

The Effect of Career Development on Turnover Intention through Job Satisfaction among Generation Z Employees

The Effect of Career Development on Turnover Intention

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Submitted:
April 9, 2026

Revised:
April 27, 2026

Accepted:
May 22, 2026

Published Online:
May 31, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the rising phenomenon of turnover intention among Generation Z employees within dynamic labor markets, focusing on career development and job satisfaction as pivotal determinants of retention. Utilizing a quantitative explanatory design, data were gathered from 186 Generation Z workers via an online structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability tests, and regression-based path analysis. The empirical findings demonstrate that career development exerts a positive, significant impact on job satisfaction, while conversely exerting a negative, significant influence on turnover intention. Furthermore, job satisfaction significantly diminishes turnover intention and functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between career development opportunities and employees' intention to leave. These insights indicate that robust organizational pathways for professional advancement substantially bolster job satisfaction, which subsequently mitigates the propensity of younger cohorts to seek external employment. Ultimately, the study concludes that structured career development serves as a critical strategic mechanism for organizations aiming to optimize workplace satisfaction and curtail voluntary turnover among the Generation Z workforce.

Keywords: Career Development, Employee Retention, Generation Z, Job Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The persistence of turnover intention has emerged as a strategic issue in human resource management, particularly within increasingly competitive and dynamic labor markets dominated by Generation Z. As a cohort that has matured in a fully digital environment, Generation Z exhibits distinctive workplace expectations compared to previous generations, including a strong emphasis on meaningful work, accelerated career development, recognition, work-life balance, and psychological well-being. These characteristics necessitate that organizations not only attract young talent but also retain them through adaptive and development-oriented management practices. In this context, turnover intention should not be viewed merely as an individual attitude, but as an early indicator of potential organizational challenges, such as talent loss, increased recruitment costs, and the disruption of operational stability (Yadewani & Wijaya, 2021; Maryam, 2025).

Among the human resource practices considered essential in mitigating turnover intention, career development plays a central role. Career development reflects an organization's efforts to provide opportunities for learning, competency enhancement, and long-term career planning. When employees perceive clear prospects for growth within the company, they are more likely to cultivate stronger attachment and commitment. For Generation Z employees, career development extends beyond vertical promotion to encompass continuous learning opportunities, mentoring, skill diversification, and transparent career pathways. Conversely, limited career development

JIMKES

Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen
Kesatuan
Vol. 14 No. 3, 2026
pp. 2595-2606
IBI Kesatuan
ISSN 2337 – 7860
E-ISSN 2721 – 169X
DOI: 10.37641/jimkes.v14i3.5287

support may lead to dissatisfaction, reduced engagement, and a stronger intention to seek alternative employment opportunities (Purwatiningsih & Sawitri, 2021; Benidikto et al., 2025).

The relationship between career development and turnover intention is closely associated with job satisfaction as an underlying psychological mechanism. Job satisfaction represents an employee's affective and cognitive evaluation of the extent to which their workplace expectations are fulfilled. Employees who perceive adequate support for career advancement tend to experience higher levels of job satisfaction, which subsequently strengthens emotional attachment and reduces withdrawal tendencies (Rahman & Syahrizal, 2019; Elian et al., 2020). In contrast, career stagnation can engender feelings of being undervalued alongside uncertainty regarding future prospects, ultimately diminishing job satisfaction and elevating turnover intention. Therefore, job satisfaction is positioned as a mediating variable that explains the mechanism through which career development influences an employee's intention to leave (Chang et al., 2007; Damayanti & Khatimah, 2025).

Despite the growing body of literature examining career development, job satisfaction, and turnover intention, several research gaps remain unaddressed. Many studies primarily focus on the direct relationships among these variables, while empirical investigations integrating them within a comprehensive mediation model remain limited (Adiputra & Milleny, 2024). Furthermore, prior research by Rahardyana and Satwika (2025) often includes Generation Z as part of a broader workforce sample rather than as the primary unit of analysis, making it difficult to isolate their unique characteristics and behavioral tendencies. Another gap lies in contextual relevance, as labor market conditions in emerging economies may uniquely shape how employees interpret career development and job satisfaction, thereby necessitating more context-specific research (Chen et al., 2004; Zalyaputri, 2025).

