

Z Accountants vs Greenwashing, Socialwashing, and Impact Washing: Seizing Chances and Overcoming Barriers. A view from Bourdieu Perspective

^[1]Evan Sutanto Putra, ^[2]Tiffany Evangelie Shanice

^[1]Faculty of Business and Economics Universitas Surabaya

^[2]Faculty of Business and Economics Universitas Surabaya

^[1]evansutantoputra13@gmail.com, ^[2]tiffanyevangelie37@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Businesses face a massive challenge toward sustainability due to resource scarcity, declining human prosperity, and climate crises. Despite tools like Corporate Sustainability Reports (CSR) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), unethical practices like Greenwashing (GW), Social Washing (SW), and Impact Washing (IW) persist. This issue arises amidst the shifting workforce, particularly among accountants, now dominated by Generation Z (Gen Z). Gen Z, digital natives with high sensitivity to environmental and social issues, also exhibit traits like self-centeredness, a rush to solve problems, and a thirst for appreciation. This research aims to provide a holistic view of how Gen Z's disposition can enlighten the accounting profession regarding sustainability and the challenges of unethical practices (GW, SW, IW). Using Bourdieu's perspective, it explores how Gen Z, as a habitus with perceived capital, gains position in accounting and sustainability reporting, addressing the misrecognition of these matters.

Keywords: Business Sustainability, Generation Z Accountants, Greenwashing, Social Washing, Impact Washing

I. INTRODUCTION

Businesses need to move towards sustainability strategically; it is an urgent matter that has absorbed the attention of the world as a whole. Business sustainability has triggered businesses to raise awareness and responsibilities to all stakeholders, including the broader society and the physical environment in which they operate (Matytsin et al., 2022). The increase in progressive global development has pushed businesses to work together with organizations from various sectors to address sustainability challenges. This process is crucial in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Rosati & Faria, 2019).

SDGs, with their 17 goals that were created by the UN in 2015, have a purpose to serve as a framework designed to guide sustainable decisions in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges that impact globally and across all countries and sectors responsible for achieving them (George et al., 2016; UN-DESA 2, 2015). Yet, according to Bebbington and Unerman (2018), suggest that some companies use SDG-related rhetoric to disguise their traditional business practices as sustainability efforts. This "window dressing" allows them to appear committed to SDGs without making real changes, aligning with strategies that prioritize

public image over genuine progress. Businesses strive to gain legitimacy regarding their acceptance and success through symbolic approaches to the SDGs (Manes-Rossi & Nicolo, 2022).

Before SDGs existed and became widespread phenomena, there was an ancient tool that has increased the awareness of the need to deal with sustainability challenges called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) since 1953 by American economist Howard Bowen in his publication "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman". The history of CSR that existed from 1950 until nowadays has been transforming in several types and figures. CSR and those who contribute to its development have evolved their focuses over the years. In 1950 and 1960, the focus of CSR was on the realm of business ethics and social duties. This focus shifted in the 1970 when frequent recession and inflation caused many unemployment problems, the focus of CSR evolved into self interest enlightened. In 1980 and 1990, the focus of CSR was more into the phenomena of corporate social performance and relationship management towards stakeholders. From 2000 until today the spectrums of CSR are more about corporate

citizenship, triple bottom line and strategic CSR. The evolution of CSR is rising according to what social and environment of businesses need (Lee, 2008).

Those two platforms have facilitated businesses to create pavements towards sustainability and their obligation of reporting, yet there are challenges, such as the high costs of adopting eco-friendly technologies and changing business models; some businesses see these as opportunities to expand into new markets. The pressures faced by every business demand sustainable strategies and social and environmental responsibility (Hsieh, 2017; Siltaoja & Onkila, 2013) while also encouraging opportunities for businesses to respond to local issues.

Thus, even though sustainability frameworks have been created in very detailed frameworks and set by the most comprehensive standard setters and scholars, there is still some misrecognition in sustainability practices and reporting fields. In the realm of unethical and misrecognition of business practices, businesses use practices such as greenwashing (GW), social washing (SW), and impact washing (IW) to exploit gaps in emerging challenges.

GW is a practice where companies gain a competitive edge by promoting financial products as environmentally friendly or

sustainable, even though these products do not meet sustainability standards (European Commission, 2022). Various factors explain the emergence of greenwashing, including external, organizational, and internal factors. Furthermore, other practices, such as SW, that result from social responsibility initiatives that seek to pursue financial profits under the pretext of social responsibility projects to improve the company's image (Williams, 2022). Then, IW is defined as the risk of purchasing products such as investments claimed to be inaccurate and impact the actual socio-economic conditions but cannot be isolated, measured, or exaggerated (OECD, 2023).

These phenomena will constantly evolve as the concepts of sustainability and its misrecognition grow. Accounting (accountant's job) plays a significant pivotal role of assurance regarding the sustainability practices, reportings and misrecognitions. Accountants frequently play a key role in gathering, analyzing, and communicating performance on various material issues. As sustainability becomes a more significant concern, it is crucial that accountants are well-prepared to handle this type of information. Additionally, it is essential for the broader business community to

recognize the important role accountants have in this growing area (ACCA,2023). This situation will impact the future of accounting and reporting. At the same time, the accounting world faces another challenge in the fight against the misrecognition of sustainability. The shifting generation of accountants into the next generation becomes another serious discussion phenomenon since there are many critics of Generation Z (Gen Z).

Generation Z, born between 1997 and early 2012, is a demographic force that has grown up with digital technology and has extensive access to information, giving them an edge over previous generations. With their population in Indonesia reaching 27.49% at the end of 2023, representing 32% of the global population, they have the potential to bring about progress and change in the future, especially with the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. Their potential to make a positive impact on the future of accounting is inspiring and should motivate us all. Interest in accounting careers has risen after declining in recent years (Handshake, 2024). Based on a 2023 report by the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (AICPA,2023), it can be concluded that all businesses currently need an accountant, and it

is estimated that the demand for young accountants will continue to grow despite this rapid technological development.

