

Living on The Edge: Survival Strategies of Millennial and Gen Z Under Low Minimum Wages in The Yogyakarta Special Region

Siti Amalia^{1*}, Agus Iwan Kesuma²

¹ Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

²Mulawarman University, Samarinda, Indonesia

*Correspondence Authors: siti.amalia@uny.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY) has set its 2025 Provincial Minimum Wage (PMW) at IDR 2,264,080.95, ranking as the third lowest nationwide, amid a steadily rising cost of living. This situation presents significant challenges for Millennial and Generation Z, who form the backbone of the local workforce. This study examines the dynamics of minimum wage policy implementation for young workers in DIY, focusing on the socioeconomic implications and adaptive strategies of workers in both formal and informal sectors. Using a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews of 20 informants representing diverse occupational and age backgrounds, the study identified five main themes: (1) consumption pattern adjustment, (2) income diversification, (3) social support and collectivity, (4) career aspirations and mobility, and (5) survival strategies rooted in local culture and community-based economy. Findings indicate that although the minimum wage policy aims to improve welfare, young workers in DIY continue to face substantial economic pressures due to the mismatch between wage levels and living costs. Adaptive strategies include consumption frugality, multiple job holding, utilization of digital platforms, and strengthening of community-based social networks. The phenomenon of “economic mutual aid” emerged as a form of social capital rooted in Javanese cultural values, functioning to reduce economic vulnerability through resource sharing, informal financial assistance, and service exchange. This study contributes to the literature on minimum wage policy by highlighting the importance of incorporating local context, social capital, and cultural norms. Policy implications include regional cost-of-living-based wage adjustments, strengthening of social protection, and empowerment of community-based economic initiatives.

Keywords: Survival Strategies; Minimum Wage; Young Workers; Yogyakarta

INTRODUCTION

The Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY) is the center of education, tourism, and culture in Indonesia. However, beneath this facade, DIY confronts major labor-related issues. The Yogyakarta government has set the Provincial Minimum Wage (PMW) for 2025 at IDR 2,264,080.95, up 6.5% or approximately IDR 138,183.34 from that of 2024. Despite the improvement, DIY remains the third-lowest PMW province in Indonesia, trailing only Central Java (IDR 2,036,947) and West Java (IDR 2,057,495). An increase in the PMW is projected to improve the welfare of low-income workers. However, this rate of increase is not in line with the large expansion in the cost of living, including housing, education, and basic necessities. (BPS, 2024).

The gap between the PMW and the cost of living creates complex economic pressures, especially for the productive age group that is starting a career. BPS data show that the cost of living index in Yogyakarta is increasing every year, driven by inflation on staples, rising rental prices, and education costs. This phenomenon not only affects purchasing power but also the overall quality of life (ILO, 2023). In this context, understanding how DIY workers navigate economic limitations and develop survival strategies is crucial.

Conceptually, the minimum wage serves as a social safety net that ensures that workers can meet their basic needs. However, in practice, especially in developing countries, the minimum wage is often below the living wage—the level of income needed to maintain a decent standard of living (Anker & Anker, 2017). DIY is a real example where a low PMW forces workers to look for additional sources of income or make extreme savings.

Globally, minimum wage policies are viewed as instruments for protecting low-income workers and reducing income gaps. However, its impact on poverty alleviation is not always consistent (Merdikawati & Izzati, 2025). The World Bank Economic Review found that in some areas, increases in the minimum wage provide only

limited benefits for some workers without significantly changing their poverty status (World Bank, 2025). A similar phenomenon occurs in Indonesia, where the heterogeneity of the impact of the minimum wage policy is influenced by the labor sector, industrial structure, and local economic conditions.

