

TALENT RETENTION IN GEN Z WORKFORCE: THE ROLE OF PURPOSES DRIVEN LEADERSHIP AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

RETENSI TALENTA PADA TENAGA KERJA GEN Z: PERAN KEPEMIMPINAN BERORIENTASI TUJUAN DAN PELUANG PENGEMBANGAN KARIER

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ABSTRACT

The conclusion of this study shows that purpose-driven leadership has a significant influence on the retention of Generation Z talent. Purpose-oriented leadership can provide greater meaning and relevance to Gen Z than traditional leadership styles. In addition, career development opportunities serve to strengthen this relationship by providing a clear and concrete growth path. This finding expands the study of generation-based human resource management, particularly by including purpose-driven leadership as a significant determinant in the retention of young employees. From a practical perspective, organizations are advised to combine purpose alignment with a structured career development strategy to minimize the turnover rate of Gen Z. Ultimately, the results of this study emphasize the urgency of building organizations that are not only progressive in providing career opportunities, but also meaningful in making contributions that align with the values and aspirations of future generations.

Keywords: Generation Z, Employee Retention, Purpose Driven Leadership, Career Development, Work Life Balance

ABSTRAK

Kesimpulan dari kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa purpose-driven leadership memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap retensi talenta Generasi Z. Kepemimpinan yang berorientasi pada tujuan mampu memberikan makna dan relevansi yang lebih besar bagi Gen Z dibandingkan gaya kepemimpinan tradisional. Selain itu, peluang pengembangan karir berperan sebagai penguat hubungan tersebut dengan menyediakan jalur pertumbuhan yang jelas dan konkret. Temuan ini memperluas kajian manajemen sumber daya manusia berbasis generasi, terutama dengan memasukkan faktor kepemimpinan berbasis tujuan sebagai determinan penting dalam retensi karyawan muda. Dari sisi praktik, organisasi disarankan untuk mengkombinasikan penyelarasan purpose dengan strategi pengembangan karir yang terstruktur agar dapat meminimalkan tingkat turnover Gen Z. Pada akhirnya, hasil kajian ini menegaskan urgensi membangun organisasi yang tidak hanya progresif dalam menyediakan kesempatan karir, tetapi juga bermakna dalam memberikan kontribusi yang sejalan dengan nilai dan aspirasi generasi masa depan.

Kata Kunci: Generasi Z, Retensi Karyawan, Purpose Driven Leadership, Career Development, Work Life Balance

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of high turnover among Generation Z is a major challenge for organizations. An HR Dive survey showed that 58% of Gen Z workers described their jobs as "situationship" or temporary employment relationships without long-term commitments. The average tenure of Gen Z is only 1.8 years, shorter than the previous generation (HR Dive, 2023).

In addition, FledgeWorks research noted that approximately 65% of Gen Z workers leave their jobs within the first 12 months (FledgeWorks, 2024). Similar findings were also shown by Deloitte's global survey quoted by Exploding Topics, that 40% of Gen Z plan to leave their jobs in the next two years (Exploding Topics, 2024). Meanwhile, the Qualtrics report found that although 74% of Gen Z feel engaged at work, only 40% intend to stay more than three years (Qualtrics, 2024).

Table 1.
Data Turnover Gen Z

Indicator	Statistical Data	Source
Average tenure of Gen Z	1.8 years	HR Dive (2023)
Gen Z came out in the first 12 months	65%	FledgeWorks (2024)
Intention to leave in 2 years	40%	Exploding Topics (2024)
	40%	Qualtrics (2024)

Source: From several reports

This table shows that although Gen Z engagement is relatively high, retention rates remain low, which reinforces the urgency of research into the factors that may influence this generation's loyalty. Generation Z has unique characteristics that differentiate them from previous generations. They are known as digital natives, mobile, and highly influenced by values (value-driven). For Gen Z, the balance between personal life and work (work-life balance) is more important than just compensation. A Randstad Workmonitor report reported by Newsweek found that 76% of Gen Z prioritizes life balance over salary (Newsweek, 2024). Furthermore, the Unstop survey noted that 47% of Gen Z professionals rank work-life balance as a top factor in choosing a job. (Economic Times HR, 2024).

Additionally, a study from the Top Employers Institute published by MarketWatch reported that 62% of Gen Z are willing to accept a lower salary for the sake of work-life balance, with 82% emphasizing the importance of work flexibility. And 83% prioritize mental health support from employers (MarketWatch, 2024). On the other hand, a Deloitte survey reported by CAKE.com stated that 86% of Gen Z considers work with purpose (purpose) as very important for their well-being (CAKE, 2024).

