

How do the Gen Z engage at Work? A Research Review and Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Gen Z or the digital natives (born between 1997 and 2013) is the latest generation to enter the workforce. They are a unique generational group oriented towards technology and a relatively high degree of achievement orientation when compared to the other generations. Indian businesses expect to hire 30 per cent of the world's Gen Z workforce by 2030. Thus, a central concern for organizations regards the work engagement of Gen Z for greater retention and organizational prosperity. Exclusive focus on this generation is critical to bringing about the much-needed generational transition and excelling at integrating them with the retiring workforce. The current study is a review paper on the individual and organizational determinants of work engagement of Gen Z. The study also presents a conceptual framework and future research implications.

Keywords: Generation Z; Work Engagement; Loyalty, Retention, Organizational factors; Individual Factors

1. Introduction

Generation Z (Gen Z), or iGen, Generation 2020 digital natives and Gamers, is rapidly changing the workplace. One of the common themes among these nicknames is the generation's deep entwinement with technology at an early age, distinguishing them from their predecessors (Pandita & Kumar, 2022). Gen Z is different from other generations in that they value flexibility, innovation, inclusivity and meaningful work roles, and therefore their expectations from employers are distinct and more dynamic. Companies that fail to achieve these expectations risk losing their top Gen Z talent (Loring & Wang, 2022). Being digital natives, Gen Z expects companies to utilize technology in efficiency, collaboration, and engagement.

1.1 Work Engagement and the Gen Z Workforce

Work engagement as passion, commitment and involvement in work by an employee is a predictor of organizational success. Engaged employees are more productive, creative and committed. Traditional models of engagement may not accurately capture the expectations of Gen Z employees whose work behaviors and motivations differ significantly from previous generations (Arora et al., 2020). In contrast to Millennials, who tend to prioritize job security, Gen Z workers are more inclined to pursue opportunities that offer instant growth, ongoing feedback and work life balance.

Gen Z's need for office flexibility, digital literacy and corporate social responsibility calls for a shift in organizational engagement strategies. Studies have established that Gen Z values career clarity, direction and meaningful projects toward a higher public good. Companies that foster a culture of diversity, innovation and employee well-being are more likely to attract and retain this future talent (Aggarwal et al., 2022).

1.2 Research Problem and Gaps in the Literature

In spite of Gen Z's growing numbers in the labor market, studies on their work engagement are still anecdotal and practice-focused (Loring & Wang, 2022). Most studies today are centered on Gen Z as consumers or students, with a big gap in knowledge regarding their work engagement. Though some of the studies have scrutinized factors like digital integration, work flexibility, and leadership, such findings are scattered and lack a strong theoretical framework (Ayoobzadeh et al., 2024). Such an unorganized study hinders the formulation of effective engagement strategies considering the unique preferences of Gen Z by organizations.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In order to fill these research gaps, this research seeks to:

1. Synthesize existing research on Gen Z work engagement: The study will synthesize and summarize findings from existing literature to identify key factors influencing Gen Z engagement, such as workplace culture, leadership styles, and career development (Anisykurli et al., 2024).
2. Develop a conceptual model of Gen Z work engagement: Based on the integration of literature, this study will propose a model that captures the interplay between individual expectations and organizational practices in affecting engagement outcomes.
3. Provide a future research agenda: Because of the largely anecdotal nature of existing research, this study will give guidelines for future research to synthesize a more robust body of knowledge concerning how to recruit and retain Gen Z workers (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study matters theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to growing work engagement literature on generations by offering a systematic examination of Gen Z workforce patterns. It enlightens us on how Gen Z's digital literacy, need for flexibility and expectation for inclusive workplaces affect engagement levels. Practically, it offers firms real-life strategies to craft engagement programs that resonate with Gen Z employees, thereby boosting retention, productivity and overall job satisfaction (Achmad et al., 2023).

1.5 Structure of the Paper

The subsequent sections of this paper will review the literature on work engagement across generations, present a conceptual model and address implications for researchers and practitioners. Drawing from this analysis, the study aims to offer a thorough understanding of how organizations can effectively engage employees from Generation Z and adapt to the evolving workforce landscape (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). By bridging the research-applied gap, this study intends to offer an organizational manual on how to build a highly motivated and engaged Gen Z workforce.

2. Methodology

This research review follows Torraco's (2005) guidelines for conducting integrative reviews to systematically synthesize the existing body of knowledge relevant to the study. An integrative review is particularly suitable for this research as it allows for the comprehensive synthesis of diverse studies, theories and perspectives, helping to develop a conceptual framework that addresses key gaps in the literature. By using this method, the study aims to provide a structured analysis of the literature on Generation Z work engagement and offer insights into its future research directions.