This article will present evidence on the dispositions of Gen Z using the theory of habitus, fields, and capital from the study of Bourdieu (1970-1994) from a summarized source written by Grenfell et al. (2012) to see whether their perceived values are sufficient to get the best position in the field of accountant's job field. After explaining the alignment of Gen Z and Accountant, this research will see the Z Accountant as the second form of habitus in performing their roles in sustainability practices and reporting.

In the end, after constructing a holistic insight of Z accountants in the field of sustainability, this research will analyze the dichotomy of those aspects before in the combat with GW, SW, and IW as the misrecognition practices frequently used by businesses to enhance their reputation and seize opportunities while overcoming the barriers in sustainable business. Bourdieu's (1974) perspective will give powerful insight into how each subjectivity reacts toward objectivity and forms each other to create a field of reality.

This research aims to provide a holistic perspective on the crucial role of Generation Z as accountants in delivering sustainability reports according to standards and combating unethical (misrecognition) practices such as GW, SW, and IW. This research highlights the novelty of applying Bourdieu's theory to examine how Generation Z accountants can uniquely address greenwashing, social washing, and impact washing in sustainability reporting. It explores how Gen Z's digital skills, social awareness, and ethics position them to reshape accounting practices, while also addressing their challenges. The study offers a fresh perspective on the generational shift in accounting and its impact on sustainability efforts.

Their virtues, competencies, and ethics will provide significant support in the activities of analyzing each transformation, deciding the validity of information, and being vigilant. This goal aligns with the taxonomy goals for Indonesia's sustainable finance (OJK, 2024), offering hope for a better, more sustainable world. Yet some delicacies accompany their marvelous natural inheritance. Their self-centered behavior, the need for validations, and favor rapid enhancements. This research will show how their dispositions, as well

as their delicacies and guidance to create an environment to support those traits, will form a new generation called Z accountants to make a better world.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Bourdieu's (1970-1990) works of habitus, field, and capital will be the main framework of this qualitative literature review. The source of Bourdieu's works gathered from Grenfel et al. (2012) and some literature that has holistic content about Bourdieu's perspective of how habitus with its perceived capital can fit into a field that contains doxa and discourse and how interactions of the habitus forming a new objectivity that taken as belief in the reality of subjectivity. For Bourdieu, habitus serves as the essential mediating link between a series of dualisms that other approaches often treat as dichotomies. It connects the presence of social regularities with the experience of agency. Importantly, habitus encourages us to think relationally by emphasizing "relations between" rather than "either/or," where each dimension being connected is itself defined through its relationships (Grenfel & Maton, 2012).

This research uses Scopus-indexed journals from 2019-2024 to gather the perspective of Gen Z's disposition, accountant

competencies, sustainability practices, reports, and misrecognition (GW, SW, and IW). Misrecognition refers to the inability to recognize the arbitrary nature of the social world, which is perceived as legitimate and objectively necessary, rather than being understood as a product of competition and domination (Bourdieu 1977:168). This article will be constructed with two stages of habitus perspective. The first perspective will see GenZ as the habitus and analyze what are their dispositions to interact with the accountant field. After finding the alignment and adjustment of the barriers of alignment, then the concept evolved into Z accountant as a new habitus (combined objectivity of accountant disposition into GenZ social and intellectual capital). The next step taken by this research is to analyze the Z accountant disposition to fit into its role as supporting and assurance unit of businesses toward sustainability practices and reporting.

The selection of the journals refers to the content analysis, and this research has eliminated journals that do not have sufficient content to support the findings. Additionally, this research uses information from notable sources to give more purities of the findings. Moreover, triangulation is applied across multiple sources or media to

minimize information bias. In this study, the process of interpretation extends beyond the meaning of the texts to include their context as well.

This research intention is to gather awareness of all stakeholders that have continuous interactions with sustainability, such as business owners, managers, standard setters, accountant-related consultants, accounting assurance companies, GenZ itself, and also scholars, lecturers, and teachers, to see GenZ's unique chances and how to overcome their barriers to forming a new and better generation. With a holistic view, this research of novel phenomena wants to enlighten all stakeholders and readers, especially GenZ, to stand brave to their natures and face their challenges with more clarity of disposition and their ability to transcend the dichotomy of aspects they will interfere with.

III. RESULT & DISCUSSION

This section will start from discussing what is the disposition, delicacies and their view about sustainability and environment that surround them. After that this article will show how GenZ's alignment with nowadays accountant competencies and ethics and gaining the picture of how they complement each other and explaining the barriers. The next step is the explanation of the role of Z

accountant as supporting and assurance role of businesses to establish good sustainability practices and reporting and how Z Accountant fighting the misrecognition products of sustainability (GW, SW, IW).

Gen Z as Habitus

Gen Z is a habitus that was born coinciding with socio-technical, cultural, and historical changes, which ultimately they live side by side closely with socio-cultural, political, and most importantly technological shifts, such as globalization and rapid technological developments, this is what forced them to change their lifestyle, mindset, habits, career choices, and attitudes (Madden, 2019). With such characteristics, Gen Z is considered to have advantages and disadvantages that we can see, namely as a generation Z who is literate in today's technology. For Advantages of Gen Z, we take journals written by Sillinevica & Meirule (2019), Vitelar (2019), Christiani & Ikasari (2020), Liu et al., (2019). Schroth (2019), Ferreira (2020), Okros (2020), Azimi et al., (2021), and Saarelainen (2021). Meanwhile, for the disadvantages of Gen Z taken from journals written by American Psychological Association (2019), Gomez et al., (2020), Tolstikova et al. (2020), Parker &

Igielnik (2020), Bulut & Maraba (2021), Jayathilake et al. (2021), Ma & Fang (2023), Hamdi et al. (2021), Becker (2022). The results found from several articles related to Gen Z's superiorities can be categorized into several lists as follows:

1. Technology Savvy: Gen Z was born and grew up with technology in the digital era, where the internet, smartphones, and social media have become part of life since early on. They are familiar with technological devices and digital applications, so they are able to master new technologies easily. Based on the results of a Dell Technologies survey, it was found that 99% of Gen Z in Indonesia believe that being technologically literate is an important factor in competing in the world of work and supported by a Google survey that more than 43% of Gen Z in Indonesia are familiar with technology. This is shown through the digital devices they use every day in doing their jobs. Thanks to their rapid adaptation to early technological changes, they are able and proficient in operating technological

equipment efficiently and easily (Okros, 2020).

