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Why do Gen Z choose teaching as careers? exploring extrinsic motivations of Gen Z to become teacher in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The decision to become teacher is greatly influenced by certain motivations such as altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic. Examining these motivations influencing individuals' decisions to become teachers is essential for sustainable professional development. This is because no previous publication has focused on Generation Z's (Gen Z) extrinsic motivations to pursue teaching profession. Therefore, this study aimed to explore motivations of Gen Z to become teachers in elementary schools. A qualitative analysis was adopted with a focus group discussion method including 58 pre-service teachers learning at the primary school teacher education program. Furthermore, the participants in the analysis were aged 18-22 years and also fell into the Gen Z category. Data obtained from the participants was further analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that extrinsic motivations underlying the desire of Gen Z to become teachers originated from the high social respect teaching receives from society, the promise of prosperity, and adequate employment opportunities. Extrinsic motivations also originated from childhood experiences inspired by religious teachings and the parents. The study further emphasized the importance of understanding the participants' motivations for entering teaching profession to improve recruitment systems, providing motivation, set hours and workloads, as well as welfare systems for Gen Z teachers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Individuals' decisions to pursue teaching profession are influenced by various types of motivations namely altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic [1], [2]. Altruistic motivations stimulate an individual to act for the good or welfare of others without expecting personal rewards or benefits [3]. It also comprises empathy and feelings of prudence, moral and ethical values, willingness to make sacrifices, emotional satisfaction, and understanding of one's limitations. Furthermore, intrinsic motivations are desires facilitating individuals to act due to internal satisfaction and interest derived from the activity, not because of external rewards [4]–[6]. Individuals who are driven by intrinsic motivations enjoy the process, feel challenged, and gain satisfaction from personal achievements [7]. Intrinsic motivations also include a desire for competence, personal

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accomplishment, interest and participation, autonomy and control, as well as an inherent excitement [8], [9]. Additionally, it is generally applied to an activity considered an end objective [10]. Publications showed that intrinsic motivation could influence individuals' achievement and higher performance as well as control basic human achievements [11]. The analysis is also predicted to increase student participation in learning and reach higher achievements [12].

In contrast to the previous two desires, extrinsic motivations are desires that stimulate individuals to act because of external rewards [13], [14] such as avoiding punishment and negative consequences. It varies in autonomy from external regulatory (performing action to please someone, receiving rewards, or avoiding punishment) to integrative (performing action because of the importance and particular behavior value) [15]. Additionally, individuals influenced by extrinsic motivations act due to the external rewards outside the activity. Extrinsic motivations include reputation and reciprocity [16], material or physical rewards, praise or recognition, punishment or negative consequences, external objectives, and external regulation [17]. It is also expressed in various financial incentives such as wages, salaries, bonuses, promotions, and other benefits that organizations offer to employees for performance improvement [18]. According to the self-determinant theory [9], employees often perceived the influence of extrinsic motivations from two perspectives including opportunity and risk. The opportunity perspective refers to the possibility of getting positive rewards when employees perform certain tasks properly. The risk aspect on the other hand shows the probability of receiving lower compensation or losing the jobs due to poor performance [13], [19]. Publications have divided extrinsic motivations into two components namely cognitive (seeking compensation) and affective (seeking recognition) [20].

Similar to altruistic and intrinsic, extrinsic motivations are often associated with individuals' performance and decisions in selecting profession. Previous publications on extrinsic motivations have shown varied and even contradictory results. Several publications have connected the desire to increase work productivity [21], contribute to better self-regulation and positive adjustment [14], have a positive and significant influence on employee performance [22], [23], and cross-cultural adjustment [13]. Other analyses show that it can mediate the influence of a student's reading skills in a particular class on the performance at the next stage [15].