The study primarily relies on secondary data, which was sourced from bibliometric databases such as Scopus and the Web of Science (WOS). These databases were chosen due to their extensive coverage of high impact academic journals and peer reviewed studies across multiple disciplines, ensuring a robust and credible data foundation. Apart from these databases, additional scholarly sources were collected from online repositories such as JSTOR, Emerald and EBSCO. These repositories contain a wealth of empirical and theoretical studies, making them valuable for identifying relevant research contributions on Generation Z workplace engagement (Busold & Husten, 2020).

To ensure the comprehensiveness of the review, supplementary literature was gathered from grey literature sources, including Google Scholar. Grey literature, which consists of reports, working papers, dissertations and industry white papers was considered important for capturing emerging trends and practitioner insights that may not yet be published in traditional academic sources. Including grey literature broadens the scope of the review and allows for a more nuanced understanding of how engagement strategies for Generation Z are being discussed beyond academic circles (Achmad et al., 2023).

The data collection process involved systematic searches using a combination of keywords such as 'Generation Z work engagement,' 'employee retention,' 'flexible work environments,' 'digital natives in the workforce,' and 'Gen Z workplace expectations.' Boolean search operators were applied to refine search results and filter studies that specifically addressed the research objectives (Dimitrov, 2022). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure that only high quality, relevant and peer reviewed studies were considered for synthesis. The inclusion criteria encompassed studies published in the last two decades, with a particular focus on research published post 2010 to capture the most recent developments in Gen Z work engagement.

After collecting the relevant literature, Torraco's (2005) integrative review framework was applied to synthesize the data into meaningful insights. This process involved identifying common themes, theoretical perspectives and empirical findings that contribute to the understanding of Gen Z work engagement. The literature was categorized based on key themes such as workplace flexibility, digital integration, career expectations, leadership styles and job satisfaction. A thematic analysis approach was employed to highlight patterns and relationships across different studies, enabling the construction of a conceptual framework that integrates existing research findings.

The final stage of the review process involved proposing a conceptual framework based on the synthesized literature. This framework serves as a foundation for future research by mapping the key drivers of Gen Z work engagement and identifying gaps that require further exploration (Fleeton, 2024). By systematically integrating existing research and practitioner insights, this

study provides a structured approach to understanding how organizations can effectively engage and retain Generation Z employees. This study adopts a rigorous and structured methodological approach to reviewing and synthesizing the literature on Gen Z work engagement. By leveraging Torraco's (2005) integrative review framework and incorporating diverse sources from bibliometric databases, online repositories and grey literature, the study ensures a holistic understanding of the topic. The synthesized findings contribute to the development of a conceptual model that organizations can use to align their engagement strategies with the expectations of Generation Z employees.

3. Theoretical Foundations

In order to understand employee engagement, one requires a cohesive theoretical framework that captures the interplay between workplace motivation, job demands, and organizational support. Several well-established theories can provide explanations for these processes, including the Job Demands Resources (JDR) Model, Self-determination Theory (SDT), and Social Exchange Theory (SET). These theories describe how employees react to workplace challenges and leverage available resources to enhance their job engagement and overall satisfaction. In addition, understanding differences across generations of what is required in the workplace, that is, Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X and Boomers, is crucial in developing effective strategies to enhance engagement in evolving workplaces (Ayoobzadeh et al., 2024).

3.1 Job Demands Resources (JDR) Model

The JDR Model postulates that work engagement is impacted by the interaction between job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to physical, psychological and emotional stressors such as workload, time pressure and emotionally demanding work. When these demands are excessive and not cushioned by adequate support, they lead to burnout and disengagement (Chala et al., 2022). On the other hand, job resources such as supportive leadership, training and developmental opportunities, mentorship and autonomy, are protective factors that not only buffer the negative effect of job demands but also promote motivation and resilience at work.

3.1.1 How Job Resources Enhance Engagement

Organizations that possess robust job resources create the environment that boosts employee commitment and motivation. Availability of formal mentorship and professional development opportunities boosts employee confidence through building career development capabilities. Skill development support employees exhibit higher levels of engagement and productivity. Besides, autonomy in decision-making transfers power to employees, allowing them to take ownership of work and contribute meaningfully towards organizational goals.

