



The Effect of Interpersonal Communication Among Coworkers on the Mental Well-Being of Generation Z in Contemporary Work Settings

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Abstract

Generation Z now dominates Indonesia's workforce and is known for valuing work-life balance and mental health. However, many companies face challenges such as work stress and high turnover among young employees. One key factor influencing this condition is the quality of coworker communication. This study aims to describe the quality of coworker communication, identify the mental health conditions of Generation Z employees, and analyze the influence of coworker communication on mental health in modern workplaces. The research employed a quantitative approach through a closed-ended questionnaire (Likert scale 1–5) involving 70 Generation Z employees from various companies in Indonesia, complemented by qualitative semi-structured interviews to deepen understanding. Data were collected from October 2 to October 16, 2025, and analyzed using multiple linear regression with SPSS. The findings reveal a positive and significant influence of coworker communication quality on employees' mental health, contributing 35% to the variation in mental health conditions. The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the relationship between coworker communication and mental health within Indonesia's Generation Z workforce. The research implies that human resource management strategies should emphasize open communication, flexible work arrangements, and psychological support programs to improve the well-being of young employees.

Keyword : Communication; Coworker Relationship; Generation Z; Mental Health; Workplace

INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly dynamic work environment, balancing work and personal life (work life balance) has become a major challenge for many employees, especially Generation Z, who are just entering the professional world. This generation is known for having high expectations regarding work flexibility and psychological well-being.

An imbalance between work and personal life can lead to psychological pressure, stress, and decreased motivation and productivity (Hasyim & Bakri, 2025; Kaur et al., 2025; Kerdpitak & Jermitsuparsert, 2020; Kumar et al., 2024; Saraswati & Lie, 2020). In this context, social factors in the workplace particularly coworker communication play an important role in maintaining employees' mental stability. Open, supportive, and effective communication among coworkers not only facilitates task completion but also contributes to creating an emotionally healthy work environment. The issue investigated in this study stems from the increasing concern over mental health in modern workplaces.

Many employees, particularly from Generation Z, report high levels of stress due to work pressure, career expectations, and a lack of social support in the workplace. Although previous studies have highlighted the relationship between work stress and productivity, or between work-life balance and psychological well-being, there are still few studies that specifically examine how the quality of communication among coworkers can affect individual mental

health at work. Some earlier studies, such as those by Down & Adrian (2004), discussed the importance of organizational communication in creating an effective work environment. Subsequent research, such as that conducted by De Cierie et al. (2020) and Spector (2021), focused on work-life balance and its relationship with job satisfaction and stress but has not yet deeply addressed peer-to-peer communication as a social factor that plays a role in maintaining mental health.

Recent research also shows that social interactions in the workplace can be a significant source of emotional support, but the literature on this is still limited to general contexts, without considering the unique characteristics of Generation Z, who tend to prioritize digital communication and collaborative work environments. Based on this research gap, this study aims to analyze the effect of Quality of Coworker Communication on the mental health of Generation Z employees in modern workplaces. This study is expected to provide empirical contributions to understanding how social interactions in the workplace can serve as a protective mechanism against mental health disorders, as well as a reference for companies in building a more supportive and sustainable work culture.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals realize their own potential, can cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community. In the context of the modern workplace, mental health has become a crucial aspect influencing employee performance, engagement, and job satisfaction. Individuals with good mental health tend to experience lower levels of stress, higher work motivation, and the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships with colleagues and the organization (Bronkhorst et al., 2015; Chu, 2017; Kaur et al., 2025; Montano et al., 2017; Sowunmi, 2022). Conversely, mental health problems in the workplace can reduce productivity, increase absenteeism, and deteriorate the overall work climate (Bailey & Dollard, 2019; Duchaine et al., 2020; Pinheiro et al., 2017; Roelen et al., 2018; Rugulies et al., 2023).

