Gen Z Interpersonal Communication Patterns in the World of Work in Medan

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Abstract	This research is motivated by the challenges of adapting introverted Generation Z in entering the world of work which demands intense social interaction, team collaboration, and professional adjustment. The purpose of this study is to understand the interpersonal communication dynamics of introverted Generation Z in the transition to the world of work in the city of Medan. This study used a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews with sixteen informants, including introverted individuals aged 18–25 years, two young psychologists, and one job accommodator, and analyzed using the Johari Window theory which divides self-awareness into open areas, blind areas, hidden areas, and unknown areas. The results of the study show that the interpersonal communication of introverted Generation Z develops gradually and reflectively; Their open area expands as confidence and work experience increase, blind areas narrow through feedback receipts, hidden areas decrease as trust in the work environment grows, and unknown areas shrink as their potential is revealed. They develop authentic communication strategies that balance introspection, expression, and social adaptation, without having to turn the personality into extroverted. In conclusion, the survival of introverted Generation Z in the world of work is adaptive and reflective, emphasizing the importance of social experiences, environmental support, and the development of self-awareness to build effective and professional communication.
Keywords	Generation Z; Introvert; Interpersonal Communication; Transition to the World of Work

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and the industrial revolution 4.0, human resources have become the main asset in determining the progress of a nation. Economic growth

and social development no longer depend only on financial capital and technological advances, but also on the quality of individuals who are able to adapt, innovate, and cooperate effectively. In this context, individual competencies must be viewed holistically, encompassing both technical skills (hard skills) and interpersonal skills or soft skills (Aini, 2025). Interpersonal competence The ability to communicate, collaborate, and build an effective social network is one of the key aspects that determine a person's successful adaptation in the world of work (Uswatusolihah, 2013).

Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, is a unique demographic group with different characteristics from previous generations. As digital natives, Generation Z grew up in a technology ecosystem that facilitates rapid access to information and social interaction through social media, online collaboration platforms, and instant digital communication. While their proficiency in the use of technology supports flexibility, creativity, and remote collaboration, reliance on digital communication also presents its own challenges, especially in the context of developing interpersonal skills that require face-to-face interaction and an understanding of non-verbal communication (Husna et al., 2024).

In this dynamic, individuals with introverted personalities face more complex challenges. Data show that about 25–40% of the global population has an introverted tendency, which is a preference for a calm, reflective environment, and selective social interaction (Dabija et al., 2023). This personality is often identified with good listening skills, deep focus, and analytical thinking. However, in a modern work environment that demands intense team interaction and the ability to lead or socialize proactively, introverted tendencies can be mistaken for a lack of initiative or the ability to work together (Hall, 2023). This raises a controversial paradox: on the one hand, the internal power of introverts is supposed to be an asset to the organization; On the other hand, social perceptions and work cultures that emphasize extroversion tend to limit recognition of their potential (Baskoro et al., 2025; Hazani, 2023).

In line with global trends, introverted Generation Z in Indonesia's metropolitan cities, including Medan, face similar social and professional pressures. The city of Medan, as the economic and social center of North Sumatra, requires individuals to

be proactive, expansive, and competitive. This pressure can exacerbate the gap between professional needs and introverted personality characteristics. Therefore, an in-depth understanding of how introverted Generation Z prepares for the world of work is very important (Arrasyidun, 2025). The study highlights their unique experience in building and managing adaptive interpersonal competencies, enabling them to participate effectively in an increasingly complex professional environment.

To comprehensively understand this phenomenon, this study uses the Johari Window theory as the main conceptual framework. This theory helps map individual self-awareness and others' perception, which are at the core of interpersonal competence development. Johari Window allows for an in-depth analysis of how introverted Generation Z is aware of their strengths and limitations, as well as how they interact with colleagues and the professional environment (Lumbanraja et al., 2023). In addition, this model is relevant to identify the adaptive strategies that introverted individuals use in dealing with the demands of extroverted social interaction and collaboration in the workplace.

Previous studies have explored several related dimensions on interpersonal competence, introverted personality characteristics, and Generation Z, yet most of them addressed these areas separately. Damayanti et al., (2024) examined the use of the Johari Window framework to improve students' interpersonal communication, but their study was limited to academic contexts and did not address workplace transition. Similarly, Rafiqoh et al., (2025) investigated interpersonal competence among Indonesian youth, but the research focused on extroverted tendencies and did not include introverted individuals. Husna et al., (2024) studied digital communication patterns in Generation Z, highlighting technology's impact on social interaction, but did not discuss how personality traits shape workplace readiness.

