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The Role of Policy and Regional Leadership in Job Motivation Among Generation Z Awareness

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Abstract

The high unemployment rate among Generation Z Awareness shows the need for adaptive regional policies and leadership in shaping the work motivation of the younger generation. This study aims to analyze the influence of the role of policy, regional head leadership, and motivation on the character and work readiness of Generation Z. The method used is quantitative with a survey design of 44 Gen Z respondents, who were selected purposively. The research instrument in the form of a questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.895. Data analysis was carried out using multiple linear regression and Pearson correlation through SPSS version 22. The results of the study show that the three variables the role of policy, regional head leadership, and motivation have a positive and significant effect on Generation Z Awareness. The role of inclusive and participatory policies forms a conducive work ecosystem, while the transformational leadership style of regional heads is proven to be a dominant factor in encouraging the enthusiasm and loyalty of Gen Z. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation supported by a work environment that is responsive to basic psychological needs also enhances the productive and adaptive work character of Gen Z. These findings underscore the importance of synergy between policy, leadership, and motivation in developing the younger generation.

Keywords

Generation Z, Regional Head Leadership, Public Policy, Work Motivation.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of the digital era has created new challenges in the world of employment, particularly for the younger age group known as Generation Z (Gen Z), which refers to individuals born between the late 1990s and early 2010s. Gen Z is recognized as a highly tech-savvy generation, with broad access to information, and a tendency to seek jobs that not only provide income but also align with their personal values, such as flexibility, meaning, and self-actualization (Martini & Sarmawa, 2029; Septiawan & Masrunik, 2020). However, the reality in Indonesia shows that many members of Gen Z still struggle to find jobs that match their aspirations and skills (Kuspianti, 2024).

One of the main causes of this phenomenon is the mismatch between the skills Gen Z possesses and the needs of the labor market (Prasetyaningtyas et al., 2022; Goldbach et al., 2023). Many companies require technical and practical skills that are often not fully mastered by graduates of schools or universities. Research supports this by showing that many Gen Z university graduates still lack competencies relevant to the modern industry, such as digital skills and soft skills, despite having undergone years of formal education (Hidayat, 2021).

Moreover, although Gen Z tends to have high confidence in their ability to secure employment, they still face significant challenges in entering the workforce. Factors such as lack of work experience, skills that do not yet meet industry needs, and intense competition serve as major obstacles. Research indicates that active involvement in organizations, English language proficiency, and support from university career centers can enhance Gen Z's perception of their job readiness (Sari, 2020).

Table 1. Gen Z Data in Indonesia

Category	Amount
Total Gen Z Population	± 74.93 million people
Gen Z Age Ready to Work	± 44.31 million people
Total Gen Z Unemployment	± 9 million people
Gen Z Open Unemployment Rate	± 20.3% of 12-24 years old

The data in Table 1 shows the total population of Generation Z (Gen Z) in Indonesia is estimated to reach around 74.93 million people. Of that number, around ±44.31 million people are in the productive age group and ready to enter the workforce. However, a major challenge faced is the high unemployment rate among Gen Z, which is around 9 million individuals. Facts show that the open poverty rate in the young age group, especially 12–24 years, is still relatively high, reaching 20.3% (BPS, 2023). This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of regional government policies, the leadership style of regional heads, and motivational factors in encouraging Gen Z involvement in the world of work (Fajriyanti et al., 223; Putri, 2024).

Factors influencing youth participation in the labor market. Rizky (2018) emphasized the importance of motivation as a driving factor for Gen Z's productivity and job satisfaction, especially when aligned with personal values and aspirations. Pratiwi et al. (2024) showed that a communicative and participatory leadership style from regional leaders can increase the loyalty and work enthusiasm of young people. Meanwhile, studies by Putri (2021) and Prasetyo et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of the role of inclusive public policies that are oriented towards empowering the local economy for the younger generation.

