



DECODING GEN Z: A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE TRAITS AND WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS OF GENERATION Z

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Abstract: This study examines the personality traits and workplace expectations of Generation Z and how their values shape perceptions of career success and organizational culture. Using a descriptive research design, primary data was collected from 108 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The findings show that Gen Z prioritizes career growth, financial stability and mental well-being, while valuing work-life balance and flexibility. Recognition, feedback and continuous learning act as key motivators. The study concludes that organizations must adopt flexible, employee-centric and purpose-driven strategies to effectively attract, engage and retain Generation Z in the evolving workplace.

Keywords- Generation Z, Workplace Expectations, Personality Traits, Work-Life Balance, Career Growth, Employee Motivation organizational Culture, Flexibility, Mental Well-being

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic corporate world, each generation reshapes workplace culture through its values, behaviors and expectations. Generation Z ("Gen Z"), born between 1997 and 2012, is considered the most diverse, technologically immersed and socially aware generation. Having grown up in an era of rapid technological advancement, global connectivity and social media influence, they bring unique perspectives toward work, learning and personal development. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z are true digital natives shaped by smartphones, high-speed internet and instant access to information. This constant exposure has made them highly tech-savvy, adaptable and entrepreneurial, enabling them to multitask efficiently and engage in digital collaboration. At the same time, they exhibit strong awareness of mental health, social justice, sustainability and inclusivity, which significantly influence both their personal values and professional aspirations.

As Gen Z enters the workforce organizations are required to rethink their talent management, leadership styles and communication strategies. This generation tends to prioritize purpose alongside pay, seeking careers that offer not only financial stability but also personal fulfilment, creativity and alignment with their ethical beliefs. They expect workplaces that are flexible, transparent and inclusive, where individuality is respected and innovation is encouraged. Additionally, Gen Z values open communication, frequent feedback, continuous learning opportunities and employers who actively demonstrate corporate social responsibility. The study "Decoding Gen Z: A Critical Study on the Traits and Workplace Expectations of Generation Z" examines these aspects in detail, aiming to understand their perceptions of success, motivation, leadership and organizational culture through factors such as work values, communication styles, career goals and preferred work environments. Understanding Gen Z is essential in today's evolving business environment, as their expectations regarding flexibility, learning and

organizational ethics will play a crucial role in shaping the future of work and building sustainable, innovative and future-ready organizations.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the key personality traits and behavioral characteristics of Generation Z.
- To analyze workplace expectations and career preferences of Gen Z individuals.
- To examine the importance of factors such as work-life balance, flexibility and mental well-being.
- To provide recommendations for organizations to align their policies with Gen Z expectations.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The entry of Generation Z into the global workforce has become a major area of study in recent years. As the first true digital natives, Gen Z individuals have grown up in an environment shaped by technology, social media and instant access to information, leading to perspectives on work, leadership, communication and success that differ significantly from earlier generations such as Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers. Understanding these differences is essential for organizations seeking to attract, engage and retain this emerging talent pool. Francis and Hoefel (2018) highlight that Gen Z is pragmatic, highly individualistic and demands authenticity and transparency from employers, while also valuing meaningful work and personal fulfilment alongside financial stability.

Seemiller and Grace (2016) describe Gen Z as entrepreneurial, tech-savvy and innovative, with a strong preference for flexibility, creativity and self-expression in their careers. Their learning style is experiential and technology-driven, relying on digital platforms and they place high importance on mental well-being and work-life balance. Similarly, Priporas et al. (2017) found that Gen Z expects personalization, quick communication and adaptability from organizations, reflecting their exposure to instant digital environments. Schroth (2019) further emphasizes that Gen Z responds positively to mentorship-based leadership, valuing continuous feedback, recognition and opportunities to upskill, along with flexible or hybrid work models that provide autonomy and purpose.

