

A META-ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION AMONG GENERATION Z EMPLOYEES

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Abstract: *This study aims to assess the primary factors impacting employee retention among Generation Z. The research employs a meta-analytical approach to collect and analyze data from multiple sources, including peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and credible publications. It unveils that while various factors affect employee retention among generation Z, career growth and development, mentorship, autonomy, and innovation and technology are the most influential determinants. The recommendations entail that organizations should align their strategies with the values and preferences of Generation Z to improve employee retention. This study is the first of its kind to provide a comprehensive meta-analysis of employee retention among Generation Z.*

Keywords: *Generation Z, Employee retention, Job satisfaction, Employee engagement, Employee motivation*

INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background

Employee retention is a buzzword in human resources and management that is known to highly contribute to organizational performance. A number of external organizational factors affect an employer's ability to retain its employees, with one of them being generational forces. The majority of conducted studies addresses the role of generational forces in employee retention, explicitly focusing on Generation Z, individuals born between the years 1995 to 2010 (Scheuerlein, 2019, 11). Individuals from this generation are often referred to as the digital natives, primarily known for being tech-savvy, socially conscious, globally aware, and highly developed (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, 807; Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022, 2). Notably, the current workforce is experiencing an influx of Generation Z workers. Consequently, organizations are more interested in unveiling the knowledge how to retain Generation Z employees, who have different values, higher expectations, and priorities in the workplace compared to the previous generations (Chillakuri, 2020, 1277). Therefore, the assessment of the relevant factors will allow employers to retain Generation Z employees successfully.

Problem and Aim

Many internal organizational factors influence employee retention, including a positive corporate culture, compensation, work-life balance, growth and development opportunities, and job satisfaction. However, previous research has revealed that the most critical driver of employee retention is comprehending and accommodating employees' needs, values, and preferences (Paskoet al., 2020, 774; Singh, 2019, 421). Therefore, employers are often advised to increase employee motivation, engagement, and satisfaction to improve employee retention. Nonetheless, unlike the previous generations, members of Generation Z have short-term desires in their workplaces, hindering organizations from retaining them. This aspect presents a challenge to modern-day employers since they must adapt to ever-changing short-term desires of the given segment of employees to successfully retain them (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017, 813). Therefore, organizations must balance the external generation Z force and internal organizational factors to enhance employee retention among this group.

Research Gap

A significant portion of past research has been conducted to evaluate the values and preferences of Generation Z employees, which significantly affect their job motivation, engagement, and satisfaction. However, a meta-analytical study that assesses the above aspects has not been performed. Moreover, no study has comprehensively provided insight into the possible retention strategies for generation Z employees. Hence, the limited information on the strategies to address the issue of employee retention in this generation allows tailoring relevant methods to further implement effectively in the workplace. The subsequent meta-analytical approach will help address the above research gap.

Research Aim, Questions, and Hypothesis

In line with the problem statement and the research gap, this study aims to determine the factors that impact workers' retention among Generation Z. Consequently, the primary research question for this study is as follows: What factors significantly affect the retention of Generation Z employees in the workplace?

The central hypothesis for this study is that implementing new and innovative retention strategies tailored to the needs and preferences of Generation Z employees can result in higher employee satisfaction, engagement, and job motivation, catalyzing higher employee retention. Therefore, to support this hypothesis, the study aims to address the following sub-questions to answer the primary research question:

1. What key factors contribute to Generation Z employees' job motivation, engagement, and satisfaction?
2. What should be done to improve the retention of Generation Z in the workplace?

The further meta-analysis employed to collect and analyze data, the review of findings, and discussion of the results and their implications will contribute to establishing study limitations and recommendations for future research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a quantitative approach, precisely the meta-analytical approach, aiming to collect and analyze data from multiple research sources. The first step of the research process entailed a literature search of past studies, including peer-reviewed articles, relevant book chapters, and other credible publications. The literature search was conducted in three academic databases: Google Scholar, ProQuest, and Emerald Insight. The main keywords that were used to search the relevant studies and articles relating to employee retention among generation Z workers were “employee retention”, “job satisfaction”, “motivation”, “engagement”, and “Generation Z”. Based on the keywords, the corresponding search phrases that were engaged include “Generation Z employee retention”, “Generation Z and motivation”, “Generation Z and engagement” and “Generation Z and job satisfactio”. Notably, the above search phrases generated many articles which were too numerous to analyze. Therefore, an exclusion and inclusion criteria were applied to reduce the number of articles to a manageable amount.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria eliminated low-quality, irrelevant, or outdated studies. In line with the search outlined above, only studies investigating employee retention or work preferences for generation Z workers were included. This study involved solely peer-reviewed publications utilizing rigorous research techniques, such as literature reviews, empirical research, surveys, experiments, or case studies, to increase the credibility of findings. Furthermore, the selected studies had to be published within the last ten years to ensure the information under consideration was current. This literature search excluded studies that did not fit one or more of the above inclusion criteria. Only 15 articles (see Table 1) satisfied the inclusion and exclusion criteria. These studies were assigned index values and subjected to a meta-analytical review using Microsoft Excel software, where statistical formulas were employed to identify the patterns and trends in the results. A summary of the findings of the meta-analysis is presented in the next section of this article.

