

Effective Leadership style for Generation Z

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Abstract

Generation Z (Gen Z) is expected to reach 2.56 billion individuals globally by 2020 and estimated to occupy 20% of work-place. Each generation has its unique ability and competency. Leveraging them is a key to the success of an organization. Gen Z is known to be more risk-averse, have lower expectations, confident but cautious, demanding. This generation is known as digitally naïve and hyper-connected junkies. Their attention span is short and need extensive feedback, but not micromanagement. Gen Z prefers face-to-face interactions. With those characteristics, this study aims to see what leadership style is effective for Gen Z. A qualitative study was conducted to 92 Gen Z see the frequent keyword to identify the effective leadership style. Voyant analytical tools was used to analyze the keywords. The most frequent keywords mentioned were friendly, good, humble, wise, polite, honest, providing, supportive, understanding, caring, giving and appreciate. However, words such as encouraging, challenging were not mentioned at all. Therefore, according to the keyword finding, the effective leadership style is servant leadership.

Keywords

Generation Z, leadership, servant leadership, transformational

1. Introduction

Regarding leadership styles, literature brings several types, such as authoritarian, charismatic, situational, visionary, contingency, behavioral, transactional among others (Northouse 2019). Among the 66 leadership styles indicated by Dinh et al. (2014) in (Girardi and Rubim Sarate 2021), transformational leadership is the most emphasized, which have been growing rapidly since the 1990s, especially in studies that investigate how these studies promote better performance in organizations (Girardi and Rubim Sarate 2021). However, difference situation requires different type of leadership.

With different traits, way of thinking, lifestyle, belief, Gen Z might need a certain type of leadership that make the work effectively. Gen Z are known to be the first global citizen due to the advancement of internet and technology. Therefore, they communicate mostly with the support of the technology. They depend on technology for almost every aspect of their life (Dwidienawati & Gandasari, 2018). However, because they were born and raised during economic downturn, Gen Z more realistic compared to Gen Y. They are also more risk-averse than earlier generation. They have lower expectation, cautious and less entitled (Tulgan 2013). They are easily bored, therefore, they expect to have different job role and flexibility (Dwidienawati and Gandasari 2018). They want instant success. They are self-reliant but still need guidance and frequent feedback and tap in the back (Stillman & Stillman, 2017), however, they do not like micromanagement. They also need superior that they respect in order to work effectively (Dwidienawati and Gandasari 2018). It seemed that Gen Z require different style of leadership. Currently in Scopus database in beginning of May 2022, there were only 34 literatures on “Generation Z” and “leadership”

1.1 Objectives

This study aims to identify which leadership style is the most effective according to Gen Z. This study will contribute for the literature of leadership and generation cohort.

2. Literature Review

Generation Cohort

Hung & Gu & Yim, 2008 in(Berkup, 2014) define a generation as “the generational cohorts or groups, who belong to the same age group, experience, or will experience accordingly the similar life experience in the years they may shape their lives”. Generations represent distinct and separate groups of people with a common set of beliefs, experiences, and values about the way the world works (Culpin et al. 2015). Generation is referred by both its years of birth and a particular set of shared social and economic conditions during their formative years. A generation is basically defined as “a series of birthdays of a group of people” Jopling, 2004 in (Berkup 2014). It is also referred as "a set of historical events and related phenomena that creates a distinct generational gap" according to Parry & Urwin, 2011 in (Turner 2015).

The definition is based on two factors. First, by the period of the lifetime based on historical time. The second one based on the common even or experiences. To identify generation, there should be some social proximity that they shared in term of events of cultural phenomena (Turner 2015). Both of those factors have shaped distinctive characteristics for each generation (Rani & Samuel, 2016). Generations share a common characteristic which make people from similar generations show common traits, way of thinking, value, and beliefs (Rani & Samuel, 2016). The era in which a person is born and growing up will affect one's behaviours, attitudes, and values. These values and subsequent behaviours will remain relatively stable throughout a generation's lifetime and set them apart from the preceding and following generations (Fountain and Lamb 2011).

