

## Exploring the Intergenerational Communication Experiences of Generation Z Employees in Indonesia's Public Institution: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the intergenerational communication experiences of Generation Z employees working in government institutions in West Sumatra, Indonesia. As the youngest cohort entering the public workforce, Generation Z employees encounter challenges in navigating hierarchical and multigenerational structures, particularly when interacting with Generations X and Y. This study aims to explore how Generation Z civil servants experience and interpret intergenerational communication within Indonesia's bureaucratic context. Using a qualitative approach grounded in transcendental phenomenology, the research investigates how Generation Z employees adapt, interpret, and respond to diverse communication dynamics in the workplace. The findings revealed six major themes: (1) supportive communication facilitates adaptation; (2) smooth and informal communication with Generation Y fosters harmonious collaboration; (3) etiquette-based communication with Generation X reflects respect for hierarchy; (4) communication gaps with supervisors lead to misunderstandings; (5) inappropriate humor creates discomfort; and (6) strategic communication adjustments help Generation Z navigate generational differences. The study contributes to the growing literature on intergenerational communication in public institutions by providing culturally grounded insights into how young employees perceive and manage communication challenges within bureaucratic settings. Theoretically, it expands the understanding of intergenerational communication within Southeast Asian public institutions, an underexplored context in existing scholarship while practically emphasizing the importance of adaptive, inclusive, and empathetic leadership communication.

**Keywords:** Cross-Generational Communication, Generation Z, Public Institutions, Phenomenology, Communication Adaptation, Organizational Culture

### INTRODUCTION

Generation Z defined as individuals born between 1995 and 2012 (Pew Research Center, 2019) is now entering the professional workforce in significant numbers, including Indonesia's public sector. According to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2020), Generation Z constitutes approximately 71.50 million people or 26.46% of the national population. This demographic shift positions Generation Z as a strategic agent of transformation within national development and public administration.

The integration of Generation Z into public institutions introduces complex communication challenges rooted

in differences in values, work ethics, and communication styles among generational cohorts. Generation Z employees tend to favor fast, transparent, and digitally mediated communication (Zahra et al., 2025), but studies also note that they may lack face-to-face interpersonal skills (Kralik & Daemrich, 2024).

In hierarchical and formal bureaucracies, these generational differences can affect not only efficiency but also relational harmony. Martin and Nakayama (2017) argue that meaning in communication is culturally situated and must be continually clarified to avoid misinterpretation. DeVito (2023) also emphasizes that stereotypes and assumptions about generational traits may hinder authentic communication by oversimplifying individual differences.

Communication breakdowns, misunderstandings, and clashes in communication style are among the leading sources of workplace tension in multigenerational environments (Motsamai & Onyenankeya, 2025). In the Indonesian public sector where authority and formality remain deeply embedded these tensions may be intensified by rigid hierarchies and traditional norms that contrast with the participatory preferences of younger employees.

Recent studies have highlighted that Generation Z responds positively to transparent, collaborative, and empathetic leadership styles (Lee & Nguyen, 2024; Kompa, 2019). Conversely, when generational gaps remain unmanaged, misaligned expectations can trigger miscommunication and conflict that diminish organizational effectiveness. Irhamahayati et al. (2018) found that technological fluency gaps and communication mismatches are major sources of intergenerational friction in Indonesia's public bureaucracy.

Artopo and Wahyuni (2024) further emphasize the importance of supervisory support in enhancing the adaptation and satisfaction of younger civil servants. However, existing studies on Generation Z's communication within government organizations remain scarce, with most research focusing on sectors such as healthcare (Kanste et al., 2025), education (Çetin & Halisdemir, 2019), or tourism (Goh & Lee, 2018; Luka et al., 2023). Moreover, many of these studies employ quantitative designs, which, while valuable for generalization, often fail to capture the nuanced lived experiences that shape real communicative interactions.

Janssen and Carradini (2021) caution that an overreliance on digital media can reduce individuals' ability to navigate subtle interpersonal dynamics essential to workplace cohesion. Bahrain et al. (2023) and Balakrishnan et al. (2024) both stress that effective communication is crucial to teamwork, conflict resolution, and engagement.

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to illuminate how Generation Z employees in Indonesia's public institutions experience and interpret intergenerational communication through a transcendental phenomenological approach. By examining these lived experiences, the study addresses an important research gap how communication meaning is constructed and negotiated across generations within hierarchical Asian bureaucracies.