2. Flexible: Gen Z is known for its flexibility in the workplace. They not only expect a pleasant work environment with a positive team atmosphere, but also demand flexibility regarding working hours and location. Research by Schroth (2019) revealed that this flexibility is an important aspect for Gen Z in organizations, along with competitive compensation, development opportunities, and various challenges. As a tech-savvy generation, they can work from anywhere and anytime using various digital platforms, allowing them to adjust work to their personal lives more effectively. This evidence suggests that flexibility is key for Gen Z in choosing and staying in a job.
3. Initiative: Gen Z is known for its high initiative and enthusiasm in work, as evidenced by its independent, creative, and interactive nature, both when working alone and in a team (Okros, 2020). Gen Z also often shares knowledge and thinks critically about risks and opportunities in business

(Ferreira, 2020). In addition, they highly value diversity and have high technological skills, making them a generation that is able to adapt quickly and work effectively in various conditions and environments.

4. Confidence and multitasking: A high level of self-confidence is generally possessed by Gen Z. With adequate technological support for them to develop their knowledge and achieve their success. Gen Z shows that they are able to overcome obstacles by relying on their own abilities and not always relying on their entire team to achieve goals (Sillinevica & Meirule, 2019; Vitelar, 2019). Some of the most significant benefits are their ability to use various types of technology, multitasking skills, quickly acquire information, and their responsiveness to significant social changes (Christiani & Ikasari, 2020).
5. Innovative and Creative: Gen Z as a technology-literate generation always has various innovative and creative solutions or ways to support business. Technological advances make

Gen Z have the opportunity to communicate with other Gen Z through any device, they are indirectly connected globally. This certainly facilitates a creative and proactive mind to explore business opportunities and the freedom to share or absorb ideas/information from anywhere and anytime (Liu et al., 2019). In fact, now every innovative solution that is channeled to solve business problems and work on ideas will be given a patent application that is worthy of being appreciated or awarded by management (Schroth, 2019).

6. Up to date: In this fast and instant era, it forces us to move more dynamically so as not to be left behind. This is found in Generation Z who always pursue the latest, be it company information, social and environmental conditions, and so on. One example, Gen Z acts to spread their career aspirations through social media posts and build a positive online brand so that prospective employers can see for

recruitment suitability (Vitelar, 2019).

7. Generation Z is known as a group with high social awareness and inclusivity, and they believe that an organization should have a positive impact or generate environmental benefits (Reiners, 2020). They often use social media as a tool to express opinions and raise awareness about social and environmental issues. Highlighting this, Gen Z's online identity has a significant influence on their purchasing habits and how others perceive them (Autumn Fair, 2019). Gen Z is considered the generation most interested in incorporating sustainability into their lifestyle (Saarelainen, 2021). Additionally, other research indicates that Gen Z has adopted values such as respecting others, sincerity, honesty, responsibility, and hedonism (Azimi et al., 2021).

After discussing the superiorities of Gen Z, there are some of the delicacies that Gen Z possesses as follows:

1. Easily Stressed: Based on the results of the Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) report from the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes), it was found that the prevalence of depression in Indonesia among those aged 15-24 year olds or generation Z, is 2%. Although it seems that Gen Z has a broad interest in technology, they often mention that if they feel uninterested in their desired job interests/passions, they tend to feel stressed and pressured, and they would rather resign than stay in a job they dislike (Ma & Fang, 2023).
2. Individualism: The individualistic attitude of Generation Z often makes them unpopular in the workplace. Gen Z is frequently said to be difficult to work with because they have too many boundaries and prefer to learn independently from various digital sources. Unlike Gen Y, Gen Z tends to act first rather than ask or think first; they enjoy finding their identity (Hamdi et al., 2021). In fact, most of them are more aware of their responsibility to serve society because they define themselves as active members of the entire society. Gen Z is known for being able to work and think independently, and they are more focused on the results of the achievements they have built (Ma & Fang, 2023).
3. Anxiety: Gen Z is reported to struggle with managing their stress effectively, with common outcomes including feelings of sadness, lack of interest, depression, or loss of motivation (American Psychological Association, 2019). This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected Gen Z's work plans and employment, especially the oldest members of Gen Z who were preparing for significant milestones such as graduating from high school and college, and entering the workforce (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). According to research in April 2020, Gen Z was found to be less prepared and more stressed when facing developmental milestones (Becker, 2022). Additionally, it is important to note that the rapid changes in the job market and the increasing

reliance on digital communication have further exacerbated stress levels among Gen Z. Their high expectations for immediate success and fulfillment can lead to increased pressure and anxiety.

4. Generation Z is viewed as individualistic and money-conscious, yet they are also highly concerned with their future careers, morality, and work ethic (Bulut & Maraba, 2021). In research related to Generation Z in Slovenia, it was found that they often pursue personal goals, even in unethical ways. Thus, it can be said that Generation Z observes their surroundings and follows existing traditions, often showing a preference for self-direction, hedonistic satisfaction of their needs, and prioritizing their financial security (Gomez et al., 2020; Tolstikova et al., 2020). Members of Generation Z consider good opportunities for advancement as the best incentive to motivate them to work hard and stay longer in an organization (Jayathilake et al., 2021). They are also often described as having a

Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) and frequently glorify related issues through their adept use of technology

Field of Current Accountant Competencies

There are some perspectives about how to be a good accountant nowadays. After analyzing some articles with comprehensive contents of what competencies should be embedded in an accountant, this research finds there are 5 dimensions from journals written by Dunn and Sainty (2019), De Villiers (2020), Jackson et al. (2022), Roy S. (2022), Maradona A. et al. (2022), Spano et al. (2023), and Chandler N. (2024), that create the perspective of a good accountant as listed and explained below:

1. Technical Skill : Numerous studies over the past few decades have identified a shift in employer preference towards generic skills rather than technical skills (Al Mallak et al., 2020), although technical skills remain necessary. Thus, the technical skills are not structured on how an accountant should have a good understanding of ledger or good capabilities of structuring the financial statements, the technical skills rather refer to more

generic-problem solving kind- skills. This condition is a product of advancement of technology that is replacing the clerical and constant job of accountant. This dimension is filled by mindful decision-making processes toward public interest, judgment on problems, creativity, conceptual and critical thinking, sense-making in complicated environments, intelligence, integration between practices and organizations, performing a higher level of duties than the later generations, consultation, and strategy formulation.

