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## **Generation Z's Response to Humanitarian Issues in Gaza, Palestine**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to determine the actions of Generation Z related to the global humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. The population of this study was all Generation Z students in Kendari City— data collection through the distribution of Google Forms. The number of questionnaires filled out was 200 responses. The research period was December 2023. The results showed that most Generation Z respond to humanitarian issues without interacting directly with others (such as boycotting, praying, giving alms, and uploading news/status). Gen Z prefers using social media more than discussing humanitarian issues directly. Around 91 percent of respondents know products affiliated with Israel, and 67 percent do boycotted action. One of the reasons respondents avoided the boycott was because they thought it would worsen the economy. Boycotting a product does not mean stopping consumption but shifting consumption from one brand to another or maintaining demand. Thus, the call for a boycott must be accompanied by a more concrete explanation of its economic impact besides religiosity and humanitarianism. Local businesses/MSMEs also need to be prepared to increase their popularity and market share in the face of shifting product demand due to the boycott.

**Keywords:** humanitarian, global, unemployment, Generation Z, demand

### **Introduction**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began in 1917, more than a century ago. World attention to this conflict peaked in 2023. At the same time, it was not only Gaza that experienced a humanitarian tragedy, for example, the Russian and Ukrainian wars. However, the Gaza tragedy is an issue that has also attracted excellent world attention (Al-Modallal et al., 2023). Several triggering factors are the loss of civilian lives, especially women and children, and a war strategy that is more of a 'genocide.' Another factor is the openness of information so that anyone can access the latest information in Gaza, unlike before, which was limited and dominated by supporters of the aggressor. Demonstrations were held in various parts of the world as a form of protest against the Gaza tragedy. (Attia, 2024)

The motivation for participating in empathy actions involves ideological, ethical, and solidarity factors with the Palestinian people. The Fatwa Commission of the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) issued Fatwa Number 83 of 2023, which discusses the law of support for the Palestinian struggle and advises Muslims to avoid as much as possible (boycott) using goods related to Israel. The essence of this fatwa is that supporting the Palestinian struggle for independence against Israeli aggression is obligatory. Global pressure to boycott companies that support Israel continues to grow. The boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement invites its followers to abandon these big brands because of their direct involvement in supporting Israel's atrocities against Palestinians. The BDS movement encourages continued pressure on those who support Israel's genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. The boycott of pro-Israel products is expected to decrease sales and inhibit money circulation in the country. Several factors influence consumer behavior toward boycotting Israeli products: cultural, social, personal, and psychological (Sutrisno et al., 2024). Consumers tend to make purchasing decisions not only based on economic factors but also, according to Kurniawan et al. (2024), based on social and political values.

The generation that spends a lot of time surfing the internet is Generation Z. Generation Z was born in 1995-2010. Generation Z is often referred to as the Internet generation because it grew up with the development of increasingly sophisticated technology. Gen Z has a very high social media consumption pattern; this behavior encourages their knowledge of current issues better than the previous generation. However, the nature of Gen Z in campaigning for global issues still needs to be studied. Several studies on student responses to the Gaza humanitarian tragedy have been conducted, including by Jaelani & Nursyifa (2024), on FISIP Unida students regarding the boycott of Israeli products. A study by Ziiqbal & Fitriyah (2024) showed that the influence of social media on purchasing interest in McDonald's products was not significant among Surabaya students.

However, participation in the boycott movement strongly and significantly impacted their purchasing interest. A study by Rahmani (2023) revealed that Generation Z and Millennials in the city of Bandung knew the Israeli-Hamas war conditions that killed thousands of people, which decreased interest in purchasing Israeli-affiliated products. Previous studies focused on the behavior of Generation Z toward the boycott action, but studies related to broader responses are still limited. Although most of the community supports the boycott actions, some still refuse. Rejecting the boycott action does not mean that the community does not empathize with the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza, but they have other considerations and ways of expressing their concerns (Wells et al., 2024). Thus, it is necessary to study the community's response, especially Generation Z, regarding the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza. This article also examines why Generation Z did not carry out the boycott action. This study aims to reveal how Gen Z's actions respond to humanitarian tragedies. This paper is expected to contribute to studying Gen Z's behavior in reacting to global humanitarian issues. This research is also expected to contribute to related institutions responding to society's behavior, including Generation Z, regarding the ongoing global humanitarian tragedy (Obermaier, 2024).

