# Understanding Work Values and Career Preferences in Generation Z: Is Becoming a Civil Servant Still a Dream Job?

**Diana Ma'rifah[1], Siti Nur Azizah[2], Wahyuni Windasari[3]**
National Research and Innovation Agency, DKI Jakarta 12710, Indonesia[1]
Putra Bangsa University, Kebumen, Central Java 54361, Indonesia[2,3]
Corresponding Author: dianamarifah12@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-8126-8161

## ARTICLE INFORMATION

## ABSTRACT

Generation Z is currently entering the working world. However, there are reports that Generation Z is uninterested in working for the government agency, thus government agencies need to understand the principles and values held by this young generation so as not to lose potential human resources in the future. Through an analysis of the work values dimensions, this study aims to identify the career preference of Generation Z. The respondents in this study were 102 Generation Z students at Putra Bangsa University, Indonesia. Data was obtained by distributing questionnaires and then analyzed with descriptive statistics via SPSS. The results show that the majority of Generation Z students prefer to work at State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN) rather than being civil servants when they graduate from university. The work values believed by the group who want to work in BUMN and the group who want to become civil servants are explained in the results of this study. The results of this study provide an overview of the work values that are the principles of Generation Z so that it can help organizations understand the characteristics of Generation Z in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Career Preference; Civil Servant; Generation Z; Generational Differences; Work Values

## INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, those born after 2000 (De Cooman & Dries, 2012; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015; Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018; Mahmoud et al., 2021, Rana et al., 2023) have a different character than the previous generation, and now they are beginning to enter the working world (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018). Generation Z, along with their strengths, is expected to bring better change, especially for the public sector organization. However, there is a general assumption that working in the public sector (as a civil servant), which was the dream job of previous generations, tends to be no longer wanted by today's younger generation. Several media outlets (Agus, 2022; CNBC Indonesia, 2022; Nurhaliza, 2022), for example, report that not many young Millennials and Generation Z consider civil servant's careers ideal for professional development. They prefer to work in the private sector or do business (Baidhowah, 2021).

One of the evidences of the allegation is the recruitment of Indonesian civil servant candidates in 2021, when the total number of civil servant candidates registered at that time only reached about 4 million people—down from the previous year's about 4.2 million people. This number has not reached the target set by the National Civil Service Agency (Badan Kepegawaian Negara/BKN), which targets about 5 million applicants in that year (Baidhowah, 2021; Sulistyo, 2021; Dzulfikar, 2022). Indeed, shortly thereafter, BKN announced the resignation of about 100 of the 112,514 officials accepted in the selection (BKN, 2022; Dwi, 2023; Karunia & Pratama, 2023). This is not a small amount. Of all the reasons that have been raised, most of the reasons are that the salary they receive is not in line with their initial expectations. Another factor is that job placement is inappropriate and causes them to lose motivation (Fauzia & Rastika, 2022; Dwi, 2023).

Although Generation Z has not dominated the current labor force, they bear some resemblance to the Millennials (Putra, 2017). They are both digital natives (Gentina, 2020; Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018), preferring a work environment that facilitates accompaniment (preferring 'mentor' rather than 'boss'), learning, and having the opportunity to grow professionally. They love freedom and work-life balance, and they have optimistic personalities (Knight, 2009; Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018). Millennials and Generation Z are equally prone to changing circumstances if they do not fit their life purposes, such as changing jobs. Besides, value is important to them. They can reject assignments if they do not match their values (Deloitte, 2022). The existence of similar characteristics related to such work can be a warning for government agencies to self-evaluate and keep in mind. In fact, the large number of civil servants resigning in 2021 and 2022 recruitment could indicate that the government is not yet able to anticipate the behavior of the younger labor force today.

