

## THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLE ON GEN Z PERFORMANCE AT PT PAN BROTHERS TBK BOYOLALI

Latifah Nur Faizah<sup>1)</sup>, Muhammad Karisma Alam<sup>2)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup>Department of Management, Terbuka University, Indonesia

<sup>2)</sup>Department of Management, Terbuka University, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Latifahnurfaiz@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This study aims to understand how leadership styles affects the performance of Gen Z employees at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 10 Gen Z employees and field observations. The results of the study indicate that the application of transformational and democratic leadership styles has a positive effect on Gen Z performance. On the other hand, authoritarian styles tend to reduce their motivation and engagement in work. The characteristics of Gen Z who value autonomy, open communication, and opportunities for development are more in line with a participatory and supportive leadership style. This study contributes to designing a leadership model that is responsive to the needs of the younger generation in the modern work environment, as well as providing practical recommendations for companies to increase employee productivity and retention through a generationally relevant leadership approach.*

**Keywords:** Gen Z, Leadership Style, PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali, Transformational Leadership

### Introduction

The transformation of the world of work in the last decade has brought significant changes, not only in terms of technology but also in the composition of the workforce generation. Currently Generation Z or better known as Gen Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012 are starting to dominate the labor market. As a generation that grew up in the midst of an established digital era and easy access via the internet (Sakitri, 2021). Gen Z has high expectations for flexibility, meaningful work, and supportive leadership, thus Gen Z brings new challenges in organizational management, especially in terms of leadership style. Leadership style has a major influence on employee motivation and performance. According to Robbins & Judge (2017), an effective leadership style can create a productive and hamonious work environment. Meanwhile, Yukl (2013) emphasizes the importance of leaders in directing and inspiring teams to achieve oragnizational goals. In addition, Northouse (2016) states that leaders who are able to understand the needs and characteristics of employees can increase their engagement and performance.

PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali, a company engaged in the garment industry, employs many employees from Gen Z who are now an important component of the workforce facing these dynamics directly. In March – May 2024, there was a mass resignation phenomenon due to their incompatibility with the leadership style of their superiors, the majority of whom were Gen Z employees. This made researchers want to dig deeper into the leadership style that suits Gen Z in the workplace. In this context, it is important to review the extent to which the leadership style apllied by supervisors and managers is in line with the needs and characteristics of Gen Z. Based on initial observations, there is a difference between the traditional top-down leadership approach and Gen Z expectations that emphasize collaboration, two-way communication, and opportunities for personal development.

Given the importance of the role of leadership in shaping performance and a healthy work atmosphere, further research is needed to understand how the current leadership style affects the performance of Gen Z employees at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali. This study focuses on answering four main questions related to the effectiveness of leadership styles on Gen Z employees at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali. These questions include: how does each leadership style affect the performance of Gen Z employees, which leadership style is most effective in creating a productive work environment for Gen Z, how do Gen Z employees perceive the leadership styles the experience in the workplace, and how companies can adjust leadership styles to be more relevant to the characteristics and needs of Gen Z. Previous studies have discussed the relationship between leadership style and employee performance in general, but there are still few that specifically review the context of Gen Z as the main object. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and explore the influence of leadership style

on the performance of Gen Z employees at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali in depth. It is hoped that this study can provide a significant contribution to the development of leadership strategies that are more in line with the dynamics of the current generation.

### Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, aiming to deeply understand the influence of leadership style on the performance of Gen Z employees at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali. Researchers use this approach to explore the views, experiences, and subjective perceptions of informants in the real context of the work environment. The location of this research is at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali, a company engaged in the garment industry located in Boyolali, Central Java. This research was conducted during the period from June to August 2024, which included the initial observation stage, interviews, and data analysis.

The informants in this study were selected purposively based on certain criteria that were relevant to the research objectives. The informant criteria include employees who are included in the Gen Z category (born between 1997-2012), then those who have worked for a least one year, and have experience working directly under a leader, either a supervisor or manager at PT PAN Brother Tbk Boyolali.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 Gen Z employee, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, giving informants the freedom to share their experiences in depth while maintaining focus on research topic. Observations were conducted in a non-participatory manner to observe patterns of interaction between leaders and Gen Z employees in the work environment. Throughout the research process, researchers maintained ethical research principles by maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, obtaining consent before the interview, and using data for academic purpose only.