Many employment and human resource development policies have not been explicitly directed to address the unique needs and characteristics of Gen Z. In

addition, there have not been many studies that examine the simultaneous influence of these three main factors in one integrative model. In fact, to create an inclusive and sustainable employment ecosystem, a multidimensional approach is needed. The purpose of this study is to analyze the extent to which the role of regional policy, regional head leadership style, and motivation significantly influence Generation Z awareness. Specifically, this study aims to determine how these three factors influence Gen Z's attitudes, participation, and work preferences in the context of regional development. By understanding the relationship between these variables, the results of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for local governments and other stakeholders in designing policies and leadership strategies that are adaptive to the dynamics of the younger generation.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Role of Policy and Generation Z Awareness

The role of policy in the context of the younger generation, especially Generation Z awareness, is very crucial. This phenomenon reflects the imbalance between the availability of jobs and the needs and work preferences of the younger generation. Within the framework of regional autonomy, local governments have strategic authority to design policies that can answer these challenges. The role of policy is not only limited to job creation, but also includes strengthening the entrepreneurial sector, cross-sector collaboration, and integration between education, training, and industry needs. According to Rizky (2018), motivation that comes from internal and external drives is the main foundation for Gen Z to work productively and meaningfully. Policies that support life balance, self-development, and actualization of potential will increase the loyalty and active participation of this generation in the job market. Pratiwi et al. (2024) added that good policies are policies that are not top-down, but participatory and in line with Gen Z values that value flexibility, openness, and sustainability. In practice, effective public policy depends on the leadership style of regional heads in articulating an inclusive vision, building trust, and creating a supportive work climate. Policies that are not responsive to Gen Z's characteristics could actually encourage them to seek risky job opportunities, including migrating abroad for illegal work in the digital sector.

H1: Role of policy has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z awareness.

2.2. Regional Head Leadership and Generation Z Awareness

The leadership of regional heads in the era of autonomy plays an important role in designing policies that have a direct impact on the younger generation, especially Generation Z (Pantelides, 2024). Regional leaders are not only responsible for the physical and economic development of the region, but also for creating a social environment that is conducive to the participation of the younger generation in the productive sector. In this context, the leadership style of regional heads is crucial because it can trigger involvement or inhibit Gen Z from taking an active role in society (Dirik et al., 2025). Generation Z has unique characteristics, such as a tendency towards independence, values of work flexibility, and preferences for work that has meaning and social relevance. Therefore, regional heads are required to apply an inclusive, communicative, and visionary leadership style in order to optimally attract the interest and potential of Gen Z. Participatory and transformative leadership will encourage a sense of belonging, trust, and commitment from young people to regional development (Rizky et al., 2024). The sociological approach to social generations emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics of Gen Z behavior in terms of career choices, lifestyle

preferences, and social engagement (Sari et al., 2014; Prasetyo et al., 2019; Putri, 2021). If regional heads are able to align their policies and leadership styles with these characteristics, then Gen Z involvement in both the public and private sectors will increase (Munahar & Kesuma, 2023).

H2: Regional head leadership has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z awareness.

2.3. Motivation and Generation Z Awareness

Motivation is a very important psychological aspect in the world of work, especially for Generation Z awareness, namely individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. According to Rizky (2018) and Septiawan & Masrunik (2020), motivation is an internal or external drive that raises enthusiasm and energy, thus encouraging individuals to work effectively, responsibly, and make optimal contributions. Motivation is an important factor in improving performance because it can influence attitudes, behaviors, and the achievement of cooperation goals (Nugroho & Saluy, 2024). For Gen Z, motivation is closely related to clear goals, personal values, and work experiences that provide emotional and professional satisfaction (Fajriyanti et al., 2023). The characteristics of Gen Z who grew up in the digital era make them a generation that is more autonomous, critical, and values speed and flexibility. They tend not to only work for a salary, but also seek meaning in their work. In this context, Pratiwi et al. (2024) emphasize that Gen Z's motivation is more developed if the work environment is able to provide transparent communication, opportunities for self-development, and recognition of their contributions. They also value time flexibility, balance between personal and professional life, and a reward system that is relevant to individual achievement. The importance of motivation in encouraging active participation, loyalty, and productivity of Gen Z is the basis for the hypothesis:

H3: Motivation has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z awareness.