Besides publications showing the positive influence of motivations on aspects of performance, many investigations suggest that there is no influence or a negative impact on aspects of performance. Publication by Gerhart and Fang [24] explained that extrinsic motivations are expensive as well as detrimental to performance and creativity. It was also perceived as having a lower quality than intrinsic desires. The results also correlated with Duan *et al.* [25] and Huang *et al.* [26], stating that extrinsic motivations reduced individuals' intrinsic desires to engage in environmentally friendly behavior. This was further supported by Moser [27] where individuals were found to be less inclined to voluntarily engage in environmentally friendly actions when bonuses and prizes were offered compared to those intrinsically motivated without external rewards [28]. Other analysis also states that extrinsic motivations are short-term and isolated [17]. Furthermore, research Iqbal *et al.* [29] measured the influence of faculty intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on higher education performance through a culture of quality in society and private universities in Pakistan. The results showed that the influence of extrinsic motivations on higher education performance was not supported empirically. Similarly, multiple regression analyses of 561 valid questionnaires investigated the relationship between work motivations and engagement. The results showed that extrinsic work motivations had no significant influence on engagement [30].

Based on the evidence, several publications also show that many employees prefer the profession due to extrinsic work motivation despite the influence not being significant [31]. This implies that quite a few employees select certain professions due to external motivations. Additionally, publications also found that the level of intrinsic work motivation in senior workers decreased when facing economic and financial constraints [32]. The influence of extrinsic motivation on individual work engagement is relatively weak during the period. When retested after a year, the study found that extrinsic motivation's influence on work engagement increased positively. Both intrinsic and extrinsic desires are essential for work engagement but extrinsic motivations will gradually strengthen and intrinsic ones will weaken [31].

Reflecting on the contradictory results of previous publications, this study aims to explore extrinsic motivations of Generation Z (Gen Z) to become teachers. As evidenced in previous analysis, there is no consensus on how extrinsic motivations influence career choices or performance [21]. Although previous publications have explored motivations to become a teacher, no study has explicitly examined extrinsic motivations using Gen Z as participants. Furthermore, no previous publications have addressed how Gen Z now entering the workforce, can endure teaching profession's high workload and turnover rate [33]. Considering that the generation started entering the world of work in 2017, it is essential to explore what motivates Gen Z to select teaching profession and how extrinsic motivations can assist in carrying out the career. Therefore, this study focuses on addressing the following questions: i) what are the sources of Gen

Z's extrinsic motivations to become teachers in elementary schools? and ii) what are the types of extrinsic motivations for Gen Z to become teachers in elementary schools?

2. METHOD

Experts adopted a qualitative method using a focus group study approach [34], [35] to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and perceptions of motivation to become teachers. This method further provided an understanding of social dynamics, differences of opinion, and shared constructions of the phenomena being examined. This method allowed experts to understand social dynamics, differences of opinion, and shared constructions of the phenomenon, leading to in-depth and contextual insights into participants' extrinsic motivations for deciding to become teachers. Furthermore, participants were pre-service teachers who were studying at teaching and education faculty, aged 18-22 years, and belonged to the Gen Z category. Determining the participants was carried out using purposive sampling [36]–[38] with the following criteria, namely i) enrollment in the elementary school teacher education program, ii) coming from Gen Z, and iii) voluntary participation [38]. Furthermore, data collection was carried out using group discussion forums, where 58 pre-service teachers were grouped into six focus groups. Experts were further assisted with data collection guidelines.

The collected data was then analyzed using thematic data analysis methods [39], [40] including the following seven steps: i) Preparation and familiarization: the experts would thoroughly read and understand the data. ii) Initial coding: shortcodes were used to identify relevant data units. ii) Searching for main themes: after initial coding, similar codes were organized and grouped to form initial themes. This process included searching for patterns or similarities in the data that led to the development of broader themes. iv) Examining and developing themes: Initial themes were further explored to ensure consistency and fit with the data. This included re-examining all the codes and how the shortcodes relate to each other. v) Naming and defining themes: clear names and definitions were given to the main themes identified. This step was taken to help ensure that each theme accurately reflected what was signified in the data. vi) Interpretation and analysis: an in-depth analysis of each theme was conducted to understand the significance and implications of the data. This included critical reflection on how the themes suggested the phenomenon under investigation. vii) Presenting results: the thematic analysis results were prepared by considering the appropriate context and relevance to existing literature. Therefore, the three main themes found in this data analysis included sources of motivation, social rewards, and increased welfare.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

This study found that extrinsic motivations for pre-service Gen Z to become teachers included motivational sources, social rewards, and welfare. Motivation sources included childhood experiences that were inspired by the Prophet's hadith and the parents. Social rewards theme emphasized teaching as a noble and respected profession by society. Furthermore, the increased welfare theme comprised decent salaries and benefits as well as work-life balance. Understanding these motivations could explain why Gen Z was interested in teaching profession and eventually influence how long the generation stays.

