Proactive Work Behavior in Generation Z Employees

Pratista Arya Satwika[1,2*], Fendy Suhariadi[1]

{pratista.arya.satwika-2022@psikologi.unair.ac.id*}

[1] Psychology Doctoral Program, Faculty of Psychology, Airlangga University
[2] Faculty of Psychology, Sebelas Maret University

Abstract. Generation Z employees require proactive work behavior to be more motivated, prepared, and efficient. Proactive behavior requires actions that originate from oneself, but others' perceptions of employees' proactive behavior may be influenced by personal characteristics such as gender. The objective This study aimse profile of proactive work behavior among Generation Z employees and determine if there are differences in proactive behavior between women and men. This study utilizes a descriptive analysis design to understand the profile of proactive work behavior among Generation Z employees. An online survey was conducted using convenience sampling techniques, with a sample size of 50 respondents who are Generation Z employees. Data collection in the survey utilized a modified questionnaire from proactive socialization tactics. This research uses descriptive analysis techniques and produces results showing thatshows among Generation Z employees is high, at 52%. Only 2% fall into the low category, while the remaining 46% fall into the moderate category. The dimension with the highest percentage is positive framing (72%), followed by general socializing (58%), information seeking as well as job change negotiating (54%). Furthermore, it is also found that there is no significant difference in proactive behavior based on gender.

Keywords: Generation Z, Proactive Work Behavior, Employee.

1. Introduction

Every organization today faces a more dynamic environment compared to the past, making the ability to adapt a necessity. Therefore, organizations need employees who can play a role in contributing their ideas to help maintain the organization's competitive advantage (1) Proactive work behavior is one of the key skills that employees must possess to face such competitive challenges (2)

Meanwhile, the current workforce in Indonesia is dominated by two generations, namely Generation Y and Generation Z employees. As one of the dominant generations in the Indonesian workforce, Generation Z employees are newcomers in the organizational work context. Generation Z employees are employees born around 1995 to 2010 who are expected to enter the workforce in 2017 for employees with a bachelor's degree (3) The characteristics of Generation Z employees, often referred to as digital natives, include a preference for independence and flexibility, a strong desire to have their ideas and opinions heard, as well as being realistic,coand nfident, and considering the social environment and workplace happiness as important (4), (5). This make Generation Z employees have deep technological knowledge and are accustomed to rapid technological changes. Therefore, the work environment that suits them may differ from previous generations.

For Generation Z employees, unmet expectations can lead to negative consequences such as boredom and the intention to quit. Recent data found that there is a tendency for generation Z employees to leave their workplace (6; 7; 8; 9). This is possible due to the unpleasant situation faced by generation Z employees in the workplace. Deloitte found that workload, being unable to be yourself at wo,rk and poor work-life balance can trigger stress Generationion Z employees.

Unlike employees from other generations who have been working longer, Generation Z employees require more effort to adapt to new organizational situations. Therefore, proactive work behavior is needed to help them become more motivated, prepared, and efficient (10). Research has found that proactive work behavior in employees affects their ability to engage in social adaptation, enhances well-being, learning, and engagement (11; 12).

Carusone (13) research specifically looked at the role of gender in proactive behavior, but it did not find a significant relationship between gender and proactive behavior among employees in Florida. Similarly, a study conducted in Kenya found no significant differences in proactive work behavior between male and female employees (14). On the other hand, Bohlamnn and Zacher (15) found that proactive behavior was rated more effective for older men compared to younger men, while younger women received higher effectiveness ratings for proactive behavior regardless of their motives.

Role congruity theory suggests that proactive behavior is congruent with gender roles, and individuals are expected to behave by their perceived gender roles (16). When women engage in proactive behavior, they are often perceived as violating established gender roles, and negative reactions are typically directed towards women (13). Each acts based on socially determined job categorizations in predictable ways, influenced by societal expectations and norms. As a result, employees' proactive behavior is motivated by societal role expectations (14). Women are considered more risk-averse than men, leading to lower levels of proactivity and innovation because proactive behavior is seen as more risky (14). This is particularly evident in Indonesia, a patriarchal culture where women and men are treated differently. Men are often associated with physically oriented and action-oriented roles, while women are considered weaker (17).

Predictions predict that by 2025, 27% of the job market will be dominated by generation Z employees, making it important for organizations to understand that generation Z has different needs than previous generations. Therefore, the researchers aim to examine the profile of proactive work behavior among Generation Z employees in Indonesia and determine if there are differences in proactive behavior based on gender. Understanding the profile of proactive work behavior among Generation Z employees will help organizations gain insights into the characteristics of Generation Z employees and create an appealing work environment for them.

