

## GEN Z'S PERCEPTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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### Article Info

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### Abstract

As members of Generation Z (Gen Z) become integral parts of the contemporary workforce, characterized by their tech-savvy nature, they bring distinct perspectives and expectations to the workplace. This paper aims to comprehensively explore the factors influencing Gen Z's engagement in the workplace and elucidate the correlation of these factors with overall employee engagement. The foundation of this research lies in a thorough literature review, which informs the development of hypotheses. Leveraging insights from existing research papers, this study employs MS Excel for data analysis, utilizing statistical tools such as correlation coefficient and regression. The findings reveal a positive correlation between identified factors and both organizational performance and employee engagement among Gen Z. Notably, career development and rewards and recognitions emerge as pivotal factors. The paper underscores the necessity for policy adaptations to accommodate the unique expectations of this emerging workforce. Failure to address these evolving dynamics may impede companies' ability to effectively attract, retain, and engage Gen Z in the evolving workplace landscape.

### Introduction

Generations are intricately shaped by the historical events and experiences that mark their formative years, influencing their values, beliefs, and perspectives. As noted by Balik and Fry (2019), these defining moments have a profound impact on the collective psyche of each generation. For instance, those who came of age during the Great Depression and post-war era were marked by the traumas of conflict and partition, fostering characteristics such as patriotism, reverence for the nation, and a profound belief in government institutions. Similarly, the Millennial generation, whose formative years were punctuated by the seismic events of 9/11 and the subsequent economic crisis, underwent transformative experiences that shaped their worldview. Focused on job security and substantial rewards, this generation navigated a landscape profoundly altered by these impactful events. Today, as the world grapples with the enduring consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that the most substantial long-term impact will be borne by Generation Z.

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Born between 1996 and 2010, Gen Z represents the first cohort to grow up in a world where internet usage is ubiquitous. With members aged between 16 and 25, they now constitute the youngest segment of the workforce, poised to exert a significant influence on the business landscape. Projections indicate that Gen Z will comprise approximately 44 percent of the global workforce by 2025, with a substantial proportion residing in Asia.

In the context of the evolving workforce, it becomes imperative to recognize the unique characteristics that define Gen Z. Digital natives by birth, technology is integral to their identity, and they approach work with a distinct perspective. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z places greater emphasis on 'what' one does rather than 'where' it is done. Collaboration is a cornerstone of their work ethos, with 51% of these young workers viewing performance as intrinsically linked to collaboration on both strategic and operational levels.

However, despite the growing influence of Gen Z in the workforce, less than a quarter of companies have formulated specific strategies to address their needs in job design. As organizations grapple with integrating Gen Z seamlessly, understanding their perceptions of organizational alignment and its impact on employee engagement becomes paramount.

Research indicates that Gen Z harbors specific expectations and values that guide their professional choices. Drawing from the Wills Towers Watson 2010 Global Workforce Study, key insights emerge:

- Demand for Honesty and Transparency: Gen Z expects companies to be transparent and honest in their dealings.
- Essential Leadership Qualities: Attributes such as honesty and confidence are deemed essential for leadership in the eyes of Gen Z.
- Short Attention Span: With an average attention span of merely eight seconds, Gen Z's engagement requires a concise and compelling approach.
- Attraction to Healthcare, Training, and Flexibility: Factors like healthcare benefits, opportunities for continuous learning, and workplace flexibility significantly influence Gen Z's choice of employers.
- Association with Learning: Gen Z is drawn to organizations that prioritize continuous learning and growth.
- Retention Drivers: Advancement opportunities, ongoing learning initiatives, autonomy, and achieving a work-life balance emerge as critical factors influencing Gen Z's decision to stay with an organization.

As the business world prepares for a future where Gen Z increasingly occupies leadership positions and influences policies, understanding their perceptions of organizational alignment and its impact on employee engagement becomes paramount. This study endeavors to delve into the nuanced dynamics of how Gen Z views the workplace, seeking to provide valuable insights for employers navigating the evolving landscape of the modern workforce.

### **1.1. Employee Engagement and Employee Relations of Gen Z**

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his organization and its values. Employee engagement involves a positive fulfilling affective motivational state of work-related wellbeing that can be seen as the antipode of Job burnout (Bakker et al., 2008) Engagement can lead to lot of positive outcomes such as increased profitability, higher levels of productivity & task performance, customer satisfaction, however this can be challenging in the context of changing business scenario.