The quality of communication among coworkers is one of the key factors shaping social dynamics in the workplace. Clampitt and Downs (1993) emphasize that quality of coworker communication encompasses openness, clarity, honesty, and effective reciprocity. Open and supportive communication can enhance trust, collaboration, and job satisfaction. For Generation Z who are known to be technologically adept yet sensitive to the social climate transparent and empathetic communication is essential for creating a comfortable, inclusive, and psychologically supportive work environment.

According to Social Support Theory, proposed by House (1981), social support from the work environment both from coworkers and supervisors serves as a stress buffer and contributes to improved mental health. Communication among coworkers represents both emotional support and instrumental support. When employees feel heard, valued, and assisted by their colleagues, they are more likely to experience higher levels of psychological well-being. Therefore, the quality of coworker communication can be considered an important indicator of the level of social support within an organization.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains that psychological well-being increases when three basic human needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled. In the context of workplace communication, the aspect of relatedness or social connectedness is particularly relevant. Effective communication among coworkers fosters a sense of acceptance and social connection within the workplace, which ultimately supports the

development of positive mental health. For Generation Z, who tend to value authentic and collaborative interpersonal relationships, the fulfillment of relatedness needs through supportive communication has a significant impact on their mental well-being.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), posits that every job consists of two main components: job demands and job resources. Job resources, including coworker communication, play a vital role in mitigating the negative effects of job demands and enhancing employee engagement and well-being. In the context of Generation Z, who face high work pressure in the digital era and rapid organizational changes, effective coworker communication can function as a job resource that strengthens resilience, reduces stress, and maintains mental stability.

Based on the literature review described above, it can be concluded that coworker communication plays a significant role in shaping and maintaining employee mental health, particularly among Generation Z in the modern workplace. Several theories support this relationship from different psychological and organizational perspectives.

First, according to Social Support Theory (House, 1981), coworker communication represents a form of social support capable of reducing work-related pressure and stress. Through open, empathetic, and supportive interactions, employees feel more accepted, valued, and have opportunities to share their feelings and experiences (Belgasm et al., 2025; Lemon, 2019; Men & Yue, 2019; Moore et al., 2020; Raina, 2022). This form of support functions as a buffer against stress, thereby helping individuals maintain emotional balance and mental health.

Second, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) posits that humans have basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy. In the workplace, high-quality coworker communication can fulfill the need for relatedness, as positive interactions strengthen a sense of belonging and social connection. Fulfillment of this need fosters satisfaction and motivation, which indirectly contributes to employees' mental well-being.

Third, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) positions coworker communication as part of job resources—factors that help individuals cope with job demands. When workplace communication functions effectively, employees gain access to emotional and informational support that can ease their workload. This directly reduces stress levels and enhances psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the concept of Quality of Coworker Communication (Clampitt & Downs, 1993) reinforces that openness, clarity, trust, and positive feedback are the main determinants of effective coworker communication. For Generation Z, who tend to value transparency, collaboration, and two-way communication, the quality of communication becomes a key element in creating a psychologically healthy work environment.

Conceptually, it can be concluded that the higher the quality of coworker communication, the higher the levels of perceived social support, social connectedness, and job resources experienced by employees. These three factors directly contribute to improved mental health. Conversely, poor communication or limited social interaction may lead to misunderstandings, feelings of isolation, and work-related stress, ultimately reducing psychological well-being.

This study aims to analyze the effect of Quality of Coworker Communication on Mental Health among Generation Z employees in modern work environments in Indonesia.

METHOD

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining a quantitative method through surveys and a qualitative method through semi-structured interviews. The use of these two approaches is intended to ensure that the research findings not only present statistical relationships among variables but also provide a deeper understanding of respondents' experiences and perceptions.

The study was conducted online and partially through in-person interviews at the workplaces of willing respondents. The research setting focuses on Generation Z employees working in various companies across Indonesia, without limiting the study to specific industry sectors, so that the results can reflect the general conditions of the young workforce in the modern era. The data sources consist of primary data obtained directly from questionnaire responses and interview results.

