature theories. The interview was conducted with six interviewees (four male and two female) who are members of a Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) Babarsari, a Pentecostal church in Babarsari, Yogyakarta. All

¹⁰ Twin Yoshua R. Destyanto et al., "Civil Society and Civil Islam Implementation on Inter-Religious Tolerance in Indonesia: A Phenomenological Study," in *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Social Science, Humanity and Public Health (ICOSHIP 2021)* (Atlantis Press, 2022), 11–15, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220207.002>; Sonny Eli Zaluchu, "Metode Penelitian Di Dalam Manuskrip Jurnal Ilmiah Keagamaan," *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 3, no. 2 (2021): 249–66.

interviewees were Generation Z, with an average age of 19.33 years. Each interviewee was led by the same pastor, who also serves as a lecturer at a private university near the church. The data were analyzed using manual coding (inductive-deductive) to generate the meanings and topics for the study results.¹¹

Pentecostal Leadership Characteristics for Leading Gen Z

Spirit-Led Leadership for Gen Z

One of the primary characteristics of leadership in the Pentecostal tradition is a strong dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.¹² Leaders do not merely carry out administrative or structural functions; they act as individuals anointed and moved by the Spirit of God to serve the congregation. Leadership filled with the Holy Spirit flows from a life marked by prayer, praise, and sensitivity to divine guidance.¹³ In much Pentecostal literature, leaders filled with the Spirit are believed to be able to guide the congregation spiritually, lead dynamic worship services, and respond to the congregation's needs with wisdom that is not only rational but also supernatural.¹⁴

For Generation Z, who are hungry for authentic spiritual experiences, this leadership model has a unique appeal. Amidst the shallow information and instant lifestyles, Gen Z seeks meaning in life and a genuine experience with God.¹⁵ Leadership that relies on the Holy Spirit opens space for experiences such as powerful intercessory prayer, manifestations of spiritual gifts (such as prophecy, healing, or divine comfort), and personal, heartfelt sermons.¹⁶ This

¹¹ Seraphia Felisian et al., "Sociocultural Practices and Beliefs during Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Postpartum among Indigenous Pastoralist Women of Reproductive Age in Manyara, Tanzania: A Descriptive Qualitative Study," *BMC Women's Health* 23:1 23, no. 1 (March 23, 2023): 123-, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02277-4>.

¹² Temesgen Kahsay, "Theological Education in the Majority World: A Pentecostal Perspective The Role of the Holy Spirit in Theological Education," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 24, no. 1 (2021): 97; Kgatle, "Leadership by the Spirit in Pentecostalism: A Transformational Pneumatocracy Approach."

¹³ Umer, " *Holistic Leadership Development: A Biblical Framework for a Transformative Leadership-Followership Process*, 35.

¹⁴ Richard F Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (InterVarsity Press, 2020), 32.

¹⁵ O Brent Dongell, "Clarifying Growth to Spiritual Maturity From the Viewpoint of American Christian Gen Z Emerging Adults in Upstate South Carolina" (Columbia International University, 2024); Amy Christine Yoder, *Spiritual Formation Strategies for Generation Z Students in a Secondary Christian School* (Grand Canyon University, 2020), 230–32.

¹⁶ Boyd Bailey, *The Spiritual Life of a Leader: A God-Centered Leadership Style* (Harvest House Publishers, 2021); Jose Mathews, "Spiritual Theory of Leadership Effectiveness," *The IUP Journal of Organizational Behavior* XX, no. 1 (2021): 2021.

answers their longing for a living faith, not just a religious routine. This powerful spirituality brings an emotional and transcendental dimension that is essential for Gen Z in building their relationship with God.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that leadership centered on the Holy Spirit should not be misinterpreted as something mystical without direction.¹⁷ On the contrary, in contemporary Pentecostal theological literature, it is emphasized that leadership inspired by the Holy Spirit must also be based on integrity, biblical knowledge.¹⁸ In other words, the power of the Holy Spirit must be manifested in the daily life of a leader who is humble, open, and willing to serve. This is very important for Gen Z, who are sensitive to falsehood and spiritual manipulation. They will accept powerful leadership if that power is displayed with love, honesty, and responsibility, not with dominance or excessive dramatization.

