



**A. K. Gani**

## **Internalization of His Struggle for Gen Z in Sprit of Merdeka Belajar**

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**Abstract.** Gen Z has the characteristics of being very technologically advanced which is currently very sophisticated. His proficiency in using technology makes it easier for Gen Z to obtain a lot of information. This of course is also related to spirit of Merdeka Belajar. In the midst of the hectic flow of information obtained by Gen Z, they must have a stronghold in the form of appreciation of the values of fighters in Indonesia, namely A.K Gani. As a fighter who defends the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang, he has warrior values that Gen Z needs to live up to and emulate. The problem with this research is what are the values of A.K Gani's struggle that Gen Z can internalize for spirit of Merdeka Belajar?. The research problems will be described using a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The results show that A.K Gani is a fighter who pays attention to his education. He traveled a considerable distance from West Sumatra to Jakarta. His persistence in getting an education is very worthy of being an example for Gen Z. Not only persistent, his struggle in Palembang contains noble values that need to be internalized by Gen Z in spirit of Merdeka Belajar.

**Keywords:** A.K. Gani · Generation · Z · Independence · Learning

### **1 Introduction**

Freedom to learn is currently a trend in Indonesia. The concept is related to the freedom of a person to meet his learning needs. The idea created by Nadiem Makarim must still internalize the noble values of the Indonesian nation. This is important to realize because the challenge of Merdeka Learning, especially for Gen Z, is to inherit the values of the fighters. These fighting values are a national identity that characterizes Gen Z.

The formation and maintenance of national identity amid the development of information and technology (globalization) is very necessary for the nation's generation. Based on research on national identity in Gen Z in terms of internet use conducted by Jony Eko Yulianto, it is found that: Gen Z who did not have internet addiction were found to have a higher national identity. This is due, among other things, to the influence of the content exposed on the formation of Gen Z's attitude towards its national identity [1]. The results of this study basically cannot be used as a general description of Gen Z

nationalism in Indonesia, but from the results of this study, it seems that efforts need to be made at this time to form and maintain a national identity for Gen Z.

Why Gen Z? this is certainly related to the characteristics of Gen Z which is very synonymous with technology or digital native [2]. Gen Z's consumption power of technology is also high [3]. Through technology, various information can be easily received and enjoyed by Gen Z without the boundaries of space and time. The information can be in the form of lifestyle, culture and others that can obscure their identity as the Indonesian generation. Based on Kui's research that the internet can be an effective medium in shaping the perception and national identity of Gen Z in China [4].

A.K. Gani is one of the local figures who should be followed by the values of his struggle. A.K. Gani really fights for his education. This is in accordance with spirit of Merdeka Belajar. A.K. Gani started his education at Europeesche Lagere School (ELS) or Elementary School (SD) in Bukit Tinggi in 1915–1923. After graduating from ELS, he continued his education at the School tot Opleiding van Indische Artsen (STOVIA) or the Javanese Medical School. In 1927, STOVIA was closed so he continued his study at Algemeene Middelbare School (AMS) and graduated in 1928. Furthermore, A.K. Gani continued his medical education at Gemeeskundige Hoge School (GHS) in Jakarta, and finished in 1940 [5]. During his education in Jakarta he was active in organizations including the Jakarta branch of the Youth Sumatran organization or Jong Sumatranen Bond (1923–1927); member of the board of directors of the Sumatra Youth Center (1927–1929); member of the preparatory committee for the founding of the Indonesian Youth organization (1929); executive board of the central committee of the Indonesian Youth Organization (1930–1931) [6].

We can imagine that at the beginning of the 20th century, access to education was not as easy as it is today. A.K. Gani took a long time to come to Jakarta from West Sumatra to continue her education. Not only that, educational institutions were also limited and had certain requirements to be able to become students at that time. However, A.K. Gani is persistent in fighting for his education. Not only related to distance and time, but also the limitations of technology. Of course, it is difficult to obtain learning resources such as books, but A.K. Gani has successfully completed his education at STOVIA. He was even involved in political organizations.

Gen Z needs to live up to the values contained in A.K. Gani's struggle. The convenience of today's technology does not guarantee that education will be easier, but it is not a reason to give up. Gen Z must take advantage of easy access to education and learning resources as a challenge to complete and realize education for a better and more useful life. Through internalization of the values of A.K. Gani's struggle, Gen Z is able to have an independent spirit of learning, fulfilling their learning needs in accordance with their ideals. It is even more necessary to live it, because today's information and technology makes geographical boundaries blur. However, Gen Z still has a characteristic national identity.

