
Effective Leadership Styles for Indonesia's Generation Z in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed organizational structures and leadership dynamics, especially as Generation Z increasingly dominates the global and Indonesian workforce. Characterized by a preference for flexibility, transparency, and authenticity, Gen Z challenges organizations to adopt leadership approaches aligned with their values and expectations. This study aims to identify the most effective leadership style for managing Indonesia's Gen Z employees in the digital era. Using a conceptual qualitative approach based on an extensive literature review, this paper analyzes and compares four contemporary leadership styles: transformational, servant, authentic, and digital leadership. The analysis reveals that authentic leadership is the most compatible with Gen Z's work orientation, emphasizing openness, ethics, and personal support from leaders. However, leadership effectiveness can be further enhanced by integrating transformational aspects that inspire, servant characteristics that empower, and digital competencies that adapt to technological advancements. Case examples from Indonesian companies such as Tokopedia and Ruangguru highlight how participative and flexible leadership fosters trust, engagement, and creativity among young employees. The study concludes that authentic leadership, when combined with transformational, servant, and digital elements, provides a holistic model for managing Gen Z in today's digital workplace. These findings have practical implications for leaders and human resource practitioners in developing adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable leadership strategies suitable for Indonesia's evolving workforce.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology over the past few decades has revolutionized various aspects of life, including the dynamics and structure of the modern workplace. This transformation compels organizations to adapt their leadership practices to address emerging challenges, one of which is the integration of Generation Z (Gen Z) into the workforce. Gen Z, generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents

the first generation to grow up entirely in a digital environment, thus exhibiting distinct characteristics and expectations compared to previous generations. According to Statistics Indonesia (2022), Gen Z constitutes more than 27% of the total population, making them a strategic group with significant potential to shape the future direction and work culture of the nation.

The defining traits of Gen Z include high digital proficiency, openness to social issues, appreciation for diversity and equity, and a strong preference for flexibility and work-life balance. Seemiller and Grace (2017) suggest that Gen Z seeks a work environment that fosters active engagement, self-empowerment, and a deep sense of purpose in their tasks. This indicates that their motivation tends to be intrinsic, driven not merely by material compensation, but also by the quality of interpersonal relationships, opportunities for learning, and personal meaning derived from work.

However, there exists a significant gap between the work expectations of Gen Z and the leadership approaches still commonly practiced in many Indonesian organizations. Traditional leadership styles that are hierarchical, authoritarian, and structurally rigid are often perceived as ineffective in fulfilling the psychological needs and values upheld by Gen Z. Such misalignment can reduce employee engagement, increase turnover intention, and ultimately harm organizational productivity. Yukl (2013) emphasizes that leadership effectiveness largely depends on a leader's ability to adapt their approach to the unique characteristics and needs of their followers.

In light of these issues, this study aims to identify the most effective leadership style for managing Generation Z in Indonesia, particularly within the context of an evolving digital era. The study also seeks to contribute theoretically by integrating contemporary leadership theories, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and digital leadership, which are considered more compatible with the values and characteristics of Gen Z.

Practically, this research is expected to serve as a valuable reference for organizational leaders, human resource practitioners, and policymakers in designing and implementing adaptive and inclusive leadership styles. In an increasingly complex and multigenerational workplace, organizational success depends not only on technical and structural factors but also on the ability of leaders to understand and manage generational diversity effectively. Leadership strategies that are responsive to the unique characteristics of each generation are crucial in fostering organizations that are dynamic, collaborative, and sustainable (Ng et al., 2012).