The research population includes individuals categorized as Generation Z (aged 18–28 years) who have been employed for at least six months in a company. Since not all members of the population could be reached, purposive sampling was applied, selecting respondents based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. A total of 70 respondents participated in the quantitative survey, while qualitative interviews were conducted with several respondents to strengthen and enrich the quantitative findings.

Data were collected using closed-ended questionnaires with a Likert scale of 1–5 to measure respondents' levels of agreement with statements related to four main variables: work-life balance, mental health, social support, and quality of coworker communication. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews were conducted both online and face-to-face to explore respondents' real-life experiences related to work stress, coworker communication, and the balance between personal life and work.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) with multiple linear regression analysis to examine the influence between independent and dependent variables. Prior to conducting regression analysis, the data were tested using classical assumption tests, including normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity, to ensure that the regression model was valid and met statistical requirements.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involves grouping respondents' answers based on recurring themes such as coworker support, emotional stress, and work-life balance. The main challenge encountered in this study was the difficulty of reaching respondents who met the Generation Z criteria and were willing to allocate time to complete the questionnaire or participate in interviews.

However, this challenge was addressed by distributing the questionnaire online through professional social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Google Forms, ensuring that the collected data remained sufficient and representative. The strength of the methodology used in this study lies in the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach provides objective and statistically testable results, while the qualitative approach offers contextual and in-depth insights into respondents' real experiences. Therefore, this mixed-methods approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of how coworker communication can influence the mental health of Generation Z in the modern workplace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 70 Generation Z respondents aged 18–27 years who are employed in various companies across Indonesia. The respondents consisted of 43 females and 27 males, with the majority holding a bachelor's degree (40 respondents) and a length of employment predominantly up to two years.

1. Validity and Reliability Testing

Tabel 1. Correlation Matrix Among Statement Items

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.895	9

Based on the SPSS output results for the Mental Health variable, all nine statement items (P1–P9) showed item–total correlation values greater than 0.3 with $p < 0.01$, and were therefore considered valid. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.895 indicates very high reliability, meaning that respondents answered all items consistently.

Tabel 2. Cronbach's Alpha

Case Summary	Processing	N	%
Cases	Valid	70	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	70	100.0

a. listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Tabel 3. Correlation Matrix Among Statement Items

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Item
.941	9

For the Quality of Coworker Communication variable, all nine items also demonstrated positive and significant correlations ($Sig < 0.05$) with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.941, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable (Nunnally, 1978). Interpretation: Both instruments meet the criteria for validity and reliability, and are therefore suitable for use in subsequent analysesz

2. Descriptive Analysis

Tabel 4. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std.Deviation	N
Mentalhealth	28.7000	7.07383	70
Qualityofcoworkercommunication	33.1286	7.00708	70

The mean score for Mental Health was 28.70, while Coworker Communication had a

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mean score of 33.13, indicating that, in general, both mental health conditions and the quality of coworker communication were in the moderately good category. This finding is consistent with the theories proposed by House (1981) and Bakker and Demerouti (2007), which state that social support through workplace communication functions as a job resource that can enhance employee well-being.

The results of the Pearson correlation test showed $r = 0.592$ with $\text{Sig (1-tailed)} < 0.001$. This indicates a positive and significant relationship between the quality of coworker communication and mental health. The better the communication among coworkers, the better the mental health condition of Generation Z employees. The strength of this relationship can be classified as moderate to strong, supporting the theory proposed by Clampitt and Downs (1993) regarding the importance of openness and clarity of information in workplace relationships.

