

# Conflict of Generational Gap in the Workplace

*By Lina Dameria Siregar*

# Conflict of Generational Gap in the Workplace

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine and explain the generation gap conflict between millennials and older generation employees. Currently, the generation gap is identified by the existence of three or even four combinations of generations in one organization. These differences trigger the generation gap conflict. This conflict will certainly have an impact on employee performance. The population in this study is the working age community with the year of birth, namely the Baby Boomers Generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y or millennials (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2012) as many as 200 respondents. The results of the study show that the majority of respondents have experienced generation gap conflicts in their work at various levels of management.

**Keywords:** *Generation, Gap, Conflict, Workplace.*

## 1. MULTI GENERATION WORKFROECE

Changes in the demographics of the workforce is a phenomenon that occurs in almost all organizations or companies in the world. Diversity in the workplace is growing with four generations currently working together namely the Baby Boomers Generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y or millennials (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2012). Currently in Indonesia itself, the composition of the population is dominated by groups of people born between the 80s and early 2000s. This can be seen from the results of the Population Census 2020 by Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS), the composition of the population in Indonesia consists of the Baby Boomers Generation (11.56%), Generation X (21.88%), Generation Y or millennials (25.87%), and Generation Z (27.94%). The increasing number of employees from the younger generation who are now entering the workforce is the most important reason to understand the phenomenon of the "generation gap".

### 1.1. Generational gap

Generations are groups that can be identified by year of birth, age, location and important events that build their personality. A generation can be developed by a significant life event such as a war event, a technological disruption, or a major economic transition. These events

determine the personality, values, and expectations of that generation [1]. The generation gap is a difference of opinion between one generation and another, namely between younger people and older people [2]. The cause of this generation gap is because each of these generations grows up with different work values and perspectives [3]. More specifically, this generational cohort have differences in actions, beliefs and views between generations [2].

The generation gap between Baby Boomers who is about to enter the future retirement meets newcomers like Generation Y or these millennials offers many complex challenges and opportunities for businesses [4]. These opportunities are growth, development, and collaboration. The "gap" itself should be useful for organizations with complementary skills; but on the other hands it also presents many challenges. There is a generation gap in an organization or company can affecting efficiency workflow among co-workers or management structures and the effectiveness of achieving company goals [3].

Leaders in the organizations need to manage employees with intergenerational perspective [6], by treats them according to their generation's character and valued in order to create a comfortable organizational environment to achieve the organization goals.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The grand theory used in this study is Organizational Behaviour theory, which is a theory that explains the impact of individual, group and their social behaviour in the organization. This theory explains that empowering the people in the organization will impact on increasing organizational effectiveness.

Generational conflict is one of the most serious problems challenging in the organization. Conflict in organizations arises from interactions with heterogeneous employees (different generational identities). Multi generations in the workplace can add diversity within the organization. Generational conflict can reduce trust, increase distortion, and reduce productivity [9]. Research by [10] also shows that conflict have a negative impact on the organization, especially when it comes to productivity and performance [10].

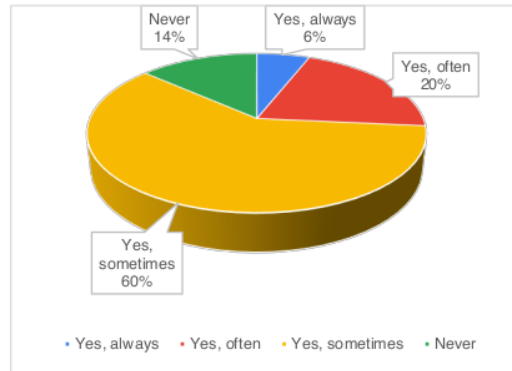
**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a survey method by questionnaire. The data used in this study are primary data. The population in this study is the working age community with the year of birth, namely the Baby Boomers Generation (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Generation Y or millennials (1981-1996) and Generation Z (1997-2012).

The number of samples used in this study were 200 employees/respondents in Palembang with various company backgrounds such as state-owned enterprise, banking officer, academician, lecturer, teacher, oil and gas company staff, administration officer, and others.