More recent studies, such as Novia & Vidya (2024), analyzed introverted leadership in modern organizations and found that introverts contribute to reflective decision-making and analytical problem-solving. However, their research centered on established professionals, not young adults entering the workforce. Studies by McCord & Joseph (2020) and (Barnes & Stewart (2022) also discussed misperceptions of introverted employees in collaborative environments, but were conducted in

Western socio-cultural contexts, making their generalization to Indonesian metropolitan settings limited.

Despite these contributions, research specifically examining introverted Generation Z in Indonesian metropolitan cities remains limited. Research integrating three core variables: Generation Z characteristics, introverted personality traits, and the development of interpersonal competence during the transition into the workforce, has not been comprehensively addressed. Thus, this study aims to fill this gap by offering a holistic exploration of how introverted Generation Z in Medan prepares for professional demands and builds adaptive interpersonal competence.

In addition to academic contributions, this research also has significant practical relevance. The development of interpersonal competencies of introverted Generation Z supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. By empowering introverted individuals to develop the skills needed in the workplace, the research contributes to increased productivity, workforce readiness, and social inclusion in an increasingly competitive job market (Arrasyidun, 2025). The results of this study are expected to be the basis for practical recommendations for individuals, educational institutions, and companies in designing adaptive, inclusive, and contextual interpersonal competency development programs.

Methodologically, this study uses a phenomenological approach to capture the subjective experiences of introverted Generation Z in depth. This approach allows for rich narrative analysis of social interactions, adaptive strategies, and self-perception in dealing with the dynamics of the world of work. The phenomena studied include the use of communication technology, face-to-face interaction experiences, collaboration skills, and challenges and opportunities arising from differences in personality characteristics (Aprianti et al., (2022); Hamandia & Firnadia, (2022)). This approach is expected to produce insights that are not only theoretical, but also applicable in the context of education and professional practice.

Thus, this study has the main objective of uncovering how introverted Generation Z builds and manages their interpersonal competencies in entering the workforce, as well as understanding the internal and external dynamics that influence

the process. The main findings of this study will provide an overview of the strengths and adaptive strategies of introverts in dealing with social and professional demands, as well as enriching the literature on Generation Z, introverted personalities, and the development of interpersonal skills in Indonesia.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to understand the experience of introverted Generation Z in building interpersonal competencies during the transition to the world of work in Medan. This approach was chosen because it emphasizes a deep understanding of the meaning of individual experiences through data in the form of words, narratives, and documents (Sugiyono, 2022). This type of research is qualitative, where the researcher acts as the main instrument in data collection and analysis, with a focus on introverted Generation Z individuals who are transitioning from formal education to the professional world. The purpose of this research is to explore experiences, adaptive strategies, and challenges faced in the development of interpersonal skills.

The research data source consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observations, and documentation conducted with informants, while secondary data were obtained from literature, journals, books, and documents relevant to introverted personalities as well as the Johari Window model. The types of data collected include qualitative data, in the form of narratives, field notes, personal documents, as well as informant behaviors and experiences related to interpersonal communication, and quantitative data in the form of the number and categories of informants that support the description of the research population.

The determination of informants is carried out using purposive sampling, which is the selection of informants based on certain considerations in order to provide relevant and in-depth information about the phenomenon being researched (Sugiyono, 2022). The criteria for informants include introverted Generation Z aged 18–25 years who are transitioning from school or college to the world of work, psychologists who understand introverted personalities, and job managers who are

dominated by Generation Z. Informants are divided into two age groups: 18–20 years old for the transition from school to the world of work, and 21–25 years old for the transition from college to the world of work, So that variations in experience and adaptive strategies can be analyzed comprehensively. The total number of informants involved was 15 people, consisting of Generation Z, psychologists, and employment managers. The identification of introverted individuals is carried out through an online verified MBTI personality test, so that the selection of informants can be scientifically justified.

Generation Z informants were selected because they are a group that directly experiences the dynamics of interpersonal adjustment in their early work environments, allowing them to authentically describe the challenges and adaptive strategies experienced by introverted individuals. Psychologists were selected because they possess professional expertise in analyzing introverted personality characteristics and can provide theoretical validation of the field findings. Meanwhile, job managers were selected because they interact directly with Generation Z employees in professional environments and understand the interpersonal communication demands required in the workplace.

Generation Z informants come from various professional backgrounds, including retail staff, administrative staff, service employees, and early-career workers at start-up companies. The psychologists interviewed are clinical practitioners and counselors with experience in handling personality development in adolescence and early adulthood. Job managers are supervisors or HR officers working at companies with a predominantly Generation Z workforce. The informants work at several companies in Medan, particularly in the retail, service, office administration, and private companies that employ a large number of Generation Z employees. Psychologists practice at psychology clinics located in Medan, while job managers work at private companies that actively recruit Generation Z.