1.1 Literature Review

Definition of Generation Z

Generation Z (Gen Z) is a demographic group generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). This generation is also known as the iGeneration or Internet Generation because it is the first generation to grow up in a fully digitalized environment. Unlike previous generations who experienced a transition from the analog to the digital era, Gen Z has been exposed to the internet, smart devices, and social media in their daily lives since childhood (Putra, 2016; Twenge, 2017)

The presence of Gen Z in the workplace marks a significant change in organizational dynamics. They have unique characteristics and often differ markedly from previous generations such as Millennial (Generation Y) and Generation X. For example, in terms of work values, Gen Z tends to be more pragmatic and prioritizes financial security and career stability, while Millennial are more idealistic and driven by passion. Generation X, on the other hand, places more emphasis on independence and resilience (Usama et al., 2025). In addition, Gen Z has a lower level of risk-taking compared to Millennial. This is influenced by their experience of growing up in global economic instability, such as the 2008 financial crisis. They are also highly connected to technology, skilled at multitasking, and prefer fast-paced, digital communication over the face-to-face communication style favored by Generation X.

Characteristics of Gen Z in the Workplace

Entering the workforce, Gen Z brings a set of characteristics that significantly differentiate them from previous generations. Shaped by rapid technological advances, globalization, and social and economic dynamics that differ from their parents' era, Gen Z exhibits unique mindsets, preferences, and work expectations. These characteristics not only influence how they work and communicate, but also challenge organizations and leaders to adapt their managerial approaches and leadership styles. Some of the main characteristics of Gen Z in the workplace are as follows.

1. **Digital Natives and Dependence on Technology**
Gen Z is a generation that has never experienced a world without the internet. They not only use technology, but also integrate it into all aspects of their lives. According to Schmitt (2023), Gen Z tends to multitask, quickly absorb information from various digital sources, and expect technology to be used to its fullest potential in the workplace. This requires organizations to provide advanced digital infrastructure and efficient, technology-based work processes.
2. **Preference for Work Flexibility**
Generation Z highly values flexibility, both in terms of working hours and location. They show a strong preference for hybrid or remote working systems that allow for the integration of professional and personal life. For this generation, work-life balance is not limited to leisure time, but also includes mental well-being and overall quality of life (Deloitte, 2022). Organizations that provide Gen Z employees with autonomy and trust have proven to be more capable of increasing loyalty and productivity.
3. **The Need for Transparency and Participation in Decision Making**
Generation Z grew up in an era of information openness, so they expect organizations and leaders to convey information honestly, openly, and accountably. They also want to be involved in the decision-making process, as this creates a sense of belonging and increases work motivation (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). A participatory and empowering leadership style is considered more effective in fostering constructive relationships with this generation.
4. **Preference for Authentic and Supportive Leadership**
In terms of leadership, Generation Z tends to respect leaders who demonstrate authenticity, empathy, and commitment to ethical values. They do not want leaders who only give authoritative instructions, but rather leaders who can be mentors, facilitators, and role models at work. Research by Schroth (2019) shows that this generation responds positively to leaders who are inclusive, listen to opinions, and are able to create a psychologically safe work environment.
5. **Concern for Social Values and Organizational Impact**
Generation Z shows a high level of concern for social issues such as environmental sustainability, social justice, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). They prefer to work in organizations that have a clear purpose (purpose-driven organizations) and make a real contribution to society at large (Deloitte, 2022). This value orientation implies the importance of integrating business objectives and social responsibility into organizational strategies.
6. **Fast and Multichannel Communication Patterns**
In terms of communication, Generation Z prefers a fast, direct, and multichannel communication style. They are accustomed to using various digital platforms such as email, instant messaging applications, and collaborative platforms to convey information. They also value two-way communication and are open to feedback (Usama et al., 2025). Leaders who are able to adapt to this communication pattern will be more effective in building interpersonal relationships and efficient work coordination.

Leadership Style

A leader is an individual who is capable of guiding an organization, institution, or even a nation based on a clear vision and mission, with the aim of fostering a prosperous and just society, while demonstrating decisiveness and integrity in carrying out their responsibilities (Nababan et al., 2022). Ngadin (2022) further explains that a leader is someone who, by virtue of personal capacity whether formally appointed or not, can influence a

group of individuals under their direction in a collective effort to achieve specific goals. The role of a leader within an organization is crucial to the organization's existence and development, encompassing two key dimensions: the administrative function, which involves policy formulation and the provision of necessary resources, and the function of top management, which includes planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling, and supervision (Candra, 2024).