Leadership plays an important role in maximizing work resources (Celestin & Vanitha, 2020). Supervisors who promote open communication, value employee contribution and facilitate career growth establish an environment of trust and respect. Employee recognition schemes that compensate employee achievements promote a sense of worth and belonging, further facilitating engagement. Career growth opportunities also provide employees with a sense of stability and direction, increasing their organizational commitment (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

3.1.2 How Job Demands Hinder Engagement

While job resources are engagement facilitators, high job demands have the opposite effect. Employees with unrealistically high workloads, conflicting priorities and ongoing stress without adequate support are at greater risk of burnout and disengagement. Role confusion, unrealistic

performance expectations and insufficient recovery time increase work stress, leading to reduced motivation and retention.

These problems have to be solved beforehand by keeping balance in the workload, specifying the job roles and offering psychological support programs (Busold & Husten, 2020). Building up a culture of open discussion about workload problems and mental health can help employees manage stress better. Flexible work schedules, such as home working and flexible work hours, can also mitigate the negative consequences of high job demands, enabling workers to have work life balance.

3.2 Self-determination Theory (SDT)

SDT centers on intrinsic motivation to employee engagement and asserts three psychological needs as central to its theory: autonomy, competence and relatedness. When these needs are fulfilled, employees have greater motivation, commitment and workplace satisfaction.

3.2.1 Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Engagement

Employees with freedom to perform tasks feel more engaged, as they can freely input accordingly. Employees who are held responsible and who serve as starters give a higher level of responsibility and ownership. Ability, by development of capabilities through skill construction and continuous education, gives greater faith in their workability by the workers, thereby providing an engine to improve on their job description (Fleeton, 2024).

A sense of relatedness, or good rapport with leaders and colleagues, also enhances engagement. Organizations that value teamwork, group activities and effective communication give the employee a setting in which he feels important and appreciated. Once the employees perceive these internal drives, they become committed to the organization and also engage to succeed with it (DeMaria, 2022).

3.2.2 Why Gen Z Values Purpose Driven Work Environments

Gen Z's work expectations reflect a strong desire for meaningful work environments. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z employees prefer organizations that align with their personal values, emphasizing sustainability, diversity, and corporate social responsibility. They wish to perform purposeful work that benefits society, so purpose- and ethics-based engagement initiatives are essential. Flexibility also propels Gen Z engagement (Kgarimetsa & Naidoo, 2024). They support hybrid work designs, remote work and work-life balance programs that allow them to seamlessly integrate their work and life. Organizations investing in mental health resources, continuous skill development and ethical leadership are more likely to engage and retain Gen Z employees.

3.3 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET defines employee engagement as a two-way relationship between employers and employees. Employees are more likely to demonstrate commitment, effort and loyalty when they believe they are being treated fairly, supported and invested in their welfare.

3.3.1 The Role of Reciprocal Employer Employee Relationships

Organizations that prioritize workers' well-being foster a give-and-take culture, leading to higher engagement, which is greater than in those organizations that don't. Proper communication, equal remuneration and clearly defined career progression routes enhance worker confidence

and satisfaction. Careful listening by managers to workers' concerns and policy-making in favor of work life balance establish a culture in which workers feel valued and encouraged (Mullen, 2021).

Organizational interventions such as mentorship programs, wellness support systems and employee value programs strengthen the employer employee relationship. Employees reciprocate by demonstrating higher levels of commitment, productivity, and teamwork when they perceive their organization as being supportive (Nieżurawska-Zajac et al., 2023).

4. Impact of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and Leadership Styles on Engagement

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) occurs when employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and is concerned about their well-being. High POS is linked with high job satisfaction, motivation, and retention.

POS is strongly influenced by leadership styles, and transformational and resonant leadership are most effective in generating engagement. Transformational leaders inspire employees through a clear and compelling vision and stimulating innovation. They call employees to become professional and provide the care required to achieve their goals. Resonant leaders, through their attention to emotional intelligence and interpersonal connections, create a workplace where employees are heard and valued (Reddy; Tarigan et al., 2022). Organisations can create an engaged and driven workforce by adopting these leadership styles.