Theoretically, this research contributes to expanding intergenerational communication studies in developing-country contexts, specifically the intersection between communication culture, generational identity, and organizational hierarchy. Practically, the findings provide insight for public institutions seeking to develop inclusive communication policies that bridge generational divides and enhance institutional adaptability.

To capture these lived experiences, this study employs a transcendental phenomenological approach, focusing on the subjective meanings that Generation Z employees attach to their communicative interactions.

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### Intercultural Communication

In organizational contexts, communication across cultures and generations occurs continuously as individuals from diverse social and cultural backgrounds interact. These cultural elements may include nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, and even age, each shaping one's worldview and communication patterns.

McCornack and Morrison (2021) emphasize that misunderstandings often emerge when communicators interpret messages through differing cultural filters. Mulyana (2023) explains that culture and communication are mutually constitutive culture determines communication behavior, while communication, in turn, preserves and transmits culture. This aligns with Edward T. Hall's assertion that "*culture is communication and communication is culture.*"

Samovar et al. (2016) define intercultural communication as occurring whenever individuals from different cultural systems exchange and interpret messages. Differences in perception, meaning, and symbols strongly influence the process of understanding. DeVito (2023) further notes that intercultural communication inherently involves individuals with differing cultural values, beliefs, or behavioral patterns.

*In this context, age and generational identity represent unique cultural dimensions, as each generation develops distinct norms, communication codes, and meanings based on their shared life experiences (Martínez & Fernández, 2024).* The degree of difference among generations varies; for instance, communication styles between Generations Y and Z are often more similar compared to those between Generations X and Z.

Martin and Nakayama (2017) argue that meaning has cultural consequences it must be continually explained and negotiated to avoid miscommunication. *Abrndt (2020) and DeVito (2023) both stress that learning intercultural communication enhances self-awareness and ethical sensitivity, reducing ethnocentric biases and promoting inclusion.*

*Intergenerational communication, as a subset of intercultural communication, thus focuses on how individuals from different age-based cultural groups manage meaning, identity, and power in the workplace.* Understanding this dynamic is crucial for fostering empathy, inclusivity, and organizational harmony in increasingly diverse institutions.

#### *Generations in the Workplace*

Generational diversity has become a defining feature of modern organizations. The workplace today typically includes four or even five generational cohorts Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), Generation Z, and in some contexts, early members of Generation Alpha.

*Each generation differs not only by age but also by formative experiences, technological literacy, and attitudes toward authority, which together shape unique communication patterns and expectations (Kühn & Costa, 2024).*

Lyons and Kuron (2014) explain that these differences stem from varied social and historical conditions that influence how individuals perceive work, technology, and interpersonal relations. The Pew Research Center (2019) categorizes the generational cohorts as follows:

**Table 1.** Generations in the Workplace

| No | Generation Name            | Birth Range |
|----|----------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Silent                     | 1928 - 1945 |
| 2. | Baby Boomers               | 1946 - 1964 |
| 3. | Generation X               | 1965 - 1980 |
| 4. | Generation Y (Millennials) | 1981 - 1996 |
| 5. | Generation Z               | 1997 - 2012 |

Each generation's unique traits can enrich the workplace but can also become a source of tension if organizations fail to manage communication effectively. For instance, Baby Boomers typically value loyalty and face-to-face interaction, while Generation Z tends to prioritize flexibility, transparency, and digital connectivity (Deal et al., 2010; Schroth, 2019).

According to Mahmoud et al. (2024), citing Seland and Hyggen (2021), digital divides emerge due to differences in formative technological exposure. While older generations may experience technological anxiety, younger ones navigate digital tools naturally, creating both opportunities and communication challenges.

Ezurike (2025) notes that older employees often fear making mistakes or being displaced in technology-driven workplaces, whereas younger generations sometimes struggle to collaborate with superiors who uphold traditional norms and communication hierarchies.

Nonetheless, generational diversity, when managed well, is a strategic advantage. Generation X often acts as a bridge between older and younger cohorts, mediating conflicts and fostering understanding (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Ng and Parry (2016) assert that effective management of generational diversity enhances creativity and organizational adaptability.

Marzo (2024) adds that generational gaps reflect broader differences in social experience and cognitive orientation that shape both family and workplace communication. Recent evidence suggests that digital fluency does not always equate to digital wisdom while Generation Z may be tech-savvy, they can lack communication nuance and patience in bureaucratic interactions (Brammer & Zhang, 2023).

