



THE INFLUENCE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP ON GEN Z RESILIENCE THROUGH PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN INDUSTRY 5.0

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ABSTRACT

Industry 5.0 marks a paradigm shift in the world of work by integrating technological advancements with a human-centered approach. In this context, Generation Z, as the emerging workforce, faces complex challenges that demand a high level of resilience. This study aims to systematically examine how ethical leadership contributes to the development of Gen Z resilience, considering the mediating roles of proactive behavior and technological innovation. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was employed to analyze relevant scientific literature from various reputable academic databases. The findings reveal that ethical leadership fosters a supportive and psychologically safe work environment, which in turn encourages proactive behavior and engagement with technological innovation. Proactive behavior is proven to be an adaptive mechanism that strengthens individual endurance against work-related stress, while technology serves as a medium for self-actualization among Gen Z employees. Ethical leadership, proactivity, and technology are interrelated in building robust resilience, both technically and emotionally. This study provides theoretical contributions to leadership and human resource management literature, as well as practical implications for organizations in developing more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable talent management strategies in the era of Industry 5.0.

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, Resilience, Gen Z, Proactive Behavior, Industry 5.0

ABSTRAK

Industri 5.0 adalah sebuah tanda adanya perubahan paradigma di dalam dunia kerja dan industri dengan integrasi teknologi yang semakin mutahir dengan pendekatan baru bagi kemanusiaan. Dalam konteks ini, Generasi Z merupakan angkatan kerja yang sedang berkembang, menghadapi tantangan yang lebih kompleks sehingga membutuhkan kemampuan resiliensi yang tinggi. Studi literatur kali ini bertujuan untuk mengamati bagaimana Kepemimpinan Etikal dapat memberikan kontribusi bagi perkembangan resiliensi Gen Z, melalui peranan sikap proaktif dan inovasi dalam teknologi. Tulisan ini menggunakan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR) untuk menganalisa tulisan yang relevan. Melalui metode ini ditemukan bahwa ternyata kepemimpinan etis mampu menumbuhkan rasa saling mendukung dan rasa aman di dalam lingkungan kerja, dimana kepemimpinan semacam ini dapat mendorong perilaku proaktif dan kemampuan untuk terlibat penuh dalam pengembangan inovasi teknologi. Perilaku proaktif terbukti menjadi cara yang tepat dalam mengadaptasi kemampuan individual agar lebih tangguh



menghadapi stress terhadap tekanan pekerjaan. Di samping itu, teknologi membuka peluang sebagai cara aktualisasi diri di antara pekerja Gen Z. Kepemimpinan Etikal, sikap proaktif dan teknologi terkait satu dengan yang lain untuk membangun sikap resiliensi yang kuat, baik secara teknis maupun secara emosional. Tulisan ini ingin membuktikan kontribusi secara teori terhadap kepemimpinan dan manajemen sumber daya manusia, seperti halnya implikasi praktikal bagi organisasi dalam upaya untuk lebih adaptif, inklusif, dan berkelanjutan dalam strategi manajemen bakat di era Industri 5.0.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan Etis, Resiliensi, Generasi Z, Perilaku Proaktif, Industri 5.0

1. INTRODUCTION

Industry 5.0 emerges as the latest evolutionary phase of the industrial revolution, emphasizing the synergy between artificial intelligence, advanced technology, and a human-centered approach. Unlike Industry 4.0 which primarily focused on efficiency, Industry 5.0 prioritizes collaboration between humans and machines to create solutions that are more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable (Zahra et al., 2025). In this context, the role of human capital especially younger generations like Generation Z, becomes increasingly critical in directing innovation toward ethical and socially oriented outcomes. However, the rapid and complex changes in the industrial landscape demand a high level of adaptability from its workforce.

Generation Z, now entering the workforce, is recognized as a tech-savvy generation, open to change, yet also vulnerable to mental pressure, uncertainty, and workplace instability (Wulur & Mandagi, 2023). Their unique characteristics, which prioritize meaning, speed, and flexibility, often clash with the competitive and high-pressure dynamics of modern industry. Therefore, resilience which is the capacity to endure, recover, and grow in difficult conditions becomes a crucial trait that must be cultivated and strengthened within this generation.