At present, legal adults consist of four generations. The first one is the Silent Generation or also known as Traditionalists or the Greatest Generation. They are those who were born between 1922 and 1945. The second one is the Baby Boomers who were born from 1946 to 1964. The third one is Generation X. This generation are people who were born from 1965 to 1977). The next is Generation Y or Millennials who were born from about 1977 to 1993. The youngest one is Generation Z who were born from 1993 to 2005 (Turner 2015).

Generation Z

Gen Z is the generation born between 1995 and 2015 (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014; Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014; Tulgan, 2013). This generation has distinct characteristics compared to Millennials because they were born and are growing up in different social and economic conditions. Growing up, they were facing economic difficulty with recession and uncertainty (Annis, 2017; Berkup, 2014; Stillman & Stillman, 2017; Tulgan 2013). Therefore, they are more realistic compared to Gen Y. They are also more risk-averse than earlier generation. They have lower expectation, cautious and less entitled (Tulgan 2013). They value stability (Annis 2017).

(Dwidienawati & Gandasari, 2018) stated that this generation put importance in competitive salary. They get bored easily, therefore, they expect to have different job role and flexibility. They want instant success and require company to provide them with personal development. They are self-reliant but still need guidance and frequent feedback and tap in the back (Stillman and Stillman 2017), however, they do not like micromanagement. They also need superior that they respect in order to work effectively (Dwidienawati and Gandasari 2018).

Gen Z are generous and concern on sustainability. They are willing to donate money and time for a cause. They are also willing to participate in Cause-Related Marketing program run by credible company (Dwidienawati & pGandasari, 2018). Interestingly, they think it is important to work in company which concern in sustainability (Dwidienawati et al. 2021).

Gen Z is known as the first global citizen. It means they share similar trend with the similar generation all over the world. They are also aware and concern with the event all over the world. The internet enables them to be connected to all the trend and cause all over the world.

Gen Z is known as digitally naïve and hyper-connected junkies (Koulopoulos Keldsen 2014). They are the first generation to have access to a wide scale of digital communication technology in the form of the mobile phone, Wi-Fi, and interaction computer games (Bassiouni and Hackley 2014). Gen Z can never imagine a world without internet. Gen Z spends on average 6.5 hours daily in front of an electronic screen (Messara 2016). They write and receive 109.5

texts per day junkies (Koulopoulos & Keldsen, 2014). They considered a smart phone as an important part of their life (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Their attention span is short (Berkup 2014).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, together with transactional leadership, was conceptualized by Bass 1995 (Bass 1998). Just as the term used, transformational, Transformational leaders do not settle for status quo, however, they are continuously pursuing an appealing and challenging future vision. Transformational leaders show creative behavior, display unconventional approach, and serve as a good role model for innovation (Chen et al. 2014). Jansen et al. (2009) in (Tung 2016) found that transformational leadership is associated with exploratory approach, on the contrary transactional leadership associates with exploiter approach.

Literature suggests that transformational leaders is an ideal role model to their follower. They are charismatic and able to inspire their follower to reach the highest level of achievement. Transformational leaders are also able to convince each member of the follower to take ownership of the group goals. They promote incremental contributions of the follower and inspire them to contribute exceeding the call of duty (Hoang-Tung et al. 2017). They eye on the long term vision, rather than short-term goals.

Refer to the concept from (Bass 1998), (Girardi and Rubim Sarate 2021), (Tung 2016), , and (Chen et al. 2014) state about the 4 I's of transformational leadership. There are four characteristics inherent in the behavior of transformational leaders. The first addresses Idealized Influence. Transformational leaders serve as role model and source of pride to the team. The provide vision and sense of mission. They exert trust and respect from their subordinate. The second character is Inspirational Motivation. Transformational leaders can provide spirit and motivation. they can express the importance of innovation in a way that enhances subordinates' intrinsic motivation to achieve this, resulting in them making more effort to perform well and thus enhance the prospects of success. Inspirational motivation is a way of transformational leaders to express their high expectation. The third I of transformational leadership is Intellectual Stimulation. Transformational leaders encourage and challenge their followers to improve their performance and transform way from their comfort zone. leaders encourage followers to challenge existing assumptions, to reframe problems, and to approach old situations in new ways. Individualized consideration relates to coaching and mentoring behavior of transformational leaders. Through coaching and mentoring, transformational leaders put consideration to individual needs and help them to become more efficient and capable in performing their work. With this, followers can learn more from their leaders so that they can increase their contribution to organization.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was introduced by Robert Greenleaf (1904-1990) in his seminal work "The Servant as Leader," first published in 1970 (van Dierendonck, 2011). He stated that:

The Servant-Leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. . . . The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (1977: 7)

Patterson (2003) in (Waddell, 2006) states that the theory of servant leadership as an extension of transformational leadership theory. She refers a servant leader as "*those leaders who lead an organization by focusing on their followers, such that the followers are the primary concern, and the organizational concerns are peripheral*". With the changes and challenges now, the demand for more ethical, people-centered management, leadership inspired by the ideas from servant leadership theory may very well be what organizations need now. What is the main differentiation of servant leadership compared to other leadership style? If other leadership styles put focus on the well-being of the organization, a servant leader more concern with serving the follower. They are putting their follower first. A servant leadership directs its focus first on the ability of the individuals to succeed and then subsequently on the success of the mission (Gandolfi & Stone 2018; van Dierendonck 2011).

(Van Dierendonck 2011) explain the 6 main characteristics of servant leaders. First is empowering and developing people is a motivational concept focused on enabling people. It aims to give a sense of personal power. It includes encouraging self-directed decision making, information sharing and coaching. It is about recognition, acknowledgement and personal development. Humility is the second key characteristic. It refers to the ability to put one's own accomplishments and talents in a proper perspective. Servant leaders realize that they can benefit from

others' expertise. Humility shows in the extent to which a leader puts the interest of others first, facilitates their performance, and provides them with essential support. Humility is also about modesty. Servant leaders stay in the background when a task has been successfully accomplished. Next is true to self or authenticity. It is about expressing themselves consistently with inner thought or feeling. It includes integrity. Authenticity is about being true to oneself, accurately representing—privately and publicly—internal states, intentions, and commitments. The forth characteristic of servant leaders is interpersonal acceptance. It is the ability to understand others' feeling and the ability to forgive and let go. It includes empathy and sees things from others perspective. It is compassion, warmth, and forgiveness even when being confronted. It puts trust to others and makes people feel accepted. The fifth characteristic is providing direction. A servant-leader's take on providing direction is to make work dynamic and "tailor made". It can also mean creating new approaches to old problems, with a strong reliance on values and convictions. The last characteristic is stewardship. It is the willingness to take responsibility for the larger institution and to go for service instead of control and self-interest. Servant leaders have to act as role model. By setting the right example, leaders can lead others to reach common goals. Stewardship includes social responsibility, loyalty, and teamwork.

3. Methods

Design

This study was designed as a qualitative study. Structured questionnaires were used as the instruments for an online survey, which was conducted in October – November 2021. Disclosure about the nature of the study, informed consent, and the participants' willingness to join the survey were also included at the beginning of the questionnaires. Questionnaires without informed consent from participants were omitted from the analysis. Open Questions regarding the participants opinion on the characteristic of leaders that they respect and make them work effectively were asked including the reasons. Additional demographic information, such as participants' position, gender, and location, was also requested for descriptive analysis

Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using Voyant analytics tool. Word occurrence frequency was calculated with Voyant. Afterword, categorization is conducted based on the match keywords with leadership characteristic.

4. Data Collection

Target participants were Generation Z who were born between 1995 to 2005. The target sample was to get 100 participants. There is no sample requirement for qualitative study (Wahyuni, 2019). Selection of the participants was done using the convenience sampling method

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Numerical Results

There were 111 questionnaires back. However, only 92 questionnaires met Gen Z criteria. Therefore, only 92 questionnaires were eligible for further analysis. From 92 respondent 54% was male, 44% female, and 2% prefer not to answer (Figure 1). Most of respondents are students (82%), 17% were fresh graduate, and 1% were entry level employee.