Research based on panel data in Yogyakarta Province shows that an increase in PMW has a significant negative influence on the poverty rate. Every 1% increase in PMW is associated with a 4.15 % decrease in the poverty rate by 4.15% (Wardani et al., 2022). These findings indicate that the minimum wage policy in Yogyakarta is relatively more effective than that in other provinces. However, this effectiveness still faces the challenge of inflation and faster growth in the cost of living than the pace of wage increases; thus, workers still have to rely on survival strategies beyond basic wages.

Millennials and Gen Z have different socioeconomic characteristics than previous generations. They tend to demand work-life balance, transparency, and a fair reward system, and are more adaptive to technological changes and the job market (Basroni, 2023). However, they also face challenges such as job instability, short-term contracts, and limited promotion opportunities amid increasing economic pressures. In the context of DIY, the limitations of PMW are an additional challenge that encourages them to look for creative strategies to meet their needs.

The increase in the cost of living in Yogyakarta is triggered not only by general inflation but also by socioeconomic dynamics such as the increasing number of students from outside the region, the growth of the tourism industry, and rapid urbanization. This condition causes residential rental prices, transportation costs, and the price of basic necessities to continue to increase, so that the applicable PMW is often considered insufficient to meet the basic needs of workers (SHS Conferences, 2024). For the younger generation, most of whom are still in the early stages of their careers, this imbalance between income and living costs is driving the emergence of various forms of additional work and lifestyle adjustments.

An increase in the minimum wage can increase real wages, but in some cases, it can also reduce working hours (Merdikawati & Izzati, 2025). These effects vary based on the sector, gender, and geographic location. In the context of the young generation of DIY, this means that some workers must find a second job, change their consumption patterns, or switch to informal work to maintain their standard of living. This kind of adaptation is important to be further researched so that policies can be adjusted to the socioeconomic realities.

Several experts believe that the minimum wage, while important, is not the only effective instrument to address the economic challenges of the younger generation. Supporting policies such as cash assistance, housing subsidies, and soft credit access are considered to complement the role of the PMW in improving the welfare of vulnerable groups (Kalenkoski, 2016). Approaches that combine wage policies with indirect support are considered more adaptive to the needs of the Millennials and Gen Z, especially in areas with a relatively high cost of living, such as DIY.

The Millennial Generation (born 1981–1996) and Gen Z (born 1997–2012) were chosen as the focus of this research because they represent the majority of the workforce in Indonesia in the 2020s (BPS, 2023). In Yogyakarta, the distribution of this young workforce is significant, especially in the service, tourism, and creative industries sectors, which generally offer wages close to or equivalent to PMW. The characteristics of the productive age make this group an important phase of career formation and economic stability; therefore, their response to the minimum wage policy can reflect the long-term economic dynamics of the region.

In addition, academically, this generational study is relevant because Millennials and Gen Z have different work orientations, aspirations, and consumption behaviors than previous generations (Basroni, 2023). They tend to be adaptive to technology, open to freelance work (the gig economy), and sensitive to wage injustice. This makes them a unique group for research, especially in the context of the low minimum wage and high cost of living in DIY. By focusing on these two-generation perspectives and adaptation strategies, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the literature on employment, wage policy, and generational studies in the context of developing countries.

This study also fills the gap in the literature related to the adaptation strategies of the younger generation in areas with a low PMW but a high cost of living. International studies show that young people in various countries are developing survival strategies that involve income diversification, temporary migration, and the optimization of digital resources (World Bank, 2021). However, specific studies in the context of DIY are still limited; therefore, this research is expected to make a relevant empirical contribution.

Based on these considerations, a qualitative approach is relevant for exploring the experiences and strategies of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in surviving with a low PMW in Yogyakarta.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory design to understand the adaptation strategies of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in surviving on a low minimum wage in DIY. This approach was chosen because it is considered to be able to explore the subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings experienced by informants in certain socio-economic contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focus is directed at the processes, dynamics, and reasons behind the strategies they choose, not just on the quantitative measurement of phenomena.