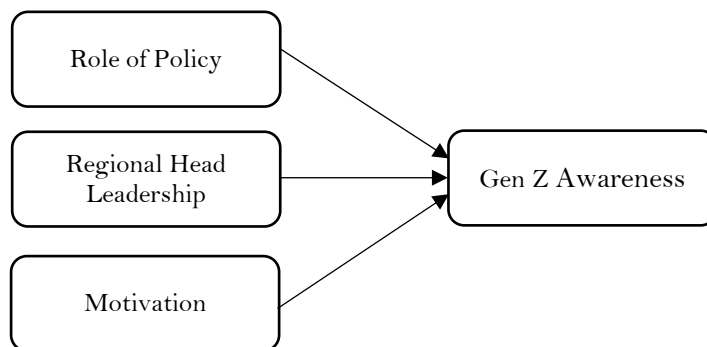


Figure 1. Research framework

Figure 1 shows a research framework that describes the relationship between three independent variables—Role of Policy, Regional Head Leadership, and Motivation—to the dependent variable, Generation Z awareness. The three hypotheses proposed emphasize that regional government policies, regional head leadership styles, and internal and external motivations have a significant influence in shaping the behavior, work preferences, and participation of Gen Z in the workforce. This framework is designed to simultaneously test the contribution of structural and psychological factors to the involvement of the younger generation in regional development.

3. Methods

This study uses a quantitative method with a survey design approach, which aims to measure the influence of the role of policy and leadership of regional heads on the work motivation of Generation Z awareness. This method was chosen because it is able to identify causal relationships between variables and provide a picture of measurements measured based on primary data collected from respondents. The population in this study were individuals included in the Generation Z category, namely those born between 1997 and 2012 and have entered productive age. The purposive sampling technique was used to determine the sample intentionally based on certain criteria, such as age, work experience, and domicile in the relevant administrative area. The number of samples obtained was 44 respondents, which was considered sufficient to describe the pattern of relationships between variables in this study.

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire instrument, which was compiled based on theoretical indicators of each variable: the role of policy, leadership of regional heads, and work motivation. Each statement item in the questionnaire was arranged on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Validity was obtained through literature review and expert review, while the reliability test was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha, which showed a value of 0.895, indicating that the instrument has high internal consistency and is suitable for use in data collection. The data that has been collected was then analyzed using SPSS version 22 analysis. The analysis stages include descriptive to describe the data distribution and inferential analysis in the form of multiple linear regression, which is used to test the simultaneous and partial effects of each independent variable on the dependent variable. In addition, a Pearson correlation test was also carried out to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. The use of this quantitative method allows researchers to obtain objective empirical conclusions, as well as to test hypotheses statistically.

4. Results

The correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the variables in this study, namely policy role, regional head leadership, work motivation, and the characteristics of Generation Z. The technique used was Pearson correlation, aimed at determining the strength and direction of the relationships between variables. The correlation coefficient (r) indicates the degree of the relationship, while the significance value (p) is used to statistically test the meaningfulness of the relationship.

Table 2. Correlation Test Results

Variable		Role of Policy	Regional Head Leadership	Motivation	Gen Z
Role of Policy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.679**	0.614**	0.742**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	44	44	44	44
Regional Head Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.656**	1	0.722**	0.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	44	44	44	44
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.653**	0.699**	1	0.618**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000

Variable		Role of Policy	Regional Head Leadership	Motivation	Gen Z
N		44	44	44	44
Gen Z Awareness	Pearson Correlation	0.682**	0.635**	0.711**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	44	44	44	44

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results of the Pearson correlation test in Table 2 involving 44 respondents, found that all variables in this study had a significant relationship at a significance level of 0.01. The policy role variable shows a strong correlation with regional leadership ($r = 0.679$), motivation ($r = 0.614$), and Generation Z awareness ($r = 0.742$). This indicates that the policies implemented play an important role in influencing leadership, increasing work motivation, and positively impacting the characteristics of Generation Z. Furthermore, regional leadership also has a strong correlation with motivation ($r = 0.722$) and Generation Z awareness ($r = 0.687$), suggesting that good leadership styles contribute to increased work motivation and the development of young workers' behavior. In addition, the motivation variable also shows a strong correlation with Generation Z awareness ($r = 0.711$), indicating that the higher the level of motivation, the more positive the character and work spirit of Generation Z. Thus, it can be concluded that all variables in this study are significantly interrelated and have a strong influence on the motivation and work behavior of Generation Z awareness.