Companies need to adjust their workplace to the needs of Gen Z, what have bought an entire Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA) different than people of the last decade. Several studies have proved that taking care of employee well-being and introducing digital strategy at work place are two most employee engaging tools for Gen Z.

Gen Z are ambitious lot, they want to work for a company which emphasis on sustainability and have a culture of career growth. Leaders in the workplace must be flexible, adapting their approach to deliver support and motivation in a way that resonates with this group. Building trust, mentoring, peer feedback, and knowledge

exchange are tools which can work well with this Gen Z to be engaged. A fully engaged Gen Z employee is one that accepts organization mission & culture given their innately independent spirit, it is little troublesome to get to that position, but once accomplished Gen Z is far more likely to immerse themselves. Gen Z has a great perspective of technology by which they can invest in achieving efficiency and effectiveness and add value to operations and be innovative.

The real challenge for organizations is retaining Gen Z and involving them in the work to create an attractive proposition for them. The cognitive dissonance must be addressed to ensure them that they made the right choice to work for the company. Increasing digitalization means social media is also playing a big role in perception of people. Organizations must create a positive online content to attract the younger lot as they are majorly communicating with world through this media. All said and done, the strengths and benefits of Gen Z employees far outweigh their downsides, which will help in increasing the vibrancy and productivity of the workplace.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

### **i) Career Development and Employee Engagement**

People prefer to join companies that can give them the opportunities to grow and develop. Career development is about improving one's skills increasing talent and sense of self-actualization. It is about full filament of one's potential. Employees are more engaged and satisfied with their careers when provided with learning opportunities and in turn their commitment level within the organization increases (Khalid and Khalid, 2015). There are three antecedents (Pandey & David, 2013) Satisfactory work environment, Job Enrichment, Career growth opportunities are crucial for engaging Gen Z. The inter-correlation matrix was calculated on 14 variables related to employee engagement and it was found that career growth opportunities ( $r=0.62$  at,  $<0.05$ ) had a high positive correlation to employee engagement (AlTit and Hunitie, 2015). Employee career growth has always been one of the forces of great concern. In recent times a greater number of young work force is entering the job market and this new generation has already made a significant impact with their technological edge. Many studies show career growth and work engagement are closely linked. An individual's psychology, career growth is affected by the capabilities, changing social and economic status and so on. High degree of fit between individual employees and organization enables employees adapt themselves quickly and get into work creatively. The development which organization provides to employees for career management will promote the quality of work among employees. According to (Son and Kim, 2019) their study revealed that the intrinsic function of organization career growth which in turn is stronger when employees perceived their leadership to be effective.

**H01:** There is no significant impact of career growth opportunities on employee engagement of Gen Z.

**Ha1:** There is significant impact of career growth opportunities on employee engagement of Gen Z.

### **ii) Reward, Recognition, and Employee Engagement**

Reward strategies play an important role in engaging employees on the job. With the advent of LPG along with the advancement in Information technology, the world has transformed. People has become a focal point in any organization, and they are the competitive advantage of organizations now. Rewards are monetary and non-monetary by nature. They are recognition of performance of the employees in the given period. Reward management attracts and retains the best employees in the organization. Reward system should have reinforced element in attracting the best talent and transfer of the talent to performance. Employees consider 'rewards' very important for keeping them engaged. The organization should ensure in enhancing nonmonetary benefits like training of new skills, job design, fairness, superior support to bring about engagement. Rewards and recognition acts as catalyst for improved performance and productivity resulting in engaged employees. Role of rewards in employee engagement was a study conducted by Bhattacharya and Mukerjee (2009) indicate that mean scores obtained by three organizations gave importance to the role of rewards in employee engagement, among them

IBM company's reward system had higher co-correlation than TCS company's reward system impact on employee engagement. Non-monetary rewards also were considered to play an important role. Taufek et al. (2016) suggested in their study there are four dimensions of reward system that were significant towards work engagement. The four dimensions are social rewards, recognition rewards, monetary rewards, and status rewards. Workplace recognition motivates, and provides a sense of accomplishment and makes employees feel valued for their work. Recognition not only boosts individual employee engagement, but it also has been found to increase productivity and loyalty to the company, leading to higher retention. Employees that don't feel recognized or appreciated are less loyal to their employers than their appreciated team members, whereas employees that feel recognized are more engaged, leading them to be more productive.

H02: there is no significant impact of rewards system on employee engagement of Gen Z.

Ha2: There is a significant impact of reward system on employee engagement of Gen Z.