A competent leader is vital to an organization because the leadership style they adopt can have a significant impact and may determine whether the organization progresses or declines (Nababan et al., 2022; Pranogyo & Hendro, 2023). According to Pranogyo & Hendro (2023), leadership style refers to efforts to influence one's group by directing available resources effectively and efficiently throughout all management processes in order to achieve desired goals and produce quality outcomes. Leaders must carefully consider the most effective leadership style—one that can optimize performance and is adaptable to various situations and conditions within the organization (Jaya et al., 2020). The success of leadership is closely linked to how effective the approach is, encompassing not only the act of giving directives but also the ability to motivate and support subordinates in reaching their fullest potential (Nurwahidah et al., 2024).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes the leader's ability to optimally transform organizational resources by inspiring, motivating, and encouraging employee self-development, enabling them to innovate and confront challenges in pursuit of shared goals (Amelia et al., 2024). The concept was first introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and was later developed by Bernard M. Bass (1985), who highlighted four core components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Bass & Riggio (2006) emphasize that transformational leadership fosters strong emotional connections, offers inspiration, and facilitates comprehensive personal and professional development—elements that align closely with the needs and expectations of Generation Z in today's workforce. Transformational leaders also demonstrate empathetic behaviors such as listening, observing, and understanding their subordinates (Nurdiansyah et al., 2020), making this style effective in creating an open, collaborative, and inclusive work environment values highly appreciated by Gen Z. In line with this, Sylvyani and Ramli (2023) found that transformational leadership has an overall positive impact on enhancing knowledge sharing, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. This leadership style not only strengthens workplace relationships but also supports overall organizational effectiveness.

In the context of Generation Z, a study by Suryaningtyas & Fauzi (2024) reveals that they prefer work-life balance, job involvement, and leadership that is open and supportive. Consequently, transformational leadership is considered an effective approach to addressing the needs of this generation. This leadership style has been shown to foster strong work enthusiasm among the majority of Gen Z employees and build their trust. Therefore, the strategic implementation of transformational leadership is relevant for developing organizations that are adaptive, innovative, and competitive in the digital era.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a leadership style that places service to team members at the core of a leader's role. The concept was first introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 and has continued to evolve across various organizational contexts to this day. At its core, servant leadership emphasizes how leaders serve, mentor, and empower their followers to help them reach their fullest potential. This leadership style is characterized by several attributes, including empathy, self-awareness, commitment to individual growth, and community building (Nabawi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Ruslim & Madiistriyatno (2023) identify several key factors in servant leadership that influence the Generation Z workforce, namely active engagement, empathy, mentoring, recognition, flexibility, and work-

life balance. This is supported by Edyawati & Desiana (2024), who found that servant leadership can foster innovative behavior among young employees by creating a work environment grounded in trust and emotional engagement (flow at work). Research conducted by Lianto (2023) also shows that servant leadership is highly relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z, who seek a collaborative and meaningful work environment. By emphasizing empathy and goal orientation, this leadership style aligns with Generation Z's expectations of leaders who are supportive and empowering. In addition, a study by Fitriana & Fakhruzein (2025) notes that a combination of transformational and servant leadership represents an effective approach to leading Generation Z.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a leadership style that focuses on self-awareness, transparency, and building trust and commitment within an organization (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders help individuals find meaning in their work, foster optimism, and create an inclusive and ethical work environment. In addition, they have a deep understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others, and are aware of the mindsets and behaviors they exhibit (Nababan et al., 2022). These characteristics are important in the context of leadership for Generation Z. According to Reformasianto & Faizah (2024), Gen Z in the Indonesian work environment brings its own dynamics because they expect a more flexible way of working, rapid self-development opportunities, and a work atmosphere that supports collaboration. Gen Z also has unique preferences compared to previous generations, prioritizing transparency, ethics, clear goals in work, and flexibility (Devi, 2024)

In line with this, research by Saruksuk et al. (2022) shows that authentic leadership has a significant positive effect on the affective well-being and affective commitment of Gen Z. Similar findings were reported by Afandi et al. (2022), who revealed that authentic leadership can reduce Gen Z's intention to leave the company (turnover intention) by strengthening employee engagement through increasing their sense of belonging to the organization and creating a space that supports them to express their ideas and develop their potential before decisions are made. Overall, Gen Z rates authentic leadership as the most effective style compared to transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire leadership (Seamon, 2022).

