

## **Analysis of Communication Patterns in Facing the Gap Generation**

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### **Abstract**

*In implementing communication within a company, intergenerational communication challenges often lead to differences in perspectives, actions, habits, and attitudes. The disparity in viewpoints between senior and junior employees can trigger conflicts. However, PT. PXX is a company that does not exhibit significant generational gaps compared to other companies. The generational gap (Gap Generation) has specific impacts within the company, such as seniors often feeling more knowledgeable than juniors, causing juniors to hesitate in expressing their opinions as they feel less involved. This study aims to understand the message construction formed by employees to avoid the Gap Generation, the use of communication media, and the role of leaders in addressing the Gap Generation. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. The study involves two internal employees of PT. PXX, one communication expert lecturer, and one supporting informant from the internal public relations of PT. PXX. The results of the study indicate that PT. PXX has a relaxed and flexible communication culture between superiors and subordinates, creating more informal and open interactions, allowing employees to feel comfortable expressing ideas, opinions, and concerns without fear of negative consequences.*

**Keywords:** *Communication, Communication Culture, Gap Generation, Role of Leaders*

### **Abstrak**

Dalam menerapkan komunikasi di sebuah perusahaan, kendala komunikasi antar generasi sering menimbulkan banyak perbedaan dalam cara pandang, tindakan, kebiasaan, serta sikap. Perbedaan sudut pandang antara karyawan senior dan junior dapat menjadi pemicu konflik. Namun, PT. PXX merupakan perusahaan yang tidak menunjukkan kesenjangan generasi yang signifikan dibandingkan dengan perusahaan pada umumnya. Gap Generation memiliki dampak tertentu di dalam perusahaan, seperti kecenderungan senior untuk merasa lebih paham daripada junior, yang menyebabkan junior segan menyampaikan pendapat karena merasa kurang dilibatkan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui konstruksi pesan yang dibentuk oleh karyawan untuk menghindari Gap Generation, penggunaan media komunikasi, serta peran pemimpin dalam menghadapi Gap Generation. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Penelitian melibatkan dua karyawan internal PT. PXX, satu dosen ahli di bidang komunikasi, dan satu informan pendukung dari internal humas PT. PXX. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa PT. PXX memiliki budaya komunikasi yang santai dan fleksibel antara atasan dan bawahan, menciptakan interaksi yang lebih informal dan terbuka, sehingga karyawan merasa nyaman mengungkapkan ide, pendapat, dan kekhawatiran tanpa takut akan konsekuensi negatif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Budaya Komunikasi, Gap Generation, Komunikasi, Peran Pemimpin*

## INTRODUCTION

PT. PXX is a company engaged in the production of paper and tissue, in which there is certainly a communication relationship between its employees. In implementing communication in a company, of course, there are communication obstacles between generations that cause many differences in perspective, actions, habits, and attitudes. Differences in perspective between senior employees and junior employees can be the beginning of conflict. Different communication styles between generations can trigger obstacles to teamwork and achieving common goals (Trisasanti et al., 2020). In its management, Human Resources have different characteristics and behaviors, therefore an analysis of the behavior of human resources themselves is needed. Such as generational differences from time to time in the scope of work is one of the problems that must be considered. Because if one generation with another generation does not connect in terms of communication, it can be a significant crisis for the company itself.

PT. PXX is a company that does not show a significant generation gap when compared to companies in general. This finding provides an important basis for further research. Thus, providing the view that a more in-depth analysis is needed to provide a more detailed explanation of the phenomenon of the generation gap in the PT. PXX company environment. According to Meddy (2023), it explains that the existence of a generation gap in a company can trigger several crises in communication, such as rarely listening to input from subordinates to their superiors where the superior feels that he is more experienced than his own subordinates. Thus, productivity in a company does not run smoothly because of the communication gap between superiors and subordinates. The existence of differences in perception creates disputes between generations and can hinder the achievement of planned goals. By being bridged by a Public Relations can minimize communication disputes between generations.

