

Generation Z's Perceptions of the Contemporary Workplace: A Qualitative Exploration of Flexibility, Leadership, Workplace Comfort, and Retention Intentions

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Abstract

Generation Z (Gen Z) is increasingly influencing workplace culture through its evolving expectations regarding flexibility, employee well-being, leadership, and organizational practices. The present qualitative study explores Gen Z's perceptions and preferences concerning the contemporary workplace, with particular emphasis on work arrangements, organizational infrastructure, leadership styles, working-hour flexibility, compensation, and employee retention. Data were collected through 30 semi-structured interviews with Gen Z participants to understand their workplace expectations and the factors shaping their employment preferences. Thematic analysis of the interview data indicated a preference for work-from-home and hybrid work arrangements, reflecting participants' emphasis on comfort, autonomy, and work-life integration. Participants highlighted the importance of supportive and empathetic leaders, adequate workplace infrastructure, and freedom in managing working hours and schedules. Popular culture, including K-pop, emerged as a reported source of inspiration influencing participants' expectations and aspirations. Competitive remuneration was identified as an important consideration in employment decisions, with participants expressing a willingness to consider leaving organizations when compensation, flexibility, leadership support, or workplace conditions failed to meet their expectations. The findings highlight the importance of understanding generational workplace expectations to inform organizational policies, leadership development, employee engagement, and retention strategies. This study contributes to the qualitative understanding of emerging workplace preferences among Gen Z and emphasizes the need for adaptable, supportive, and employee-centered work environments.

Keywords: Generation Z, workplace perceptions, hybrid work, leadership, employee flexibility, employee retention.