

Research Horizon

ISSN: 2808-0696 (p), 2807-9531 (e)

Research Horizon

Volume: 05

Issue: 04

Year: 2025

Page: 1099-1110

Citation:

Salma, C. D., & Rizky, M. C. (2025). Creativity, challenges, and strategies of Generation Z in MSME empowerment. *Research Horizon*, 5(4), 1099-1110.

Article History:

Received: June 21, 2025

Revised: July 16, 2025

Accepted: July 21, 2025

Online since: August 30, 2025

Creativity, Challenges, and Strategies of Generation Z in MSME Empowerment

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the low social awareness among Generation Z which is a serious concern. The lack of effective communication strategies and the lack of relevant training are the main factors that exacerbate this condition. The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of communication strategies and training on the social awareness of Generation Z. This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational type. The population of Sei Dendang Village is recorded at 292,951 people, and the sample used in this study is 30 people from Generation Z. Data were collected using a closed questionnaire based on indicators of communication strategies, training, and social awareness. The results show that communication strategies and training simultaneously and partially have a positive and significant effect on the social awareness of Generation Z. Digital and interactive communication strategies can increase social understanding and awareness, while training relevant to social values strengthens empathy and collective responsibility. These findings provide an important basis for youth empowerment program designers to develop technology-based approaches and participatory training to increase their social engagement in the community.

Keywords

Communication Strategies, Empowerment, Generation Z, Social Awareness, Training.

1. Introduction

Social awareness is a crucial aspect of community life, especially in the era of globalization, which is rife with social and cultural change (Kusuma & Simpat, 2025). In the context of rural life, social awareness plays a crucial role as a primary driver of development based on community participation and the strengthening of local social values (Ginting et al., 2024). Generation Z, a young age group born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, possesses distinct characteristics from previous generations. They grew up and developed amidst rapid technological advancements and the rapid flow of digital information. Therefore, Generation Z is often referred to as the digital native generation, a generation highly accustomed to using information and communication technology in their daily lives (Mutiarra et al., 2024).

Communication strategies play a crucial role in shaping and enhancing Generation Z's social awareness. Effective communication strategies can convey social messages that are relevant and engaging to this generation. According to Liliweri (2011), a good communication strategy must be able to inform, motivate, educate, disseminate information, and support decision-making. This ensures that social messages are conveyed effectively and well-received by Generation Z. The Berkaingembira campaign successfully raised awareness of berkaing culture among Generation Z through social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Discord messaging. The campaign utilized creative content and collaboration with influencers to convey cultural messages in a way that was engaging and relevant to the younger generation (Santiyuda et al., 2023).

In addition to communication strategies, training is also an effective method in increasing social awareness of Generation Z. Well-designed training can provide the knowledge and skills needed to understand and deal with social issues in society. According to Seaman et al. (2018) and Handayani et al. (2024), leadership training provided can develop communication skills, improve decision-making skills, understand the importance of teamwork, and foster responsibility and integrity. This was proven by Ekawati and Martani (2013) through the development of the SINERGI I training program which aims to improve the prosocial abilities of adolescents aged 14–16 years. This program uses an experiential learning approach, namely learning based on direct experience that involves participants in various activities that trigger empathy, cooperation, and concern for others. The results of the analysis showed that after participating in this training, there was a significant increase in the participants' prosocial behavior, which reflects an increase in their social awareness. These findings strengthen the view that interactive and applicable training can be a strategic means to foster social awareness, especially among the younger generation.

In Sei Dendang Village, Langkat Regency, the phenomenon of low social awareness among Generation Z is a serious concern. This is exacerbated by the lack of effective communication strategies and appropriate training to increase social awareness of the younger generation in the village. Putri and Muliani (2023) research discusses the success of the Berkaingembira campaign carried out through social media as a cultural communication strategy to build Generation Z's awareness of the berkaing culture. This campaign utilizes digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Discord to convey cultural messages creatively and in accordance with the communication style of the younger generation. In addition, research by Ekawati and Martani (2013) proves that training with an experiential learning approach, such as in the SINERGI I program, is effective in increasing adolescent prosocial behavior that is directly related to social awareness. Similar findings were also revealed by Furman and Sibthorp (2014) and Lusiria and Yusra (2017) who showed that the *Pramkuka Peduli* training was able to encourage

adolescent prosocial behavior in Islamic boarding schools through a character education and social empathy approach.