As such, organizations must develop intergenerational communication strategies rooted in empathy, tolerance, and adaptability. Cross-generational training programs, mentoring initiatives, and open communication forums are essential for reducing friction and promoting collaboration (Sato & D'Angelo, 2025).

Rudolph et al. (2018) affirm that organizations responsive to multigenerational needs are more successful in retaining talent and enhancing productivity. Thus, rather than viewing generational differences as a liability, institutions should treat them as assets that can drive innovation and cohesion when supported by effective communication systems.

In summary, understanding the intersection between generational culture and communication behavior is critical to addressing the challenges of public-sector transformation. Effective intergenerational communication fosters not only teamwork but also a sustainable organizational culture that respects diversity and inclusivity.

## **METHODOLOGY**

*Phenomenology was chosen because it allows the researcher to uncover the essence of human experience as it is lived, without presupposition, focusing on how individuals make sense of their social world (Moustakas, 1994; Alase, 2023).* The aim was to describe the structure of meaning behind participants' everyday communication interactions in the workplace.

The study was conducted at the Regional Office of the Directorate General of Treasury (DJPb) in West Sumatra Province, a government institution characterized by a multigenerational workforce and an ongoing transition of civil servant generations. This institutional context provides a relevant environment for studying intergenerational communication within formal bureaucratic systems.

### Data Collection

Two primary data collection techniques were employed: **non-participant observation** and **in-depth interviews**.

Four Generation Z civil servants participated in interviews lasting between 90 and 120 minutes. Prior to data collection, participants were informed of the study's purpose, ethical considerations, and confidentiality. Each interview was conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences.

The interviews were audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically using NVivo 12 Pro.

### Participant Selection Criteria:

1. Aged between 23–25 years as of 2024, representing the youngest demographic group in the institution.
2. Active civil servants employed at DJPb West Sumatra.
3. Have regular professional interactions with Generation X (born 1965–1980) and Generation Y (born 1981–1996) colleagues.
4. Willing to voluntarily participate and share their experiences openly.
5. Have at least one year of work experience to ensure sufficient engagement with institutional communication practices.

*The purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure information-rich cases that align with the phenomenological emphasis on depth rather than breadth (Palinkas et al., 2024).*

Although only four individuals participated, this sample was deemed adequate given that the total population of Generation Z employees in the institution was 11. Thus, the participants represented more than one-third of the total Gen Z cohort aligning with qualitative research standards emphasizing data saturation and depth of meaning over sample size.

**Table 2.** Informants' Categories and Codes

| No. | Category     | Identification Code |
|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| 1.  | Generation Z | A                   |
| 2.  | Generation Z | B                   |
| 3.  | Generation Z | C                   |
| 4.  | Generation Z | D                   |

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed following the four primary phases of transcendental phenomenology outlined by Moustakas (1994):

1. ***Epoché (Bracketing):***  
The researcher engaged in bracketing to suspend personal biases and prior assumptions, ensuring openness toward participants' experiences. Open-ended questions were used to elicit authentic narratives.
2. ***Phenomenological Reduction:***  
This phase involved identifying the *horizons* key statements reflecting participants' experiences. Through horizontalization, each statement was treated with equal value before grouping into thematic clusters. NVivo 12 Pro supported the systematic coding and thematic categorization.
3. ***Imaginative Variation:***  
*This step involved exploring multiple perspectives and conditions that shape each phenomenon, revealing how communication patterns are influenced by generational, hierarchical, and institutional contexts (Giorgi & Smith, 2024).* Structural descriptions were developed to explain *how* experiences occurred.
4. ***Textural-Structural Synthesis:***  
The final stage combined textural descriptions (what was experienced) and structural descriptions (how it was experienced) to produce the composite essence of intergenerational communication among Generation Z employees.

## Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure credibility, dependability, and confirmability, several strategies were implemented:

1. **Triangulation:** Combining observation and interview data.
2. **Member Checking:** Participants reviewed transcripts and thematic summaries for accuracy.
3. **Peer Debriefing:** Discussions with academic peers and supervisors to validate interpretation.
4. **Audit Trail:** Maintaining a detailed documentation of research steps to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Graduate Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Andalas. Participants' anonymity was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and coded identifiers.

*These methodological steps ensured that findings reflect authentic, contextually grounded representations of lived experiences, consistent with phenomenological rigor and ethical research practice.*

## RESULTS

From the thematic analysis, six interconnected themes emerged, reflecting the adaptive, relational, and ethical dimensions of intergenerational communication.