2. **Communication Skill** : Communication becomes a very important soft-skill that is needed by accountants in businesses to support the decision making processes between disciplines, organization structures, even branches across countries (Chandler N. 2024). Thus, this dimension is filled by Interpersonal communication skills, cross collaboration, social skills, personal interactions, negotiation.
3. **Technology Adaptability** : In the beginning, this matter

will not be an issue until the last two decades when technology rapidly evolves itself and runs faster than the user (De Villers, 2020). This dimension become more and more into main consideration of accountant's competencies, this dimension consist of innovative thinking, IT skills, deep analytical skills of big data, agile and future-fast, technological accounting practices, advanced tech-adaptability, intelligent automation, blockchain, big data, and cloud-based software, flexible working environments, digital literacy. This dimension is moving at light speed and has the ability to make some practices become obsolete within no time.

4. **Accountability**: accountability is the foundation of the accounting practices and services. A South African study highlighted that "truth and fairness," along with public interest, should be included in the accounting profession's competency framework, especially given the rising concerns about corruption and accounting irregularities

(Lubbe's. 2020). Thus this dimension became the most considerable topic across the seven journals. This dimension consist of Professionals who follow a strict code of conduct that is built on integrity, morally competent, society interest on top of all interests, integrity, honesty, objectivity, rationality, social ethical responsibilities, environmental ethical responsibilities, personal accountability, fiscal transparency norms, ethical use of technological accounting, ethical awareness.

5. Self Management : Self-awareness, especially through reflection, is crucial for effective collaboration, communication, and meeting clients' needs (Psaila, 2018). With the growing significance of new technology, accountants must commit to lifelong learning, constantly updating their skills to stay aligned with the latest practices. This dimension consists of challenge enthusiast, consciousness, curiosity, lifelong learning,

self-learning, emotional and cognitive engagement, respectful mind, culture and diversity awareness, resilience, work-life balance, emotional intelligence.

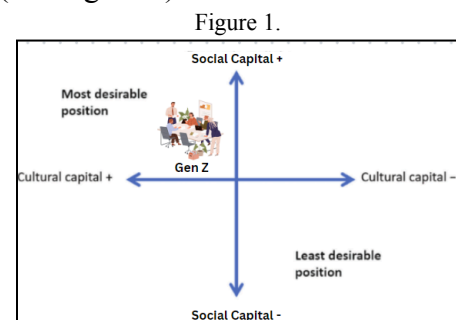
These findings are based on the demand that is structured by the new world's need for the competencies of an accountant. The accounting profession is evolving quickly, placing greater emphasis on technology skills, accountability, and self-management. Accountants need to be proficient with modern tools like big data, blockchain, and cloud software to remain effective in this dynamic environment (De Villers, 2020). Accountability is the spotlight, with a focus on maintaining integrity, honesty, and ethical behavior, particularly in response to growing concerns about corruption and irregularities (Lubbe, 2020). Additionally, self-management is vital; accountants must be self-aware, reflective, and dedicated to continuous learning to collaborate effectively and meet client needs (Psaila, 2018). They should also be emotionally and mentally engaged, culturally aware, and resilient to navigate the complexities of today's business landscape.

There is still a need for financial or accounting skills such as budget planning and preparation, administration analysis and review, managing money, financial planning and management, business research and analysis, cost analysis, using numbers as a reasoning tool, effective at solving financial problems, preparing financial reports, learning and remembering numbers and statistics (Chandler N., 2024). Yet, nowadays what is needed is a decision-maker who can quickly bounce back after setbacks, adapt to fast-paced changes, and stay current with technological advancements (De Villiers, 2020). These traits and competencies of accountant more or less develop in the evolution of the accountant's workforce that evolving into more of the GenZ workforce. Self management, accountability, and technological advance become the most discussed issues in those articles and in reality.

Gen Z Position in the Field of Current Accountant Competencies

As previously explained, there are five main components of an experienced accountant: technical skills, communication skills, technology adaptability, accountability, and self-management. Technology adaptability, accountability, and self-management are based on these findings, as the

business world today demands these three areas of accounting competence. Based on the previous section, the results of Gen Z clearly reflect the business world's need for accounting skills in this era of technological advancement. Generation Z brings a unique set of skills and qualities to the accounting profession, making them well-suited to meet the demands of this rapidly evolving field. According to Thomson (2012), there are three types of capital in Bourdieu's work (social, economic, and cultural). This study intends to use cultural and social capital to identify Gen Z's position in accounting capacity, as financial capital does not have strong alignment in this adaptation. In the figure below (Figure 1), Gen Z holds a strong position in the disposition or understanding of social and cultural capital aspects in current accounting capacity. They also participate in maintaining their expertise by meticulously recording each account (see Figure 2)



Gen Z Position in the Fields of Current Accounting Competencies
 Source: Author/Researcher

Generation Z's natural interest in technology is a valuable asset as accounting increasingly relies on advanced tools such as big data analytics, blockchain, and cloud-based software. De Villers (2020) notes that technological advancements often outpace users' ability to adapt. However, Gen Z, having grown up with digital technology, not only keeps up but also drives transformation in accounting practices. Okros (2020) also emphasizes that this generation's comfort with technology makes them indispensable in a profession increasingly driven by technology.

Flexibility is another advantage that positions Gen Z for success in the field of accounting. Schroth (2019) points out that Gen Z highly values work environments that offer flexibility in terms of hours and location, which is becoming increasingly important in a global and interconnected business world. Furthermore, Chandler (2024) notes that as accounting roles become more collaborative and span various regions, the ability to work flexibly becomes crucial. Additionally, Gen Z's ability to adapt to digital communication and collaboration tools allows them to thrive in such environments, making them well-suited for modern accounting roles that require a balance between

work responsibilities and personal life.