In efforts to build such resilience, leadership factors play a significant role. Ethical leadership has been widely recognized as a leadership style capable of fostering a supportive and psychologically safe work environment that promotes both personal and professional growth (Sumantri et al., 2024). Ethical leaders



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emphasize moral values and fairness while serving as role models in making responsible and integrity-based decisions. For Gen Z employees, this leadership approach can serve as a buffer against workplace stressors while also motivating them to grow positively within their roles.

However, resilience is not solely the product of external leadership influence. According to Sigaeva et al. (2019), there are internal mechanisms within individuals that mediate this influence. One such mechanism is proactive behavior which is the ability to take initiative, anticipate challenges, and actively create opportunities. While Gen Z tends to be independent and exploratory, their success in navigating industrial complexity is heavily influenced by how much the organization supports or inhibits such behavior.

Furthermore, the ability to engage with technological innovation also plays a vital role in building Gen Z's resilience in the workplace. Industry 5.0 requires high-level human-technology collaboration, including the use of AI, intelligent automation, and data-driven system integration. As digital natives, Gen Z naturally possesses strong technological capabilities, yet they still require a work ecosystem that channels these skills toward meaningful and productive ends (Putri et al., 2025). Here, the role of ethical leadership becomes even more crucial: how to foster a culture of innovation without compromising individual well-being.

When ethical leadership succeeds in encouraging proactive behavior and opening space for technological innovation, a strong foundation is established for Gen Z to remain resilient amid change (Paulišić, 2024). The interaction between leadership, individual behavior, and technological readiness forms a crucial matrix in developing both psychological endurance and long-term productivity. Thus, it becomes essential to understand more deeply how these three elements are interrelated in shaping the resilience of younger generations in this new industrial era. Accordingly, examining how ethical leadership influences Gen Z resilience in the Industry 5.0 landscape through proactive behavior and technological innovation becomes a highly relevant research endeavor. This phenomenon is not only vital in



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the context of modern HR management but also in shaping future organizations that are more adaptive, inclusive, and sustainable.

Previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of ethical leadership, proactive behavior, technological innovation, and employee resilience within modern organizational contexts. Nguyen & Petchsawang (2024) found that ethical leadership significantly enhances employee trust and organizational commitment. Lopes et al. (2024) revealed that proactive behavior serves as an important mediator between ethical leadership and employee performance. Meanwhile, Lee (2021) showed that technological innovation in the workplace can improve employee engagement and adaptability, especially among younger generations more familiar with digitalization. Katsaros (2025b) stated that ethical leadership also contributes to psychological resilience by fostering a supportive and fair work environment. Additionally, research by Jasin et al. (2023) in the Indonesian context highlighted that the combination of ethical leadership and innovation initiatives strengthens Gen Z's ability to withstand work-related stress and organizational change.

Despite numerous prior studies discussing the relationships between ethical leadership, proactive behavior, technological innovation, and resilience, a research gap remains in comprehensively understanding how these four elements are interconnected particularly within the context of Generation Z and the dynamics of Industry 5.0. This study aims to systematically examine the influence of ethical leadership on Gen Z resilience by considering the mediating roles of proactive behavior and technological innovation.

Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this study is expected to provide a structured and in-depth synthesis of existing findings while identifying patterns, inconsistencies, and directions for future research. The value of this study lies not only in its academic contribution to the fields of management and leadership studies, but also in its practical relevance for organizations seeking to design adaptive leadership strategies to ensure the sustained performance of younger generations in an increasingly complex and technology-driven industrial environment.



2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to thoroughly examine the relationship between ethical leadership, proactive behavior, technological innovation, and Gen Z resilience within the context of Industry 5.0. The SLR approach was chosen because it enables researchers to systematically, transparently, and replicably identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant empirical findings. This strategy is considered appropriate for addressing the complexity of a topic involving multiple variables and diverse organizational contexts, as well as for filtering literature with high methodological quality.

