Organizational Culture Transformation and Generation Z Empowerment Strategy in Supporting the Implementation of the Blue Economy

M. Chaerul Rizky, Yohny Anwar, Noni Ardian

Abstract

The blue economy is a paradigm of sustainable economic development that makes optimal use of marine resources while preserving the maritime ecosystem. Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic country in the world with a coastline of 81,000 km, has a huge blue economy potential but has not been fully utilized. The study used a mixed methods approach with an embedded multiple case study design, involving 370 respondents through purposive sampling and snowball sampling, then analyzed using thematic analysis and Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results showed that the model had adequate predictive capabilities with an R-Square value of 0.616, which means that 61.6% of the Blue Economy variation could be explained by independent variables in the model. The hypothesis test confirmed that Gen-Z Empowerment had a positive and significant effect on the Blue Economy, while Organizational Culture also had a positive and significant effect. The F-Square value shows that Gen-Z Empowerment has more dominant influence (0.531) than Organizational Culture (0.369), even though both belong to the major influence category. The findings identify that the transformation of coastal community organizational culture requires a gradual approach through the process of unfreezing-changing-refreezing, while the empowerment of Generation Z is most effective through individual empowerment, organizational empowerment, and community empowerment strategies.

Keywords: Blue Economy, Generation Z, Organizational Cultural Transformation, Coastal Communities, Empowerment

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Introduction

The blue economy has become a sustainable development paradigm that is increasingly receiving global attention, especially for maritime countries such as Indonesia. The blue economy emphasizes the management of marine natural resources in an inclusive and innovative manner, maximizing zero waste value, as stated by (Pauli, 2011) in (Hirbasari, 2025). Geographically, Indonesia is a country that has a larger archipelago compared to its mainland. This is evidenced by Indonesia, which is the largest archipelagic country in the world, about two-thirds of Indonesia's territory is an ocean area (Hasibuan et al., 2024). Two-thirds of Indonesia's total area or 8.3 million square kilometers is waters. Indonesia also has the second longest coastline in the world after Canada with a length of 108,000 kilometers. The area of the sovereign sea is 6.070 million square kilometers and 3 million square kilometers of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) area (Damanik et al., 2023).

The Government of Indonesia has set the blue economy as one of the main pillars in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), with the target of the contribution of the marine and fisheries sector to national GDP reaching 8%. As mandated by the 2020-2024 RPJMN, economic growth in national development must be based on competitive advantages in various regions supported by quality and competitive human resources (PPS, 2021). The coastal area of North Sumatra has significant marine and fisheries potential, including capture and aquaculture fisheries. According to data, the potential for capture fisheries in the Strait of Malacca reaches 276,030 tons per year, while in the Indian Ocean it reaches 1,076,960 tons per year. In addition, there is potential land for pond cultivation covering an area of 20,000 hectares, marine cultivation of 100,000 hectares, freshwater cultivation of 81,372.84 hectares, and public waters of 155,797 hectares (Azhar et al., 2022) deep (Sahjaya et al., 2025). However, the implementation of the blue economy cannot be separated from challenges, especially related to the limitations of technology and infrastructure, as well as the lack of public awareness of the importance of sustainable natural resource management (Nasir et al., 2024).

Belawan, as a strategic coastal area in North Sumatra, has a vital position in the implementation of Indonesia's blue economy. Medan Belawan District is an area located on the coast, this condition causes the people who live in the area to make a living as fishermen and chart workers. According to (Kusnadi 2017) there are three social layers in the Indonesian fishing community, namely the upper layer (successful boat owners and fish traders), the middle layer (sea warriors or boat crew leaders) and the lower layer (labor fishermen) where most of the people in Medan Belawan sub-district are in the lower layer which causes the people's lives to be in low welfare (poverty). Poverty can be seen from a person's inability to meet the needs of food, clothing, shelter, access to health and education. One of the key principles of the Blue Economy is social inclusion, where all members of society, especially those in vulnerable coastal areas, can participate and benefit from economic development (Nasir et al., 2024). Challenges such as low quality of human resources, limited access to technology, and external factors such as extreme weather need to be addressed to maximize the sustainable utilization of these potentials (Sahjaya et al., 2025).