Communication skills are also a significant asset for Gen Z in the accounting field. In today's business environment, where accountants often need to collaborate across disciplines and organizational structures, effective communication can be crucial if not well-organized. Chandler (2024) also mentions that communication skills are increasingly important for accountants, as these skills are needed to facilitate decision-making processes and negotiations across branches and even countries. Gen Z's strong social and interpersonal skills, combined with their familiarity with digital communication tools, enable them to meet these demands effectively, making them valuable contributors in team settings and interactions with clients and stakeholders.

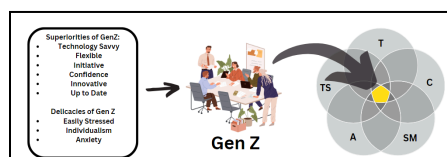
Moreover, Gen Z's initiative and innovative mindset make them well-suited for the accounting profession. Okros (2020) and Liu et al. (2019) highlight that Gen Z is known for their proactive approach to work and creativity in problem-solving. With accounting now encompassing not only financial report management but also providing strategic insights and solutions, Gen Z's ability to think critically and innovate becomes

increasingly important. Their desire to explore new ideas and adapt to changes in the business environment positions them as key players in developing new strategies and approaches in the field.

Finally, Gen Z's strong sense of responsibility and ethical commitment is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the accounting profession. Lubbe (2020) explains that growing concerns about corruption and misconduct in accounting have reinforced the need for ethical accountability in the profession. Gen Z's commitment to values such as integrity, transparency, and social responsibility, as highlighted by Vitelar (2019), aligns well with the core principles of accounting ethics. Their ability to navigate complex ethical landscapes while upholding high standards of conduct makes them well-suited to advance ethical practices in accounting, ensuring the profession remains trustworthy and reliable amid increasing scrutiny.

important to highlight that Gen Z is still capable of demonstrating their best performance in the business and accounting world. Generation Z has unique and diverse characteristics in terms of ethics. On one hand, they are known as a group with high social awareness, inclusivity, and values such as sincerity, honesty, and responsibility in their work. Reiners (2020) emphasized that Gen Z believes an organization can have a positive impact or generate environmental benefits. On the other hand, Gen Z often exhibits highly individualistic traits to achieve their personal goals, sometimes using unethical methods, and focusing more on financial security and personal satisfaction (Gomez et al., 2020; Tolstikova et al., 2020). However, Gen Z views these traits as opportunities to motivate themselves to work harder and stay longer. In the context of accounting, it is crucial for Gen Z to manage these less ideal ethical aspects through effective self-management, where ethics and integrity are the foundation of the profession. Thus, as accountants, Gen Z can leverage their enthusiasm, build self-awareness, and master emotional intelligence to continuously update their skills through business, social, and environmental issues, and make important decisions (Psaila, 2018).

Figure 2.



Capital, Habitus, and Field of Z Accountant
 Source: Author/Researcher

After analyzing the positive and negative ethics of Gen Z, it is

Role of Z Accountant in Sustainability Practices and Reporting

Accountants, with their expanding skill set, are key players in promoting, guiding, and integrating sustainable practices. They can only effectively fulfill this role by developing and utilizing integrated sustainability and financial information (ACCA, 2023). These facts are also supported by IFAC (2021) that stated professional accountants play a crucial role in collecting, analyzing, and conveying high-quality information. Accountants' involvement in sustainability-related reporting and insights presents a significant opportunity to create value for both companies and clients. As we embrace new and diverse subject matters and technologies, our foundational knowledge, skills, professional judgment, integrity, and adherence to the International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants remain steadfast. The future of sustainability information holds immense potential, and it is essential that we excel in this area. Together, we will demonstrate that our profession is uniquely equipped to meet this challenge.

The role of accountant remains as supporting to the businesses decision of sustainability practices and reporting. In the field

of sustainability practices and reporting, accountants do not have importances to gain any specific conditions, yet accountant's role remains crucial to assure the game in the field of sustainability practices and reporting proceed into the desired direction of all entities involved (businesses and public). Grenfel and Thomson (2012) stated that Bourdieu often uses football as the analogy of a field, where novice players with basic skills gaining positions in the game with external elements interfere. In this field of sustainability, an accountant has multifaceted roles.

The first role is a key supporting player (defender, playmaker, or even goalkeeper), it is the role of management accountant. According to Lawal et al. (2022), the management accounting is a fundamental part of the organizational control system. It is essential for providing managers with the information they need to oversee their activities effectively and manage environmental uncertainties, ultimately helping to achieve the organization's objectives. Accountants play a central role among various departments, allowing them to establish benchmarks, create frameworks, and produce reports, thereby underscoring the organization's dedication to and active involvement

in sustainability efforts (Kasim C. et al., 2024). These findings show that in the analogy of the field by Bourdieu (1974), even though decisions are made by the top level management of businesses, accountants play a pivotal role in assisting the data and options to the businesses in terms of taking the best decision toward sustainability practices and reporting.

The second role is the external function of accountant as assurance party to seal the accountability of the report to align with the practices and also following the standard that has been set by standard setters (eg. GRI, TCFD, SASB, and ISO26000). Reynolds G. (2022) stated that a central role among various departments, allowing them to establish benchmarks, create frameworks, and produce reports, thereby underscoring the organization's dedication to and active involvement in sustainability efforts. This role of accountant as an external party of the businesses can analogically be referred to as the referee, this role will strictly enhance the quality of the sustainability practices and reporting field. As their job is to make a reasonable assurance of the content of sustainability reports by businesses to align with its practices and standards. When an accountant fails to give reasonable assurance in

many conditions, it will consequenced the accountant to bear the brunt of the public as the forum that businesses should be accountable for.

Accountants play a crucial role in developing standards and setting boundaries within the field of accounting. One example is the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB), which recently introduced their first standards, IFRS S1 and IFRS S2, designed to enhance sustainability disclosures in global capital markets. These standards aim to build trust and confidence in corporate reports by providing a unified framework for reporting climate-related risks and opportunities. They are intended to be used alongside financial statements and are based on IFRS principles, with the goal of global application, thus creating a consistent foundation for sustainability reporting worldwide. High-quality data is essential for effective price discovery, capital formation, and market efficiency. These ISSB standards help companies present clear sustainability information to investors and capital providers, reducing fragmentation and enhancing comparability in climate-related financial data. Based on the TCFD framework, these standards provide a global

foundation for transparent reporting, supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy and promoting a more resilient and sustainable global economy (Scaphiro, 2023).