## Literature Review

Research by Afifah, Sutopo, & Albab (2024) shows that public participation in boycotts is influenced by several factors, such as the desire to support the local economy, fight for social justice, and show solidarity with global issues. The effectiveness of social media can be a medium for disseminating information and support in this mass movement. Furthermore, Munandar, Yaasin, & Firdaus (2023) examined the sentiment of Twitter or X internet citizens regarding boycotts, indicating that the sentiment for boycotting Israeli-affiliated products was mostly positive. Indonesian internet citizens were quite happy and fully supported the action as a rejection of genocide.

## Research Method

The population of this study was all Generation Z students in Kendari City. The research sample was determined by distributing a Google form to students. The selection of students was based on the consideration that in this period, the thinking stages of Gen Z have improved, making it easier to determine attitudes and analyze global issues. The research period was December 2023. The number of questionnaires filled out was 200 responses. Data analysis used quantitative description with the frequency distribution and diagrams. The questionnaires distributed were closed questions regarding the actions taken using eight choices, consisting of boycotting Israeli products, giving alms to Gaza, reporting on social media, conveying/discussing to friends, praying for Palestine to be free, condemning the injustice of the aggressor, and peaceful solidarity actions, and not taking action at all.

## Result

Figure 1 presents the characteristics of research respondents based on gender. Of 200 respondents, 59 percent were female, and 41 percent were male.

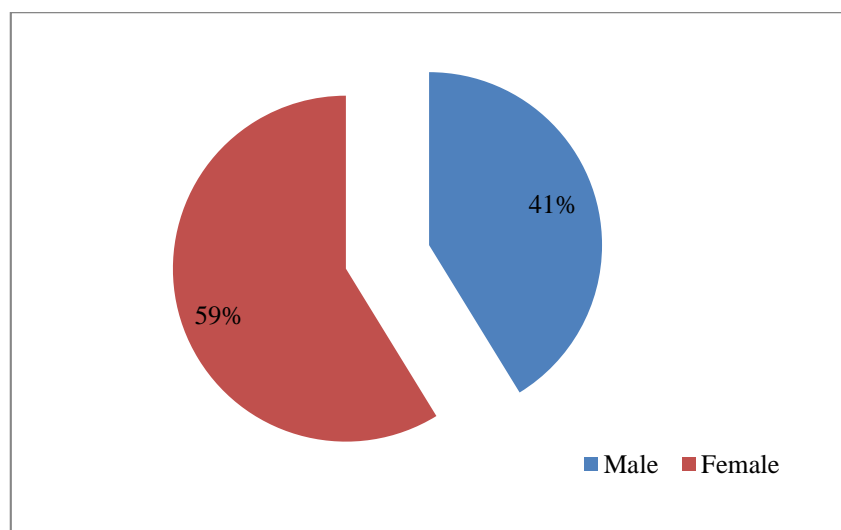


Figure 1 Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender

Figure 2 presents the characteristics of respondents based on the type of action. Based on eight action choices, it shows that around 2.5 percent of respondents did not take any action related to the global humanitarian tragedy. Around 48 respondents took at least one action, and around 98 took two actions at once. Meanwhile, six respondents took six to seven actions at once. Table 1 shows that around 134 respondents often take action by boycotting products—next, alms for the people of Gaza and prayers for Palestinians' independence.