The Blue Economy concept has emerged as a transformative framework to improve the economic well-being of coastal communities while promoting sustainable practices. This concept encompasses a wide range of economic activities related to oceans, seas, and coastal areas, which aim to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability (Rizky et al., 2025). Organizational culture transformation is one of the key factors in creating business sustainability in the midst of rapid global changes. Organizational culture is a system of values, beliefs, and norms that are shared by members of an organization that distinguishes the organization from others (Robbins & Judge, 2019). This culture acts as a guideline for behavior, forms interaction patterns, and influences organizational performance. The transformation towards a blue economy in Belawan requires a fundamental change in the organizational culture

and mindset of the community, from a conventional economic approach that tends to be exploitative to a sustainable paradigm that integrates economic, social, and environmental aspects. This change cannot be achieved without the active involvement of various stakeholders, especially the younger generation who will be the backbone of long-term implementation. A study conducted by (Pauli, 2010) emphasizes that the Blue Economy requires a mindset transformation from a linear economy to a sustainable circular economy.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of Indonesia's demographic dividend shows that Generation Z (born 1997-2012) is currently the largest demographic group that will enter productive age. In Indonesia, generation Z reaches around 27.94% of the total population or around 74.93 million people, making them a very significant demographic force. This generation is known to be adaptive to technology, creative, and concerned about environmental issues, but they also need the right empowerment strategies to be able to contribute optimally. Empowerment is a concept that was born as part of the natural development of the community's mind and culture (Afriansyah, 2023). In particular, generation Z people in Belawan have strategic potential in supporting the transformation of the blue economy. They have access to digital information and technology that can be leveraged for innovation in the maritime sector, environmental awareness that can drive sustainable practices, and energy and creativity to develop new solutions in the use of marine resources. Research by (Seemiller & Grace, 2018) reveals that Generation Z has great potential as a change agent in sustainable development if empowered with the right strategy. Generation Z, which is currently at the optimal productive age (18-27 years), is a window of opportunity that should not be missed. Second, the Belawan area is facing development pressure and environmental degradation that requires innovative and sustainable solutions. Third, Indonesia has ambitious targets in the implementation of the blue economy which requires the support of capable and committed human resources.

In principle, the application of the blue economy concept in coastal areas will provide more points and be influential in national development, in addition to the development of independence in coastal areas which is expected to be realized (Rangkuti et al., 2024). A study by (Sofyaningrum et al., 2023) emphasizes that the implementation of the Blue Economy must be supported by the right policies as well as adequate infrastructure support. To achieve a sustainable blue economy, every country needs to find the best way to balance sustainability and economic growth. This aims to optimize the use of maritime resources, while ensuring maximum benefits for the environment (Olteanu & Stinga, 2019) in (Latif et al., 2023).

Literature Review

2.1 Blue Economy

Blue Economy is a concept of sustainable economic development developed by Gunter Pauli in 2010, which was later widely adopted by various international organizations including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The term blue economy is one of the latest development concepts by relying on the sea and waters based on three integrated pillars, namely ecoitem, economic and social. The term blue economy has been raised in various international cooperations, such as at the Senior Office Meeting (SOM) for the Asia Pacific Economics Cooperation (APEC). This concept is a development concept that aims at three interests, namely economic growth, community welfare, and environmental health (Ilma, 2014) (Ilma, 2014) in (Rangkuti et al., 2024).

According to (Prayuda, 2020) Blue Economy is a concept that aims to integrate the sustainable use of marine resources in supporting economic growth, improving human welfare, and maintaining the health of marine ecosystems. The Blue Economy has great potential in various aspects. First, the marine and fisheries sectors are able to create millions of new jobs, especially in coastal countries, which can help reduce unemployment and improve the well-being of coastal communities. Second, the development of new technologies in the utilization of marine resources, such as renewable energy from the sea and marine biotechnology, offers significant

innovation opportunities (Wiratma & Nurgiyanti, 2019). This technology can help improve efficiency and sustainability in the exploitation of marine resources (Adnan et al., 2023). Third, the Blue Economy can improve the welfare of coastal communities by providing a sustainable source of income through the creation of new jobs and increased income from sea-based economic sectors (Febryaningrum et al., 2024). Fourth, the sustainable use of marine resources can make a significant contribution to national economic development, with sectors such as fisheries, marine tourism, and maritime transportation being the main pillars in sustainable economic growth (Nasution, 2022). Finally, with a sustainable approach, the Blue Economy seeks to preserve marine ecosystems, which is important to ensure that the economic benefits obtained do not result in long-term damage to the marine environment (Buana et al., 2024).