Generation Z accountants have unique capabilities to excel in sustainability, particularly in roles described by Lawal et al. (2022) and Reynolds (2022). As management accountants, Gen Z professionals leverage their technological advantages—an essential asset in modern sustainability approaches. Their skills in using advanced digital tools, such as big data analytics and cloud-based platforms, enable them to collect, analyze, and present crucial data for sustainability efforts. Their ability to utilize this technology provides management with the insights needed to drive sustainability initiatives effectively and manage environmental uncertainties. Their capability in building and refining sustainability frameworks aligns with the growing demand for transparent and robust sustainability reporting (Kasim et al., 2024).

In external roles as assurance providers, Gen Z accountants excel in enforcing accountability, which is the cornerstone of sustainable practices. Reynolds (2022) highlights the importance of accountants in ensuring that sustainability reports comply with established standards

such as GRI, TCFD, SASB, and ISO 26000. Gen Z's strong commitment to ethical standards and transparency, as discussed by Lubbe (2020), makes them well-suited to verify that business sustainability practices are reported accurately and in accordance with these frameworks. Their resilience in maintaining high standards even under pressure allows them to effectively act as gatekeepers, enhancing the credibility of sustainability disclosures and strengthening trust among stakeholders.

Furthermore, as potential contributors to the development of sustainability standards, Gen Z accountants are well-positioned to influence the future of sustainability reporting. The introduction of IFRS S1 and IFRS S2 by the ISSB is a significant step towards unified global sustainability standards (Scaphiro, 2023). Gen Z's technological fluency and adaptability enable them to engage with these new standards, ensuring that sustainability disclosures are not only comprehensive but also comparable across global markets. Their ability to quickly adapt to new frameworks, as well as their dedication to continuous learning, equips them to play a critical role in shaping sustainable practices. This will drive the transition to a low-carbon economy

and support the broader goal of a resilient and sustainable global economy.

The biggest challenge for Gen Z in terms of self-management is their weaknesses, particularly in managing stress and anxiety. Although Gen Z has many strengths, such as quickly adapting to technology and having strong social awareness, they often struggle with the pressures and demands that come from all aspects of life. To overcome weaknesses like being easily anxious and stressed, individualistic, easily pressured, and so on, it is important for Gen Z to develop better management skills. By balancing personal needs with professional responsibilities, they can act with greater integrity and ethics, regardless of the pressures and challenges they face, to achieve both organizational and personal goals.

Misrecognition in the form of GW, SW, and IW

This paper finds the red lines of GW, SW, and IW with Elkington's (1994) triple bottom line. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL), a concept introduced by Elkington in 1997, emphasizes the importance of People, Planet, and Profit and has become a significant framework globally. This model provides a foundational approach for companies aiming to transition towards

sustainability by focusing on three key dimensions of sustainable development: environmental quality, social equity, and economic benefits (Elkington, 1998). This model, often called the Profit - People - Planet model, has a very similar correlation with the impact caused by GW, SW, and IW. Greenwashing as misrecognition to planet framework, social washing as misrecognition to people framework, and impact washing as misrecognition to profit framework.

Greenwashing as stated by OJK in its green taxonomy 2024 is certain practices in the financial sector involving marketing products as more environmentally friendly or climate-aligned than they genuinely are (OECD, 2022). Some financial providers gain an unfair competitive advantage by promoting their products as sustainable or eco-friendly, even though these products do not actually meet established sustainability standards (European Commission, 2022).

Booyens I. et al. (2021) found that SW is introduced to describe the failure to properly address customer misbehavior in hospitality workplaces, driven by the perception that such incivility is normal in the sector. This issue is compounded by under-reporting of abuse by employees and dismissive attitudes from management, despite

outwardly supportive anti-harassment policies and campaigns. As described by AsQuach (2020), social washing refers to policies or statements that create a false impression of social responsibility. The study argues that many hospitality organizations engage in social washing by not providing real protection against customer abuse, similar to how “green” or “white” washing practices create a misleading appearance of environmental or social responsibility.

There are still fewer researchers that do research of IW. Yet there are some comprehensive findings to detail the practices of those misrecognitions. Pendse K. et al. (2022) also mentioned some practices of greenwashing such as selective disclosure, decoupling, attention deflection, deceptive handling, doubtful authorization and label, and inefficient public voluntary programs. These practices happened as the result of misrecognition of the rule in the field of sustainability also can come from the domination of some agents or unsynchronized rules and norms.

Additionally, there are instances where financial service providers make unsupported claims about their sustainability status to secure a competitive edge. There are some examples of greenwashing,

social washing, and impact washing by major companies, citing various sources. Coca-Cola engaged in greenwashing by falsely claiming that its plastic bottles were "100% recycled," despite experts like Rosa Pritchard pointing out that achieving full recycling is technically impossible and potentially harmful to both humans and the planet (Gibbens, 2022). McDonald's, on the other hand, illustrates social washing through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, such as charity work and educational support, which critics argue are more about improving the company's image rather than making a substantial positive impact (Schempf-Stirling et al., 2016). Goldman Sachs also participated in greenwashing by issuing green bonds intended for environmentally beneficial projects, but research in the Journal of Finance by Flammer (2020) reveals that these projects did not fully meet the promised sustainability criteria. Finally, Volkswagen's "Dieselgate" scandal is a prominent case of impact washing, where the company installed software to cheat diesel emissions tests, resulting in severe environmental damage and breaches of governance. The scandal led to significant legal repercussions and a tarnished reputation for prioritizing personal gain over genuine

sustainability efforts (Selin, 2015; Neate, 2015; Schiermeier, 2015; BBC, 2016; Gomez, 2016; Siano et al., 2017).

This research highlights an investigation of the connections between GW, SW, and IW with Elkington's Triple Bottom Line framework, which highlights the importance of People, Planet, and Profit. Each type of washing represents a misalignment with one of the TBL dimensions: environmental responsibility, social contribution, and economic value. This research finds that in the principle level of understanding GW, SW, and IW, are more like the subjective symbolic designations to a misrecognition of sustainability practices and reporting as the objective in the socio-economic interactions. As GRI builds a 5P framework as enhancement of the 3P framework of Elkington, this research believes there will be new "washing", assumably there will be "collaboration washing" and "purpose/vision washing". Stakeholders must be aware of this framing of misrecognition of sustainability practices and reporting, rather than focus on the designation, stakeholders, specially accountants must more consider the peculiarity in the reality of sustainability.

