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Generation Z: Understanding the Moral Characteristics of The Current Generation

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Abstrak

Students fill the dominant generation Z, and students today are a generation that has experienced growth in line with technological advances. The number of media interventions and easy access to harmful information can hinder efforts to instill positive moral values. One of the first steps in designing and developing moral learning strategies that suit the needs of learners is to understand their moral characteristics. Therefore, this study aims to uncover the characteristics of Generation Z in terms of their moral reasoning. The study involved 63 Generation Z students and used a descriptive method, with data collection is done through a test technique known as the "moral reasoning test". The results indicate that the moral reasoning of Generation Z students tends to be at the conventional level, dominated by stage 4, followed by stage 3. In this stage, good actions are carried out by obeying obligations and respecting authority. This reflects the existence of social conformity, where individuals tend to act according to social norms to gain positive recognition from friends or other adults.

Keywords: Generation Z, Moral Reasoning

Introduction

Generation Z, also known as "iGeneration" or "Information Generation," is a group born after the millennial generation, which is between 1995 and 2010

(Andrea, 2016). According to BPS data in 2020, generation Z is the largest group in Indonesia's population today. Generation Z reaches 27.94% of the total population, or around 75.49 million people. Their presence

in large numbers requires special attention because they are the generation that will be the nation's successors in the future.

Generation Z grew up with technological advances, the internet, and social media, which have become society's primary means of communication (Tapscott, 2013). Turner (2015) defines Generation Z as the first group to be widely and directly exposed to digital technologies, such as social networking sites and various information on the internet. The latest data on *digital natives*, obtained from Kemp's study (2018) through *Google Consumer Behavior*, revealed that around 50% of the total population in Indonesia are internet users.

Technological advances have had a diverse impact on various aspects of life. Arismunandar (2017) explained that currently, there are various negative behaviors among students that are not in line with the nation's cultural values. The increasing trend of juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, acts of radicalism, free-sex behavior, bullying, and other deviant acts indicates that the spirit of nationalism and nationality among the younger generation today has decreased compared to the previous generation.

As social individuals, generation Z adolescents are expected to obey the norms that apply in their environment. However, they also face challenges in instilling good moral values due to media intervention and the ease of receiving damaging information. The era of globalization has also contributed to changes in Eastern cultural norms that are increasingly influenced by Western culture, so cultural identities have begun to mix (Willis, 2010).

In adolescence, morality has a

significant role as a guide and guide on the way to adulthood and to avoid role conflicts (Sarwono, 2010). The learner's characteristics are among the most influential factors in developing learning strategies. Analyzing student characteristics is a crucial first step in determining learning strategies that suit the needs of students. This confirms that any approach or strategy educators apply must consider the learner's characteristics as a solid foundation.

The development of effective moral learning strategies is essential to understanding the moral characteristics of the learner himself. Student characteristics are an essential foundation in the design of appropriate moral learning strategies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the characteristics of Generation Z based on their stage of moral reasoning, which will be the cornerstone in designing moral learning programs suitable for them.

Method

This descriptive quantitative research aims to describe the moral characteristics of Generation Z by referring to the stages of moral reasoning according to Kohlberg's theory. The research subjects consisted of 63 students at UKI Toraja aged between 19 to 22 years. The study sample was selected through a *purposive sampling technique*.

The instrument used in collecting data in this study is a moral reasoning test adapted from Kohlberg's theory and has gone through validity tests by experts. This moral reasoning test contains stories that contain moral dilemmas. As illustrated in the stories, the aim is to reveal the research subjects' reasoning about their actions if they were in a moral dilemma. In addition to tests, the study also involved interviews to

verify the data obtained from the test results.

Result

The moral development developed by Kohlberg consists of three levels, each with two stages. The three levels are pre-conventional, conventional, and post-

conventional levels. The study results found that the moral reasoning of Generation Z students was at the conventional level, with stage 4 being the dominant, followed by stage 3. Here are the percentages and frequency of each stage in the study.

Subject	STAGE OF MORAL REASONING						TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Generation Z Students	-	3	25	31	4	-	63
		4.8%	39.7%	49.2%	6.3%		100%

The results of the study on the subjects of Generation Z students showed that subjects who were at the stage of moral reasoning stage 2 were three people (4.8%), as many as 25 people (39.7%) subjects were at stage 3, 31 people (49.2%) were at stage 4, as many as four people (6.3%) were at stage 5, and no subjects were at stages 1 and 6.