### **iii) Trust & Respect and Employee Engagement**

Negative working atmosphere creates a highly stressful and undesirable environment for everyone. Trust at workplace has a big impact on how employees collaborate and work together as a team. Organizational alignment in large enterprise is a challenge for managers, unless trust and respect are built it is unlikely that all members in a team will work together to achieve the same ultimate business goals. Aligning words and actions, leader involvement, being honest, consistency is some of the ways to build trust and respect among employees. Respect that subordinate receives from his managers positively affect work engagement. Procedural justice and fairness are mediated relationship of trust and respect between employees and their supervisors (Melhem and Al-Qudah, 2019). According to Ugwu et al. (2014) Organizational trust and psychological empowerment were predictors of work engagement. There was a moderating effect of empowerment on the relationship between trust and engagement. Consistent and meaningful communication is essential to build trust, face-to-face communication is powerful. Gen z are outspoken and very vocal about anything they want to discuss. They have strong social values and use the informal means or social media to discuss issues that bother them. They expect their employers to encourage two-way communication and provide constant feedback to improve performance. Building trust and respect is crucial for success of the organization.

Ho3: There is no significant impact of trust and respect on employee engagement among Gen Z

Ha3: there is significant impact of trust and respect on employee engagement among Gen Z **iv) Job Security and Employee Engagement**

Concern of Job security may be real or perceived, but the impact is the same. If not addressed, it has a negative impact on employee health, engagement, and performance. An engaged employer is the one who says positive about the organization to others, wants to stay and put in extra work. Essentially engaged employees will be an asset to the organization. If an employee's job is at risk, he will feel threatened and always think of shifting his job elsewhere, thereby involvement in the current job will be minimum. During work, employees want to know that jobs are safe and that they are valued by management. It is going to be very hard for employees to do their best work if they must worry and stress about the future of their jobs. If employees must work to the highest of their abilities, they need to communicate to them that they are valued, safe and secure, both now and in the future. The ever-changing work environment makes the employees feel more insecure and this has become one of the common psychological problems faced by employee (Greehargh, & Rosenblatt, 1984). Under changing work environment, building strategies to improve employee engagement and to ensure sustainable development of the organization has become an immediate concern for HR managers. Some studies believe that job insecurity has a significant negative impact on employee engagement, and it reduces employee participation and initiative to work. Job insecurity variable was also interacted with the supervisor support variable, perceived job insecurity was

associated with reduced engagement and that this may be moderated by supervisor support. (Asfaw & Chang, 2019) This is the first study using nationally representative data to examine the role of supervisor support in mitigating the negative impact of job insecurity on engagement. When team of employees stick together for a long time, they are far more likely to work on dynamic new projects and create innovation. Lifelong friendships are formed, strong bonds and connections are created, and a strong sense of culture is grown. Thereby employees are engaged on their jobs improving effectiveness and efficiency.

H04: There is no significant impact of job security on employee engagement among Gen Z.

Ha4: there is significant impact of job security on employee engagement among Gen Z.

#### **v) Employee Engagement and Organization Performance**

Employee engagement plays a critical role in achieving project delivery metrics like production targets, quality, and safety. Employee engagement can be viewed as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimension. All the three-dimension work positively to achieve successful enterprises. Employee engagement is different than employee satisfaction, motivation, and culture. Employee engagement is having the right person in the right position and providing right resources so that they do the right things at the right time.

An engaged employee is likely to work distinctively better than others who are not engaged. To achieve this, an organization must be integrated, management practices must be aligned, work climate must be supportive so as to maximum worker engagement. According to Devi (2017) shared the view, that organizations could improve various business functions by using employee engagement as a strategic tool. Positive work environment encourages employees to be driven and perform exceptionally well to improve levels of productivity, profitability, the delivery of superior products or services and the better utilization of organizational resources. Alagaraja and Shuck (2015) identified a third link being alignment and argued that a state of engagement is only realized through the organization's ability to drive alignment at all levels namely, individual, team, intergroup and organizational levels.

H05: There is no significant impact of employee engagement on organizational performance.

Ha5: There is significant impact of employee engagement on organizational performance.

#### **2.1. Research Gap**

The Literature review has given an understanding of important concepts of employee's engagement in line with our study, but the impact of these factors on younger Gen Z is not highlighted in many research papers. The studies reveal that if employee engagement is to be achieved certain constituents must be addressed thereby performance of the employees will be motivated. Since the work-force features are changing it is necessary that present organizations should revamp themselves to maintain a good employee relation. This aspect is probed in this study.