2. Literature Review

Proactive work behavior refers to self-initiated, active, and future-oriented behavior intended to change and improve the situation before problems arise (18). Proactive work behavior is not just about "going the extra mile," but rather an active behavior that involves anticipation and creating a new future (19). The uncertain and unpredictable work environment that often appears in the world of work makes proactive work behavior a key factor that can make employees survive (20). The concept of proactive work behavior especially in newcomers was first researched by Ashford and Black in the 1990s (21). New employees' proactive work behaviors allow them to

understand their work environment and adjust their behaviors to improve their socialization and career success (10).

Proactive work behavior is work behavior that benefits the organization, Pratama et al. (22) through their systematic literature found that proactive work behavior can increase team innovation and is also related to task clarity, performance evaluation and work conflict. Proactive work behavior can increase social integration, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceptions of competence, career success, work engagement, innovation, intention to stay in the organization, job performance, work-life balance, well-being and learning in employees. This makes proactive work behavior a behavior that is beneficial to the organization and must be increased.

Several things can affect employee proactive work behavior. In a social context, innovative climate, leadership and perceived coworker trust can increase employee proactive work behavior (23). Meanwhile, individual personality can also influence proactive work behavior (10); (24), (25). In their research, Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller (25) found that high extraversion tendencies in new employees will correlate with high feedback seeking and relationship building. Demographic factors such as age, tenure, opportunities to interact, previous work experience and job category can also influence employees' proactive work behavior (25).

According to Ashford and Black (21) proactive work behavior consists of seven dimensions. Feedback seeking is the first dimension, which means seeking feedback after the task is given and asking for criticism from superiors and coworkers. The next dimension is Job change negotiating, which is how employees try to modify the job demands they receive. Then, Positive framing is an effort to view everything optimistically. General socializing is the extent to which employees engage in activities such as attending company social events and trying to socialize to get to know colleagues. Next, building relationships, namely the extent to which employees try to build relationships with superiors and Networking, the extent to which employees try to build relationships with superiors and colleagues throughout the organization. Finally, information seeking is the behavior of individuals to seek information on various topics related to work, such as job techniques, organizational values, expectations of their role in the organization, and social norms regarding expected behavior.

3. Method

This study uses a quantitative method with a descriptive analysis design to determine the description of proactive behavior among Generation Z employees. The survey was conducted online by providing questionnaires about demographics and proactive work behavior. There were 50 respondents obtained through the convenience sampling technique. Based on the demographic survey, it was found that the majority of respondents were female (64%), single (76%), had a bachelor's degree (74%), and worked in the private sector (72%) (see Table 1).

Data collection in the survey utilized a modified scale of proactive work behavior derived from proactive socialization tactics (21) consisting of 18 items with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.892. The range of item discriminant power ranged from 0.399 to 0.681. The study's proactive work behavior data followed a normal distribution (p>0.05; Mean=65.4; SD=10.66).

Table 1. Demographic Data (N=50)

Demographics		f	%	
Gender				
	Male	18	36	
	Female	32	64	
	Total	50		100
Marital Status				
	Single	38	76	
	Married	12	24	
	Total	50		100
Education				
	High School	7	14	
	Diploma	4	8	
	Bachelor's Degree	37	74	
	Master's Degree	2	4	
	Total	50		100
Occupation				
	Civil Servant	10	20	
	Private Employee	36	72	
	Freelancer	4	8	
	Total	50		100

4. Result

Based on hypothetical data obtained from the research findings of 50 Generation Z respondents, it reveals that most Generation Z employees have a high level of proactive work behavior (52%). Meanwhile, among the 7 dimensions of proactive work behavior, Generation Z employees have the highest percentage in the positive framing dimension (72%), followed by general socializing (58%), information seeking and job change negotiating (54%) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Categorization of Proactive Work Behavior in Generation Z Employees

Variable and Dimension	High	Moderate	Low
Proactive work behavior	52%	46%	2%
Feedback seeking	36%	62%	2%
Job change negotiating	54%	42%	4%
Positive framing	72%	28%	0%
General socializing	58%	42%	0%
Build relationship	38%	52%	10%
Networking	44%	52%	4%
Information seeking	54%	46%	0%

The researchers also conducted a difference test to observe whether there were any differences in proactive work behavior based on gender among Generation Z employees. Based on the analysis using an independent sample t-test, it was found that there were no significant differences based on gender ($p>0.05$).

