Gen Z Digital Leadership through Social Media

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Abstract *— Born within specific timeframes, typically spanning five to ten years, individuals form distinct generational cohorts that share common experiences and traits influenced by the technology that evolves during their formative years. Generation Z, encompassing those born between 1996 and 2006, navigated their childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood with the companionship of smartphones, tablets, social media, online gaming, and various digital interaction platforms. This exploration into Generation Z's digital leadership through social media using qualitative methods with netnography and literature review illuminates the dynamic interplay between generational disparities and the evolving digital landscape. New findings underline that as long as leadership goals and purposes are explicit, Gen Z leaders' disclosures may be perceived as fair by followers, enhancing interaction quality and shaping follower perceptions positively. Social media possesses the potential to bridge gaps, serving as a powerful tool for fostering cohesion and connectivity for Generation Z within a broader range of social contexts. This study found that initiative and having high impact are among the main characteristics of Gen Z digital leaders who prefer online over offline discussions. The development and expression with social media consist of personal growth, learning new things, and developing skills and voice. Gen Z digital leaders are found to use social media in various contexts such as foster collaboration, build networks, inspire action. Gen Z also face challenges while using social media as they are faced with passivity and communication failure, while at the same time they are blessed with opportunities such as amplifying underrepresented voices, impacting and influencing others, even inspiring action. Supporting and integrating Gen Z digital leadership skills in practices means knowing the cohort closely, fostering digital literacy in senior generations that work together with them, understanding everyone's strength, creating opportunities in the leadership area with safe online environments.*

Keywords: *Generation Z, Social Media, Digital Leadership, Communication Channel, Cohort Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

The Generation Z (Gen Z), encompassing those born between 1996 and 2006, is called digital natives (Prensky, 2001) as they use smartphones, tablets, and other gadgets almost 24 hours per day. Gen Z was born from Generation X (Gen X) who experienced life very differently, where face-to-face interaction was all there was and their experiences were colored with physical interaction. With the advancement of technology, gen X must adapt and having given birth to gen Z, they face the situation where their children need to grow in the digital world.

Gen Z is the second generation that live and grow with technology after the Millennials. With gen Z, the minute one was born, that was the time technology was introduced into life. Since they were little, Gen Z has interacted with friends online (Hidayat & Hidayat, 2020), including people that they had never met before worldwide. The most digital interaction tools used by gen Z in daily life is social media.

Despite the potential for social media to provide unique opportunities for leadership development, there is limited understanding of how gen Z

leverages these platforms to cultivate and exercise digital leadership skills. This knowledge gap hinders the ability of organizations, educators, and policymakers to effectively support and harness the innovative potential of gen Z leaders in the digital age. To address this problem, this study could investigate the following problem with these research questions: first, what are the key characteristics of digital leadership among gen Z in the context of social media use? Second, how do gen Z individuals utilize social media platforms for leadership development and expression? Third, how do gen Z leaders leverage social media to foster collaboration, build networks, and inspire action in various contexts? Fourth, what challenges and opportunities do gen Z leaders face when using social media for leadership purposes? And fifth, how can organizations, educators, and policymakers better support and integrate gen Z digital leadership skills in their strategies and practices?

By exploring these research questions, the study aims to deepen our understanding of gen Z's digital leadership through social media, identify best practices, and provide insights for organizations and other stakeholders to better support and engage with this generation of leaders.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses a qualitative approach to capture the process and use of social media in terms of digital leadership among gen Z, its characteristics, challenges, opportunities and support. Fifteen samples of Gen Z digital leaders with the age of 19 years old, 20 years old, 22 - 26 years old were taken from different countries such as Indonesia, Taiwan, India, and USA using the netnography approach. Kozinets (2019) explains that netnography is a form of ethnography adaptation for the online world, which usually studies online cultures and communities as distinct social phenomena, rather than isolated content.

This study collected data through open-ended questions by offline interviews and google form spread to Gen Z leaders and their communities online. The Gen Z individuals who had successful experiences as digital leaders, such as gathering people, raising movements or making events online were chosen to answer the questions.

Using the google form, the researchers use online and mobile platforms to conduct interviews with the chosen digital leader participants. Offline interviews in Gen Z communities are also conducted. The data are then verified and coded manually or sorted for the relevant statements according to the topic or subject under study. Literature review method is alsoused to support the findings.

