

## **THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE LEADERSHIP IN ALIGNING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the role of emotional intelligence-based leadership in harmonizing generational differences in the workplace. The method used is a qualitative approach with descriptive research, through a literature study covering books and scientific journals. Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model that included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to obtain an in-depth understanding of the contribution of emotional intelligence in cross-generational leadership. The results showed that emotional intelligence-based leadership had a significant effect on creating intergenerational harmony in the workplace. Leaders who are able to recognize, understand, and manage emotions have been proven to reduce the potential for conflict, increase employee engagement, and strengthen team cohesion. Emotional intelligence applied through the aspects of self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, social skills, and motivation is able to bridge differences in communication styles, values, and work orientations between the Baby Boomer, X, Y (millennial), and Z generations. A work environment managed with emotional health turns differences into a collective strength that drives productive collaboration, innovation, and organizational sustainability. Implementing this type of leadership confirms that generational diversity can be optimized into an organizational competitive advantage.

**Key words:** leadership; emotional intelligence; generation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Changing global workforce structures present new challenges for organizations. Currently, multiple generations work within the same organizational environment, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z. Each generation possesses different backgrounds, values, work styles, and technological preferences that influence workplace interactions. These differences can become both strengths and potential sources of conflict in daily organizational activities (Anugrah et al., 2025).

The coexistence of different generations in the workplace creates opportunities for collaboration, but also generates friction due to differences in perspectives regarding loyalty, flexibility, and the use of digital technology. Older generations tend to prioritize stability and structured procedures, whereas younger generations prefer innovation, flexibility, and rapid change. These differences may affect team harmony and organizational productivity if not managed effectively (Ferdiana & Yuwono, 2023).

Leadership therefore plays an essential role in managing generational diversity. Organizational success depends not only on business strategy or technological capability but also on the ability of leaders to manage emotional relationships among team members. Leaders who lack emotional understanding may face increased conflict and reduced work effectiveness within multigenerational teams (Cahyono, 2022).

Emotional intelligence is an important leadership competency that enables leaders to understand emotions, maintain interpersonal relationships, and create a harmonious work atmosphere. Leaders who understand the emotional needs of employees can encourage mutual respect, trust, and cooperation among team members from different generations. As a result, emotional intelligence becomes a strategic tool for bridging generational differences in organizations.

This study aims to analyze the role of emotional intelligence-based leadership in harmonizing generational differences in the workplace. Specifically, it explores how leaders' emotional abilities can minimize conflict, improve team harmony, and strengthen cross-generational collaboration.

### **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative method was selected because the research seeks to understand social phenomena related to emotional intelligence leadership and generational diversity in depth. According to Sugiyono (2021), descriptive qualitative research aims to describe real conditions in depth so that researchers can capture the hidden meaning behind the facts.

Data collection was conducted through literature studies derived from books, scientific journals, and other relevant academic sources. This approach allows researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of emotional intelligence leadership and generational differences in the workplace. According to Sugiyono (2021), literature study is a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading, recording, and

processing research materials obtained from literature. Through this technique, researchers can obtain a strong theoretical foundation and enrich their understanding of the variables being studied.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles & Huberman (2018), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Through these stages, the study identifies key patterns and relationships regarding the role of emotional intelligence leadership in managing multigenerational teams.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Differences in Generation Characteristics and Their Influence on Employment Relations in Organizations**

Generational differences within organizations originate from distinct social, economic, and technological experiences that shape the perspectives of each generation. Baby Boomers are known for strong loyalty and dedication to work. Generation X values independence and work–life balance. Millennials are characterized by digital literacy and openness to innovation, while Generation Z is highly adaptive, technology-oriented, and creative (Gultom, 2023).

These generational differences influence communication styles, work expectations, and approaches to technology. Older generations often prefer structured communication such as formal meetings or emails, while younger generations favor digital communication platforms such as instant messaging and online collaboration tools. If not properly managed, these differences may lead to misunderstandings and reduced cooperation.