2.2 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is defined by (Schein, 2010) as a pattern of basic assumptions learned by the group in solving problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked so well that they are considered valid and taught to new members as the correct way to understand, think, and feel. (Hofstede, 1980) developed a theory of cultural dimensions that includes power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs short-term orientation, and indulgence vs restraint. (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) introduced the Competing Values Framework which categorizes organizational culture into four types: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy. In the context of younger generation engagement, an organizational culture that supports innovation, collaboration, and flexibility tends to be more effective in attracting the participation of Generation Z. An inclusive and socially purpose-oriented organizational culture is also an important factor in encouraging the involvement of the younger generation in sustainable development initiatives.

2.3 Empowerment Strategy

According to (Afriansyah, 2023), community empowerment is an effort to prepare the community in line with efforts to strengthen community institutions so that they have the ability to realize progress, independence, and welfare in an atmosphere of sustainable social justice. (Mardikanto, 2014) explained the role of community empowerment, among others, as follows: 1. Institutional improvement (Better Institution). By improving the activities carried out, it is hoped that it can improve the institution. Good institutions will encourage the community to participate in activities. 2. Better Business. It is hoped that institutional improvements will improve the business carried out so that it can provide benefits to the members of the institution and the surrounding community. 3. Better Income. Business improvements are expected to improve the income of all members of the institution, including the community. So improvements are needed in terms of public financial revenue. 4. Better Environment. Income improvement is expected to improve the physical and social environment because environmental damage is often caused by poverty or limited income. 5. Better Living. A good income and environment will improve people's living standards. This can be seen from the level of health, education, and purchasing power. Economic ability will make people's lives better. 6. Better Community. If every family has a good life, a better community life will be created, so that community improvement is needed.

2.4 Gen Z

Generation Z, who were born between 1997-2012, have unique characteristics as true digital natives who grew up along with internet technology and social media. According to (Ngoc et al., 2022) generation Z is a special generation born with technology that plays an important role in future economic growth. Generasi ini, sering digambarkan sebagai orang yang melek teknologi dan mudah beradaptasi, telah tumbuh dengan akses konstan ke perangkat

digital dan internet, yang memengaruhi komunikasi, pembelajaran, dan pandangan dunia mereka (Noordiono, 2016) dalam (Sasmita et al., 2025). According to Pew Research Center research, Generation Z tends to be more pragmatic, independent, and financially security-oriented than millennials. The generational cohort theory developed by (Mannheim, 1952) explains that shared experiences during the formative period create values and behaviors that are unique to each generation. The Deloitte Global Millennial and Gen Z Survey 2023 shows that Generation Z has a high level of concern for environmental issues, climate change, and sustainability. They also prioritize work-life balance, diversity and inclusion, and have high expectations for the organization to have a positive impact on society. In the context of social participation, Generation Z tends to be more active in social and environmental movements, but they need digital platforms and approaches that suit their communication styles.