The most frequent words in the corpus analysis are: friendly (30); subordinates (29); employees (25); good (25); work (24); able (17); attitude (16); fair (14); firm (14); humble (14); responsible (14); wise (14); appreciate (12); polite (12); superiors (12); provide (11); honest (9); leadership (9); respect (9); boss (8); help (8); opinions (8); accept (7); spirit (7); supportive (7); understand (7); willing (7); caring (6); employee (6); high (6); kind (6); mistakes (6); support (6); appreciation (5); giving (5); hard (5); motivate (5); open (5); time (5); trust (5); understanding (5); workers (5); authoritative (4); communicate (4); disciplined (4). This result is depicted in Figure 2. From the keywords with at least 4 occurrence, the words "challenges" and "encourage" are not in the list.

Figure 3 shows the trend of keywords from 92 respondents. It is shown that the words able, which refer to the ability or competence of the boss, and humble show up from many of respondents. The words attitude and friendly were emphasized few times by some respondents.

From the analysis result the top 10 topics where reviewed (Table 1). From 10 topics, it seems that the theme of servant leadership is very strong. Topics 1,8 and 9 cover all characteristics of Servant Leadership. The other topics

cover at least 2 of characteristic. However, for transformational leadership, only topic 9 cover 3 characteristic. The other topics only cover 1 or 2 characteristics.

From the words analysis, it seems that the type of leadership that is effective according to Gen Z is servant leadership. Gen Z are known even though they are quite confident, but they are to cautious and risk averse. Therefore, leaders who give directly frequently (Direction) and always be there when they needed (Stewardship) are more suitable for them. The needs to gain instant success will require guidance and direction. They need leaders who are “able” so that they can respect them, because from these competence leaders, Gen Z will be able to learn to help them move up in the career ladder. They need leader who really can put their subordinate interest as priority. They are risk averse, therefore, they need to have a leader who can accept and forgive their mistakes. They do not like micromanagement, therefore, leaders who empower them will gain their respect.

5.2 Graphical Results

Add graphical results here. Make sure to describe all figures and add inferences. If needed, add statistical analysis here. (10 font)