4.1 Comparison with Earlier Generations (Millennials, Gen X, Boomers)

Though both Gen Z and Millennials like digital workplaces, Gen Z's focus is more extreme on remote collaboration and seamless technology adoption. Having grown up in a digital native world, they expect organizations to implement agile workflows, real-time collaboration tools, and cloud-based software for collaboration. Their extreme focus on work-life balance also sets them apart, as they want flexible work schedules that can accommodate their professional needs along with personal priorities. Compared to Gen X and Boomers, Gen Z is less committed to traditional hierarchical career structures (Ayoobzadeh et al., 2024). They prioritize career mobility, continuous skills development and varied work experiences over long-term job tenure. As opposed to Boomers, who tended to stay with one employer for decades, Gen Z workers actively pursue varied jobs that enable flexibility and personal development (Wennqvist, 2022). To engage Gen Z, organizations need to embrace dynamic career development initiatives, rotational assignments and individualized learning experiences. Allowing employees the flexibility to try various jobs within an organization guarantees that they will stay engaged and motivated, to the advantage of both the individual and organization.

5. Individual Factors Affecting Work Engagement

Work engagement is shaped by several individual factors that influence motivation, commitment and productivity. One of the key determinants is belongingness and workplace community. Employees who feel connected to their peers and the organizational culture are more likely to be engaged. Generation Z prioritizes inclusive and diverse workplaces where mutual respect and collaboration are encouraged. These environments create a sense of psychological safety and professional growth. Strong peer networks, mentorship programs and team bonding activities enhance engagement by providing social support and opportunities for learning (Waworuntu et al., 2022). Organizations that facilitate structured mentorship and networking enable employees

to integrate more effectively into the workplace. This strengthens their commitment and reduces disengagement.

Another crucial factor is self-efficacy and career confidence. Employees with strong confidence in their abilities are more likely to take initiative and seek new learning opportunities. They also show greater resilience in the face of challenges. Generation Z has entered the workforce during a time of rapid technological and economic change. This has created uncertainty about career trajectories and job stability. Confidence building interventions such as skill development programs and leadership training are essential. Organizations that provide structured learning pathways and clear career progression frameworks contribute to a sense of competence and security. This reinforcement strengthens engagement and fosters long-term commitment (Suryakumar et al., 2024).

Digital skills and technological adaptation also play a vital role in shaping engagement. Generation Z, as digital natives, expects seamless technology integration in their work environments. High digital literacy influences how employees interact with workplace tools, collaborate with teams and complete tasks. Organizations that incorporate advanced digital tools, AI driven learning platforms and gamified training modules create more interactive and productive work experiences (Taibah & Ho, 2023). Realtime communication tools and virtual collaboration platforms enhance engagement by enabling flexibility and immediate feedback. Workplaces that fail to modernize their technological infrastructure may struggle to engage younger employees who expect efficiency and innovation in their workflow.

The presence of purpose driven work is another critical factor influencing engagement. Unlike previous generations who prioritized financial stability, Generation Z seeks meaningful work that aligns with their personal values. Employees are more engaged when they perceive their work as having a positive impact on society. Sustainability, diversity and corporate social responsibility are key areas that attract commitment from younger workers (Sono et al., 2024). Organizations that integrate social impact initiatives and ethical business practices into their operations foster deeper engagement. Employees who find alignment between personal and professional values demonstrate higher job satisfaction and emotional investment. These individual factors interact to create environments where employees feel valued, capable and motivated. By addressing these factors, organizations can sustain high levels of engagement and empower employees to contribute meaningfully to their roles.

6. Organizational Factors Influencing Work Engagement

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is the driving force towards gaining employee engagement. It provides the employees with feelings of being appreciated and supported, leading to greater commitment and less turnover. Firms providing flexible working schedules, mental health support and opportunities for development boost job satisfaction and commitment. Workers receiving high POS experience enthusiasm and resiliency, driving organizational effectiveness. Further, POS provides a feeling of job security, in which employees can focus on their job without the possibility of job loss (Vanpetch & Chearnkaitpradab, 2024). Psychological safety arising from high POS motivates employees to speak freely and contribute to decision-making activities, further boosting engagement. Companies who knowingly recognize and reward their employees strengthen trust and commitment culture, ultimately leading to a higher level of engaged employees.

Empathic Leadership (EL) & Mentorship are critical in developing a caring work culture. Leaders who speak openly, give constructive criticism and demonstrate emotional intelligence build trust and motivation in employees. Contemporary organizations are moving towards coaching leadership instead of hierarchical systems, which promotes employee development and workplace inclusivity. Successful mentorship programs enhance employee loyalty and organizational performance (Wennqvist, 2022). Mentorship leaders, as opposed to authoritative leaders, build a deeper relationship with the team members and make them feel a sense of belonging. The organization where the leaders embrace mentorship not only increases the engagement level of employees but also brings about a learning culture where the employees are always developing new skills and honing their abilities. EL has also been linked to effective conflict resolution, which reduces the tensions at workplaces and enhances teamwork.