To date, there has been little research specifically examining the influence of communication strategies and training on the social awareness of Generation Z in rural areas such as Sei Dendang Village. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining in depth how communication strategies and training can influence the social awareness of Generation Z in the village. By understanding the influence of communication strategies and training on the social awareness of Generation Z, it is hoped that more effective and targeted programs can be designed to increase the social participation of the younger generation in Sei Dendang Village.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Communication Strategy and Social Awareness of Generation Z

A communication strategy is an integrated design that combines systematic planning with the message delivery process to achieve specific goals. Gupta et al. (2021) explains that a communication strategy encompasses elements such as the communicator, message content, media, audience, and the resulting impact, all of which are systematically arranged to optimize communication results. Bungin (2015) emphasizes that a deep understanding of communication dynamics and its actors is key to ensuring that the message is received effectively and has an impact in accordance with the initial objectives. Liliweri (2011) describes a communication strategy as a conscious and planned effort to convey messages in an informative and educational manner, while also mobilizing the audience to actively engage in the issues presented. Information conveyed through a communication strategy must also be widespread and relevant and assist the decision-making process for both individuals and groups. In the context of Generation Z, communication strategies need to be adapted to the characteristics of those growing up amidst the development of digital technology. Habibah et al. (2021) state that Generation Z interactions and communications are now mostly conducted through digital media such as mobile phones, computers, and the internet. Meanwhile, Sari and Prasetya (2022) explain that social media has become the primary platform for this generation to gather, share, communicate, and collaborate virtually. Therefore, to foster social awareness among Generation Z, communication strategies must rely on interactive, visual digital approaches, utilizing platforms familiar to them, such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok (Furman & Sibthorp, 2014; Salma & Rizky, 2014). This approach also needs to consider the relevance of the message to the context of their values and social experiences to be more impactful and participatory.

H1: Communication strategy has a positive and significant effect on the social awareness of Generation Z.

2.2. Training and Social Awareness of Generation Z

Training is an important aspect of human resource development, including fostering social awareness in Generation Z. According to Haryati (2019), training is a process of improving knowledge and skills, and in some cases, includes changing attitudes so that individuals can work more efficiently. In the context of Generation Z, training designed to increase social awareness must address the dimensions of attitude, empathy, and the ability to interact inclusively within society. Ampauleng (2018) emphasized that training is a structured learning process with specific methods and approaches to foster better conceptual understanding and work practices. Training targeting social awareness needs to integrate learning about social values, justice, diversity, and concern for environmental and humanitarian issues. Wahyuningsih (2019) identified five key indicators in training: clarity of

objectives, relevant training materials, participatory methods, participant qualifications, and trainer qualifications. To foster social awareness, training must have realistic objectives, materials that cover aspects of ethics and social psychology, and use methods that involve group discussions, simulations, and field visits to build hands-on experience. Generation Z, who grew up in a fast-paced, digital environment, tends to have a decreased level of empathy and social sensitivity if not systematically trained (Allui & Sahni, 2016; Seaman et al., 2018; Karoso et al., 2024). Therefore, interactive and contextual training is crucial for developing their awareness of social issues around them. Rizky (2024) emphasized that training has a significant positive impact on improving community capabilities, including in aspects of resource management and developing adaptive and productive social character.

H2: Training has a positive and significant effect on the social awareness of Generation Z.