Gen Z's Preference for an Inclusive and Adaptive Leadership

In the ministry to Generation Z context, Pentecostal leadership holds great potential when it can prioritize a relational and shepherding approach. This generation highly values the presence of leaders who are genuine, open, and trustworthy.¹⁹ They not only need spiritual direction from the pulpit but also need figures who can accompany them through life's processes, including failures, identity crises, or complex questions of faith. Shepherding leadership means presenting oneself as an authority figure and a spiritual friend who can be talked to and heard without judgment.²⁰ This demands that leaders possess empathy,

¹⁷ Bailey, *The Spiritual Life of a Leader: A God-Centered Leadership Style*.

¹⁸ Kgatle, "Leadership by the Spirit in Pentecostalism: A Transformational Pneumatocracy Approach"; Christine J. Chapman, "Training Requirements for Entry-Level Ministry-Ready Pentecostal Leaders," *Innovating Christian Education Research: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, January 1, 2021, 303–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-8856-3_18; Logan Knight, Kaitlin Casassa, and Njeri Kagotho, "Dignity and Worth for All: Identifying Shared Values between Social Work and Christian Faith-Based Groups' Anti-Sex Trafficking Discourse," *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work* 41, no. 2 (April 3, 2022): 193–212, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15426432.2021.2011533>;PAGE:STRING:ARTICLE/CHAPTER; Marnaek Nainggolan et al., "An Explanatory and Confirmatory Study of Transformative Leadership Based on Nehemiah 1-8 among Church Leaders in Batam City.," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 103, no. 2 (2022).

¹⁹ Banu et al., "Deconstructing Generation Z's Self-Awareness through Problem-Solving Techniques in Group Guidance"; Reinka, Chaudoir, and Quinn, "Millennials Versus Gen Z: Have Perceptions and Outcomes of Concealable Stigmatized Identities Changed Over Time?"

²⁰ Joni Manumpak et al., "Pastoral Strategy in Developing the Dimension of Understanding Generation Z," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 6, no. 1 (January 31, 2022): 47–58, <https://doi.org/10.46445/EJTI.V6I1.472>; Agata Pietroni--Pyszczyk and Magdalena Borowska, "Generation Z Demand for Mentoring Support.," *Human Resource Management / Zarzadzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi* 149, no. 6 (December 31, 2022): 44–59, <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0016.2045>.

sincerity, and a commitment to fostering healthy relationships and building trust across generations.²¹

Furthermore, the ideal Pentecostal leadership character for Gen Z must also be participatory and empowering (Folami, 2022; Kesumawati & Gultom, 2025).²² One of the unique characteristics of this generation is their desire to be involved, not just controlled. They value collaborative processes and want to feel that their voices and contributions are meaningful. In this context, leaders who can recognize the potential and spiritual gifts of young people and give them space to grow will gain high levels of loyalty and enthusiasm.²³ A leadership model that is willing to accompany, guide, and simultaneously give trust will be far more effective than a leadership style that only commands and controls from above. Empowerment in Pentecostal leadership is also in line with the biblical principle that every member of the body of Christ has their respective roles and gifts to build up the whole body. In line with this, flexibility and the ability to adapt become crucial keys in leading a generation that lives in this ever-changing era.²⁴ Gen Z is a highly contextual generation: they have grown up amidst rapid social, technological, and cultural shifts.²⁵ Therefore, church leaders who are rigid, unwilling to change, and rely solely on old ways without contextual relevance will lose their appeal in the eyes of this generation. Conversely, adaptive Pentecostal leadership will seek new ways to communicate the Gospel and build vibrant communities, including through

²¹ Tim McKnight, *Engaging Generation Z: Raising the Bar for Youth Ministry* (Kregel Publications, 2021); Natalia Sigaeva et al., "In Search of Effective Gen Z Engagement in the Hospitality Industry: Revisiting Issues of Servant and Authentic Leadership," *Sustainability* 2022, Vol. 14, Page 13105 14, no. 20 (October 13, 2022): 13105, <https://doi.org/10.3390/SU142013105>.

²² Charles O Folami, "The Worship Battle: Reaching Generations Z and Alpha in American-Based Nigerian Pentecostal Churches," *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*, April 1, 2022, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3481>; Kesumawati Kesumawati and Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom, "Effective Pastoral Leadership in Church Growth and Renewal," *Journal of the American Institute* 2, no. 2 (February 27, 2025): 156–68, <https://doi.org/10.71364/NY9DEA85>.

