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Generation Z in Construction: Exploring Onboarding in Multigenerational Work Environments

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees in the construction industry work environment and how they adapt during the early stages of their employment. The research was conducted at PT Wira Sakti using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with Generation Z employees as the main informants and triangulation informants from the millennial generation. The results show that the onboarding process does not only focus on introducing job tasks but also involves adjustment to organizational culture, work communication patterns, and the dynamics of professional relationships within project teams. Generation Z employees face adaptation challenges related to hierarchical organizational structures, the dynamic rhythm of project work, and the high demands for coordination in the field. In addressing these challenges, Generation Z employees develop various adaptation strategies, such as improving their ability to observe team work patterns, building more active communication with colleagues, and adjusting personal expectations to align with the organization's work system. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of more structured onboarding practices to support the adaptation process and social integration of new employees within the organization.

Keywords: *Construction Industry, Employee Onboarding, Generation Z, Intergenerational Workplace.*

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1. | INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the global workforce are undergoing significant transformation with the entry of Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012, into the formal labor market. Data from the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022) projects that by 2025, Generation Z will account for approximately 27% of the total global workforce, a proportion that cannot be overlooked by academics and human resource management practitioners. In Indonesia, *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS, 2023) reported that the productive age group of 15–29 years, which largely represents Generation Z, exceeds 64 million individuals, making them the fastest-growing segment of the labor force.

Within the context of Indonesia's construction industry, this demographic transition becomes even more complex. Unlike the technology or financial services sectors, which have more rapidly adopted digital and horizontal work cultures, the construction industry has historically been characterized by rigid hierarchical structures, formal top-down communication patterns, and professional norms passed down across generations through seniority-based mechanisms (Meng & Boyd, 2017). A survey conducted by *Gabungan Pelaksana Konstruksi Nasional Indonesias* indicates that more than 60% of managerial and supervisory positions in medium-scale construction companies are currently dominated by Millennials, individuals born between 1981 and 1996, who developed their professional capacities within organizational cultures substantially different from the expectations of Generation Z.

The organizational onboarding literature consistently demonstrates that the first six months of a new employee's experience represent a critical period influencing long-term engagement, initial productivity, and the decision to remain within the organization (Budiono et al., 2024; Klein et al., 2015). However, most existing onboarding studies have been developed in relatively demographically homogeneous organizational contexts or have focused on intergenerational transitions involving Baby Boomers and Millennials (Waligóra, & Górski, 2025). Research specifically exploring the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees within Millennial-dominated workplaces, particularly in project-based industries such as construction, remains highly limited.

Several recent studies have begun identifying the unique characteristics of Generation Z as a distinct workforce entity. Michael Dimock (2019) noted that Generation Z is the first generation to grow up entirely within a post-smartphone digital ecosystem, resulting in expectations for workplace digitalization, information transparency, and rapid feedback responses that are significantly higher than those of previous generations. Research by Bhayana et al. (2021) in the Southeast Asian context found that younger employees tend to experience more intense expectation conflicts when interacting with supervisors from different generations who adopt leadership styles rooted in field experience and formal seniority. Meanwhile, Lucy Cennamo and Dianne Gardner (2008) emphasized that intergenerational value misalignment within

the workplace can significantly affect job satisfaction and turnover intentions among new employees.

Specifically within the construction industry, research by González-Morales (2025) in the United Kingdom identified that the deeply rooted culture of masculinity and hierarchy within the sector creates structural barriers to the integration of new employees who possess different value orientations. Po et al. (2024) also found that the slow pace of digitalization among medium-scale construction companies in developing countries further widens the expectation gap between new employees and their work environments. These findings indicate a significant research gap, as no comprehensive study has yet explored the phenomenological onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees within Millennial-dominated construction companies in Indonesia.

PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha, a construction service company operating in Tangerang, represents a relevant organizational context for examining cross-generational onboarding dynamics within the construction industry. The company's workforce composition reflects demographic patterns commonly found in the national construction sector, where supervisory and managerial positions are largely occupied by Millennial employees, while the recruitment of new workers in recent years has been dominated by Generation Z individuals. These generational differences have the potential to create complex adaptation dynamics, particularly during the early stages of integrating new employees into a work environment characterized by hierarchy and field-experience-based practices.