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

The Baby Boomers are called 'Baby Boom' as they were born during the post-World War II, around 1946-1964 (Ghaidani, Lokesh, and Bhuvanesh 2019) wrote that the western nations were recovering slowly during wartime and the baby boomers experienced economic growth throughout their lives even though they had to experience hardship. They have emerged as a successful and affluent generation with education and technological advancements (Ghaidani, Lokesh, and Bhuvanesh 2019).

The generation which was born between 1981-1995 and named as 'Millennials', 'Generation Y', or Gen Y as more commonly known are the children of globalization. (Berkup 2014) explains that for this generation who have accessed the development and easiness of technology, technology is one of the cornerstones of life. Compared to baby boomers, Millennials drive technological advancement and integration faster than previous generations, allowing technology to adapt more quickly. These changes will improve efficiency, allow more flexible working arrangements, and as studied by Nakagawa & Yellowlees (2020), they increase convenience in the workplace.

Gen Z, who are raised in the digital world with the social web, are digital centric with technology as their identity, and the fact that their existence is more connected to electronics and the cybernated world distinguish them from other generations (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Therefore, the Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y must adapt to lead, teach, and even work together with Gen Z who, in Dolot's (2018) findings, regard their work as a crucial element that they most identify with and expect, and have new technologies that are a natural environment for them. While Gen X and Gen Y have spent most of their lifetime communicating to their peers face-to-face, Millennials (in some part of their lives) and Gen Z communicate to their peers, have communities and do various activities worldwide, online. The tools that they use the most are social media.

Tyson et al. (2021) have found that Gen Z social media users address global issues that reach many other users, while Viţelar (2019) emphasized on Gen Z personal branding in social media. Research on Gen Z and social media have attracted researchers in many contexts, especially behavior, skill and personality, however this study differs from previousresearch in the focus of digital leadership, its opportunities, optimization of the media and intergenerational support for organizations and stakeholders.

Bhalla et al. (2021) found that members of Gen Z arehyper-creative and comfortable in gathering and cross-referencing various sources of

information and they have a tremendous potent influence on people of all incomes, genders, and ages due to greater exposure to social media, internet, and mobiles.

In their research (Demirbilek and Keser 2022), found that the leadership expectations of the Generation Z teachers in inclusivity behavior involved sincerity, flexibility, warm communication, horizontal relationship, consistent behavior, supportive behavior, motivating, problem solving, and smiling. In competencies, (Demirbilek and Keser 2022) discovered that they focused on innovations, communication skills, technological competence mentoring, competence in the field, being solution oriented, being a researcher, taking initiative, financial management skills, and entrepreneurship competencies. They hold values of being fair and compassionate, altruistic attitude, respect for differences, sensitivity, patience, empathy, and openness to criticism. In the sub-theme of characteristics, they focus on being charismatic and democratic, openness to innovations and teamwork, analytical skills, project orientation, and determination (Demirbilek and Keser 2022).

The findings are in line with this study, where the participants of this study explain that they find motivating others and promoting growth for all are key characteristics that define Gen Z digital leadership on social media.

Digital Leadership Characteristics using Social Media

Diversity is a character of digital leadership using social media, as they have given Generation Z a connection to others from different cultures, backgrounds and circumstances (Lanier 2017).

However, in this study, Gen Z tends to seek leadership characters that stand out in the social media digital environment that often offers passivity and indifferent behavior, such as having initiative, taking charge, being impactful, and having self-confidence.

Brn (19 years old, USA) explained that Gen Z digital leaders key characteristics can be seen through their initiative online:

"Gen Z leadership is, to me, defined by initiative. If a Gen Z leader has the initiative to get something done, chances are they can rally a team to help them do what must be done, which can most quickly and effectively be done over social media. Leaders emerge in the first place by having proven themselves to be competent for the role, especially online…"

Ry (20 years old, Taiwan) and Han (22 years old, Taiwan) both agreed that leadership characteristics found in social media are the impact felt:

"Someone who has a high impact towards their viewers" (Ry, 20 years old, Taiwan). *"Characteristics that define digital leadership are being impactful, motivating others"* (Han, 22 years old, Taiwan.