5. Discussion

The research findings on 50 Generation Z respondents revealed that most Generation Z employees have a high level of proactive work behavior (52%). Only two percent were

categorized as low in proactive work behavior and forty-six percent as medium. This indicates that Generation Z employees have high initiative to change and improve situations that arise. By their characteristics, Generation Z employees have sufficient confidence and independence to take action in making changes in the workplace. Previous research has found that with proactive work behavior, employees will be better able to make social adjustments and learn (11); (26). Pratama et al. (22) through their systematic literature review found that job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational engagement, well-being, innovation, work performance and work-life balance will be improved when employees have proactive work behavior.

Meanwhile, among the 7 dimensions of proactive work behavior, Generation Z employees had the highest percentage in the positive framing dimension (72%), followed by general socializing (58%), and information seeking and job change negotiating (54%). Positive framing predominantly influences the proactive work behavior of Generation Z employees in this research sample, which refers to an individual's effort to view things optimistically (21). This indicates that Generation Z employees perceive situations as opportunities for personal development rather than threats. They consider self-development important; therefore, situations that arise may be seen as opportunities to grow. Kuzior et al. (27) found in their research that the main reasons Generation Z employees leave their workplace are non-materialistic reasons, such as ethical, cultural, relational, and personal issues, one of which is the lack of opportunities for self-development. However, despite their optimistic approach, Generation Z employees are also more risk-averse than previous generations. Therefore, although they see situations as opportunities, they also exercise caution regarding the potential risks that may arise (5).

The second dimension with a high categorization in the proactive work behavior of Generation Z employees is general socializing, which refers to the extent to which employees engage in activities such as attending company social gatherings and trying to socialize to get to know colleagues (21). Park et al. (28) cc Supia (29) found found that social values such as conformity, benevolence, universalism, and security are considered important by millennial and Generation Z employees who remain in the organization.

The next dimension of proactive work behavior with a high categorization is information seeking (54%). When employees join an organization, they must learn to understand the new environment by not solely relying on organizational facilities, but also by actively engaging in the socialization process (30). This is also true for Generation Z employees who are newcomers in the organization. They strive to learn about the organization's structure, important policies and procedures, job-related techniques and the political landscape within the organization.

Job change negotiating has the same high percentage categorization as information seeking (54%). Job change negotiating refers to how employees attempt to modify job demands (21). Generation Z employees value flexibility and independence in their work (4) and by modifying their job demands, they indirectly facilitate the flexibility in organizing their work. As many as 76% of Generation Z employees desire flexibility in how and when they work. For them, flexible work arrangements are an important strategy for improving work-life balance.

In addition, the feedback-seeking dimension has the lowest high categorization among the other six dimensions. Generation Z employees are known to need feedback from their superiors as a

form of validation, but they are reluctant to get long-winded feedback. Although not the dominant one, Generation Z employees also have the initiative to build relationships with superiors and people around them, including coworkers and consumers, to help them make changes to their work.

Based on the above discussion, it is known that the proactive work behavior of Generation Z employees is categorized as high. The dimensions of positive framing, general socializing, information seeking, and job change negotiating (54%) are the most dominant dimensions exhibited by Generation Z employees. Therefore, this can serve as a basis for companies or organizations to provide opportunities for them to develop by assigning challenging tasks and having leaders who are open to discussions. Ivasciuc et al. (31) found that 62.5% of Generation Z employees appreciate work patterns that help them create flexible work arrangements to achieve work-life balance. As a generation that has witnessed significant recessions, Generation Z employees prioritize salary, benefits, and job security. Still, they are more vocal about work-life balance and flexibility than other generations (6). For Generation Z employees, workplace happiness is important, and if it is not fulfilled, they are more likely to quit their jobs (4).

This study also tested differences to examine whether there are differences in proactive work behavior based on gender among Generation Z employees. The analysis found no significant differences based on gender ($p > 0.05$). These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted on employees in Kenya and Florida (13; 14). These findings also align with the research by Griffin et al. (32) which showed no relationship between gender and proactive work behavior. As a generation highly exposed to technology, often called digital natives, Generation Z employees have a more adaptive attitude towards their surroundings (33). This diminishes the significance of gender differences in shaping the behavior of Generation Z employees. In their research (14) revealed that since no specific gender is associated with proactive work behavior, it is important to embrace gender diversity in the workplace to broaden the search base for proactive work behavior. It can be explained that gender differences do not significantly affect jobs, or certain fields of work, especially in generation Z.