Findings from Hasan's research (2023), where there is a greater conflict in the Millennial generation than the Baby Boomers generation. What makes this study different is that the study focuses on the differences in work conflicts between baby boomer generation employees and the millennial generation, while this study focuses on how to minimize the occurrence of communication gaps with generation gaps in the company. This study uses a qualitative method with PT PXX as the main subject. Data was collected through interviews that focused on topics relevant to the problems being studied and the objectives of the study. Interviews can be conducted with a structured or unstructured approach, involving question and answer interactions between the interviewer and the respondent. The interview process can take place over a long period of time or in several sessions at the research location. This approach is applied to collect accurate and in-depth information in order to understand the formulation of the research problem comprehensively. Based on the background of the problem explained above, the researcher conducted an Analysis of Communication Patterns in Dealing with the Gap Generation of PT. PXX Employees.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Bureaucratic Theory*

Theory According to Weber (2009), bureaucracy is a form of organization that shows a combination of hierarchical authority. Organization as an ideal type, which not only identifies the general characteristics of bureaucracy but also describes the characteristics of an ideal

formal organization. An organization can be perfectly formed in a bureaucratic model (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979). Ten characteristics of an ideally bureaucratized organization, namely in an organization that is regulated based on bureaucratic principles, structured relationships between various positions are the main foundation of the formal organizational structure. Each position has clearly defined responsibilities and authorities, with organizational goals or plans divided into specific tasks that are distributed among positions as official obligations. The authority to carry out job duties can only be given to individuals who legally occupy the position, which is known as legal authority. The hierarchical structure which is generally pyramid-shaped regulates the scope of authority of superiors to subordinates with firmness, and the principle of upward and downward communication describes the flow of information from positions with broader authority to positions with more limited authority. A formal system of rules and regulations governs the actions and functions of each position, while formal and impersonal organizational procedures ensure that these rules apply equally to all members of the organization. Organizations also implement a structured disciplinary system, with attitudes and procedures that support the application of discipline in the professional lives of its members. Organization members are expected to separate their personal lives from their professional lives in the organization. Employee recruitment is based on their technical qualifications, and employment in the organization is seen as a long-term career that offers security in the position (Griffith et al., 2019).

In a bureaucracy, decisions and actions are taken based on clearly defined rules and procedures. In addition, bureaucracy is known to have high technical competence, neutrality towards external influences, and selection and promotion processes that are based on technical qualifications. A clear hierarchical system of authority, namely the division of labor based on specialization, a complete system of rules covering the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of personnel, perfect procedures for work performance, impersonality in human relations, and selection and promotion of personnel based on technical competence. The bureaucratic theory proposed by Weber (2009) is considered an ideal theory because it conceptualizes something abstract into an ideal form of an organization that should be run professionally and rationally. The key to the concept of an ideal bureaucracy is called the term "rational". Bureaucracy should be operated in a strict vertical hierarchy system and with limited communication between workers. Like a machine that has spare parts that have different functions, the bureaucratic system must be designed based on the division of labor with clear job specifications. Bureaucracy must also have characteristics where the flow of power is centralized, because it is considered more effective in decision making and the specification of workers' tasks. Bureaucracy is a closed system, assuming that environmental intervention can interfere with organizational performance. And no less importantly, regulations have a major role in the bureaucratic system.

### ***Communication Patterns***

Communication patterns refer to the way individuals or groups communicate based on communication theory to convey messages or influence communicants. There are several types of communication patterns, including Primary Communication Patterns, Secondary Communication Patterns, Linear Communication Patterns and Circular Communication Patterns. Primary Communication Patterns are methods of conveying thoughts from the communicator to the communicant through verbal (language) and non-verbal (body language, images) symbols. Secondary Communication Patterns are methods of conveying messages

using the second media after symbols. Communicators can reach communicants who are far away or in large numbers. The communication model is to see the communication process as one way, focusing on who says what, through what, to whom, and the consequences. This is used in mass and organizational communication (Adnjani & Prianti, 2023). Linear Communication Patterns describe communication as a straight journey from the communicator as a source of information to the communicant as a destination. Developed by Shannon and Weaver, this model involves information sources, transmitters, channels, and receivers. Used in mediated communication, focusing on the transfer of information from one place to another. Circular Communication Patterns were developed by Osgood et al. (1957), this model sees communication as a dynamic process with messages transmitted through encoding and decoding. Both parties can act as senders and receivers of messages, emphasizing the mutual influence and equal status between source and receiver.

