



Workplace Commitment across Generations: A Study on Millennials vs. Gen Z

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Abstract

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In today's rapidly evolving workforce, understanding generational differences in organizational commitment is crucial for businesses striving to enhance employee engagement and retention. This study examines workplace commitment across generations, specifically comparing Millennials and Generation Z, to explore the factors influencing their organizational loyalty. The research focuses on key questions, including the unique determinants of Generation Z's organizational commitment, their attitudes toward work and workplace values, and the extent to which leadership style, organizational culture, and work-life balance impact their commitment levels.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study integrates survey data and qualitative insights to analyze generational differences in workplace expectations and drivers of engagement. Findings suggest that while both Millennials and Generation Z value career growth, meaningful work, and workplace flexibility, Gen Z places a stronger emphasis on technology integration, mental well-being support, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Additionally, leadership transparency, work-life balance, and corporate social responsibility play pivotal roles in fostering Gen Z's commitment to their organization.

The study also highlights strategies organizations can implement to retain and engage Generation Z employees, including personalized career development plans, inclusive workplace policies, and flexible work arrangements. By understanding these generational preferences, organizations can design effective policies that promote long-term employee commitment and drive organizational success.

I. Introduction

The study of organizational behavior has long been interested in organizational commitment. Understanding how commitment differs across generations is crucial, as the workplace increasingly comprises a mix of generations. Gen Z (born 1997–2012) and Millennials (born 1981–1996) are two of the most significant generations in the workforce today. The disparity in values, expectations, and attitudes toward work between these two cohorts may affect their job commitment.

The desire for meaningful work, flexible scheduling, and a strong emphasis on work-life balance are characteristics that frequently define millennials. When choosing a job, they are renowned for prioritizing social responsibility and professional advancement. In contrast, Gen Z is a digital native generation that prioritizes financial independence, stability, and security. Millennials and Gen Z may have distinct perspectives on corporate loyalty, as Gen Z places greater value on social impact and work-life balance.

In light of these distinctions, it is imperative to investigate how Millennials and Gen Z perceive workplace

commitment and what motivates or deters commitment in both populations. The purpose of this study is to examine generational differences to contribute to the body of knowledge on organizational commitment.

Organizational dynamics have changed as Generation Z (born 1997–2012) has entered the workforce. As digital natives, they have demands and preferences regarding organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and workplace culture. Employee retention, productivity, and success all depend on organizational commitment, which is the emotional bond employees have with their company. Organizations looking to retain top talent and adapt to changing workplace trends must understand how Generation Z's attitudes and behaviors shape organizational commitment.

It can be challenging for modern managers to adapt HRM practices to the demands of the many generations of employees now working in organizations. Employees' work habits, needs, and expectations are, in fact, influenced by several sociocultural and economic elements that impact their development, education, and upbringing. The status of workers in the internal (organizational) and external labour markets changes concurrently. Over time, the labor market turns into an employee market (Górnjak et al., 2022). In the knowledge-based economy, where human capital is becoming increasingly important, companies seek dedicated and innovative workers who are willing to actively contribute to organizational success, as their dedication is one of the main factors affecting success or failure.

Given the escalating labor shortage, a strategy of age diversity and the strengthening of employees' organizational commitment across generations ought to be a fundamental component of modern human resource management. Due to rapid advances in knowledge and technology over the past three decades, as well as socioeconomic change, businesses now face significant age diversity and generational differences that manifest in attitudes and behaviors. The success of HRM policy in this context depends critically on identifying the unique traits of the various generations and tailoring it to their needs.

a. Research Questions

1. What factors influence Generation Z's organizational commitment?
2. How do Generation Z's attitudes toward work and workplace values differ from those of previous generations?
3. To what extent do factors such as leadership style, organizational culture, and work-life balance contribute to Generation Z's commitment to their organization?
4. How can organizations retain and engage Generation Z through strategies that promote organizational commitment?

II. Organisational commitment

Research on organizational commitment began in the early 1960s. Becker (1960) was the first to present an all-encompassing conceptual framework. His method states that employees' organizational commitment is determined by the personal investments they make to stay with the company and the losses they would incur if they left (Cohen, 2007). He also made a distinction between attitudinal and calculative commitment. The importance of its emotional component was emphasized by Buchanan (1974), who further defined organizational commitment as the emotional attachment of an employee to the organization's goals and values, as well as to his role in achieving them.