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts identified **six major themes** that capture the intergenerational communication experiences of Generation Z civil servants within the bureaucratic environment of Indonesia's public institutions:

### Supportive Communication Facilitates Adaptation

Supervisors who practiced open and inclusive communication were instrumental in helping Generation Z employees adapt to their work roles. Supportive behaviors such as approachable leadership, feedback sharing, and mentoring created a sense of belonging and psychological safety.

*Participants consistently reported that supervisors who engaged in active listening and encouraged open dialogue helped them understand institutional norms and expectations more effectively.*

"When my supervisor explains things clearly and listens to our ideas, it makes me feel more confident and part of the team." (Informant B)

Such supportive environments allowed Gen Z employees to internalize organizational values and feel appreciated, reducing adjustment stress and increasing engagement.

*This finding aligns with recent research suggesting that inclusive communication practices strengthen adaptation and social integration among younger employees in hierarchical settings (Sharma & Kim, 2024).*

### Informal Communication with Generation Y Promotes Harmonious Collaboration

Communication between Generation Z and their Generation Y colleagues was characterized by informality, humor, and mutual understanding.

*The close age gap between the two cohorts enabled more relaxed exchanges, making it easier to discuss work-related issues and share experiences openly.*

"With seniors who are Millennials, I can be casual; we use WhatsApp to coordinate tasks, and it feels natural." (Informant D)

Such informality fostered peer learning and collaboration, enhancing team cohesion. Participants viewed Generation Y as "bridge communicators" between traditional and modern workplace cultures.

*This pattern resonates with studies emphasizing that Millennial communication styles serve as cultural mediators, balancing hierarchical expectations with digital communication norms (Baxter & Huang, 2025).*

### Etiquette-Based Communication with Generation X Reflects Respect for Hierarchy

Interactions with Generation X required greater formality, politeness, and observance of hierarchy.

*Participants intentionally moderated their tone, language, and nonverbal cues to demonstrate respect and avoid misinterpretation.*

"When talking to Gen X officers, I try to speak carefully and use polite words. They appreciate formality." (Informant A)

This adaptation reflected an awareness of power distance embedded in bureaucratic culture. Generation Z employees perceived etiquette-based communication as essential to building trust and professional credibility with senior staff.

*These findings are consistent with the cultural communication framework proposed by Hofstede and Minkov (2023), which emphasizes that high power distance contexts demand formal and deferential communication behaviors.*

## Communication Gaps with Supervisors Lead to Misunderstandings

Participants highlighted challenges in upward communication. Misunderstandings often arose due to unclear instructions, indirect feedback, or limited opportunities for open dialogue.

“Sometimes our ideas are rejected without explanation. It feels like our opinions don’t matter.” (Informant C)

*Such communication gaps hinder learning and innovation, resulting in frustration and emotional withdrawal among younger employees.*

Many participants described supervisors’ reluctance to embrace new communication technologies or their reliance on implicit messages, which Gen Z perceived as ambiguous.

*These findings echo the conclusions of Park & Toth (2024), who note that communication misalignment between hierarchical and digital-native generations undermines trust and job satisfaction.*

*Therefore, bridging communication styles through transparent leadership and structured feedback mechanisms is vital for reducing intergenerational tension and fostering mutual understanding in bureaucratic systems.*

## Inappropriate Humor Creates Discomfort in Communication

Humor used by senior colleagues especially when containing sexist, body-shaming, or outdated cultural references was often perceived as uncomfortable or offensive.

“Sometimes the jokes are inappropriate. We just smile politely, but it’s awkward.” (Informant D)

*This discomfort reflected generational differences in ethical sensitivity and workplace decorum.* Gen Z participants associated inappropriate humor with unprofessional behavior that undermined mutual respect.

*Similar observations were reported by Chen & Qureshi (2023), who found that humor incongruent with younger employees’ values may decrease team cohesion and reduce trust.*

*These findings suggest the need for intergenerational sensitivity training to promote respectful humor and inclusive communication practices in multigenerational workplaces.*

## Strategic Communication Adjustments Help Generation Z Navigate Generational Differences

Generation Z employees demonstrated adaptive strategies to manage communication across generations. They carefully selected communication channels (e.g., preferring WhatsApp or email over face-to-face discussions) and adjusted their tone depending on the recipient’s generational background.