3.1.1. Theme 1: sources of motivation

Extrinsic motivations were the desires of an individual to act due to external encouragement which could originate from various aspects. The sources of external motivations for participants in this study included childhood experiences as well as inspiration from the Prophet's hadith and the parents.

a) Childhood experiences

Participants stated that childhood experiences influenced the desire to become teachers. The experiences of working alongside teachers as children inspired the desire to pursue teaching. This dream arose because teachers the participants met inspired the desire in life. Furthermore, P2 shared in an interview the following statement, "Since childhood, becoming teacher was the dream. Many childhood experiences inspired the confidence to pursue this profession" [P2].

Similarly, P3 reported that the childhood experience of observing a close neighbor as teacher became the source of extrinsic motivations. It was not P3's pleasant experience as a child that inspired the desire to become a teacher but rather the inappropriate experience faced by teachers where students were taught harshly with inappropriate words. This experience facilitated the decision to become professional teacher who could educate students and possibly pay attention to students' mental health.

My initial motivation to become teacher started from seeing my neighbors guiding the children to learn. It was often observed that parents taught the children in a harsh tone and used inappropriate words. Without the parents realizing the effect, it may hurt the child's heart and cause scars or trauma into

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adulthood. Therefore, becoming professional teacher by paying attention to students' mental health was the desire [P3].

Other participants also widely reported similar extrinsic motivations where P14 and P26 stated, "The childhood desire and ambition to become teachers were influenced by family members who were teachers" [P14]. "Additionally, I also really love children. Even though I am not perfect at teaching, I enjoy being a Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (Quran Learning Center) teacher" [P26]. b) Inspired by parents

Parents were the most frequently mentioned source of extrinsic motivations, specifically for participants whose parents were teachers. The participants' experiences as children who always observed the parents' lives as teachers left an impression on the hearts to become teachers. P23 through an interview reported, "Because I grew up with parents who worked as teachers, I wanted to become teacher" [P23]. P18 through interviews also mentioned the following statements.

Observing the parents always leaving early in the morning, wearing proud uniforms, inspired the desire. Both of the parents were elementary school teachers. From there, the feeling of wanting to become the parents, who always left early in the morning wearing a uniform, was greeted warmly by society and cheerfully by the students [P18].

For P18, seeing the parents' habit of wearing proud teacher uniforms, receiving warm greetings from society, and being greeted cheerfully by the students inspired the desire to become a teacher similar to the parents. Many more participants including P3, P12, P9, P13, P8, and P21, also cited the parents as significant sources of motivation.

My mother was an elementary school teacher and maybe my mother wanted me to enter the primary school teacher education study program to continue the legacy. My parents always motivated me to join the primary school teacher education study program. Motivation from my parents was that being a teacher was a very noble job as children were educated properly and had quality time with the family [P8]. c) Inspired by the prophet's hadith

Some participants stated that the Prophet's hadith about the virtues of working as teacher inspired the desire to teach. As stated in several hadith readings, the Prophet promised that Allah SWT would give great rewards to individuals who work in teaching profession. P6 explained through an interview the following statements.

I wanted to become a professional teacher because of rewards that came from the job. As a Muslim, the words of the Prophet Muhammad were believed as stated, "When a person dies, then the deeds would be cut off except for three things namely good deeds, useful knowledge, and the prayers of pious children" [P6].

For P6, being a teacher was not just profession that brought income but was part of good deeds and useful knowledge. The hadith of the Prophet further explained that useful knowledge should be transmitted to other individuals or the wider society. Teachers pass on the knowledge to the students, thereby the knowledge would automatically be helpful in the lives of the individuals. Therefore, rewards would never be lost by becoming a teacher even in death. P8 also expressed similar thoughts where motivations to become teachers were inspired by a hadith of the Prophet stating that the best individuals were those who benefited others. The thoughts of P8 were registered during an interview in the following statements.