In order for Generation Z to survive working in government, it is necessary to know what the value is for them, which underlies their preference in choosing jobs. Gilbert et al. (2008) mention that work value becomes one of the psychological areas of an individual that can be a tool of judgment in an individual's career choices. According to De Cooman and Dries (2012), work values refer to individual preferences in a job. Work values also relate to productivity, individual commitment to the organization, and influence individual decisions to stay or exit the organization (Hanaty, 2022). Understanding the characteristics of Generation Z and their work values becomes important as it can help organizations identify effective strategies to attract and keep this generation in their organization (Acheampong, 2019).

Some studies on work values and testing them with Generation Z have been done several times (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015; Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018; Maloni et al., 2019; Hanifah & Wardono, 2020). However, in Indonesia, associating work value with career

preference as a civil servant has never been done. This study will discuss the career preference of Generation Z by measuring the dimensions of work value. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide insight to government agencies about the working value principle that affects the preferences of Generation Z.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Generational Differences
In this research, it was explained that generations are a social construction in which there are groups of people who have the same year of birth within a period of 20 years and are in the same historical experience (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018). According to Mannheim, the younger generation cannot socialize perfectly with the older generation due to a gap in values, where the reality faced by the younger generation is different from that taught by the older generation (Putra, 2017). In 1991, Neil Howe and William Strauss developed the results of Mannheim's research that in studying generations, we should not only look at how events in history shape a generation, but we also need to look at the concept that generations themselves make it possible to shape history (Knight, 2009). Howe and Strauss divide generations based on the same birth time span and similar historical events (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018). Other researchers also divide generations with different labels but generally have the same meaning. Furthermore, a generation, according to Kupperschmidt (2000), is a group of people who identify as such because they have the same year of birth, age, place of living, and life events that have a major impact on that group's growth phase. Additionally, the topic of intergenerational differences in the contexts of Europe and America is discussed. It is noted that regional differences might also contribute to generational gaps (Knight, 2009).

In Indonesia, the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, conducted a thematic gender statistical study (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018) which discussed the profile of the Millennial generation in Indonesia. From various research literature that has been collected, it is concluded that the Indonesian Millennial generation are people born from 1981 to 2000. The two generations before Millennials are the Baby Boomer generation who were born from 1946 to 1960 and the X generation who were born in 1960 to 1980. After millennials, there is a post-millennial generation called Generation Z, namely those born from 2001 to 2010. After Generation Z, there is the Alpha generation who were born after 2010 until now.

### Generation Z
There are differences in generational birth years from various studies. This is because there are differences in the schemes used by various researchers in grouping generations because they come from different countries (Putra, 2017). Likewise with research related to Generation Z. Maloni et al. (2019) and Yun (2024) state that Generation Z are individuals born in the period 1995-2012. Meanwhile, in research by Ozkan & Solmaz (2015), De Cooman & Dries (2012), Mahmoud et al. (2021), and Badan Pusat Statistik (2018) categorize Generation Z as individuals born after 2000. However, various studies agree that Generation Z was born in when technology has developed rapidly. Therefore, they are referred to as digital natives (Gentina, 2020).

Generation Z's mindset tends to be instantaneous (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018). They like freedom and dislike authority. They are open to ideas, realistic, quickly adopt technologies, and like learning new things (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015; Kee et al., 2022). Their communication style is informal, straight to the point, they use social media a lot (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018). Because they grew up in a complex and uncertain environment, they have different views to previous generations about work, learning, and

the world. They are career-oriented, professional, and ambitious, and have high technical abilities and language knowledge. Therefore, they are an excellent workforce (Putra, 2017).

In terms of work, research results from Gentina (2020) explain that Generation Z in Asia shows their disinterest in the manufacturing industry, they are more likely to choose industries in the service sector such as marketing, advertising, media, tourism, and entertainment. They are willing to choose jobs with low starting salaries, but the most important thing for them is to gain experience and better training. The work environment is also one of the things that determines their preferences. In addition, according to Agarwal and Vaghela (2018), in choosing the company they will work for, Generation Z considers the credibility of the company. They are less likely to join a company that has a bad impression with job applicants. Through technology, Generation Z will see reviews, responses to reviews or feedback.