Further studies reinforce these expectations in broader and regional contexts. Deloitte's Global Millennial and Gen Z Survey (2023) reveals that Gen Z places strong emphasis on sustainability, inclusion and equity, expecting organizations to actively address social and environmental issues. In the Indian context, Kaur and Arora (2022) note that Gen Z professionals seek a balance between career growth, financial stability and mental well-being, while valuing transparency, diversity and recognition. Overall, the literature indicates that Generation Z is redefining traditional work paradigms, prioritizing flexibility, purpose, innovation and ethical practices and seeking meaningful work that aligns with both personal and societal values.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study focuses on understanding the personality traits, values and workplace expectations of Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012. In recent years organizations have witnessed a significant shift in workforce dynamics due to the entry of this generation, which has grown up in an era of rapid technological advancement, globalization and heightened social awareness. Generation Z differs considerably from previous generations in terms of their approach to work, career aspirations and personal fulfillment. However, many organizations and educational institutions face challenges in understanding their unique motivations and expectations. Traditional workplace practices often fail to align with their preferences for flexibility, inclusivity, mental well-being and purpose-driven work. Moreover, there is limited empirical research in the Indian context that examines how these traits influence their career decisions and perception of ideal workplaces. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing the behavior, values and expectations of Generation Z to provide meaningful insights for organizations and policymakers.

The study adopts a descriptive research design to systematically analyze and interpret the characteristics and opinions of Generation Z individuals without manipulating any variables. This design is appropriate as it enables an accurate description of existing trends and patterns related to their workplace expectations and

professional attitudes. The research is based on quantitative data collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of close-ended questions designed to gather information on demographic details, personality traits, work values and career expectations. The collected data is analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentages, mean scores and graphical representations including charts and tables. These methods help in summarizing the responses and identifying key trends, thereby providing a clear understanding of Generation Z's preferences and behavior.

The scope of the study is limited to students, interns and young professionals who belong to Generation Z and are either preparing to enter or have recently entered the workforce. The research examines important aspects such as work-life balance, flexibility, recognition, inclusivity, leadership preferences and opportunities for career growth. It also considers how digital exposure and value-driven thinking influence their perception of success and job satisfaction. Geographically, the study is confined to respondents within a specific region and the findings are interpreted within this context. The study does not include comparisons with other generations and focuses solely on Generation Z as an independent group. The results are expected to help organizations, HR professionals, educators and policymakers in developing strategies that align with the expectations of this emerging workforce.

The study employs a Simple Random Sampling method, ensuring that every individual belonging to Generation Z, aged between 18 and 29 years, has an equal chance of being selected. This method reduces sampling bias and enhances the reliability of the results. The data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, allowing participation from individuals across different educational and professional backgrounds. The study is based on responses from 108 participants, which provides a sufficiently diverse and representative sample of Generation Z. The variation in respondents' gender, education level and employment status adds depth to the analysis and supports the validity of the findings.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

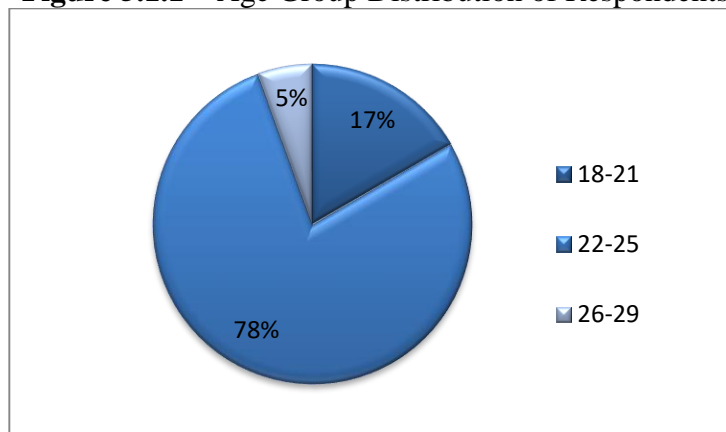
5.1 Age Group

Table 5.1.1 – Age Group Distribution of Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
18-21	18	17%
22-25	84	78%
26-29	6	5%

(Source-Field Survey)

Figure 5.1.1 – Age Group Distribution of Respondents



Interpretation- The majority of respondents (78%) fall within the 22–25 age group, indicating that the study mainly represents individuals transitioning from education to early careers. The 18–21 group (17%) includes younger students, while only 5% belong to the 26–29 category. This distribution suggests that the findings largely reflect the perspectives, aspirations and expectations of early-stage professionals rather than experienced individuals.

