Contributions/Roles of Millennial and Gen Z in Utilising Digital Technology

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The millennial generation and generation Z play a strategic role in the era of modernization influenced by technological advances and globalization. Generation actively contributes to economic, cultural, and social aspects with the characteristics of being adaptive, digital-savvy, critical and innovative, open, free, critical, and brave by fostering opportunities and chances to innovate. Through qualitative methods based on secondary data analysis, this study reveals how this generation accelerates current social change. Despite facing economic challenges and financial pressures, this generation is still able to contribute to a more advanced and inclusive society. Their technological skills and entrepreneurial spirit create opportunities for innovation, especially in the digital economy and social movements that support inclusivity and diversity. Driven by technological advances, the influence of globalization, these two generations have extraordinary abilities to adapt, think critically, and create innovations that can affect many aspects of life, such as the economic, cultural and social fields.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of technology has caused rapid and radical changes in the 21st century, while the development and rapid changes of technology have been interacting mutually. These changes have formed the basis of new technologies. These experiences have brought people who were born at different periods of time,

having distinct personalities, viewpoints and values. The changes that occurred in the economy, culture, and politics deeply influence the perception, expectations, and viewpoints of individuals. As a result of these interactions, the borders of the period of generations are marked off and their characteristics are determined (Priyowidodo, Swestin, and Nurvidyarini 2014)**.**

Indonesia is home to several generations, such as Millennials and Z-generations, that play an essential role in today's social and economic dynamics. They are known for their rapid adaptation to technology, progressive social values, and focus on education and careers. This generation is more inclusive of creativity and self-expression and shows concern for social and environmental issues. From their inclusive perspective, there are parallels with Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity. He stated that the achievement of human social life and the existence of social order in society are what is called social solidarity.

This theory is a response to modernity, namely from the modern belief that society can be transformed for the better, and progress can be achieved in social organization through the application of human knowledge. Notwithstanding Karl Marx's thoughts, the potential for individual achievement is linked to a society's economic activity or production, particularly in terms of the opportunity for freedom in modern society. This highlights the role of each generation in shaping social interaction. This is what Émile Durkheim asserted in the theory of structural functionalism, derived from the thoughts of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer.

Throughout various periods of social history, young people have always been a group at the crossroads of social, political, and economic change. In the modern era, a belief emerged that society could be guided toward progress through the application of knowledge and technology. This idea gave rise to major theories such as structural functionalism (Durkheim, Comte, Spencer) and conflict theory (Marx), which sought to explain the social dynamics of modern society. However, these early approaches tended to view youth as part of an established social structure, as inheritors of social values and functions.

In response to this structural approach, Karl Mannheim introduced generational knowledge sociology, which asserts that generations are not merely inheritors of old values but also active agents in the formation of new social consciousness. Mannheim saw generations as historically and socially formed entities with the potential to change the direction of society through unique collective experiences. This approach was later developed extensively in contemporary studies of youth.

This research draws on Mannheim's framework and aims to explore the dynamics of young generations in the context of Indonesia's changing society. Drawing on contemporary thinkers such as Johanna and Rob White (2000), this article seeks to understand how Indonesian youth-particularly those from the millennial and Gen Z generations—shape their identities, respond to crises (ecological, economic, and social), and take on roles in social change (Rebecca 2023).

A review of existing literature shows that studies on youth in Indonesia often fall between two extremes: viewing them as a social burden due to a "moral crisis" or as hopeful agents of change. This research takes a critical stance between these two extremes, highlighting that the reality of youth is far more complex and heavily influenced by structural contexts such as economic inequality, digitalization, and shifts in cultural values.

METHOD

The data used in this study was obtained from various secondary sources, including: Research reports from national and international institutions focusing on generational studies, social movements, and youth participation. Peer-reviewed scientific articles discussing the roles, attitudes, and behaviors of Millennial and Generation Z in the context of social change. Statistical data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), particularly demographic, educational, labor, and technology access data related to both generations.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applied source triangulation by: Comparing findings from various types of secondary data (academic journals, statistical data, institutional reports, and media analysis). Verifying themes that emerge from the literature with current statistical trends and the latest studies. Interpreting data through a consistent theoretical lens to avoid bias and enhance the depth of analysis (Factors, Analysis, and Woodruff 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Contribution of Emile Durkheim's Functionalism Theory to Social Change the Modern Face of Indonesia: Millennial and Z Generation. Social change is a pervasive and inevitable phenomenon in modern society. Emile Durkheim, within the framework of structural functionalism, explains that society transforms when it shifts from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. In traditional societies, social order is shaped by uniform, collective values, whereas in modern societies, order is more determined by functional differentiation and occupational specialization. Durkheim emphasized that social change occurs systematically when social structures must adapt to the complexity and new needs of society. In the context of globalization, this accelerates cross-cultural interactions and the role of technology as a catalyst for change, including the way younger generations participate in society.