My motivation to become a teacher was to serve society and provide benefits to society. As the Prophet said in the hadith of the history of Bukhari, "The best individuals among you were those who bring the most benefits to others" [P8].

3.1.2. Theme 2: social rewards

The second theme that evolved from the participants was social rewards. The participants were extrinsically motivated to become teachers because teaching was profession that could bring social rewards. This theme was supported by two codes namely teaching as a noble profession and respected by society.

a) Teaching as a noble profession

Participants explained that part of motivations for becoming teachers was the perception of teaching as a noble profession from the perspective of society. The role of teacher as a disseminator of knowledge, a societal role model, and a beacon of life contributed to the perspective that teaching was considered noble by the wider society. Through interviews, P20 asserted the following statements.

What motivated me to become teacher was that teaching was a noble profession in society. In my village, individuals considered teaching a very noble profession, even the title "Pak Guru (Mr. Teacher)" was perceived to occupy a special position in society's life [P20]. Other participants such as P11 and P14 also expressed similar confessions, stating that the nobility of teaching inspired the desire to become teachers. b) Respected by society

As reported by previous participants, the perception that teaching was a noble profession caused individuals who work as teachers to be respected by society in general. Therefore, being respected by society

was also part of the motivations for the participants in this study to become teachers. "Being teacher, you would be considered a figure who was admired and imitated" [P16]. P17 added, "Being teacher would be considered a role model".

3.1.3. Theme 3: increased welfare

Welfare was an important theme reported by many participants as extrinsic motivation to become teachers. This theme was supported by the following codes including decent salary and benefits as well as work-life balance.

a) Decent salary and benefits

Participants believed that becoming a teacher would provide a decent salary and professional benefits. This was expressed in P25 statements as, "My motivation to become a professional teacher was to gain appreciation from the government which could guarantee welfare of life. I have needs that should be met and I want to live on personal terms without asking my parents. This was a sign of gratitude to my parents, who have paid for my education up to university level" [P25].

For P25, being a teacher was profession that promised a decent salary from the government, allowing independence and repayment of the parents' investment in education. Another participant also expressed the same sentiment as P11, also stated, "Part of motivations for becoming a teacher was that when succeeded in becoming a professional teacher, needs would be fulfilled" [P11].

b) Work-life balance

Participants considered teaching profession that balanced work with personal life aspects. Sufficient time for family, flexible working hours, and the opportunity to educate children at home were characteristics of teaching profession that many participants found motivating. P6 further explained through an interview the statements, "I want to work, but I also want to have lots of time to educate the children. Working as teacher will allow me to spend more time with my family than working in an office or private company" [P6]. Other participants reported similar sentiments including P22 and P24. "Flexible working hours for you to share time with family, have long holidays because teaching hours followed student study time" [P22]. "Being teacher implied flexible time to manage with other tasks. Therefore, the time does not run out by teaching and time with family and even friends were available" [P25].

3.2. Discussion

This study is unique because it explores extrinsic motivations of Gen Z for selecting a career as teacher. Despite previous publications showing contradictory results regarding the influence of extrinsic motivations on performance and career decisions, the study suggests that 50% of an individual's work is driven by extrinsic motivations [30]. The analysis shows that Gen Z pre-service teachers obtain motivation from childhood experiences, parental influence, and religious teachings. This extrinsic motivation is further driven by two key factors namely social appreciation and welfare. Social appreciation reflects the perception of teaching as a noble and respected profession while welfare pertains to the assurance of adequate compensation and job opportunities. This insight has opened new knowledge that there are quite a few individuals who decide to select certain profession due to external motivations, requiring greater attention from stakeholders. These results will be beneficial in the continuous development of teacher professionalism which influences recruitment, motivation, competency development, workload management, and welfare issues, particularly for older teachers. Predominantly extrinsically motivated, Gen Z's motivations have long-term implications as the career span in the workplace will be 25-40 years.