Data collection was carried out by searching scientific articles from several reputable academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The keywords used included “ethical leadership,” “resilience,” “Gen Z,” “proactive behavior,” “technological innovation,” and “Industry 5.0.” The inclusion criteria consisted of articles published within the last 10 years, written in English or Indonesian, and applying quantitative, qualitative, or mixed empirical approaches. Articles that were not directly relevant to the topic or failed to meet the methodological standards were excluded during the selection process.

The selected articles were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns of relationships among the variables and the theoretical and practical implications embedded in the studies. This process involved several stages, including initial coding, categorization, and the formulation of key themes that reflect the dynamics among ethical leadership, proactive behavior, technological innovation, and Gen Z resilience. The results of this analysis were used to develop a conceptual model and provide recommendations for future research and organizational practice.

3. DISCUSSION



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The Central Role of Ethical Leadership in Building a Resilient Work Environment

The findings indicate that ethical leadership serves as a foundational element in shaping a work environment that supports Gen Z resilience. Leadership grounded in strong moral values creates a workplace climate that is open, fair, and supportive which is an environment crucial for a generation that values authenticity, inclusivity, and meaning in their professional lives. Within the context of Industry 5.0, characterized by technological disruption, rapid innovation, and intense competition, leaders who consistently uphold values and demonstrate social awareness are capable of fostering psychological safety in the workplace (Ang et al., 2022). This sense of security forms a vital basis for Gen Z employees to confidently express ideas, take risks, and manage stress constructively.

Ethical leadership is not only viewed through the lens of morality but also in its ability to build trust and organizational justice. Aksakal & Ulucan (2024) found that ethical leaders promote the perception of organizational fairness, which directly impacts employee well-being and engagement. For Generation Z, values such as transparency, honesty, and empathy in leadership are particularly crucial, as they tend to be skeptical of authority and have high expectations for clarity and consistency in values (Yusuff et al., 2023). When they perceive leadership as authentic and consistent, they are more likely to demonstrate loyalty and resilience in the face of organizational challenges.

This view is also supported by Wawer et al. (2022), who showed that ethical leadership contributes to enhancing employees' psychological resilience by creating a work climate that supports personal and professional growth. In workplaces that value moral principles, employees feel respected as individuals rather than merely as "resources" (Soelaiman et al., 2023). This sense of recognition provides space for Gen Z, in particular, to develop their potential optimally without fear of failure. In this context, resilience is not merely the capacity to endure but also the ability to thrive under pressure.



These findings urge organizations to take the integration of ethics in leadership development more seriously. It is not enough to cultivate technical competence and managerial strategy; it is equally important to nurture the moral and social dimensions of leadership. In an Industry 5.0 landscape that prioritizes human-centric innovation, the ethical leader is not only a visionary but also a guardian of values (Sigaeva, 2019). When ethical leadership is practiced consistently, the workplace becomes more resilient, collaborative, and adaptive—qualities that are most needed to cultivate Gen Z resilience amid the complexity of today's and tomorrow's work environment.

Proactive Behavior as a Bridge for Adaptation and Endurance

Proactive behavior represents an active form of adaptation that enables individuals not only to survive difficult situations but also to take control of their environment. In the context of Generation Z, traits such as independence, a desire to experiment, and a tendency to seek meaning in work drive them to be more initiative-taking. According to Seyfi et al. (2024), proactive individuals do not wait for instructions or solutions from superiors; instead, they anticipate problems, create opportunities, and make improvements independently. In ever-changing work environments like those in Industry 5.0, such behavior becomes a key factor in professional endurance and growth.

Ethical leadership plays a major role in fostering the emergence of proactive behavior among Gen Z employees (Phuong et al., 2022). Leaders who uphold fairness, model moral conduct, and recognize individual contributions help create a sense of security and confidence among their teams. As Ozturk & Yildirim (2023) explained, ethical leadership not only enhances work engagement but also promotes positive behaviors such as proactivity, as employees feel empowered and involved in decision-making processes. In such an environment, Gen Z employees feel they have space to express themselves and experiment, without fear of failure or punishment, thereby naturally reinforcing their resilience.