### ***Organizational Communication***

According to Goldhaber (2020), Organizational communication can be interpreted as a process within an organization that involves the delivery, receipt, and exchange of information and messages, both formally and informally, to overcome uncertainty or changes in the environment and achieve goals that have been jointly set by members and leaders of the organization. Organizational communication is the exchange of messages in a network of interdependent relationships (Falkheimer, 2022). Ludlow (2013), emphasizes communication programs in the context of Public Relations. De Bono & Jones (2008), see it as communication as sending and receiving messages in formal and informal groups. Katz & Kahn (2015), focus on the flow of information, and Jacobson (2003), see it as participatory behavior in the communication process. Jefkins (2012), distinguishes organizational communication as planned interaction with the public outside the organization.

### ***Gap Generation***

Generation Gap is a condition in which there are differences in values and understanding between different generations, often resulting in misunderstandings (Hayes, 2022). In the 19th century, two or three generations living at that time did not feel the existence of a Generation Gap, because the development of people's lives was slow. The Generation Gap emerged due to the development of society that was not in line with advances in technology and social fields, which caused significant differences between generations. This phenomenon began to appear in the 20th and 21st centuries. The difficulties experienced by several older generations in adapting to the development of modern technology prove this. Generations and preferences for news media consumption patterns, Vozab (2019) states that each generation has its own preferences in reading the news, which are influenced by habits formed since childhood. Generation X and Baby Boomers have had experiences growing up with different media characteristics compared to the generations that followed. The existence of a Generation Gap can be an obstacle for companies to achieve their goals, because each generation has different views or ways of thinking that trigger conflict. Therefore, an understanding of each generation is needed to avoid gaps between employees in an organization or company.

## ***Generations***

A generation is a group of individuals born in the same time period and experiencing similar events that shape unique characteristics. Generation classification is based on factors such as birth year, location, and significant events (Yawson & Yamoah, 2020; Rudolph et al, 2021). Baby Boomers were born after World War II, known to be disciplined, tough, and loyal, although less adaptive to technology. Generation X, the descendants of baby boomers, are independent and creative, growing up in a time of economic crisis and becoming pioneers in early technology. Generation Y (Millennials) are adept at technology and social media, open-minded, innovative, but tend to be less stable in employment. Generation Z, or digital natives, grew up in the digital world, quickly access information, multitasking, and creative, driving change in various sectors, including media and technology.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach in the constructivism paradigm (Haryono, 2020). This paradigm allows researchers to understand how generational differences affect communication and interaction, and identify effective communication strategies to reduce generational gaps in the workplace and in other social contexts. The subjects of this study consisted of employees of PT. PXX Karawang, including the Head of the Division Department and supervisor as key informants, a communication lecturer at Atma Jaya University Yogyakarta as an expert informant, and a PR from PT. PXX as a supporting informant. Meanwhile, the object of this study is the role of leaders at PT. PXX and Paper Mills in building cross-generational communication. This study collects data from various sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding. The techniques used include in-depth interviews with informants who have different experiences and understandings related to the phenomenon being studied. The data obtained were analyzed by considering relevance in the context of communication science and leadership. To increase the validity of the study, the researcher applied source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data from various informants to gain a broader perspective and avoid bias. Meanwhile, technical triangulation is used by combining various data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, to ensure the accuracy of the research results. The results of this study are expected to provide insight into effective communication strategies in cross-generational leadership in the workplace. In addition, this study also contributes to the development of organizational communication and leadership theories in the modern era.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the study related to the Analysis of Communication Patterns in Facing the Generation Gap in PT. PXX Employees will be described in this sub-chapter. The findings obtained by the researcher in this study are based on data obtained from the results of the researcher's interviews with informants accompanied by observations. This study explores the generation gap and communication patterns at PT PXX. The main focus is to understand whether there is a generation gap and how communication patterns and message construction are formed in the company. From the interview process that has been conducted, the researcher found that PT PXX, communication tends to be two-way, with instructions flowing from superiors to subordinates. These instructions are then evaluated by superiors., the



communication pattern used is linear, where information or instructions flow from leaders to field implementers without much back interaction. Leaders have strong control and authority in regulating the flow of information.