²³ Demy Jura, "The Role of Professionals in the Leadership of the Local Church Through Empowerment of Christian Education," in *2nd Annual Conference on Blended Learning, Educational Technology and Innovation (ACBLETI 2020)* (Atlantis Press, 2021); Scott Pace and Shane Pruitt, *Calling Out the Called: Discipling Those Called to Ministry Leadership* (B&H Publishing Group, 2022).

²⁴ Judit TÖRÖK-KMOSKÓ and Krisztina DAJNOKI, "Adapting Leadership Development for Smes in the Era of Remote Work from the Perspective of Generation Z: Modern Approaches and Challenges," *Annals of the University of Oradea, Economic Science Series* 33, no. 1 (July 31, 2024): 645–54, [https://doi.org/10.47535/1991AUOES33\(1\)071](https://doi.org/10.47535/1991AUOES33(1)071).

²⁵ Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan and Katherine K.W. Lee, "The AI Generation Gap: Are Gen Z Students More Interested in Adopting Generative AI Such as ChatGPT in Teaching and Learning than Their Gen X and Millennial Generation Teachers?," *Smart Learning Environments* 10, no. 1 (December 1, 2023): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1186/S40561-023-00269-3/TABLES/4>.

social media, digital technology, and cultural language that is familiar to Gen Z.²⁶ This adaptability does not mean losing core values of faith but rather demonstrates wisdom in communicating truth in a relevant way.

Finally, all of these approaches must lead to transformation, both personal and communal.²⁷ The literature distinguishes Pentecostal leadership models that emphasize follower mobilization from those that prioritize discipleship formation, with the latter associated with biblical grounding.²⁸ Gen Z desires a meaningful life, not just religious rituals.²⁹ They want to see how faith functions in real life, in social issues, ethics, and relationships. Leaders who instill the values of discipleship, character formation, and impactful social ministry will meet the deepest spiritual needs of this generation. In this regard, Pentecostal leadership has an advantage: the spirit of evangelism and community transformation that has been rooted since the beginning of the Pentecostal movement can be a primary driving force in shaping a strong and relevant young generation.³⁰

Exemplary Living, Vision, and Integrity to Maintain the Trust of Gen Z

In facing Generation Z, who are critical and highly sensitive to falsehood, the authentic character of spiritual leaders becomes significant. Gen Z is not easily impressed by status or position but is more drawn to figures who demonstrate real-life examples.³¹ The leaders who

²⁶ Sunny Sunwook Ahn, *Adaptive Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Qualitative Multi-Case Study of Pastors Serving Local Churches in the California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church* (Northcentral University, 2023); Sarah A Crippen, "Adaptive Leadership and Crisis Management," *All Electronic Theses and Dissertations* (2023), <https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/936>.

²⁷ Hasiholan and Marbun, "Sinergitas Kepemimpinan Senior Dan Muda Di Gkii Se-Jabodetabek Dalam Menghadapi Dampak Pandemi 19 Dan Disrupsi Era: Sebuah Kajian Kepemimpinan Transformatif."

²⁸ John W Rawlings and Mark Kwablah Buku, "A Correlational Study Between Spiritual Bible Reading and Spiritual Formation of Leaders of Pentecostal Churches," *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects*, June 19, 2024, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/5727>; Markow and Åkerlund, "Pentecostal Leadership: Exploring a Global Phenomenon"; Mark D Chapman, *The Future of Liberal Theology* (Routledge, 2017).

²⁹ Miia Grénman, Juulia Räikkönen, and Fanny Aapio, "Nature as a Contributor to Wellbeing and Future Tourism: Finnish Gen Zers Seeking Happiness and Meaning in Life," in *A Research Agenda for Tourism and Wellbeing* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024), 99–116; Barbara M. Holzer et al., "Motivation and Personality Factors of Generation Z High School Students Aspiring to Study Human Medicine," *BMC Medical Education* 22, no. 1 (December 1, 2022): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1186/S12909-021-03099-4/FIGURES/1>.

³⁰ Kgate, "Leadership by the Spirit in Pentecostalism: A Transformational Pneumatocracy Approach"; William K Kay and Ewen H Butler, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Education: Renewalist Education Wherever It Is Found* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2023); John P. Lathrop, "The Pentecostal Mind," *Ritornera - Jurnal Teologi Pentakosta Indonesia* 1, no. 2 (August 31, 2021): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.54403/RJTPI.V1I2.19>.