Interestingly, the dynamics described by Durkheim can be observed in Indonesia through the role of millennial and Gen Z. These two generations live in an increasingly digital and pluralistic society, where they are not only users of technology but also agents of social change through digital activism, social entrepreneurship, and political participation. Therefore, it is essential to examine how their active involvement reflects broader social change dynamics and their potential to shape the nation's future direction.

This article specifically examines the participation of millennial and Gen Z in social change in Indonesia. This research is grounded in Durkheim's functionalist framework and expanded upon with contemporary readings in youth studies,

developed by thinkers such as Johanna, Dan Woodman, and Linda Herrera. Therefore, this article not only presents theoretical reflections but also analyses social data and cultural dynamics specific to Indonesia.

These generations shape the modern face of Indonesia in their unique ways. Millennial serve as the bridge between the pre-digital and digital eras, while Gen Z faces a fast-paced, online-connected world. Understanding the characteristics and dynamics of these two generations is necessary to respond to social and economic changes that affect all aspects of life (Lestyaningrum et al. 2022). In Indonesia, there are several generations, including Millennial and Z, who play an important role in today's social and economic dynamics. They are known for their rapid adaptation to technology, progressive social values, and focus on education and career.

Generally, concepts take on special meanings in this study, including different generational groups, generational theory, management practices, millennial expectations, long-term employment, leadership theory, public sector, high turnover, productivity, retention, and workplace sustainability. One of the essential building blocks in the cognitive leadership literature is the concept of schema, which is a broad organizing framework that helps individuals understand and make sense of a given context or experience. (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber 2009).

Although leadership remains a challenge, primarily due to complacency from managers who do not want to change, the task for organizations is to ensure that those in leadership and management roles understand the impact on millennial and job retention if change does not occur (Walden 2024). The role of each generation in supporting social change can help create harmony and order within the structure of society. Moreover, society itself is inseparable from family relationships, work and education.

It is these interdependent roles that Durkheim mentions as a metaphor for modern existence. To stay alive, we need others; our existence and our future depend on our interdependence. Using this phrase, modern society needs to achieve organic solidarity (Lubis 2017). This generation also needs interaction to create a

tangible change in society, whether it is within the family, at work, or in social environments.

Digitalisation to New Social Landscape: It's Contribution to Social, Economic and Cultural Change

1. Contributions to Social Change

Millennials hold the key in many countries, especially in education, creative business and future political direction. The Millennial Generation in Indonesia is also expanding its presence in technology, creative businesses, and a new generation of political leaders who hold the key to public communication, supported by digital technology. Social media is also very much a part of their lives, triggering excessive self-comparison that causes anxiety and stress. For Generation Z, technology is one of the most striking aspects of their development, requiring them to be able to operate it effectively. This means that technology has become a 'friend of life' that cannot be separated anymore (Situmorang 2023).

According to census data compiled by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Indonesia's demographics are undergoing significant changes. More than 50 percent are dominated by productive individuals from Generation Z and millennial. This change is expected to be a key factor in Indonesia's future economic recovery. Digitalization has significantly reshaped the landscape in which individuals engage with social movements by providing platforms for dissemination, affiliation, and mobilization activities. This study examines the impact of digitalization on engagement with social movements in the evolving social landscape. It assessed the difference between respondents' perceptions of the role of digital transformation in the changing social landscape according to their demographic profiles (Bacani et al. 2025).

2. Contribution to Economic Change

Indonesia is a vast market with a total population of approximately 270 million. The GDP of Indonesia reached an all-time high of 1,042.17 billion USD in 2018, which is an indication of the ability of Indonesia to grow quite steadily, and

currently, the economy is in a growth mode. The market size can be measured by the population and the population growth of the country. The population density and land area of the top 10 countries with the highest population (Fernandez, Almaazmi, and Joseph 2020). Through cooperation, this generation can create new jobs through digital platforms, such as e-commerce.