To address these identified gaps, the novelty of this study lies in integrating career development, job satisfaction, and turnover intention within a unified conceptual framework, positioning job satisfaction as a mediating variable and Generation Z employees as the primary unit of analysis. This study not only examines direct relationships but also elucidates the underlying psychological mechanisms driving employee retention behavior, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of how developmental practices influence the intent to leave. This approach contributes to the existing literature by offering a more specific generational perspective within human resource management studies (Dewi & Nurhayati, 2021; Pricilla & Martdianty, 2024).

The objectives of this research are to analyze the influence of career development on turnover intention, to test the impact of career development on job satisfaction, to examine the influence of job satisfaction on turnover intention, and to evaluate the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable in the relationship between career development and turnover intention among Generation Z employees. Consequently, this study is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions. It enhances the understanding of the relationships among key organizational behavior variables, particularly regarding mediation mechanisms. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for organizations in designing more effective human resource management strategies, specifically in formulating career development programs that enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention within the Generation Z workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Influence of Career Development

Career development is recognized as a strategic human resource management practice that plays a crucial role in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors. This practice encompasses organizational efforts to provide growth opportunities, including training, mentoring, promotions, and long-term career planning (Friska & Sandroto, 2025). From the perspectives of social exchange theory and human capital theory, organizational

investment in employee development is likely to be reciprocated through positive work attitudes, such as higher job satisfaction and stronger commitment (Nurhasanah, 2025). This indicates that career development not only enhances individual competencies but also contributes to more favorable perceptions of the organization.

Previous studies by Nawaz and Pangil (2016) and Muhaimin et al. (2025) have consistently demonstrated that career development exerts a positive effect on job satisfaction and a negative effect on turnover intention. Employees who perceive the availability of development opportunities tend to evaluate their jobs more positively and feel more valued. Conversely, limited career development may lead to perceptions of stagnation and increase the intention to leave the organization (Hadun & Perkasa, 2025; Santoso, 2025). In the context of Generation Z, who are highly oriented toward growth and continuous learning, career development becomes a critical factor in shaping both satisfaction and retention decisions (Lambert et al., 2001; Siti, 2025).

H1: Career development has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction.

H2: Career development has a negative and significant effect on turnover intention.

The Influence of Job Satisfaction on Turnover Intention

Job satisfaction refers to employees' affective and cognitive evaluation of their work experiences. This construct is influenced by various factors, including working conditions, supervision, recognition, and development opportunities (Alam & Asim, 2019; Tiara et al., 2025). Based on discrepancy theory and affective events theory, job satisfaction is formed through the alignment between employees' expectations and the realities they experience in the workplace (Novitiya & Putranta, 2025). Therefore, job satisfaction serves as an important indicator of the quality of the relationship between employees and the organization (Kuo et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2017).

Empirical literature by Kusuma et al. (2024) and Yaqin and Indradewa (2025) demonstrates that job satisfaction has a negative relationship with turnover intention. Employees who are satisfied tend to develop stronger emotional attachment and are less likely to leave the organization, whereas dissatisfaction often leads to the intention to seek alternative employment (Friska, 2024). This is consistent with withdrawal behavior models, which suggest that dissatisfaction is an initial stage leading to turnover intention (Irawati & Meilani, 2024). In the context of Generation Z, who are more sensitive to work experiences and external opportunities, job satisfaction becomes a critical factor in reducing turnover intention (Yang & Dini, 2023).

H3: Job satisfaction has a negative and significant effect on turnover intention.

The Influence of Job Satisfaction as a Mediating Variable

Beyond direct effects, the relationship between career development and turnover intention can also be explained through the mediating role of job satisfaction. Career development first influences how employees evaluate their job experiences, which subsequently affects their intention to stay or leave (Danendra & Rahyuda, 2019; Purnomo et al., 2025). Employees who perceive strong developmental support are more likely to feel satisfied because they see clear prospects and opportunities for growth (Friska & Sandroto, 2025; Muhaimin et al., 2025). This satisfaction then strengthens their attachment to the organization and reduces their intention to leave.