³¹ Maya Elizabeth Neufeld-Wall, "Being Real: Gen-Z, Self-Presentation, and Authenticity on Social Media," *Communication Honors Theses* (Trinity University, 2023), https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/comm_honors/26.

are genuine, transparent, and honest in acknowledging their life's journey. Effective Pentecostal leadership for this generation is leadership that is not distant but rather allows itself to be seen and known, including its weaknesses and growth.³² Exemplary living becomes the most potent form of proclamation in a digital culture saturated with image-building. Leaders whose lives reflect love, humility, and consistency of values will be far more appreciated than those who are merely skilled at preaching or leading worship.

Leadership also needs to possess direction and clarity of vision that is contextual. Pentecostal leaders are often known for having a strong and spiritually fervent vision for ministry, but to be effective for Gen Z, that vision must be translated into concrete forms that are relevant to the lives of young people.³³ Gen Z lives in a digital, global, and multi-crisis world. Therefore, they need leaders who can read the signs of the times and provide a clear and flexible direction.³⁴ Contextual visionary leadership will be able to guide young congregants to understand their calling of faith not only within the context of the church but also amidst the realities of campus, social media, the world of work, and the social issues they face every day.³⁵

In developing vision and responding to the challenges of the times, Pentecostal leaders who want to reach Gen Z must possess humility and openness to input.³⁶ This generation not only wants to be heard but also wants to be involved in the conversation. They appreciate leaders who can engage in dialogue, receive criticism, and are willing to learn together.³⁷ A healthy ministry culture must be supported by leaders who are not resistant to criticism but

³² Stuart Allen and Louis W. Fry, "A Framework for Leader, Spiritual, and Moral Development," *Journal of Business Ethics* 184, no. 3 (May 1, 2023): 649–63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10551-022-05116-Y/TABLES/1>; Julia Krampitz et al., "Self-Leadership: A Meta-Analytic Review of Intervention Effects on Leaders' Capacities," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 15, no. 3 (November 1, 2021): 21–39, <https://doi.org/10.1002/JLS.21782>.

³³ Kesumawati and Gultom, "Effective Pastoral Leadership in Church Growth and Renewal"; David Ming et al., "Transformational Leadership of Nehemia in Spirituality, Integrity and Visioner to the Contemporary Leaders," *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 1, no. 6 (November 22, 2021): 12–18, <https://doi.org/10.24018/THEOLOGY.2021.1.6.38>; A Nicolaidis and G M Naidoo, "Considering Transformative Leadership from a Christian Vantage Point," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 106, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.1>.

³⁴ Jodi Day, "Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z Teachers: A Comparison of Generational Preferences for Leadership Practices" (Purdue University, 2023).

³⁵ Umer, " *Holistic Leadership Development: A Biblical Framework for a Transformative Leadership-Followership Process*."

³⁶ Benjamin Crisp, "A Tale of Two Worlds: An Analysis of 1 Corinthians 2," *Biblical Organizational Spirituality*, 2022, 177–98, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04006-1_10.

³⁷ Indira Revuru and Krishna Kumari Bandaru, "Leadership Practices for Sustaining Work Engagement: A Gen-Z Perspective," *International Journal of Organizational Leadership* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 2024): 451–66, <https://doi.org/10.33844/IJOL.2024.60424>.

are willing to evaluate themselves for the sake of mutual growth. Leadership that is open to collaboration will strengthen Gen Z's involvement because they feel given a place and valued in the spiritual journey of their community.³⁸ Finally, all the above aspects of leadership will lose their influence if they are not grounded in personal integrity. Gen Z highly values the alignment between words and actions. Leadership that has a good reputation in personal life and ministry becomes the foundation of trust.³⁹ Amidst the many spiritual scandals that have tarnished the name of the church, young people are increasingly cautious in giving respect and loyalty. Leaders who have integrity, maintain morality, and live according to Gospel values will form a spiritually and psychologically safe community for young people. It is this kind of Pentecostal leadership that will have a long-term impact because it is not only outwardly charismatic but also solid in character.