Digital Leadership

Digital leadership is a modern form of leadership that prioritizes the use of digital technology to support decision-making processes, organizational transformation, and the improvement of employee performance in the digital era. This leadership does not only emphasize technological mastery but also the ability to create a work culture that is open to change, collaborative, and innovative. Digital leaders are not only those who understand technology but also those who possess a digital mindset, namely a way of thinking that can identify opportunities from technological developments and direct the organization to adapt strategically. They encourage comprehensive technology adoption, integrate data into decision-making, and build agile and responsive teams to face the challenges of the times. Digital leaders are not only those who understand technology but also those who possess a digital mindset, namely a way of thinking that can identify opportunities arising from technological developments and guide the organization to adapt strategically. They encourage comprehensive technology adoption, integrate data into decision-making, and build agile and responsive teams to face contemporary challenges.

El Sawy et al. (2020) in *MIS Quarterly Executive* explain that digital leadership requires leaders to act as catalysts for change. Leaders must be able to accurately interpret digital trends, facilitate technological innovation across all levels of the organization, and align digital transformation with long-term business goals. In addition, digital leaders need to foster a work environment that supports continuous learning and experimentation. Digital leadership is particularly relevant in the context of leading Generation Z, who are digital natives. This generation prefers fast communication, the use of digital platforms for collaboration, and

transparency in leadership styles. Therefore, leaders in the digital era are required to accommodate these needs through approaches that are more flexible, open, and adaptive.

Comparison of Leadership Style Preferences Across Generations

The dynamics of leadership continue to evolve alongside generational shifts in the workplace, where each generation brings its own distinct values and expectations toward leadership styles (Habib, 2019). Generation X (born 1965–1980), Generation Y or Millennials (born 1981–1996), and Generation Z (born 1997–2012) possess different characteristics shaped by the socio-technological contexts in which they grew up (Purnama, 2025). According to the 2020 Population Census in Indonesia, Generation Z has begun to dominate the labor market, accounting for 27.94% of the population, making the understanding of effective leadership styles increasingly critical. The digital era has accelerated this transformation, requiring leadership approaches that are adaptive, inclusive, and technology-driven to accommodate the needs of a multigenerational workforce (Dewantara, 2022). The following table presents a comparison of leadership style preferences among Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z.

Table 1. Comparison of Leadership Style Preferences Across Generations

Aspect	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Core Values	Stability, loyalty, hierarchy	Collaboration, meaningful work, flexibility	Creativity, autonomy, digital-savvy
Effective Leadership Style	Authoritative, centralized decision-making	Participative, mentoring, transformational	Democratic, adaptive, technology-based
Communication	Formal, face-to-face, direct	Informal, open, email/chat	Fast, digital, social media
Work Motivation	Financial compensation, security	Career development, work-life balance	Freedom of expression, social impact

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that Generation X tends to be more comfortable with clear structures and authoritative leaders, whereas Generation Y prefers a collaborative work environment with leaders who act as mentors. In contrast, Generation Z, as digital natives, values leaders who are transparent, innovative, and capable of utilizing technology in decision-making (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Leading Generation Z requires a different approach compared to previous generations. This generation values freedom in their work and tends to be more productive in dynamic environments. They are more motivated by leaders who listen to their aspirations and provide space for creative contribution (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). Moreover, the use of digital platforms such as Zoom, Slack, or other project management tools has become essential for effective communication and collaboration.

2. Research Methods

This study is a conceptual paper that employs a qualitative research method using a literature-based approach. The research focuses on collecting, reviewing, and analyzing various relevant written sources to develop a strong conceptual understanding of the most effective leadership styles for Generation Z in the digital era. Rather than engaging in primary data collection, this study relies entirely on secondary data derived from credible and authoritative sources. The type of research used is a descriptive literature study, which aims to analyze key concepts and theories related to leadership and the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z.