PT PXX implements a comprehensive employee management approach. This approach includes coaching, sharing, and routine evaluation processes. Employees can communicate directly with their superiors for consultation and receive guidance and encouragement so that their performance improves. Performance assessments are carried out with a value system, where employees who get low scores will be guided to improve their performance. The communication culture at PT PXX is described as relaxed and flexible, decisions are often made outside the formal meeting room. For example, during lunch together. This informal communication strengthens the relationship between superiors and subordinates, increases collaboration, and facilitates innovation.

Internal company communication can be affected by generational differences. Different technologies, communication methods, languages, and worldviews can affect organizational dynamics. However, PT PXX tries to overcome this gap by ensuring that employees from different generations feel valued and cared for. So, PT PXX implements a good communication pattern between superiors and subordinates, which is not hampered by the generation gap. With a better understanding of the generation gap in communication patterns, companies can develop more effective and inclusive communication strategies. This allows the exchange of ideas and knowledge through various communication channels, creating a dynamic and innovative work environment.

### ***Use of Media in Overcoming the Generation Gap***

The use of communication media at PT PXX to overcome the generation gap that occurs in the company. The media used include WhatsApp, Outlook, and Microsoft Teams. These communication media are utilized both virtually and verbally. PT PXX uses email for official work communication because email is well databased, while WhatsApp groups are used for internal communication within one division. Each department has a WhatsApp group that includes sections such as mechanics, instruments, and electricity. This group is used to share work reports, document employee tasks, and report errors. For example, if there is a machine problem on the night shift and subordinates are slow to take action, superiors can immediately instruct via WhatsApp so that the problem is handled immediately. The use of digital communication media such as WhatsApp Group at PT PXX has facilitated intergenerational interaction in the workplace. With this digital platform, the company can maintain connectivity and collaboration among employees, both internally and between work units. This technology enables the exchange of information in real time, ensuring that all employees remain informed and can collaborate well. This not only increases productivity and response to emerging problems, but also creates a more inclusive and harmonious work environment. Through the integration of appropriate communication technology, PT PXX is able to reduce the inter-generational gap, build better working relationships, and achieve common goals more effectively.

### ***The Role of Leaders in Overcoming the Generation Gap***

This study reveals the important role of a leader in overcoming the generation gap at PT PXX. In this context, leaders play a crucial role in maintaining balance and harmony in the workplace, especially in managing generational differences. Based on the interview results,

leaders at PT PXX not only play formal roles in team management, but are also active in facilitating interpersonal relationships outside of formal contexts such as meetings or gatherings. Informal interactions such as eating together or family gatherings are carried out to strengthen relationships between employees. This helps reduce intergenerational tensions and facilitates better collaboration. In addition, leaders at PT PXX are also active in providing appreciation and recognition to employees for their achievements. This approach not only increases motivation but also strengthens the relationship between superiors and subordinates, making them more than just coworkers. Leaders are also involved in managing differences in work styles and communication preferences between generations. For example, leaders use different communication approaches for boomers and millennials, according to their respective characteristics and preferences. This helps create an inclusive work environment and supports optimal productivity. In addition, PT PXX implements of Management by Olympic System (MBOS) which competes individual and team performance. This approach not only increases motivation but also encourages innovation and creativity throughout the organization. Thus, leaders at PT PXX act as key facilitators in managing generation gaps. Through an inclusive and reward-based approach, they not only minimize intergenerational conflict but also optimize the potential of each team member. This approach not only creates a harmonious work environment but also supports the achievement of the company's common goals effectively and sustainably.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Message Construction***

