

Differences in Mental Toughness in Communication Behavior of Generation X and Generation Z in Donggala Regency

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the differences in mental toughness in the communication behavior of Generation X and Generation Z in Donggala Regency. This qualitative study used purposive sampling. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews and direct observation. Data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification were used for analysis. The results indicate that Generation X is mentally very resilient, characterized by their communication behavior, which prioritizes ethics when communicating with others, such as using the word "tabe" (excuse me), not easily contradicting parents even when they are right, and being mentally strong in facing life's challenges. Furthermore, Generation X also discourages the use of harsh words such as "anjay," "anjir," "baya" (crazy), stress, and calling friends by animal names or genital names in everyday conversations, both face-to-face and via social media. In contrast, for Generation Z, these words are considered commonplace, but they are used more frequently among peers.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are born and live from various generations, of course, have different ways of communicating, both verbally and non-verbally. These differences also lead to the ability to manage mentality which can be tough or even the opposite. Manheim in the journal Hasyim (2023) said that generation is a social construct in which there is a group of people of the same age who are in the same social and historical dimensions. Basically, the similarity of age and life experience shows that they are in the same generation and different from other generations. For example, in generation X, which is different from generation Z, the difference between one generation and the previous generation can be seen from communication behavior and things that can and should not be tolerated.

Communication behavior is influenced by various factors such as motivational perception, communication, and information. A person's communication behavior is based on experience through the senses of sight, hearing, smell and so on. Motivation is defined as the drive to act to achieve a certain goal as a result of an impulse and this movement is manifested in the form of behavior (Sura, 2019). Differences in communication behavior can be seen in terms of messages, especially the language and format of the message itself. Initial attitudes, information, and moral norms have a lot of influence on the way, language, and changes for students when contacting lecturers through text messaging applications (Pandu and Darwis, 2018).

Each generation has a different perception of understanding a social condition. This is influenced by the process of human life in his time. Generation X grew up with a different mindset than Generation Z. This mindset is closely related to mental toughness in facing various life challenges, whether strong or even weak and falling. Darmawan and Fadjarajani in the journal Nuraeni (2022) explain that communication behavior is a human action in communication activities. There are several factors that affect humans in behavior such as genes, power, attitudes, emotions, and culture. A person's background has a great influence on their behavior. Behavior is the result of experiences that are driven or motivated by the need to increase excitement and reduce suffering. Differences in cultural backgrounds cause differences in a person's behavior in communicating.

In a social reality that occurs in the community of Donggala Regency, generation X tends to find it difficult to keep up with the development of technological sophistication that Generation Z usually uses in communicating. On the other hand, Generation Z tends to be uncomfortable when communicating with Generation X because they feel that the conversations that take place are not *related* to what they are facing in the current era. Generation X shows pioneering behavior that works conventionally. Prefer direct communication, willing to make financial sacrifices and willing to work for a long period of time. Generation X is able to show good manners as Indonesian citizens who are full of eastern culture, such as using the *word tabe*, bowing when passing in front of others, maintaining speech, optimism in thinking and respecting the process as a form of mental toughness. A tough mentality is caused

by not being contaminated with various persuasive messages that are detrimental on social media.

In contrast to Generation Z who tend not to like processes, but are proficient in using fast-paced technology, both in communicating and various other activities *online*. This makes Generation Z used to something fast-paced so they don't like something old and require a long process. In their behavior they are more inclined to be individualistic. Not liking the process will certainly cause a lack or even no mental toughness possessed by generation Z in Donggala Regency so that their communication behavior will be different from generation X which in the end often clashes in showing the ethics of manners expected by generation X. *anjir, bejir*, damn it, calling friends by animal names and even genitals. Even though they have been reminded, generally Generation Z seems to think that this is not a problem.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Communication Behavior

Communication behavior is influenced by various factors such as motivational perception, communication, and information. A person's communication behavior is based on experience through the senses of sight, hearing, smell and so on. Motivation is defined as the drive to act to achieve a certain goal as a result of an impulse and this movement is manifested in the form of behavior (Sura, 2019).

Mental Toughness

Gucciardi *et al.*, (2008) state that mental toughness or a collection of values, attitudes, behaviors, and emotions that allow a person to be able to preserve and overcome obstacles, difficulties, or pressures experienced, but still maintain concentration and motivation to be consistent in achieving a goal. Mental toughness can make a teenager feel relaxed, calm, and excited, because it can develop two skills, namely draining positive energy such as perceiving to eliminate difficulties and thinking to behave or ignore problems, pressures, mistakes, and competition in a match (Jones, 2010). In addition, mental toughness is a determination at a high level, refusing to be pressured but must be able to stay focused on stressful situations, as well as the capacity to survive every stress of life (Cashmore, 2008). Mental toughness is a collection of superior psychological attributes that can be seen during social interaction (Jones, 2010).

Generational Theory (Generation X and Generation Z)

Generational theory explains that individuals born within the same historical period tend to share similar values, attitudes, and behavioral patterns shaped by socio-economic conditions, technological development, and cultural experiences (Mannheim, 1952). Generation X, generally born between 1965 and 1980, grew up during a period of economic uncertainty and technological transition, which fostered independence, adaptability, and resilience.