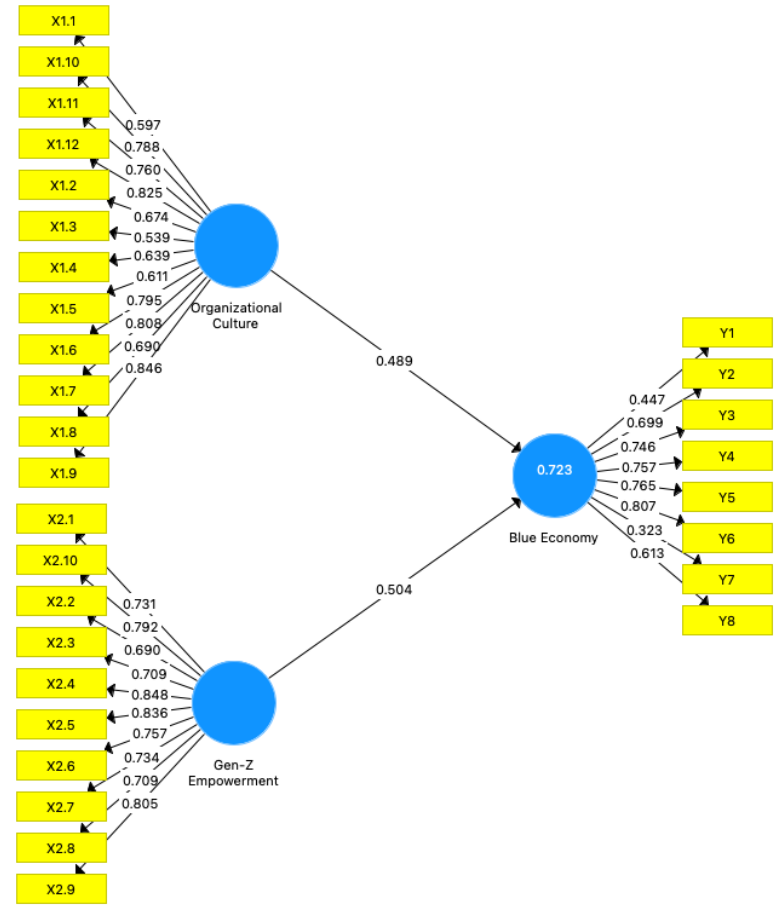
Research Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to measure and analyze the relationships between variables objectively and can be generalized to a wider population. The population in this study is all members of Generation Z (born in 1997-2012) who are domiciled in the Belawan area and are involved or potentially involved in marine-based economic activities, either as business actors, workers, students, or community members. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency of the City of Medan in 2023, it is estimated that there are around 15,000 Generation Z individuals in the Belawan area who meet these criteria. This study uses the geographical quota sampling method. The geographic quota sampling method was chosen to ensure that the sample taken includes the geographical variations that exist in the population, so as to improve the validity of the study. Sample size determination was performed using the Krejcie and Morgan Tables, a tool used to determine the appropriate sample size for a specific population (Ahmad & Halim, 2017). Based on Krejcie and Morgan's Table, with a population of 10,000, the recommended sample size (n) is 370. The data analysis technique used in this study is quantitative analysis with a multiple linear regression approach. All data analysis was carried out using the help of SmartPLS statistical software version 4.

Results

4.1 Measurement Model (Outer Model)

External model analysis or measurement analysis aims to ensure that the measurement used is feasible as a measure or validity and reliable, by specifying how the relationship between manifest variables in the form of indicators and latent variables. Measurement Model Testing (Outer Model) is a stage to assess the validity and reliability of indicators in measuring latent variables. This test ensures that each indicator is able to accurately represent the construct through the evaluation of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. The following is presented with the output picture of the measurement model 1 below:



Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

Figure 1. Outer Loading 1

In the outer loading image 1, it can be seen that the X1.1, X1.3, Y1, and Y7 indicators have loading values below 0.6, so they do not meet the criteria for convergent validity and must be eliminated from the research model

Table 1. Discriminant Validity - Outer Loading

	Blue Economy	Gen-Z Empowerment	Organizational Culture
X1.10			0,782
X1.11			0,772
X1.12			0,816
X1.2			0,711
X1.4			0,627
X1.5			0,603
X1.6			0,783
X1.7			0,811
X1.8			0,713
X1.9			0,868
X2.1		0,733	
X2.10		0,787	
X2.2		0,695	
X2.3		0,711	
X2.4		0,844	
X2.5		0,831	
X2.6		0,759	

	Blue Economy	Gen-Z Empowerment	Organizational Culture
X2.7		0,740	
X2.8		0,713	
X2.9		0,800	
Y2	0,744		
Y3	0,785		
Y4	0,787		
Y5	0,786		
Y6	0,814		
Y8	0,633		

Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

After the elimination of 4 indicators that did not meet the loading criteria (in indicators X1.1, X1.3, Y1, and Y7), it can be seen in Table 1, all indicators in the Blue Economy, Gen-Z Empowerment, and Organizational Culture variables showed loading factor values that had met the convergent validity criteria above 0.6, with the highest value of 0.868 in the X1.9 indicator and the lowest value of 0.603 in the X1.5 indicator.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity- Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Blue Economy	Gen-Z Empowerment	Organizational Culture
Blue Economy	0,760		
Gen-Z Empowerment	0,688	0,763	
Organizational Culture	0,642	0,441	0,753

Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

The Discriminant Validity table with the Fornell-Larcker criteria shows that the square root value of AVE for each variable (denoted diagonally) is greater than the correlation between other variables, so that all variables in the model meet the discriminant validity criteria.

Table 3. Average Variance Extracted/AVE, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Blue Economy	0,852	0,859	0,891	0,578
Gen-Z Empowerment	0,919	0,922	0,933	0,582
Organizational Culture	0,913	0,918	0,928	0,567

Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

Table 3 shows that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.7 and AVE above 0.5, so it can be concluded that this research instrument meets the criteria for reliability and validity.