Gen Z's Point of View toward Pentecostal Leadership ***Gen Z's Experiential Feeling on Pentecostal Leadership***

The experiences of the respondents indicate that the leadership style in the Pentecostal churches they have experienced tends to be relational and familial. The respondents who mentioned "relation is more important than church achievement" prove that this aspect is critical in church leadership among Gen Z. This style is characterized by warm, open, and close relationships between church leaders and the congregation, especially young people. The leaders do not position themselves as rigid authorities but rather as part of the community who are present and involved in the daily lives of the congregants. This experience confirmed the finding that the friendly leadership approach mentioned is suitable for the youth generation. Gen Z feels valued and accepted personally, even when they do not fully understand the church's leadership structure, as expressed by one respondent who felt a family atmosphere despite not fully understanding church leadership models.⁴⁰

³⁸ Manumpak et al., "Pastoral Strategy in Developing the Dimension of Understanding Generation Z"; Pietron--Pyszczyk and Borowska, "Generation Z Demand for Mentoring Support."

³⁹ Veronika Agustini Srimulyani and Yustinus Budi Hermanto, "Organizational Culture as a Mediator of Credible Leadership Influence on Work Engagement: Empirical Studies in Private Hospitals in East Java, Indonesia," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 9, no. 1 (December 1, 2022): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1057/S41599-022-01289-Z>; SUBJMETA=4003,4007,4014;KWRD=CULTURAL+AND+MEDIA+STUDIES; Paul D Stanley and J Robert Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (NavPress, 2024).

⁴⁰ Mohd Mursyid Arshad et al., "Character Development and Youth Leadership Mentoring.," *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* 29 (2021); McKnight, *Engaging Generation Z: Raising the Bar for Youth Ministry*.

A loving and guiding leadership style also emerged as a common thread in the respondents' narratives. They felt the presence of church leaders as spiritual fathers or mothers who faithfully accompanied and strengthened them. This was reflected in an approach that was not judgmental but rather edifying and directed the congregation towards growth. In their experience, love was manifested in sermons or pulpit ministry and concrete attention to the spiritual and emotional well-being of individual congregants. Love performed in concrete action helps testify to God's love

Interestingly, the church leaders were also seen as contextual and adaptive to youth culture, a key characteristic of Gen Z. They adjusted their communication styles, ministry methods, and even ways of interacting to remain relevant and acceptable to the younger generation. This adjustment did not mean compromising values but rather demonstrated flexibility in approach. Several respondents expressed that their leaders were sensitive to trends and able to deliver ministry with a fresh style that aligned with the rhythm of life for young people today, in line with the adaptive leadership characteristics.⁴¹

Another aspect highly valued by Gen Z is the open and non-authoritarian attitude of the church leaders. They see leaders not as dominant figures who control but as companions on their spiritual journey who are willing to listen, receive input, and even learn together. This leadership style creates a sense of safety and comfort, while also providing more space for young people to participate and contribute to the ministry. In fact, some respondents specifically noted that this style did not pressure them but rather encouraged them to grow spiritually and in character.

In the context of spiritual correction or discipline, Gen Z also experienced a personal and respectful approach. Leaders did not immediately reprimand publicly or shame congregants, but rather chose personal relational channels to counsel with love.⁴² This approach fostered a sense of trust and reflected the leaders' integrity in handling mistakes with the aim of

⁴¹ Ahn, *Adaptive Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Qualitative Multi-Case Study of Pastors Serving Local Churches in the California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church*; Crippen, "Adaptive Leadership and Crisis Management."

⁴² Memon and Ooi, "Investigating the Relationship Between Relational Leadership and Employees' Promotive Voice Behavior"; Nakamura and Milner, "Inclusive Leadership via Empathic Communication"; Guo Feng Wu and Mei Li, "Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Employees' Innovative Behavior: A Relational Silence Approach," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (March 6, 2023): 1144791, <https://doi.org/10.3389/FPSYG.2023.1144791/BIBTEX>.

restoration, not punishment.⁴³ One respondent noted a positive experience of being corrected privately without social pressure, which helped them grow in spiritual maturity.

Furthermore, the church leaders are also seen as facilitators of spiritual growth who actively support and provide space for the faith development of Gen Z. This is not only in the form of verbal guidance but also in tangible ways, such as providing their homes as places for prayer altars, small groups, or other ministry activities. This leadership style demonstrates a commitment to young people and a belief that they are capable of growing and being used by God. The leaders not only lead from the front but also create shared spaces for collaborative growth and service.