2.3. Communication Strategy, Training , and Social Awareness

Social awareness is a person's ability to understand the social conditions around them, including understanding the emotions, actions, and needs of others. Generation Z, growing up in a digital and multicultural environment, faces significant challenges and potential in developing social awareness. Sigmar et al. (2012) explain that social awareness is formed through empathy, social sensitivity, and the ability to see from another person's perspective. This requires a strategic approach in communication and training so that social values can be deeply embedded. Communication strategy plays a crucial role in shaping and delivering relevant messages to Generation Z. According to Gupta et al. (2021), communication strategy is a systematic plan involving the elements of the communicator, message, media, audience, and the desired impact. This strategy is crucial in shaping social awareness because it allows messages to be delivered in an appropriate and engaging manner, in line with the characteristics of Generation Z, who are more visual, interactive, and quick to respond to digital media (Bungin, 2015). Furthermore, training serves as a structured learning medium for instilling social values. Haryati (2019) states that training not only improves knowledge and skills but can also change participants' attitudes. Ampauleng (2018) added that effective training is designed using participatory methods such as group discussions, case studies, and simulations, which encourage participants to directly understand social realities. Therefore, integrating appropriate communication strategies and contextualized training is a crucial combination in fostering social awareness in Generation Z.

H3: Communication strategies and training simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on the social awareness of Generation.

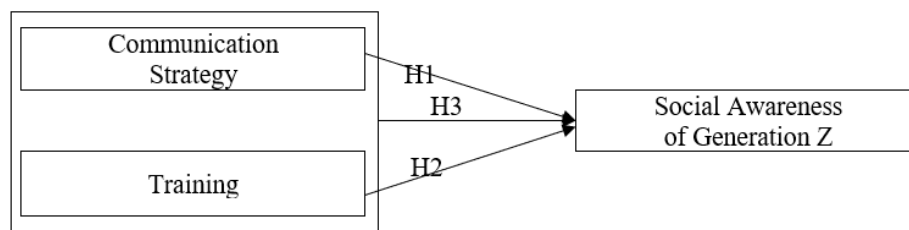


Figure 1. Research Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the research framework showing the relationship between Communication Strategy and Training on Social Awareness of Generation Z. In this model, H1 tests the influence of communication strategy on social awareness of

Generation Z, which includes delivering informative, educational, and motivational messages through media that are appropriate to the characteristics of this generation. H2 tests the influence of training on social awareness, with a focus on programs to improve empathy, social perspective, and interpersonal skills. Meanwhile, H3 is a simultaneous hypothesis that looks at the combined influence of both independent variables on social awareness. This framework is used to understand how communication strategy and training can effectively increase social awareness of Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village, Langkat Regency. This model serves as the basis for designing research instruments and analyzing the contribution of each variable to the formation of social awareness.

3. Methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational research type, which aims to determine and analyze the influence of communication strategies and training on the social awareness of Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village, Langkat Regency. The correlational approach was chosen because this study wants to empirically see the relationship and influence between variables and test the relationship between the independent variables communication strategies and training with the dependent variable social awareness. The study was conducted in Sei Dendang Village, located in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. This village was chosen as the research location because there are social activities and training programs relevant to the research subjects, especially those involving the younger generation or Generation Z.

The research subjects consisted of a population of 292,951 people and the sample used by the researcher was 30 people from Generation Z who resided in Sei Dendang Village. The selection of subjects was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting respondents who met the criteria as members of Generation Z who actively participated in communication and training programs in the village. The sampling of 30 people was considered sufficient for multiple regression statistical analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) considering the limitations of resources and population coverage. Data were collected using a questionnaire instrument designed based on indicators for communication strategies, training, and social awareness.

This questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions designed with a Likert scale to measure respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding communication strategies, training received, and their level of social awareness. Prior to use, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability to ensure the quality of the data obtained. The collected data were analyzed using multiple regression using SPSS software. This analysis aimed to determine the extent of the influence of communication strategies and training, both simultaneously and partially, on the social awareness of Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village. Multiple regression was chosen because it can examine the relationship between two independent variables and one dependent variable simultaneously and provides regression coefficients that illustrate the level of influence of each independent variable.