Kurpierz R. and Smith (2020) propose the greenwashing triangle

(based on fraud triangle) that notes some practices such as treating CSR as advertising rather than material disclosures and presumption that fraud only affects financial statements (rationalization), discretionary disclosure, market apathy to assurance, lack of harmonized CSR reporting requirements and murky nature of CSR outcomes (opportunity), increased profit from perceived compliance and harm to the firm from perceived noncompliance due to missed standards (pressure).

Empowerment of Gen Z to Lead the Charge in Genuine Sustainability

Generation Z accountants are in a strong position to deal with the issues of greenwashing (GW), social washing (SW), and impact washing (IW) that undermine the credibility of sustainability efforts. With their advanced skills in technology, especially in using tools like big data analytics and cloud-based platforms, they are well-equipped to identify and reduce these deceptive practices. Kasim C. et al. (2024) emphasize that Gen Z accountants excel at collecting, analyzing, and presenting sustainability data accurately, which is crucial for uncovering practices like selective disclosure that lead to greenwashing. By ensuring that sustainability reports are based on

reliable data, they help align environmental claims with actual practices, supporting the integrity of sustainability within the framework of Elkington's Triple Bottom Line (TBL).

When it comes to social washing, Gen Z accountants bring a strong sense of accountability, which is vital for maintaining honest business practices. Their role as assurance providers is key to making sure that sustainability reports meet global standards like GRI, TCFD, SASB, and ISO26000, as noted by Reynolds G. (2022). Their commitment to ethical standards and transparency, as highlighted by Lubbe (2020), allows them to rigorously check whether companies' social responsibility claims are backed by real actions. This focus on ethics ensures that social impacts are reported truthfully, preventing social washing and building trust among stakeholders.

Gen Z's adaptability and willingness to keep learning also help them combat impact washing, where businesses might exaggerate the benefits of their actions. As sustainability efforts become more complex, there's a growing risk of overstating positive impacts. Gen Z accountants, with their strong grasp of new technologies and standards, are well-prepared to critically assess these claims. Their ability to quickly

adapt to new frameworks, such as those introduced by the ISSB (Scaphiro M., 2023), ensures that impact assessments are accurate and reflect real-world outcomes, preventing exaggerated reports and maintaining the integrity of the economic value in TBL.

Moreover, Gen Z accountants are in a great position to shape the future of sustainability reporting. The new standards like IFRS S1 and IFRS S2 from the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) represent a big step toward unified global sustainability standards (Scaphiro M., 2023). Gen Z's comfort with technology and their proactive approach to engaging with these new standards make them key players in ensuring that sustainability reports are thorough and comparable across different markets. By helping to develop and implement these standards, they contribute to creating more reliable and consistent sustainability reporting practices worldwide.

Finally, Gen Z accountants are ready to face new challenges like "collaboration washing" and "purpose/vision washing," where businesses might misrepresent their collaborative efforts or commitment to purpose-driven initiatives. Their strong ethical grounding and critical thinking skills, combined with their tech-savviness, make them

particularly effective in spotting and countering these deceptive practices. By staying alert to these emerging issues, Gen Z accountants help maintain the trustworthiness of sustainability practices, ensuring that the profession continues to align with the true principles of the sustainable practices and reporting.

Overcoming the Barriers of GenZ Delicacies

Self-management is a vital competency for Generation Z accountants, encompassing self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to continuous learning (Psaila, 2018). While these traits are crucial for managing the modern demands of the accounting profession, Gen Z faces significant hurdles that reveal the need for further guidance in handling self-management challenges. The key issue is that Generation Z often experiences significant stress and anxiety. According to the Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) from the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes), around 2% of individuals aged 15-24, which includes many from Gen Z, report depression (Ma & Fang, 2023). This demographic frequently encounters stress and job dissatisfaction when their career interests are not fulfilled, leading them to quit rather than persist. This highlights the need for

effective self-management skills to cope with job-related pressures and maintain emotional stability.

Thus, Gen Z's individualistic tendencies can sometimes lead to challenges in workplace collaboration. Their inclination to learn independently through digital means and their tendency to act without seeking guidance can disrupt team dynamics (Hamdi et al., 2021). While their independent learning is beneficial, it can create difficulties in aligning with team goals and working effectively within organizations. Support and structured guidance can help Gen Z balance their personal learning styles with effective team collaboration.

Anxiety is a notable concern for Gen Z, intensified by the rapid pace of technological advancement and high expectations for quick success (American Psychological Association, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, showing that many Gen Z individuals struggled with transitioning from education to the workforce (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Addressing these anxiety and stress factors through targeted support and resilience-building strategies is crucial for their successful integration into professional roles. Gen Z possesses valuable skills and attributes, they still need structured guidance to manage their

self-management challenges effectively. By focusing on their stress management, individualistic tendencies, and anxiety, organizations can better support Gen Z accountants, creating a more adaptable and resilient workforce (Becker, 2022; Psaila, 2018). This approach will help them navigate the complexities of their roles and contribute more effectively to their organizations.

Some negative ethics of Gen Z, such as bad attitudes, stress management issues, individualism, etc., can be addressed through various measures. These include creating open discussion spaces to maintain mental health, promoting work-life balance, fostering an inclusive workplace culture, forming cross-functional teams, providing guidance, and creating appropriate collaborative support. By equipping Gen Z with stress management skills, such as maintaining self-awareness, practicing meditation, and managing time effectively, it is hoped that stress and anxiety can be reduced. Prioritizing health and self-care is crucial in managing the various negative ethics of Gen Z. Moreover, while traits like high self-confidence and independence are positive, if taken to extremes, they can have negative impacts in the future. Therefore, Gen Z must be able to

maintain boundaries and prioritize their health, especially mental health

Implication

Implication for Practices

To align accounting practices with modern sustainability challenges, businesses should leverage Generation Z's technological skills. Gen Z accountants are adept with tools such as big data analytics and blockchain, which can significantly enhance financial reporting and sustainability audits (De Villers, 2020; Okros, 2020). Their proficiency enables them to drive innovation and ensure that financial practices remain current with technological advancements, leading to more accurate and efficient reporting.