Later on in the organizational commitment research, this emotional component of organizational commitment was also highlighted by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979), who asserted that an employee's identification with the organization and the strength of their relationships with it constitute organizational commitment. Nonetheless, they mostly used the social exchange theory as a foundation for this idea. Organizational commitment has since been defined as a particular mentality or condition that defines an employee's relationship with an organization (Houfak Khoufak, Nouri, 2023). Throughout the 1980s, a multifaceted approach to organizational commitment gained popularity.

Two aspects of commitment, psychological attachment and instrumental exchange were distinguished by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986). According to them, an employee's psychological commitment to the company is what fosters a deeper bond, whereas the exchange process merely produces a surface-level attachment.

Meyer and Allen (1984) started researching this phenomenon during this time. According to their definition, an employee's positive sentiments of attachment and identification with the organization constitute organizational commitment. They developed a measurement tool and proposed their three-component model in a subsequent study in the 1990s (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Their idea remains one of the most well-liked and widely acknowledged methods of organizational commitment despite several debates. As a result, many studies that examined the key elements of organizational commitment, its different determinants, and its outcomes (e.g., Steijn and Leisink, 2006; Fu, Bolander, and Jones, 2009; Cesinger et al., 2023) continued their work.

The relationship employees have with their organization is known as organizational commitment. In general, dedicated employees feel a sense of belonging, understand the organization's objectives, and feel connected to the organization. These workers have the added benefit of being more proactive in offering assistance, more driven in their work, and comparatively productive.

The organizational commitment model proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990) is among the most well-known and widely applied. Additionally, it has been effectively proven in earlier Polish empirical studies (Bańka, Bazińska, Wołowska, 2002). This particular model consists of three unique elements of organizational commitment. Affective Commitment: Employee perceptions of their emotional connection to, identification with, and involvement with their organization and its objectives are referred to as affective commitment. It arises from and is prompted by a congruence of values inside the organization and among its members. Because of this, it is virtually natural for the person to develop an emotional bond with the organization and take pleasure in remaining a member (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Meyer & Allen, 1984). Affective commitment is preceded by variables that create intrinsically gratifying settings for employees, according to Steers (1977). Task significance, autonomy, identity, range of talents, feedback on job performance, and perceived organizational support or dependence are some examples of these elements.

Continuance Commitment: Continuance commitment is a concept that describes how employees perceive the costs of leaving the organization. Personal nontransferable investments, such as close working relationships with coworkers, retirement and career investments, acquired job skills specific to a particular organization, years of employment in a particular organization, involvement in the community where the employer is located, and other benefits that make it too expensive to leave and look for work elsewhere, represent the willingness to stay in an organization. According to Meyer and Allen (1974), employees find it extremely difficult to leave an organization if they are committed to the organization.

Normative Commitment-Normative commitment describes how employees feel about their duty to their company. The "generalized value of loyalty and duty," as Wiener (1982) defined it, is frequently the root of this sense of duty. Because of socialization in a society that values commitment and loyalty to institutions, there is an almost innate tendency to be committed to and loyal to institutions like family, marriage, country, religion, and job organizations. This perspective on commitment holds that a person acts in a committed manner only when they feel it is morally and ethically right to do so.