EWorkLife Balance (EWOL) has become more pertinent with the growing trends of hybrid and remote work models. No meeting days and digital detox rewards work well to contain burnout and boost productivity. Studies have shown that the companies that implement flexible work models see decreased absenteeism and improved retention (Sidorcuka & Chesnovicka, 2017). Workers who can manage their work life do better and are more engaged. Companies that encourage well-planned breaks, set up digital communication standards, and inculcate personal time appreciation eliminate work-life clashes, rendering workers happier and effective. With shifting work dynamics, organizations must align their policies in a way to deal with sustainable engagement and efficacy.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) strategies have a strong impact on employee engagement, especially among Gen Z employees who support gender, race and LGBTQ+ workplace policies. Organizations that infuse DEI strategies through equal hiring, representation of leadership and inclusive policies facilitate a sense of belonging, thus leading to improved employee engagement and innovation. An ethnically diverse workforce enhances innovation and collaboration, which enhances the overall organizational performance (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020). Apart from that, unionized employees that are represented and involved in making decisions are more committed to their organization. Implementing inclusive benefits, equal opportunities for growth and a zero-tolerance approach for discrimination boosts the level of engagement because employees are secure in the development of their careers.

The Future of Work Engagement lies in integrating supportive organizational structures, leadership, work life balance and inclusivity. Companies that prioritize these elements not only retain top talent but also create an innovative and productive work environment. Organizations that adapt to these evolving employee expectations will secure a competitive edge in workforce engagement and sustainability. Future oriented workplaces focus on employee wellbeing, flexibility and a culture of continuous learning (Choudhary & Pandita, 2024). As technology advances, engagement strategies must evolve, incorporating digital wellbeing measures and AI driven personalized learning programs. Companies that proactively address employee concerns through feedback driven policies ensure long-term satisfaction and sustained engagement. Ultimately, a workplace where employees feel valued, supported and empowered will continue to thrive in an everchanging corporate landscape (Fleeton, 2024).

7. Conceptual Model for Gen Z Work Engagement

Integrating Individual and Organizational Factors: The conceptual model for Gen Z work engagement integrates both **individual** and **organizational** factors to provide a comprehensive understanding of how young professionals interact with their work environments. At the

individual level, key determinants include *belongingness*, which fosters a sense of inclusion and psychological attachment to the workplace and *self-efficacy*, which strengthens resilience and the ability to navigate workplace challenges (Anisykurli et al., 2024). Additionally, *digital adaptability* is particularly crucial for Gen Z, given their immersion in technology driven environments, shaping their expectations for seamless digital tools and remote work flexibility. Furthermore, *purpose driven work* plays a central role, as Gen Z prioritizes careers that align with personal values, social impact and long-term growth opportunities. These individual factors interact dynamically with organizational structures, influencing how Gen Z employees perceive their roles, responsibilities and overall job satisfaction.

At the **organizational level**, several factors contribute to shaping Gen Z engagement. *Perceived Organizational Support (POS)* is instrumental in ensuring employees feel valued, which leads to increased motivation, commitment and retention. *Empathetic leadership* fosters psychological safety, encouraging open communication and innovation. *Employee Work Ownership and Learning (EWOL)*, characterized by autonomy in decision making and opportunities for continuous skill development, enhances workplace engagement and reduces turnover intentions. Additionally, *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies* are particularly significant for Gen Z, who actively seek workplaces that demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity, fairness and social responsibility (Mohr & Mohr, 2017). Collectively, these organizational factors create an environment where Gen Z employees feel respected, empowered and motivated to contribute meaningfully to their work.

8. Dynamics of Engagement and Influencing Factors

8.1 The Role of Moderators in Engagement

Individual-organization interface is bridged through some of the main variables that influence the engagement process. EWorkLife Balance as a moderator variable between engagement and job stressors ensures the health of Gen Z employees while they meet workplace demands. A great deal of concern this generation places on maintaining boundaries for work and non-work life and organizations facilitating it achieve heightened engagement and productivity. Further, self-efficacy comes to the forefront of building resilience, particularly in high-pressure work environments where staff must navigate multi-level issues while being encouraged (Nieżurawska-Zajac et al., 2023). Furthermore, empathetic leadership promotes psychological safety in which staff are able to raise issues, risk-taking and accept straightforward problem-solving without punishment or job insecurity. These mediating factors are present in the form of major mechanisms that determine the extent to which Gen Z employees remain committed to their work, showing that commitment is not dependent on organizational structures but also on the workings of individual agency and workplace processes.