3.2.1. Sources of motivation: childhood experiences, parents influence, and religious teachings

A key finding is that extrinsic motivations of Gen Z to become teachers originate from childhood experiences, parental influence, and religious teachings. Many participants dreamed of becoming teachers due to positive experiences in the families and schools or inspirational figures such as parents and teachers. Another motivational factor came from religious teachings where values such as the hope of obtaining good deeds and helpful knowledge motivated the desire to select a teaching career [41]. Additionally, parental influence is also an important factor in motivating Gen Z to pursue a career as teachers [42] with the support and encouragement to build confidence and extrinsic motivations to pursue the dream. When individuals get motivation from the individuals around, the confidence will increase in performing a certain job [43]. Therefore, Gen Z intends to select teaching profession as the future career. It can be that influential teachers or positive learning experiences with the parents and teachers [44] influenced the decision to become teacher.

The results confirm previous publications that in collectivist societies such as Indonesia, parents often strongly influence the lives of the children including the decision to select a career. The participants generally stated that childhood and parental experiences strongly influenced the decision to become teacher. The important role of the family in Indonesian society makes time for the family an important consideration for Gen Z when choosing teaching profession. Teachers' working hours allow more family time than other

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careers. This correlates with publications in other collectivist countries where family time scores higher compared to less collectivist countries [45]. Additionally, religion influences Indonesia's young generation in the career choices as teachers [45], [46].

3.2.2. Social rewards: teaching as a noble profession and respected by society

Social appreciation is extrinsic motivation for Gen Z to become a teacher. Society also values teachers for the contributions to shaping children's and society's futures [47]. Teachers are perceived as important pillars of social and intellectual development, influencing future generations through teaching, guidance, and inspiration. This appreciation includes not only verbal or symbolic recognition but also tangible support through public policy, educational investment, and professional development which strengthen the status and sustainability of teaching profession. The results of this study emphasized the importance of building sustainable support for teachers to contribute positively and meaningfully to society. This correlates with previous publications showing that teachers in Indonesian society are generally considered a noble profession [45], [46] due to the role in spreading knowledge, enlightening society, and improving societal character. Since most religions respect teachers as a noble profession, Indonesian teachers enjoy high social status and are regarded as role models in society [48].

The deeply ingrained respect culture towards teachers among the younger generation positions teaching as a noble and respected profession. This respect is instilled similarly to the respect for parents. Previous publications show that many young individuals learn life values from teachers at school [49]. The respect for teachers and perceiving as role models has undoubtedly inspired the desire to follow in the footsteps of teachers' careers at school. This is specifically true for Gen Z, who are studying elementary education and have had the most positive experiences with teachers [45].

3.2.3. Teacher welfare: guarantee of adequate welfare and employment opportunities

Teacher welfare is a significant concern for Gen Z when selecting a career. In Indonesia, the issue of teacher welfare remains sensitive. Despite government efforts to improve teacher welfare through professional education programs, only civil servants and some permanent teachers with teaching certificates at foundations benefit from these improvements. Furthermore, teachers in Indonesia have different employment statuses including state civil servants, contracts hired by central and regional governments, permanent in private schools, non-permanent in private schools, and honorary in state schools with each status influencing welfare received. State civil servants receive a monthly salary until retirement and enjoy pension funds for life. In contrast, contract teachers hired on a short-term basis by schools or local governments do not receive pensions or government incentives and lack job security [45]. Consequently, many teachers who do not hold civil servant status have not experienced increased welfare from the government, leading to the current injustice towards teachers in Indonesia [50]. This low welfare is a major external factor causing many to leave teaching profession [51], [52].

In this context, professional education program that provides allowances for some teachers has improved the image of teaching profession in Indonesia. Previously less popular than professions such as medicine, engineering, and law, teaching has seen increased interest thanks to Law No. 19 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers with the number of individuals interested in teacher education rising from 200,000 in 2005 to over 1 million in 2010 [53]. The increase in teacher salaries due to this law has increased the attractiveness of teacher education for secondary graduates [45]. Although teaching is often reported negatively in the mass media for low salaries and heavy workloads, some believe teaching offers better welfare than others, particularly for those with civil servant status or permanent foundation teachers. Prospective elementary school teachers see teaching as profession with higher income potential compared to other study programs [45]. Besides guaranteeing welfare, Gen Z perceives teaching profession as offering more adequate job opportunities than others. With over 50 million students across more than 300,000 schools in all provinces, Indonesia requires more than 3 million teachers [45]. This suggests that teaching profession promises broad employment opportunities for Indonesia's young generation.