The implications of the results of this study are useful for organizations to design effective policies and strategies in developing and motivating Generation Z employees to maintain or improve their proactive work behavior. Based on this research, it is known that Generation Z employees tend to be able to see things optimistically, like social activities, tend to be able to take the initiative to find information that is important to them, and tend to like to modify their work. This allows the organization to provide opportunities for them to contribute ideas and different views on a problem. New ideas and a more optimistic outlook are expected to help the organization to solve its problems more effectively.

Generation Z employees also do not hesitate to get involved in social activities held by the organization, so events related to socializing with colleagues can be carried out regularly. This can also make employees more able to improve interpersonal relationships with their social environment, making it easier for them to carry out their duties in the future. Organizations can also utilize the high initiative of Generation Z employees to seek information to find the latest information and data useful for the organization. Generation Z employees with their flexibility tend to modify their assigned tasks. Organizations can provide opportunities to modify their work or sufficient work autonomy to Generation Z employees, hoping these changes can make them more effective at work.

This study has limitations, one of which is the limited sample size. A larger sample size is needed to enhance the generalizability of findings to a broader population of Generation Z employees. Additionally, this study utilized a questionnaire developed by (21) which mainly focuses on the proactive work behavior of new employees during their adjustment phase. As previously explained Generation Z employees are expected to enter the workforce in 2017 (5 years), so it can already be said to exceed the standard of employees said to be newcomers in the organization (6 months) (34).

Future research could employ other questionnaires that provide more insights into the proactive work behavior of employees in organizations, such as Parker and Collins (35) or Frese et al. (36). Parker and Collins (35) in his research has analyzed and found that taking charge, voice, individual innovation, and problem prevention are dimensions that can measure proactive work behavior more precisely because they have separate and consistent constructs. Meanwhile, Frese et al (36) also be given more attention in future studies. This study uses a convenience sampling technique so that the distribution is too wide even though it produces normal data distribution, in future studies it is hoped that it can use a more predictive sampling technique to be generalized more precisely.

6. Conclusion

The results of the descriptive analysis in this study indicate that proactive work behavior among Generation Z employees is relatively high, at 52%. Only 2% fall into the low category, while the remaining 46% fall into the moderate category. The dimension with the highest percentage is positive framing (72%), followed by general socializing (58%), and information seeking as well as job change negotiating (54%). Furthermore, it is also found that there is no significant difference in proactive behavior based on gender.

References

1. Khasanah IFN, Himam F. Kepemimpinan transformasional kepribadian proaktif dan desain kerja sebagai prediktor perilaku kerja inovatif. Gadjah Mada J Psychol. 2018;4(2):143–57.
2. Sunarto LRP, Muhid A. Pengaruh Pemberdayaan Psikologis Terhadap Perilaku Proaktif Karyawan Start-up: Literature Review. J Psikol J Ilm Fak Psikol Univ Yudharta Pasuruan. 2022;9(1):64–78.
3. Tanner R. Understanding and Managing the 4 Generations in the Workplace. Am Manag Assoc. 2019;3–13.
4. Ozkan M, Solmaz B. The changing face of the employees–generation Z and their perceptions of work (a study applied to university students). Procedia Econ Financ. 2015;26:476–83.
5. Rachmadini F, Riyanto S. The impact of work-life balance onemployee engagement in generation z. IOSR J Humanit Soc Sci. 2020;25(5):62–6.
6. Chillakuri B. Understanding Generation Z expectations for effective onboarding. J Organ Chang Manag. 2020;33(7):1277–96.
7. Afandi A, Wicaksono B, Satwika PA. Peran Kepemimpinan Autentik dan Person-Job Fit terhadap Turnover Intention pada Karyawan Generasi Z. J Psikol Teor dan Terap.

2022;13(3):282–93.

8. Pinandito IS, Savira AW. Peran Empowering Leadership terhadap Intensi Turnover Karyawan Generasi Z di Indonesia. Gadjah Mada J Prof Psychol. 2022;8(2).

9. Sidorcuka I, Chesnovicka A. Methods of attraction and retention of generation Z staff. In: CBU International Conference Proceedings. 2017. p. 807–14.

10. Gruman JA, Saks AM. Socialization preferences and intentions: Does one size fit all? J Vocat Behav. 2011;79(2):419–27.

11. Ashforth BE, Sluss DM, Saks AM. Socialization tactics, proactive behavior, and newcomer learning: Integrating socialization models. J Vocat Behav. 2007;70(3):447–62.

12. Saks AM, Gruman JA, Cooper-Thomas H. The neglected role of proactive behavior and outcomes in newcomer socialization. J Vocat Behav. 2011;79(1):36–46.