8.2 Comparison with Traditional Engagement Models

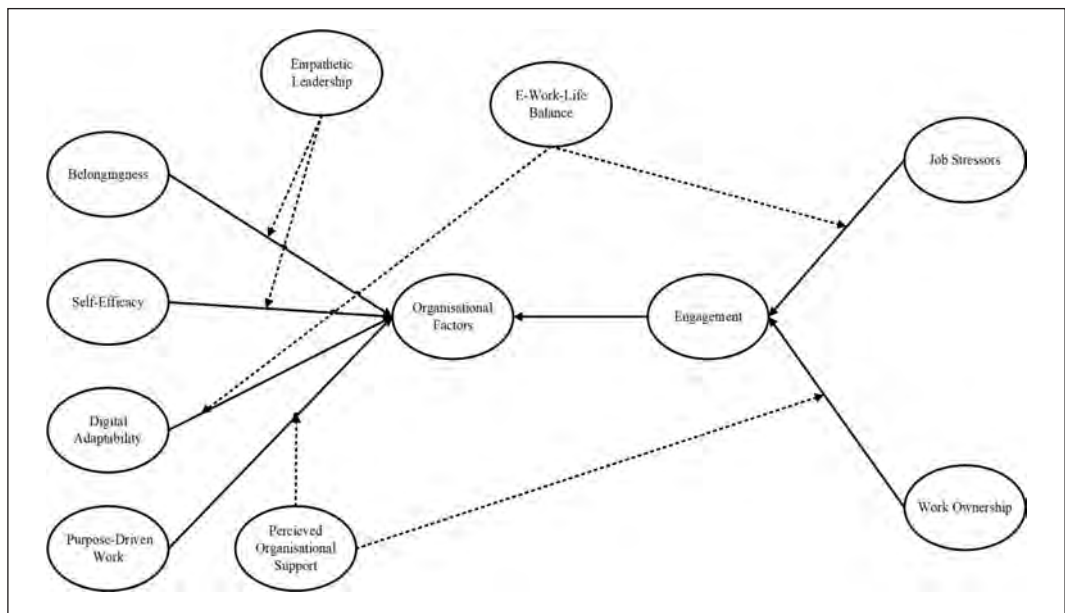
This conceptual model differentiates itself from traditional engagement frameworks by accounting for **Gen Z's digital first nature**, preference for **flexible work arrangements** and demand for **purpose driven employment**. Unlike previous generations, who often prioritized financial compensation and hierarchical career advancement, Gen Z is characterized by a strong inclination toward **fluid career paths, hybrid work models and continuous learning opportunities**. Traditional engagement models typically emphasized job stability and organizational loyalty as key indicators of engagement, whereas for Gen Z, **engagement is closely linked to autonomy, values alignment and**

technological integration (Achmad et al., 2023). This shift necessitates a reevaluation of workforce management strategies, particularly in terms of leadership approaches, digital transformation and employee wellbeing initiatives.

8.3 Conceptualising the Engagement Dynamics

The conceptual model is a systematic account for how organizational and individual factors collectively shape Gen Z work engagement. It proposes variables such as belongingness, digital adaptability and self-efficacy as key determinants in fostering engagement through mechanisms such as psychological safety and work ownership. The model also reflects the moderating impact of certain factors: empathetic leadership moderates between psychological safety and self-efficacy by providing a safe context that encourages risk-taking and innovation; eworklife balance moderates between job stressors and work engagement to keep employees with wellbeing while meeting work demands; and POS moderates between work ownership and digital adaptability to enhance employees' initiative motivation (HUSAINAH et al., 2022). By offering an integrated view of these interconnected elements, the model serves as a basis for empirical study, guiding organizations on how to create targeted interventions to optimize Gen Z workforce engagement. The conceptual framework is illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model to assess engagement dynamics (Source: Author's own)



9. Research Implications and Future Directions

The evolving workforce dynamics, particularly with the entry of Generation Z, call for a strategic shift in organizational practices and research methods (Arora et al., 2020). Organisations and researchers have to adapt to new trends that influence employee engagement, productivity and turnover as the workplace changes. This section addresses the organisation, researcher, and field-level consequences of these changes, setting out a roadmap for future research and adaptation.

9.1 Implications for Organizations

Organizations need to reboot their engagement models to suit the needs of Gen Z employees. This generation appreciates flexibility, infusion of technology and continuous learning experiences. Employers need to establish a friendly working culture with role clarity, market-based compensation structures and robust training and development programs (Mullen, 2021). A brief job description and employment contract terms are essential in minimizing role confusion and employees' understanding of their career progression and performance expectations. Failure to adapt to such expectations can lead to disengagement and high employee turnover.