### Results and Discussion

Leadership is a process in which a superior influences his subordinates to achieve certain goals (Nurhalim et al., 2023). Good and correct leadership will improve employee performance (Perkasa et al., 2023). Some leadership styles that are commonly discussed in management literature include transformational, democratic, and authoritarian leadership. Transformational leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to inspire and motivate subordinates to go beyond personal interests in order to achieve common goals. According to Baskoro (2019), this style has a significant positive effect on employee performance. Meanwhile, democratic or participatory leadership emphasizes the importance of team member involvement in the decision-making process, where leaders are open to suggestions and encourage healthy two-way communication. On the other hand, authoritarian leadership is characterized by the leader's complete dominance in decision-making, giving one-way instructions, and strict supervision of subordinates activities. Although effective in emergency situations, this leadership style can hinder creativity and reduce work enthusiasm if applied in the long term (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

Transformational leadership is considered the most effective because it provides vision, inspiration, and recognition of the individual's role. Participative leadership is also considered suitable for Gen Z because it provides space to be involved in decisions. Meanwhile, authoritarian leadership style is considered less appropriate because it conflicts with the value of openness and autonomy upheld by Gen Z. On Friday of June 21, 2024, researchers conducted interviews with five Gen Z employees with the question "What characteristics of a superior do you like?". Here are the responses from the five Gen Z informants:

Table 1 Interviews Results

Number	Name	Age	Respons
1	Fitria	23	"I like a boss who is open to his subordinates, who does not hinder all their activities and creativity"
2	Diki	25	"I like a boss who is not too rigid so that the relationship between the boss and subordinates is also good and not awkward"
3	Wulan	19	"A boss who is relaxed and easy to discuss with"
4	Erlita	20	"A boss who gives me trust, this makes me more enthusiastic to work more freely without feeling uncomfortable"
5	Akbar	22	"A boss who gives me the freedom to speak and express opinions, so I don't feel pressured to keep something to myself"

Source: Interviews with Gen Z employees

From the results of the interviews, it was found that five Gen Z employee informants at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali responded positively to a leadership style that is participatory, communicative, and supportive. On Tuesday of June 25, 2024, researchers conducted interviews with five Gen Z employees who were under authoritarian leadership with question "Do you like the style of a leader who closely supervises your performance?". Here are the responses from the five Gen Z informants:

Table 2 Interviews Results

Number	Name	Age	Respons
1	Nurma	21	"No, I really don't like that kind of leader because it actually interferes with my performance."
2	Kiki	20	"No, I feel uncomfortable and uneasy when working under close supervision"
3	Irel	19	"Not at all, I am more productive when given the space to work independently."
4	Fauzi	26	"Don't like it, too much supervision can hinder my effectiveness and creativity"
5	Solichun	25	"No, it makes me feel uncomfortable and I always want to take leave every now and then because I don't want to meet my boss."

Source: Interviews with Gen Z employees

On the other hand, five informants who worked under an authoritarian leader expressed feelings of discomfort and limitations in creativity.

In this study, observations were conducted for a full month in July 2024 on two work teams with different leadership styles. The results of the observations showed that a team led with a transformational and democratic style showed a more open and collaborative work atmosphere. During the internal meeting held by the team on Monday of July 15, 2024, team members actively discussed and provided ideas. In contrast, teams led with an authoritarian style tended to create a formal and passive work atmosphere. Researchers saw that employees seemed to be waiting for instructions and did not contribute much to the decision-making process. Researchers also observed the achievement of the targets of the two teams. Teams led with a transformational and democratic style achieved higher target achievements and received more internal rewards. Meanwhile, teams led in an authoritarian manner had a higher level of job rotation and experienced more frequent communication conflicts.

The three leadership styles identified in this study are transformational, democratic, and authoritarian, each of which has a different influence on the performance of Gen Z employees at PT Pan Brothers Tbk Boyolali. Transformational and democratic styles have both been shown to have a positive impact, where both are able to increase internal motivation, a sense of ownership of work, and encourage participation and responsibility because employees feel valued and involved in the decision-making process. On the other hand, an authoritarian leadership style has a negative impact on performance, because Gen Z feels unfree and less emotionally and intellectually involved in their work. Leaders who are able to provide space for employees to innovate, listen to their ideas, and support their self-development can increase employee motivation and engagement and also improve their performance. This is in line with the character of Gen Z who values transparency, personal support, and inspirational leadership. The majority of Gen Z employees have a positive perception of open and supportive leadership. They consider that leaders who are able to build personal relationships and provide space to develop make them more comfortable, enthusiastic, and productive. Several respondents also mentioned that a rigid and top-down leadership style makes them feel constrained, less motivated and inhibits growth. PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali can adjust its leadership style to the characteristic of Gen Z through several strategies that are relevant to the values of that generation. First, by providing generation-based leadership training to equip leaders with an understanding of the importance of autonomy, flexibility, and meaning in working for Gen Z. Second, encouraging active two-way communication to build a culture of feedback and open discussion, so that employee engagement increases. Third, by integrating managerial technology such as digital performance, support team collaboration, and create a more transparent reporting system. Finally, companies can apply a coaching approach so that the role of superiors can shift from merely giving instructions to being mentors and facilitators in individual development.

