

Talent Management in The Generation Z Era : Challenges and Retention Strategies in Modern Organizations

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ABSTRACT

The increasing dominance of Generation Z in the global workforce presents significant challenges and opportunities for modern organizations, particularly in the design of effective talent management and retention strategies. This study aims to analyze how talent management systems can be strategically restructured to address the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z and enhance long-term employee retention. A qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review method was employed, examining recent peer-reviewed studies focusing on Generation Z workforce behavior, organizational challenges, and retention practices. Data were analyzed through thematic synthesis to identify recurring strategic dimensions within contemporary talent management systems. findings reveal that retention in the Generation Z era depends on an integrated and value-aligned talent management framework encompassing digital recruitment, strategic onboarding, structured and personalized career development, inclusive and purpose-driven culture, flexible work arrangements, technological workplace infrastructure, and comprehensive total reward systems. The discussion highlights that retention outcomes improve when organizational systems align with Generation Z's expectations for flexibility, meaningful work, growth opportunities, and continuous feedback. In conclusion, effective retention of Generation Z requires systemic alignment across the entire talent lifecycle rather than isolated human resource interventions, ensuring sustainable engagement and organizational competitiveness in a rapidly evolving demographic landscape.

Keywords: Employee retention; Generation Z; Organizational agility; Talent management

INTRODUCTION

The global workforce is currently undergoing a profound demographic transition marked by the accelerated entry of Generation Z into modern organizations. Born approximately between 1997 and 2012, Generation Z is projected to constitute nearly 30 percent of the global workforce by 2030, while Baby Boomers continue to retire in large numbers each day, fundamentally reshaping organizational structures and labor market dynamics (Cantrell & Carr, 2024). This demographic shift is not merely quantitative but structural, influencing organizational culture, leadership expectations, and human resource management systems. Bibliometric analyses reveal a sharp increase in scholarly attention to Generation Z in the workplace since 2018, particularly within themes of workplace management, leadership transformation, and career development, indicating the growing urgency of understanding this cohort's organizational implications (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Consequently, talent management in the



Generation Z era emerges as a strategic imperative rather than an optional managerial adaptation.

Generation Z brings distinctive competencies and value orientations shaped by digital immersion, global interconnectedness, and socio-economic volatility. Research consistently highlights their advanced digital literacy, innovation orientation, and readiness to embrace agile and technology-driven work systems, positioning them as catalysts of digital transformation within organizations (Pratama et al., 2025; Simon et al., 2025; Lazar et al., 2023). Their familiarity with emerging technologies not only accelerates organizational digitalization but also influences expectations regarding communication speed, feedback mechanisms, and performance transparency. However, these strengths coexist with distinct workplace preferences that challenge traditional human resource models, necessitating reconfiguration of talent acquisition, development, and retention strategies.

Central to understanding Generation Z in the workplace is their value orientation. Empirical studies indicate that flexibility and work-life balance are fundamental priorities, driving preferences for hybrid arrangements, adaptive scheduling, and autonomy in task execution (Pratama et al., 2025; Roy et al., 2025). Unlike previous cohorts that often equated career success with hierarchical progression alone, Generation Z seeks meaningful and purpose-driven work, expecting organizations to articulate clear social impact, ethical commitments, and authentic value alignment (Simon et al., 2025; Kraght & Brøndum, 2025). Furthermore, continuous development opportunities, structured career pathways, mentoring systems, and role rotations are perceived as essential components of long-term engagement (Holban & Bedrule-Grigoruță, 2025; Muralidharan, 2025; Nakash, 2024). Inclusivity, diversity, and psychological safety also occupy a central place in their expectations, reinforcing the demand for empathetic leadership and trust-based organizational cultures (De Waal, 2025; Roy et al., 2025). These value orientations collectively redefine the strategic landscape of talent management.