2. Results

To determine whether there is an influence of variable X1 (Communication Strategy) and variable X2 (Training) on variable Y (Social Awareness of Generation Z), a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, the results of which are presented in a regression coefficient test table. The table shows the significance value and beta coefficient of each independent variable on the dependent variable. If the significance value is <0.05 , there is a significant influence. The beta coefficient value indicates the direction and magnitude of the influence of variables X1, and X2 on Y.

Communication Strategy (X1) is assessed from the effectiveness of message delivery, the media used, and the appeal of the message. Meanwhile, Training (X2) includes the effectiveness of the training method, the materials provided, and participant involvement. Social Awareness of Generation Z (Y) is measured from empathy, social perspective, and attitudes towards the social environment. Through this analysis, it can be concluded how much the two variables contribute to shaping the social awareness of Generation Z simultaneously or partially.

Table 1. Results of Validity Test X1 (Communication Strategy)

No.	Indicator	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
1	X1.1	0.682	0.000	30
2	X1.2	0.581	0.001	30
3	X1.3	0.732	0.000	30
4	X1.4	0.799	0.000	30
5	X1.5	0.818	0.000	30
6	X1.6	0.760	0.000	30
7	X1.7	0.765	0.000	30
8	X1.8	0.715	0.000	30
9	X1.9	0.765	0.000	30
10	X1.10	0.811	0.000	30

The research results presented in Table 1 show that of the 30 respondents used in this study, with a significance level (alpha) of 0.05 and degrees of freedom of 27, the r table value obtained was 0.381. Based on the results of the validity calculation, all statement items 1 to 10 in variable X1 (Communication Strategy) have a total correlation value greater than 0.381. Thus, all items are declared valid and suitable for use as research instruments. The validity of these items indicates that the indicators used in measuring communication strategies can represent the variables accurately. This is important because communication strategy is one of the main factors studied in its influence on the social awareness of Generation Z. With good validity, further analysis of the relationship between variables in the study can be carried out more accurately and responsibly.

Table 2. Results of X2 Validity Test (Training)

No.	Indicator	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
1	X2.1	0.682	0.000	30
2	X2.2	0.581	0.001	30
3	X2.3	0.732	0.000	30
4	X2.4	0.799	0.000	30
5	X2.5	0.818	0.000	30
6	X2.6	0.760	0.000	30
7	X2.7	0.765	0.000	30
8	X2.8	0.715	0.000	30
9	X2.9	0.765	0.000	30
10	X2.10	0.811	0.000	30

The validity test results in Table 2 show the research instrument for variable X2 (Training) with 30 respondents. With a significance level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom (df) of 27, the r table value was 0.381. Based on the total correlation calculation, all statement items from number 1 to 10 had a correlation value greater than 0.381. This indicates that all items in the training variable are valid, as they are able to accurately measure relevant aspects of the training. This high validity indicates that the questions in the instrument can be well understood by respondents and can reflect the objectives, materials, methods, and effectiveness of the training provided. Thus, the data obtained from these items are worthy of further analysis in

examining the influence of training on the social awareness of Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village.

Table 3. Results of Validity Test for Y (Social Awareness)

No.	Indicator	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
1	Y1	0.733	0.000	30
2	Y2	0.702	0.000	30
3	Y3	0.659	0.000	30
4	Y4	0.701	0.000	30
5	Y5	0.518	0.003	30
6	Y6	0.698	0.000	30

The results of the study in Table 3 show that of the 30 respondents used as the research sample, all statement items for variable Y (Social Awareness) were declared valid. With a significance level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom (df) of 27 (30 - 3), the r value of the table used was 0.3810. All statement items from number 1 to 6 had a total correlation value greater than 0.3810, which means each item has a good ability to measure the construct of social awareness. This validity reflects that indicators such as empathy, social perspective, and respect for others have been accurately depicted in the instrument. These results strengthen that the Y variable instrument can be used to analyze the relationship and influence of communication strategies and training on the level of social awareness of Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village accurately and reliably in the further research process.