The research was carried out in five districts/cities in the DIY region: Yogyakarta City, Sleman, Bantul, Kulon Progo, and Gunung Kidul. This region was chosen because, although it has the same PMW as a province, the cost of living and job opportunities differ between regions. For example, the cities of Yogyakarta and Sleman have a relatively high cost of living due to population density, the tourism sector, and educational activities, while areas such as Kulon Progo and Gunungkidul tend to have a lower cost of living but more limited access to formal employment.

The research informants were 20 individuals from the Millennial generation (born 1981–1996) and Gen Z (born 1997–2012) who work in the formal and informal sectors in DIY with an income equal to or close to PMW 2025. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling by considering variations in the type of work (e.g., retail workers, tourism services, creative industries, and freelancers), domicile location, and marital status. An additional criterion was a minimum of one year of work experience in DIY, so that the informant had a sufficient understanding of the dynamics of the cost of living in the region. With a purposive sampling approach, the selected informants had at least one year of work experience in DIY and received a salary equal to or close to the 2025 PMW.

Basic information regarding the anonymous identity, age, and occupation of each informant is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Research Informants

Informant Code	Age (years)	Main Occupations
M01	34	Administrative Officers of Private Companies
M02	32	Retail Marketing Staff
M03	31	Elementary School Honorary Teacher
M04	30	Building Materials Store Employee
M05	29	Modern Retail Cashier
M06	28	Customer Service Bank
M07	28	Coffee Shop Barista
M08	27	Campus Administration Staff
M09	26	Electronic Product Sales
M10	26	Event Organizer Employee
Z01	25	Restaurant Waitress
Z02	25	Freelance Graphic Designer
Z03	24	Cafe Worker
Z04	24	Online Motorcycle Taxi
Z05	23	Photographers Lepas
Z06	23	Online Shop Seller
Z07	22	Freelance Video Editor
Z08	22	Computer Technician
Z09	21	Social Media Creator Content
Z10	21	Laundry Clerk

Source: Processed by Researcher (2025)

Data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face and online using Zoom and Google Meet platforms. The interview guidelines were prepared in a semi-structured manner, containing core questions about (1) perception of the 2025 DIY PMW, (2) survival strategies for meeting basic needs, (3) experience of earning additional income, and (4) views on employment policy. Each interview lasts between 45-75 minutes, was recorded with the informant's consent, and then transcribed verbatim. In addition to interviews, the researcher

collected secondary data in the form of official government documents, cost-of-living statistical reports, and publications related to the minimum wage policy in Indonesia. This secondary data were used to provide context and compare field findings with macroeconomic trends.

The analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which involved six stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts; (2) initial coding of relevant pieces of text; (3) search for main themes based on the similarity of meaning; (4) a review of the theme to ensure consistency and relevance; (5) definition and naming of themes; and (6) writing a narrative of the results of the analysis with illustrations of direct quotes from the informant.

This study followed the ethical principles of social research, including obtaining informed consent from all informants. The identities of the informants were disguised using anonymous codes to protect their privacy. All data were stored and accessed only by the research team.

Based on a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, this study identified five main themes that reflect the survival strategies of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in DIY amid the low PMW 2025. The five themes are: (1) adjustment of consumption patterns, (2) diversification of sources of income, (3) social support and collectivity, (4) aspirations and career mobility, and (5) survival strategies based on local culture and community economies. Each theme shows different adaptations, both short-term to meet daily needs and long-term strategies oriented towards improving future welfare. These five themes reflect the economic conditions in Yogyakarta and illustrate the social and cultural dynamics that shape the way the younger generation responds to the challenge of a low minimum wage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumption Pattern Adjustment

The findings of this study show that adjusting consumption patterns has emerged as the most dominant strategy among the Millennials and Gen Z in Yogyakarta in the face of the low PMW 2025. The findings of this study show that the majority of informants reduced spending on non-essential goods and services, switched to a more frugal lifestyle, and changed consumption preferences to ensure that their basic needs could be met. This change is not temporary but has become routine, showing that there is a structural gap between the PMW received and the living wage needed to live a decent life. This is in line with the findings of Anker and Anker (2017), who explain that in many developing countries, minimum wage workers tend to develop deficit consumption strategies to survive.