Despite these strengths and potential contributions, organizations encounter significant challenges in managing and retaining Generation Z employees. One of the most pressing phenomena observed globally is increased turnover intention and relatively low long-term organizational commitment among this cohort. Studies consistently report that Generation Z demonstrates higher job mobility compared to previous generations, often viewing career progression as non-linear and open to frequent transitions (Pratama et al., 2025; Guslina et al., 2025). This phenomenon generates substantial costs for organizations, including recruitment expenses, onboarding inefficiencies, knowledge loss, and disruption of team cohesion. Retention therefore becomes a central managerial challenge in the Generation Z era.

Another critical challenge lies in the mismatch between generational expectations and traditional hierarchical organizational structures. Generation Z tends to expect rapid career advancement, participative decision-making, and high levels of autonomy. However, many organizations still operate within rigid bureaucratic frameworks that emphasize tenure-based progression and top-down leadership (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021; Kraght & Brøndum, 2025). This structural incongruence creates frustration, disengagement, and eventual turnover. Moreover, differences in communication styles and feedback preferences further intensify workplace friction. Generation Z prefers continuous feedback and open dialogue, whereas traditional performance management systems often rely on annual evaluations and formalized reporting processes (Muralidharan, 2025).

The issue of value misalignment and perceived gaps in soft skills further complicates talent management efforts. Research suggests that disparities between organizational expectations and Generation Z's perceptions of meaningful work may undermine collaboration and productivity if not carefully addressed (Kraght & Brøndum, 2025; Eßwein, 2025). Additionally, multi-generational workplaces create friction due to differing communication norms, motivational drivers, and interpretations of professional commitment. Effective intergenerational collaboration therefore requires adaptive leadership models and inclusive communication strategies (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Chaudhary et al., 2025). These challenges underscore the complexity of talent management in contemporary organizations characterized by generational diversity.

In response to these challenges, scholarship has proposed various strategic retention approaches tailored to Generation Z. Structured career development systems emerge as one of the most consistently supported strategies. Clear promotion pathways, mentoring programs, skill mapping, and continuous learning ecosystems are positively associated with engagement and loyalty among young employees (Simon et al., 2025; Kulkarni & Rai, 2023). Organizations that institutionalize learning agility and career transparency demonstrate stronger retention outcomes, particularly when development opportunities are personalized and competency-based (Holban & Bedrule-Grigoriuță, 2025; Guslina et al., 2025). Such systems reinforce perceptions of growth and fairness, mitigating early career turnover.

A second pillar of retention involves cultivating positive, inclusive, and trust-based organizational cultures. Empathetic leadership, symbolic recognition, ethical fairness, and participatory governance significantly enhance psychological attachment to the organization (Roy et al., 2025; Freitas & Ribáuè, 2025). Trust functions as a mediating mechanism linking leadership behavior with retention outcomes, especially among younger employees who prioritize authenticity and transparency (Kumari et al., 2025). Organizational climates that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion further strengthen commitment by aligning with Generation Z's value orientation (Pratama et al., 2025). This cultural dimension highlights that retention is not solely a compensation issue but a multidimensional relational process.

Flexibility and well-being constitute a third strategic dimension. Flexible work arrangements, mental health support systems, and psychologically safe environments significantly influence retention intention among Generation Z employees (Muralidharan, 2025; Roy et al., 2025). The integration of work and personal life is no longer perceived as a privilege but as a baseline expectation. Organizations that fail to institutionalize flexible policies risk being perceived as outdated or unsupportive, diminishing their attractiveness in competitive talent markets. Therefore, retention strategies must incorporate holistic well-being frameworks rather than focusing exclusively on financial incentives.

Compensation remains important but operates within a broader ecosystem of value alignment. Competitive salary and benefits packages are necessary to attract Generation Z talent, yet empirical evidence suggests that monetary incentives alone are insufficient to ensure long-term retention (Cantrell & Carr, 2024; Nakash, 2024). Instead, compensation must be integrated with transparent career narratives, developmental promises, and ethical commitments. This indicates that talent management requires systemic coherence across recruitment, onboarding, development, and performance management stages (Guslina et al., 2025; R & M, 2025).