Impacts of Pentecostal Leadership on Gen Z's Life

Gen Z's experiences with Pentecostal leadership demonstrate a very significant impact on their lives, especially in terms of community formation and a sense of belonging. Many of them stated that the church is not just a place of worship but has become a "second home" or spiritual family. Expressions like "so I feel like I have family in Jogja" reflect that the presence of the church and the inclusive and loving leadership style create a safe space for young people who have moved away from home. This emotional attachment is not only social but also supports their psychological stability during the transition to adulthood.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Pentecostal leadership is felt to have an impact on character formation and personal spiritual growth. Respondents noted that they became mentally and spiritually stronger and experienced changes in how they manage emotions and face life's struggles. Values such as forgiveness, love, and faithfulness to God became real in their daily lives. Leadership that provides examples and practical teaching opens a new understanding that faith is not just doctrine but also a lifestyle that shapes attitudes and responses to the realities of life.

⁴³ Elisabeth Kim et al., "'Positive Discipline Doesn't Sound Like Discipline': Experiences with Restorative Justice Implementation," *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 23, no. 3 (July 2, 2024): 530–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2023.2174143>;WGROU:STRING:PUBLICATION; Owen D Webb, "Enacting Relational Leadership Through Restorative Practices," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 67, no. 2 (May 31, 2021): 159–77, <https://doi.org/10.11575/AJER.V67I2.68603>.

⁴⁴ Crout, "Development of Future Leaders in the Christian Church"; Temaris Loran Moore, "Youth Discipleship Framework for Church Revitalization," *Doctoral Dissertations and Projects* (Liberty University, 2022), <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3552>; Webb, "Enacting Relational Leadership Through Restorative Practices."

Another significant impact is the emergence of longing and discipline in personal spiritual practices. Several respondents expressed that they have become more diligent in having silence and solitude times, experiencing depth in prayer, and seeing worship no longer as a routine but as a personal encounter with God. One respondent even stated that quiet time, which they never used to do, has now become part of their continuously developing spiritual lifestyle. This affirms that leadership that is intentionally cultivated has a direct impact on the spiritual growth of Gen Z.

In the context of ministry, consistent involvement in spiritual activities also shapes faith growth and self-understanding. Routine activities such as prayer altars, COOL (discipleship cell groups), and church community gatherings become effective means that not only nurture faith but also strengthen social relationships and build solidarity among young congregants. They feel facilitated and involved, so the growth process is not passive but participatory. One respondent mentioned that due to the intensity of church activities, they were able to grow both personally and spiritually.

Leadership that is open and willing to accompany individuals personally also fosters an awareness of life's values and spiritual purpose. Several respondents described their experiences consulting or sharing with church leaders as pivotal moments that opened their eyes to a more meaningful life. In this atmosphere, they not only found reliable figures but were also guided to know God more deeply and experience life transformation. As one respondent expressed, the existence of the church and its leaders tangibly taught them about God's love and faithfulness. This is also the fruit of their willingness to perform genuine love for Gen Z.⁴⁵

Overall, the Pentecostal leadership experienced by the respondents proved to have a holistic impact on their lives: spiritually, emotionally, socially, and in character. For many of them, this leadership is not just about organizational structure or theological teaching but about authentic presence, guiding shepherding, and a supportive community. The impact is felt not only in daily spiritual practices but also in the formation of personal identity and the maturity of faith. Thus, this leadership style proves to have high relevance in reaching and shaping today's young generation.

⁴⁵ G P Harianto et al., "Honor Dei as a Learning of the Need to Appreciate God's Servants in the Church," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 1 (2023); Thomas Jay Oord, *Pluriform Love: An Open and Relational Theology of Well-Being* (SacraSage Press, 2022).

Gen Z's Expectation toward Pentecostal Leadership

In the view of the respondents, the ideal church leader figure they long for is, first and foremost, someone who exemplifies the character of Christ. One respondent clearly stated that "the ideal leader is like the Lord Jesus." This expectation reflects a desire for a leader who not only holds a position but also embodies the values of love, sacrifice, selfless service, and empathetic presence.⁴⁶ They are not looking for a perfect leader but rather a figure who is willing to keep learning and reflect the love of Christ in their daily lives.