In practice, there has been a shift in preferences from tertiary expenditures, such as dining in restaurants or recreation, towards more functional expenditures, such as staples and transport. This change indicates that for the younger generation in Yogyakarta, consumption is no longer a matter of lifestyle or personal choice but a mandatory adaptation to economic reality. This change in priorities, while effective in saving expenses, has the potential to reduce the quality of life in the long run, including physical and psychological health due to reduced social and recreational activities.

The nominal increase in PMW is often not directly proportional to the increase in workers' real purchasing power. Merdikawati and Izzati (2025) found that the increase in PMW in Indonesia has a limited impact on household consumption, especially in the non-essential sector. Qualitative data from this study corroborate the findings, where even though the 2025 DIY PMW increased by 6.5% compared to the previous year, informants still experienced stagnation or even a decrease in consumption in the non-basic category.

The impact of this adjustment in consumption patterns is not only economic but also social. Reducing spending on social interactions can lower the social capital needed to expand professional networks or secure new job opportunities. Yamada (2016) emphasized that prolonged economic stress can increase the risk of financial stress in young workers, which in turn affects their work productivity and mental health. This makes consumption adjustment not only a financial strategy but also a survival strategy with far-reaching consequences.

From a political-economic perspective, this strategy of frugal consumption is a form of individual adaptation to the failure of the wage system to provide real welfare benefits. Inadequate labor market infrastructure and a rapidly rising cost of living create conditions in which young workers are forced to minimize consumption to survive. The ILO (2019) emphasizes the importance of matching the minimum wage and a decent standard of living, which is still underachieved in many Indonesian provinces, including DIY.

However, this pattern also shows a fairly high capacity for adaptation among Millennials and Gen Z generations. By utilizing digital technology, they can find the cheapest price information, take advantage of online promotions, and manage budgets more effectively than the previous generation. Nonetheless, this adaptive

capacity does not negate the structural vulnerabilities they face; ultimately, a frugal consumption strategy is only a temporary solution that masks the fundamental problem of the imbalance between income and the cost of living. These findings also indicate that a nominal PMW increase alone is insufficient to improve welfare. The government needs to make adjustments based on living wages by considering decent minimum-spending standards. Torry (2013) suggested the use of the minimum income standard as a more realistic benchmark than just setting the annual minimum wage so that the strategy of frugal consumption is no longer a forced choice for young workers. However, while effective in the short term, consumption reduction strategies have long-term risks, including the potential for a decline in the quality of life, physical health, and productive capacity of younger generations.

Diversification of Sources of Income

The findings of this study show that most participants chose to diversify their sources of income in response to low PMW. This strategy is carried out by combining low-wage main jobs with additional jobs such as online freelancing, selling in e-commerce, becoming a content creator, and part-time jobs in the service sector. Income diversification is considered a step that not only increases monthly income but also provides a sense of security against high economic uncertainty.

This phenomenon of income diversification reflects a portfolio approach to income, wherein individuals manage various sources of income to minimize financial risks (ILO, 2022). In the context of DIY, income from a primary job is often insufficient to cover living costs; therefore, young workers are encouraged to look for additional resources. This strategy is in line with the theory of household economics, which states that households or individuals will maximize their utility by allocating time and skills to activities that provide the highest marginal returns (Becker, 1993).

The use of digital platforms is the main supporting factor for diversification. Informants revealed that additional jobs are often technology-based, such as graphic design, social media management, or drop shipping. Advances in digital technology have lowered the barriers to entry into the informal labor market and gig economy, allowing young workers to access the global market, even though they are based in Yogyakarta (Chen et al., 2021).