This mediating perspective is supported by studies suggesting that job satisfaction functions as a psychological mechanism linking organizational practices to employee behavior (Sihotang & Sitompul, 2024). Without the presence of job satisfaction, career development may not fully reduce turnover intention. This indicates that an employee's subjective evaluation of their work experience is crucial in determining the effectiveness of organizational policies (Kurniawanto et al., 2022). In the context of Generation Z, who place a strong emphasis on meaningful work experiences and development opportunities,

the mediating role of job satisfaction becomes even more significant in explaining employee retention dynamics (Karolina & Saryatmo, 2024).

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of career development on turnover intention.

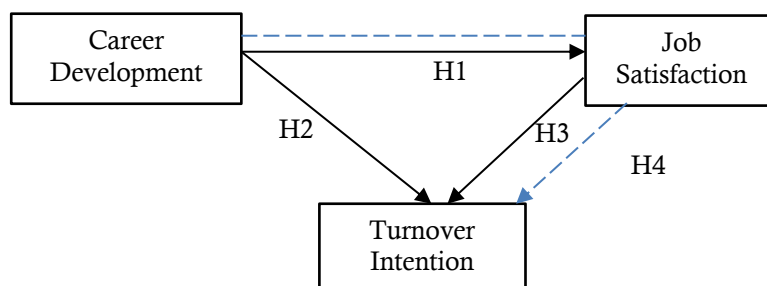


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, illustrating the relationships among career development, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. The framework proposes three direct relationships. Hypothesis 1 (H1) suggests that career development has a direct positive effect on job satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 (H2) proposes that career development directly affects turnover intention, while Hypothesis 3 (H3) posits that job satisfaction directly influences turnover intention. In addition, the framework includes an indirect relationship represented by Hypothesis 4 (H4), in which job satisfaction functions as a mediating variable between career development and turnover intention. This indicates that the effect of career development on turnover intention occurs not only through a direct pathway but also indirectly through enhanced job satisfaction, which serves as a psychological mechanism linking the two variables.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design aimed at examining causal relationships among variables, particularly the effect of career development on turnover intention, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable. This approach was selected as it enables empirical testing through statistical analysis to explain the relationships among the constructs under investigation. The unit of analysis was individual employees, as all variables were based on employees' perceptions and behavioral intentions within formal organizational contexts.

The variables measured in this study consisted of three main constructs: career development as the independent variable, job satisfaction as the mediating variable, and turnover intention as the dependent variable. Career development was operationalized through indicators reflecting employees' perceptions of growth opportunities, including training opportunities, promotion opportunities, career path clarity, and organizational support for long-term professional development. Job satisfaction was measured through employees' affective and cognitive evaluations of their work, including satisfaction with the job itself, supervision, recognition, and the work environment. Meanwhile, turnover intention was measured based on employees' tendencies to consider leaving their job, searching for alternative employment, and their intention to resign.

The population of this study consisted of Generation Z employees, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who have entered the workforce. To ensure data relevance, respondents were required to meet specific criteria: belonging to Generation Z, being actively employed, and having a minimum tenure of six months in their current organization. This study applied purposive sampling, as respondents were selected based on specific characteristics aligned with the research objectives, ensuring the collection of relevant and appropriate data. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed based on measurement indicators adapted from previous studies. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, was used to capture

respondents' levels of agreement. The questionnaire was distributed online via a survey platform, considering Generation Z's familiarity with digital technology. Before full distribution, the instrument was reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance, and a data screening process was conducted to include only complete and valid responses in the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages, including validity and reliability testing to ensure instrument quality, descriptive analysis to describe respondent characteristics, and inferential analysis to test the research hypotheses. The relationships among variables were examined using path analysis or regression techniques to identify both direct and indirect effects. Additionally, mediation analysis was performed to assess the role of job satisfaction in transmitting the effect of career development on turnover intention, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying behavioral mechanisms.