Based on this context, this study aims to explore in depth the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees during the early stages of their employment at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha. Specifically, the study seeks to identify various challenges emerging during the initial adaptation process, including those related to organizational structure, workplace communication patterns, and differences in values and expectations between generations. Furthermore, the study aims to understand how Generation Z employees interpret the onboarding process they experience, including their expectations regarding organizational support, work systems, and feedback mechanisms provided during the adjustment period. In addition, this research seeks to investigate the adaptation strategies developed by Generation Z employees in dealing with cross-generational interaction dynamics within a workplace dominated by Millennials. Through this exploration, the study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how onboarding processes occur within generationally heterogeneous organizations and how these experiences influence the integration of new employees in the construction industry.

2. | LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the phenomenon of demographic transformation in the workplace, marked by the increasing participation of Generation Z in the formal labor market. This generation grew up in an environment

heavily influenced by digital technological developments, shaping characteristics that differ from previous generations. Generation Z individuals generally possess a strong orientation toward technology utilization, preferences for fast and open communication, and expectations regarding information transparency and responsive feedback systems within the workplace. These characteristics influence how they perceive the world of work and how they interpret their initial experiences when entering an organization (Dimock, 2019; Waligóra & Górski, 2025).

Several previous studies have shown that Generation Z tends to seek work environments that are flexible, collaborative, and supportive of continuous self-development. Research by Aggarwal et al. (2022) found that Generation Z tends to prioritize open communication, rapid access to information, and work environments that provide dynamic learning opportunities. In addition, Racolţa-Paina and Irini (2021) also demonstrated that Generation Z has higher expectations regarding organizational support, the use of technology in the workplace, and participative working relationships compared to previous generations. These findings indicate that the characteristics of Generation Z may influence how they undergo the adaptation process when first entering the workforce.

In the organizational context, the initial process that determines how new employees adapt to the work environment is known as onboarding. Onboarding is a systematic process designed by organizations to help new employees understand their roles, responsibilities, values, and organizational culture so that they can integrate effectively into the workplace. According to the onboarding framework, employees' early experiences during onboarding play an important role in shaping organizational attachment, early work effectiveness, and employees' decisions to remain within the organization over the long term (Budiono et al., 2024). Other studies also show that successful onboarding processes can improve job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and accelerate the adaptation process of new employees within the workplace (Klein et al., 2015).

Previous research also emphasizes that onboarding experiences have a significant influence on new employees' early work experiences. Scott et al. (2021) explain that effective onboarding can help employees build an understanding of organizational culture, increase work engagement, and strengthen social relationships with coworkers and supervisors. Meanwhile, Peltokorpi et al. (2022) found that unstructured onboarding processes may lead to role ambiguity, work stress, and low organizational attachment during the early stages of employment. These findings suggest that onboarding is not merely an administrative process, but rather an important mechanism in shaping the integration experiences of new employees within organizations.

However, onboarding processes do not occur within homogeneous social environments. In many modern organizations, workplace interactions involve individuals from various generational groups with different values, experiences, and work preferences. This condition also occurs within the construction industry, which

has historically been recognized as a sector characterized by relatively hierarchical organizational structures, formal communication patterns, and work cultures heavily influenced by field experience and seniority mechanisms (Meng & Boyd, 2017). In many construction companies, supervisory and managerial positions are currently dominated by Millennials, a generational group that has developed its professional identity within organizational cultures substantially different from those of younger generations. Previous studies within the construction industry context indicate that the sector's work culture tends to emphasize work discipline, formal coordination, and practical field experience. Such conditions may create particular challenges for younger generations who prefer more flexible and collaborative work environments.

Differences in characteristics between Generation Z and Millennials have the potential to create complex interaction dynamics within the workplace. Millennials in leadership positions are generally accustomed to work structures emphasizing practical experience, organizational hierarchy, and more formal communication patterns. In contrast, Generation Z tends to expect work environments that are more collaborative, open to digital technology utilization, and capable of providing faster and more transparent feedback mechanisms (Bhayana et al., 2021). Misalignment between generational expectations and organizational cultural realities may affect new employees' experiences during onboarding, particularly regarding adaptation to work systems, communication patterns, and professional relationships with supervisors and coworkers. Research by Cennamo and Gardner (2008) demonstrates that intergenerational value differences within organizations can affect job satisfaction and turnover intentions among new employees.