Table 1. Articles with Exclusion and Exclusion Criteria and Their Assigned Index Values

Study Citation	Index	Study Citation	Index
(Racolta-Paina & Irimi 2021)	1	(Singh & Dangmei 2016)	9
(Acheampong 2021)	2	(Scheuerlein 2019)	10
(Rani et al. 2022)	3	(Gaidhani et al. 2019)	11
(Lee et al. 2022)	4	(Kirchmayer & Fratricova 2020)	12
(Cromer 2022)	5	(McGaha 2018)	13
(Schroth 2019)	6	(Lee et al. 2021)	14
(Jayathilake et al. 2021)	7	(McGraw & Stewart 2020)	15
(Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka 2017)	8		

RESULTS

The examination has unveiled that various organizational factors affect the job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement of generation Z in the workplace, ultimately resulting in employee retention. These factors include mentorship, opportunities for career advancement, autonomy, innovation and technology, value-aligned leadership style, corporate social responsibility, teamwork, generous pay, workplace inclusivity, workplace diversity, workplace equity, friendly work environment, good healthcare benefits, good organizational performance, flexibility, and meaningful work/job nature. The determined factors were listed in the articles that delved into each of them, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Research Results

Organization Factor	Articles (Represented by their Indexes)	Total Number of Articles (f)	Relative Statistical Frequency of the Articles in Percentage (f/n) *100 %
Opportunity for rapid career advancement	1, 9, 4, 14, 11, 9, 12, 2, 8, 7	10	66.66666667
Mentorship	2, 3, 6, 10, 9, 7, 11, 12	8	53.33333333
Autonomy	4, 8, 11, 14, 10, 9	6	40
Innovation and technology	8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 5	6	40
Value-aligned leadership style	4, 11, 13, 15, 14	5	33.33333333
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	1, 4, 9, 14	4	26.66666667
Stable work environment	1, 2, 12, 3	4	26.66666667
Teamwork	1, 2, 8, 14	4	26.66666667
Generous pay	1, 2, 12	3	20
Workplace inclusivity	6, 5, 11	3	20
Workplace diversity	1, 2, 6	3	20
Workplace equity	6, 5	2	13.33333333
Friendly work environment	8, 9	2	13.33333333
Good healthcare benefits	1, 3	2	13.33333333
Good organizational performance	7, 10	2	13.33333333
Flexibility	11,	1	6.66666667
Meaningful work/ Job Nature	12,	1	6.66666667

Based on the meta-analytical review, the most impactful factor on employee retention among Generation Z is the opportunity for rapid career development, which was highlighted in 66.67 % of the analyzed articles. The second most significant factor is mentorship, which was discussed in 53.33% of the sources. The third most important determinants are autonomy along with innovation and technology, each representing 40% of the articles. The value-aligned leadership style was discussed in 5 articles, representing 33.33% of the total number of studies. Further determinants, corporate social responsibility, stable work environment, and teamwork had each been mentioned in 4 articles, accounting for 26.27% of the total number of articles each. The remaining factors were listed in descending order of their relative statistical frequency, with generous pay, workplace inclusivity, and workplace diversity sharing a statistical significance of 20%, workplace equity, friendly work environment, and good organizational performance sharing a statistical frequency of 13.33 percent, and finally, flexibility and meaningful work sharing a statistical frequency of 6.67%. The next section of this article offers a comprehensive examination of these findings.

DISCUSSION

The results show that each organizational factor has a varying level of significance regarding employee retention among Generation Z. This information allows responding to the first sub-research question revealing factors contributing to job motivation, engagement, and satisfaction among Generation Z employees. Generation Z was established to highly value career growth and development opportunities. This finding means they prefer workplaces offering clear advancement pathways and providing the resources and support to help them attain their career goals. However, this group strongly appreciates mentorship, autonomy, innovation and technology, and value-aligned leadership. They also consider corporate social responsibility, a stable work environment, and teamwork. The above elements, ordered from the most to the least preferred factors, form the list of the key elements contributing to job motivation, engagement, and satisfaction among Generation Z employees.