## 2 Method

The method used in this research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Qualitative methods use people as research instruments or known as human instruments [7]. This type

of research process involves important efforts such as asking questions and procedures, collecting specific data, analyzing data inductively from specific to general themes and interpreting their meaning [8]. In qualitative research, data collection techniques are an important step, because the main purpose of research is to obtain data related to the topic of the problem to be studied.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Results

##### 3.1.1 A.K. Gani's Struggle

A.K. Gani's struggle in South Sumatra began during the Japanese occupation. As an activist for the anti-fascist national movement, his name was well known and was the target of arrest by the Japanese. He is considered an influential figure who can move the masses against Japan. His anti-fascist attitude was so dangerous that he was arrested by the Japanese in September 1942 and only released in October 1943 [9].

A.K. Gani had a very big role in the early days of independence in Palembang. Based on historical records regarding his actions at the beginning of independence in Palembang, A.K. Gani was a central figure who was quick in making decisions. Besides being fast, he acts for the common good in this case the people of Palembang City. This is important to point out, because A.K. Gani is not a native of South Sumatra/Palembang, but comes from Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra. However, his ethnic background did not become an obstacle for him to maintain independence, especially security and order in Palembang.

A.K. Gani has great fighting instincts and strategies. This can be seen from the way he reads the situation, especially when there is limited information regarding the news of the proclamation. The proclamation of Indonesian independence which was proclaimed on August 17, 1945 in Jakarta, was not fully accepted by the people in other areas such as Palembang. However, the happy news was also known by the youths who worked at the News Agency and the Domei news agency in Palembang, namely Mailan who heard the news of the proclamation on August 18, 1945 [10]. Apart from Mailan, there is also Nungtjik AR as Chief Editor of the newspaper "Palembang Shinbun" who is in control of Hodohan radio broadcasts for the benefit of the newspaper [10, 11]. The Domei news agency is one of the news agencies that is still given a permit to operate. Since August 15, the Sumatran citizen, isolated from the outside world, can no longer hear news, because "Radio Sumatra" and radio stations in the residency suddenly stopped broadcasting. His employees were laid off. On the other hand, residents are still prohibited from listening to foreign radio broadcasts (allies). Newspapers are also no longer published [12].

On August 19, 1945, Nungtjik AR suggested that Mailan convey the news of the proclamation to dr. A.K. Gani [10]. Mailan then met dr. A.K. Gani to deliver the news of the proclamation. Based on this information, that evening, A.K. Gani held a meeting with the youths. The results of the meeting instructed the youth and the public to prepare for any possible takeover of power from Japan [6]. Next, there was a meeting on 23 August 1945 which was attended by A.K. Gani; drg. Mass; Parmono; Asaari; RM Oetoyo; Nungtjik AR; RZ Fanani; Abdul Rozak; Raden Hanan; Ir. Abraham; RM

Moersado; Tjik Den, and KH Tjikwan, A.K. Gani conveyed the initial composition of the government of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang. The concept of the initial structure of government became the forerunner of the Palembang Residency government. In this arrangement A.K. Gani served as Head of Government of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang [6, 13].

A.K. Gani's intelligence brought him to an important position in regional (Palembang City) and national government. At the beginning of independence he assumed the position of head of government (1945); Commander of the South Sumatra Sub-Commandment (Subkoss) (1946); was appointed by Soekarno to be the Coordinator of the Sumatran TKR (Nov 1946); served as the Young Governor of the South Sumatra region (inaugurated on May 17, 1946). Several important positions at the national level for which he is responsible include Deputy of the Sumatran Ministry of Security and Defense (1946); Minister of Wealth in Syahrir's Cabinet (1946–1947) based on Presidential Decree No. 1946. 3 October 2, 1946 concerning the ratification of the composition of Sutan Syahrir's cabinet; Deputy Prime Minister Amir Syarifuddin and concurrently Minister of Prosperity (1947). Then on January 5, 1947 [14, 15].

A.K. Gani, who served as Minister of Prosperity of the Republic of Indonesia on January 5, 1947, immediately headed to Palembang to meet with political figures and soldiers in Palembang and negotiate with the Dutch. Negotiations regarding peace with the Netherlands, the Republican government in Palembang were attended by several figures, including: M. Isa, Rasyad Nawawi, M. Mursodo, and several other figures. The Dutch side was attended by Colonel Mollinger [16].

The struggle of A.K. Gani in defending the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang (1945–1950):

- 1) Mobilizing the fighters in Palembang in responding to the Japanese government in Palembang (in particular) after the proclamation which was proclaimed on August 17, 1945.
- 2) Filled in designing the structure of the government of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang which was then known as the structure of the Palembang Residency Government.