Based on the research conducted, PT PXX has succeeded in overcoming the generation gap in its company by applying the principles of bureaucratic theory proposed by Weber (2009). Bureaucratic theory emphasizes rules, structured hierarchies, and standardized processes, which can implicitly influence how messages are constructed and delivered in the work environment. PT PXX understands that the generation gap, namely the difference between the younger generation (millennials and Z) and the older generation (baby boomers and X), can affect organizational dynamics. The younger generation tends to pay attention to technology, wants flexibility, and prefers to work collaboratively, while the older generation may prefer hierarchical structures and proven procedures. In message construction, PT PXX has adapted a communication approach that includes coaching, sharing, and regular evaluation. Communication between superiors and subordinates is not only formal and hierarchical, but also more relaxed and open, allowing employees to convey ideas, opinions, and concerns more easily without fear of negative consequences. This approach helps strengthen relationships between teams by reducing hierarchical distance and increasing mutual trust. In addition, PT PXX also implements routines such as daily reports, weekly reports, and Monday reports that involve all team members. This helps in maintaining an effective flow of information and ensures that any issues or achievements can be discussed and evaluated collectively. Thus, PT PXX not only creates an inclusive and collaborative work environment but also ensures that every employee can develop professionally and make a significant contribution to the company's goals.

According to Alfatoni (2022), regarding the Differences in Communication Styles Between Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y in Companies, the Baby Boomers generation tends to learn slowly, focus on one task at a time, and work individually. While

Generation Y tends to multitask, use various media, and can learn quickly. The communication in the company described is linear, where information or instructions flow from leaders to field implementers without much interaction or significant feedback to leaders. This reflects a more formal and hierarchical work culture. Research also shows that the Millennial generation tends to follow the existing work culture, including from the Baby Boomers generation, and vice versa, showing an adaptation to the norms and values that exist in the organization. By adopting this strategy, PT PXX has successfully managed the generation gap well, ensuring that each generation can contribute in their own unique way to the overall success of the company. This shows that a holistic approach to communication and organizational management in accordance with bureaucratic theory can effectively address generational challenges in the context of a modern company like PT PXX.

### ***Use of Media in Overcoming the Generation Gap***

PT PXX has successfully implemented an effective communication pattern between employees and superiors by utilizing various communication media. This smooth communication is not hampered by the generation gap that exists within the company. A deep understanding of generational differences in communication patterns allows PT PXX to develop a more inclusive and effective communication strategy. By providing training and education on intergenerational communication, the company can reduce conflict and increase collaboration in the workplace. The role of media in overcoming the generation gap in the company is very important. Media helps create an organizational culture that can accommodate differences between generations, allowing employees from various backgrounds to interact and work together more effectively. In addition, media also plays a role in improving the digital skills of employees, especially the younger generation who are more familiar with technology, so that it can increase work efficiency and reduce the skills gap between generations. The Bureaucracy Theory proposed by Weber (2009), emphasizes that a clear organizational structure, established rules, and strict hierarchy can increase efficiency and effectiveness in work. In the context of using media to overcome the generation gap, these bureaucratic principles can be applied to form a structured and effective communication system. Media helps in communicating rules and procedures consistently to all employees, ensuring that each individual understands their roles and responsibilities well. With a clear communication structure and effective use of media, PT PXX can reduce the generation gap and improve collaboration among employees of different generations. The use of communication media such as Outlook, WhatsApp, and Teams has helped PT PXX in providing the right communication channels according to the company's hierarchical structure. These media help to align understanding between different generations regarding the organizational structure and official communication procedures, which in turn reduces the potential for misunderstandings in the workplace. In addition, media facilitates the development of an inclusive culture of discussion and evaluation, supporting effective participation from employees of all ages. Based on research results, the use of appropriate communication media is very important in overcoming the challenges of generation gaps in the workplace. At PT PXX, digital platforms such as WhatsApp Group have proven effective in bridging the gap between generations. This technology facilitates fast and efficient communication, allowing managers to connect with subordinates and facilitate the exchange of information in real-time. This approach increases productivity, response to problems, and creates a more inclusive and harmonious work



environment. Through the integration of appropriate communication technology, PT PXX can build better working relationships and achieve company goals more effectively.