However, generational diversity can also become a strength when organizations successfully integrate the experience of older employees with the creativity and technological skills of younger employees.

### **Challenges Due to Lack of Understanding of the Emotional Needs of Each Generation**

A lack of understanding of generational emotional needs may create challenges in workplace relationships. Younger employees, particularly Generation Z, often require psychological support, recognition, and meaningful work experiences. When these needs are not fulfilled, employees may experience emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, or disengagement (Laras & Saidi, 2023).

This condition may lead to phenomena such as “quiet quitting,” where employees perform only minimal responsibilities without contributing beyond basic requirements. Additionally, misunderstandings between generations may arise when older employees perceive younger workers’ need for feedback as weakness. Organizations that fail to recognize these emotional needs risk increased stress, lower job satisfaction, and higher employee turnover (Lucero & Ocampo, Jr., 2019).

### **The Role of Emotional Intelligence-Based Leadership in Creating Work Harmony Between Generations**

Leadership based on emotional intelligence occupies a very influential position in maintaining the balance of intergenerational work relationships in the organization. Leaders who have high emotional intelligence are able to recognize personal emotions as well as understand the feelings of others, so that the interactions created are warmer and more appreciative. This ability makes it easier for leaders to adjust their approach to communication and decision-making according to the emotional condition of the team consisting of various generations. Strong self-awareness also helps leaders assess the emotional impact of speech and actions, so as to be able to avoid attitudes that can cause conflict or widen the gap between generations. This role is the main key in creating a harmonious, inclusive, and conducive work environment for cross-age collaboration (Novryansyah et al., 2021).

The self-regulation ability of leaders plays a big role in maintaining emotional stability in the midst of generational differences. When faced with sharp disagreements, emotionally intelligent leaders can control themselves so as not to get carried away with adverse impulsive reactions. A calm and controlled attitude sets a positive example for team members so that conflicts can be resolved constructively. The work environment also becomes more emotionally safe because each individual feels protected from the potential for unhealthy friction. This condition makes employees from different generations more confident to express ideas, opinions, and criticisms without worrying about getting a negative response. Self-regulation also plays a role in reducing stress levels in the organization, which ultimately maintains team productivity and cohesion (Pandaleke & Ardi, 2025).

The motivational drive of a leader who has high emotional intelligence is able to create comprehensive engagement in each generation. Leaders not only focus on achieving organizational targets, but also pay attention to the emotional needs of the team that vary according to generations. The younger generation can be given space to create and experiment, while the older generation gets rewards for the experience and contributions that have been given. A targeted way of motivating fosters a sense of emotional justice in the team and strengthens the bond between ages. Leaders' success in managing motivation will result in a healthy work culture, where passion, dedication, and a sense of belonging grow equally across generations.

Empathy is the most defining aspect of emotional intelligence-based leadership when dealing with generational diversity. Leaders who are able to experience what employees are experiencing can understand the difficulties and expectations that arise from each age group. This sensitivity bridges differences in perceptions so that communication between generations becomes more open and sincere. Leaders who show empathy will find it easier to build trust, reduce the risk of conflict, and strengthen a sense of community in the organization. The existence of empathy also encourages the creation of a more humane work climate, where employees feel valued not only in terms of productivity, but also as individuals who have emotional value. Situations like this ultimately

form a sustainable work harmony, where generational differences are no longer an obstacle, but a source of collective strength (Pinandito & Savira, 2022).

The social skills possessed by a leader have a huge role in building work bonds between heterogeneous team members. The ability to communicate effectively interpersonally allows leaders to be bridges that connect different generations with different backgrounds of values, ways of thinking, and work cultures. An adaptive, empathetic, and understanding communication style makes open dialogue easier to realize so that every team member feels that their voice is heard. This condition helps minimize the risk of misunderstandings that often arise due to differences in perception between generations. Leaders who are adept at building relationships are also able to reduce tension early on, facilitate healthy conflict resolution, and create a cooperative work environment. When intergenerational relationships are well maintained, team cohesion is stronger and productivity increases, while the job satisfaction of members of all ages can be maintained continuously.