5.2 Gender

Table 5.2.1 – Gender Distribution of Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Female	72	67%
Male	36	33%
Other	0	0%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- The sample shows a female majority (67%) compared to males (33%), with no representation in the “Other” category. This imbalance may influence the results, particularly in areas such as workplace expectations, communication preferences and work-life balance. It also indicates the need to consider gender diversity while interpreting the overall findings.

5.3 Educational Qualification

Table 5.3.1 – Educational Qualification of Respondents

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Undergraduate	28	26%
Postgraduate	78	72%
Diploma	0	0%
Others	2	2%

(Source: Field Survey)

Interpretation- A significant proportion of respondents (72%) are postgraduates, while 26% are undergraduates. This indicates that the sample is highly educated, which may lead to higher expectations regarding career growth, learning opportunities and organizational culture. The limited representation of other educational backgrounds suggests that the findings may not fully reflect vocational or non-traditional career perspectives.

5.4 Status

Table 5.4.1 – Current Status of Respondents (Intern/Student, Employed, etc.)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Intern/Student	88	81%
Employed	16	15%
Full Time	2	2%
Part Time	2	2%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Most respondents (81%) are students or interns, followed by 15% employed individuals and a small percentage in full-time or part-time roles. This indicates that the study primarily captures the expectations and perceptions of individuals at the beginning of their careers, who may prioritize learning, flexibility and growth over long-term stability.

5.5 How would you describe yourself? (Select up to 3)

Table 5.5.1 – Self-Description of Respondents (Gen Z Personality Traits)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Ambitious	48	13%
Creative and expressive	61	17%
Tech-Savvy and Curious	21	6%
Practical & independent thinker	58	16%
Risk-taking	32	9%
Value-driven	34	9%
Authentic and honest	51	14%
Adaptable and quick learner	56	16%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- The most commonly identified traits include creativity, adaptability and independent thinking. These traits highlight that Generation Z sees itself as flexible, innovative and capable of self-direction. Other traits like authenticity and ambition also reflect a desire for meaningful and value-driven work, while lower emphasis on risk-taking suggests a more balanced and cautious approach.

5.6 How important are the following values to you? (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)

Table 5.6.1 – Importance of Values among Gen Z (Financial Stability, Career Growth, Social Impact, Mental Well-being)

Values / Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Financial Stability	0	2	6	30	70
Career Growth	0	3	5	22	78
Social Impact	1	7	16	44	40
Mental Well-being	0	2	8	24	74

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Career growth, financial stability and mental well-being are rated as highly important by most respondents, indicating a practical yet balanced outlook. While social impact is valued, it receives comparatively moderate importance. This suggests that Gen Z prioritizes personal and professional security first, while still maintaining awareness of broader societal contributions.

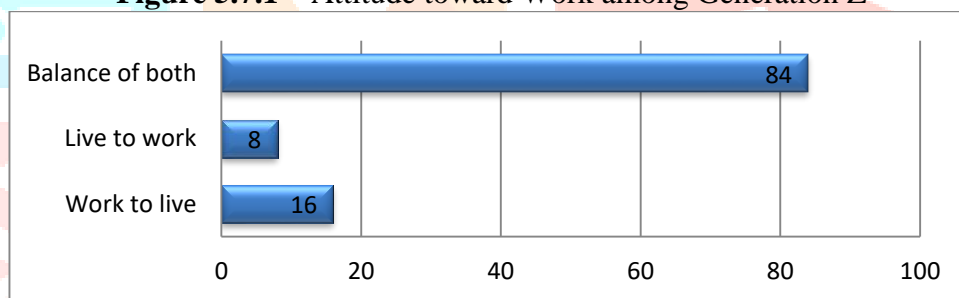
5.7 Which of the following best describes your attitude toward work?