This income diversification is not only related to money but also to the development of new skills (upskilling). Some informants see additional work as an opportunity to expand their competencies and build a portfolio that is beneficial for a long-term career. Gig work can be a means of developing work capacity, although it does not always guarantee stability (Wood et al., 2019).

Diversification of income sources can reduce economic vulnerability, but it also risks increasing the workload and stress. Young workers with dual jobs are more prone to burnout and mental health disorders because of reduced rest time (Eurofound, 2021). This is also reflected in the experience of the informants, who admitted that it was difficult to maintain a balance between work and personal life.

The motivation to diversify income is related to financial aspirations and lifestyles. Some informants revealed that extra work helps them save for long-term goals, such as buying a house or venture capital investment. This phenomenon shows that despite low minimum wages, young workers are not only surviving but also trying to build a better financial future (Sussman & O'Donoghue, 2018).

This phenomenon is also influenced by the characteristics of the Millennial and Gen Z generations, who are more adaptive to technological changes and the job market. A Gallup study (2022) shows that young people are more likely to change jobs or combine various jobs to pursue work-life balance and self-development opportunities. In DIY, this trend is reinforced by social networks and creative communities that encourage interdisciplinary collaboration.

There is also a gender dimension to income diversification. Female informants are more often involved in household-based businesses, such as online shops and creative services, while male informants tend to opt for part-time physical or technical freelance work. This difference is consistent with the literature on the gender-based division of labor in the informal economy (ILO, 2020).

Although income diversification increases the resilience of an individual's economy, its sustainability depends on the stability of the informal labor market and macroeconomic conditions. When the demand for digital services or gig work decreases, this additional source of income is also vulnerable to being stopped (De Stefano, 2016).

Social Support and Collectivity

The findings of the study show that social support and collectivity play an important role in the survival strategies of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in DIY, who are facing low PMW 2025. This form of support

includes family help, peer networks, hobby or professional communities, and online groups that share information about jobs and business opportunities. For some informants, collectivity is not only a source of direct financial support but also provides psychological motivation and a sense of community that helps them cope with economic pressures.

These findings are in line with the theory of social capital put forward by Putnam (2000), which emphasizes that shared social networks, norms, and beliefs can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordination and cooperation for mutual benefits. In the context of DIY, the existence of a solid community is one of the social capitals that facilitates the exchange of job information, business opportunities and moral support.

Family support is the most dominant form of collectivism. Some informants relied on parents or relatives for shelter, emergency fund assistance, or business networking. Conger et al. (2010) showed that family support is positively correlated with the economic resilience of young individuals, especially in the face of income fluctuations.

Peers are also an important resource, especially for those who live far from their families. A network of friends can provide information on job openings, share freelance projects, and even form small-scale joint ventures. This phenomenon strengthens the concept of an effective peer support network in mitigating economic pressure among the younger generation (Brown & Lara, 2011).

Online communities are unique spaces of collectivity. Platforms such as social media groups or online discussion forums allow for a quick and wide-ranging exchange of information, even across regions and countries. McMillan and Chavis' (1986) research on the sense of community explains that digital interactions can form a sense of attachment similar to a physical community, provided there are common goals and values. Collectivity not only provides practical support but also reduces the psychological burden of financial instability. A sense of community can reduce stress levels, increase confidence, and foster collective optimism for the future (Thoits, 2011). In interviews, some participants stated that simply sharing stories and complaints with others helped reduce their emotional burden.

The nature of mutual cooperation, which is still strong in Yogyakarta, especially in the village environment, also strengthens the collectivity network. This culture facilitates the exchange of services and goods without monetary transactions, such as helping each other move, sharing groceries, or babysitting. This phenomenon describes the sustainability of cultural values as local social capital (Geertz, 1963). However, while collectivity has many benefits, there is also a risk of over-reliance on social networks. If all network members are under the same economic pressure, their ability to provide assistance is limited. This is reinforced by Lin (2001), who shows that the effectiveness of social capital depends on the diversity and capacity of resources in the network.