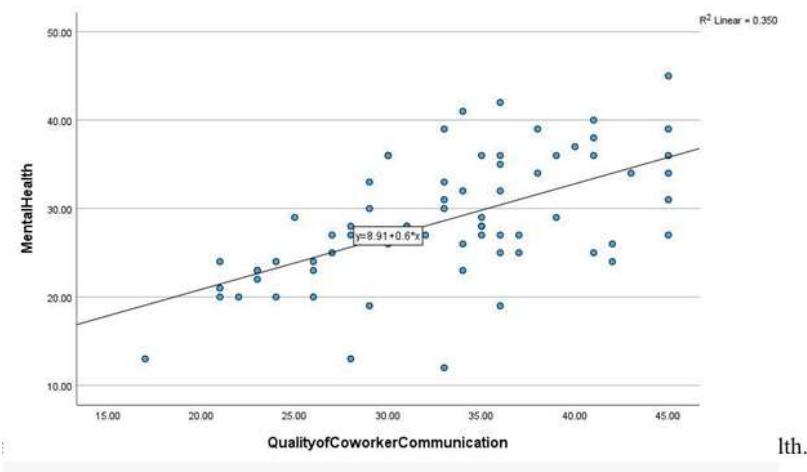
Table 5. Multiple Linier Regression Analysis

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std.Error of the estimate
1	.592 ^a	.350	.341	5.74438

a. predictors: (constant), Qualityofcoworkercommunication

b. Dependent Variable : mentalhealth

The regression model produced an R value of 0.592 and an R^2 of 0.350, meaning that 35% of the variation in mental health can be explained by the quality of coworker communication, while the remaining 65% is influenced by other factors (such as workload, supervisor support, or work-life balance). The ANOVA results showed $F = 36.634$ with $\text{Sig} < 0.001$, indicating that the model is significant and appropriate for use.



Gambar 1.

$[Y = 8.91 + 0.67X]$ di mana: Y=Mental Health, X = Quality of Coworker Communication

Model	Coefficients ^a							
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
1	(Constant)	8.911	3.341		2.667	.010	2.244	15.577
	QualityofCoworkerCommunication	.597	.099	.592	6.053	<.001	.400	.794

a. Dependent Variable: MentalHealth

Figure 2. The regression coefficient $B = 0.597$ ($p < 0.001$) indicates that each one-unit increase in the quality of coworker communication will significantly increase the mental health score by 0.597 points.

3. Classical Assumption Test

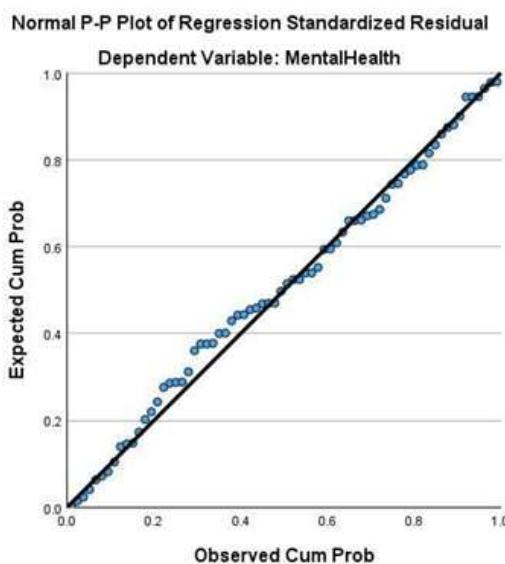


Figure 3. Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residuals for the mental health variable. SPSS data processing results (2025).

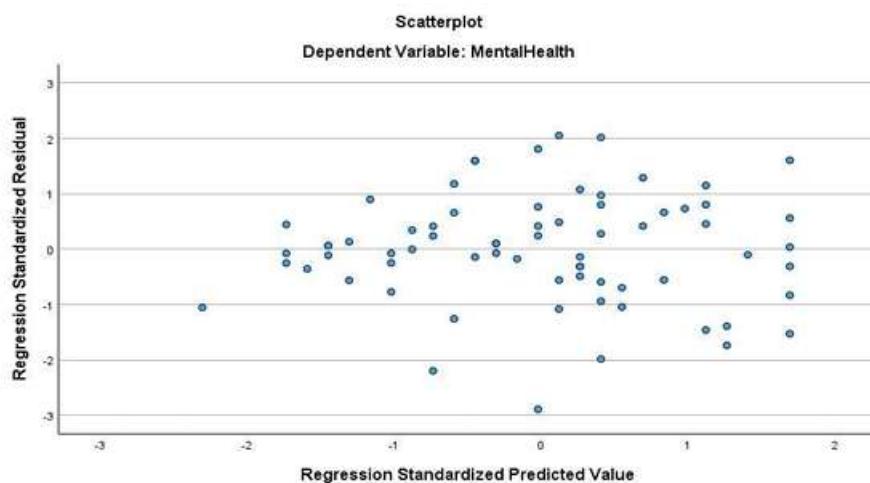


Figure 4. Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals versus Values for the Mental Health variable.
Source: SPSS data processing results (2025).