3. Contribution to Cultural Change

The environment and regional culture are seen as institutions that contain elements of local wisdom values and as a form of community contribution that is concerned, is proud of its culture, plays an active role in strengthening its identity, and fosters self-confidence in its potential. To realize Indonesia's golden future, it is crucial to recognize that prelove practices can be environmentally friendly consumption behaviors. However, in reality, the motives behind Generation Z's actions still need to be made aware of in response to these environmental issues. As explained in the discussion, prelove by the Z generation is more oriented towards the consumption of signs and fulfillment of symbolic desires, compared to the use value of the item itself (Rahmah, Fanani, and Pamungkas 2023). This generation must be actively involved in every cultural change, specifically in bringing public spaces. Through modern digitalization, it will be able to enrich, bring, and foster a sense of care and pride for existing cultural wealth.

Many opportunities and hopes will certainly affect the future of this generation. Advances in technology and accessibility of information open up great opportunities for them to innovate, become entrepreneurs and access better education. These cases serve to illustrate the vectors, actors, and crucibles of entrepreneurial development, such as business incubators and their associated networks, technology and knowledge clusters, and innovation networks, including agglomerations of large and small, public and private entities, and partnerships focused on knowledge creation, diffusion, and use (Carayannis et al. 2006). Technology also allows for the widespread and rapid dissemination of ideas and thoughts, and changes, and facilitates access to the broader world. It also provides

access to various forms of culture from around the world, enriching cultural experiences and accelerating the spread of new trends.

Blending local with global elements, creating innovations in art and fashion that reflect cultural diversity is the task of Millennial and the Z generation. Developing innovation requires interactions that involve responsive norms and obligations. This social interaction also involves communication tools, such as language and symbols, allowing individuals to exchange meanings and thoughts with each other. In other words, social interaction is a social process that involves responding to each other's behavior towards other individuals. This will undoubtedly affect one human being on another.

Many factors influence this generation, especially social media. It can be interpreted that in social media, interaction is essential because it is the key to all life. Therefore, interaction will not exist if there is no life together (Erawati and Taufik 2024). Through this interaction, it will certainly be a way for Millennial and Gen Z to promote gender equality, racial equality, and human rights. They tend to be more vocal about inclusivity in various aspects, including the workplace, education, and public services. Both generations are recognized as key drivers of climate change and sustainability issues.

Implications of Change: Challenges and Expectations of Millennials and Generation Z in the New Social Landscape

According to Schumpeter (Malerba and McKelvey 2020), The main factor that drives an economy is the process of innovation, and the key actors are innovators or entrepreneurial achievers. Through economic progress of a society can only be implemented with innovation by entrepreneurs, and this progress is defined as an increase in the total output of society. This innovation has three effects, namely:

1. The introduction of new technology.
2. It generates excess profits (monopoly profits), which serve as an important source of capital accumulation.

3. Typically, innovation is followed by a process of imitation, during which other entrepreneurs adopt and replicate the newly introduced technology.

Based on the theory presented above, the Millennial and Z generations have brought about social change, particularly in the economic sector. This generation uses three innovations that guide them, especially in the field of technology. Of course, those who are literate in this technology can generate profits through social media (Livingstone 2011).

Generations Y and Z in Indonesia are playing a very dynamic role in the country's social and economic changes. National resilience is a dynamic condition of the Indonesian nation that reflects resilience and fighting power in the face of various threats, disturbances, obstacles, and challenges that can endanger the unity, identity, and survival of the nation and state (Auzar, Ramadani, and Saputra 2025). Technological advancements and the accessibility of information facilitate growth and change in various fields, paving the way for innovation and more effective problem-solving. Technology can enhance the ability to monitor and respond to security threats more quickly and effectively. There are also challenges related to cyber and privacy, which need to be addressed wisely with adaptive strategies and policies to protect data and critical infrastructure.