The data sources used in this study include publications from Statistics Indonesia (*Badan Pusat Statistik*), academic journals discussing leadership theories, behavioral and motivational aspects of Generation Z, and the dynamics of leadership in the digital era. In addition, this study also draws from books, industry reports, business articles, and case studies from organizations that have implemented effective leadership practices reflecting real-world dynamics among Generation Z employees, particularly within the Indonesian context. These diverse sources provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation to better understand how leadership styles can adapt to the evolving expectations of younger generations in the modern workplace.

The data collection technique employed in this study is a comprehensive literature review, conducted through an extensive exploration of academic and professional publications. The process involves identifying, reading, and synthesizing information from journals, books, articles, and reports that discuss leadership and Generation Z in various organizational settings. This method allows the researcher to compile diverse insights from previous studies to construct a holistic understanding of the topic.

For the data analysis, a descriptive-qualitative approach is applied by examining and comparing four contemporary leadership theories: Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership, Authentic Leadership, and Digital Leadership. These four leadership models were chosen due to their strong relevance to modern organizational contexts and their potential alignment with Generation Z's values and expectations in the workplace. The analysis compares these theories in terms of their respective strengths and weaknesses in addressing the characteristics of Generation Z, their compatibility with Indonesian organizational culture, and their relevance to the challenges and dynamics of the digital work environment.

The literature-based approach was selected because the main objective of this research is to construct a conceptual framework that identifies the most suitable leadership style for Generation Z. A literature review is considered the most appropriate method for this purpose, as it allows the researcher to explore established theories and practices from prior studies without the need for primary data collection. This approach not only enables a deeper understanding of leadership models but also provides a solid theoretical foundation for future empirical research that may further validate the proposed framework.

Moreover, this method offers the flexibility to compare and evaluate different leadership styles in relation to the unique attributes of Generation Z, such as their preference for flexibility, transparency, inclusivity, and digital engagement. In an exploratory and conceptual study like this, a qualitative, literature-driven approach is particularly suitable because it captures theoretical nuances across a wide range of perspectives while synthesizing empirical findings from diverse contexts and industries. By doing so, the study is able to provide a comprehensive conceptual understanding of leadership effectiveness in guiding Generation Z within the modern, digitally oriented workplace.

3. Result and Discussion

Selection of Leadership Styles Based on Gen Z Characteristics

Understanding the unique characteristics of Generation Z, distinct from previous generations, is essential in determining the most effective leadership style in the digital era. As digital natives with a need for flexibility and a preference for open communication and authentic leadership, they require strategically tailored approaches (Hidayat & Selvia, 2022; Schmitt, 2023). Previous studies have examined several leadership styles,

including transformational, servant, authentic, and digital leadership. Each has the potential to be applied to Generation Z; however, their effectiveness largely depends on the organizational context and the specific needs of Gen Z individuals.

Transformational leadership offers an inspiring and empowering approach that aligns with Gen Z's need for self-development and leadership that supports creativity and innovation. This style emphasizes empathy, motivation, and individualized coaching, which are highly valued by Gen Z in the workplace (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Suryaningtyas & Fauzi, 2024). Its strength lies in its ability to build emotional bonds and foster collective enthusiasm, although its implementation may also require leaders to possess strong interpersonal skills.

Meanwhile, servant leadership is particularly relevant to the collaborative and participatory spirit of Gen Z. Leaders who are able to serve and empower their team members tend to earn the trust and loyalty of Gen Z, especially because they value leaders who show genuine care, provide space for growth, and pay attention to employee well-being (Lianto, 2023; Edyawati & Desiana, 2024). Its strength lies in fostering an inclusive and humane work environment. However, a potential drawback may arise when the focus on individuals becomes excessive, leading to a lack of firmness in strategic decision-making.