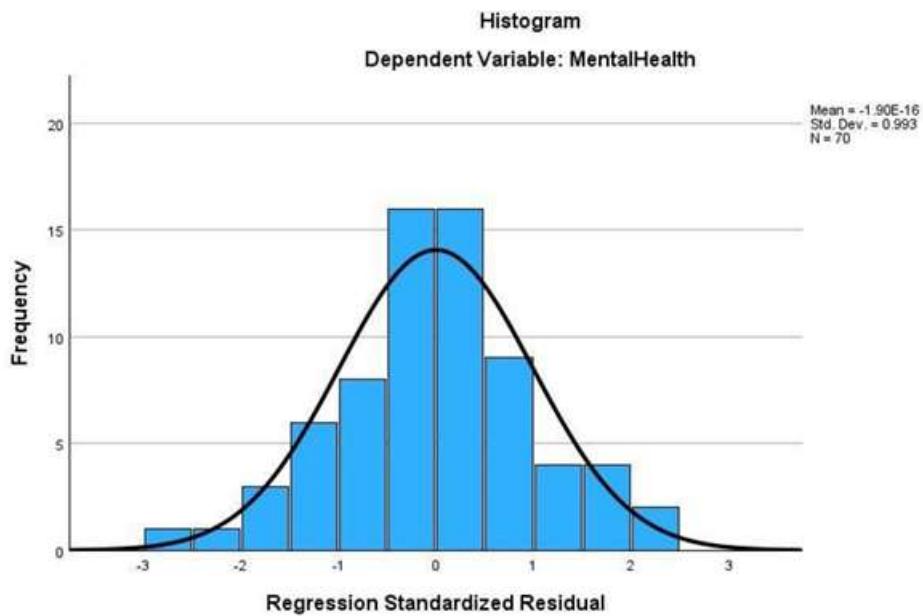


Figure 5. Histogram of Regression Standardized Residuals for the Mental Health variable.

Source: SPSS data processing results (2025).

The results of the normal P-P plot and the residual histogram indicate that the residuals are approximately normally distributed (mean ≈ 0 , Std. Dev. ≈ 1). The scatterplot shows a random dispersion of points around the horizontal line at 0, indicating that heteroscedasticity does not occur. Therefore, the regression model meets all classical assumptions and can be considered reliable.

These findings are consistent with those of Ruppel and Harrington (2020), who found that supportive coworker communication can reduce stress and enhance emotional well-being. The 35% contribution to the variance in mental health indicates that coworker communication is an important factor, although not the only one. From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), coworker communication functions as a job resource that helps Generation Z cope with high job demands in modern work environments.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of data from 70 Generation Z respondents across Indonesian companies reveals that coworker communication quality positively and significantly influences their mental health, with an R^2 of 0.350 explaining 35% of mental health variations (the rest attributable to factors like workload, supervisor support, and work-life balance); the regression model was robust ($F = 36.634$; $\text{Sig.} < 0.001$), satisfying classical assumptions (normality, linearity, homogeneity), and supported by qualitative interviews highlighting how open, empathetic communication reduces stress and boosts well-being. All alternative hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_3) were accepted ($\text{Sig.} < 0.001$), rejecting H_0 , and confirming significant mental health differences based on communication effectiveness. Organizations should foster open communication cultures, offer interpersonal training, peer support programs, psychological

counseling, and team-building. For future research, incorporate additional variables like supervisor support and workload while expanding samples across diverse sectors and regions in Indonesia to enhance generalizability.

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