Based on the results above, it can be seen that the moral reasoning of Generation Z students who are the subjects in this study is dominant in stage 4, namely 31 people (49.2%), followed by stage 3, as many as 25 people (39.7%). This analysis shows that Generation Z college students know their obligation to comply with prevailing social norms and realize the importance of maintaining social order. At this stage, good behavior is reflected in their adherence to the expectations of the social group, which is characterized by the presence of conformity with the norms in their social environment. They support and follow all the rules set by the social group, such as

meeting the expectations of parents and teachers. This is done because they want to avoid negative judgments from those around them, including peers and other adults. In addition, they also try to maintain the trust that has been given to them to avoid a bad reputation in the eyes of others.

Discussion

According to Kohlberg, actions with moral value are carried out with awareness, on personal volition, and based on independent thinking. (Setianingsih, 2017). Moral thinking is a critical element that determines the emergence of moral behavior. Therefore, a person's moral behavior can be identified by analyzing his thoughts. Therefore, moral measurement must consider the underlying process of reasoning or moral reasoning rather than being based on visible observations of behavior. A person's level of morality can be measured by paying attention to the stages in his moral reasoning. Kohlberg identifies six levels of moral reasoning (Isaksson,

2014; Zhang, 2017), i.e., the pre-conventional level consists of stages 1 and 2, the conventional level consists of stages 3 and 4, and the post-conventional level consists of stages 5 and 6.

Discussion

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Furthermore, another stage that has a large share after stage 4 is stage 3, where the behavior considered good is to help or fulfill the wishes of others, which is seen as an action approved by them. In addition, peers also significantly influence adolescents' lives, including in the decision-making process and the desire to be accepted by them (Santrock, 2013). Kohlberg (1995) states that during adolescence towards adulthood, it is essential to reach a higher stage of moral reasoning, the post-conventional stage. Therefore, efforts are needed to optimize the moral reasoning of Generation Z to reach the level of moral

reasoning that should be, namely, the post-conventional stage.

Education is the best method to teach moral values to students. Through learning activities that focus on developing moral reasoning, we can positively impact the development of students' thinking skills and behavior in moral situations. Moral education plays a role in shaping individuals who adhere to moral values, making them more humane. Moral education also helps improve the ability of learners to make more mature and accountable considerations related to their interactions with others. (Nucci & Darcia, 2014).

Entering the 21st century, the world is experiencing revolutionary changes in the form of a digital revolution that has significantly changed aspects of life, culture, and education. Education needs to re-emphasize the importance of character as a core element in national education and intellectual development, reflected in competence (Effendy, 2017). Advances in advanced science and technology must be in harmony with the development of moral values.

Moral development is characterized by changes in one's reasoning, feelings, and behavior related to standards regarding right and wrong. The intrapersonal dimension in moral development governs the activities of individuals when they engage in social interaction and conflict resolution (Santrock, 2011).

The development of moral reasoning has two essential dimensions: the intrapersonal dimension, which regulates individual activities when engaged in social interaction, and the interpersonal dimension, which regulates social interaction and conflict resolution. This

means that moral reasoning deals with the rules and regulations regarding the behavior learners should perform in interacting with others. This approach is in line with the views of Kohlberg (1995), who states that the development of moral reasoning is not the result of innate factors but is a product of human interaction with the social environment.

Conclusion

Generation Z students develop moral reasoning at the conventional level, which is 56 people or 88.9%, divided into stages 3 and 4. Most subjects were at stage 4 with 31 people (49.2%), followed by stage 3 with 25 (39.7%). This indicates that Generation Z students behave well by fulfilling their obligations and respecting authority. They strive to adhere to the expectations of their social group, which is characterized by conformity with social norms, including efforts to meet parental expectations. This action is done to obtain good judgment from other parties, such as peers or adults.

Kohlberg (1995) argues that during adolescence into adulthood, a person is expected to reach the third stage of moral reasoning, the post-conventional level. Therefore, efforts are needed to optimize the moral development of Generation Z so that they reach the level of moral reasoning that should be, namely, the post-conventional level.

Suggestion

1. Researchers can then research efforts to improve moral reasoning in Generation Z through learning activities that increase students' moral reasoning stage.
2. Generation Z students still at the

conventional stage can increase moral discussions with other students who have reached the post-conventional level.

3. Policymakers can design programs that can improve students' moral reasoning.

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