His struggle to defend the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, especially in Palembang, earned him the title of National Hero (9 November 2017) which was given by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia during the reign of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

### 3.1.2 Gen Z

Some terms refer to Gen Z, namely: iGeneration, net generation or internet generation. This generation lives in an uncertain environment when technological developments are increasingly massive [17]. Their lives are very close to the use of smartphones, internet and social media. In the use of social media, Gen Z is divided into two groups, namely "The Influencers" and "The Followers". Gen Z is very comfortable communicating using social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube rather than face

to face [18]. This is reinforced that Gen Z is proficient in computer information technology; frequently communicate through social media; tend to be tolerant of cultural differences; accustomed to various activities at one time and tend to communicate less verbally (selfish and individualistic) [19].

A survey conducted by Harris Poll shows that Gen Z is a creative generation and they are digital natives [20]. They are a generation whose growth and development coincided with the development of digital technology. This makes this generation inseparable from digital technology. However, another survey conducted by Randstad showed that employees aged 18 to 24 years, which is the age range of Gen Z, mostly prefer to stop working than unhappy [21].

Gen Z's superiority in using technology seems to be less balanced with its sense of nationalism. Gen Z teenagers who do not have internet addiction are found to have a higher national identity. This is due, among other things, to the influence of the content exposed on the attitude formation of Gen Z towards its national identity [22]. However, the research conducted in Surabaya cannot be used as the basis or generalization of nationalism in other regions in Indonesia. Regarding the characteristics of Gen Z who are very proficient in utilizing technology, it means that an approach through technology is needed, for example developing interesting infographic media to foster a sense of concern for the environment [23]. In addition to infographics, it is necessary to develop technology-based learning media according to the characteristics of Gen Z [24].

As a generation that grew up in the midst of technological developments, Gen Z needs to gain a strong understanding of its national identity and multicultural values. This is very important considering that Indonesia is a country that has a variety of cultures. Gen Z requires strengthening of multicultural competence as a whole, both understanding, awareness, and multicultural skills. Gen Z requires strengthening of multicultural competence as a whole, both understanding, awareness, and multicultural skills [25]. In addition, strengthening national identity is necessary to filter out radicalism and intolerance or other influences of globalization that are not in accordance with the values adopted by the Indonesian people.

### **3.1.3 Spirit of Merdeka Belajar**

Merdeka Belajar is an educational concept introduced by the Indonesian Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. The meaning of Merdeka Belajar is the freedom to obtain, deepen, and expand knowledge according to their needs as long as it does not conflict with applicable law in Indonesia. So that in its implementation there are certain terms and conditions or guidelines. The concept spirit of Merdeka Belajar can be said to be in accordance with the concept of education proposed by Freire that independent learning is a teaching process that frees students from all kinds of colonialism, such as the banking system [26]. Liberating education can foster transitive critical awareness which is characterized by the depth of interpreting problems, confidence in discussing, being able to accept and reject [27]. Freire's thought in liberating education is based on humanism, namely freedom from oppression and bondage and all things about human freedom that are disturbed from anything. Oppressive education will give birth to a silent culture [28].

Freedom to learn has the essence of being free in acquiring knowledge and experience by recognizing humans by their nature. This is in line with the opinion of national leaders including according to Sjahrir, Merdeka Belajar plays a role in building political stability and a healthy political system as well as creating human beings with character in accordance with Indonesian culture and national identity [29]. With spirit of Merdeka Belajar, Gen Z can determine for themselves what information they need and look for it online without being limited by space and time.

## **3.2 Discussion**

### **3.2.1 Nationalism**

The development of technology and information is an opportunity as well as a challenge for nationalism, especially Gen Z today. Kenichi Ohmae in his writings "The End of Nation State" states that the nation state no longer exists, nationalism has ended. Likewise, Julia Kristeva's stated "nation without nationalism", namely people who are still formally bound in one country, but deny their nationalist ties to that country [30]. Through internalizing the values of A.K. Gani 's struggle, Gen Z can maintain its national identity. Gen Z can emulate A.K. Gani 's nationalism in his struggle to defend the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang.

If in the 19th century nationalism was marked by taking up arms and diplomacy, then in the 21st Century, Gen Z can cultivate nationalism through achievements in spirit of Merdeka Belajar. Technology and information obtained without the limitations of space and time, can be used by Gen Z to excel. Nationalism is a vision of the future [31]. Various views on the end of nation, Gen Z Indonesia must be able to excel at local and international levels to show that they are Indonesia. Nationalism is the main value that needs to be applied in spirit of Merdeka Belajar by increasing achievements both in Indonesia and internationally. Through internalizing the nationalism of A.K. Gani 's struggle, Gen Z can filter the information received, especially for Gen Z who are addicted to the internet.