Businesses must prioritize genuine sustainability over symbolic frameworks, addressing issues of greenwashing, social washing, and impact washing (OJK, 2024; OECD, 2023). Gen Z accountants, with their strong analytical and ethical standards, are well-equipped to verify the authenticity of sustainability claims and prevent misleading practices (Kasim C. et al., 2024). Their critical approach ensures that sustainability reports accurately reflect true environmental, social, and economic impacts, aligning with sustainability practices and reporting.

Creating a supportive work environment that aligns with Gen Z's strengths is essential. This includes offering flexible work arrangements and creating a culture that values technological adaptation and ethical accountability (Schroth, 2019; Chandler, 2024). By adapting to Gen Z's capabilities and preferences, businesses can enhance their sustainability efforts and effectively address modern challenges, ensuring that their practices align with true sustainability principles and contribute positively to the sustainability practices and reporting. (Lubbe, 2020).

Implication for Theory

Bourdieu's theories of habitus, field, and capital offer a broad understanding of the interaction between subjective experiences and objective realities. His framework helps to unravel how personal dispositions (habitus) interact with broader social structures (field) to shape practices and perceptions. By applying Bourdieu's concepts, this research highlights how Generation Z's unique attributes—formed by their social and intellectual capital—fit into the evolving demands of the accounting profession, particularly in sustainability practices and reporting (Grenfell & Maton, 2012). Bourdieu's theory underscores that

habitus does not merely reflect but actively shapes the field within which individuals operate, thus offering a broader perspective on how subjective beliefs and practices interact with objective standards and expectations.

Generation Z, as a new habitus, exemplifies how the modern accounting profession is evolving. Their technological proficiency and adaptability to rapid changes align well with the competencies required in today's field of sustainability and financial reporting. Their strong grasp of digital tools and commitment to ethical standards equip them to address the challenges of greenwashing, social washing, and impact washing (De Villers, 2020; Ma & Fang, 2023). By integrating their social and intellectual capital into the accountant role, Gen Z can effectively contribute to refining sustainability practices and combating misrecognition (Grenfell & Maton, 2012). This alignment not only enhances their role but also ensures that accounting practices remain relevant and robust in the face of contemporary challenges.

Moreover, Bourdieu's concept of misrecognition, which involves the failure to see social norms as products of power and competition, is critical in understanding the current landscape of sustainability reporting. Gen Z's

emerging role can address these issues by ensuring transparency and integrity in sustainability reports (Bourdieu, 1977). Their ability to critically engage with and reform existing practices will challenge established norms and contribute to a more accurate and accountable approach to sustainability. By bridging the gap between subjective perceptions and objective reporting standards, Gen Z can drive meaningful changes in how sustainability is practiced and reported, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness and credibility of accounting in this crucial area (Scaphiro M., 2023).

Implication of Gen Z and Businesses

To harness the full potential of Generation Z in modern accounting, companies should leverage their exceptional technological skills. Gen Z's adeptness with advanced technologies like big data analytics and blockchain provides a significant advantage in enhancing financial reporting and sustainability practices (De Villers, 2020; Okros, 2020). Integrating their capabilities into business operations helps maintain cutting-edge practices and ensures that sustainability reporting is precise and adheres to contemporary standards (Elkington, 1997). By

doing so, organizations can stay at the forefront of technological advancements and improve their overall sustainability performance.

Addressing the specific challenges associated with Gen Z, such as high stress levels, individualistic tendencies, and anxiety, is essential for optimizing their contributions (Ma & Fang, 2023; Hamdi et al., 2021; American Psychological Association, 2019). Companies must develop environments that support mental health and provide flexible work arrangements, while also offering mentorship and guidance. Recognizing the unique needs of Gen Z and creating a supportive atmosphere can help mitigate their stress and increase their job satisfaction and effectiveness, ultimately leading to better performance and engagement.

Older generations within organizations need to acknowledge and embrace the influence of Gen Z, along with the rapid technological changes they bring. Rather than resisting or criticizing their approach, it's beneficial to focus on collaboration and mutual learning (Lubbe, 2020). This approach will facilitate a harmonious integration of traditional and modern practices, driving improvements in sustainability efforts and reporting. By building a cooperative

environment and valuing Gen Z's contributions, companies can enhance their adaptability and maintain robust sustainability practices that are both innovative and credible.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research outlines the opportunities and challenges faced by Generation Z, a generation of digital natives with a high sensitivity to addressing social and environmental issues, as well as unethical practices (GW, SW, IW). Gen Z has proven to be a generation with high social awareness, adeptness, and proficiency in using existing technology. Evidence of this is their frequent use of social media as a tool to spread career aspirations and drive public opinion. Additionally, the competencies of accountants have evolved alongside the workforce, which increasingly includes Gen Z. For example, accountants must be proficient in using modern tools such as big data, blockchain, and cloud software. This aligns with the competencies possessed by Gen Z, including IT skills, analytical abilities, and the ethical and professional use of accounting technology (integrity, honesty, objectivity, rationality, social ethical responsibility, and accountability)

On the other hand, Gen Z's tendencies towards individualism, anxiety, and stress can be obstacles that disrupt workplace continuity. Therefore, every team collaborating with Gen Z must be able to provide structured support and guidance. Furthermore, managing these hindering factors through strategies that build resilience can ensure their successful integration into the professional world, contributing more effectively to the organization.

The role of accountants is inseparable from promoting, guiding, and integrating sustainable practices. Accountants play an effective role in being key supporters of business decisions, setting benchmarks, assisting with data and choices for businesses in making the best decisions, and ensuring report accountability aligns with established practices and standards. In addressing new challenges such as GW, IW, and SW, Gen Z accountants are well-prepared to create goals/visions where they have a strong ethical foundation and critical thinking skills, combined with technological proficiency. Gen Z accountants, as guarantors and supporters, can maintain trust in sustainable practices and ensure that the profession remains aligned with the principles of sustainable practice and reporting.

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