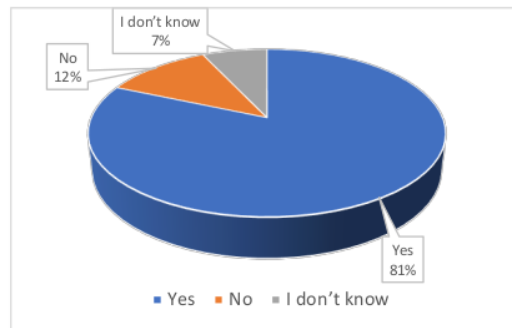
**4. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

1. Have you ever experienced a generation gap conflict (conflict between the older generation and the younger generation) in the world of work?



**Figure 1**

2. In your opinion, do intergenerational conflicts really occur?



**Figure 2**

**Table 1. Data of Respondent**

Description	Category	Total	Percentage (%)
Year of birth	Baby boomers	15	7%
	Generation X	42	21%
	Generation Y	126	63%
	Generation Z	17	9%
Gender	Male	79	39%
	Female	121	61%
Educational background	Senior high school	4	2%
	Diploma	21	10%
	Undergraduate	69	35%
	Postgraduate	90	45%
	Doctoral	16	8%
Employee status	Permanent	164	82%
	Temporary	36	18%
Working experience	≤ 2 years	29	14%
	3 – 5 years	40	20%
	6 – 10 years	35	18%
	11 – 15 years	46	23%
	≥ 15 years	50	25%

3. In your opinion, how difficult is it to work with people who are much older or younger?

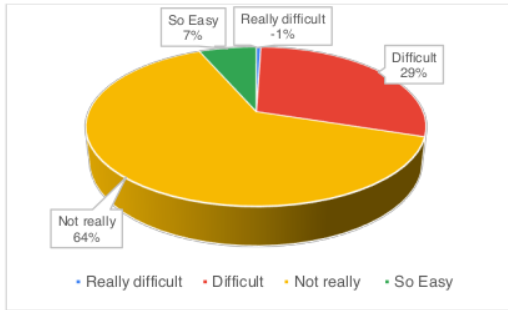


Figure 3

4. In your opinion, how difficult is it to accept the opinions or suggestions of people who are much younger or older?

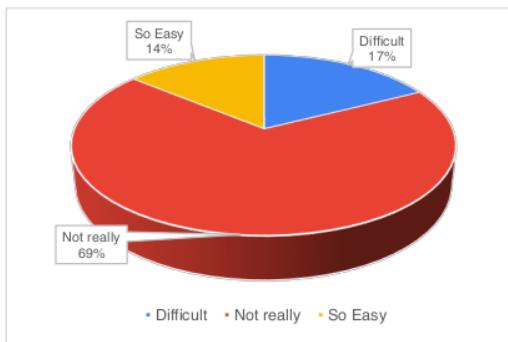


Figure 4

5. In your opinion, what is the cause of the gap between generations? Majority of respondents say the cause of the gap between generations is caused by: different point of view or values, differences in knowledge and skills of using technology, and rejection of old things.