These characteristics influence their communication behavior, which tends to be more structured, cautious, and oriented toward direct interpersonal interaction.

In contrast, Generation Z, born after 1997, is the first generation to grow up fully immersed in digital technology and social media. Their communication behavior is strongly influenced by instant messaging, visual content, and online interaction, which often emphasizes speed and efficiency over depth (Prensky, 2001). These generational differences may shape varying levels of mental toughness, particularly in managing stress, emotional expression, and interpersonal challenges in communication contexts.

Mental Toughness and Communication Behavior

Mental toughness plays a crucial role in shaping communication behavior, particularly in situations involving pressure, conflict, or emotional demands. Individuals with high mental toughness tend to demonstrate confidence, emotional regulation, and persistence, allowing them to communicate effectively even under stressful conditions (Gucciardi et al., 2008). Such individuals are more capable of maintaining clarity of message, managing interpersonal tension, and responding adaptively to communication challenges.

Conversely, individuals with lower levels of mental toughness may experience difficulty in expressing ideas clearly, managing emotional responses, or coping with communication-related stress. In generational contexts, these differences may become more pronounced, as Generation X and Generation Z are exposed to distinct stressors and communication environments. Therefore, mental toughness functions as a psychological resource that mediates how individuals from different generations engage in communication behavior.

Socio-Cultural Context of Communication in Donggala Regency

Communication behavior and mental toughness are also influenced by local socio-cultural contexts. Donggala Regency, with its strong communal values, cultural traditions, and social norms, shapes how individuals interact and express themselves. Intergenerational communication in such contexts often reflects respect for hierarchy, collective decision-making, and cultural etiquette, which may affect both mental toughness and communication patterns.

Differences in exposure to modernization and digitalization between Generation X and Generation Z in Donggala Regency may further contribute to variations in communication behavior. Generation X may rely more on traditional communication norms, while Generation Z may integrate digital communication styles into their daily interactions. Understanding this socio-cultural context is essential to comprehensively analyze generational differences in mental toughness and communication behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Types of Research

The research uses qualitative methods. Bogdan and Taylor stated that qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words from people and observed behaviors (Murdiyanto, 2020). The data is related to the difference in mental toughness in the communication behavior of generation X and Generation Z in Donggala Regency.

Research Subject

The subjects of this study are informants selected through *purposive sampling*, which is a sampling technique with certain considerations. Certain considerations referred to here are, the person who is considered to know the most what we expect or maybe he is a ruler so that it makes it easier for researchers to explore the social object/situation being studied (Sugiyono, 2015). The informants in this study are 3 parents aged 45-50 years and 3 generation Z children aged 19-23 years.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection technique in this qualitative research is divided into two, namely:

1. Observations

Observation according to Soemitro in Subagyo (2011) is a form of systematic observation of social phenomena with a focus on psychic symptoms. The goal is to record data on differences in mental toughness in communication behavior of generation X and Generation Z in Donggala Regency.

2. In-Depth Interviewing

The researcher uses a planned-unstructured interview method where the researcher does not use a systematic format or standard rules but the guidelines used in the interview are only in the form of outlines of the problems to be asked (A. Muri, 2014).

Data Analysis

Data analysis according to the view of Miles and Huberman is cited by Subagyo (2011) that it consists of three flows of activities that occur simultaneously, namely: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verifications about the difference in mental toughness in the communication behavior of Generation X and Generation Z in Donggala Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Every generation born in this world certainly has very basic differences related to communication behavior in their daily lives. This behavior is formed from a life experience that is carried out continuously either with family or in the social environment where they live, school and the use of social media, especially for generation Z. Based on the results of the research that has been analyzed, it is

very clear that the difference between the communication behavior of generation X and generation Z who at birth have been exposed to the sophistication of communication technology such as the use of social media.

Generation X are individuals born from 1965-1980 with different mental characters, where their mental toughness is very strong and generally they were born without being exposed to social media. This mental toughness can certainly be applied through the process of communicating verbally or conveyed in the form of words and writing, letters and numbers. Furthermore, the generation born from 1997 - 2012 is referred to as the Z negeration whose birth has been exposed by the media, especially on social media. They have been used to using *smartphones* since childhood with various applications called social media. It is not surprising that Generation Z is exposed to many messages that are not suitable for children to watch, but they digest them without properly considering the impact that is obtained when used to communicate with others. Generation Z children are a generation that does not want to be called a village or a udik, they will continue to try to use words that are considered slang so that they can be accepted in *their circle* and recognized by others. However, Generation Z has advantages in the communication technology sector, they are very proficient in utilizing it and of course this is the main capital in working in the current digital era.

According to Manheim in the journal Hasyim (2023), generation is a social construct in which there is a group of people of the same age who are in the same social and historical dimensions. Basically, the similarity of age and life experience shows that they are in the same generation and different from other generations. For example, in generation X, which is different from generation Z, the difference between one generation and the previous generation can be seen from communication behavior and things that can and should not be tolerated. Each generation has a different perception of understanding a social condition. This is influenced by the process of human life in his time. Generation X grew up with a different mindset than Generation Z. This mindset is closely related to mental toughness in facing various life challenges, whether strong or even weak and falling.