Table 5.7.1 – Attitude toward Work among Gen Z (Work to Live vs. Live to Work)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Work to live	16	15%
Live to work	8	7%
Balance of both	84	78%

(Source-Field Survey)

Figure 5.7.1 – Attitude toward Work among Generation Z



Interpretation- A large majority (78%) prefer a balanced approach between “work to live” and “live to work.” This reflects a shift toward integrating work with personal life rather than prioritizing one over the other. It indicates that Gen Z seeks both professional fulfilment and personal well-being.

5.8 How often do you use digital tools or social media for learning or work?

Table 5.8.1 – Frequency of Digital Tool/Social Media Usage for Learning or Work

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Rarely	6	5%
Often	6	5%
Never	4	4%
Always	60	56%
Sometimes	32	30%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- The majority of respondents frequently use digital tools, with over half reporting “always” and a significant portion “sometimes.” This confirms that Generation Z is highly comfortable with technology and relies on digital platforms for learning and work. It emphasizes the importance of tech-enabled environments in modern organizations.

5.9 Recognition and appreciation motivate me more than pay. (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)

Table 5.9.1 – Recognition and Appreciation vs. Pay Motivation Level

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	0	0%
2	2	2%
3	30	28%
4	40	37%
5	36	33%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- A majority of respondents rate recognition and appreciation as strong motivators, with many placing them at levels comparable to financial rewards. This indicates that Gen Z values emotional acknowledgment and feedback alongside monetary benefits, highlighting the need for appreciation-driven workplace cultures.

5.10 I consider mental health as important as career success.

Table 5.10.1 – Importance of Mental Health in Relation to Career Success

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	4	4%
Disagree	4	4%
Neutral	4	4%
Agree	36	33%
Strongly agree	60	55%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- A significant majority agree that mental health is as important as career success. This reflects a holistic understanding of success, where psychological well-being is not compromised for professional growth. It emphasizes the need for supportive and employee-friendly workplace policies.

5.11 To what extent do you agree with this statement: “Success means having personal freedom and flexibility.”

Table 5.11.1 – Perception of Success as Personal Freedom and Flexibility

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	6%
Disagree	8	7%
Neutral	18	17%
Agree	34	31%
Strongly agree	42	39%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Most respondents associate success with personal freedom and flexibility. This shows a shift from traditional definitions of success toward more autonomy-driven and lifestyle-oriented goals. It indicates the importance of flexible work structures for this generation.

5.12 Work-life balance is more important to me than a high salary.

Table 5.12.1 – Work-life Balance Preference over High Salary

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	6%
Disagree	2	2%
Neutral	18	17%
Agree	48	44%
Strongly agree	34	31%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- A significant majority prefer work-life balance over high salary, indicating that quality of life and personal time are key priorities. While financial stability remains important, it is not the sole determinant of job satisfaction for Generation Z.

5.13 When choosing a company, what attracts you most?

Table 5.13.1 – Factors Attracting Gen Z to a Company (Company Reputation, Salary, CSR, etc.)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Company reputation	60	17.65%
Salary package	62	18.24%
Work environment	76	22.35%
Career advancement	67	19.71%
Social values	45	13.24%
Leaderships & Management style	30	8.82%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Work environment and career advancement emerge as the most important factors when choosing a company, followed by salary and reputation. This indicates that Gen Z values growth opportunities and supportive workplace more than traditional incentives alone.

5.14 Which type of work environment do you prefer?

Table 5.14.1 – Preferred Type of Work Environment (Office-based, Remote, Hybrid)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Office-based	46	43%
Remote	16	14%
hybrid	46	43%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Preferences are evenly divided between office-based and hybrid work models, with fewer respondents favoring fully remote work. This suggests that Gen Z values both flexibility and in-person interaction, indicating the importance of balanced work arrangements.