Other studies also show that cross-generational dynamics may influence communication effectiveness and learning processes within organizations. In the context of onboarding, such differences may influence how new employees understand organizational culture and build professional relationships with more senior coworkers. Within the construction industry specifically, these dynamics may become even more complex. Research by González-Morales (2025) indicates that strong masculine cultures and hierarchical structures within the construction sector often create barriers for the integration of new employees with different value orientations. In addition, Po et al. (2024) found that the relatively slow pace of digitalization in many construction companies in developing countries may widen the gap between younger generations' expectations and existing organizational work practices.

In such situations, the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees are determined not only by the design of organizational onboarding programs but also by the interaction between generational characteristics, organizational work culture, and cross-generational relationship dynamics within the workplace (Saepudin & Handayani, 2026). Generation Z employees entering the construction industry need to adapt not only to job demands but also to the professional norms that have long developed within the sector. This adaptation process may create various challenges,

such as communication gaps, differences in expectations regarding leadership styles, and misalignment in perspectives toward technology utilization and work systems.

Nevertheless, individuals are not always passive in facing such conditions. Generation Z employees may develop various adaptation strategies to navigate cross-generational dynamics within organizations. These strategies may include adjusting communication styles when interacting with supervisors from different generations, building social relationships with more senior coworkers, and modifying personal expectations regarding organizational work systems. Through these processes, Generation Z employees gradually develop an understanding of their work environments while simultaneously creating specific ways to function effectively within organizations.

Based on these perspectives, the conceptual framework of this study views Generation Z onboarding experiences as phenomena formed through the interaction of three main dimensions: the characteristics and expectations of Generation Z toward the workplace, the characteristics of construction industry work culture that tend to be hierarchical and dominated by Millennials in leadership positions, and the adaptation strategies developed by Generation Z employees in responding to cross-generational dynamics during the early stages of organizational integration. The interaction among these three dimensions ultimately shapes the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees within construction work environments and influences their adaptation and integration processes within organizations.

3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees within a construction work environment dominated by Millennials. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to explore the meanings, perceptions, and subjective experiences of individuals regarding the social phenomena they directly encounter within the organizational context. According to John W. Leavy, qualitative research is used when researchers aim to understand a phenomenon from the participants' perspectives and interpret the meanings they assign to their experiences (Leavy, 2022).

More specifically, this study applies a phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of Generation Z employees during the onboarding process within the organization. The phenomenological approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals interpret particular experiences and how these experiences shape their understanding of the surrounding social environment. This approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on the subjective experiences of new employees in dealing with intergenerational dynamics during the early adaptation process within the organization (Van Manen, 2023).

The study was conducted at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha, a construction service company located in Tangerang. The company was selected because its workforce

composition reflects cross-generational interactions commonly found in the construction industry, where managerial and supervisory positions are largely occupied by Millennials, while the recruitment of new employees in recent years has been dominated by Generation Z. This situation makes the company a relevant research setting for examining onboarding experiences within a generationally diverse work environment.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a participant selection technique based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. The selected informants were Generation Z employees who had worked at the company for less than one year and were therefore still in the early stages of onboarding. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain participants who had direct experience with the phenomenon being studied, resulting in richer and more relevant data (Patton, 2022).

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews. This method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding the onboarding process in greater detail. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by open-ended questions concerning early adaptation experiences, challenges encountered, expectations toward the work environment, and adjustment strategies used to cope with intergenerational dynamics within the organization. This interview approach provided flexibility for the researcher to further explore issues that emerged during the interview process, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (Brinkmann, 2022).