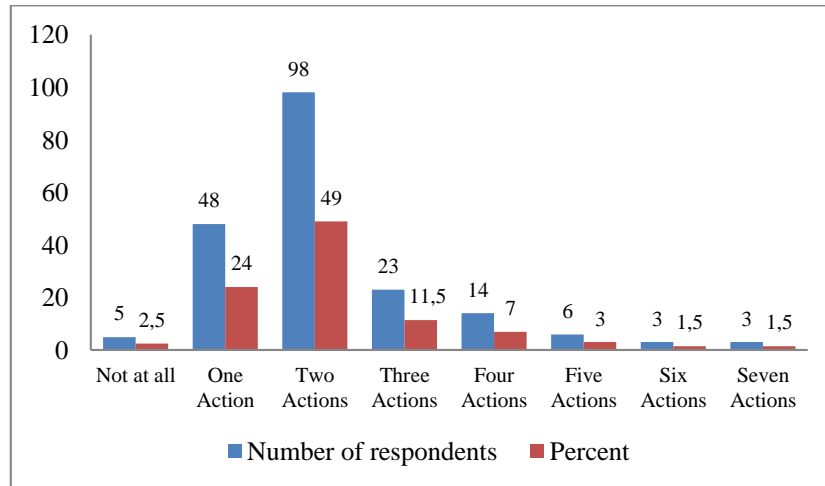


Figure 2 Distribution of Respondents Based on Number of Actions

On the other hand, 64 respondents, or around 32 percent, admitted to discussing and/or conveying at least once about the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza through their social media. This action is higher than discussions with friends, which reached 13 percent. Gen Z prefers using social media more than directly discussing their ideas and thoughts. On the other hand, as many as 26 respondents, or around 13 percent, admitted to having participated in a solidarity action (long march) to defend Palestine.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents Based on Type of Actions

Actions	Number of respondents	Percent
Boycott	133	66.5
Alms	88	44.0
Prayer	79	39.5
Upload News	64	32.0
Discussion	26	13.0
Solidarity Action	26	13.0
Condemn	20	10.0
Nothing	5	2.5

The boycott of Israeli products, as per Table 1, is supported by the respondents' knowledge regarding what products are affiliated with Israel. Figure 3 presents the respondents' knowledge regarding products affiliated with Israel. As many as 182 respondents, or around 91 percent, know about products affiliated with Israel, while the remaining 9 percent do not.

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Compared with the data in Table 1, it implies that the number of respondents know about products affiliated with Israel is 182 respondents, but 134 respondents took boycott action. Thus, as many as 48 respondents did not take boycott action even though they knew about products affiliated with Israel. These respondents preferred to do other alternatives to defend the Palestinian people, such as giving alms, praying, or other acts of defense.

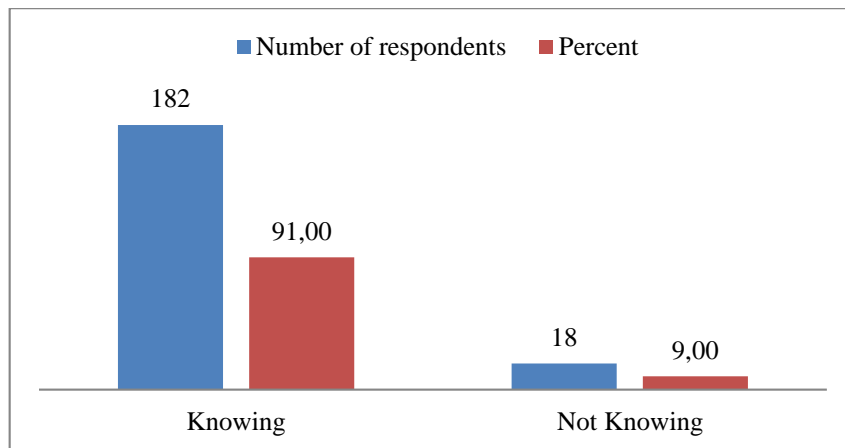


Figure 3 Distribution of Respondents Based on Knowledge of Boycotted Products

Some of the reasons respondents did not boycott, even though they knew about products affiliated with Israel, were because they were worried that the action would worsen the country's economy, especially creating unemployment; in addition, respondents questioned the boycott's effectiveness in stopping the war. On the other hand, some respondents considered that they needed the product, and it was challenging to switch to another. Another reason is that the government has not officially declared a boycott, even though the Indonesian Ulema Council has issued a Fatwa.

### Discussion

The study results show that Gen Z is responsive to global humanitarian issues, especially in Gaza. As many as 97.5 percent of respondents have taken at least one action related to the Gaza issue. Only 2.5 percent of respondents did not take any action. Gen Z prefers using social media more than discussing humanitarian issues directly, which aligns with the characteristics of Generation Z, the first generation to grow up with Internet access and digital technology from a young age. They feel more comfortable interacting with social media than face to face.