According to research by Putri et al. (2019), the Baby Boomers generation tends to use face-to-face communication and formal procedures in workplace coordination. They prioritize face-to-face meetings, discussions in meetings, and guidance as the main methods of communicating with subordinates or superiors. Meanwhile, the millennial generation prefers more open and flexible communication using technology and social media in the company. They often use digital platforms to facilitate coordination within a team or between divisions. PT PXX follows this pattern with the Baby Boomers generation who prefer face-to-face communication when important, while the millennial generation uses social media more often because it is considered more flexible in communicating.

### ***The Role of Leaders in Overcoming the Generation Gap***

In managing generational differences at PT PXX, the role of a leader is very important to ensure effective collaboration within the team. PT PXX adopts the practice of daily report, weekly report, and Monday report that involves all team members, both junior and senior, in discussions and decision-making. This approach has proven effective in facilitating cooperation, transparency, and mutual understanding between generations. In line with Weber's Bureaucracy theory (2009), PT PXX implements a continuous training program to improve the ability of junior employees to face senior roles. This aims to reduce the gap between generations and promote the sharing of knowledge and experience between different generations. A clear hierarchical structure and strict rules help create a structured and effective work environment for different generations of employees. In addition, the importance of giving praise and appreciation to subordinates at PT PXX is a strategic step to increase their motivation and confidence. This not only creates a positive work environment but also strengthens collaboration between generations. In the context of leadership, PT PXX implements a competition system such as the Management by Olympic System (MBOS) which is supervised by the leader to encourage innovation and healthy competitiveness among employees. This approach is in accordance with the Bureaucracy theory which emphasizes organizational efficiency through structured processes and support from leaders.

In a study conducted by Kartika (2023), the approach to overcoming the generation gap at PT XYZ used two main strategies: formal and informal approaches. Formally, the company implemented a training program to increase awareness and intergenerational communication skills among its staff. This program is designed to reduce the communication gap that may occur due to differences in values, work styles, and technology used by different generations. On the other hand, an informal approach is also applied by holding joint break activities between leaders and staff. This activity aims to create a relaxed and open atmosphere where staff from different generations can interact with each other more personally. In addition, activities such as family gatherings are also used as a strategy to strengthen harmony and build effective communication between generations. Simple activities such as gathering to enjoy coffee are also a way to create well-being and reduce the communication gap between them. This holistic approach combines both formal and informal elements to manage the generation gap at PT XYZ, with a focus on developing closer relationships between generations and ensuring that each team member feels valued and heard. Thus, generation gap management at PT PXX integrates organizational rationality with recognition of generational differences. This

approach not only manages intergenerational conflict, but also optimizes the potential of each generation to support the company's overall growth.

## CONCLUSION

PT PXX manages the generation gap using Max Weber's bureaucratic theory, adjusting communication patterns to accommodate different generations. They prioritize linear communication through a clear hierarchy, but also apply a relaxed approach to encourage collaboration and innovation. Media such as WhatsApp and Teams are used to facilitate effective interaction between generations, reduce conflict, and increase productivity. Leaders in the company play a crucial role in ensuring effective team collaboration through regular reports and training programs to reduce skill gaps. Open praise is also used to increase employee motivation, creating a positive and harmonious work environment. Public Relations, together with Leaders and HRD, are responsible for handling generational conflicts by facilitating dialogue and collaboration. This maintains the stability of the company's bureaucracy while utilizing the strengths of different generations to achieve organizational goals efficiently. The researcher recognizes the limitations of this study and suggests further research to explore more deeply corporate communication related to the generation gap with different approaches, such as quantitative methods. Practically, companies are advised to maximize social media and technology in communication and work, implement flexible work policies according to generational needs, and develop mentorship programs between senior and junior employees to increase knowledge transfer and reduce communication gaps. These steps are expected to increase work effectiveness and strengthen relationships between employees across generations

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