Authentic leadership is a leadership style that aligns particularly well with Gen Z, as it emphasizes transparency, integrity, and genuineness. Gen Z, shaped in an era of open information, expects leaders to be honest, ethical, and consistent in aligning their values with their actions (Saruksuk et al., 2022). In Seamon's (2022) study, authentic leadership was rated as the most preferred style among Gen Z compared to others. Its strength lies in the ability to build long-term trust, while its challenge rests in the leader's consistency of character and ethical commitment.

On the other hand, digital leadership has become a highly contextual style in the post-pandemic era and within hybrid work environments. This approach aligns with Gen Z's expectations of leaders who are technologically adept, adaptive, and capable of fostering a digitally collaborative work culture (Kane et al., 2015). In organizations that operate remotely or in hybrid systems, digital leadership has been shown to be effective in ensuring rapid and efficient coordination that fits Gen Z's communication patterns. However, this style tends to be less attentive to emotional aspects or direct personal development, making it necessary to integrate elements of empathy from other leadership approaches.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that there is no single ideal leadership style; rather, an integrative approach is required. However, the style most aligned with the core characteristics of Generation Z is authentic leadership, as it responds to their need for openness, transparency, and values-based leadership (Afandi et al., 2022). This style can also be strategically combined with elements of transformational and digital leadership to create an approach that is adaptive, inspiring, and relevant amid the current digital disruption.

Integration of Leadership Styles as an Ideal Solution for Generation Z

In addressing leadership challenges in the modern workplace, particularly within the context of multigenerational dynamics and digitalization, a single leadership style is often insufficient to meet the complex needs of Generation Z. Therefore, an integrative leadership approach is required, one that combines the strengths of various relevant styles. The following section outlines four complementary approaches: transformational, authentic, servant, and digital leadership—which, when applied synergistically, can create an ideal work environment for this generation.

- A. **Inspiring Vision Built on a Foundation of Trust (Transformational and Authentic Leadership)**
Generation Z is known for valuing meaningful work, transparency, and authentic leaders. Transformational leadership provides an inspiring vision and encourages employee self-development, making it highly relevant for Gen Z, who seek direction and motivation in their professional lives. However, the effectiveness of this style is strengthened when combined with authentic leadership,

which emphasizes transparency, integrity, and self-awareness. Leaders who are trusted are more capable of communicating a vision that is embraced and implemented by their teams. This leadership combination has been shown to reduce turnover intention among Generation Z employees. Ultimately, the integration of transformational and authentic leadership forms a foundation that not only motivates but also fosters trust and long-term loyalty.

B. Active Support for Empowerment (Servant Leadership)

In addition to inspiration and trust, Generation Z also requires tangible support in their work processes. Servant leadership plays a crucial role in this regard by emphasizing empathy, empowerment, and a commitment to individual growth. A servant leader is not merely a director but a facilitator who actively supports the team's needs both emotionally and practically. For Generation Z, who are accustomed to collaborative and non-hierarchical work environments, the presence of supportive leaders who position themselves as partners is a key factor in creating a healthy and productive organizational climate.

C. Technology as a Medium (Digital Leadership)

The integration of these leadership styles requires an appropriate medium to be effectively implemented, particularly within today's digital work environment, which has become the norm. Digital leadership serves as a vital element that connects vision, values, and empowerment through the utilization of technology. Digital leaders use collaborative platforms to communicate their vision, build transparent work systems, and provide flexible working arrangements that are highly valued by Generation Z. The combination of strong leadership values with digital competencies is essential for enhancing engagement and team effectiveness in the hybrid work era.

These four leadership approaches not only complement one another but also form a comprehensive and responsive leadership framework. Transformational leaders answer the "why" through a clear and meaningful vision; authentic leaders answer the "who" by establishing trust and credibility; servant leaders answer the "how" by supporting and empowering their teams; and digital leaders provide the "tools" to realize all of these elements within the realities of modern work. This combination fosters leadership that is adaptive, collaborative, and capable of optimizing Generation Z's potential amid the challenges and changes of the digital workplace.