The leadership style of Gen Z today is different from the previous generations. (Lanier 2017) explained that Gen Z needs to be recognized and understood in order for leaders to be their mentors. Their leadership style preferences are humorous, popular in social media, open to many online discussions and general audience to exchange information.

Brn (19 years old, USA) said,

"In terms of direct leadership, Discord is king. Unless less than 10 people are being led by one person, they convene in what is called a "server" with multiple text and voice channels for people to discuss things. Certain channels can be gated off from some members, so the leader(s) can discuss issues and concerns with others who are involved in an isolated setting. Small groups are often handled in various social media sites' Direct Messages (DMs), since smaller groups are often more focused on one goal or project. Discord is very popular for leadership and community in Gen Z."

Frd (20 years old, Taiwan) sees that online discussions is preferred over offline interactions:

"Social media apps such as LINE, Instagram, GoogleMeet, and Zoom are often used by Gen Z leaders, as they offer quite easy ways to relay important information to one another. Perhaps it's also due to this advantage that some Gen Z leaders prefer holding online discussions rather than offline meetings."

The effortless access of social media makes it possible to produce limitless leaders in this generation. (Levickaite 2010) explained that social networking may be part of every communication tool one uses; those tools in the very essence change how people interact with each other. In this case social networking loses categories of time and space providing the concept of the world without borders (Levickaite 2010).

Brn (19 years old, USA) sees the internet opportunities in aiding leadership:

"The vast nature of the internet will also allow for more opportunities for such leadership through new things being created. More Gen Z individuals, consequently, will learn how to lead through experience."

Frd (20 years old, Taiwan) also perceive the chance social media offers for leadership:

"The way I see it, a lot of Gen Z individuals will be able to lead in the future, especially with the presence of social media. Not only due to the convenience and practicalities it offers, but also due to the sources and ideas that social media apps like Instagram, TikTok, and others contain. Any type of content is literally available in social media apps. This way, Gen Z individuals can have access to many sources of information and ideas that can be useful for their own needs. It can also increase the creativity of the individuals."

The magnitude of social media use creates chances for Gen Z to promptly produce Gen Z leaders, by giving the possibility for them to participate in every social media opportunity. The social media expansion will generate Gen Z leaders without limit. The more attractive, the more followers they have, the more possibility they can be leaders.

Leadership Development and Expression with Social Media

(Jacobsen and Forste 2011) findings underscore that electronic media use can produce both positive and negative consequences as it can distract from academic success, but if used positively, can facilitate social interaction and the development of social networks. Ahlquist (2017) saw the opportunity in doing it by giving digital technology education that is not merely the introduction of tools; rather, it should guide the youth on ways to effectively take advantage of social media as future leaders in their chosen professions.

This study finds that today, Gen Z use social media in almost the entirety of their time, grow with them, making social media an important part of their development and expression in many areas including leadership. It is shown by the Gen Z participants whouse social media for entertainment, to communicate, exercise what they love, promote, get commissions and learn.

Frd (20 years old, Taiwan) really thank social media for his personal growth:

"Social media has been a tremendous help for my personal growth as I often find a lot of good advices regarding some issues I experience in my life, it also serves as a good platform to express one's ideas and communicate with other people, as we literally are only screen taps away from the people we want to communicate with. This also helps a lot of people

with leadership roles as it makes communicating with people easier."

Dav (23 years old, Taipei Taiwan) feels that many reels and videos on Instagram provide information for self-growth and help her learn new things:

"I mostly use Instagram, and it helps me express my ideas, for example, through Instagram stories that can be seen by all of my followers. In addition, many reels and videos on Instagram provide information for self-growth that could help me to learn new things through social media"

Today Gen Z members start to lead in many areas and are considered significant customers by businesses.

Bhalla et al. (2021) explained that as a new member of the global workforce, Gen Z has had an impact on society with their leadership style. Therefore, it is inevitable that Gen Z leadership preparation must receive special attention, especially to increase leadership power through social media. Douglas (2020) said that in order for Gen Z to have the potential to become successful leaders, they must be supported by developing their identity and achieving an accomplishment mentality through the use of social media.