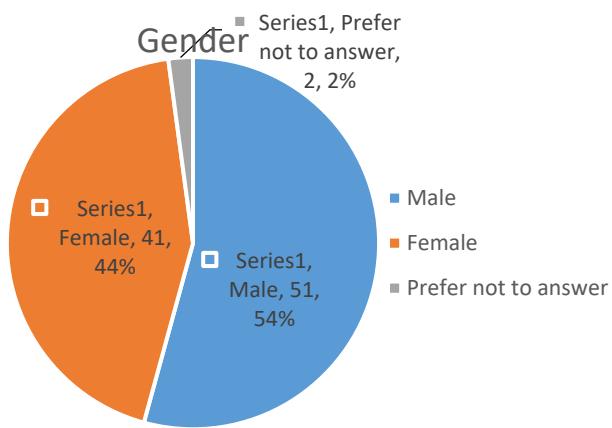


Figure 1. Gender of Respondents



Figure 2. Word Cloud of Effective Leader Characteristics

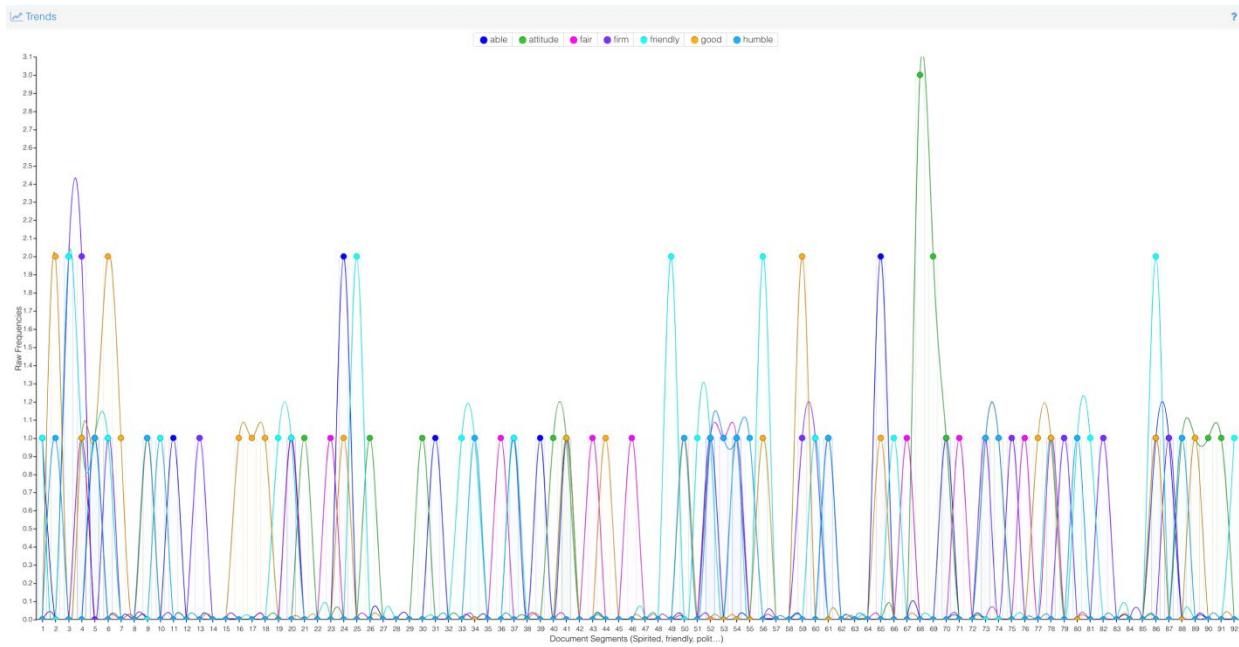


Figure 3. Trend of keywords

Table 1. Topics of keywords group

No	Topic	EP W	HU M	AU T	AC C	DI R	ST W	II	IM	I S	IC
1	good work responsible wise fair supportive hard communicate teach easy	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
2	respect kind workers caring input unyielding way treat polite fair		x			x	x	x		x	
3	protecting feedback invite joke fellow listening difficulties mentor pressure solution	x			x	x		x		x	
4	able opinions boss employees	x		x	x	x	x		x		

	accept giving							
	polite care							
	having things							
5	friendly							
	subordinates							
	employees							
	humble firm							
	appreciate							
	provide help							
	support							
	understanding	x		x	x			x
6	understand							
	willing							
	example like							
	attention social							
	position							
	guidance							
	communication							
	assertive	x		x	x	x		x
7	superiors able							
	subordinates							
	open time							
	disciplined							
	make right							
	friendly							
	competent	x	x			x		x
8	honest polite							
	high leadership							
	working							
	consistent							
	reliable							
	mistake							
	providing							
	respectful	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
9	employee spirit							
	motivate							
	willing							
	leadership							
	gives persistent							
	embrace clear							
	wants	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
10	attitude							
	mistakes							
	members							
	encourage							
	strictly	x	x		x		x	x

experience
discuss
unselfish
minded
seriousness

6. Conclusion

The qualitative study conducted to generation Z showed that based on the keywords analysis the effective leadership style for them is servant leadership style. The words analysis showed that words which represent empowering (such as giving chance, opportunity, able), humility (such as humble, friendly, kind, good, nice, polite), authentic (such as responsible, fair), acceptance (such as accept, mistakes, forgive), direction (such as guidance, communication, discuss, feedback), and stewardship (such as giving, providing, support) are occurred frequently. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effective leadership for Gen Z is a servant leader.

This study, however, did not see the relationship between servant leadership and work effectiveness. Therefore, further quantitative study is recommended to confirm the relationship. This study also only used questionnaire, therefore the deep understanding why Gen Z mentioned certain characteristic cannot be explored. Further study with deep interview method should be conducted to understand the reasoning further.

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