Gucciardi *et al.*, (2008) state that mental toughness or a collection of values, attitudes, behaviors, and emotions that allow a person to be able to preserve and overcome obstacles, difficulties, or pressures experienced, but still maintain concentration and motivation to be consistent in achieving a goal. Mental toughness can make a teenager feel relaxed, calm, and excited, because it can develop two skills, namely draining positive energy such as perceiving to eliminate difficulties and thinking to behave or ignore problems, pressures, mistakes, and competition in a match (Jones, 2010).

The mental toughness possessed by each generation will certainly result in different communication behaviors. Behavior is an activity or activity of the organism (living thing) concerned. Skinner in Notoadmojo formulated that behavior is a person's response or reaction to a stimulus. The definition of behavior according to Mc Donald is the response or action carried out by a person or everything he does (Nugraha, 2018). Arifin also explained that behavior is a

person's actions or actions and words that can be observed, described, and recorded by other people or people who do it (Zis, 2021).

Communication behavior is influenced by various factors such as motivational perception, communication, and information. A person's communication behavior is based on experience through the senses of sight, hearing, smell and so on. Motivation is defined as the drive to act to achieve a certain goal as a result of an impulse and this movement is manifested in the form of behavior (Sura, 2019). The difference in communication behavior between generation X and generation Z comes from the five senses that are always used in the process of daily life experiences. Each generation has a different level of ethics in both verbal and non-verbal communication. There are generations who state that certain behaviors shown can violate ethics or social norms, but for other generations it is something ordinary and not related to ethics because it is only considered a joke. But after a deeper analysis that it was also a mistake.

Generation X strongly does not justify someone who in a daily conversation both *face to face* and in the media uses harsh words such as *anjay, anjir, baya* (crazy), stressed, calling friends by animal names and genital names. This sentence is very rude and is not good to hear with the sense of hearing and of course very disrespectful. However, for Generation Z who have an advantage in the communication technology section, they consider that the use of these sentences is only a form of joke among their generation so that they can seem more sociable and recognized in certain groups as a process of self-actualization. However, after a more in-depth analysis, Generation Z also admitted that the sentence was a negative word that was actually inappropriate to say because it meant not respecting others and also that it was a sin in the hereafter.

Furthermore, in the application of other verbal communication, Generation Z is not able to consider the right time to talk or *chat* with older ones such as students and teachers as well as students and lecturers. Without saying greetings, conveying the word *tabe* and not introducing themselves, generation Z like students directly ask their lecturers related to their intentions and goals and try to impose these intentions and goals so that they can be realized. This makes generation X such as lecturers and teachers feel unappreciated. However, it should be understood that not all generation Z behaves in this way of communication, because there are also those who convey messages according to mutually agreed rules and social norms.

The difference in non-verbal communication for the two generations, namely X and Y, is also proven in the results of the study which explains that in generation X always bows when walking in front of other older people, shaking hands with parents when traveling out of the house. Try not to pass in front of the teacher or lecturer in the past because there is fear or reluctance. This is different from the communication behavior of generation Z who do not apply such things because they consider it very unimportant, although not all of Generation Z are like that.

Differences in communication behavior can be seen in terms of messages, especially the language and format of the message itself. Initial attitudes, information, and moral norms have a lot of influence on how, language, and

changes for students when contacting lecturers through text messaging applications. In the past, contacting lecturers via text message was taboo and disrespectful. However, as the times develop, it will actually make it easier for students and has been considered commonplace. Even so, it is not uncommon for students who until now have not understood the ethics of communication so that they show inappropriate communication behavior to older people, in this case lecturers (Pandu and Darwis, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the research, the conclusion is that generation X has a very tough mentality, this can be characterized by their communication behavior that prioritizes ethics when conveying messages with others, such as using the word *tabe* (excuse me), not easy to refute parents even though it is true, mentally strong in facing life problems, when walking in front of others non-verbally trying to bowing when walking in front of other older people, shaking hands with parents when traveling out of the house. Try not to pass in front of the teacher or lecturer in the past because there is fear or reluctance.

Furthermore, Generation X also does not justify in a daily conversation both *face to face* and in the media using harsh words such as *anjay, anjir, baya* (crazy), stress, calling friends by animal names and genital names. On the other hand, for generation Z, these words are considered commonplace, but their use is more widely used by their peers. But it is also often used in statuses on social media that can be read by anyone. The communication behavior shown by Generation Z basically makes them mentally unresilient, feeling the greatest because they can master communication technology which is ultimately exposed to uneducational sentences.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of this study by involving a larger and more diverse sample across different regions to enhance generalizability. Further studies may also incorporate qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into the psychological and contextual factors influencing mental toughness and communication behavior across generations. Additionally, examining the role of digital media usage, socio-cultural background, and occupational settings may provide a more comprehensive understanding of generational differences in communication patterns..

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