### **Conclusion**

This study confirms that leadership style has a significant impact on the performance of Gen Z employees at PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali. The generation that grew up in the digital era and values freedom, participation, and the search for meaning in work, shows that the authoritative approach is no longer effective and has the potential to be counterproductive. From the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, transformational and democratic leadership styles have proven to be more effective in developing a productive and motivating work environment. Leaders who are able to inspire, provide space for participation, and establish open communication tend to produce employees who are more loyal, creative, and highly competitive. This study is in line with various previous studies, including those conducted by Hafidz 7 Noviyati (2022) and Hardian & Hermawan (2022) which have examined the relationship between leadership and organizational performance in the context of Gen Z. The results of the study show that transformational leadership has a positive influence on team engagement, motivation, and performance.

This study theoretically supports the approach that states that leadership effectiveness is contextual, depending on the values and characteristics of the individuals being led. Thus, one leadership style cannot be applied uniformly across generations. This study has important implications in three main aspects. Practically, organizations need to view leadership not just as a position, but as an interpersonal and emotional skill that must be developed, especially in dealing with new generations such as Gen Z. Theoretically, this finding confirms that leadership theory is dynamic and needs to be reviewed in the context of sociological and cultural contexts that are always changing. Meanwhile, in terms of organizational policy, a paradigm shift is needed from a control-focused approach to a more collaborative model, and from an instructional style to a more empowering approach. This study not only confirms the importance of transformational and democratic leadership styles, but also criticizes the inequality in leadership adaptation that still occurs in conventional companies to the new generation of workers.

### **Suggestions**

The suggestions that researchers can convey to the management of PT PAN Brothers Tbk Boyolali are that intensive training is needed for team leaders to understand the psychological and social dynamics of Gen Z. The managerial approach must be based on coaching and mentoring, not just structural control. Direct leaders such as supervisors to develop skills that are not only focused on achieving targets, but also on the process of individual formation. Don't forget the advice for Gen Z employees to be more active in providing constructive feedback to superiors, as well as taking part in creating a collaborative work culture.

## References

- Baskoro, C. (2019). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Transformasional dan Motivasi Kerja Terhadap Kinerja Karyawan. *Manajer: Jurnal Ilmu Mnajemen*, 2(2), Nomor telepon 69. <https://doi.org/10.32832/manager.v2i2.2562>
- Hafidz, G. P., & Noviyati, M. (2022). Analisis motivasi kerja, kepemimpinan transformasional dan budaya organisasi terhadap kinerja karyawan dimediasi kepuasan kerja pada angkatan kerja generasi Z. *Fair Value: Jurnal Ilmiah Akuntansi dan Keuangan*, 4(7), 2763-2773.
- Hardian, V., & Hermawan, E. (2022). Gaya Kepemimpinan Transformatif Untuk Gen Z. *KENDALI: Economics and Social Humanities*, 1(1), 32-38. <https://doi.org/10.58738/kendali.v1i1.15>
- Northouse, P. G. (2016). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Nurhalim, N., Saputra, M. Z. A., Ningsih, N. S., Amirullah, A., Musli, M., & Jamrizal, J. (2023). Konsep Kepemimpinan: Pengertian, Peran, Urgensi dan Profil Kepemimpinan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 7(1), 2071–2072.
- Perkasa, D. H., Arbaina, C., Purwanto, S., Sari, O. H., & Tarmiji, A. (2023). Pengaruh Kedisiplinan, Kepemimpinan dan Lingkungan Kerja terhadap Kinerja Karyawan. *AGILITY: Lentera Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia*, 1(02), 47–59. <https://doi.org/10.59422/lmsdm.v1i02.84>
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2017). *Organizational behavior* (17th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2019). *Organizational Behavior* (18th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Sakitri, G. (2021). Selamat Datang Gen Z, Sang Penggerak Inovasi. *Forum Manajemen Prasetiya Mulya*, 35(2), 1–10.
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in Organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson Education.

## Author's Bibliography

Latifah nur faizah was born in Klaten, Indonesia, on September 02, 2003. A student in the Management Study Program at the Terbuka University, Indonesia, which started in 2022. During the study period, actively participated in various seminars ad workshops related to business management and leadership.