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method aims to identify, categorize, and interpret patterns of meaning emerging from the research data. The analysis process involved several stages, including repeatedly reading interview transcripts, coding relevant units of meaning, grouping codes into broader themes, and interpreting the relationships among themes to better understand the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure the quality and credibility of the study, the researcher also applied data validation techniques through source triangulation and member checking. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants to ensure data consistency, while member checking involved asking informants to review interview summaries to ensure that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected their experiences. These procedures were essential in enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of the qualitative research findings (Beuving, & Vries, 2025). Through this methodological approach, the study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees within a construction work environment dominated by Millennials, while also revealing the intergenerational adaptation dynamics that occur during the early integration process of new employees within the organization.

4. | RESULTS

The study was conducted at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha, a construction service company located in Tangerang City, Banten Province, Indonesia. The research location was selected purposively based on the relevance of its workforce demographic composition to the research questions. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling with explicitly defined inclusion criteria: (a) for the Generation Z group, informants were employees born between 1997 and 2004, had worked at the company for 3 to 12 months at the time of data collection, and were employed across various divisions; and (b) for the triangulation group, informants were Millennial employees (born between 1981 and 1996) who held supervisory or managerial positions with a minimum of three years of work experience.

The number of informants was determined using the principle of data saturation, resulting in a total of 7 informants participating in the study. The informants consisted of Generation Z employees working in the administration, procurement, and site engineering divisions, as well as triangulation informants from project supervisors and HRGA personnel involved in onboarding new employees within the company. The variation in work positions was intended to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of onboarding experiences within a cross-generational construction work environment.

Table 1. Research Informant Profiles

Code	Name	Age	Gender	Position	Length of Employment
01	L	24 y.o	Female	Supervisor Officer	3 years
02	FN	24 y.o	Male	Quality Control Engineer	2 years
03	DM	23 y.o	Female	Project Administrator	1 year
04	AS	33 y.o	Male	Project Supervisor	8 years
05	RA	22 y.o	Male	Site Engineer	6 months
06	NS	23 y.o	Female	Procurement Staff	8 months
07	RK	35 y.o	Female	HRGA Supervisor	7 years

Source: personal document (2026)

4.1 Early Onboarding Experiences of Generation Z in the Construction Work Environment

Early onboarding experiences represent a critical stage in the integration of new employees into an organization. Based on the interview findings, the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha involved not only learning job-related responsibilities but also adapting to the organization's culture, communication patterns, and professional relationship dynamics within a project-based construction environment. These findings support the concept of organizational socialization, which suggests that onboarding is a process through which newcomers

acquire the knowledge, behaviors, and values necessary to function effectively within an organization (Frögéli et al., 2023).

Most informants reported that the initial period of employment differed considerably from their previous experiences in both educational and work settings. The project-based nature of the construction industry creates a dynamic work environment that requires employees to adapt quickly to changing operational demands. During the onboarding process, new employees were expected to understand project workflows, decision-making mechanisms, and the distribution of responsibilities among project team members. These conditions required them to develop an understanding of how construction projects are managed and coordinated in practice.

The findings indicate that much of the learning process occurred through direct involvement in project activities. During the first weeks of employment, new employees participated in various operational tasks, including observing field activities, understanding work procedures, and monitoring coordination processes among project stakeholders. Through these experiences, they gradually developed a broader understanding of the organization's work system and the roles expected of them within project teams. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that experiential learning is an important component of employee socialization, particularly in industries characterized by operational complexity and project-based work structures (Batra & Rastogi, 2024).

In addition to technical job learning, onboarding also involved adaptation to organizational communication patterns. The construction work environment at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha follows a relatively formal and hierarchical communication structure. Work-related information is generally communicated through established reporting lines according to organizational positions and responsibilities. Consequently, new employees were required to learn appropriate communication practices, including how to report work progress, seek guidance from supervisors, and discuss operational issues that emerged during project implementation. Research has shown that role clarity and access to organizational information are essential factors influencing successful newcomer adjustment and organizational socialization (Bauer et al., 2025).

Several informants explained that during the early stages of employment, they spent considerable time observing the work practices of more experienced colleagues. Through these observations, they attempted to understand workplace expectations, professional standards, and effective approaches to managing construction-related tasks. Observation became an important informal learning mechanism because it enabled newcomers to learn directly from experienced employees and gain practical insights into project execution. Furthermore, observing senior colleagues helped new employees understand how to coordinate with field workers, manage project schedules, and respond to technical challenges that commonly arise during construction activities.