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Narojczyk and Nowak (2024) emphasized that proactive behavior can serve as a mediator between a healthy organizational climate especially one shaped by ethical leadership and various forms of adaptive performance, including resilience. This behavior helps individuals develop a future orientation and manage stress productively, as they are accustomed to taking initiative in crafting solutions rather than simply reacting. This is especially relevant for Gen Z, who often work in dynamic, tech-driven systems that demand agility and responsiveness. In other words, while ethical leadership builds the foundation of values and security, proactive behavior becomes the practical expression of adaptive and constructive effort (Lhakard, 2024).

Within the framework of Industry 5.0, proactive behavior is also aligned with the demands of work that integrate human flexibility and technological sophistication. Proactive Gen Z employees tend to adapt more quickly to new roles, utilize new technologies effectively, and propose innovations within work processes (Kim et al., 2024). Therefore, organizations that aim to build long-term resilience in this era must provide space for exploration and support the courage of young employees to take initiative. In this way, resilience is not merely a reactive response to stress, but a long-term strategy shaped by an ethical work environment and proactive individuals working simultaneously.

Technological Innovation as a Space for Gen Z Actualization

As a generation that has grown up alongside the rapid development of digital technology, Gen Z possesses a strong advantage in accessing, understanding, and optimizing the use of technology in the workplace. They do not view technology merely as a tool, but rather as a medium to express ideas, collaborate effectively, and shape their professional identities (Katsaros, 2025a). In the context of Industry 5.0, which emphasizes the integration of technological advancement with humanistic values, Gen Z finds a platform for self-actualization through digital innovation. A work environment that supports technological exploration becomes a vital space for both personal and professional growth.



The integration of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, automation tools, and collaborative platforms like Slack or Notion has been shown to enhance young employees' engagement and sense of ownership over their work. Hill et al. (2024) found that employees working in technology-driven environments tend to show higher engagement levels and a stronger sense of responsibility for outcomes. Technology allows for greater flexibility, transparency, and interactivity in workflows which are factors highly valued by Gen Z. When individuals feel that their digital skills are being used productively and recognized, their resilience to workplace pressures increases, as they feel empowered to take control of processes and contribute meaningfully (Dirik et al., 2025).

However, the role of technology in promoting resilience largely depends on how leaders frame and implement innovation. Ethical leaders ensure that the use of technology aligns with values of justice, transparency, and sustainability. This aligns with findings from Boyden et al. (2024), which indicate that technological innovation guided by wise and ethical leadership tends to result in a more inclusive work environment that supports employees' mental well-being. In this context, technology does not become a burden or a source of alienation, but rather a tool for empowerment that strengthens Gen Z's adaptive capacity and resilience in navigating workplace complexity and disruption.

The Synergy of Three Dimensions in the Context of Industry 5.0

Findings from this Systematic Literature Review confirm that the relationship between ethical leadership, proactive behavior, and technological innovation should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as interconnected and synergistic elements in shaping Gen Z resilience. In the context of Industry 5.0 which emphasizes collaboration between technological sophistication and human values, human capital development depends not only on technical readiness but also



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on moral values and individuals' adaptive capacities. Ethical leadership provides direction and meaning, proactive behavior enables individuals to respond actively to change, and technological innovation offers both tools and space for experimentation and growth (Anggraeni, 2022). When combined, these three components create a resilient organizational ecosystem.

Several studies support the integration of these three dimensions. For instance, Alamsyah et al. (2025) stated that ethical leadership fosters work environments that support innovation and personal growth, ultimately boosting employees' psychological resilience. Similarly, Zahra et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of proactive behavior as a key pathway to adaptation amid organizational change. Wawer et al. (2022) further argued that technological innovation strengthens employee engagement and work effectiveness, particularly when paired with a supportive leadership approach. Thus, Gen Z resilience is not simply a result of individual traits or a single influencing factor, but rather the outcome of a synergistic interaction among various organizational elements.