This integrated leadership approach aligns with the principles of hybrid leadership, which has emerged as a response to post-pandemic work dynamics, particularly in managing teams that operate both physically and virtually (Avrillia et al., 2025). This leadership style emphasizes the importance of adaptability and flexibility, as well as competence in building trust and maintaining effective cross-cultural communication (Usama et al., 2025). Nevertheless, Kwartawaty et al., (2024) highlight the need for further research to understand the long-term impact of various leadership styles on Generation Z's career development and their responses to the increasingly prevalent hybrid leadership model.

Real Practice Example in Indonesia (Case Study)

One company that has successfully implemented these leadership practices in Indonesia is Tokopedia. Tokopedia serves as a prime example of a technology-based company that effectively applies both servant leadership and digital transformation leadership. Leadership at Tokopedia emphasizes employee empowerment and the use of technology to create a flexible work environment. For instance, Charlie, as the head of the Business Intelligence team at Tokopedia, provides his team members with significant autonomy to innovate and learn independently, offering guidance only when necessary (Sari & Warsindah, 2024). In addition, Tokopedia's digital leadership is evident in its work culture, which adopts remote communication technologies and digital tools to facilitate collaboration, aligning with Generation Z's need for flexibility and opportunities for self-development. This leadership approach allows Generation Z employees at Tokopedia to feel more comfortable expressing ideas and contributing creatively within a supportive and inclusive work environment (Morrison, 2024). Consequently, Tokopedia has succeeded in fostering employee trust and loyalty while simultaneously supporting sustainable business growth.

Another company that exemplifies real-world leadership practices is Ruangguru. Under the leadership of Belva Devara, Ruangguru has consistently implemented democratic and servant leadership styles. Belva prioritizes open dialogue with his team and stakeholders, while promoting a service-oriented approach as the core of the company's strategy. According to Rest of The World, Ruangguru has reached more than 22 million students and 300,000 teachers, and successfully raised \$55 million in funding to expand its digital education impact. Furthermore, Belva stated that his main priority is to enhance the quality of education through technology that can reach a broader audience effectively and efficiently. This real-world example aligns with the characteristics of Generation Z, who value collaborative environments, transparent leadership, and social-oriented missions. Such an approach positions Ruangguru as a relevant and inspiring organization for the younger workforce.

4. Conclusions

Entering an era of digital work that is increasingly dominated by Generation Z, choosing the right leadership style is a key element in creating a productive, inclusive, and sustainable work environment. Based on the discussion outlined above, it can be concluded that Generation Z has unique characteristics as digital natives who value flexibility, transparency, collaboration, and authentic and adaptive leadership. Therefore, the leadership approach to this generation cannot be standardized, but rather needs to be integrative, contextual, and responsive to the dynamics of the times.

From the various leadership styles studied, namely transformational, servant, authentic, and digital leadership, authentic leadership emerged as the approach most aligned with the core values of Generation Z. Authenticity, honesty, and integrity in leadership are the foundations needed to build long-term trust and loyalty. However, leadership effectiveness for Gen Z will be optimized if authentic leadership is strategically combined with an inspiring transformational leadership approach, an empowering servant leadership approach, and a digital leadership approach that is relevant to the reality of hybrid work and technology. The integration of these various styles enables leaders to respond to the needs of Gen Z more holistically, in terms of their values, aspirations, and work preferences. With this adaptive and collaborative approach, organizations can create leadership that is not only effective in a managerial sense but also meaningful for future generations.

Case studies from companies such as Tokopedia and Ruangguru show that the implementation of adaptive and participatory leadership can increase the comfort, engagement, and creative contribution of Gen Z employees. This reinforces that an open, flexible, and empowering leadership style not only meets the expectations of the younger generation but also encourages sustainable organizational growth. The managerial implications that emerge underscore the importance of practical leadership training, flexible and visual communication, and agile, results-oriented work system design. Today's leaders are not only required to have technological competencies, but also emotional intelligence, the ability to build trust, and the courage to be authentic. However, because this article is based on secondary literature, further applied research is needed to test the effectiveness of this leadership style in the context of organizations in Indonesia.