Although existing literature identifies these strategic pillars, a notable research gap persists. Many studies examine individual aspects of Generation Z's workplace behavior, such as engagement, leadership expectations, or turnover intention, in

isolation. Others focus broadly on talent management without generational specificity. There remains limited integrative analysis that systematically connects demographic shifts, generational value orientation, organizational challenges, and comprehensive retention strategies within a unified talent management framework. Furthermore, much of the research is context-specific, lacking synthesis across diverse organizational environments. This fragmentation limits theoretical consolidation and practical applicability.

The novelty of this study lies in developing an integrative perspective that bridges demographic transformation, value-based expectations, and strategic talent management mechanisms specifically tailored to Generation Z in modern organizations. Rather than treating retention as a discrete HR function, this research conceptualizes retention as an outcome of systemic alignment between generational values and organizational design. By synthesizing empirical findings across leadership, culture, flexibility, career development, and compensation dimensions, this study proposes a coherent analytical framework that repositions talent management as a dynamic, generation-responsive system. This integrative approach contributes theoretically by consolidating dispersed insights into a structured model and practically by offering actionable guidance for modern organizations facing demographic transition.

Based on the aforementioned phenomenon, challenges, and research gap, the objective of this study is to analyze how talent management systems in modern organizations can be strategically restructured to address the unique characteristics of Generation Z and enhance long-term retention outcomes. Through this objective, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between generational values, organizational practices, and sustainable workforce engagement in the Generation Z era.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a Systematic Literature Review design to comprehensively analyze talent management practices in the Generation Z era and their implications for employee retention in modern organizations. The selection of this method is grounded in the objective of synthesizing empirical findings from diverse contexts in order to construct an integrative analytical framework. Data were collected through a structured search of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2025, focusing on keywords such as “Generation Z,” “talent management,” “employee retention,” “organizational culture,” and “workplace flexibility.” Academic databases such as Scopus-indexed journals, DOAJ-indexed journals, and other reputable international sources were prioritized to ensure credibility and relevance. Inclusion criteria consisted of empirical studies, theoretical models, and systematic reviews discussing Generation Z workforce characteristics, retention determinants, and strategic human resource management practices. Articles that did not directly address workplace or organizational contexts were excluded. The data collection technique followed identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages to ensure systematic selection and transparency.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis and integrative synthesis. Initially, selected articles were coded to identify recurring themes related to demographic shifts, generational work values, managerial challenges, and retention strategies. These codes were then categorized into broader analytical dimensions, including career development systems, leadership and organizational culture, flexibility and well-being, compensation alignment, and integrated talent management practices. Cross-study comparison was performed to examine patterns, theoretical consistencies, and contextual variations. The findings were subsequently interpreted through a strategic

talent management lens to develop a conceptual integration between generational characteristics and organizational retention mechanisms. This analytical procedure enabled the study to construct a coherent framework explaining how modern organizations can realign talent management systems to enhance Generation Z retention outcomes.



Figure 1. Diagram Conceptual Research

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following table presents the synthesized findings derived from the Systematic Literature Review conducted in this study. It summarizes the main thematic dimensions of talent management in the Generation Z era, the strategic indicators consistently identified across the literature, and their implications for employee retention in modern organizations.

Table 1. Thematic Synthesis of Talent Management Strategies for Generation Z Retention

No	Thematic Dimension	Key Strategic Indicators Identified in Literature	Implication for Retention Outcomes
1	Structured Career Development	Clear career pathways, mentoring systems, job rotation, continuous learning programs	Enhances engagement, perceived growth opportunities, and long-term organizational commitment

2	Inclusive and Trust-Based Organizational Culture	Empathetic leadership, participative decision-making, diversity and inclusion practices, psychological safety	Strengthens emotional attachment and reduces turnover intention
3	Flexibility and Well-being Support	Hybrid work models, flexible scheduling, mental health initiatives, work-life integration policies	Increases job satisfaction and organizational loyalty
4	Competitive and Value-Aligned Compensation	Fair salary structures, transparent reward systems, benefits aligned with employee values	Improves retention stability and perceived organizational justice
5	Integrated and Agile Talent Management System	Digital recruitment, structured onboarding, competency-based evaluation, continuous feedback mechanisms	Creates systemic alignment that sustains performance and long-term retention