The current digital era influences human existence, which is not only determined by thinking, but also by technology (Ismail 2018). Digital identity has become an essential aspect of self-presentation, starting from profiles on platforms such as Instagram, Link, or Twitter that often reflect a person's interests, expertise, and outlook on life, especially generations Y and Z. These generations are very close to technology because it is used as a tool for them to connect with technology. This generation is very close to technology because it is a means to "know" who they are, what they like, their habits, and even predict their future behavior. This data has become an integral part of our digital existence.

Generation Z is a new cohort who have started joining the workforce recently. While academic literature on Generation Z is still at a nascent stage, key findings of this study reveal much more about their interests and their expectations

from the workplace (Chillakuri 2020). The impact of technology on professional life is significant. Today, many individuals pursue careers enabled by digital platforms, ranging from content creation and freelancing to remote work facilitated by collaborative tools.

Professional existence is increasingly dependent on digital presence and the ability to utilize technology. This is the main impetus for Millennial and Z generations so that they have more freedom to choose a career path that suits their interests and creativity. Technology provides opportunities and challenges for Gen Y and Z in building their careers. For this reason, they need to be adaptive, creative, and proficient in using technology to remain relevant and professional in the digital era.

In the context of discussing how Millennial and Generation Z utilize technology to build careers and professional existence in the digital world, Anthony Giddens' structuration theory is very relevant as a framework for thinking. Giddens' emphasizes that humans are not only passive in following social rules, but also active in creating and changing the social structure itself through their actions. So, when Millennial and Generation Z choose a technology-based career path, they are not only carrying out existing roles, but also changing the way they work and the professional structure itself.

According to Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, humans have the ability to create structures and voluntarily determine structures for themselves (Madubrangti 2008). The view that humans have full freedom to build their own living environment. This also provides insight into the fact that this generation tends to choose a technology-based career path. Not only that, they can remodel the social structure of work and professional existence in society. This generation creates a new interaction space in the digital world that affects the economy and culture. Therefore, The relevance of the theory continues to grow, given that technology now permeates nearly every aspect of life in the digital age, including professional existence.

Therefore, the theory comes into play to explain that changes in digital professionalism are not only technological phenomena, but also social processes in which individuals consciously and creatively rebuild social structures in the digital era. This provides a theoretical basis that strengthens the argument that this generation is not only adapting, but also influencing and shaping the modern world of work.

CONCLUSION

Millennial and Generation Z play a pivotal role in the pace of social change in today's world. Driven by technological advances and the influence of globalization, these two generations possess an extraordinary ability to adapt, think critically, and create innovations that impact various aspects of life, including economic, cultural, and social fields. Through their skills in technology and entrepreneurial spirit, they have great potential to create new opportunities, especially in the digital economy sector and social movements that support the values of inclusivity and diversity. Although faced with uncertain economic challenges, they still have the power to bring about significant changes that lead to a more developed and prosperous society.

Millennial and Generation Z must continue to explore their potential in technology and entrepreneurship to find creative solutions to existing social challenges. They need to prioritize the values of diversity, inclusivity, and collaboration in every step they take, both in the workplace and in social movements. Through the spirit of cooperation among various parties, the desired social change can be achieved more quickly and sustainably, building a more just and prosperous society for the future.

This study aims to explore the role of the Millennial and Generation Z generations in shaping the dynamics of social change in the digital era, particularly in the context of Indonesia, which is experiencing a demographic bonus. The primary focus of the research lies in the effort to integrate classical social theories—such as structural functionalism and structuration theory—with contemporary

realities characterized by digitalization, shifts in cultural values, and economic challenges faced by the younger generation. In addition, the limitations of the use of secondary data require researchers to be more careful in selecting, reducing, and analyzing data in order to produce relevant and scientifically accountable interpretations.

This publication is expected to trigger various further studies, especially those related to: An in-depth exploration of the impact of digital media use on mental health, the search for self-identity, and the dynamics of social relationships of the younger generation. Research on innovation practices carried out by the Millennial and Gen Z generations through digital platforms, as well as their contributions to the creative economy and social entrepreneurship sectors. Research on how local culture is transformed, negotiated, or even preserved through social media and the digital expressions of the younger generation.

Research on how the state and educational institutions respond to the challenges of the digital era through inclusive policies and digital competency development programs for the younger generation. This research is expected to provide not only a theoretical understanding but also practical contributions to research on more inclusive social, cultural, and economic development strategies for the nation's next generation.

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