13. Carusone N. Is Proactive Behavior Always Positive? An Examination of Leader Reactions Based on Employee Gender and Organizational Crisis. 2018;

14. Shirandula D, Cheloti-Mapelu I, Sepula M. Relationship between gender and proactive work behaviour in the Kenya's hotel industry. 2017;

15. Bohlmann C, Zacher H. Making things happen (un) expectedly: interactive effects of age, gender, and motives on evaluations of proactive behavior. J Bus Psychol. 2021;36:609–31.

16. Eagly AH, Karau SJ. Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Psychol Rev. 2002;109(3):573.

17. Uyun Q. Peran gender dalam budaya Jawa. Psikologika J Pemikir dan Penelit Psikol. 2002;7(13):32–42.

18. Parker SK, Williams HM, Turner N. Modeling the antecedents of proactive behavior at work. J Appl Psychol. 2006;91(3):636.

19. Grant AM, Ashford SJ. The dynamics of proactivity at work. Res Organ Behav. 2008;28:3–34.

20. Matsuo M. Reflecting on success in difficult times: a key to enhance proactivity and employability. Sage Open. 2021;11(4):21582440211059170.

21. Ashford SJ, Black JS. Proactivity during organizational entry: The role of desire for control. J Appl Psychol. 1996;81(2):199.

22. Pratama AS, Sridadi AR, Eliyana A, Anggraini RD, Kamil NLM. A Systematic Review of Proactive Work Behavior: Future Research Recommendation. J Behav Sci. 2023;18(2):136–51.

23. Cai Z, Parker SK, Chen Z, Lam W. How does the social context fuel the proactive fire? A multilevel review and theoretical synthesis. J Organ Behav. 2019;40(2):209–30.

24. Kammeyer-Mueller JD, Livingston BA, Liao H. Perceived similarity, proactive adjustment, and organizational socialization. J Vocat Behav. 2011;78(2):225–36.

25. Wanberg CR, Kammeyer-Mueller JD. Predictors and outcomes of proactivity in the socialization process. J Appl Psychol. 2000;85(3):373.

26. Cooper-Thomas HD, Paterson NL, Stadler MJ, Saks AM. The relative importance of proactive behaviors and outcomes for predicting newcomer learning, well-being, and work engagement. J Vocat Behav. 2014;84(3):318–31.

27. Kuzior A, Kettler K, Rąb Ł. Great resignation—Ethical, cultural, relational, and personal dimensions of generation Y and Z employees' engagement. Sustainability. 2022;14(11):6764.

28. Park J, Uhm J-P, Kim S, Kim M, Sato S, Lee H-W. Sport Community Involvement and Life Satisfaction During COVID-19: A Moderated Mediation of Psychological Capital by Distress and Generation Z. Front Psychol. 2022;13:861630.

29. Supia I, Hadi C, Fajrianthi F. Nilai Personal pada Stay Employee Angkatan Kerja Generasi Milenial dan Generasi Z: Studi pada Posisi Marketing di Salah Satu Bank Swasta di Indonesia. Sang Pencerah J Ilm Univ Muhammadiyah But. 2023;9(2):385–92.
30. Gruman JA, Saks AM, Zweig DI. Organizational socialization tactics and newcomer proactive behaviors: An integrative study. J Vocat Behav. 2006;69(1):90–104.
31. Ivasciuc IS, Epuran G, Vuță DR, Tescașiu B. Telework Implications on Work-Life Balance, Productivity, and Health of Different Generations of Romanian Employees. Sustainability. 2022;14(23):16108.
32. Griffin MA, Neal A, Parker SK. A new model of work role performance: Positive behavior in uncertain and interdependent contexts. Acad Manag J. 2007;50(2):327–47.
33. Pithaloka D, Taufiq I, Dini M. Pemaknaan perempuan Generasi Z terhadap maskulinitas joget Tiktok. Satwika Kaji Ilmu Budaya dan Perubahan Sos. 2023;7(1):69–78.
34. Ellis AM, Nifadkar SS, Bauer TN, Erdogan B. Newcomer adjustment: Examining the role of managers' perception of newcomer proactive behavior during organizational socialization. J Appl Psychol. 2017;102(6):993.
35. Parker SK, Collins CG. Taking stock: Integrating and differentiating multiple proactive behaviors. J Manage. 2010;36(3):633–62.
36. Frese M, Fay D, Hilburger T, Leng K, Tag A. The concept of personal initiative: Operationalization, reliability and validity in two German samples. J Occup Organ Psychol. 1997;70(2):139–61.