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that talent management in the Generation Z era functions as a multidimensional and interconnected system rather than as isolated human resource practices. The thematic synthesis demonstrates that structured career development consistently correlates with stronger employee engagement and perceived professional growth. Generation Z employees are more likely to remain in organizations where career pathways are transparent and continuous learning opportunities are embedded within the organizational system. Growth visibility and developmental clarity emerge as central psychological drivers of long-term commitment.

In addition, organizational culture plays a crucial relational role in retention outcomes. Inclusive and trust-based environments significantly reduce turnover intention by fostering psychological safety and emotional belonging. Flexibility and well-being support further reinforce retention, highlighting that work-life integration has evolved from a supplementary benefit into a core organizational expectation for Generation Z. Although competitive compensation remains important, its impact on retention is amplified when aligned with organizational values and career development narratives. Overall, the results suggest that optimal retention outcomes occur when these dimensions operate within an integrated and agile talent management framework, indicating that retention in the Generation Z era is best understood as the result of systemic alignment between generational values and strategic organizational design.

Discussion

This study aims to analyze how talent management systems in modern organizations can be strategically restructured to address the unique characteristics of Generation Z and enhance long-term retention outcomes. Based on the systematic synthesis presented in Table 1, the discussion demonstrates that retention in the Generation Z era is not determined by a single organizational intervention but by an integrated and value-aligned talent management architecture that spans attraction, development, and employee experience stages.

One of the most critical findings relates to the systemic nature of talent management challenges across three interconnected stages: attracting, employing, and retaining Generation Z employees. Research consistently identifies these three points as high-risk phases in the talent lifecycle, each with distinct failure probabilities (Guslina et al., 2025; Cantrell & Carr, 2024). Organizations that fail to position themselves as digitally adaptive and value-driven at the attraction stage struggle to compete in talent markets characterized by intense employer branding visibility. Generation Z candidates evaluate organizations not only based on compensation but also on digital presence, ethical narratives, and perceived cultural authenticity. Employer branding that leverages social media platforms and communicates purpose-driven identity significantly increases organizational attractiveness among this cohort (Husein et al., 2025; Rahdarpour et al., 2025). Therefore, talent acquisition strategies must be digitally optimized and aligned with Generation Z's value orientation to ensure successful entry into the organizational system.

The digitalization of recruitment processes emerges as another decisive factor. Studies show that Generation Z expects seamless, technology-enabled recruitment experiences, including applicant tracking systems, AI-supported screening, video interviews, and simplified application mechanisms (Guslina et al., 2025; Husein et al., 2025). Traditional recruitment processes characterized by bureaucratic delays and rigid procedural requirements create negative early impressions, reducing organizational attractiveness. From a strategic perspective, digital recruitment is not merely an operational upgrade but a symbolic representation of organizational agility. It communicates technological maturity and responsiveness, two attributes highly valued by Generation Z. Thus, the integration of digital recruitment within broader talent management systems strengthens both attraction and early-stage retention by aligning procedural design with generational expectations.

Beyond attraction, the development stage plays a pivotal role in determining retention trajectories. The findings highlight that structured career development consistently correlates with higher engagement and long-term commitment. Generation Z employees exhibit high expectations for accelerated growth, continuous learning, and transparent career pathways (Dieguez & Loureiro, 2025; Muralidharan, 2025). When such expectations remain unmet, turnover intention rises significantly (Novanantha & Febriansyah, 2025). This short-term career horizon reflects not necessarily disloyalty but rather a rational evaluation of growth opportunities. Organizations that institutionalize mentoring programs, job rotations, competency mapping, and personalized development plans create a sense of progress visibility that stabilizes retention (Holban & Bedrule-Grigoruță, 2025; Laia & Palupiningtyas, 2025).