The onboarding experience was also influenced by interactions with employees who possessed extensive experience in the construction industry. Most supervisory and

managerial positions within PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha are occupied by individuals with long-standing industry experience. As a result, Generation Z employees viewed interactions with senior colleagues as valuable opportunities to gain practical knowledge regarding project implementation, professional conduct, and effective teamwork. Through these interactions, newcomers gradually developed an understanding of workplace expectations and learned how to establish professional relationships within the organizational setting.

Moreover, informants reported that onboarding helped them understand the professional values promoted by the company, including teamwork, responsibility, discipline, and commitment to work quality. These values were not formally taught in isolation but were learned through daily interactions and participation in project activities. Over time, these experiences contributed to the development of professional attitudes and behaviors that enabled employees to function effectively within project teams.

Overall, the findings indicate that the early onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha involved a combination of technical learning and organizational adaptation. New employees were required not only to understand their job responsibilities but also to learn communication norms, workplace relationship dynamics, and organizational values. The adaptation process occurred gradually through direct participation in project activities and continuous interaction with other organizational members. Furthermore, onboarding experiences varied across work divisions. Employees in site engineering roles experienced more intensive adaptation challenges related to field coordination and project execution, whereas employees in administration and procurement divisions focused more on understanding documentation systems, administrative workflows, and interdepartmental communication processes. These findings suggest that onboarding experiences within the construction industry are shaped by the specific characteristics of each work function and the operational demands associated with different organizational roles.

4.2 Cross-Generational Interaction Dynamics and Adaptation Challenges of Generation Z

The findings of this study indicate that the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha are strongly influenced by cross-generational interactions within the workplace. As a construction company characterized by a hierarchical project structure, most supervisory and managerial positions are occupied by employees with extensive industry experience. Consequently, newly recruited Generation Z employees are required to interact closely with supervisors, site managers, senior engineers, and other experienced colleagues during their early stages of employment. These interactions form an important part of the onboarding process and significantly influence how new employees adapt to the organizational environment.

The interview results reveal that cross-generational interactions provide valuable learning opportunities for Generation Z employees. Through daily involvement in project activities, newcomers gain access to practical knowledge regarding construction project implementation, team coordination, problem-solving strategies, and workplace expectations. Senior employees serve as important sources of experience and guidance, enabling new employees to understand both technical and operational aspects of their work. In addition to formal instructions, knowledge transfer frequently occurs through informal interactions and observations of experienced colleagues during project execution.

These interactions contribute significantly to the socialization process of new employees. Through engagement with more experienced coworkers, Generation Z employees gradually develop an understanding of organizational norms, work standards, and professional values that are essential for effective performance within the construction industry. They learn how to coordinate with multiple stakeholders, manage work responsibilities, and maintain project quality standards. As a result, cross-generational interactions function not only as mechanisms for knowledge transfer but also as important channels for professional development and organizational integration.

Despite these benefits, the findings also reveal several adaptation challenges arising from generational differences in workplace expectations and communication styles. One of the most commonly reported challenges concerns communication practices. Many Generation Z informants explained that they were accustomed to fast, flexible, and technology-driven communication methods. However, the work environment at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha generally follows a more formal and structured communication system that aligns with the company's hierarchical organizational structure. Information is typically communicated through designated reporting lines and established coordination procedures. Consequently, newcomers needed to adjust their communication approaches to fit organizational expectations and professional norms.

In addition to communication differences, adaptation challenges were also associated with the organizational structure and work culture of the construction industry. The company operates within a project-based environment that emphasizes discipline, accountability, and adherence to established procedures. Decision-making processes generally follow clear chains of command, requiring employees to respect hierarchical relationships and formal coordination mechanisms. For some Generation Z employees, who were previously more familiar with flexible and collaborative environments, adjusting to these organizational characteristics required considerable effort during the onboarding period.

Another significant challenge identified by the informants was adapting to the demanding work rhythm of construction projects. Construction activities are governed by strict schedules, predefined project targets, and continuous coordination among various stakeholders. New employees often found themselves working in environments where precision, time management, and effective teamwork were essential for project

success. During the early stages of employment, several informants reported difficulties in adjusting their personal work habits to meet the operational demands of ongoing projects. They needed to learn how to manage multiple responsibilities, respond to changing project conditions, and maintain performance under time pressure.