#### **2.2. Objectives of the Study**

After analyzing the literature and delving into the concept, the following objectives have been framed.

1. To analyze the impact of employee engagement techniques among Gen Z
2. To find out which factor affects employee engagement among the Gen Z the most

#### **3. Research Methodology**

Research is systematic search of facts and data (Bajpai, 2013). This study is descriptive in nature, which facilitated to have definite conclusions. The present study is depended on primary data, which were collected among Gen Z employees in various sectors like Consulting, Retail, marketing and sales, banking, and IT (born between 1996-1999). The data was collected through formal questionnaire. Structured and standardized questions were framed to empirically test the hypothesis and draw inferences. Twenty-five closed ended questions were designed for



better collection and tabulation of data. A5 point Likert Scale was used to derive at responses from the respondents to quantity and the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness.

The data was collected from July 2020 to September 2020, it was during and just after the COVID Lockdown period. The respondents were chosen according to the convenience, but the age was the decisive factor to be included in the study. The respondent age should be inbetween 21 to 25 years only.

The sample size was calculated as follows:

$$SS = z^2 \times (p) \times (1-p) / E^2$$

$$SS = (1.92)^2 \times (0.8) \times (0.2) / (0.05)^2 = 246$$

Therefore, from the above calculated formula, 246 is the sample size and 250 questionnaires were distributed to youngsters in Google forms. We received back 232 filled up responses. The response rate was 84%.

## 4. Analysis and Results

### 4.1. Reliability Testing

Reliability of the data is estimated statistically through Cronbach co-efficient alpha and shows the results as 0.776. The co-efficient value of 0.7 and above is considered as satisfactory (Bajpai, 2013). The Cronbach results is acceptable and we can proceed with the analysis.

Table 1.

*Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.776	22

### 4.2. Factor Analysis

According to Table 2, the 25 questions have found values and the total variations explained by them is 78.29 which is adequate to carry on the study. In Table 2, it is noted that the 25 variables are divided into 5 different components. We used the analysis of the main components for extraction and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization for the rotation method. Once the matrix was derived, the factors were identified and labeled as sown in Table 3.

Table 2.

*Rotated Component Matrix*

<u>Variables</u>		<u>R&amp;R</u>	<u>Factors</u>	<u>JS</u>	<u>OP</u>	<u>EE</u>
	<u>CD</u>		<u>T&amp;R</u>			
Q5	.855					
Q9	.731					
Q16	.717					
Q18	.698					
Q22	.652					
Q1		.900				
Q11		.886				
Q15		.851				
Q19		.829				
Q21		.781				
Q3			.819			
Q8			.802			

Q13	.781					
Q20	.743					
Q23		.916				
Q7		.865				
Q14		.836				
Q06		.771				
Q2				.848		
Q10				.838		
Q12				.825		
Q17				.793		
Q4					.701	
Q25					.832	
Q24					.768	
<b>Variance explained</b>	<b>16.847</b>	<b>14.675</b>	<b>13.279</b>	<b>12.861</b>	<b>10.756</b>	<b>9.878</b>
<b>Cumulative</b>	<b>16.847</b>	<b>31.522</b>	<b>44.801</b>	<b>57.662</b>	<b>68.418</b>	<b>78.296</b>
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>.894</b>	<b>.903</b>	<b>.913</b>	<b>.861</b>	<b>.886</b>	<b>.704</b>

Table 3.

Labelling Factors

<b>Factor1:Career development (CD)</b>	<b>Factor-2: Rewards and recognition (R&amp;R)</b>	<b>Factor3: Trust &amp; Respect (T&amp;R)</b>	<b>Factor4: Job security (JS)</b>	<b>Factor5: Organisational Performance</b>	<b>Factor6: Employee engagement</b>
Q5, Q9, Q16, Q1, Q11, Q15, Q3, Q8, Q13, Q23, Q7, Q18 Q22	Q19, Q21	Q20	Q14, Q6	Q2, Q10, Q12, Q17	Q4, Q25, Q24

**4.3. Regression Analysis**

The five factors identified from factor analysis are CD, R&R, T&R, JS, EE and OP respectively. The hypothesis developed from the theoretical framework are considered and the analysis is done by using linear regression analysis. Here, employee engagement is used as dependent variable and other five factors are used as independent variables

Table 4.