Strategic onboarding further reinforces this developmental foundation. Gamified onboarding processes and structured integration programs accelerate adaptation and enhance early productivity among Generation Z employees (Khamar & Kanchan, 2025; Mosca & Merkle, 2024). Early-stage organizational experiences significantly influence psychological attachment and perceived belonging. When onboarding emphasizes

clarity, feedback, and interactive engagement, it reduces uncertainty and strengthens commitment. Conversely, poorly structured onboarding increases disengagement and early turnover. Therefore, onboarding should be conceptualized as a strategic retention instrument rather than merely an administrative orientation process.

A central theme emerging from the synthesis concerns value alignment and purpose-driven organizational culture. Generation Z demonstrates strong orientation toward meaningful work, ethical responsibility, and societal contribution. Organizations that articulate clear corporate social responsibility initiatives and purpose-driven narratives are more likely to foster emotional attachment among young employees (Orero-Blat & Seguí, 2025; Sihite & Damanik, 2025). This value alignment operates as a psychological anchor, mitigating the high mobility tendency often associated with Generation Z. When employees perceive congruence between personal values and organizational mission, intrinsic motivation increases, leading to enhanced engagement and reduced turnover intention (Muralidharan, 2025).

However, value alignment must be supported by inclusive and psychologically safe environments. Research indicates that generational value gaps and differences in soft skill readiness may reduce engagement if not managed effectively (Kraght & Brøndum, 2025; Mosca & Merkle, 2024). Multi-generational workplaces require adaptive leadership capable of mediating communication differences and expectation mismatches. Participatory decision-making, empathetic leadership, and transparent communication practices strengthen trust and reduce intergenerational friction (Husein et al., 2025). This relational dimension underscores that talent management extends beyond formal HR systems into leadership behavior and organizational climate.

Flexibility and work-life balance represent another dominant determinant of retention outcomes. Empirical evidence demonstrates that hybrid work arrangements, flexible scheduling, and mental health support significantly enhance job satisfaction among Generation Z employees (Rahdarpour et al., 2025; Syafani et al., 2025). Unlike previous generations, Generation Z perceives flexibility not as a benefit but as an expectation embedded in contemporary work norms. Organizations that resist flexible models risk being perceived as outdated, leading to reduced attractiveness and increased turnover intention. Moreover, psychological well-being initiatives signal organizational care, reinforcing emotional attachment and long-term commitment (Sihite & Damanik, 2025).

Technology-enabled workplaces further amplify retention outcomes. Digital collaboration tools, mobile learning platforms, and integrated HR systems enhance productivity and create familiarity with digital ecosystems valued by Generation Z (Tathavadekar & Mahankale, 2025; Guslina et al., 2025). Technology functions both instrumentally and symbolically. Instrumentally, it improves efficiency and communication. Symbolically, it signals innovation orientation and adaptability. Organizations that invest in digital workplace infrastructure thus strengthen both functional engagement and psychological identification among Generation Z employees.

Compensation remains relevant but operates within a broader total reward framework. While competitive salaries and benefits are necessary baseline factors, research suggests that intrinsic rewards such as recognition, growth opportunities, and meaningful work significantly mediate retention decisions (Rahdarpour et al., 2025; Mabaso, 2025). Generation Z evaluates compensation within a holistic experience, balancing extrinsic rewards with personal development and value alignment. Therefore, total reward systems must integrate financial incentives with symbolic recognition and career progression pathways.

Personalized employee experience emerges as a distinguishing feature of effective talent management systems. Generation Z values customization in career pathways, reward structures, and well-being programs (Laia & Palupiningtyas, 2025). Standardized HR policies may fail to address diverse aspirations within this cohort. Personalization enhances perceived fairness and autonomy, reinforcing engagement. This shift toward individualized talent management reflects a broader transformation from administrative HR models to experience-centered human capital strategies.