For Generation Z, work plays an important role in their part in achieving their hopes and dreams. If not, then they will feel unhappy (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). This is confirmed by the results of the Randstad Workmonitor survey in 2022 of workers aged 18-67 years in Europe, Asia Pacific, and America, that Generation Z and millennial workers would rather be unemployed than feel unhappy at work (Annur, 2022). The Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey conducted by Deloitte in 2022 also produced something that was not much different, namely that as many as 40% of Generation Z would happily leave their job in just 2 years if they felt it was not suitable. With 35% of them not even having other alternative jobs. Their priorities in choosing a job are a workplace that provides work-life balance, and a job that provides opportunities for learning and development.

**Work Values**
Work values are values that are the main goals that individuals pursue regarding work which directly influence them in making choices and will influence their performance (Ye, 2015). Work values relate to what people want to do and what people want to get and need in their workplace. Work values are an area of individual psychology that is used as an assessment tool in career choices (Gilbert et al., 2008).

Maloni et al. (2019) summarized the results of studies from various researchers and produced 7 dimensions of work values, namely 1) Extrinsic (tangible/visible rewards that come from external individuals); 2) Intrinsic (intangible rewards that are attractive to the individual in the job); 3) Supervisory (interaction and supervision by leadership); 4) Social (the need to interact and be part of the environment); 5) Altruistic (motivation to help others); 6) Leisure (Having time outside of work) and 7) Stability (long term certainty).

Other researchers, such as Agarwal & Vaghela (2018) and Hanifah & Wardono (2020), use five dimensions of work values commonly referenced by researchers. These dimensions, also addressed in Maloni et al.'s (2019) research, clarify indicators for each dimension. The intrinsic work value dimension refers to values related to work itself, including competencies, interest, self-esteem, status, and the need for self-actualization (Lyons et al., 2009), with development and motivation as key indicators. The extrinsic work value dimension involves values related to material gains from work, such as prestige, performance, and job promotion (Lyons et al., 2009), with power, status, and career as indicators. Altruistic work value focuses on working to help others (Twenge et al. in Hanifah & Wardono, 2020), with helping others and contributing to society as indicators. Status-associated values pertain to work values related to achieving status, recognition, independence, and pride in one's job, with personal superiority as an indicator. Finally, social values encompass relationships with coworkers, leaders, and

others, as well as aspects like free time, a pleasant environment, and work-life balance, with leisure, coworkers, and work-life balance as indicators.

**Previous Research**
There are several studies regarding work values in Generation Z, including those in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Previous Research on Work Values in Generation Z

| No | Author and Year | Title/Objective/Method | Result |
|----|-----------------|------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Ozkan & Zolmaz (2015) | The Changing Face of the Employees- Generation Z and Their Perceptions of Work (A Study Applied to University Students)<br><br>The research aims to determine Generation Z's perception of work 276 students were surveyed for the study. | The social environment is an important aspect for Generation Z at work, especially to build team spirit. Generation Z is open to ideas and they want to learn new knowledge. |
| 2 | Agarwal & Vaghela (2018) | Work Values of Gen Z: Bridging the Gap to the Next Generation<br><br>The research aims to determine the workplace expectations of Generation Z. The research was conducted using a survey method on 215 students. | Generation Z's biggest contribution in choosing a workplace is found in intrinsic value, altruistic value, and status-associated value |
| 3 | Maloni et al. (2019) | Understanding the Work Values of Gen Z Business Students<br><br>The research aims to determine the career expectations of Generation Z. The research was conducted using a survey method of 7,860 students at 7 universities in American states. | Intrinsic value has the biggest contribution, especially in the result indicator. What Generation Z hopes most is that they can see the results of their work and that they are interested in work that is meaningful and makes an impact |
| 4 | Hanifah & Wardono (2020) | Identification of Factors Forming Generation Z Job Seeker Behavior in Indonesia<br><br>The study's goal is to discover the elements that influence the behavior of Generation Z job seekers in Indonesia. 150 students in the business, creative, and technological fields—the majority of whom live in Jakarta and Bandung—were involved in the study, which was carried out using a survey method. | Altruistic and social work values make the largest contribution to Generation Z's work behavior. According to this research, a workspace concept that takes into consideration the distance between employees is recommended because Generation Z wants a workplace where they can build relationships |