With high turnover rates and the unique characteristics of Gen Z, talent retention has become a strategic issue for human resource management worldwide. A Randstad Workmonitor report noted that for the first time in 22 years, work-life surpassed salary as the primary factor in global worker motivation (Newsweek, 2024). This confirms that the traditional paradigm of employee retention—which focuses on compensation and job security—is no longer relevant to address retention challenges in the era of Gen Z dominance. Therefore, organizations need to explore new approaches such as purpose driven leadership And career development opportunities to be able to retain Generation Z talent effectively.

Studies on employee retention have tended to focus on classic factors that are material and structural, such as compensation, benefits, and job security guarantees (job security). This approach is rooted in traditional motivation theories, for example Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which places financial aspects and stability as fundamental needs in building job satisfaction. While these factors remain relevant, particularly among previous generations of workers, recent research suggests that younger generations—particularly Generation Z—tend to prioritize non-material aspects, such as the meaning of work, the social value of the organization, and opportunities for self-actualization.

This indicates a shift in orientation from merely fulfilling economic needs to seeking meaning and purpose in life through work.

In this context, the concept/purpose-driven leadership offers a new perspective that has rarely been explored in depth in talent retention research. Purpose-driven leaders focus not only on achieving business targets but also on creating broader value for both employees and society. The literature on leadership has indeed highlighted transformational, authentic, and servant leadership styles (servant leadership). However, purpose-driven leadership is still considered a developing concept and has not been widely integrated into the workforce retention discourse, especially regarding the preferences and needs of Generation Z.

Furthermore, the relationship between purpose-driven leadership and career development opportunities (career development opportunities) has not received adequate attention. Several studies have indeed confirmed that career development is a crucial factor in increasing retention, especially among younger employees. However, a comprehensive synthesis linking these two aspects—namely, how purpose-based leadership can create an organizational climate that supports career development and ultimately strengthens Generation Z retention—is still very limited. Thus, there is a significant research gap to be explored, both conceptually and empirically, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction of these three variables.

Based on the research gaps above, this study aims to systematically examine the role of purpose-driven leadership in increasing the retention of Generation Z talent. This research will attempt to describe the mechanisms by which purpose-based leadership can meet the expectations of Generation Z who tend to seek meaning, sustainability, and social contribution in their work.

In addition, this study also aims to analyze the extent to which career development opportunities can strengthen the relationship between purpose-driven leadership and retention of Generation Z. This analysis is important because while purpose-based leadership can create intrinsic motivation, without concrete support in the form of a clear career development path, this motivation risks becoming unsustainable. Therefore, this study emphasizes the need to integrate aspects of value-based leadership with talent management strategies oriented toward career growth.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to enriching the literature on employee retention by offering a new perspective that combines purpose-driven leadership and career development opportunities. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for HRM practitioners in designing retention strategies that are more adaptive to the needs of Generation Z, who rely not only on financial compensation but also emphasize meaning, value, and career sustainability. Thus, this study has the potential to provide a dual contribution: broadening academic insights while increasing the effectiveness of human resource management practices in the era of the new workforce generation.

2. METHODS

2.1. Review Approach

This research uses a narrative review approach by referring to literature that has been published in reputable scientific databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Narrative review was chosen to allow a comprehensive analysis of empirical and conceptual findings related to the phenomenon. Gen Z workforce, especially in the context of leadership, career development, and talent retention.

2.2. Literature Inclusion Criteria

To ensure relevance and quality, this study established the following literature inclusion criteria:

1. Articles discussing related topics: purpose driven leadership, employee retention, career development, and generational workforce (Gen Z).
2. Types of research accepted include: empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods) and systematic review.
3. The publication period is limited to last 10 years (2014–2024), in accordance with the relevance of generation Z who have just entered the workforce in this period.
4. Articles must come from peer reviewed journals to maintain academic validity.