The implementation of emotional intelligence-based leadership not only focuses on the results of the work, but also pays great attention to the psychological well-being of each team member. Leaders who are sensitive to the emotional state of their employees can create an inclusive and respectful work environment across generations. Such a workspace provides an opportunity for employees to feel safe, valued, and supported in developing their potential. Leaders also play a role in providing psychosocial support that makes teams more resilient in the face of heavy work pressure. The presence of leadership who is able to manage emotions in a healthy manner reduces the risk of burnout and the desire to change jobs, especially in the younger generation who tend to prioritize emotional balance, as well as the senior generation who need more stability and appreciation for their experiences. The work culture built from leadership like this not only benefits individuals, but also has a positive impact on the sustainability of the organization as a whole (Rimadhani, 2024).

The role of emotional intelligence-based leadership in creating work harmony between generations shows that modern organizational management cannot be separated from emotional and social aspects. Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are complementary foundations in daily leadership practice. Each of these aspects strengthens a work culture that prioritizes mutual respect, trust, and cross-generational cooperation. A good integration of emotional intelligence components makes organizations able to optimize the potential of each generation while minimizing conflicts that arise from differences in work styles or emotional needs. The result is a harmonious, sustainable work environment that is able to encourage effectiveness and innovation. When leaders manage to make differences a collective strength, organizations are not only more adaptive to external challenges, but also have a competitive advantage born of their internal diversity.

### **The Impact of Emotional Intelligence-Based Leadership on Multigenerational Team Collaboration and Productivity**

Leadership based on emotional intelligence has a very large role in managing the diversity of multigenerational teams. A leader who is able to recognize, understand, and manage the emotions of himself and others will find it easier to create an inclusive work environment for a generation with different values, preferences, and work styles. The success of this kind of leadership lies in its ability to mediate differences that arise so that they do not turn into obstacles, but instead become a source of collective strength. Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to build trust between team members, strengthen solidarity, and create a work climate that emphasizes open communication. This situation ultimately helps individuals from different generations feel valued, recognized for their contributions, and more committed to working together to achieve organizational goals (Supriyanto, 2023).

Effective communication is one of the main foundations in realizing cross-generational cooperation. Different communication styles are often the trigger for misunderstandings in multigenerational organizations. Baby Boomers are generally more accustomed to formal communication done face-to-face, while Generation X tends to opt for a clear and structured way of communication. This is in contrast to millennials and Gen Z who prefer the use of digital technology, such as online collaboration platforms and instant messaging, because they are considered more practical and fast. Leaders who are able to read those communication preferences will be able to adjust their approach so that all parties feel comfortable and understood. This kind of adaptation fosters mutual respect, reduces the potential for miscommunication, and strengthens team cohesion so that the interactions that are established are not only functional, but also harmonious.

Personalized motivational strategies are also an important element in emotional intelligence-based leadership. Each generation has different emotional needs, and a smart leader will be able to adapt how to provide encouragement according to the characteristics of each age group. Older generations such as Baby Boomers or Generation X may value recognition for their experience and dedication more, while millennials and Gen Z need more space to create, innovate, and have opportunities to grow. Wise leaders can balance the two needs through contribution-based rewards and the creation of space for the exploration of new ideas. This approach not only strengthens a sense of belonging, but also fosters a collaborative spirit, where each generation feels its role is important and complementary to achieve Shared goals (Tampubolon, 2024).