| | | | with their coworkers and support each other. |
|---|---|---|---|

## RESEARCH METHOD

This is a type of quantitative study that uses survey methods. The questionnaire was distributed to students at Putra Bangsa University in Kebumen, Indonesia. Respondents were asked about the job they wanted if they had graduated (career preference). The next question is about the work values. The work values measurement refers to Agarwal & Vaghela (2018) and Hanifah & Wardono (2020) studies that measure five dimensions of work value: (1) intrinsic work value (indicator: development and motivation); (2) extrinsic working value (indicator: power, status, and career); (3) altruistic work value (indicator: helps others and contribute to society); (4) status-associated work value (indicator: personal superiority); and (5) social work value (indicator: leisure, co-workers, work-life balance)

The research was carried out in August 2023. The sample determination approach uses purposive sampling, considering that the student filling out the form will be at least 22 years old by 2023. This criterion was determined based on Central Bureau of Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018) research on Generation Z births, which ranged from 2001 to 2010. Descriptive analysis is used to analyze questionnaire data using SPSS.

## RESULTS

### Respondents' Profile
Of the 121 data obtained, there were 19 respondents aged over 22 years, so excluded from the data analysis. The amount of data analyzed in this study amounted to 102. Table 2 describes the profile of respondents in this research.

**Table 2.** Respondents' Profile

| | | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Man | 29 | 28% |
| | Woman | 73 | 72% |
| Age | 18-20 | 68 | 67% |
| | 21-22 | 34 | 33% |
| Study Program | S1 Management | 70 | 68% |
| | S1 Computer Science | 14 | 14% |
| | D3 Accounting | 10 | 10% |
| | S1 Data Science | 8 | 8% |
| Job Experience | Not working | 60 | 59% |
| | Already Working | 42 | 41% |
| Employment sector (that already works) | Business | 25 | 60% |
| | Private | 11 | 26% |
| | Non-Profit Organization | 3 | 7% |
| | Regional-owned Enterprise | 2 | 5% |
| | Government worker | 1 | 2% |

Based on Table 2, out of 102 respondents, the majority were female (72%). The majority of respondents were between the ages of 18-20 years (67%) and most of the respondents came from the S1 Management study program (68%). According to work experience, 59% of respondents had no work experience and out of 41% who were already employed, most were employed as entrepreneurs (60%).

**Career Preference**
Respondents were asked questions about the job they wanted or would be applying for when they graduated. Figure 1 shows respondents' answers about the job they wanted.

**Figure 1.** The Job that Generation Z Wants to Apply For
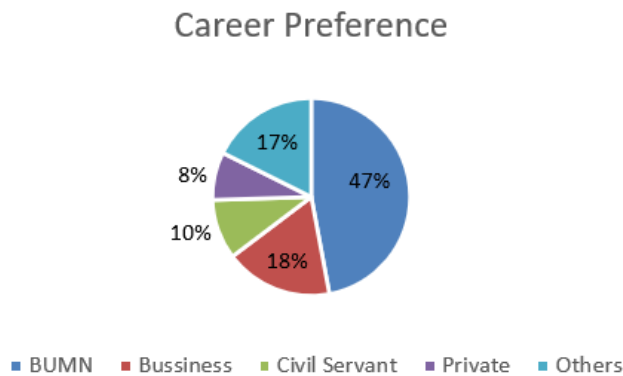


Of the 102 respondents, who wanted to become civil servants only 10% (10 students). The majority of respondents wanted to work at state-owned enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Negara/BUMN) (47%) and the job option the least sought was to work for a private company (8%). 18% of respondents wanted to be entrepreneurs, 17% wanted to work in other sectors, such as non-profit organizations, and the rest did not give a statement.