Managerial and Organizational Implications

In dealing with Generation Z, which is now increasingly dominating the world of work, leaders and HR divisions are required to be more adaptive, not only in terms of values, but also in terms of the strategies applied in the field. Approaches that are too theoretical and rigid are no longer effective for a generation that is accustomed to speed, flexibility, and room for expression.

The first step organizations can take is to design leadership training based on practical and real-life situations, such as leadership simulations or reverse mentoring, where senior leaders are trained to understand Gen Z's expectations directly from their perspective. This practice also encourages the creation of a more open and supportive leadership style, as suggested by Edyawati & Desiana (2024), that trust and emotional security are the keys to innovation from young employees. In terms of communication, a more suitable approach for Gen Z is concise, flexible, and visual communication. Leaders should start utilizing digital platforms such as short video briefings, digital boards (such as Notion or Miro), and open feedback forums, rather than relying solely

on formal meetings or annual evaluations. This is not just a trend, but also an adaptation to the way Gen Z quickly digests and responds to information.

Not only that, the work environment also needs to be reorganized. It is not just a matter of office decoration, but more about designing a hybrid, transparent, and results-based work system. For example, the use of flexible workspaces (hot desks), more dynamic working hours, and an assessment system that focuses on output rather than working hours. According to Kwartanwaty et al. (2024), effective digital leaders not only master technology but also create an agile work culture and empower employees. In addition, HR also needs to prepare transparent and data-driven onboarding and career path programs, such as the use of career dashboards or self-tracking progress tools that can be accessed directly by employees. This is important so that Gen Z feels that their career path is clear and can develop as they wish. Afandi et al. (2022) show that the higher the level of alignment between personal values and work, the less likely Gen Z is to leave the company. Overall, the approach to Gen Z cannot be superficial. Systemic changes are needed in leadership patterns and organizational culture that truly give Gen Z space to grow, be heard, and be empowered. When this strategy is implemented comprehensively and consistently, the loyalty, engagement, and productivity of Gen Z employees will increase significantly.

Limitations and Further Research

This paper has several limitations that need to be noted. The discussion is based entirely on secondary literature without involving primary data, such as direct surveys, interviews, or field observations. As a result, all arguments presented are conceptual and cannot represent the real conditions that occur in the workplace, especially in the context of applying leadership styles to Gen Z employees. In addition, not all leadership styles discussed in this paper have been directly tested for effectiveness in Indonesian organizations. Some concepts may be relevant in theory, but they still need stronger empirical evidence in order to be widely applied and contextually appropriate. In the future, further research should be directed towards a more applicative and field data-based approach. One way to do this is by conducting case studies in digital companies or startups where the majority of employees are from this generation. Such studies can provide a real picture of how certain leadership styles are applied and accepted by Gen Z in the workplace. Research by Saruksuk et al. (2022) shows that authentic leadership accompanied by emotional well-being can strengthen employee commitment in a technology-based startup work ecosystem.

In addition, it is important to conduct a nationwide survey of Gen Z employees in various industrial sectors. Such research can help map Gen Z's preferences for leadership styles that they consider most effective and relevant to their values. Devi (2024) asserts that a data-driven quantitative approach can help organizations understand Gen Z's expectations more comprehensively. Longitudinal research can also be a useful alternative approach. By observing the long-term impact of a particular leadership style, organizations can more accurately assess whether that style truly contributes to Gen Z's loyalty, satisfaction, and career development. Findings from Sylvyani & Ramli (2023) show that transformational leadership combined with a culture of knowledge sharing can significantly increase job satisfaction.

Finally, further exploration of hybrid leadership models is also important. In the context of an increasingly flexible and digital world of work, leaders are required to be able to combine traditional and modern approaches in a balanced manner. Candra (2024) emphasizes that developing excellent human resources in the current era requires a leadership style that is adaptive to changes in culture and work patterns. By expanding research methods and approaches, future studies are expected to make a tangible contribution to the development of more contextual, relevant, and effective leadership strategies in dealing with Generation Z in the Indonesian workplace.

5. References

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