a. Factors affecting organizational commitment include

1. Work-Life Balance – The extent to which Gen Z employees feel they can balance professional and personal life.
2. Job Satisfaction – Their level of satisfaction with job roles, responsibilities, and work culture.
3. Career Growth and Development Opportunities – The importance Gen Z places on training, mentorship, and career progression.
4. Workplace Flexibility – Preferences regarding remote work, flexible hours, and hybrid work models.
5. Technology Integration – How well technology supports their efficiency and engagement at work.
6. Leadership and Management Style – The role of supportive and transparent leadership in organizational commitment.
7. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – How inclusivity impacts their loyalty to the organization.
8. Sense of Purpose and Meaningful Work – The alignment of personal values with organizational goals.
9. Compensation and Benefits – The impact of salary, perks, and financial incentives on their commitment.
10. Organizational Culture and Values – The importance of ethical practices, teamwork, and communication in engagement.
11. Employee Recognition and Feedback – The role of appreciation and constructive feedback in retaining Gen Z employees.
12. Job Security and Stability – Their perception of long-term career security within the organization.
13. Mental Health and Well-being Support – The availability of mental health resources and support.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Generation Z's traits and organizational commitment. It will specifically examine how workplace culture, leadership style, work-life balance, and employment flexibility affect their emotional attachment to companies. With the help of this study, employers will better understand how organizational commitment varies by generation and adjust their policies and procedures to engage and retain Gen Z and Millennial workers. Businesses can improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover, and strengthen corporate culture by understanding the distinctive elements that motivate commitment within each group.

III. Generation Z and Millennials

Millennials are defined as those born between 1981 and 1996, though some sources may differ by 1 or 2 years. William Strauss and Neil Howe initially adopted it in their 1991 book *Generations* because they thought it was a fitting moniker for the first generation to enter maturity in the new century. The generation that falls between Generation Z (born from about 1997 to the early 2010s) and Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) is known as the millennial generation.

The first generation to incorporate various forms of digital technology into their everyday lives is millennials. They use social media to network on LinkedIn, date on apps like Tinder, Bumble, and Hinge, shop on Amazon and other websites, keep up with friends on Facebook and Instagram, and consume entertainment on YouTube, Spotify, Netflix, Hulu, and other platforms. Irish writer Sally Rooney, dubbed "the first great millennial novelist," deftly depicts the kinds of electronic and text-based discussions that young people engage in and how they sometimes lead to misunderstandings and social isolation. Millennials aren't only passive digital users, though. Its primary motivators are these. Over the past 10 years, Mark Zuckerberg, one of the most well-known millennials, transformed Facebook from a student directory into a significant and powerful social networking platform. Zhang Yiming, the inventor of TikTok, and Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, the founders of Instagram, are examples of other millennial visionaries. Like their more experienced coworkers, millennials are dedicated to their jobs. Good work-life balance and an engaging job are important to millennials. Overwhelming work expectations are not worth sacrificing one's personal life for.

Millennials are prepared to forgo promotions and salary raises in exchange for a more flexible work schedule. Production, not the amount of time spent in an office, should be the key indicator of success. Millennials want to feel valued and supported by their employers and superiors. More chances for skill development are what millennials desire. These consist of interpersonal, collaboration, and technology skills.

People born in 1996–2006 are referred to as Generation Z. They fall between Generation Alpha and millennials, making them the second-youngest generation. The digital era, climate fear, a changing financial situation, and COVID-19 have all influenced Gen Z identity. "Digital natives" are the first generation to have grown up on the Internet. America's late 1990s and early 2000s generation is referred to as Generation Z. Because distinguishing between generations and their zeitgeists can be challenging, some publications cite the precise year range of 1997–2012; however, this is sometimes disputed. The millennial generation, commonly referred to as Generation Y, came before Generation Z. Generation X was the first generation to receive a letter. As Generation Z approaches the conclusion of the conventional Latin alphabet, Generation Alpha—the first generation to be given a Greek letter—takes its place. Gen Z is the first generation to be truly digital natives. Gen Zers have lived their whole lives linked online, unlike millennials, who saw the Internet's ascent while still using landlines and cable television. The majority of them grew up in an era when social media and streaming entertainment were widely available, and none recall life before cellphones. In contrast to earlier generations, people engage with the Internet and with one another through it in distinct ways. Gen Zers spend at least six hours a day on their phones throughout Asia, and they are well-known for working, shopping, dating, and forming friendships online. Gen Zers are more interested in anonymous social media platforms like Snapchat and Whisper, which let users limit their audience and have messages vanish after the person who received them thinks about them. Millennials are known for posting extremely personal content on social media, including blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. The difference in both the generation is listed below in Table 1.

