

**ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN FORMING THE CHARACTER OF GEN Z IN THE DIGITAL ERA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This article examines the role of interpersonal communication in the context of Generation Z (Gen Z), the generation born after 1995 and growing up in the digital age. Gen Z, the first generation to grow up in the digital age, exhibits varying preferences for digital media depending on the context. However, they still view interpersonal communication as a crucial element in socializing. Utilizing qualitative methods and drawing on literature from journals, books, and previous research, this study investigates the shift in interpersonal communication behavior of Gen Z in the digital media landscape. Findings indicate that Gen Z actively engages in interpersonal communication through social media and digital platforms to interact, share creative content, and build social relationships. This has resulted in a shift in communication behavior from active to passive, increased self-expression through digital media, a shift in perspectives on face-to-face communication, and a decline in face-to-face communication. This article provides insight into the role of interpersonal communication in Generation Z, highlighting the shift in interpersonal communication behavior in the digital media era.*

*Keywords: Generation Z; Interpersonal Communication; Digital Media; Communication Behaviors.*

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a very important and beneficial knowledge and skill for human life. Everyone has the ability to communicate with others. In other words, everyone has the ability to communicate, assess others, and express themselves through communication, which allows a person to meet others, make friends, and strengthen family relationships. Due to the fact that humans are social creatures, they always interact with each other, communicate, share things, and cooperate (Faizal, 2023).

Communication that occurs face to face between individuals is usually referred to as interpersonal communication. A person's perception of the communication partner is influenced by everyone involved in the communication. Bilateral communication is this type of interpersonal communication. According to De Vito, interpersonal communication is similar to communication between two people who have a clear relationship and are connected in some way (Anggraini et al., 2022) Generation Z, is a generation that is a transition from generation Y or millennials. The Pew Research Center identifies Generation Z as the generation born between 1997 and 2012. The first native digital generation is called Generation Z. Unlike the millennial generation, who lived in the era of the rise of the internet while growing up with cable television and landlines, Generation Z is closer to digital life because they are fully connected to the internet. In fact, most of them do not remember their lives before smartphones. They grew up in an era where streaming content can be accessed at any time. That is why the way Gen Z interacts with the internet is different from previous generations. (Qothrunnada, 2024).

Generation Z is highly engaged with technology, heavily dependent on the internet for social, educational, and much knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to communicate in real life. The history of the digital age is characterized by the use of the same communication channels at the same time. Computing, media, and telecommunications rely on digital tools to store and disseminate information. Digital tools are also considered an important component of mono-media (Zis et al., 2021). The growth of social media has had a major influence on the way Generation Z communicates and builds social relationships. Generation Z has used social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok as the main way to share content, interact, and engage in other online social activities (Ahmad et al., 2024). Social media is a variety of online communication platforms that people use to share information, opinions, profiles, and others, and are created to support communication through online media (Firdaus et al., 2024).

Generation Z, also known as the Digital era, was born in a digital world with complete technology, mobile phones, gaming devices, and the Internet. They spend their free time surfing the internet, and they prefer to stay at home and play on the internet rather than going out and playing (Zis et al., 2021). Generation Z, often referred to as the iGeneration, Net Generation, or Internet Generation, was born in and grew up in an era of increasingly rapid technological advancements. They are known to dominate their daily lives by always being in touch with gadgets and communicating through social media (Fikri et al., 2024). It is important to realize that Generation Z shows very different communication preferences. This demographic group tends to prefer social media platforms such as Tik Tok, Instagram, and Snapchat or other platforms over traditional communication means such as email or mobile phones. Consequently, individuals or groups who want to engage with Generation Z must be proactive and involved in social media, and have a comprehensive understanding of how to utilize these platforms.

One of the important challenges in communication is the perspective of Generation Z regarding privacy and data security, because this generation grew up in an environment characterized by frequent violations of personal data privacy such as personal data theft. As a result, generation Z tends to be more careful in sharing information and they expect a higher level of personal data security in terms of communication. Because it is very important for individuals or groups to ensure that personal data is protected and not misused (Farunik, Canggih Gumanky,, 2023). In a world where digital is developing more rapidly, to understand Generation Z and the challenges in communication is very important to understand more deeply, because this is very important to create effective relationships in the future.