**Work Values**
*Work Values Dimensions*
The result of the data processing of the questionnaire yields the average score of the work values dimensions studied in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Average Score of Work Values Dimensions
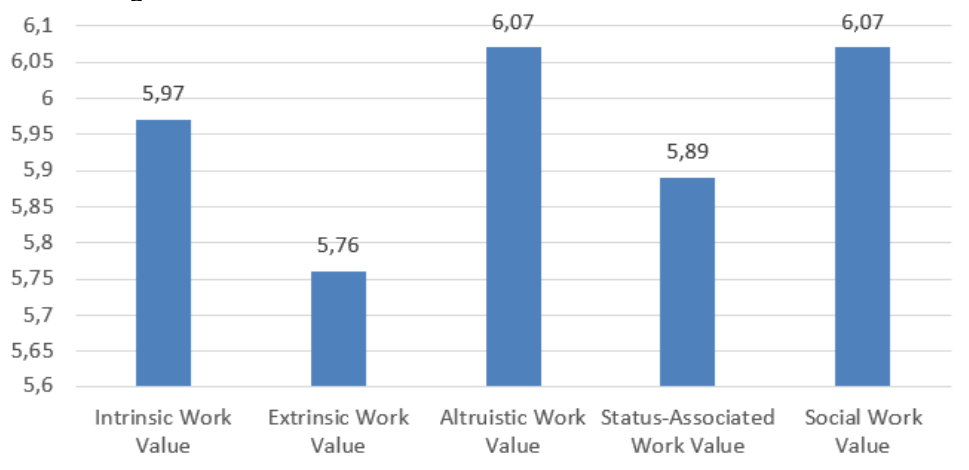


Based on the average score in Figure 2, respondents have altruistic work value and social work value tendencies, which means respondents attach importance to the values of helping each other, helping others, and work that contributes or benefits (altruistic). Respondents also consider the importance of relationships with their leaders, colleagues, and others in their work, as well as giving priority to the balance in life and work (social). The lowest work value score is extrinsic work value, which describes the feedback of the work obtained that is related to the individual's economic condition, prestige or self-esteem, work performance, and promotion. Respondents assessed these extrinsic values as a lack of priority in choosing jobs.

### Work Values Indicators
The data is processed to calculate the average score of the work value indicators, with the result shown in Figure 3.

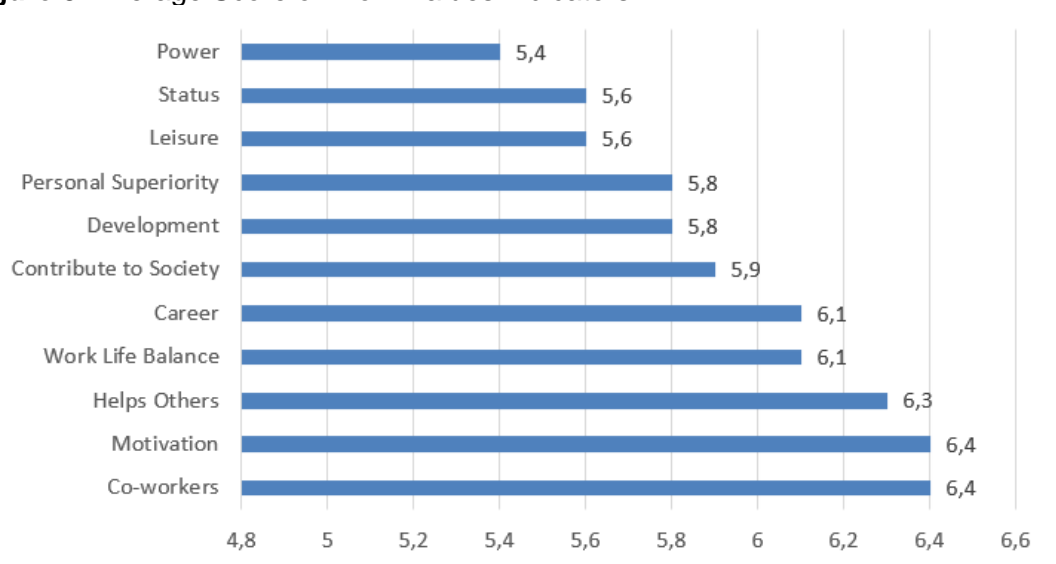**Figure 3.** Average Score of Work Values Indicators