Data collection was carried out through a combination of observation, interviews, and document studies. Non-participatory observations were used to understand introverted interpersonal communication behaviors in the work environment, while semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration

of the experiences and adaptive strategies of introverted Generation Z. The document study includes photographs, notes, and relevant documents that support the results of observations and interviews. The research was conducted in Medan, a metropolitan city with a large and diverse Generation Z population, which offers a dynamic social and professional context to observe the interpersonal interactions of introverts during the transition to the workforce. Demographic data shows that around 20.31% of Generation Z is in NEET (not in education, employment, or training) status and the unemployment rate reaches 16% (BPS, 2024; Sakernas, 2025), emphasizing the relevance of the research location in describing the challenges faced by this group.

Data analysis was carried out interactively and inducively following the model of Miles & Huberman (1984), including data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation, data reduction to highlight important information relevant to interpersonal competence, and presentation of data in the form of narratives, tables, and charts to facilitate the understanding of relationships between categories. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions and verification of findings based on the evidence gathered, resulting in new insights that were not previously available.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study uses triangulation of sources and techniques. Source triangulation compares information obtained from various informants, while triangulation techniques examine the consistency of data from different methods, i.e., observation, interviews, and documentation. This triangulation approach ensures that the research findings reflect an accurate and in-depth interpretation of the experiences of introverts Z, without relying on time triangulation, as the focus of the research is on contextual understanding and subjective meaning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the interpersonal communication of introverted Generation Z in the transition to the world of work in Medan City develops through a gradual adaptation process that is reflective and contextual.

Based on in-depth interviews with sixteen informants, including Generation Z aged 18–25, two psychologists, and one employment accommodator, it was found that although they tend to be introverted, the informants seek to build effective social relationships through strategies of self-introduction, observation, and adjustment to the demands of the work environment. The analysis using the Johari Window theory reveals the dynamics of four areas of self-awareness in interpersonal communication: open area, blind area, hidden area, and unknown area.

In the early stages, the open area of informants is relatively small, especially in the age group of 18–20 years old who have just entered the workforce. For example, Ilda (19 years old) admitted that she was nervous at first and observed more before daring to greet her colleagues. A similar strategy was also carried out by Azzam (20 years old) who used a simple script to communicate. The age group of 21–25 years showed higher reflective skills, informant Vicky (23 years old) learned to adjust the way of communication to remain polite but authentic, while Andri (24 years old) emphasized professionalism in expressing opinions. This shows that openness to them does not mean losing the introverted personality, but adjusting the way of communication to suit professional norms.

> *"… At first I was really nervous, especially since this is my first job. I'm not very good at interacting with new people, so I'm more quiet and paying attention first..." (Interview Result, 2025)*

Previous research also mentioned that at the beginning of work it will take a long time to adapt and understand communication patterns in the workplace (Gunarsa, 2019). They tend to be careful in speaking, listen and observe more, and only convey things that are considered important and relevant. Research Siregar et al., (2025) Emphasizing this attitude does not always show seclusion, but a form of prudence in maintaining professionalism and self-image. Putri, D. M., (2022) also revealed that they have not fully expressed their personal personality or opinion because they feel that they are not familiar enough with the social environment at work. However, as time went by, this area of openness began to grow. Confidence begins to grow when they see that open communication is not always risky, but rather can strengthen professional relationships. This is in line with the Johari Window

theory which states that open areas can be expanded through a consistent communication process, positive feedback, and mutual trust (Rani Hartati Tarigan & Elfi Yanti Ritonga, 2024). Thus, the open area in introverted Generation Z develops gradually and contextually, adjusting between personal needs and social demands of the workplace.

The blind area is quite dominant in the early stages of adaptation, where individuals are unaware of how their behavior is perceived by others. Ilda (19 years old) was surprised to find out that her expression was considered cold, while Azzam (20 years old) was labeled arrogant because she rarely greeted. Awareness of blind areas increased after receiving feedback from colleagues, according to the view of young psychologist, Deli (25 years old), who stated that Gen Z only understands social dynamics after being informed about how their expressions are received.

"… My supervisor once said I looked too stiff and cold. I was shocked, because I didn't mean that..." (Interview Result, 2025)

The Johari Window Theory explains that the more a person receives and processes feedback, the smaller the blind area they have. For introverted Generation Z, accepting feedback is not easy. Some informants admit to feeling awkward or defensive when criticized, but after going through a process of repeated interactions, they learn to understand that criticism is not a form of rejection, but an opportunity to grow. This is in line with the findings of the study Mukherjee et al., (2023) that feedback helps them see previously unrealized sides of themselves such as how their facial expressions appear stiff in the eyes of others, or how their speaking style is too short for a measure of collaborative work communication. Once this awareness grew, they began to work on adjusting their communication style to be more acceptable to the environment. This narrowing of the blind area indicates an increase in social awareness and maturity of interpersonal communication (Cazan, 2024).