Social support and collectivity strategies are ultimately important pillars of economic resilience for the Gen Z generations. However, for this strategy to be sustainable, community institutions, group-based skills training, and public policy support that facilitates socioeconomic collaboration at the local level must be strengthened (OECD, 2020).

Aspirations and Career Mobility

The findings of this study reveal that career aspirations and mobility are long-term strategies used by the Millennial and Gen Z generations in Yogyakarta to overcome the challenge of low PMW 2025. For this group, limited income is not only an obstacle but also a trigger to plan strategic steps to increase self-capacity, expand professional networks, and take advantage of more promising job opportunities, both inside and outside the DIY area. These aspirations are generally related to the desire to earn a decent income, achieve financial stability, and build a career with long-term prospects.

The career mobility shown by the informant reflects the awareness that the labor market in Yogyakarta has limitations in terms of salary and career path opportunities. This is in line with the BPS report (2024), which shows that the average wage of workers in Yogyakarta is still below the national average, especially in the informal sector and small-scale creative industries. This condition encourages some informants to consider geographical mobility, such as moving to another major city with higher job opportunities or vertical mobility through improved job titles and skills in the current workplace.

The aspirations that arise are not only material but also related to professional achievement and self-development. Many informants target themselves to take part in online training, professional certification, or further education to increase their competitiveness. According to Becker (1993), investing in human capital through education and training can provide significant competitive advantages, including in the context of a competitive labor market such as DIY.

The role of digital technology is seen to be very dominant in career mobility strategies. Millennial and Gen Z are leveraging online job platforms, professional social networks, and freelance communities to access opportunities outside of the local job market. This phenomenon reflects a paradigm shift from location-based work to competency-based work and global networks (Friedman, 2005). It also shows that although the PMW in DIY is low, openness to digital opportunities can reduce dependence on the local labor market. However, high career aspirations sometimes clash with structural realities such as limited quality formal jobs, high competition, and economic uncertainty. Some informants stated that despite having adequate skills and qualifications, access to jobs with competitive salaries in the DIY sector remains difficult to obtain. According to Standing (2011), this condition creates a precarious phenomenon in which young workers are in unstable work situations, lack social security, and are vulnerable to market fluctuations.

Career mobility strategies also often involve professional social networks that have been built beforehand. Relationships with mentors, former bosses, or co-workers are gateways to new job opportunities. Coleman (1988) calls this a form of social capital that can increase access to economic resources. For some informants, this connection is even more effective than applying for a job through conventional channels such as job portals. From a cultural perspective, the aspirations and career mobility of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in DIY are influenced by collective values and family support. Despite the push to migrate for better jobs, social ties and family responsibilities keep them considering the option of working within the DIY area. This suggests a negotiation between personal goals and social commitments, a dynamic common in societies with strong kinship ties (Geertz, 1976).

In the long run, these aspirations and career mobility strategies can be the key to getting out of the low-wage trap, provided they are balanced with public policies that support skills development and employment expansion. The OECD (2020) emphasizes that the success of career mobility is not only determined by individual efforts but also by economic ecosystems that can provide commensurate opportunities.

Survival Strategies Based on Local Culture and Community Economy

The findings of the study show that some Millennials and Gen Z generations in DIY rely on a life strategy based on local culture and community economy as one way to survive in the midst of low PMW. This strategy includes the use of traditional social networks, participation in village- or community-based economic activities, and involvement in cultural activities that generate additional income. This approach is unique in that it aims not only to meet economic needs but also to maintain Yogyakarta's cultural identity and social solidarity.

This phenomenon has its roots in the strong sociocultural structure of DIY, which maintains the value of mutual cooperation and citizen solidarity. The younger generation leverages kinship, friendship, and geographical proximity to form mutually beneficial informal economic networks. In contrast to individual adaptation strategies in other big cities, in Yogyakarta this adaptation is collective and often runs in a space that intersects culture, art, and economy (Geertz, 1983).