Importantly, the findings collectively support the argument that retention is the outcome of systemic alignment rather than isolated practices. When attraction strategies, digital recruitment, structured onboarding, career development, inclusive culture, flexibility policies, technological infrastructure, and total reward systems operate cohesively, organizations create an integrated talent management ecosystem. This ecosystem aligns with Generation Z's expectations for digital fluency, personal growth, value congruence, and flexibility. Fragmented implementation, by contrast, weakens retention outcomes even if individual policies appear attractive.

The discussion thus answers the research objective by demonstrating that restructuring talent management systems requires comprehensive transformation across organizational levels. First, organizations must embed digitalization across recruitment, development, and performance management functions. Second, leadership models must transition toward participatory, empathetic, and trust-based approaches. Third, career systems must emphasize transparency, personalization, and continuous learning. Fourth, flexible work policies and well-being frameworks must be institutionalized rather than offered selectively. Finally, total reward systems must integrate intrinsic and extrinsic components aligned with organizational purpose.

The theoretical implication of this synthesis lies in reframing retention as a dynamic interaction between generational characteristics and organizational architecture. Generation Z's high mobility and short-term career orientation are not merely individual traits but responses to perceived misalignment within organizational systems (Dieguez & Loureiro, 2025; Novanantha & Febriansyah, 2025). By addressing alignment gaps through integrated talent management strategies, organizations can transform potential instability into sustainable engagement.

Practically, this study provides actionable insights for HR leaders and organizational decision-makers. It suggests that effective retention of Generation Z requires proactive system redesign rather than incremental adjustments. Organizations must evaluate coherence across their talent lifecycle, ensuring consistency between employer branding messages, recruitment experiences, development pathways, cultural narratives, and reward systems. Only through systemic integration can modern organizations achieve long-term retention and sustained performance in the Generation Z era.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that talent management in the Generation Z era demands digital sophistication, value alignment, personalization, and organizational agility. Retention is achieved not through singular policy interventions but through the orchestration of interconnected strategies that collectively respond to generational expectations. By strategically restructuring talent management systems along these dimensions, modern organizations can enhance employee engagement, reduce turnover intention, and secure sustainable competitive advantage in an evolving demographic landscape.

CONCLUSION

In response to the research objective of analyzing how talent management systems in modern organizations can be strategically restructured to address the unique characteristics of Generation Z and enhance long-term retention outcomes, this study concludes that effective retention in the Generation Z era requires an integrated, digitally driven, and value-aligned talent management framework. Retention is not determined by isolated HR practices but by systemic alignment across the entire talent lifecycle, including digital recruitment, strategic onboarding, structured and personalized career development, inclusive and purpose-driven organizational culture, flexible work arrangements, technological workplace infrastructure, and a comprehensive total reward system combining intrinsic and extrinsic incentives. When these dimensions operate cohesively, they create psychological alignment between organizational design and generational expectations, thereby strengthening engagement, organizational commitment, and sustainable performance. Conversely, fragmented or traditional approaches that fail to accommodate flexibility, growth visibility, and value congruence increase turnover intention among Generation Z employees. Therefore, modern organizations must adopt agile, personalized, and strategically integrated talent management systems to ensure long-term retention and competitiveness in the evolving demographic landscape.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study carry important theoretical and practical implications for modern organizations navigating demographic transformation. Theoretically, the study reinforces the perspective that employee retention in the Generation Z era should be conceptualized as a systemic outcome of strategic alignment between generational values and organizational design, rather than as a consequence of isolated human resource practices. It contributes to talent management literature by integrating digitalization, personalization, value congruence, and organizational agility into a unified retention framework. Practically, the study implies that organizational leaders and HR practitioners must shift from traditional, standardized talent management models toward digitally enabled, experience-centered, and purpose-driven systems that emphasize structured career development, flexible work policies, inclusive culture, and comprehensive total rewards. Organizations that adopt this integrative and adaptive approach are more likely to enhance engagement, reduce turnover intention, and secure sustainable competitive advantage in increasingly multi-generational and dynamic labor markets.

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