Moreover, organizations must integrate technological solutions to enhance employee engagement and career growth. Digital tools, AI enabled learning platforms and data analytics can be leveraged to provide personalized career growth paths (Tarigan et al., 2022). AI and machine learning can help organizations track employee engagement metrics and solve disengagement issues in advance. In addition, organizations must recognize the importance of workplace inclusivity in retaining Gen Z employees. Apart from diversity and equity programs, enhancing organizational culture to include transparency, openness mental wellbeing is critical for long-term commitment. Adopting approaches like hybrid work models, mental health initiatives, and feedback loops for employees can offer a more responsive and adaptive work setting.

Employee wellbeing is another critical factor that organizations must address. Gen Z values a strong work life balance and expects employers to prioritize their mental health and wellness. Companies that offer employee assistance programs, wellness initiatives and flexible work arrangements will have a competitive advantage in retaining top talent. By acknowledging the need for mental health support, organizations can build a more resilient workforce (Vincent & Ahmad, 2021).

9.2 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical models of work engagement must be tested empirically, more so in the context of generational change. Research must be extended to investigate industry level variation in work engagement due to differences in technology intensive industries such as IT, traditional service sectors such as healthcare and high people intensive environments such as retail. This granular level of focus will facilitate more precise determination of drivers of engagement across a variety of professional settings.

Further, studies must be undertaken on the impact of technological innovations such as AI and automation on traditional theories of engagement (Wulur & Mandagi, 2023). As there is increased integration of machine learning and decision making using AI in the performance of work operations, researchers must explore how changes in the workplace affect employees' motivation, autonomy and retention in the long run. Through such studies, adaptive HR practices will be developed that act to balance technical effectiveness with employee engagement. Understanding how automation impacts different groups and sectors helps develop inclusive policies that ensure equal treatment and opportunities for every worker (Xueyun et al., 2023).

Second, scholars have to explore the place of convergence of work engagement and newer forms of employment such as freelancing and the gig economy. Models of employee engagement thus far are based on long term, full-time employment patterns. However, the growth of contract and project-based labor calls for new conceptualizations that include nontraditional employment relationship patterns (Chakraborty, 2024). Studies need to examine how freelancers and gig workers are engaged differently from traditional employees and identify means to improve their job satisfaction and productivity.

New Work Engagement Trends Research & Future Approaches

Subsequent research has to employ mixed method approaches in order to get a holistic understanding of engagement behaviors. Combining qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and ethnographic studies with quantitative survey-based analysis will provide richer insights into the drivers and interests of Gen Z workers. Furthermore, longitudinal research that observes engagement behaviors over time will play a key role in identifying shifting expectations of this workforce as they progress in their careers (Tarigan et al., 2022).

Neuroscience and Behavioural analytics are also emerging fields of future research. The application of EEG research, sentiment analysis and AI enabled Behavioural tracking can enable a better understanding of how engagement initiatives influence employee cognition and decision making (Chakraborty, 2024). Cross national and multinational studies will also be beneficial in ascertaining how cultural differences influence engagement and retention initiatives so that results can be generalized to various organizational contexts.

Another emerging trend is the study of hybrid work models and their impact on employee engagement. The COVID19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote and hybrid work and researchers should investigate how these models affect employee satisfaction, productivity and engagement. Understanding the benefits and challenges of remote work can help organizations refine their policies and create work environments that cater to the evolving needs of employees (Chala et al., 2022).

Moreover, research should explore the psychological factors influencing employee engagement, such as intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Understanding how these factors interact with workplace conditions can provide insights into how to design more effective engagement strategies. Studies should also investigate the role of leadership styles in fostering engagement, examining how transformational and servant leadership approaches impact employee morale and productivity (DeMaria, 2022).

The impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on employee engagement is another critical area of research. Employees, particularly Gen Z, are increasingly drawn to companies that align with their values and contribute positively to society. Researchers should examine how CSR initiatives influence employee engagement, retention and overall workplace satisfaction (Fleaton, 2024). Understanding this relationship can help organizations design CSR programs that not only benefit communities but also enhance employee commitment and motivation.

Finally, the role of technology in shaping the future of work engagement cannot be ignored. Digital transformation is reshaping the workplace and researchers should explore how emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and blockchain can enhance employee engagement. These technologies have the potential to revolutionize training programs, improve collaboration and create immersive work experiences that boost motivation and productivity (Mullen, 2021).