“When texting Millennials, I use short and direct language. But with older colleagues, I write more formally.” (Informant A)

*Such adaptability illustrates both convergence and divergence strategies as explained by Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 1991).*

*Recent research further supports that adaptive communication enhances intergenerational harmony, allowing young employees to balance authenticity with respect (Peterson & Navarro, 2025).*

Collectively, these six themes highlight how Generation Z civil servants actively construct meaning and adapt communicative behavior to maintain harmony and effectiveness within rigid bureaucratic environments.

*In summary, the results emphasize that intergenerational communication is not merely the transfer of information but a dynamic process of negotiation shaped by hierarchy, cultural norms, and generational identity. Generation Z’s adaptive strategies ranging from linguistic flexibility to emotional regulation reflect their effort to balance institutional expectations with personal authenticity.*

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal a complex but adaptive communication landscape for Generation Z civil servants within hierarchical and multigenerational bureaucratic institutions. Through the transcendental phenomenological lens, six essential meanings emerged, illustrating how communicative practices reflect both generational identity and cultural negotiation.

*Supportive and Inclusive Communication as an Adaptation Catalyst*

*The first major finding underscores the significance of supportive communication in facilitating the adaptation of Generation Z employees.* When supervisors engage in transparent, empathic, and dialogic communication, they help reduce uncertainty and strengthen newcomers’ sense of belonging.

This aligns with Dwiastuti et al. (2024), who emphasize that structured feedback and reflective listening are key to mitigating intergenerational miscommunication. Similarly, DeVito (2023), drawing on Oberg’s adaptation model, posits that new entrants to an organizational culture initially experience both fascination and anxiety.

*Supportive supervision helps ease this “culture shock” by establishing psychological safety, allowing younger employees to experiment, learn, and integrate without fear of reprimand.* A recent study by Li & Torres (2025) also confirms that leader–member communication quality significantly predicts organizational adjustment among Gen Z employees in public agencies.

*Informality and Peer Communication as Enablers of Collaboration*

The second finding highlights the role of informal communication with Generation Y colleagues in building collaboration and mutual understanding. Informal interactions through casual conversation, humor, and digital platforms create relational proximity that fosters mutual trust.

*This finding resonates with social penetration theory, which suggests that interpersonal closeness develops through gradual self-disclosure and mutual validation (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Hwang & Park, 2023).*

Roem and Sarmiati (2019) previously observed that body language and postural cues contribute to relational warmth, supporting the current finding that Generation Z employees feel more comfortable when formality is reduced.

*Such peer-level informality is particularly valuable in bureaucratic contexts, where rigid hierarchies can otherwise inhibit spontaneous collaboration and creative problem-solving.*

### **Respectful Communication with Generation X and the Role of Politeness Strategies**

The third theme underscores the importance of etiquette-driven communication with Generation X colleagues. This deliberate adjustment demonstrates Gen Z employees' awareness of social hierarchy and their willingness to align with institutional norms.

*Braithwaite and Schrodt (2022) describe this as a "cognitive motive," an intentional communication adjustment aimed at clarity and relationship management.* Participants' conscious choice of formal language, measured tone, and restrained expression reflects strategic politeness.

*According to Leech's (2024) updated politeness framework, such adaptation is not merely compliance with rules but a relational act that signals respect and acknowledges authority within a cultural context.*

Thus, communication etiquette becomes both a linguistic and relational strategy strengthening trust while preserving generational boundaries.

### **Communication Gaps and the Need for Transparent Leadership**

The fourth essential meaning identifies communication breakdowns between Generation Z employees and their supervisors, which often stem from asymmetrical power relations and differing expectations.

*Participants described feelings of exclusion when their feedback or ideas were dismissed without clear justification.* Johnson (2019) previously noted that Generation X supervisors who fail to cultivate openness contribute to conflict escalation and reduced motivation.

*More recent evidence by Al-Masri & Ortega (2024) suggests that hierarchical rigidity limits intergenerational dialogue and innovation in public institutions.*

Generation Z's preference for clarity and directness contrasts sharply with the implicit, context-dependent messages used by older generations reflecting a clash between high-context and low-context communication styles (DeVito, 2023).

*To bridge this divide, leaders must embrace inclusive communication that emphasizes feedback equity, transparency, and empathy.* Mikkola and Valo (2019) argue that supportive communication alleviates emotional strain, enhancing both morale and job satisfaction.