2.3. Analysis Process

The analysis was carried out in three stages:

1. Identifying Main Themes
Relevant literature is categorized into central themes, namely leadership style, meaning of work, career development, and retention drivers.
2. Narrative Synthesis
This process involves comparison, connection, and emphasis on patterns that emerge from various studies. In addition, the identification of research gaps which is still open.
3. Consistency Validation
The synthesis results are compared with empirical data from international institutions (e.g., Gallup, Deloitte, and the World Economic Forum) to provide practical context to the academic findings.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Characteristics of Generation Z and Implications for Retention

Generation Z (Gen Z), defined as individuals born from 1997 to 2012, exhibits distinctive characteristics regarding their work values and motivations, which impact workplace retention strategies. Central attributes of this generation include a strong orientation towards meaningful work, flexibility, work-life balance, and self-development. Studies indicate that Gen Z prioritizes work-life balance as a critical component of their overall job satisfaction, which substantially affects their educational performance and mental well-being. This emphasis is supported by research demonstrating that effective time management and a balanced lifestyle correlate positively with educational attainment, thereby creating a foundation for future career preferences (Adedeji et al., 2023; Schroth, 2019). Moreover, meaning in work and opportunities for self-improvement are significant motivators for Gen Z, as they aim to align personal and professional aspirations (Septiawan et al., 2024).

The implications for employee retention are considerable. Factors driving turnover among Gen Z employees include a perceived lack of career growth, misalignments between personal values and organizational culture, and unsupportive work environments. Gen Z members often express dissatisfaction when their roles do not provide clear paths for advancement or fail to resonate with their core values, leading to disengagement and a propensity to leave organizations (Davis & Needham, 2023; Chillakuri, 2020). An organization's commitment to nurturing a supportive work atmosphere—characterized by open communication and collaborative opportunities—can significantly influence retention rates (Chillakuri, 2020). Research suggests that organizations that develop retention strategies emphasizing alignment between employee personal values and corporate missions are better positioned to engage younger workers effectively (Nadya & Farozin, 2021).

In addressing the need for self-development, research indicates that Gen Z actively seeks opportunities for continuous learning, using platforms like podcasts to gain guidance and manage collective challenges related to their mental health (Nguyen-Hoang, 2024). This generation's high adaptability enables them to thrive in dynamic environments; thus, organizations that facilitate skills enhancement and career adaptability are likely to foster strong commitment and lower turnover rates (Nadya & Farozin, 2021; Sinring & Umar, 2023). In

summary, organizations seeking to retain Gen Z talent must prioritize meaningful work experiences, flexibility, and opportunities for self-development while fostering a supportive environment aligned with the values of this emerging workforce segment. Such proactive strategies are essential for mitigating turnover risks and enhancing organizational commitment.

3.2. Purpose-Driven Leadership and Retention

Purpose-driven leadership has emerged as a crucial framework in enhancing employee retention by creating a clear and meaningful vision, promoting strong organizational values, and integrating social purpose into the fabric of the organization. This model is particularly relevant for addressing the unique needs and motivations of Generation Z workers, who prioritize organizational alignment with personal values. Exploring the dimensions of purpose-driven leadership, we see that it encompasses not only a compelling vision but also a robust set of organizational values that resonate with employees on a personal level, which in turn drives commitment and loyalty (Ribeiro et al., 2024; .

The mechanisms through which purpose-driven leadership influences retention include building trust and engagement among employees. Transformational leaders, who embody purpose-driven principles, actively inspire and empower their teams, fostering a culture of trust and collaboration. This form of leadership has been linked to increased organizational commitment, as employees who trust their leaders are more likely to feel valued and engaged in their work environment. Studies have shown that transformational leadership significantly impacts employee retention by enhancing job satisfaction, creating a sense of belonging, and aligning personal values with those of the organization (Yamin, 2020; , القبيعان & Nassani, 2024; , Tian et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the alignment of organizational values with those of Generation Z is critical for retention. This generation places high importance on social purpose and corporate responsibility, expecting their employers to reflect these values in their operational strategies. Purpose-driven leadership effectively addresses this expectation by reinforcing the significance of a shared mission and fostering value congruence between the organization and its employees. Leaders who prioritize communication and create platforms for employees to express their values contribute positively to retention rates, particularly among younger workforce segments who are often motivated by intrinsic factors such as personal growth and alignment with the organization's ethical standards (Lee et al., 2022). In conclusion, the integration of purpose-driven leadership, defined by shared vision, core values, and social responsibility, plays a vital role in shaping employee retention strategies. By focusing on building trust, enhancing engagement, and aligning values, organizations can foster a loyal workforce that not only remains committed but also actively contributes to the organization's success (Ribeiro et al., 2024; , Ali et al., 2024).

3.3. Career Development Opportunities

Career development opportunities play a crucial role in shaping a workforce that is responsive to the fast-evolving demands of the current job market, especially for Generation Z (Gen Z) employees. Key elements in fostering enhanced career trajectories include establishing a clear career path, implementing comprehensive training programs, providing effective mentorship, and ensuring ongoing upskilling. This paradigm is particularly relevant considering Gen Z's pronounced emphasis on continuous personal and professional growth.