In addition, many Millennials and Gen Z in DIY are involved in arts and cultural activities that have commercial value, such as music performances, batik craft production, or typical culinary. These activities not only strengthen the personal economy but also become part of the nationally recognized local creative industry. As stated by UNCTAD (2021), the creative industry has great potential to support the regional economy, especially when supported by a strong cultural heritage.

The community economy is also reflected in the pattern of consumption and distribution of goods based on trust. For example, some informants mentioned the "warung debt" or "pay later" system allowed by small business owners in their neighborhoods. While informal, these schemes help maintain household liquidity and minimize daily financial stress. This phenomenon is rarely found in large urban areas outside Java, where social interactions are looser (Putnam, 2000).

Another unique aspect is the integration of cultural and tourism activities as an additional source of income. The younger generation is leveraging skills such as foreign languages, social media, and photography to become freelance tour guides, content creators, and cultural experience service providers for tourists. With the cost of living continuing to increase, this opportunity is a smart way to capitalize on the position of DIY as an international cultural tourism destination (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

However, although this strategy demonstrates high innovation and adaptability, it has significant vulnerabilities. Dependence on the tourism market causes their income to fluctuate. This is in line with the findings of Cohen (2019), who stated that culture-based economies are highly vulnerable to external shocks that affect the mobility and purchasing power of tourists.

However, active participation in the community economy is not recorded in the formal system therefore, its contribution is not recognized in labor statistics or regional employment policies. This has the potential to reduce the bargaining power of the younger generation in obtaining social protection and decent work rights, despite their significant economic role at the local level (ILO, 2020).

However, the sociocultural strength of Yogyakarta makes this strategy relatively sustainable in the medium term. Close community ties and appreciation for the arts and culture encourage the creation of alternative economic ecosystems that are more resilient to low PMW pressures. This strategy can be a typical adaptation model of regions based on high social capital, which has the potential to be replicated in other regions with similar social conditions (Granovetter, 1985).

Thus, a life strategy based on local culture and community economy is not only a response to economic limitations but also a representation of social values rooted in Yogyakarta society. The success of this strategy lies in its ability to harmoniously combine economic, social, and cultural dimensions, although it still requires policy support for sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that the Millennial and Gen Z generations in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) show high adaptability in facing economic challenges due to low PMW, which, despite an increase of 6.5%, is still ranked the third lowest nationally. Through thematic analysis, five main strategies carried out by informants were identified: adjustment of consumption patterns, diversification of sources of income, social support and collectivity, aspirations and career mobility, and strategies based on local culture and community economy as characteristics of DIY.

These findings suggest that the economic resilience of the younger generation is sustained not only by individual factors such as skills and flexibility but also by social capital and deep-rooted cultural values. However, this adaptation is often accompanied by compromises in quality of life and increased workload, thus posing a risk of economic fatigue in the long run. Therefore, while these strategies allow survival in low-wage conditions, they are not sustainable structural solutions to improve the well-being of younger generations.

From a development economics perspective, improving the welfare of the productive generation in Yogyakarta requires structural and multi-dimensional interventions. First, local governments need to develop wage policies that are more adaptive to the dynamics of local living costs, including considering a living wage as the basis for determining the PMW. Second, the capacity of digital-based and creative entrepreneurs needs to be strengthened through incentives, mentoring, and easy access to financing so that income diversification can develop into a stable economic source.

Third, integrating local social and cultural capital into the region's economic development strategy is important. The typical community ecosystem in Yogyakarta can function as a collective economic platform, for example, through digital cooperatives, culture-based business incubation, and creative tourism involving the younger generation. Fourth, there needs to be synergy between the education sector, skills training, and local industries to open a clear career mobility path so that the aspirations of the Millennial and Gen Z generations can be realized without having to leave the region.

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