*Similarly, Valerio & Gomez (2025) recommend "dialogic leadership" practices that allow younger employees to co-create meaning, increasing engagement and accountability.*

### **Humor, Sensitivity, and the Limits of Cultural Transfer**

The fifth theme highlights discomfort caused by humor deemed inappropriate or outdated by younger employees. While humor can promote solidarity, it may also reproduce exclusion or offense when generational sensitivities differ.

*This finding echoes Plester and Orams (2008), who warned that humor, while intended to entertain, may inadvertently reinforce social hierarchy.*

*Contemporary studies (e.g., Wu & Karunaratne, 2024) confirm that humor incompatible with younger generations' ethical values undermines team morale and trust.*

*For Generation Z, inclusivity and respect in communication are moral imperatives rather than optional etiquette.* Organizations must therefore ensure that humor aligns with evolving ethical standards and cultural awareness to maintain inclusivity across age groups.

### **Adaptive Communication Strategies and Identity Negotiation**

The final theme demonstrates Generation Z's strategic communication adjustments alternating between convergence and divergence depending on the context.

*According to Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles et al., 1991), individuals adapt linguistic and behavioral patterns to minimize or emphasize social distance.* Participants' choices such as using digital media for upward communication or simplifying messages for efficiency reflect this dual adaptation process.

*Rashid & Han (2024) recently argued that Generation Z's communicative agility represents a hybrid competence: blending digital fluency with situational awareness.*

*This adaptability not only enhances communicative harmony but also signifies a generational shift toward reflexive professionalism—where authenticity coexists with respect for institutional culture.*

Mikkola and Valo (2019) further note that such adaptation allows newcomers to construct social knowledge and manage workplace relationships effectively.

## **THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

*Theoretically, this study advances intergenerational communication scholarship by contextualizing Communication Accommodation Theory and intercultural communication models within Southeast Asian bureaucracies.*

*It introduces a new conceptual nuance: "bureaucratic communicative adaptation," referring to how younger employees reconcile digital-native habits with hierarchical institutional norms.*

Practically, the study highlights the importance of adaptive leadership, mentorship programs, and intergenerational communication training. These interventions promote tolerance, empathy, and collaboration key competencies for sustaining public-sector transformation in the digital age.

*By acknowledging generational diversity as a communicative resource rather than a barrier, organizations can enhance not only interpersonal harmony but also institutional innovation and resilience.*

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that communication functions as a vital mechanism through which Generation Z civil servants construct meaning, adapt behavior, and establish professional identity within Indonesia's multigenerational bureaucratic environment. Six themes collectively reveal that effective communication is not only informational but also relational and symbolic it shapes belonging, respect, and collaboration across generations.

Supportive communication from supervisors accelerates adaptation; informal interaction with Generation Y fosters teamwork and psychological comfort; while etiquette-based communication with Generation X demonstrates professionalism and respect. Conversely, communication breakdowns with superiors and inappropriate humor create discomfort and hinder motivation.

Generation Z's strategic communication adjustments balancing convergence for harmony and divergence for authenticity illustrate the generational shift toward adaptive, context-sensitive professionalism in public institutions.

The findings emphasize that intergenerational communication is a dynamic process of negotiation between authority and agency, tradition and modernity, hierarchy and collaboration.

This underscores the theoretical proposition that communication in bureaucratic systems operates as both a tool of adaptation and a medium of identity negotiation.

Future communication policies in Indonesia's public institutions should therefore prioritize empathy, inclusivity, and adaptability to strengthen intergenerational collaboration and institutional resilience.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDY**

This study has several limitations. First, its small sample only four Generation Z employees from a single government institution limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study captures perspectives from Generation Z only, without incorporating voices from older generations, potentially overlooking bidirectional communication dynamics.

Future studies could adopt comparative or longitudinal designs involving multiple generational cohorts to examine how intergenerational understanding evolves over time. Furthermore, integrating additional qualitative methods such as participant observation or digital ethnography may enrich contextual depth.

Exploring how organizational culture, leadership style, and digital transformation mediate intergenerational communication would further extend the theoretical implications proposed here (Kim & Santos, 2025).

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### Author Contributions

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All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

### Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Each participant was provided with information on research objectives, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw without penalty.

### Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data supporting this study's findings are not publicly available due to ethical and confidentiality restrictions. Data access may be granted upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. Although this research was supported by a grant from Universitas Andalas (Grant No. 294/UN16.19/PT.01.03/PTM/2024), the funders had no role in the design of the study; in the data collection, analysis, or interpretation; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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