The findings also suggest that understanding job expectations constituted a major component of the adaptation process. Many participants explained that during their first months of employment, they were still attempting to understand the specific expectations associated with their roles. Learning frequently occurred through direct participation in project activities rather than through formal training alone. As a result, new employees were required to take initiative by observing experienced colleagues, asking questions, and actively seeking information regarding organizational standards and performance requirements.

To cope with these challenges, Generation Z employees developed various adaptation strategies. One of the most common strategies involved observing the work practices of senior colleagues. Informants reported that they carefully monitored how experienced employees performed tasks, communicated with stakeholders, and handled workplace challenges. Through observation, they gradually acquired a deeper understanding of organizational expectations and professional behavior within the construction environment.

Another important adaptation strategy involved proactive communication. Rather than remaining passive, many informants actively sought guidance from coworkers and supervisors whenever they encountered difficulties or unfamiliar situations. Asking questions, requesting clarification, and engaging in discussions with team members enabled them to accelerate the learning process and reduce uncertainty during onboarding. This proactive behavior also facilitated relationship building and enhanced social integration within project teams.

Furthermore, several participants reported adjusting their personal expectations regarding work realities. As they gained more experience, they recognized that the construction industry operates differently from their initial assumptions. Instead of focusing on perceived differences between expectations and reality, they gradually shifted their attention toward learning opportunities and professional development. This adjustment helped them become more resilient and adaptable within the demanding work environment.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that cross-generational interactions play a crucial role in shaping the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha. While generational differences may create challenges related to communication, workplace expectations, and organizational culture, they also provide valuable opportunities for learning and professional growth. Through interactions with experienced colleagues and the implementation of proactive adaptation strategies, Generation Z employees gradually develop the knowledge, skills, and professional

competencies necessary to function effectively within the dynamic and project-oriented environment of the construction industry.

4.3 Generation Z Expectations and Implications for Onboarding Practices in the Construction Industry

In addition to experiencing various adaptation challenges during the onboarding process, the findings of this study reveal that Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha hold several expectations regarding the work environment and organizational support they receive during the early stages of employment. These expectations are closely related to communication practices, feedback mechanisms, learning opportunities, technology utilization, and organizational support for professional development. The findings suggest that onboarding is not merely perceived as a process of introducing job responsibilities but also as an important period that shapes employees' perceptions of the organization and influences their long-term engagement.

One of the most frequently expressed expectations among the informants was the need for open and transparent communication within the organization. In the project-based work environment of PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha, coordination involves multiple stakeholders, including field personnel, supervisors, project managers, and administrative staff. Under such conditions, Generation Z employees expect clear information regarding their responsibilities, project objectives, work priorities, and performance expectations. According to the informants, transparent communication helps reduce uncertainty during the adaptation period and enables new employees to understand their roles more effectively within project teams.

The findings also indicate that Generation Z employees place considerable importance on receiving constructive feedback from supervisors and managers. Informants explained that feedback is viewed as an essential component of the learning process, particularly during the early stages of employment when employees are still becoming familiar with organizational procedures and performance standards. Constructive feedback allows employees to evaluate their progress, identify areas for improvement, and gain a better understanding of organizational expectations. As a result, regular feedback contributes to both competence development and increased confidence in performing work-related tasks.

Another expectation identified through the interviews relates to opportunities for continuous learning and professional development. Most Generation Z employees perceive employment not only as a source of income but also as a means of acquiring practical experience and developing competencies relevant to their career goals. Therefore, they expect organizations to provide opportunities for active involvement in project activities, exposure to different aspects of project implementation, and access to learning experiences that enhance their professional capabilities. Direct participation in construction projects is viewed as a valuable opportunity to gain practical knowledge

and develop industry-specific skills that cannot be acquired solely through formal education.