For Dav (23 years old, Taiwan), the key characteristic for Gen Z digital leaders on social media is their confidence:

"Self confident. This characteristic is crucial for someone to be able to express themselves through social media and learning about digital leadership. There are still many people that are afraid to be in front of a camera or be able to write their thoughts on social media in order to bring positive impacts for others."

Among Gen Z who are mostly online, Brn (19 years old, USA) sees the importance of initiative:

"Gen Z leadership is, to me, defined by initiative. If a Gen Z leader has the initiative to get something done, chances are they can rally a team to help them do what must be done, which can most quickly and effectively be done over social media. Leaders emerge in the first place by having proven themselves to be competent for the role, especially online. If a person has acted as a good leader would, chances are they would be selected to lead more things in the future (though this is a trait I feel all democratically-elected leaders have had over the years, I think it is especially relevant now because information on people's past deeds are more accessible than ever."

Leaders are a generation that must be deliberately born or mentored, and changes in technology will affect the way seniors provide guidance. Social media

really provides access for seniors to provide guidance to Gen Z to become future leaders. McCrindle (2019) suggested that the key to success is understanding changes in attitudes, social trends and mindsets from Gen Z.

Eug (24 years old, Indonesia) finds that social media supports him to develop leadership skills and voice through several means:

"Provide access to leadership resources: Social media platforms can curate and share resources such as articles, videos, and webinars that provide tips, advice, and guidance on leadership skills and development. Facilitate networking opportunities: Social media platforms can create communities or groups that bring together like-minded individuals to discuss leadership topics, share ideas, and collaborate on projects. Offer mentorship and coaching: Social media platforms can connect young people with experienced professionals who can offer mentorship and coaching on leadership development. Create leadership challenges: Social media platforms can offer challenges or competitions that encourage young people to showcase their leadership skills and creativity. Promote diversity and inclusion: Social media platforms can highlight diverse voices and perspectives, creating a more inclusive environment where everyone feels empowered to share their ideas and lead."

Brn (19 years old, USA) feels that social media helps amplifying voices:

"In many cases, projects can be completed regarding the interest in question, or communities can be formed that need leaders or figureheads to guide them. Social media platforms (in particular, Twitter and YouTube) could help these communities and the people that lead them amplify their voices by supporting them more."

Social media has become the most important tool for gathering information needed, therefore it is crucial for Gen Z to have the proficiency to handle it, making it provide positive values in their lives. Gen Z leadership power can be built through their activities on social media, with various achievements such as followers, the influence benefits of their content creation, all which can develop their digital leadership. Providing opportunities for Gen Z to be active in social media is a form of leadership support and bringing opportunities

Leaders using Social Media in Various Contexts

Internet users, both individuals and organizations cannot only consume and share existing information but also create and publish new text and video content. Social media, being a powerful tool, has become an integral part of everyday life. A recent Global Web Index survey found that 98% of online users spend 2.25 hours on social media, which is one-third of their

daily online hours, and respondents aged 16-24 reported the most intense daily use of social media networks (Bayindir & Kavanagh, 2018).

This study explores how Gen Z leaders leverage social media to foster collaboration, build networks, and inspire action in various contexts.

Eug (24 years old, Indonesia) shares how he has used social media to foster collaboration:

"I utilized linkedin to connect with fellow product managers to discuss how we can provide support to the companies using our skills, how we can support young product managers about career"

Ry (20 years old, Taiwan) has experienced building network with social media:

"I have used social media to try and invite as many people as I can to join the gaming community that I am a part of. I also was able to meet some great graphic designers and tournament organizers from different communities and was able to network with them. I've used my following support to get more likes and views on my projects"

Social media platforms can act as a valuable tool for Gen Z leaders in various contexts, not only to connect individuals but also to create an environment that allows for the gradual familiarization and integration of new members into existing communities. Another purpose of social media itself as the platform to raise up social issues then it was more likely to be accepted by their followers, and surely it will bring greater impact and influence for many aspects of life. An example is a racism concern against the black skin race and they started to gain tons of attention from public through hashtags on social media #blacklivesmatter (Tillery, 2019).