Figure 3 describes priority values related to job choices. The values that are important are co-workers and motivation, followed by helping others and work-life balance. This shows that their tendency to choose jobs is motivated by motivating jobs, providing opportunities to cooperate and help each other, sharing knowledge, a pleasant working environment, and jobs that can provide a balance for personal life and work.

### Work Values Indicators Based on Career Preferences to Work at State-Own Corporation and as a Civil Servant
The data was reprocessed by focusing on the work values indicators for respondents who had a BUMN job choice (as the majority job choice of respondents), that is 48 respondents (47%). Data were compared with the working value score for respondents who had preference as civil servants (10 respondents or 10%) to see the difference. The result of this comparison can be seen in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Comparison of Average Scores of Work Values Indicators of Respondents with BUMN and Civil Servant Career Preferences
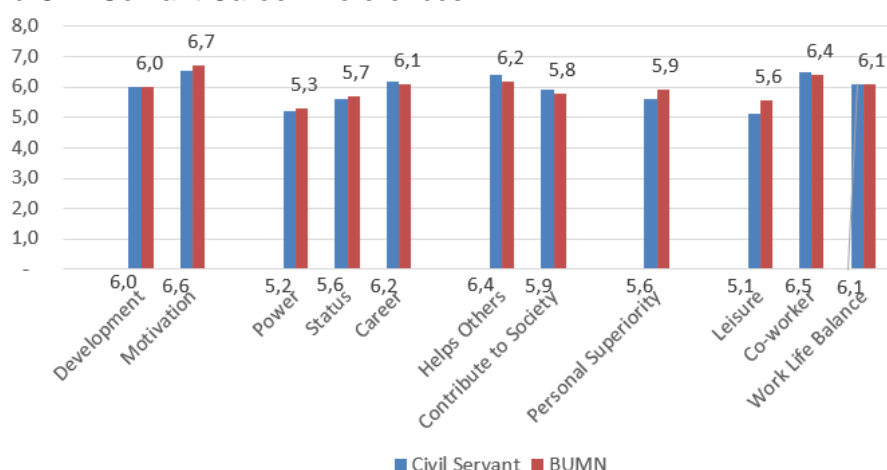
Based on Figure 4, the high-rated work value indicators of the combination of these two types of respondents are motivation, co-workers, and helping others. Respondents who preferred to work at BUMN had a higher motivation value (6.7) than those who preferred to work as civil servants (6,6). Those who preferred to work as civil servants scored higher (6,5) than those who preferred to work at BUMNs in coworker-related categories (6,4). For associate-related values, those who preferred working as civil servants scored higher (6,4) than those who preferred working at BUMN (6,20).

In the overall work values indicators, respondents who prefer to work as civil servants have high scores in careers, helping others, and contributing to the community and colleagues. Respondents in this group, focus on jobs with long career opportunities, have good relationships with colleagues, and make a contribution to society.

Respondents who prefer to work at the BUMN have high scores in motivation, power, status, personal superiority, and leisure. They consider it important to choose jobs that motivate them, jobs that have career opportunities to occupy strategic positions, work in places that make them proud, and a pleasant and non-rigid work environment.