6. I find it most difficult to communicate with generations:

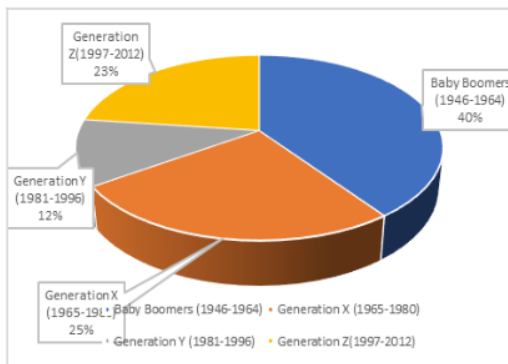


Figure 5

7. How did you feel after the conflict occurred?

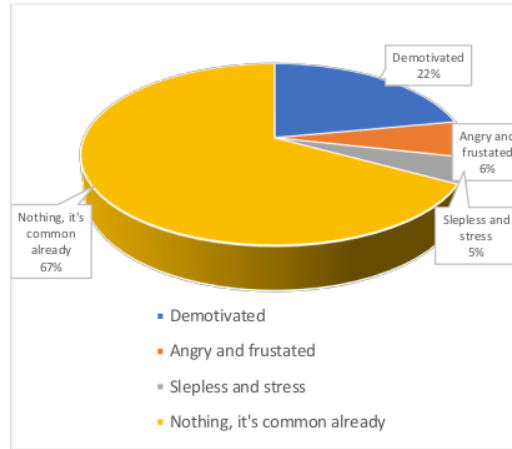


Figure 6

8. In your opinion, what are the most negative effects of workplace conflicts that you have found? Majority of respondents say the most negative effects of workplace conflict are: personal problems among employees, employee moves to another department, and cross-departmental conflict.

9. At which organizational level do you observe the most conflict?

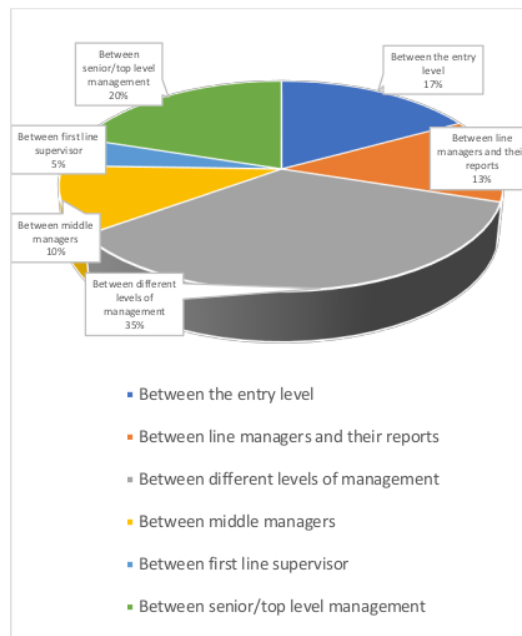


Figure 7

10. In your opinion, who is the most affected by intergenerational conflict in the workplace?

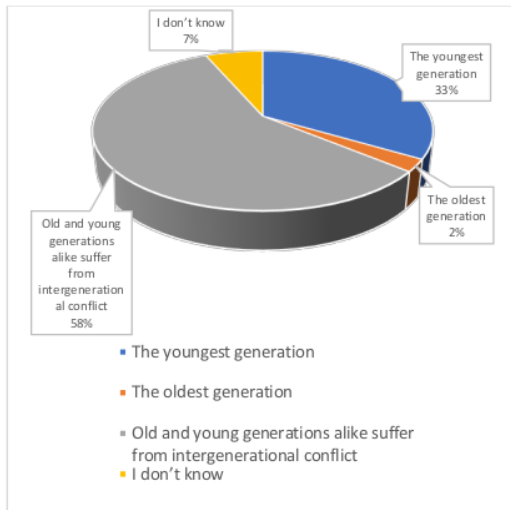


Figure 8

11. In your opinion, what percentage of conflicts in the workplace occur because of the generation gap?

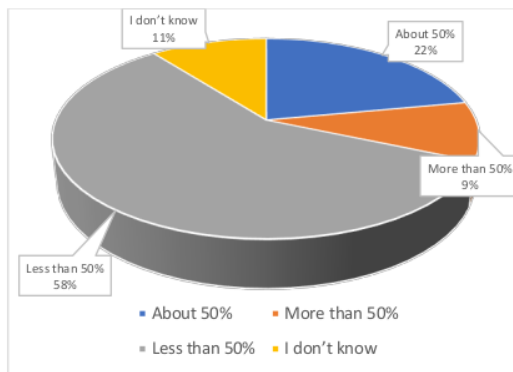


Figure 9

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributed in the field of Human Resource Management study especially in the scope of Organizational Behaviour and the factors affecting the generational gap and conflict in the workplace.

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