The study findings showed that around 91 percent of respondents knew about products affiliated with Israel. Generation Z is more domain interacting with the internet so that they can access the latest information faster. This knowledge underlies their boycott. Naninsih, Alam, & Daing (2024) study showed that student knowledge significantly influenced the decision to boycott Israeli products. Based on fiqh al-Jihad, it is generally shown that the law of boycotting Israeli products and their supporters is *fardhu 'ain* for every Muslim (Yunus et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the Indonesian Ulema Council has issued Fatwa no. 83 Concerning the Law of Support for the Palestinian Struggle. For Gen Z Muslims, this fatwa is a reference to carrying out boycott actions as a manifestation of religiosity. Research findings by Alfina & Tresnawaty (2024) and Fakriza & Ridwan (2019) show that religiosity positively and significantly affects boycotts. The higher the individual's religiosity, the higher the motivation to boycott

Trisnawati (2024) stated that three factors can encourage a boycott's effectiveness. The first is the accessibility of information about the fatwa prohibiting the use and purchase of pro-Israel products. Second, the boycott of products affiliated with Israel will also be felt if the public is given information regarding products that are tied to Israel; and third, the impact of the boycott will be practical if the public can obey and consistently implement the fatwa.

The study results showed that 67 percent of respondents had boycotted products affiliated with Israel, but some did not. The study by Wibowo, Hapsari, & Ascha (2024) showed that the public responded to the boycott fatwa in two clusters. The first cluster expressed support, and the second cluster expressed disagreement with the fatwa, but the actors and discourses that supported the MUI fatwa were more dominant. This study's results align with the research by Jaelani & Nursyifa (2024), which showed that 76% of respondents strongly agreed with the boycott of Israeli products as an expression of solidarity. The research findings show that respondents avoided the boycott because they worried the action would worsen the country's economy, especially creating unemployment. However, Gen Z's concerns about worsening the country's economy must be addressed because demand for the product remains. Boycotting a product does not stop consumption but only shifts demand to other brands. Research findings Kurniawan et al. (2024) strengthen this argument that consumers involved in the boycott movement tend to prefer local products to avoid pro-Israel products, thus creating opportunities for local products to increase their popularity and market share amidst ongoing political tensions. Thus, the potential for unemployment that is created can still be handled if companies that produce and sell products that are not affiliated with Israel immediately fill the gap due to the shift in demand.

The Indonesian economy was severely affected by the boycott of businesses and goods suspected of being linked to Israel, specifically, sales in the restaurant and retail industries dropping by 40% (Ardhani, 2023). This boycott lowered stock prices and purchasing interest in 30 affiliated companies (Rahmani, 2023). The decline in Starbucks store consumers in Padang City, West Sumatra, impacts the boycott social movement (Sugandi & Anggraini, 2024). The research results by Afifah et al. (2024) show that the boycott movement on social media significantly impacts people's purchasing interests. The influence of this movement was recorded at 56.9%, which means that the more people are exposed to the boycott campaign on social media, the greater their tendency to consider the choice of products purchased. The study results (Kurniawan et al., 2024) show that calls for a boycott of Israeli and affiliated products reasonably impact consumer purchasing decisions. Participation in the boycott reflects high consumer awareness and involvement in related political and social issues. Brands associated with pro-Israeli products experience declining image and popularity among consumers who support the movement's boycott.

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The research findings show that only about 13 percent admitted to having participated in a peaceful demonstration (long march) to defend Palestine. The percentage of respondents who held peaceful demonstrations was the same as the respondents' actions in discussing the Gaza tragedy. Most actions carried out by Gen Z are without interacting directly with others (such as boycotts, praying, giving alms, and uploading news/statuses). Gen Z's communication style is restrictive in interacting directly with others.

### **Conclusion**

Most Generation Z responded to the global humanitarian tragedy without interacting directly with others (such as boycotting, praying, giving alms, and uploading news/status). Gen Z's communication style is more limited to interacting directly with others. Gen Z prefers using social media more than discussing humanitarian issues directly. Around 91 percent know about products affiliated with Israel, and 67 percent of them have boycotted. One of the reasons respondents avoided the boycott was because it could worsen the country's economy, especially creating unemployment. However, Gen Z's concerns about worsening the country's economy must be addressed because demand for the product remains. Boycotting a product does not stop consumption but switches to other brands where consumers involved in the boycott movement prefer local products to avoid pro-Israel products. Thus, the call for a boycott, including the socialization of the Indonesian Ulema Council Fatwa Number 83 of 2023, needs to be accompanied by an explanation of its economic impact. On the other hand, local businesses/MSMEs must also be prepared to increase their popularity and market share to take advantage of the demand shift from boycotted products.

### **Declaration of conflicting interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

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