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>

<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R square</b>	<b>Adjusted R square</b>	<b>Std. Error of Estimate</b>	<b>Durbin-Watson</b>
1	.711a	.506	.500	.835	1.760

Multi-collinearity is verified by using variable inflation factor (VIF) which must be less than 3 for the acceptability interval. Here, all VIF values fall within an acceptable range, and we conclude that the variables are devoid of multi-collinearity. As depicted in Table 4, 0.711 is the correlation coefficient (R) in Model 1. It highlights the various correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The square value R explains .506 or 50.6% which is quite significant

From the Coefficient Table 5, it is observed that Career Development (CD) has the highest unstandardized B value of 0.699 with t-value 16.98 and  $p=.000$ . It signifies that Career development has a positive impact on employee engagement of Gen Z. The second highest influencing factor is Rewards and Recognition (R&R) with unstandardized B value of 0.086 with t-value 2.227 and  $p=.027$ . Compensation system and recognition thus have a significant positive influence on employee engagement of Gen Z.

Table 5.

Coefficients b

Model	Un standardized Coefficients	Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics
	B	std.error	Beta	Tolerance	VIF
1 (constant)	1.045	.327	3.197	.002	
CD	.699	.041	.666	16.984	.00
T&R	.019	.025	.028	.776	.008
JS	.016	.029	.020	.523	.004
R&R	.086	.038	.087	2.22	.027
OP	.016	.020	.019	.536	.002

Thus the multiple regression equation can be expressed as follows:

$$\text{Employee engagement} = 1.0145 + (.699)X_1 + (.019)X_2 + (.016)X_3 + (.086)X_4 + (.016)X_5 \quad (1) \text{ where}$$

$X_1 = \text{CD}, X_2 = \text{T\&R}, X_3 = \text{JS}, X_4 = \text{R\&R}, X_5 = \text{OP}$

Table 6.

Hypothesis Results

Measurement Path	Hypothesis	Assessment
EE ← CD	Ha1	Accepted
EE ← T&R	Ha2	Accepted
EE ← JS	Ha3	Accepted
EE ← R&R	Ha4	Accepted
EE ← OP	Ha5	Accepted

#### 4.4. Findings

Hypothesis was framed based the literature study and factor analysis indicated that there are four important factors influencing employee engagement of Gen Z and they are career, development, Rewards and recognition, Job security, Trust and respect, organizational performance. Regression analysis indicates that dependent variable of employee engagement is correlated to independent variables of career development, Trust and respect, Job security, rewards, and recognition. So, managers of the Gen Z organizations should develop policies towards career development, and fair rewards as well non-monetary rewards which will attract and retain the future workforce. Career development with un-standardized B value of .699 indicates most important influence on employee engagement of the Gen Z. the second highest value is rewards and recognition which stands at .086 Trust and respect and job security have the least significant impact on employee engagement.

From Table 6, it can be observed that all the alternative hypothesis from Ha1 to Ha5 are accepted. If an organization wants to increase employee engagement within Gen Z, it is important to note their generational preferences. Majority of them want growth and advancement beyond the purpose of salary. Organizations should take advantage of the technology savvy generation to a larger benefit, but this Gen prefers steady income, and



they would quickly get involved in meaningful initiatives. By knowing and understanding their needs in an organization, Gen Z will soon have greater engagement levels.

## 5. Conclusion

Gen Z is focused on financial stability and responsibility, aspects of the compensation package should be carefully planned. If the company is not catering to their basic needs like health coverage, paid time off, clear opportunities of career growth flashy perks might help in retaining this Gen on jobs for long. Talking honestly about their career path and helping them understand what learning opportunities are available can also build trust and respect and help them envision a long-term strategy for retention and growth for all employees. Offering autonomy on job can be highly attractive for this generation. Flexibility and freedom are basic requirements for attracting them to apply for the organizations, so it important to highlight them during hiring process. Gen Z knows what they want, and they work hard and smart enough. They prefer to work in an organization which has an extension of their personality. They have eyes firmly on the career ladder shown to them and make smart moves to climb them through learning opportunities, regular feedback, and higher productivity. So today organizations should gear up and make necessary changes to accommodate the changing preferences of the coming generation at workplace.

### 5.1. Limitations of the Study and Scope of Further Research

Though the study has revealed greater insights into the issues of Gen Z at workplace, still the research faces some limitations.

- The study was conducted taking few factors into considerations, during the study there were various other factors identified which could be the part of the study.
- Moreover, Gen Z at workplace is just at a nascent level, a comprehensive study can be done a couple of years from now to get the detailed characteristics of this Gen Z.
- This study was conducted during and just after COVID lockdown, it is believed the mindset of respondents would have been influenced by the pressure of lockdown and responses would have been biased.

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