RESULTS

This section reports the results of the data analysis conducted to investigate the influence of career development on turnover intention, with job satisfaction serving as a mediating variable among Generation Z employees. The analytical procedures were performed through several stages, including the examination of respondents' demographic characteristics, descriptive statistical analysis, assessment of the validity and reliability of the research instrument, and inferential analysis to evaluate the proposed hypotheses as well as the mediation effect. A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed; however, only 186 responses were considered valid following the screening process, while the remaining questionnaires were excluded due to failure to meet the established criteria. The final sample size was regarded as sufficient for conducting multivariate analysis. To ensure adequate representation of the target population, respondents were categorized according to gender, age, educational background, length of employment, and type of organization.

Table 1. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	84	45.2%
	Female	102	54.8%
Age	21–23 years	79	42.5%
	24–26 years	91	48.9%
	27 years and above	16	8.6%
Education	Diploma	38	20.4%
	Bachelor's degree	126	67.7%
	Postgraduate	22	11.8%
Length of Employment	6–12 months	58	31.2%
	1–2 years	87	46.8%
	More than 2 years	41	22.0%
Type of Organization	Private sector	117	62.9%
	Public sector	29	15.6%
	Service/business sector	40	21.5%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents, indicating that the majority were female (54.8%) compared to male respondents (45.2%). In terms of age, most respondents were between 24 and 26 years (48.9%), followed by those aged 21–23 years (42.5%), while only a small proportion were aged 27 years and above (8.6%), confirming alignment with the Generation Z category. Regarding education, the majority held a bachelor's degree (67.7%), with the remainder having a diploma (20.4%) and postgraduate qualifications (11.8%). In terms of length of employment, most respondents had worked for 1–2 years (46.8%), followed by 6–12 months (31.2%), and more than 2 years (22.0%), suggesting sufficient experience to evaluate organizational practices. Most respondents were employed in the private sector (62.9%), while others worked in the

service/business sector (21.5%) and public sector (15.6%), indicating a relatively diverse organizational background.

The descriptive statistics reveal that career development and job satisfaction achieved relatively high mean scores, implying that the respondents generally regard their organizations as offering sufficient growth prospects and maintain favorable views of their professional roles. In contrast, turnover intention remains at a moderate level, suggesting that the desire to exit the organization is not pervasive across the entire sample. Furthermore, the standard deviation values for all variables remain within acceptable parameters, indicating a high degree of response consistency and minimal data dispersion. These preliminary results confirm that the dataset is sufficiently stable and appropriate for the subsequent inferential analyses detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Career Development	186	2.10	5.00	3.87	0.64
Job Satisfaction	186	2.00	5.00	3.79	0.69
Turnover Intention	186	1.40	4.80	2.91	0.73

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the research variables, revealing that career development attained the highest mean score (3.87), followed by job satisfaction (3.79). These figures suggest that the respondents generally maintain favorable perceptions of their professional growth prospects and overall work evaluations. Conversely, turnover intention yielded a lower mean score (2.91), indicating a moderate inclination among the sample to contemplate organizational exit. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.64 to 0.73, signify a relatively high degree of consensus among participants with minimal response dispersion. Furthermore, the distribution of minimum and maximum values across the entire measurement scale confirms that the data captures a comprehensive range of employee perspectives, thereby reinforcing its suitability for subsequent analytical procedures.

Prior to the formal testing of hypotheses, the integrity of the research instrument was rigorously evaluated through validity and reliability assessments. The analysis demonstrated that all measurement items achieved factor loading values surpassing 0.50 and maintained acceptable corrected item-total correlations, thereby confirming their construct validity. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the variables was substantiated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding the 0.70 threshold, indicating a high degree of reliability across all scales. Consequently, the instrument was deemed both robust and stable, establishing the suitability of the data for the subsequent inferential analyses presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Factor Loading Range	Cronbach's Alpha	Result
Career Development	5	0.711–0.842	0.861	Valid and Reliable
Job Satisfaction	5	0.694–0.826	0.847	Valid and Reliable
Turnover Intention	4	0.728–0.855	0.873	Valid and Reliable