5.15 Do you prefer workplaces that allow self-expression in appearance and ideas? (Flexible dress code, expressing ideas for better innovation and teamwork)

Table 5.15.1 – Preference for Self-expression in Workplace (Dress Code and Ideas)

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	86	79%
No	4	4%
Sometimes	4	4%
Maybe	14	13%

(Source-Field Survey)

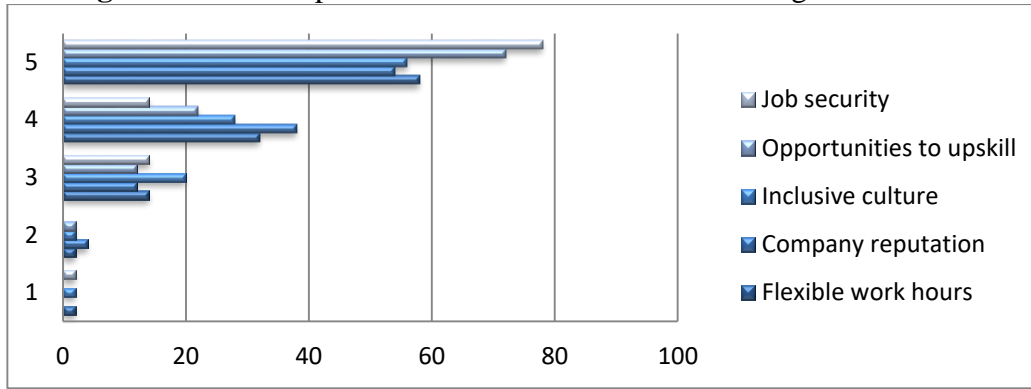
Interpretation- A large majority of respondents prefer workplaces that allow self-expression in both appearance and ideas. This reflects the importance of individuality, creativity and psychological safety in the workplace, which can enhance engagement and innovation.

5.16 How important are these factors in choosing a job? (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)

Table 5.1.16 – Importance of Job-related Factors (Flexible Hours, Reputation, Inclusivity, Upskilling and Job Security)

Factors / Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Flexible work hours	2	2	14	32	58
Company reputation	0	4	12	38	54
Inclusive culture	2	2	20	28	56
Opportunities to upskill	0	2	12	22	72
Job security	2	0	14	14	78

(Source-Field Survey)

Figure 5.16.1 – Importance of Job-related Factors among Generation Z

Interpretation- Job security and opportunities for upskilling are rated as the most important factors, followed by flexible hours and inclusive culture. This indicates that Gen Z seeks both stability and continuous growth in their careers.

5.17 How do you prefer feedback from your manager/supervisor?

Table 5.17.1 – Preferred Feedback Style from Manager/Supervisor

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Frequent & informal	24	22%
Periodic & formal	64	59%
Only when necessary	20	19%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Most respondents prefer periodic and structured feedback, while a smaller group favors informal or minimal feedback. This suggests that while consistency is important, flexibility in communication styles is also necessary.

5.18 I believe in changing jobs if I don't find purpose or growth.

Table 5.18.1 – Willingness to Change Jobs without Purpose or Growth

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	6%
Disagree	8	7%
Neutral	12	11%
Agree	58	22%
Strongly agree	24	54%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- A majority express willingness to change jobs if they do not find purpose or growth. This highlights a strong focus on meaningful work and career development, along with lower long-term attachment to organizations.

5.19 How long do you plan to stay in your first or current job?

Table 5.19.2 – Duration Respondents Plan to Stay in First/Current Job

Options	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 year	14	13%
1-3 years	64	59%
3-5 years	28	26%
More than 5 years	2	2%

(Source-Field Survey)

Interpretation- Most respondents plan to stay in their first job for 1–3 years, indicating a preference for gaining experience before moving on. This reflects a dynamic and exploratory career approach.