Brn (19 years old, USA) says that social media helps inspiring action

"I use the Reno Smash Discord by suggesting people to join it who are new to the competitive scene to allow themselves to familiarize themselves with the people and the environment they will eventually come to know by attending events. Event-driven community leadership, such as e-sports, is often simple"

Kan (19 years old, Indonesia) shows how social media really play a crucial part in her projects:

"I've done reanimated projects before and gathered people in a Discord server. I usually give a deadlineof when I need the scenes to be finished and used todo daily updates. I also share a trailer, do a poll, or whatever else"

This study reveals that Gen Z are using the social media platform to foster a community of peers, facilitate meaningful discussions to help

companiesand support young professionals in their respective career paths. Social media's potential in promoting and expanding interest-specific communities. By inviting people to join the gaming community and networking with professionals from various fields, can effectively use online followers to garner attention for his projects. The insight into event-driven community leadership in e-sports and also utilizing Discord, can aid newcomers to the competitive scene in familiarizing themselves with the community and environment. It demonstrates how online platforms can facilitate the integration process within community settings. Gen Z also can creatively use Discord for project management, regular updates, setting deadlines, sharing trailers, and polling methods reflect how social media can streamline the coordination and management of complex creative projects.

These insights, drawn from interviews with Gen Z leaders from diverse geographical and professional contexts, collectively spotlight the versatility of social media as a leadership tool. Whether for professional networking, community-building, or project management, these platforms provide the capabilities necessary to guide and engage in a digitally interconnected world.

Leaders' Challenges and Opportunities using Social Media

Frd (20 years old, Taiwan) explains his challenges with social media:

"People tend to become more passive when asked for opinions, due to the fact that social media can allow important discussions to take place anytime anywhere (online), the lack of that physical interaction reduces the activeness of the participants. Personally, I have not been able to find a solution that works best to address this issue, but at least, there are already some features that can mitigate this phenomenon, which is through video conferencing, where a certain number of people can join in a meeting room hosted online, and the participants still can see each other's faces through the camera they each have in their devices. Definitely not the solution yet, as it can't reproduce the exact same activeness as physical meetings, but I think it's already the best method to try to achieve it"

Kyl (24 years old, USA) also highlights communication when asked about social media challenges:

"I think that the challenge is communication failure that leads to issues and possibly discourse in our groups. We have addressed them by giving roles to other leaders so we may work together to cover all bases"

Despite the challenges, there are also plenty of opportunities for digital leaders using social media.

One thing that stands out, Gen Z is able to take advantage of technological changes in various aspects of their lives. The technology they use is as natural as they breathe. Bencsik and Machova (2016) found that because of digitization, Gen Z is very fast in accessing information and at the same time reacting quickly to the waves of information that surround it. With it, Chillakuri (2020) points out that Gen Z grows up smart, skilled at using technology, creative, and critical.

Eug (24 years old, Indonesia) sees social media as a receptacle to amplify underrepresented voices:

"Social media provides an opportunity for Gen Z leaders to amplify the voices of underrepresented communities and advocate for their rights and needs. They can use their platforms to raise awareness about social and political issues affecting these communities and create a more equitable and just society. Build global networks: Social media platforms allow Gen Z leaders to connect with people from around the world, build global networks, and foster cross-cultural collaborations. They can leverage these networks to exchange ideas, learn from each other, and create collective impact. Drive social activism: Gen Z leaders can use social media to mobilize their followers around social and political causes they care about. They can organize online campaigns, create petitions, and call for actionto promote change and create a better future. Educateand inform: Social media is an excellent tool for education and information sharing. Gen Z leaders can use their platforms to share knowledge, provide resources, and educate their followers about important topics related to social justice, environmental sustainability, and other issue"

Experiment with emerging technologies: As early adopters of new technologies, Gen Z leaders can leverage emerging technologies such as virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and blockchain to create innovative solutions to complex problems and reach new audiences"

Ry (20 years old, Taiwan) gives circumstances on how social media can be used for making impact and influence:

"Gen Z leaders can make a greater impact on social media by advocating for social justice causes, building online communities, leveraging new technologies, and partnering with influencers and organizations. Through social media, they can raise awareness about important issues, connect with like-minded individuals, and create new and innovative ways to engage with audiences. By using their digital skills and passion for social justice, Gen Z leaders can make a meaningful impact and inspire others to take action"

Another new finding showcases their encounters with various challenges and

opportunities as they steer their communities in the digital world. It draws upon the experiences of young leaders navigating thesocial media landscape.