In addition to learning opportunities, several informants emphasized the importance of technology integration within organizational work systems. As individuals who grew up in a digital environment, Generation Z employees are accustomed to using technology for communication, information management, and problem-solving. Consequently, they expect organizations to utilize digital tools and technologies that can improve work efficiency, facilitate information sharing, and support project coordination. Informants specifically highlighted the potential benefits of technology in project documentation, reporting systems, internal communication, and access to work-related information. The use of technology is perceived as an important factor that can support both productivity and the onboarding experience of younger employees.

Furthermore, some participants expressed expectations regarding the availability of a more structured mentoring system during the onboarding process. Informants believed that having a designated mentor or experienced colleague could significantly facilitate their adjustment to the organizational environment. Mentors can provide guidance on technical tasks, explain workplace norms and expectations, and help newcomers navigate the complexities of project-based work. In the context of the construction industry, where projects often involve complex coordination and operational challenges, mentoring is considered a valuable mechanism for accelerating learning and supporting professional development.

The findings of this study also have several implications for onboarding practices within the construction industry. First, organizations should recognize that effective onboarding extends beyond introducing job responsibilities and organizational policies. New employees require comprehensive support that addresses both technical and social aspects of workplace integration. Structured onboarding programs can help reduce uncertainty, improve role clarity, and facilitate a smoother transition into the organization.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of implementing formal mentoring systems. Given the complexity of construction projects and the significant role of experiential learning, mentorship can facilitate knowledge transfer between experienced employees and newcomers. Such systems can also strengthen cross-generational collaboration and enhance the social integration of new employees within project teams.

Third, organizations should pay greater attention to communication practices throughout the onboarding process. Providing clear information regarding work expectations, project goals, and organizational procedures can help Generation Z employees adapt more efficiently and perform their roles more effectively. Open communication channels also encourage employees to seek assistance when needed and contribute to a more supportive work environment.

Fourth, organizations should create learning-oriented environments that encourage continuous professional development. Opportunities to participate in diverse project activities, attend training programs, and engage in collaborative learning experiences can support employee growth while enhancing organizational capabilities. These practices are particularly important for Generation Z employees, who often prioritize learning and career development opportunities when evaluating their employment experiences.

Finally, the findings suggest that organizations should leverage technology to enhance onboarding effectiveness. Digital platforms, learning management systems, communication applications, and project management tools can facilitate information access and support employee adaptation. By integrating technology into onboarding practices, construction companies can create more engaging and efficient onboarding experiences that align with the characteristics and expectations of today's workforce.

The findings demonstrate that Generation Z employees expect onboarding experiences that emphasize communication, feedback, learning opportunities, mentoring, and technology integration. These expectations highlight the need for construction companies to adopt more adaptive and employee-centered onboarding approaches. By developing structured onboarding programs that address both organizational and employee needs, companies can facilitate successful adaptation, improve employee engagement, and strengthen long-term workforce retention within the construction industry.

5. | DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha involve a multidimensional adaptation process extending beyond the introduction of job responsibilities. New employees are required to adapt to organizational culture, communication patterns, project-based work systems, and professional relationship dynamics within a construction work environment. These findings support the Organizational Socialization Theory, which argues that newcomers must acquire the knowledge, behaviors, values, and social competencies necessary to become effective organizational members (Bauer et al., 2025).

The results reveal that onboarding in the construction industry is strongly influenced by the project-based nature of work. Unlike more standardized office environments, construction projects require intensive coordination, strict adherence to procedures, and rapid adaptation to changing operational conditions. Consequently, most participants reported learning primarily through direct involvement in project activities, observation of senior employees, and everyday workplace interactions. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that experiential learning and workplace socialization are particularly important in industries characterized by operational complexity and project-oriented work structures (Batra & Rastogi, 2024).

Another important finding concerns the role of cross-generational interactions in shaping onboarding experiences. Generation Z employees regularly interact with supervisors, managers, and senior colleagues who belong predominantly to older generations. These interactions serve as an important mechanism for knowledge transfer, enabling newcomers to learn technical skills, professional norms, and effective work practices. Previous studies have similarly highlighted that intergenerational collaboration can facilitate organizational learning and improve newcomer adjustment through informal mentoring and knowledge-sharing processes (Tang & Martins, 2021).