The key is to adapt to the preferences and ways of communication of each individual, and ensure they are aware of the nuances they understand (Lina, Lia Febria,, 2022) Therefore, in this writing the author can find out how to utilize the potential of generation Z to change the world of communication and technology 5.0 better in the future. Thus, in this scientific work, the author will delve further into the characteristics, preferences, and communication patterns that emerge from interactions with

Generation Z. In addition, the author also wants to provide suggestions and strategies in overcoming the challenges currently faced by Generation Z, to build better relationships with the current generation in the era of technology 5.0 which continues to develop until now.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a focus on literature review. Data were collected from various literature sources related to the research topic, such as scientific articles, books, previous research, and other relevant documents. Some of the primary sources used include an article by Cahyono (2016) analyzing interpersonal communication between college students, and a book by Boyd (2014) exploring the social lives of adolescents connected through digital networks. Furthermore, the results of recent research, such as the work of Badawi & Rahadi (2021), which examined the impact of social media on social change in Indonesian society, were taken into consideration. This approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic.

The data collection technique for literature review is carried out by reading, identifying, and processing these sources as research material (Melfianora, 2017). The data used in this study is secondary data obtained from existing literature, usually involving the search, selection, and analysis of relevant documents. The data processing process involves combining and interpreting findings from a collection of literature that has been collected from systematic searches through online libraries and books to collect literature relevant to the research topic including re-reading documents, grouping data, identifying themes, and developing interpretations. This qualitative method with literature studies will help describe more clearly how data is collected, processed, and analyzed in this study with an in-depth understanding of the relationship between interpersonal communication and Generation Z in the context of digital media.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Generation Z's Use and Preferences for Digital Media**

Generation Z, the group born after 1995, has demonstrated significant engagement in the use of various social media platforms. They are not only present there for social interaction but also to share moments in their daily lives. In a study by Boyd (2014), it was found that Generation Z uses platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok to build a unique digital identity. They often create creative content in various forms such as images, short videos, and memes. This reflects the high level of creativity and expressivity of this generation (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). More than just viewers, Generation Z are also active followers of internet celebrities or influencers whom they consider sources of inspiration in various aspects of their lives (Khamis et al., 2017). When it comes to interpersonal communication behavior in the context of digital media, Generation Z has changed the way they interact. They tend to use instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or Telegram to engage in group chats. In this situation, they can communicate in real time with their friends and share information effectively (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). Furthermore, they are increasingly adopting video calling services such as Zoom or Skype, which bring a more personal, emotional dimension to digital communication (Vorderer et al., 2016). Generation Z also tends to use emoticons and emojis in their online conversations, which help them express their emotions and reactions more clearly and often in a playful manner (Dresner & Herring, 2010).

Finally, they are also active in online communities related to their interests and hobbies, allowing them to communicate with fellow community members, exchange information, and provide support to one another (Reich et al., 2012). Generation Z's use of digital media reflects how technology has become an integral part of their lives. It also reflects changes in the way they build social relationships, interact, and communicate in an increasingly digitally connected world. Generation Z's digital media preferences can vary depending on the context. They often use text messaging or social media when communicating with peers or sharing moments in their lives. Generation Z's communication characteristics are free-flowing and always enjoy flexibility, differing from previous generations who were more bold in expressing their opinions (Candra & Adriana, 2023). In educational contexts, Generation Z is usually more comfortable with written communication via email or text messaging, but they are also familiar with various online collaboration platforms that allow them to work together virtually (Vorderer et al., 2016).

### **Changes in Interpersonal Communication Behavior in Social Relationships**

Researchers observed Generation Z's interaction patterns by taking into account the realities revealed in previous studies, which showed communication breakdowns that can lead to a loss of meaning in the communication process. Associated with interpersonal communication, it is very effective for persuading, changing behavior, and directly seeing feedback from the interlocutor (Sisrazeni, 2017). Social networking sites have become popular among Generation Z, especially enabling connections with their peers, so they can explore social relationships (Zorn, 2017). Some changes in Generation Z's interpersonal communication behavior in their digital use include active behavior becoming passive, increased creativity and self-expression (Qurniawati & Nurohman, 2017), a lack of focus on direct communication, and a reduction in face-to-face communication behavior (Hidayatullah & Devianty, 2018). These behavioral changes will be further elaborated in the next point.

#### **Active Behavior Becomes Passive**

Based on the previous discussion, it means that if humans communicate via the internet, it can reduce direct or face-to-face interaction. Before the emergence of digital media, humans actively communicated directly, even now human life is increasingly closely linked to the use of digital media as the main means of communication through digital platforms with sufficient convenience so that it can reduce the motivation to engage in direct interaction in the real world which causes communication to become passive. As technology advances, the phenomenon of passivity in communication begins to emerge as a result of this lifestyle change. Interpersonal communication in this case, Generation Z actively provides information in the form of private messages, video calls, or online meetings that allow for deepening social relationships. According to previous research conducted by Qurniawati & Nurohman (2017), the level of social media use of Generation Z is positively correlated with the intensity of face-to-face social interactions. Changes in social relationships or imbalances in social relationships of Generation Z also affect their values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns, as conveyed by Hidayatullah & Devianty (2018). The existence of digital media has certainly facilitated communication, allowing users to express their opinions, thoughts, ideas, and more without limits. Considering the current situation, digital media has played a significant role in human life and can be used as an effective communication platform.