In general, Gen Zers hold strong beliefs about sustainability and racial fairness. Young people's involvement is essential to movements like the Global Climate March, which Gen Z campaigner Greta Thunberg spearheaded. One of the concerns that Gen Zers are most concerned about is climate change. To avert such tragedies, they regularly demand reform at the personal, societal, and international levels. The majority of Gen Z expects businesses and organisations to make sustainability pledges, and many Gen Zers identify as environmentally conscientious. Additionally, Gen Z is living through a period of financial difficulties and quickly increasing inflation. Many people in this age are also afflicted by rising student loan debt.

Table 1 Key Differences Between Millennial and Gen Z

Basis	Millennial	Gen Z
Age Range	1980-1996	1996-2012
Technology	Traditional Methods but are Tech savvy	Digital Natives, More explored to technology

Communication	Prefer formal Communication over e-mail	Prefer In-Person Discussion over remote communication
Work Satisfaction	Work for Need and Purpose	Value Money and Job Security
Feedback	They Value timely Feedback	They have a tendency of “Fear of Missing out” hence want instant Feedback
Job Orientation	Value work and consider work for life	Consider work as a part of life hence are oriented towards more Work Life Balance.
Work Structure	Prioritize Collaborative work environment and prefer traditional workplace	Prioritize autonomy and flexibility and prefer boundaryless workplace
Mode of Communication	They prefer Face to face Communication	They prefer Digital Communication
Identity	They are collective in approach at workplace	They are individualistic in approach at workplace

IV. Research Methodology

A survey design will be used to collect data from employees of different organizations as part of the research's quantitative methodology. To provide a comprehensive view of generational variations in organizational commitment, the study will focus on Gen Z and Millennial workers in a range of industries. This section presents the analysis of survey responses from 180 participants across different industries. The respondents are categorized into two generational units: Millennials and Generation Z. The analysis is structured into two key sections: Demographic Profile (Table 2) and Statistical Analysis (Table 2), followed by an in-depth interpretation of the findings.

Table 2 Demographic Profile of the respondents

Categories		Millennials		Gen Z		Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
No. of Respondents		40	35	55	50	180
Industry Sector	IT & Tech	10	8	15	12	45
	Finance & Banking	8	7	10	9	34
	Healthcare	5	6	7	8	26
	Education	6	5	8	7	26
	Retail & E-commerce	4	4	6	7	21
	Others		5	9	7	28
Education Level	Undergraduate	5	6	20	18	49
	Postgraduate	20	18	25	22	85
	Doctorate	3	2	1	2	8
	Professional Certifications	12	9	9	8	38
Work Experience (in years)	0-2 years	5	6	30	25	66
	3-5 years	10	8	15	14	47
	6-10 years	15	12	7	6	40
	11+ years	10	9	3	5	27

Table 3 Statistical Analysis

Factors	Millennials (Avg. Score)	Gen Z (Avg. Score)	Interpretation
Work-Life Balance & Flexibility	4.2	3.8	Millennials find better work-life balance than Gen Z.

Job Satisfaction & Career Development	4.0	3.6	Millennials feel more satisfied with career growth than Gen Z.
Workplace Culture & Leadership	4.1	3.7	Millennials have higher trust in leadership than Gen Z.
Compensation & Benefits	3.9	3.5	Gen Z is less satisfied with salary and benefits.
Technology & Work Efficiency	4.3	4.5	Gen Z adapts to technology faster than Millennials.
Meaningful Work & Job Security	3.8	3.4	Gen Z has concerns about job stability.
Mental Health & Well-being	3.7	3.5	Both groups feel workplace mental health support needs improvement.
Corporate Social Responsibility & Ethics	4.0	4.2	Gen Z values CSR more than Millennials.
Autonomy & Decision-Making	4.1	3.9	Millennials feel more empowered in decision-making.

V. Interpretation of result and discussion

The results highlight significant differences in workplace commitment between Millennials and Gen Z, shaped by their unique workplace expectations, experiences, and industry preferences. Millennials, who have more work experience, report higher satisfaction with job stability, career growth, and leadership support. They value structured career paths, competitive compensation, and clear professional growth opportunities. Their commitment to an organization is strongly linked to long-term career development and financial security.

On the other hand, Gen Z demonstrates a higher preference for flexibility, autonomy, and ethical workplace practices. They are more inclined toward remote work options, digital tools, and organizations that prioritize work-life balance and mental health support. While Millennials tend to trust leadership structures and hierarchical decision-making, Gen Z prefers transparency, open communication, and active involvement in workplace decisions.