Table 4. Results of Multiple Regression Test

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	260.754	40.197		60.374	0.000
Communication Strategy (X1)	0.219	0.067	0.472	30.273	0.003
Training (X2)	0.211	0.067	0.455	30.156	0.004

The results of the study in table 4 show that the positive relationship between variable X1 (Communication Strategy) and variable X2 (Training) on variable Y (Social Awareness of Generation Z) can be seen from the results of multiple linear regression analysis obtained through calculations using SPSS software. Based on the Coefficient output, the constant value (α) is 260.754, the regression coefficient of the Communication Strategy variable (X1) is 0.219, and the regression coefficient of the Training variable (X2) is 0.2110. $Y = 26.754 + 0.219X1 + 0.211X2$ This means that if there is no influence from the communication strategy and training variables, the value of social awareness of Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village remains at 260.7540. The regression coefficient of the Communication Strategy of 0.219 indicates that every one unit increase in the communication strategy can increase social awareness by 0.219 units. Similarly, each one-unit increase in training activities will increase social awareness by 0.211 units.

To determine the significance of this effect, a hypothesis test was conducted using the t-test. Based on the data obtained, the calculated t-value for the Communication Strategy variable (X1) was 30.273, and the calculated t-value for the Training variable (X2) was 30.1560. These values were then compared with the t-table at a significance level of 0.05 and degrees of freedom (df) = $n - k - 1 = 30 - 2 - 1 = 27$, resulting in a t-table = 20.0520. Since the calculated t-value for Communication Strategy (30.273) > t-table (20.052), H1 is accepted. This means that Communication Strategy has a positive and significant effect on Social Awareness of Generation Z. Similarly, because the calculated t of Training (30.156) > t table (20.052), then H2 is also accepted, which means that Training has a positive and significant effect on the Social Awareness of Generation Z. Thus, it can be concluded that communication and training strategies have a significant contribution in increasing the social

awareness of the younger generation in Sei Dendang Village, Langkat Regency. These results emphasize the importance of the role of an effective communication approach and structured training in shaping social awareness and active participation of generation Z in the context of community life.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	600.725	2	300.363	100.513	0.000
Residual	770.975	27	20.888		
Total	1380.700	29			

The results of the study in Table 5 it is known that the calculated F value is 100.513 with a significance value of 00.0000. Furthermore, the calculated F value is compared with the F table value at a significance level of 00.05, with degrees of freedom $df_1 = 2$ (number of independent variables) and $df_2 = 27$ ($n - k - 1$), the F table is 30.350. Because the calculated F (100.513) > F table (30.35) and the significance value is smaller than 00.05 ($00.000 < 00.05$), then H3 is accepted. This shows that Communication Strategy (X1) and Training (X2) simultaneously have a positive and significant influence on Social Awareness (Y) in Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village, Langkat Regency. Thus, it can be concluded that the combination of appropriate communication strategies and effective training together makes a significant contribution to increasing the social awareness of the younger generation in the region. This reinforces the importance of an integrated approach in social empowerment programs that target Generation Z as agents of change in society.

Table 6. Results of the Determination Coefficient Test

Model	Value
R	0.662
R Square	0.438
Adjusted R Square	0.396
Std. Error of the Estimate	10.699

The test results in Table 6 show a positive influence between X1 (Communication Strategy) and X2 (Training) on the Y variable (Social Awareness), as indicated by the correlation coefficient (R) of 00.6620. This value indicates the strength of the relationship between the independent variables Communication Strategy and Training and the dependent variable Social Awareness. Based on the classification of the level of relationship, the R value of 00.662 is included in the strong category, meaning the relationship between the two independent variables and the dependent variable is quite significant. This means that 66.2% of the change in the Social Awareness variable can be explained by the Communication Strategy and Training variables simultaneously. Meanwhile, the remaining 33.8% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study.