### **3.2.2 Empathy**

Empathy is the ability to understand what another person is feeling, see things from the other person's point of view, and also imagine yourself in that person's shoes. Empathy has an important role in building and maintaining relationships between human beings. The nature of empathy is very relevant to the characteristics of the Indonesian nation. The nature of empathy will shape the character of Gen Z who can feel the condition of others so that the sense of wanting to help others becomes greater [32] (Ramadhan et al., 2022). Empathy is a skill Value-based socio-culture can be developed through education [33].

The development of technology and information today, has the impact of making it easier to find out problems in other areas. Information on social problems and natural disasters such as floods, landslides, earthquakes and others is very easy for Gen Z to receive. Through internalization of A.K. Gani 's struggle, Gen Z can be involved in helping social problems and natural disasters. A.K. Gani 's form of empathy includes fighting against forms of colonialism after the proclamation of the independence of the

Republic of Indonesia. A.K. Gani designed a constitutional strategy for the composition of the government of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang.

Real actions taken by Gen Z towards social problems and concerns can be in the form of giving donations in the form of money or energy. Gen Z can form certain communities as a forum for concern for national and international problems. Spirit of Merdeka Belajar and empathy must be the capital of Gen Z because it is the identity of the Indonesian nation that cares for fellow human beings.

### 3.2.3 Creative

Gen Z who have creative characters are able to find new ideas and solve problems with the resulting solutions. In the struggle to defend the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang, A.K. Gani created a political strategy, namely Oil Diplomatie. Through the strategy of oil diplomacy, A.K. Gani succeeded in making oil natural resources in Palembang for the benefit of negotiations with various parties in Palembang including the Netherlands and the Allies. The resulting oil production is used for various purposes including for business expenses other than to supply oil needs in several areas such as Bengkulu, West Sumatra, Lampung and Java Island [16].

Long before that, after receiving news from Mailan regarding the news of the Proclamation of Independence of the Republic of Indonesia, dr. A.K. Gani immediately invited community leaders and ex-Gyugun youth throughout the Palembang Residency to immediately gather in Palembang to discuss the steps to be taken after the announcement of the proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia. The meeting was held at Maghrib until 20.00 WIB at the residence of dr. A.K. Gani (Jl. Kepandean, No.1 Palembang), on August 19, 1945.

The creative strategy created by A.K. Gani can be applied by Gen Z in spirit of Merdeka Belajar. Merdeka Belajar gives Gen Z the breadth to create strategies to answer social or other problems. This is reinforced by a survey conducted by Harris Poll shows that Gen Z is a creative generation and they are digital natives [20].

### 3.2.4 Gotong Royong

*Gotong royong* is a noble value that is owned by the people of Indonesia. The spirit of *gotong royong* is very important to be maintained by Gen Z in the midst of an individualist culture due to technological developments. The struggle to defend the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang was carried out together for the common good. A.K. Gani will not be able to fight alone without the cooperation of other figures such as Abdul Rozak, M. Isa and other youth leaders, especially at the national level. Referring to the teamwork or *gotong royong* carried out by A.K. Gani and other figures, Gen Z must be able to internalize the value of *gotong royong* in the spirit of Independent Learning.

One of the technological challenges is that Gen Z only focuses on technology, such as social media. Such an attitude is not appropriate to build the spirit of Independent Learning because Gen Z requires the ability to communicate, interact and work together to solve problems at the national or international level. The value of *gotong royong* is important in carrying out the spirit of Independent Learning, in addition to aiming to introduce the noble character of Indonesia.

## 4 Conclusion

The spirit of Merdeka Belajar, especially for Gen Z, can be implemented by internalizing the values of AK Gani's struggle. Some of A.K. Gani's values that can be internalized by Gen Z in the spirit of Merdeka Belajar are nationalism, empathy, creativity and mutual cooperation.

In the struggle to defend the independence of the Republic of Indonesia in Palembang, especially in 1942–1945, A.K. Gani spent his time and contributed his thoughts and energy to create a political strategy so that Indonesia could maintain its independence, especially in Palembang. It certainly cannot be separated from A.K. Gani's nationalism towards the nation. His concern for the people of Palembang and for his mutual cooperation with other figures such as Abdul Rozak, M. Isa and others, the struggle to maintain independence in Palembang can be realized. Among them with the formation of a government in Palembang and appointing A.K. Gani as the highest leader.

The values of A.K. Gani's struggle are very appropriate to be internalized by Gen Z who have the characteristics of being proficient in technology and the flow of information is getting faster. By internalizing these values, Gen Z can instill a national identity and the spirit of Independent Learning to realize the ideals of Indonesian love.

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