VI. FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents belong to the 22–25 age group, indicating representation of early-stage professionals and students transitioning into the workforce.
- The sample is female-dominated, which may influence perspectives related to workplace expectations and work-life balance.
- Most respondents are postgraduates, reflecting a highly educated group with higher career aspirations and expectations.
- A large proportion of respondents are students or interns, indicating that the study mainly reflects expectations rather than actual long-term work experience.
- Generation Z identifies itself as creative, adaptable and independent, highlighting their innovative and flexible nature.
- Career growth, financial stability and mental well-being are considered highly important values by respondents.
- A majority prefer a balanced approach toward work and personal life, rather than prioritizing one over the other.
- Respondents show high dependence on digital tools and technology for learning and work activities.
- Recognition and appreciation are considered strong motivators, almost as important as financial rewards.
- Most respondents agree that mental health is as important as career success, reflecting a holistic view of well-being.
- Success is largely defined by personal freedom, flexibility and growth, rather than traditional measures alone.
- A significant number prefer work-life balance over high salary, indicating a shift in priorities.
- Work environment and career advancement are the most important factors when choosing a company.
- Respondents prefer office-based and hybrid work models, showing the need for both flexibility and interaction.
- A large majority prefer workplaces that allow self-expression and individuality.
- Job security and opportunities for upskilling are highly valued by respondents.
- Most respondents prefer structured and periodic feedback from managers.
- A majority are willing to change jobs if they do not find purpose or growth opportunities.
- Most respondents plan to stay in a job for 1–3 years, indicating a dynamic and flexible career approach.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations must redesign their human resource practices to align with the evolving expectations of Generation Z. The following recommendations are proposed based on the findings of the study:

- **Adopt flexible work policies:**
Organizations should implement hybrid and flexible work models that allow employees to maintain a balance between professional and personal life. Flexibility in working hours and location can enhance productivity and job satisfaction among Gen Z employees.
- **Prioritize employee mental well-being:**
Companies must introduce mental health initiatives such as counseling services, stress management programs and wellness activities. Creating a supportive and psychologically safe work environment is essential for sustaining employee engagement.
- **Provide continuous learning and development opportunities:**
Since Gen Z values growth and upskilling organizations should invest in training programs, online learning platforms and career development initiatives to enhance employee capabilities and retention.
- **Implement recognition and reward systems:**
Regular appreciation, feedback and recognition programs should be integrated into organizational practices. Non-monetary rewards such as acknowledgment and career advancement opportunities are equally important as financial incentives.
- **Foster an inclusive and open work culture:**
Organizations should promote diversity, equality and inclusion by encouraging self-expression and

respecting individual differences. A culture of openness and acceptance can significantly improve employee satisfaction.

- **Strengthen organizational communication:**

Structured and transparent communication channels should be established. Managers should provide periodic and constructive feedback to ensure clarity, motivation and performance improvement.

- **Focus on career growth and advancement opportunities:**

Clear career paths, promotion policies and skill-based progression should be defined to meet the aspirations of Gen Z employees who prioritize growth and development.

- **Enhance workplace environment and culture:**

Organizations should create a positive and engaging work environment that encourages collaboration, creativity and innovation, as workplace culture plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining Gen Z talent.

- **Align organizational values with social responsibility:**

Companies should actively engage in CSR activities and demonstrate ethical practices, as Gen Z prefers organizations that contribute positively to society.

- **Develop retention strategies:**

Since Gen Z shows a higher tendency to switch jobs organizations must focus on employee engagement, meaningful work and growth opportunities to improve retention rates.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The present study provides valuable insights into the personality traits and workplace expectations of Generation Z, a generation that is gradually transforming the dynamics of the modern workforce. The findings reveal that Gen Z individuals are highly ambitious, adaptable and value-driven, with a strong inclination toward both professional growth and personal well-being. Unlike previous generations, they do not define success solely in terms of financial achievements but consider factors such as mental health, work-life balance, flexibility and meaningful work as equally important.

The study highlights that Generation Z prefers a balanced approach toward work and life, emphasizing flexibility in work arrangements such as hybrid and office-based models. Their strong reliance on digital tools reflects their identity as digital natives, making technological integration an essential component of organizational practices. Additionally, recognition, appreciation and opportunities for continuous learning play a significant role in motivating this generation.

Another important observation is the relatively high job mobility among Gen Z, as they are willing to change jobs in search of better growth opportunities, purpose and job satisfaction. This indicates that organizations need to move beyond traditional retention strategies and focus on creating engaging, inclusive and growth-oriented work environments.

In conclusion organizations must adopt employee-centric and flexible strategies to effectively attract, engage and retain Generation Z. Aligning organizational values with employee expectations, promoting mental well-being and providing opportunities for continuous development are crucial for building a future-ready workforce. The study underscores the importance of understanding generational differences and adapting organizational practices accordingly to ensure long-term sustainability and success.

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