



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
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Trinity Saint David

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Proposed Research Topic: Motivation, Challenges and
Retention Strategies for Generation Z in the Contemporary
Workplace: A Systematic Review

Student Name: Syril Jerom

Tutor: Dr Abdi Rahman

Student Number: 2413952

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Problem Context

The modern work environment is undergoing a swift change due to digitalisation, flexibility, and the ongoing shift in staff demand, where Generation Z represents an influential group of employees that are becoming more and more visible and prolific. Growing up in a very interconnected and technology-oriented setting, the employees of Generation Z are characterised by different work-related values and attitudes than those of the past generations, in particular, motivation, career expectations, and engagement with the workplace (Benítez-Márquez *et al.*, 2022). With organisations increasingly depending on this group of people to provide a future talent pool, the perceptions and experiences of work for the members of Generation Z have emerged as a pressing issue for managers and human resource practitioners.

According to recent studies, Generation Z is highly focused on meaningful work, the availability of continuous learning, positive leadership, and work-life balance, as well as demonstrating high sensitivity to stress at the workplace and management (Septiani *et al.*, 2024). Even though they are increasing their labour market share, organisations still face challenges when recruiting, managing and retaining employees of Generation Z. The intention to leave the organisation is often high, the disconnect between the organisational practice and employee expectation is common in all the sectors, and the inability to build a long-term commitment is common (Ismet alimin and Martinus Tukiran, 2024).

Despite the growing scholarly interest in the study of Generation Z motivation, engagement, and retention, the current evidence is still fragmentary in both terms of disciplines and themes. There are numerous studies that depend on isolated constructs, and they do not allow a comprehensive understanding. The fragmentation also indicates the necessity of an organised synthesis to elucidate the interaction of motivation, work-related demands, and retention policies and their impact on the job experiences of Generation Z.

1.2 Aim of the Study

This study aims to systematically review and synthesise existing literature on the motivation, challenges, and retention strategies of Generation Z employees in the contemporary workplace.

1.3 Research Question

- What factors motivate Generation Z employees in the contemporary workplace, as identified in the existing literature?
- What key challenges do organisations face in attracting, managing, and engaging Generation Z employees in the contemporary workplace?
- What organisational strategies have been identified in the literature as effective in retaining Generation Z employees in the contemporary workplace?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To identify and synthesise the key factors that motivate Generation Z employees in the contemporary workplace as reported in existing literature.
- To examine the principal challenges faced by organisations in attracting, managing, and engaging Generation Z employees.
- To analyse organisational strategies identified in the literature as effective in retaining Generation Z employees in the contemporary workplace.

1.5 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Gen Z are quickly becoming a powerful generation in the international labour market, although organisations are still facing challenges in motivating, engaging, and retaining these workers. Despite the recent reviews discussing Generation Z through the prism of engagement, leadership, and talent management, the literature is still scattered across various disciplines and tends to discuss these issues separately (Zahra, Handoyo and Fajrianthi, 2025). Consequently, organisations do not have a clear evidence-based picture of how motivation, workplace issues, and retention plans interplay in the formation of the employment experiences of Generation Z. The research is important, as it offers a systematic and integrative synthesis of the previous studies, which helps to obtain clearer theoretical knowledge on Generation Z work behaviour. In practice, the results can guide human resource and talent management practices to determine strategies that are consistent with the Generation Z

expectations and, therefore, contribute to sustainable workforce planning and organisational retention effects (Pózner and Kozaka, 2025).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives on Generation Z in the Workplace

The study of Generation Z at work is becoming more based on the developed models of motivation and organisational behaviour that clarify the way this generation perceives work, leadership, and organisational support. One of the most commonly applied integrative frameworks is the combination of the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explain the concept of work engagement among Generation Z workers (Susetio *et al.*, 2025). The JD-R model emphasises the ratio between job demands, including workload and stress, and job resources, including autonomy, feedback, and learning, which is especially topical due to the sensitivity of Generation Z to stress and enjoyment of favourable conditions. SET characterises motivation and retention as reciprocal relationships, which implies that Generation Z workers will be more committed when they feel that they are fair and supported by the organisation. SDT also adds to these views by focusing on intrinsic motivation based on autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Talent management and employer brand models have also been used to explain attraction and retention beyond motivation-based models. Systematic reviews suggest that authenticity, development opportunities and organisation values calculated with systematic reviews indicate a critical role in influencing the organisational commitment of Generation Z (Vieira, Gomes da Costa and Santos, 2024). Combined, the models offer an ordered framework for analysing motivation, challenges, and retention in a combined fashion.

2.2 Motivation and Engagement of Generation Z Employees

The literature also demonstrates that Generation Z workers are driven by both internal and external aspects, focusing on fulfilling work and personal development more than other generations. Work engagement is described as the value of learning continuously, career growth, and service to organisational purpose in reviews

(Agustinus, Aditya and Meilani, 2025). The engagement is also closely related to the supportive leadership and access to the resources which support autonomy and skills development (Surugiu *et al.*, 2025).

Reward systems are still applicable, but they can only work as well as they are designed and communicated. An empirical study comparing Generation Z and Millennials indicates that non-financial rewards, including recognition, flexibility, and developmental opportunities, have a stronger effect than those directly related to finances in maintaining motivation (Alimin and Tukiran, 2024). These results are alignable with SDT, which emphasises intrinsic motivating factors. Motivation is also influenced by career desires because GenZ employees place more emphasis on career mobility, skills development, and employability in the long-term rather than on hierarchical advancement (Barhate and Dirani, 2021).

2.3 Challenges in Managing and Engaging Generation Z

Although there is a high desire to have meaningful and flexible work, organisations have a significant difficulty in handling Generation Z employees. It has become common to read reviews complaining of a mismatch between organisational practices and Generation Z expectations, especially when it comes to leadership style, communication, and work design (Kenneth and Hudtohan, 2024). Conventional top-down management styles are usually seen as ineffective, which is a cause of disengagement.