To assess the nature and intensity of the associations between variables before conducting regression-based hypothesis testing, a correlation analysis was performed. The results indicated that career development shares a positive relationship with job satisfaction, suggesting that enhanced perceptions of professional growth coincide with higher satisfaction levels, while simultaneously maintaining a negative correlation with turnover intention, implying that robust developmental prospects are associated with a reduced desire to exit the organization. Similarly, job satisfaction exhibited an inverse relationship with turnover intention, indicating that satisfied employees are less inclined to consider resignation. While these initial findings offer preliminary validation for the conceptual framework, the inability of correlation to confirm causal trajectories or

mediating mechanisms necessitated the more rigorous inferential analyses detailed in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
1. Career Development	1.000	0.643	-0.512
2. Job Satisfaction	0.643	1.000	-0.598
3. Turnover Intention	-0.512	-0.598	1.000

Table 5 presents the first hypothesis, which proposes that career development has a positive effect on job satisfaction. The regression result showed that career development significantly influenced job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.643$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the better the employees perceived career development in their organizations, the higher their level of job satisfaction. Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported.

The second hypothesis proposed that career development has a negative effect on turnover intention. The analysis demonstrated that career development significantly and negatively affected turnover intention ($\beta = -0.254$, $p < 0.01$). This means that employees who perceived stronger career development opportunities were less likely to show an intention to leave the organization. Although the effect size was smaller than the effect on job satisfaction, the direction of the relationship was consistent with the theoretical expectation. Thus, the second hypothesis was supported.

The third hypothesis proposed that job satisfaction has a negative effect on turnover intention. The regression result showed that job satisfaction significantly and negatively influenced turnover intention ($\beta = -0.435$, $p < 0.001$). This finding confirms that employees who were more satisfied with their jobs had a lower tendency to think about leaving the organization. Among the direct predictors of turnover intention, job satisfaction showed a relatively stronger coefficient than career development. Therefore, the third hypothesis was supported.

The fourth hypothesis proposed that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between career development and turnover intention. The mediation test showed that career development had a significant indirect effect on turnover intention through job satisfaction (indirect effect = -0.280 , $p < 0.001$). In the presence of job satisfaction as a mediator, the direct effect of career development on turnover intention remained significant but decreased in magnitude. This indicates partial mediation. In other words, career development reduced turnover intention both directly and indirectly through its positive influence on job satisfaction. Accordingly, the fourth hypothesis was also supported.

Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta Coefficient	t-statistic	P-value	Decision
H1	Career Development → Job Satisfaction	0.643	11.284	<0.000	Supported
H2	Career Development → Turnover Intention	-0.254	-3.417	0.001	Supported
H3	Job Satisfaction → Turnover Intention	-0.435	-5.926	<0.000	Supported
H4	Career Development → Job Satisfaction → Turnover Intention	-0.280	4.987	<0.000	Supported (Partial Mediation)

The coefficient of determination reveals that career development accounts for 41.3% of the variance in job satisfaction, while the combination of career development and job satisfaction explains 46.8% of the variance in turnover intention, indicating that the model possesses moderate explanatory power. Although external factors beyond the scope of this study likely influence turnover intention, these specific variables provide a substantial contribution to understanding the withdrawal tendencies of Generation Z employees. Ultimately, the results demonstrate that career development serves as a significant factor

in mitigating turnover intention, functioning through both direct influence and indirect mediation via job satisfaction.

These findings emphasize that individuals who perceive robust opportunities for professional advancement typically report elevated levels of job satisfaction and a decreased propensity for organizational exit. The identified mediating role of job satisfaction confirms that employees' psychological appraisals of their professional experiences act as a critical conduit linking institutional practices to retention results. Moreover, job satisfaction functions as a primary catalyst that amplifies the efficacy of career development initiatives, suggesting that organizations must go beyond merely offering programs; they must ensure these opportunities are perceived by the workforce as genuinely impactful and advantageous for their long-term career trajectories.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research substantiate previous academic inquiries identifying career development as a pivotal factor in mitigating turnover intention. Consistent with prior literature, the inverse relationship between developmental opportunities and the desire to leave suggests that personnel are more inclined to remain within organizations that offer transparent and sustained professional advancement. Essentially, career development serves as a strategic retention tool, symbolizing a firm's dedication to its workforce's long-term trajectory (Benidikto et al., 2025). This correlation is especially significant for Generation Z, a cohort defined by a profound emphasis on self-improvement, lifelong education, and structured career pathways (Tnay et al., 2013; Novarian & Ramli, 2020).