Conflict management is another aspect that shows how vital emotional intelligence is in multigenerational leadership. Differences in views, values, and work styles often cause tension between team members. Leaders who have the ability to control emotions and show empathy are able to reduce potential conflicts early on with a constructive mediation approach. Being open to listening, understanding perspectives, and appreciating the experiences of each generation makes the work atmosphere more positive and trusting. Conflicts that originally

had the potential to damage relationships can be diverted into opportunities to learn from each other and enrich insights. The harmony created from this process is not only due to organizational rules, but is born from a strong emotional bond, mutual respect, and willingness of all team members to work together. The result is more solid, productive, and sustainable cross-generational collaboration.

The development of team skills through appropriately designed training programs is closely related to emotional intelligence-based leadership. A leader who understands the diversity of competencies, learning styles, and development needs of each generation will be able to design training that is inclusive, relevant, and in accordance with the potential of his team members. Programs that combine formal approaches such as workshops and practical approaches through work simulations will provide balanced benefits for all generations. Collaboration between generations can be enhanced through mentoring programs, where the senior generation shares experience and practical wisdom, while the younger generation contributes fresh ideas and technological skills. A well-managed cross-generational project will bring together experience and innovation, resulting in more comprehensive problem-solving and creating innovations that are more adaptive to changing business environments. This kind of interaction also strengthens social bonds within the team, fosters mutual respect, and broadens work horizons among team members of different age groups (Veda & Rahayu, 2023).

A work environment that is able to provide emotional support and ensure the psychological well-being of employees is one of the main impacts of leadership that prioritizes emotional intelligence. Leaders who are sensitive to the emotional state of their team will strive to create a work environment that is safe, comfortable, and respectful of differences. An open space to discuss and express emotions without fear provides an opportunity for multigenerational team members to understand each other's needs and challenges. This kind of psychosocial support is important because each generation brings a different background of stressors, for example the older generation may be more sensitive to rapid changes, while the younger generation is vulnerable to high expectations pressures. An emotionally healthy work atmosphere can reduce the risk of burnout, reduce absenteeism, and increase employee loyalty. When employees feel emotionally valued, they tend to be more motivated to give their best contribution and maintain consistent work quality (Yuliantari & Widayati, 2020).

The effectiveness of leadership based on emotional intelligence as a whole has been proven to be able to bring a major transformation to the performance of multigenerational teams. Leaders who are able to manage the emotional and social potential in the team will create more optimal human resource management, quick and appropriate decision-making, and an organizational culture that respects diversity. The success of this leadership is not only seen from the improvement of quantitative work results, such as productivity and efficiency, but also from the formation of an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable work climate. Organizations that invest in developing the emotional intelligence of leaders as well as their team members will be better prepared to face the challenges of change in the era of globalization. This readiness not only maintains performance stability, but also equips organizations with adaptive capabilities to continue to develop, innovate, and maintain competitiveness in the midst of increasingly complex generational differences.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, emotional intelligence-based leadership plays an important role in aligning generational differences in the work environment. Leaders who are able to recognize, understand, and manage emotions not only create more open and effective communication, but also strengthen a sense of intergenerational togetherness. The results of the study confirm that the success of collaboration is not only determined by organizational strategy, but also by the ability of leaders to maintain emotional balance, manage conflicts, and provide motivation that suits the needs of each generation. The integration of each generation's strengths through an adaptive leadership style creates a more harmonious, productive, and innovative work environment, so that organizations can maintain their competitive advantage in the midst of global changes.

The advice that can be given is for organizations to focus on developing the emotional intelligence of leaders and team members through training, mentoring, and periodic evaluation programs that emphasize communication skills, empathy, and self-regulation. In addition, companies need to provide cross-generational collaboration spaces that provide opportunities for employees to share experiences, ideas, and skills according to the characteristics of each age group. This approach not only reduces the potential for conflict, but also strengthens team cohesion and increases employee engagement in achieving common goals. Consistent efforts to foster an inclusive work culture based on emotional intelligence will help organizations meet the challenges of generational differences while creating a strong foundation for long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

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