Both types of respondents have similar development scores and work-life balance, which means for them, building relationships, self-development, and work-life balance can be done both as a civil servant and as a BUMN employee.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the data processing results, if looking at the overall work value dimension, Generation Z has a tendency toward altruistic value (6,07) and social value (6,07). They attach importance to the values of self-reliance, such as work that can contribute to society and work that is of the nature of helping each other. Besides, their work connectivity with their social environment is also considered important. When applying for a job, Generation Z prefers the kind of work that encourages collaboration with colleagues and jobs that can enable them to balance their personal and professional lives. They like flexible work to do, both in terms of working hours and the way they work.

The results support the Hanifah and Wardono study (2020), which revealed that the biggest contribution of Generation Z's work behavior was the value of altruistic and social work. The results explained that Generation Z wants a workplace where they can build relationships with their coworkers and support each other.

According to the results of the survey, the majority of the career preferences of respondents are working in state-owned corporations (47%), while those who prefer to work as civil servants only 10% are still below the profession of entrepreneur in demand by as much as 18%. Both types of respondents consider that choosing jobs that can drive their motivation to develop is important, this is shown by the scores of the indicator of the motivation value of the two (civil servant: 6.6; state-owned corporation worker: 6.7), which is higher than other indicators.

Compared to respondents who prefer to work as civil servants, respondents who prefer to work at a state-owned corporation have greater emphasis on power, status, personal superiority, and leisure values. They love jobs that offer important posts or positions, make them have meaningful responsibilities, jobs that make them proud, and fulfill their personal achievements, and they like jobs that are flexible in terms of time and way of working, not always supervised but gain support, and they also expect jobs that give them time for their personal lives (free time outside of routine work).

By understanding the work value of Generation Z, then organizations in particular government agencies can take the following steps. Firstly, every institution needs to nurture a culture of work that appreciates ideas and shares knowledge. In this case, it also means building a culture of communication that is accustomed to openness, friendliness, and anti-criticism. Take advantage of the expertise of the Baby Boomers, Gen-X, and Gen-Y to help guide Gen-Z to their best performance. Generation Z wants seniors and their leaders to be coaches and mentors, not just assignments. Based on the survey results, the co-worker aspect is the most valued value by the Z generation (highest average score = 6.4). Generation Z's tendency in choosing jobs is jobs that provide opportunities to collaborate, help each other, and share knowledge. Secondly, provide opportunities for learning and self-development, education, and training of staff on a sustainable basis. Based on the results of the survey, in addition to the aspect of co-workers, the motivation aspect is also the most important value by Generation Z (highest average score = 6.4). They consider it important to choose jobs that motivate them and that provide career benefits for them. Thirdly, flexible working patterns are also part of the organizational culture that the Z generation is concerned about (average response score = 6.1). They prefer a pleasant and non-rigid working environment. Then the implementation of flexible working, like working from anywhere, with flexible working hours and a flexible way of working can be developed. This is done by considering the type of duty and function of the department, whether to provide direct service to the public or not. Lastly, more activities that demonstrate engagement with the community or work that contributes to the community, and the use of social media as a media of information need to be more covert. This is because Generation Z tends to have altruistic values, where they want to be able to provide mutual benefit (average answer score for mutual help =6.3).

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the values believed by Generation Z as the basis of their preferences in choosing jobs becomes crucial. The government does not want the best talents to choose not to serve the country. The fact that civil servant candidates resigned when the selection process had been completed could indicate that they had experience interacting with their agencies, which turned out not to meet their expectations. The reasons for their resignation were related to both extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Therefore, the current government agency needs to adapt its culture and work environment to be more dynamic and adaptive.

This study is limited to a small number of samples and was only taken from one university. Furthermore, the findings in this study have not responded to how the respondents perceive the civil servant profession. Knowing how their views on civil servants' professions can answer the main reason why they are not interested in working as civil servants, and prefer to work at state-owned corporations, further research is still needed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS
The present study which is reported in this article is not being published in other publishers, has no element of plagiarism, and is free from the interests of any party.

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