The results of these publications strengthen previous studies on motivations of Gen Z in selecting careers. In choosing a career, Gen Z is very concerned with physical and financial security [54] influenced by life experiences marked by uncertainty, crises, and the COVID-19 outbreak [55]. This background drives Gen Z to seek secure jobs with minimal risk of failure [56], [57] with teaching meeting these criteria [58]. Another publication shows that Gen Z seeks careers that provide freedom and flexibility in the workplace to meet personal and family needs [58]. Therefore, work-life balance is a crucial consideration for Gen Z in anchoring career choices [33], [58]–[61]. Flexible working hours, the opportunity to take time off to fulfill personal interests and having time for family are work indicators that meet the work-life balance theme. Additionally, organizations that promote and promise work-life balance can attract and retain Gen Z employees.

The novelty of this study lies in the focus on extrinsic motivations of Gen Z to become teachers which was a topic previously underexplored. By understanding these various sources of extrinsic motivations, one can better understand what drives the current young generation to select teaching profession. Identifying the types and sources of extrinsic motivations influencing the choice of teaching as a career provides a crucial empirical basis for recruiting teachers, developing teacher education policies and programs, as well as improving the overall quality of teaching [1]. Mapping motivations of participants entering teaching profession is necessary to enhance teacher recruitment system. Motivation, work hours, workload, and welfare systems should be reorganized considering these motivations. This analysis will probably increase interest in teaching profession among the younger generation.

This study comprehensively examines extrinsic motivations driving Gen Z in Indonesia to pursue a teaching career. Although the analysis provides valuable insights into external motivation factors, several limitations were also considered. First, the limitations of the sample affect the representativeness of the data as differences in extrinsic motivation are observed between prospective teachers from private and state universities as well as from different regions. Second, the qualitative method provides in-depth insights but does not cover all aspects of existing extrinsic motivation. Third, extrinsic motivation toward teaching profession can be influenced by rapid social and economic changes. This analysis may not fully capture the impact of the changes on the motivation of prospective teachers due to the evolving dynamics in the job market.

Future publications could explore the following three important areas. First, an in-depth analysis of how social rewards from society influenced motivation and commitment of prospective Gen Z teachers was necessary. This included analyzing the types of recognition that were most motivating, the differences between rewards received from students, colleagues, and the wider society, and the influence on job satisfaction as well as retention in profession. Second, a more in-depth analysis of the role of religious teachings in extrinsic motivations was needed. Publications could further explore how religious values and teachings influenced teacher career choices. Third, an in-depth analysis of the influence of economic factors and welfare was necessary. Publications could focus on how economic factors including salary, benefits, and welfare guarantees influenced the decision of Gen Z to pursue a teaching career. This publication could include a comparison between extrinsic motivation from financial aspects and other motivations, as well as effective strategies to increase the attractiveness of teaching profession in terms of economic welfare. By conducting an in-depth study in these areas, the dynamics of Gen Z's extrinsic motivations could be better understood, and appropriate strategies could be developed to support as well as retain young individuals in teaching profession.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results showed clear evidence that Gen Z's extrinsic motivation to pursue a teaching career was driven by a strong combination of social rewards and welfare associated with the profession. Furthermore, extrinsic motivations originated from dreams and experiences since childhood, parental influence, and religious teachings. Gen Z was driven by childhood experiences, inspiration from influential teachers, and values taught through religious teachings supported by motivations from the parents. Extrinsic motivations as prospective teachers also reflected a desire for recognition and appreciation from society for the contributions to educating future generations. With high social esteem, these prospective teachers felt motivated to facilitate a significant influence on society through profession. Continuous support from the government, educational institutions, and communities was crucial to maintaining this motivation strong and sustainable. Therefore, strengthening extrinsic factors that supported this motivation would help create an environment conducive to developing an empowering and meaningful educational career for Gen Z as the future generation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study is available upon reasonable request.

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