One of the challenges is decreased activeness of online participants due to the lack of physical interaction. While video conferencing provides some level of face-to-face interaction, it falls short in replicating the energy of in-person meetings. This reduced activeness affects the quality and depth of discussions, an issue yet to be fully resolved.

Another challenge is the potential for communication failure within groups. such miscommunication can lead to discord and misunderstandings. Addressing this issue, roles have been delegated to different leaders to ensure comprehensive coverage and minimize communication gaps.

Despite these challenges, social media also presentsvast opportunities for Gen Z leaders. Social media can amplify underrepresented voices, enabling leaders to advocate for social and political issues. They can also build global networks, drive social activism, educate and inform their followers, and experiment with emerging technologies. The platform serves as an instrumental tool for Gen Z leaders to generate social change and achieve equitable societies. And another opportunity to echo this sentiment is Gen Z leaders can make significant impacts by advocating for social justice causes, building online communities, and leveraging new technologies. Their digital skills, combined with a passion for social justice, can lead to meaningful change and inspire action among their followers.

Supporting and Integrating Gen Z Digital Leadership Skills in Practices.

When asked about their parents or mentor helping them to become digital leaders, more participants say "yes" rather than "no". Some answered "not specifically digital" but becoming a leader, they havesolutions from their parents. Like Brn (19 years old, USA) who said, "*Sometimes when a decision is evenundecided by the moderation group in Reno Smash, Iask my parents about the situation. Since they themselves are very experienced leaders, they are often quick to respond with a brief, sensible answer.*" Kan (19 years old, Indonesia) explained, "*Not digitalbut yes? I'm clearly raised differently than most people and I can't exactly pinpoint what, but it probably helps that I usually tell my parents about my problems and they provide me with helpful solutions as to how to handle them.*"

(Pichler, Kohli, and Granitz 2021) explained that even though understanding Gen Z is vital to business success and gaining competitive advantage, little work has been done to translate research on this generation into opportunities and challenges for businesses, and in this study, other stakeholders.

Gen Z are digital integrators and technology is seamlessly integrated into their lives, almost like the air they breathe-it makes them connect to a borderless world and socialize by screen-based devices (Fell 2019). Being truly globalwith borderless friendships and vocabulary, connected to and shaped by their friends, (Fell 2019) also found that they are mobile not only in terms of using technology but in homes, jobs,and careers where they can have 18 jobs across 6 careers. (Fell 2019) findings also showthat their engagement and learning styles has shown the dominance of visual and hands-on learning over auditory delivery.

With these traits, this research finds that in order to support and integrate Gen Z leadership skills, organizations, educators, and policymakers can prioritize digital literacy among them, encourage digital leadership development, create a safe online environment, partnering with Gen Z leaders, and always embrace emerging technologies.

Eug (24 years old, Indonesia) felt that organizations, educators and policymakers would effectively support and integrate Gen Z digital leadership skills in practices through the steps:

"Foster digital literacy: Organizations, educators, and policymakers can prioritize digital literacy education to teach young people how to use digital technologies effectively and safely. This includes teaching digital communication skills, online safety, critical thinking, and digital citizenship.

Encourage digital leadership development: prioritize leadership development among Gen Z individuals byproviding them with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, such as mentoring programs, leadership workshops, and experiential learning opportunities.

Create safe and inclusive online environments: work together to create safe and inclusive online environments for Gen Z individuals to express their ideas and voices. This includes creating safe and moderated online spaces, promoting respectful online interactions, and addressing cyberbullying and online harassment.

Partner with Gen Z leaders: partner with Gen Z leaders to better understand their perspectives and incorporate their ideas into their strategies and practices. This includes involving young people in decision-making processes and giving them opportunities to lead and influence.

Embrace emerging technologies: embrace emerging technologies and integrate them into their strategies and practices to engage Gen Z individuals in new and innovative ways. This includes leveraging socialmedia, virtual and augmented reality, and other technologies to create immersive and engaging learning experiences.

When asked about how to support and integrate Gen Z leadership, Han (22 years old, Taiwan) answered, *"Utilizes resources, materials and courses to expandstrategies and practices."* He agreed that organizations, educators (including parents), and policymakers take to better support and integrate Gen Z digital leadership skills into their strategies and practices by utilizing resources, materials and courses to expand strategies and practices.