However, the findings also indicate that generational differences create adaptation challenges, particularly regarding communication styles and workplace expectations. Generation Z employees tend to prefer fast, transparent, and technology-supported communication, whereas construction organizations often maintain formal communication structures and hierarchical decision-making processes. This observation aligns with research indicating that communication preferences represent one of the most significant differences between Generation Z and older workforce generations, influencing both employee engagement and workplace adjustment (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

The study further demonstrates that Generation Z employees possess clear expectations regarding organizational support during onboarding. Participants emphasized the importance of transparent communication, constructive feedback, mentoring opportunities, and continuous learning experiences. These expectations can be understood through the Person–Organization Fit perspective, which suggests that positive employee outcomes are more likely when organizational practices align with employees' values, preferences, and expectations. When organizations provide opportunities for growth, learning, and meaningful communication, newcomers are more likely to experience successful adaptation and stronger organizational commitment (Racolţa-Paina & Irini, 2021).

An additional finding concerns the proactive role of Generation Z employees in managing their own adaptation process. Rather than acting as passive recipients of organizational practices, participants actively developed strategies such as observing experienced coworkers, seeking information through communication, and adjusting their expectations to fit workplace realities. These behaviors reflect proactive socialization strategies that have been associated with higher levels of newcomer adjustment, job satisfaction, and organizational integration (Yu et al., 2025).

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that construction companies should view onboarding as a strategic human resource management function rather than merely an administrative orientation process. Structured onboarding programs, mentoring systems, continuous feedback mechanisms, and technology-supported learning platforms may enhance the adaptation experiences of Generation Z employees. Furthermore, organizations should actively manage cross-generational dynamics to maximize knowledge transfer while minimizing communication barriers. This study

highlights that successful onboarding within the construction industry depends not only on introducing job responsibilities but also on facilitating organizational socialization, supporting professional development, and creating an inclusive work environment that accommodates the characteristics of an increasingly diverse and multigenerational workforce.

6. | CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the onboarding experiences of Generation Z employees within the construction industry work environment and how they navigate the adaptation process during the early stages of employment. Based on interviews with Generation Z employees at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha, the findings indicate that onboarding is a complex and multidimensional process involving not only the introduction to job responsibilities but also adaptation to organizational culture, communication patterns, and professional relationships within project teams.

During the initial stage of employment, Generation Z employees faced various adaptation challenges related to the characteristics of the construction work environment, including a hierarchical organizational structure, dynamic project work rhythms, and intensive coordination demands. These conditions required new employees to quickly understand the company's work system, performance expectations, and professional standards. Most job-related learning occurred through direct field experience, observation of senior colleagues, and daily interactions within ongoing project activities.

The study also found that Generation Z employees have expectations regarding open and transparent communication, constructive feedback from supervisors, and opportunities to develop professional competencies. They view the early employment period as an important phase for gaining practical experience, understanding the construction industry, and building a career foundation.

Cross-generational interaction emerged as a significant factor shaping onboarding experiences. Generation Z employees work alongside more experienced colleagues from older generations, creating opportunities for knowledge transfer and learning about professional values within the company. Although generational differences occasionally create communication challenges and differing perspectives toward work, these interactions are generally perceived as valuable learning experiences.

To overcome adaptation challenges, Generation Z employees developed various strategies, including improving observation skills toward team work patterns, engaging in more active communication with coworkers and supervisors, and adjusting personal expectations to align with the company's work system. Through these efforts, employees gradually became more capable of understanding workplace dynamics and functioning effectively within project teams.

The findings indicate that successful onboarding at PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha depends not only on introducing employees to their job responsibilities but also on

creating a work environment that supports learning, effective communication, and social integration. The study further reveals that onboarding experiences vary according to work division characteristics and the intensity of cross-generational interactions. Employees in field divisions encounter greater challenges related to project rhythms and technical coordination, whereas administrative employees focus more on adapting to coordination systems and communication flows.

By understanding Generation Z onboarding experiences more deeply, PT Wira Lindu Sakti Artha can develop more adaptive onboarding practices through structured programs, open communication, effective mentoring systems, and adequate learning opportunities. Effective management of cross-generational dynamics can also strengthen collaboration and foster a more inclusive and productive work environment.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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