Previous studies have shed light on various reasons that explain why career growth and development hold a high priority among members of Generation Z. For instance, Agarwal and Vaghela (2018, 18) argue that with the availability of information and resources on the internet, Gen Z has become more accustomed to on-demand and accessible learning. As a result, they tend to look for similar experiences in the workplace, where they can continually develop their skills and knowledge conveniently and effectively. Additionally, the regularly exposure to technology from a younger age has resulted in an advanced technological literacy level among the analyzed group (Racolța-Paina & Irini, 2021, 78). Consequently, they believe in the potential to leverage this literacy to achieve higher milestones in their careers. Thus, a workplace lacking growth opportunities can result in a feeling of unrealized potential among Generation Z employees.

The Generation Z's workplace preferences, in terms of opportunity for career growth, align primarily with their values. The overview of past literature also indicates that their other key preferences go hand in hand with their experiences and values. For example, Agarwal and Vaghela (2018, 5) mention that the Generation Z's discretion on mentoring may be attributed to not believing their acquired education has equipped them well to handle real-life problems.

Importantly, members of Generation Z do not usually exhibit a strong interest in maintaining long-term or lifelong employment (Kirchmayer & Fratricova, 2020, 6027). This tendency may be the reason they place less significance on a stable work environment, good organizational performance, and good healthcare benefits as factors in employee retention. Therefore, the results of this study prove the influence of values held by Generation Z on their preferences and priorities in the workplace.

The above findings allow identifying implications for businesses that are increasingly employing Generation Z members. By comprehending the priorities and motivations of Generation Z employees, these businesses can effectively design programs and initiatives that enhance their overall job satisfaction, promoting their retention. In light of the above analysis, several recommendations for introducing effective retention strategies for Generation Z in the workplace can be made. These suggestions will align with the second sub-research question seeking the strategies to improve retention practices in the workplace. First, businesses should concentrate on providing Generation Z employees with apparent career growth and development possibilities along with the tools and assistance needed to help them reach professional objectives. Offering mentorship programs, establishing a climate that prioritizes innovation and technology, and encouraging value-aligned leadership are some of the highly preferred organizational facets. Second, businesses can promote teamwork to provide Generation Z's a dependable work atmosphere. Finally, they may offer opportunities for on-demand learning, which Generation Z employees highly prefer. Indeed, these strategies, among others, can contribute to job motivation, engagement, and satisfaction among Generation Z employees, enhancing their retention.

CONCLUSION

The study findings offer valuable information to businesses attempting to retain Generation Z workers. This research posits that employee retention is a significant measure of an organizational ability to keep its employees motivated, engaged, and satisfied to continue working for the firm. Therefore, organizations should take action to strengthen their retention strategies and create a more inspiring and engaging work environment by having a better grasp of the values and objectives of this generation. As a result, they will likely experience high employee retention, which can help save on organizational costs in recruiting and training new employees. Employers will also maintain a stable and prosperous workforce, resulting in increased productivity, higher consumer satisfaction, and a more substantial competitive advantage. Consequentially, the organizational efficiency and success will be generated, which is the goal of many organizations.

Although this research achieved its primary aim, it has some limitations that cannot be overlooked. For instance, the inclusion of studies with different results, sample sizes, and methodologies can potentially affect its validity. Additionally, the sample size selected in this study was limited to 15 articles, which means that the articles may not accurately represent the entire population under discussion, resulting in limited research credibility. Finally, the analysis lacked control over confounding variables like any demographic differences in Generation Z preferences that may have been highlighted in the studies. Therefore, future researchers should consider addressing the limitations of this study. For instance, the assessment of the impact and strength of

confounding variables like educational levels, age, race, gender, and socioeconomic structure, on Generation Z's preference can be conducted. This aspect can result in improved generalizability of the research findings and a better comprehension of the complex relationships between the studied variables. In turn, this will lead to more generalizable recommendations for improving employee retention. Overall, by addressing the study limitations, future researchers can improve the validity and reliability of their results.

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МЕТААНАЛИЗ НА ЗАДЪРЖАНЕТО НА СЛУЖИТЕЛИТЕ СРЕД ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛИТЕ НА ПОКОЛЕНИЕ Z

Резюме: Целта на това проучване е да се оценят основните фактори, които оказват влияние върху задържането на служителите сред поколението Z. В проучването е използван метааналитичен подход за събиране и анализиране на данни от множество изследователски източници, включително рецензирани статии, глави от книги и достоверни публикации. То разкри, че макар различни фактори да оказват влияние върху задържането на служителите сред поколението Z, кариерното израстване и развитие, менторството, автономността, както и иновациите и технологиите са определящите фактори с най-голямо влияние. В препоръките се посочва, че организациите трябва да

съобразят стратегиите си с ценностите и предпочитанията на поколението Z, за да подобрят задържането на служителите. Това проучване е първото по рода си, което предоставя цялостен анализ на задържането на служителите сред представителите на поколението Z.

Ключови думи: *поколение Z, задържане на служителите, удовлетвореност на служителите, ангажираност на служителите, мотивация на служителите*

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