5. Discussion

The results of the regression analysis show that Communication Strategy (X1) has a positive and significant influence on Generation Z's Social Awareness. This indicates that an effective communication approach can strengthen social understanding and awareness among Generation Z. Research by Mohammad (2025) supports the finding that a structured and technology-based communication strategy can increase social awareness among Generation Z. Their study shows that a strategic communication model focused on optimal use of social media successfully increased the participation of the younger generation in maintaining the mangrove ecosystem in Mempawah Regency. This confirms that Generation Z, known as

digital natives, is more responsive to messages delivered through interactive and visual digital platforms (Nurimansjah et al., 2022). Planned and impactful communication can shape collective awareness and encourage active involvement in social and environmental issues. This finding is relevant to the research context in Sei Dendang Village, which also highlights the importance of a technology-based communication approach to building strong and sustainable social awareness among today's younger generation.

The Effect of Training on Social Awareness shows that Training (X₂) has a positive and significant effect on Generation Z's Social Awareness. Every increase in training activities will increase social awareness. Well-designed training can strengthen social values and empathy in Generation Z. Suciati and Deswarta (2024) research supports the finding that training plays an important role in shaping the performance and social awareness of Generation Z. This study conducted in Selat Panjang shows that effectively designed job training can improve the competence and professional awareness of young employees. Generation Z, who tend to require an interactive and relevant training approach to social values, responds positively to training programs that encourage active involvement and self-reflection. The results of this study confirm that increasing individual capacity through training not only impacts work productivity but also contributes to their social awareness in the workplace and society. This shows that training not only functions as a strengthening of technical skills but also as a means of forming social ethics and social responsibility among the younger generation (Khairina & Games, 2022).

The Effect of Communication Strategy and Training on Social Awareness, F-test shows that simultaneously, Communication Strategy and Training have a significant effect on Social Awareness of Generation Z. This confirms that the combination of effective communication strategies and structured training can significantly increase social awareness in Generation Z. Hanifah (2022) study emphasized the importance of integrating social and technological factors in training to improve job satisfaction of Generation Z. This study shows that training that not only focuses on technical skills, but also accommodates social needs and emotional involvement, can produce a more significant impact. Generation Z is known to be responsive to collaborative, interactive, and technology-based approaches. By utilizing digital platforms and training methods that encourage two-way communication, participant engagement increases significantly. In addition, social training such as teamwork, empathy in service, and awareness of work group dynamics also contribute to shaping the social awareness of this generation (Ismayanti et al., 2025). The results of this study indicate that job satisfaction and social awareness can be simultaneously increased if training is designed by considering the social and technological dimensions relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z.

6. Conclusion

Communication and training strategies have been shown to have a positive and significant impact on increasing social awareness among Generation Z in Sei Dendang Village. Structured, technology-based communication strategies have proven effective in delivering social messages interactively, thereby fostering social understanding and awareness among the younger generation. Meanwhile, training designed in a participatory manner and in accordance with the characteristics of Generation Z can strengthen social values, empathy, and collective responsibility.

This study has several limitations. The sample size of only 30 respondents and the limited coverage area of one village make the generalization of the results still local. In addition, other variables that may influence social awareness, such as family influence, non-digital mass media, and local cultural values, have not been analyzed in this research model. The practical implication of these findings is the importance of collaboration between village governments, educational institutions, and local

communities to design sustainable, digital-based communication and training programs that are relevant to the lifestyles of the younger generation. A two-way, interactive approach oriented towards social values is considered more effective in shaping comprehensive social awareness. For further research, it is recommended to expand the location and number of respondents, as well as add other external variables that have the potential to contribute to social awareness. Longitudinal research can also be used to see the long-term impact of communication and training strategies on the formation of the social character of Generation Z.

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Acknowledgment

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

Funding Information

This research did not receive any funding.

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 Disclosure Statement

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



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