Moreover, the positive impact of career development on job satisfaction corroborates established scholarship, which posits that employees perceive their roles more positively when they encounter robust institutional support for growth. Provisions such as specialized training, mentorship programs, and defined promotional tracks elevate satisfaction levels by demonstrating an organization's investment in its human capital (Damayanti & Khatimah, 2025). This study underscores that for Generation Z, job evaluation is not merely a reflection of immediate working conditions but is heavily influenced by the prospective growth opportunities provided by the employer.

The research findings confirm that job satisfaction significantly reduces turnover intention, a result that aligns with established theoretical frameworks and empirical data identifying satisfaction as a primary driver of employee retention. When individuals experience high levels of job satisfaction, they typically cultivate a deeper emotional bond with their employer, which diminishes the likelihood of resignation. This observation corroborates the work of Purba and Ruslan (2020), who argue that declining satisfaction levels often function as a precursor to heightened turnover. For Generation Z, maintaining satisfaction is particularly vital, as this demographic is notably sensitive to discrepancies between their professional expectations and reality.

A significant contribution of this research is the evidence that job satisfaction acts as a partial mediator between career development and the intention to leave. This suggests that the impact of developmental initiatives on retention is not merely direct but is processed through the psychological state of the employee (Rahardyana & Satwika, 2025). Career development programs are most potent in curbing turnover when they successfully foster a sense of fulfillment within the workforce. By establishing job satisfaction as a critical explanatory bridge, this study advances existing literature on how strategic human resource practices translate into improved retention outcomes.

Furthermore, these results resonate with research highlighting the necessity of synchronizing organizational strategies with the specific expectations of different age cohorts. Generation Z is frequently characterized by increased mobility and a proactive tendency to exit organizations that neglect their professional growth requirements. Consequently, firms that lack transparent career progression frameworks are prone to higher attrition rates. This reinforces the assertion that retention initiatives must be tailored to generational nuances, as conventional methods may prove insufficient for engaging and retaining younger talent (Pricilla & Martdianty, 2024).

This study validates prior scholarship while simultaneously advancing the field by synthesizing career development, job satisfaction, and turnover intention into a unified mediation framework specifically for Generation Z (Hidayah & Ananda, 2021). In doing so, it broadens the academic understanding of retention dynamics within a rapidly shifting labor market. The results emphasize that career advancement and job fulfillment are interdependent elements that fundamentally influence an employee's commitment to their organization.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research establishes that career development plays a fundamental role in minimizing turnover intention among Generation Z employees, operating through both direct pathways and indirect mediation via job satisfaction. The data suggest that individuals who recognize superior professional growth prospects are more likely to report higher levels of job fulfillment and a reduced desire to resign. These findings affirm that career development transcends mere skill enhancement, acting as a critical strategic lever for retention. Specifically, the study highlights the mediating function of job satisfaction, indicating that developmental initiatives are most impactful when they successfully foster a positive evaluation of the overall work experience. Consequently, it is recommended that organizations implement transparent career trajectories, ongoing educational opportunities, and a supportive atmosphere to bolster satisfaction and secure the loyalty of the Generation Z workforce.

Despite these insights, the study acknowledges certain methodological constraints. The cross-sectional nature of the research precludes a definitive explanation of long-term causal dynamics, and the reliance on self-reported metrics may introduce common method bias. Furthermore, the specific focus on Generation Z may restrict the applicability of these results to other demographic cohorts or varied institutional settings. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the study's validity, as the research instruments demonstrated robust reliability and the methodology was well-suited to the core objectives. Future academic inquiries should consider longitudinal or mixed-method designs and explore additional variables such as organizational commitment, leadership styles, work engagement, or perceived organizational support to cultivate a more comprehensive understanding of employee retention.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who supported the completion of this article, including academic colleagues, institutional support, and respondents who participated in this research.

FUNDING STATEMENT: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not - for - profit sectors.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: The author declares no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT: During the preparation of this work, the author used a generative AI-assisted language tool to improve language quality and sentence clarity. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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