By adopting innovative research methodologies and focusing on emerging trends, scholars can provide organizations with actionable insights that drive sustainable engagement strategies. The future of work engagement research lies in its ability to adapt to changing workforce expectations and technological advancements, ensuring that businesses can thrive in an ever-evolving landscape (Reddy).

10. Conclusion

The evolving workforce dynamics, characterized by the increasing presence of Generation Z employees, present both challenges and opportunities for organizations aiming to foster work engagement (Achmad et al., 2023). This research has highlighted the necessity of adapting traditional engagement models to accommodate the unique expectations and preferences of Gen Z workers. As digital natives with a strong emphasis on flexibility, technology integration and purpose driven work, Gen Z requires organizations to rethink how they structure work, manage engagement and promote long term retention.

A key takeaway from this study is the fundamental shift in how engagement is perceived by Gen Z compared to previous generations. Unlike Baby Boomers or Gen X, who often valued job stability and hierarchical career progression, Gen Z seeks dynamic work environments that provide continuous learning, career mobility and a strong sense of purpose. Organizations that fail to align with these expectations risk disengagement and higher turnover rates, whereas those that implement innovative engagement strategies will thrive in the modern workplace (Xueyun et al., 2023).

The study also underscores the role of **technology** in shaping the future of work engagement. AI driven analytics, digital learning platforms and remote collaboration tools are no longer optional but essential components of an engaging workplace. Organizations must not only invest in these technologies but also ensure they are leveraged to create meaningful and interactive work experiences (Vanpetch & Chearnkaitpradab, 2024). The successful integration of digital solutions in employee engagement will be a crucial differentiator for organizations seeking to attract and retain Gen Z talent.

Additionally, **workplace flexibility and mental wellbeing** have emerged as critical determinants of engagement. The COVID19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote and hybrid work models, making flexibility a key expectation rather than a perk (Retnowati et al., 2024). Companies that embrace flexible work arrangements, support work life balance and prioritize mental health initiatives will have a competitive edge in retaining an engaged workforce. Providing employees with autonomy over their work schedules and ensuring they have access to wellness resources will strengthen long term commitment and productivity.

The role of **leadership and mentorship** is another vital consideration for organizations aiming to enhance engagement among Gen Z employees. Transformational and empathetic leadership styles that prioritize open communication, collaboration and continuous feedback resonate more with younger workers than traditional authoritarian models. Mentorship programs that connect employees with experienced professionals can further enhance career development and workplace engagement, fostering a sense of belonging and professional growth (Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018).

Furthermore, **diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives** play a crucial role in Gen Z's engagement. As one of the most diverse generations in history, Gen Z expects workplaces to embrace and actively promote inclusivity. Organizations that implement meaningful DEI policies, provide equal opportunities for career advancement and create a culture of respect and belonging will be more successful in engaging and retaining Gen Z talent (Tolstikova et al., 2021). This generation places a high value on authenticity and corporate social responsibility, making it essential for organizations to align their values with their business practices.

From a research perspective, this study has outlined the **gaps in existing literature** and provided a roadmap for future investigations into Gen Z work engagement. The need for **industry specific engagement models**, empirical validation of conceptual frameworks and exploration of **emerging trends such as the gig economy and freelancing** are areas that warrant further research (Vincent & Ahmad, 2021). Longitudinal studies tracking engagement trends over time will also be instrumental in understanding how Gen Z evolves in their career trajectories and workplace expectations.

Additionally, **interdisciplinary approaches** incorporating insights from psychology, behavioural science and artificial intelligence will enrich our understanding of work engagement in the digital era. Neuroscience based research on employee motivation, sentiment analysis using AI and cross cultural engagement studies will provide valuable insights into how organizations can design tailored engagement strategies for Gen Z (Chala et al., 2022).

Therefore, future of work engagement depends on organizations' ability to adapt to **generational shifts, technological advancements and evolving workplace expectations**. Companies that proactively invest in employee centric engagement strategies, foster an inclusive and flexible work culture and leverage digital innovation will not only attract top talent but also sustain long term organizational success (Dimitrov, 2022). By embracing continuous learning, leadership evolution and ethical business practices, organizations can create work environments where Gen Z employees feel motivated, valued and empowered to contribute meaningfully (Wennqvist, 2022). The research on Gen Z engagement must continue to evolve to ensure that organizations stay ahead in this rapidly transforming work landscape.

11. References

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