Another consistent expectation is that church leaders should be able to embrace across generations, from young people to the elderly. Respondents desire leaders who have the heart of a "spiritual father," who are emotionally and spiritually present, and ready whenever the congregation needs them. This figure is expected to not only care in general but also be personally present in the lives of the congregants. The role of the leader is not only structural but also relational, in the sense of building connections and communicating openly with various age groups within the congregation.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the ideal church leader in the eyes of Gen Z is authentic, humble, and able to be an example in real life. These characteristics are fruits from the leaders who give his/her life led by Spirit.⁴⁸ They highly value leaders whose lives align with the teachings they deliver from the pulpit. Exemplary living in daily actions is an important benchmark. It is not enough to just be a skilled preacher or authoritative on stage; leaders are also expected to be down-to-earth, approachable as a friend, and even acknowledge that they themselves are still growing in faith. Leaders who can be close without losing respect, firm yet still protective, become ideal figures in the context of a church community that involves many young people.

⁴⁶ Tim Gregory, "Sacrifice: Living Selflessly," *Transformational Pastoral Leadership*, 2023, 113–21, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27488-6_10; Ekenedilichukwu A. Okolo and Christian Oziezi, "'Let There Be No Quarrel among Us' (Genesis 13:8-9): Using Abraham's Model for Restructuring in Nigeria," *UNIZIK Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 13, no. 1 (July 22, 2021): 37–68, <https://doi.org/10.4314/JRHR.V13I1.3>.

⁴⁷ Memon and Ooi, "Investigating the Relationship Between Relational Leadership and Employees' Promotive Voice Behavior"; Nakamura and Milner, "Inclusive Leadership via Empathic Communication"; Wu and Li, "Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Employees' Innovative Behavior: A Relational Silence Approach."

⁴⁸ Asier Baquero, "Authentic Leadership, Employee Work Engagement, Trust in the Leader, and Workplace Well-Being: A Moderated Mediation Model," *Psychology Research and Behavior Management* 16 (2023): 1403–24, <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S407672>; Natalya Sergeeva and Dicle Kortantamer, "Enriching the Concept of Authentic Leadership in Project-Based Organisations through the Lens of Life-Stories and Self-Identities," *International Journal of Project Management* 39, no. 7 (October 1, 2021): 815–25, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJPROMAN.2021.09.001>.

Other responses emphasized the importance of an empathetic and communicative leadership style, especially in addressing the dynamics and struggles typical of young people today. They expect leaders who are not quick to judge but are able to correct with love and guide the congregation in the right direction. One respondent described that leaders should not shame erring members publicly but rather correct them privately with respect. This style is considered far more effective and builds trusting relationships. Gen Z appreciates leaders who understand their challenges, e.g., from studies, social interactions, relationships, and self-identity, and can convey spiritual messages in a relevant and easily understandable language. Equally important, there is an expectation that the ideal church leader possesses strong spiritual capacity as well as inter-generational communication skills. This includes an understanding of the current socio-cultural context and the ability to translate Christian values in a way that is relatable to Gen Z. One respondent conveyed that leaders do not need to know all the trends, but it is important for them to be able to deliver the Word in a way that touches the hearts and is relevant to the lives of young people. This indicates that Gen Z does not demand leaders who are superficially "hip" but rather socially intelligent and communicative in nurturing the spirituality of their generation.

This overall finding indicates that Gen Z expects church leadership that is not only theologically strong but also relationally warm and flexible in its approach. Leadership that can embrace, listen, correct with love, and be a real example in everyday life. Their ideal leader figure is both a mentor and a friend; a shepherd who can guide without being distant, nurture without judging, and inspire without being preachy. This expectation opens up a significant space for the transformation of church leadership styles, especially within the context of Pentecostal churches that are moving to reach a new generation.

Conclusion

Pentecostal church leadership must evolve from traditional authoritative models to embrace a relational and Spirit-led approach that meets the unique needs of Generation Z. Leaders who embody empathy, presence, and inclusivity are better positioned to guide this generation toward authentic faith and meaningful community engagement. Therefore, church leadership should focus on cultivating spiritual sensitivity and relational skills to remain relevant and

impactful in contemporary ministry contexts. Potential development of this study can be done by enlarging the scope of location, to get more generalized meaning.

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