4.2 Structural Model (Inner Model)

Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model) is a stage of assessing the quality of causal relationships between latent variables in the SEM-PLS model which aims to test the research hypothesis and predictive ability of the model. This test was carried out to determine the magnitude of the influence, direction of relationship, and significance between variables through the analysis of R-square values, path coefficients, and hypothesis tests.

a. Uji Hypothesis

Hypothesis testing is a statistical analysis procedure used to determine whether a conjecture or statement (hypothesis) about the relationship or influence between variables in a study is supported by data. In PLS-SEM, hypothesis tests are carried out by looking at *t-statistical* and *p-value* values to assess the significance of the relationship between variables. For hypothesis testing, a probability value of 5% and a t-statistical value of 1.96 were used. So that the criterion for accepting or rejecting the hypothesis is Ha is accepted if the value of p < 0.05 (5%). Meanwhile, to find out whether the level is significant or not, the statistical value > 1.96 is used. Similarly, Ha is rejected if the p-value > 0.05 (5%) and is considered insignificant if the t-statistical value < 1.96.

Table 4. Uji Parsial (Uji t)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Gen-Z Empowerment -> Blue Economy	0,503	0,505	0,028	17,841	**0,000**
Organizational Culture -> Blue Economy	0,420	0,421	0,032	12,951	**0,000**

Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

The results of the t-test showed that Gen-Z Empowerment had a positive and significant effect on the Blue Economy with a coefficient of 0.503 (p-value 0.000), while Organizational Culture also had a positive and significant effect on the Blue Economy with a coefficient of 0.420 (p-value 0.000).

b. F-Square

F-Square is a measure of how much of an influence each independent variable has on the dependent variable in a structural model. F-Square values are categorized as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35) (Cohen, 1988).

Table 5. F-Square

	Blue Economy	Gen-Z Empowerment	Organizational Culture
Blue Economy			
Gen-Z Empowerment	**0,531**		
Organizational Culture	**0,369**		

Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

Based on Table 5, the F-Square value shows that Gen-Z Empowerment has a great influence on the Blue Economy with a value of 0.531, while Organizational Culture also has a great influence with a value of 0.369. This indicates that both independent variables make a significant contribution in explaining the variation in the Blue Economy.

c. R-Square

The R-Square value aims to determine the magnitude of the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. Classification criteria, namely the R-Square value of 0.67 (strong); 0.33 (moderate); and 0.19 (weak) (Ghozali, 2021).

Table 6. R-Square

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Blue Economy	0,616	0,614

Sources: SmartPLS, 2025

Based on Table 4 shows that the R-Square value of 0.616 for the Blue Economy variable falls into the moderate category, which shows that 61.6% of the Blue Economy

variation can be explained by independent variables in the model, while the remaining 38.4% is influenced by other factors outside the study.

The results of the study show that Gen-Z Empowerment and Organizational Culture have a positive and significant effect on the Blue Economy. The path coefficient value for Gen-Z Empowerment is 0.503 with a p-value of 0.000, and Organizational Culture is 0.420 with a p-value of 0.000, which means that the higher the empowerment of Generation Z and the better the organizational culture, the more the implementation of the Blue Economy will increase. An R-Square value of 0.616 indicates that 61.6% of the Blue Economy variation can be explained by both variables, while the rest is influenced by factors other than the model.

The F-Square value shows that Gen-Z Empowerment (0.531) has a major influence on the Blue Economy compared to Organizational Culture (0.369), even though both are in the major influence category. These results show that the role of generation Z who have creativity, technological skills, and the spirit of innovation are the dominant factors in supporting the development of the Blue Economy, while the transformation of organizational culture remains an important foundation to create a work environment and governance that is in line with the principles of sustainability, so that the synergy between the two can strengthen the sustainable management of marine resources and have an impact positive for the regional economy. A conducive organizational culture remains an important element to strengthen its implementation.

Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that Gen-Z Empowerment and Organizational Culture have a positive and significant effect on the implementation of the Blue Economy. The path coefficient value of 0.503 for Gen-Z Empowerment and 0.420 for Organizational Culture, with p-values < 0.001, demonstrate that higher levels of Gen-Z empowerment and stronger organizational culture lead to better implementation of the Blue Economy. The R-Square value of 0.616 shows that 61.6% of the variation in the Blue Economy can be explained by these two variables, while the remaining 38.4% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Based on the F-Square results, Gen-Z Empowerment (0.531) has a greater impact than Organizational Culture (0.369), although both fall into the category of major influence.

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