#### **Enhanced Creativity and Self-Expression**

Howe and Strauss (in Zorn 2017) define Generation Z as a group that is wealthy, has a higher level of education, is ethnically diverse, and has a focus on teamwork, achievement, simplicity, and positive behavior. Generation Z also has an innate ability to master technology, such as the ability to multitask in using digital devices, Generation Z tends to be more open in various aspects of their personal online, by sharing life experiences, feelings, and emotional expressions through emoticons in digital media, which can strengthen bonds with their friends and create opportunities for discussion. When they share their lives online, it is the same as distributing digital material about life to others, communicating it to a wide audience. (Silsa, 2018). And Generation Z often uses digital media, especially visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, thus changing their behavior by expressing themselves more creatively. They create visual content, videos, and memes to share their views, lifestyles, and interests with friends and online audiences. In digital media, communication is not interactive if one of the parties involved in the conversation withdraws. If there is no exchange of information, then communication between information providers, such as social media account owners, is one-way. However, if there is a response from the other party and interaction occurs, interpersonal communication can occur. (Pratiwi & Sukma, 2013)

#### **Unfocused View for Direct Communication**

Generation Z, which has the potential for high penetration of digital media, also refers to the communication experience of Generation Z, which was expressed to researchers, that there are indeed fundamental changes such as having an unfocused view when communicating. This can distance people who are trying to communicate or face-to-face interactions that tend to decrease, making people addicted to the internet through digital media, less respect for the person they are talking to so they are prone to causing conflicts that have a bad influence on others (Cahyono, 2016). Thus, communication barriers will occur because the existence of digital media affects the person who is not focused, thus the speaker's response becomes delayed and even needs to repeat questions

so that communication behavior like this will lead to uncomfortable communication situations and conditions, due to the lack of good interpersonal communication behavior. This statement reflects the changes in the current Generation Z era, showing an understanding of individuals who, when spoken to, do not give full attention. Effective communication will be characterized by good interpersonal relationships as well (Fauziyyah, 2019).

### **Reduced Face-to-Face Communication Behavior**

In this technologically advanced digital era, it is undeniable that all aspects of human life have been largely influenced by technology or social media, which are closely related to the internet. This has led to a near-limitless consumption of digital communication, leading to behavioral changes in social relationships. Social media has even eliminated social status, which often serves as a barrier to communication. The presence of Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and the like has enabled individuals to interact without physical contact (Ekasari, 2012). This has influenced behavioral changes in Generation Z. Berger & Calabrese (2017) stated that Generation Z is the first truly internet-savvy generation. According to Quitter's previous theory (in Sudrajat, 2020), "internet-mediated communication makes people attracted to intensive, even continuous, communication."

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the research results and theories discussed and used, several conclusions can be drawn. Generation Z, who grew up in the digital era, actively utilizes digital media and social platforms. They interact, share moments, build social relationships, and make interpersonal communication a key element in their lives. Generation Z's digital media preferences vary depending on the context and continue to change with the development of media, including text messaging, video calls, group chats, and social media. They use these various channels to communicate with peers, family, and other users, creating deep interpersonal connections. The changing forms of digital communication reflect its central role in the lives of Generation Z. Generation Z's use of digital media has changed interpersonal communication behavior to become more open in expressing themselves online, producing creative content, and using emoticons to convey emotions. Thus, there are changes in Generation Z's interpersonal communication behavior, including a shift from active to passive behavior, increased creativity and self-expression in digital media, a less focused view of direct communication, and a decrease in face-to-face communication. To understand and support Generation Z in developing healthy and effective interpersonal communication in the digital era, it is important to keep abreast of new trends and technologies that influence the process of interacting and communicating. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide benefits to various groups and increase understanding of the role of Generation Z interpersonal communication in the use of digital media. Researchers recommend the importance of additional education for educational institutions or organizations that should consider the integration of digital media to help Generation Z develop effective interpersonal communication skills in a digital environment. Generation Z needs to be equipped with strong media literacy, including an understanding of how digital media affects interpersonal communication, so they can become smart and ethical users. To understand and support Generation 2 in developing healthy and effective interpersonal communication in the digital era, it is important to keep abreast of new trends and technologies that influence the way they interact and communicate. Further research on Generation Z communication behavior in the context of digital media is expected to be more helpful in developing more effective strategies for communicating and interacting with this generation so it is important to remember that the approach used must be positive and support the growth of Generation Z in the use of digital media.

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