Nas (20 years old, Indonesia) also believes in a safe environment:

"Educators can add more creative content to influence viewers and policymakers should make sure the social media platform content is not destructive."

Similar with the others, Rua (19 years old, India) feels that supporting Gen Z digital leadership means digital literacy, collaboration, mentorship and opportunity:

"To support Gen Z digital leadership skills, invest in digital literacy and education, encourage collaboration, provide mentorship, promote diversity and inclusion, and create opportunities for youth-led initiatives."

A critical point is to believe in the individuals and ask the strength that they have as it will be a valuableasset, just as Brn (19 years old, USA) said:

"If someone wishes to integrate a Gen Z leader into their organization, they should ask them what their strengths are, no matter how seemingly inconsequential. In particular, it may be helpful to ask what presence they serve in the Discord servers they are in (most are in at least one at our age). Using the confidence, the Gen Z leader knows they have would prove invaluable."

As Gen Z is a very different cohort compared to the senior generations, the question of how to engage Gen Z leaders through social media platforms arises. For Rua (19 years old, India), the answer lies on authenticity and other traits close to Gen Z:

"Be authentic and transparent, listen and engage, create valuable content, use visuals, embrace new platforms, and give back to causes that matter. By following these tips, organizations and individualscan build meaningful relationships with Gen Z leaders."

Brn (19 years old, USA) also highlight the importance of welcoming any skill possessed by the individuals:

"Be open and welcoming to any skill set. It is likely that any social media platform can be used for marketing or promotion given a good enough leader. Make sure the Gen Z individual feels valued as a genuine colleague."

A critical point or warning is made by Kan (19 years old, Indonesian) who, being a global digital leader involved in hundreds of communities worldwide, experience firsthand how being a leader to Gen Z is not as straightforward or as normal as expected: *"Remember that most of Gen Z are probably more dumb, impolite, and passive than the average person.Approach professionally and politely, and when things start to go downhill, remove yourself from that person, it's not worth it. Nowadays a lot of Gen Z are insanely cringe because they're mostly terminally online, and sometimes I think I'm born in the wrong generation. My advice is that you DON'T have to engage with Gen Z leaders unless you must, or they're proven to be a level headed and normal human being."*

Through this study, it is found that supporting and integrating Gen Z digital leadership skills in practices means knowing the cohort closely, by fostering digital literacy in senior generations that work together with them. Understanding each individual's strength is crucial, and creating opportunities in the leadership area would engage and sharpen their leadership ability. Digital Gen Z leaders are proven to need safe online environmentsas the cohort are always online and may not behaveas expected in their environment as the culture and exposure they have depend on what they are put in view online. It is found that parents' involvement helps them become leaders as they are today, and Gen Z nurtured to be leaders simply translate leadership into digital one.

The research results can open a basis for a future study examining the impact of supporting and integrating Gen Z digital leadership skills in stakeholder practices

CONCLUSION

Gen Z, being digital natives, demonstrates a unique approach to leadership, leveraging social media platforms to build networks, share ideas, and inspire action. This generation is transforming traditional leadership models by utilizing digital tools and online interactions, which can help bridge generational gaps and foster collaboration across age groups. As social media continues to evolve, it is essential for organizations and leaders to recognize and adapt to the changing landscape, embracing Gen Z's innovative leadership strategies to drive meaningful change in various contexts.

This study found that initiative and having high impact are among the main characteristics of Gen Z digital leaders who prefer online over offline discussions. The development and expression with social media consist of personal growth, learning new things, and developing skills and voice.

Gen Z digital leaders are found to use social media invarious contexts such as foster collaboration, build networks, inspire action. Gen Z also face challenges while using social media as they are faced

with passivity and communication failure, while at the same time they are blessed with opportunities such as amplifying underrepresented voices, impacting and influencing others, even inspiring action.

Supporting and integrating Gen Z digital leadership skills in practices means knowing the cohort closely, fostering digital literacy in senior generations that work together with them, understanding each individual's strength, and creating opportunities in the leadership area with safe online environments. Based on the research results, future study should examine the impact of supporting and integrating Gen Z digital leadership skills in stakeholder practices.

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