The significant challenge areas involve work-life balance and mental well-being. Studies of the flexible work environment show that although flexibility is capable of promoting well-being, when implemented poorly, it can lead to an increase in stress because of the lack of clarity in the boundaries and expectations (Kasundari, 2025). Employees of Generation Z are also particularly sensitive to work stress and management support, and poor leadership is a significant risk of disengagement (Septiani *et al.*, 2024). Reviews devoted to leadership also reveal that transformational and supportive leadership approaches prove more efficient in encouraging engagement and learning, and authoritarian leadership is associated with decreased motivation and increased turnover intentions (Doan and Wu, 2025).

2.4 Retention Strategies and Organisational Responses

Generation Z employees are a strategic issue that has emerged because of high turnover and reduced organisational commitment. According to systematic reviews, more systematic reviews indicate that retention is a factor of how organisations navigate the transition between attraction and sustained engagement, and not the individual retention initiative (Póznér and Kozak, 2025). Strong strategies are well-defined career trajectories, ongoing feedback, welcoming cultures, and chances of constant learning.

Congruence between the human resource management practices and the expectations of the generation Z is echoed numerous times. Personalised development plans, flexible working arrangements and participative decision-making have been found to positively affect the engagement level and turnover intentions (Rahman, Supriadi and Marwana, 2025). Retention beyond recruitment is also affected by employer branding because when organisations promise things and fail to deliver them in the workplace, the levels of trust are compromised (Vieira, Gomes da Costa and Santos, 2024). Wider scans touch on the holistic and system-wide strategies that include leadership, culture, rewards, and well-being programs (Benítez-Márquez *et al.*, 2022).

2.5 Research Gap Identification

Despite an extensive body of research on Generation Z in the workplace, the literature is still disjointed in the themes of motivation, leadership, engagement, and retention. A lot of reviews emphasise the individual constructs, which do not give much insight into the interactivity between factors. Moreover, although several theoretical frameworks are used, little is synthesised wherein these frameworks are merged into a comprehensive interpretation of Generation Z experiences at work. This is where the gap lies, and a systematic review is required to combine motivational drivers, organisational challenges and retention strategies into a single analytic framework to inform theory and practice.

3. Research Methodology

This research paper will utilise the systematic literature review approach to detect, analyse, and generalise the available academic evidence on the motivation, challenges, and retention strategies of Generation Z workers in the modern workplace. The systematic review would suit the integration of disjointed and multidisciplinary evidence about Generation Z, which cuts across research in human resource management, organisational behaviour, leadership, and employee well-being (Zain, Ardiansyah and Fachrunnisa, 2025).

The literature review will concentrate on peer-reviewed articles published in 2020-2025, which are relevant to current workplace practices and the early careers of employees of the generation Z. Structured searches in selected academic databases will be conducted to identify relevant studies based on preset keywords of Generation Z, motivation, engagement, leadership, and retention. The review will be limited to studies about Generation Z in organisational or workplace settings, as clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria will be used.

A staged screening will be introduced, where title and abstract screening will be followed by full-text assessment to ascertain the transparency and replicability of the selection process. Quality and relevance of all the included studies will be critically appraised, and data will be extracted systematically to compare the most important themes and results. A qualitative narrative synthesis will be used to combine the evidence to enable thematic comparison across a range of study designs instead of statistical aggregation (Susetio *et al.*, 2025).

Ethical standards will be upheld throughout the review process through accurate referencing, responsible handling of sources, and faithful representation of original authors' contributions.

4. Study Scope and Feasibility

The current study is based on peer-reviewed literature discussing motivation, workplace issues, and retention techniques regarding Generation Z workers in modern organisational practices. The selection is restricted to practices where studies are published in 2020-25 and are, therefore, relevant to contemporary labour market circumstances and early labour market workforce relations. The review focuses on organisational, managerial and human resource standpoints without considering the studies that have no connection to workplace situations. The method of the systematic review makes the study possible within a master 's-level timeframe since a significant and increasing amount of high-quality review and empirical literature on Generation Z is already available, making the synthesis of the evidence conducted systematically possible without the necessity of the primary collection of data, which is methodologically and practically viable.

5. Anticipated Contributions of the Research

It is believed that the research will contribute both theoretically and practically to the literature on Generation Z in the work environment. Theoretically, it will combine the disjointed research on motivation, challenges, and retention into a consistent framework, which will add to the comprehension of how those variables combine to help shape the experiences of Generation Z at work. The review will make inconsistencies in current research clear by synthesising evidence in relation to engagement, leadership, and HRM perspectives. In practice, the results could help organisations to establish evidence-based human resources and retention policies that respond to the expectations of Generation Z and help organisations gain better engagement and lower turnover in the modern workplace (Anand, Mishra and Mohanty, 2025).

6. Proposed Research Timeline

Activities	February 2026 to April 2026				
	Week 1	Week 3	Week 5	Week 7	Week 9
Research planning and ethics approval					
Systematic literature review and study selection					
Data extraction, quality appraisal, and analysis					
Dissertation drafting, revision, and final editing					
Dissertation submission					

7. Conclusion

Generation Z is a unique and powerful group of workers whose motivation, engagement, and retention become a major challenge to modern organisations. Available literature provides useful and scattered information in the areas of motivation, leadership and human resource management. The current research aims to offer a coherent explanation of the influences in the workplace experiences of Generation Z by conducting a systematic literature review and synthesis to achieve this goal. It is hoped that the implications the findings will have on academic debate and organisational practice will be to help develop more effective and evidence-based strategies that can be used to engage and retain Generation Z employees.

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