Before conducting further analysis, one important step in quantitative research is to test the reliability of the instruments used. The purpose of this reliability test is to determine the extent to which the research instrument—in this case, a questionnaire—can produce consistent results when used under the same conditions, whether at different times or by different evaluators. One commonly used method for testing reliability is the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measures the internal consistency of a set of items in the instrument. The higher the Cronbach's Alpha value, the higher the level of reliability of the instrument. The general interpretation of this value is as follows: a value ≥ 0.90 indicates that the instrument is highly reliable; a value between 0.70–0.90 indicates the instrument is reliable; a value between 0.60–0.70 indicates moderate reliability; and a value < 0.60 indicates low reliability. Based on the results of the reliability test conducted, further information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Model	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	0.895
N of Items	4

The results of the reliability test in Table 3 show that the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.895 for the 4 question items used in the research instrument. This value is included in the "reliable" category because it is in the range of 0.70–0.90, approaching the "very reliable" category. This shows that the instrument used to measure Gen Z's perception of the role of regional policies and leadership in motivating them towards the job market has high internal consistency, so it is suitable for use in collecting data for this study.

The Coefficient of Determination test (R^2) is used to measure how much of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in the regression model. The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1, where a value closer to 1 indicates that the regression model can explain the variability of the data well.

Conversely, a low R² value indicates that the independent variables have a limited ability to explain the variability of the dependent variable.

Table 4. Determination Coefficient & Hypothesis

Variable	Value	Unst. Coef	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.976 ^a	2.446	0.425	-	2.419	0.020
Role of Policy	0.953	1.032	0.204	0.416	2.156	0.015
Regional Head Leadership	0.950	1.292	0.153	0.994	6.469	0.000
Motivation	1.327	2.571	0.421	0.399	2.356	0.005

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis in Table 4 show an R value of 0.976, which indicates a very strong correlation between the independent variables (policy role, regional head leadership, and motivation) and the dependent variable (Gen Z). The R Square value of 0.953 indicates that 95.3% of the variation in the Gen Z variable can be explained by the three independent variables. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.950 shows that after adjusting for the number of variables, the model is still able to explain 95.0% of the data variation. The Standard Error of Estimate of 1.327 indicates a relatively low level of prediction error. A hypothesis test is used to determine whether the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable is statistically significant. The decision is based on the significance value (p-value), which is compared to the error level (α). If the p-value < α , the effect is considered significant. The results of the hypothesis test for the variables in this study are presented in the following table:

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis show that all independent variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable (Gen Z). The Policy Role variable has a regression coefficient (B) of 1.032, with a t value of 2.156 and a significance level of 0.015 (p < 0.05). The standardized beta coefficient of 0.416 indicates that the Policy Role has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z awareness. This means that the greater the role of policy implementation, the more positive its influence on the formation of character or behavior of Generation Z. Regional Head Leadership Variable The results of the regression test show that this variable has a regression coefficient of 1.292, a t value of 6.469, and a significance level of 0.000 (p < 0.01). The standardized beta coefficient of 0.994 makes this variable the most dominant factor influencing Gen Z compared to other variables. Therefore, regional leadership has a clear significant and strong positive influence on the direction and behavior of Gen Z. The Motivation variable shows a regression coefficient of 2.571 with a t value of 2.356 and a significance level of 0.005 (p < 0.01). The standardized beta coefficient of 0.399 indicates that motivation also has a positive and significant influence on Gen Z. This means that the higher the motivation, the stronger its influence in shaping the behavior or characteristics of Gen Z.