In practice, organizations aiming to survive and thrive in the Industry 5.0 era must deliberately design systems that integrate these three elements. Leaders are not only expected to be technologically competent but also to uphold ethical standards and actively facilitate employee engagement (Sigaeva et al., 2019). The work environment must support initiative and avoid penalizing failure, while technology should be positioned not merely for operational efficiency but as a tool for empowerment. When leaders succeed in shaping a culture that harmoniously blends values, initiative, and innovation, Gen Z employees will not only endure but also emerge as key drivers of transformation within the organization.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study not only hold practical relevance for the world of work but also offer significant contributions to theoretical development in the fields of leadership, organizational behavior, and human resource management. The



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approach that integrates ethical leadership, proactive behavior, and technological innovation into a unified framework for explaining the formation of Gen Z resilience provides a new, more integrative and contextual perspective. This is particularly relevant in the landscape of Industry 5.0, which demands a close interplay between values, individual capacities, and adaptive technological systems.

Theoretically, this research expands the concept of resilience, which has traditionally been studied primarily as a psychological trait or a response to workplace stress. By incorporating proactive behavior as a mediating variable and technological innovation as the contextual factor influencing both behavior and perception, the resilience model becomes more dynamic and contextually grounded. These findings support an interactionist approach to organizational theory, emphasizing the importance of the relationship between individual characteristics and the surrounding social and technological environment. This opens up new avenues for developing resilience theory not only based on individual coping mechanisms but also on ethical values and the digital work ecosystem.

Additionally, this study contributes to the contemporary leadership literature by highlighting how ethical leadership plays a role not only in fostering trust and moral integrity within organizations but also in shaping the adaptive capacities of new generations. Ethical leadership, which was previously viewed largely through a normative lens, is now extended into a strategic domain as a driver of engagement, proactive behavior, and technological utilization. Therefore, this study reinforces the position of ethical leadership as a central factor in future organizations that pursue not only efficiency but also long-term sustainability and organizational resilience.

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the need for organizations to design human resource development strategies that focus not only on technical competencies but also on strengthening ethical values and proactive behavior. Leadership training programs should be redesigned to include components of morality, empathy, and sensitivity to the needs of younger generations who prioritize authenticity and transparency. Moreover, organizations



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must create work systems that allow individuals especially Gen Z, to take initiative without fear of failure. A work culture that encourages experimentation, open dialogue, and collective decision-making is key to building a resilient workforce.

Furthermore, organizations must ensure the availability and accessibility of technological infrastructure that supports innovation among young employees. Technology should be integrated not only as an operational tool but also as a medium for personal development and intergenerational collaboration. Flexible and transparent digital work systems will promote active participation among Gen Z and strengthen their sense of belonging to the organization. When organizations successfully combine the values of ethical leadership, support for proactive behavior, and effective utilization of technology, their competitiveness and sustainability in facing the challenges of Industry 5.0 will be significantly enhanced.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ethical leadership plays a fundamental role in building Gen Z resilience in an ever-evolving work environment, particularly within the context of Industry 5.0. The resilience of this generation is not formed instantly but is shaped by the presence of an ethical work environment, opportunities for proactive behavior, and the strategic use of technological innovation. Ethical leadership provides value-driven direction and psychological safety; proactive behavior acts as an adaptive bridge to face challenges; and technological innovation offers a space for self-actualization aligned with Gen Z's digital nature. These three elements work synergistically and reinforce one another, thereby creating a solid foundation for individual endurance and organizational sustainability in an era that prioritizes human-machine collaboration.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that organizations actively develop human resource management systems that emphasize not only efficiency and productivity but also ethical values and individual empowerment. Leadership development programs should incorporate ethics as a core competency while



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fostering an organizational culture that encourages initiative and the courage to take risks. Furthermore, organizations need to invest in technology that not only enhances operational efficiency but also expands opportunities for participation and learning among younger generations. Through this integrative approach, organizations will be better equipped to cultivate a resilient, innovative workforce that aligns with the challenges and values of Industry 5.0.

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