Hidden areas, which are things that individuals hide from others, are still wide at the beginning of work. Informants such as Fitri (18 years old) and Fia (19 years old) admitted that they held back their ideas and feelings for fear of being judged negatively. However, as trust in the work environment increases, this hidden area narrows, marked by the courage of Vicky (23) and Andri (24) to ask for help or raise

concerns. This suggests that hidden areas are magnified by fear of social judgment. However, this area can be narrowed as trust in the work environment increases.

> *"… I actually had an idea of how to dress up, but I didn't dare to talk to my boss. Fear of being seen as a jerk..." (Interview Result, 2025)*
> *"… I rarely tell people that I'm not confident, but over time I learned that open communication makes work easier..." (Interview Result, 2025)*

The above transformation shows that trust is an important factor in narrowing down hidden areas. This is in line with the Johari Window theory, the higher the level of interpersonal trust, the more likely a person is to open up without fear of rejection. Previous research has also found that these hidden areas tend to narrow as trust in the social environment increases (Siregar & Irfan, 2025). After interacting for longer periods of time and finding supportive colleagues, informants began to be more open in expressing ideas and opinions. Some even say that openness actually makes work easier because it avoids misunderstandings and speeds up task completion. In other words, openness is the result of the process of building a sense of security, not just spontaneous courage (Ismayanti et al., 2025).

Unknown areas are also revealed through work experience, where informants discover new potentials that were previously unrealized, such as stress management skills, small team leadership, or public communication skills. Ilda (19 years old) and Fitri (18 years old) are aware of the self-resilience and adaptability that arise during work, while Ariq (22 years old) learns to accept criticism as input for self-development.

> *"… I just realized that I am easily stressed when I am criticized in public. After finding out, I learned to accept criticism as input..." (Interview Result, 2025)*

Some of them find that they are able to lead small teams, adapt under pressure, or speak confidently in public things they never imagined before. Through job challenges, they discover their own capacity that has been hidden. This discovery process shows that the work environment acts as a mirror that helps introverted individuals recognize and develop their deepest potential. In line with research Purwanto et al., (2023) that interpersonal communication is not a static ability, but the result of an ever-evolving reflective experience.

Overall, the changes in the four areas of the Johari Window form a typical transition pattern for introverted Generation Z. At the beginning of the work, the open area was still small, blind and hidden areas were large, and unknown areas were wide. Over time, open areas develop, blind areas narrow through social feedback, hidden areas decrease due to increased trust, and unknown areas decrease as self-potential is discovered. This adaptation shows that interpersonal communication is dynamic and develops through reflective experiences.

Successful adaptation does not mean they become extroverted, but rather find authentic survival strategies, choose when to be open and when to maintain privacy, and express themselves in a targeted and meaningful way. They are also able to create a psychologically safe space, manage social energy, and cope by temporarily withdrawing to restore focus. The use of digital media as an initial means of communication shows the typical way this generation adjusts effectively in the world of work.

Thus, the survival of introverted Generation Z is more determined by reflective awareness, social experiences, and environmental support, rather than personality changes. This process reflects psychological and emotional maturity that allows them to balance introspection and expression, as well as being authentically present in the world of work. Introversion is not a weakness, but rather a force that supports clear thinking, meaningful communication, and continuous adaptation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that the interpersonal communication of introverted Generation Z in the transition to the world of work is gradual, reflective, and contextual. At first, their communication tends to be closed and limited to technical matters, but over time it develops through increased confidence, professional experience, and social environment support. Open areas expand, blind areas narrow through feedback receipts, hidden areas decrease as trust grows in the workplace, and unknown areas shrink as potential is discovered, such as leadership skills, public speaking, and adaptation under pressure. Their resilience does not demand a change in personality to be extroverted, but rather is reflected in authentic communication

strategies that balance introspection and expression, emotional management, and sustainable social adaptation.

This study suggests that future research can explore additional variables, such as the influence of organizational culture, gender, or educational background on the interpersonal communication of introverted individuals. A comparative study of introverts and extroverts can provide deeper insights into the dynamics of cross-personality interactions in the workplace. The longitudinal approach can also trace the development of communication skills and adaptation strategies over time, thus contributing to the development of human resource management theories and practices.

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