5. Discussion

The Role of Policy shows a positive and significant influence on the characteristics of Generation Z. This shows that the more effective and targeted the policies implemented by local governments, the greater the impact in shaping the work character of Generation Z. In the context of increasingly complex and dynamic modern public policy, the evidence-based policy approach as developed by Sabatier and Weible (2014) is becoming increasingly relevant and urgent to be implemented. This approach emphasizes the importance of using empirical data, scientific findings, and objective facts as the main basis in the process of formulating and drafting public policies. In addition, the concept of adaptive governance such as Folke et al. (2010) emphasizes the importance of flexibility and the government's ability to adapt to rapid social and technological changes (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Fitriani, 2018;

Fratrièová & Kirchmayer, 2018; Dewa, 2023; Laksmi & Perdhana, 2024). Thus, policies designed with a modern approach will create an ecosystem that is conducive to the development of Generation Z (Maharjan, 2012; Yusuf, 2017; Shrestha, 2019; Aung, 2021).

The leadership of the Regional Head has the most dominant influence on the character of Generation Z. This confirms that the quality and style of leadership applied by the regional head plays an important role in shaping the character and work behavior of Generation Z. In the theory of transformational leadership put forward by Bass (2011), an inspiring and visionary leader is able to build high enthusiasm and loyalty among his subordinates. Regional heads who adopt a transformational leadership style will be better able to motivate Generation Z who tend to seek meaning in their work, clarity of vision, and space to express themselves. Furthermore, according to Avolio and Kahai (2003), leaders who are able to utilize technology in communication and public services will find it easier to reach and motivate generations who are accustomed to the digital environment. An inclusive leadership approach according to Nishii and Mayer (2009) is also important to implement. Leadership that prioritizes inclusivity makes Generation Z feel appreciated and accepted, which ultimately increases their loyalty and motivation in the workplace.

Motivation also has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z awareness, this shows that high motivation contributes significantly to the formation of productive, adaptive, and goal-oriented work characters. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (2017) explains that intrinsic motivation driven from within because they consider work to be something meaningful is very important for Generation Z. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model by Bakker and Demerouti (2017), work motivation is also influenced by the balance between job demands and available resources. Generation Z is also known as meaning seekers, individuals who seek meaningful work and value work-life balance (Schroth, 2019; Astuti et al., 2023). The phenomenon of Gen Z's increasing desire to look for work abroad, although often risky, cannot be separated from the conditions of the domestic labor market which have not fully met the expectations and needs of this generation (Indriwati, 2023).

Regional leaders who are able to formulate policies based on data and the real needs of young people, such as technology-based job training, support for young entrepreneurship, and access to open and accurate career information, contribute significantly to creating a conducive work climate in their regions (Rahmawati, 2016; Nurkhairina & Assingily, 2021). Bronfenbrenner (2005) ecological theory of human development provides a relevant framework for understanding this interaction. These three systems influence each other and contribute to shaping the direction and life choices of Gen Z (Kuspanti, 2024). Visionary leaders can create an ecosystem that encourages innovation, entrepreneurship, and active participation of young people in regional development (Anshor & Permatasari, 2022). Through this holistic approach, Gen Z is expected to develop into a generation that is not only professionally competent but also highly committed to local contributions, thus building a shared future in their homeland (Pratama et al., 2020).

6. Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that the role of local government policies, local leadership, and motivation have a positive and significant effect on the development of character and work readiness of Generation Z awareness. The three factors interact with each other and explain 95.3% of the variation in Generation Z characteristics, indicating the importance of synergy in forming an adaptive and productive young generation. Inclusive, participatory, and data-based policies can create a conducive work ecosystem, while transformational and digital leadership

implemented by local leaders can inspire and facilitate the active involvement of Generation Z. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation influenced by a work environment that supports basic psychological needs also contributes to the formation of positive work character. Therefore, youth development strategies need to integrate policy, leadership, and motivation approaches, holistic reinforcement so that Generation Z can develop optimally not only as competent workers but also as agents of change in their local environment. These findings indicate the need for synergy between local policies, leadership styles, and motivation-enhancing strategies to support the development of Generation Z's work character. Further research is recommended to test the role of mediation such as communication effectiveness or organizational support in strengthening the relationship between variables

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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