In terms of compensation and benefits, Millennials are generally more satisfied with their earnings and rewards, whereas Gen Z perceives compensation as inadequate relative to their expectations. Gen Z is also more driven by meaningful work and social responsibility, making corporate ethics, sustainability, and diversity key factors influencing their commitment. However, both groups agree that workplace mental health support needs to be enhanced, indicating an increasing awareness of employee well-being.

The use of technology is another distinguishing factor, with Gen Z quickly adapting to digital tools and workplace innovations. While both generations recognize the importance of technology in enhancing productivity, Gen Z sees it as an essential part of work efficiency and engagement. Millennials, in contrast, value technology but still place a higher emphasis on traditional workplace interactions and stability.

These findings suggest that organizations need to adopt a multi-generational approach to workplace policies. Providing flexible work arrangements, career development programs, transparent leadership, fair compensation, and mental health support can help retain both Millennials and Gen Z employees. By recognizing the unique priorities of each generation, organizations can create a more engaging and productive work environment, leading to higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Also, the study reveals that flexibility, career growth opportunities, ethical leadership, work-life balance, and organizational culture primarily influence Gen Z's commitment. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z values workplace autonomy and prefers organizations that offer hybrid or remote work options. Technology adoption, mental health support, and meaningful work also play significant roles in their commitment, as they seek workplaces that align with their personal values and offer a sense of purpose.

Compared to Millennials, Gen Z is less focused on long-term job security and more driven by personal growth, work-life integration, and purpose-driven work. They expect open communication, diversity, and inclusive environments where their voices are heard. Unlike Millennials, who prioritize financial stability and structured career progression, Gen Z places higher importance on job satisfaction, ethical corporate practices, and mental health initiatives. Their preference for instant feedback and digital interactions further distinguishes them from older generations who may value traditional face-to-face interactions and hierarchical leadership structures.

The study highlights that Gen Z prefers transformational and participative leadership styles over authoritarian or rigid structures. They engage more with leaders who are mentors than with authoritative figures. An organizational culture that promotes collaboration, innovation, and inclusivity significantly impacts retention. Furthermore, work-life balance is a

crucial factor, as Gen Z seeks jobs that respect their personal time and allow them to pursue interests outside of work. Companies that fail to provide flexible working arrangements or mental health support often experience lower commitment levels from Gen Z employees.

Organizations can improve Gen Z retention by offering flexible work models, transparent communication, continuous learning opportunities, and mental health resources. Providing personalized career development paths, fostering an ethical and socially responsible workplace, and leveraging technology for efficient workflows can also enhance engagement. Recognition and reward systems tailored to individual achievements, rather than just tenure, are essential in maintaining their commitment. Lastly, companies that embrace diversity, sustainability, and a strong corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy tend to attract and retain Gen Z talent more effectively.

By aligning organizational practices with Gen Z's values and expectations, businesses can create an environment that fosters commitment, productivity, and long-term retention among the younger workforce.

VI. Conclusion

This study highlights key differences between Millennials and Gen Z in workplace expectations, experiences, and organizational commitment. Millennials feel more satisfied with their work-life balance, job security, and career growth opportunities. At the same time, Gen Z places higher importance on flexibility, ethical corporate practices, and digital work environments. Leadership plays a crucial role in commitment. Millennials generally trust leadership more, whereas Gen Z seeks greater transparency and involvement in decision-making.

Compensation and benefits are another key difference. While Millennials are relatively satisfied with their earnings, Gen Z often feels underpaid and undervalued. Both generations agree that mental health support needs improvement, showing a growing need for organizations to prioritize employee well-being. Additionally, Gen Z quickly adapts to technology but faces challenges in career growth and job stability compared to Millennials.

To enhance engagement and commitment, organizations should provide flexible work options, clear career development programs, transparent leadership, fair compensation, and stronger mental health support. Encouraging employee participation in decision-making and fostering an inclusive, tech-driven, and ethically responsible workplace will help meet the needs of both Millennials and Gen Z. By addressing these factors, businesses can create a balanced, motivated, and productive workforce.

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