A clear career path is foundational for employees to visualize their future roles within an organization. Research indicates that structured career development support is vital for enhancing employee satisfaction and performance (Ismail et al., 2014). Organizations that provide clear career trajectories tend to foster a more motivated and engaged workforce, particularly among younger workers who value transparency in progression and development (Ismail et al., 2014). This aligns with findings from Plant et al., who emphasize the positive

impact that well-structured training programs have on workplace learning outcomes, including motivation and commitment to organizational goals (Plant et al., 2017).

Training programs are essential in equipping employees with relevant skills that align with industry standards. Such programs not only enhance professional capabilities but also instill confidence required for navigating complex work environments. Abu-Bakarr et al. highlight the effectiveness of integrating training with mentorship to create an enriching, multidisciplinary learning environment that helps in achieving long-term career goals (Abu-Bakarr et al., 2022). This multifaceted approach facilitates personal and professional growth, as employees receive not only theoretical knowledge but also practical guidance related to their fields (Abu-Bakarr et al., 2022).

Mentoring emerges as another key element that greatly contributes to career development opportunities. Effective mentoring can significantly influence professional self-identity and competency, as shown in studies focused on various professional settings, including medical education (Anurat et al., 2024), early childhood education (McCosh & Clarke, 2024), and teacher training (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Goldenberg, 2023). For instance, Jevtić and Rogulj discuss how mentorship can enhance the professional skills of early childhood education students, showcasing the critical role that mentors play in facilitating students' growth (McCosh & Clarke, 2024). Likewise, mentoring relationships in medical education are instrumental in not just fostering professional growth but also in developing competencies such as leadership (Anurat et al., 2024).

Ongoing upskilling is equally important in a rapidly changing job environment. Continuous learning opportunities allow employees to stay relevant and competitive. Research by Singh et al. emphasizes that mentors who engage in continual professional development not only benefit themselves but also enhance the quality of the experience for their mentees (Singh et al., 2014). This "ripple effect", as highlighted in various studies, suggests that those who have been mentored are more likely to become mentors themselves, thus contributing to a cycle of shared learning and support that is crucial for adapting to future challenges (Singh et al., 2014).

Gen Z's inclination towards meaningful growth experiences necessitates that organizations take a proactive approach in fostering these developmental pathways. Balmer et al. assert that mentoring relationships evolve to provide not only support but also challenge, thereby promoting a holistic framework for professional development (Balmer et al., 2011). Furthermore, Ismail et al. argue that effective career development initiatives can significantly improve organizational efficacy by enhancing job satisfaction and inducing feelings of fulfillment among employees (Ismail et al., 2014). In conclusion, creating robust career development opportunities through clear career pathways, training programs, mentorship, and continuous upskilling is essential in meeting the aspirations of Gen Z. This demographic seeks environments where they can thrive through constant learning and feedback, ensuring that they are well-equipped to handle the complexities of the modern workforce.

3.4. Integration of the Two Factors

The integration of purpose-driven leadership and career development is crucial for enhancing employee satisfaction and retention, particularly for Generation Z. Purpose-driven leadership gives employees a profound sense of meaning in their work, which is essential for job satisfaction and engagement (Ballout, 2009). In parallel, career development serves as a critical pathway for growth, offering opportunities for both professional and personal advancement that are highly valued by today's workforce Wong et al. (2017).

Purpose-driven leadership inspires individuals by aligning their personal and professional objectives with the broader organizational mission. This alignment fosters a work environment where employees find intrinsic meaning in their roles, which has been positively correlated with retention rates Coetze & Stoltz (2015). Specifically, Coetze and Stoltz Coetze

& Stoltz (2015) highlight that career adaptability—an essential aspect of career development—enables employees to navigate their career paths more effectively. In environments where leadership actively promotes a sense of purpose, employee adaptability is heightened, thereby reinforcing their commitment to the organization.

Moreover, career development not only provides the necessary growth but can also mediate the relationship between purpose-driven leadership and employee retention. Wong et al. Wong et al. (2017) demonstrate that career strategies can moderate the dynamics between leadership styles and individual career advancements. Employees who perceive their leaders as purpose-driven are more likely to seek opportunities for development, enhancing their loyalty to the company. This suggests that when organizations prioritize purpose in their leadership, they foster a culture that supports continuous career development.

Research by Ginevra et al. Ginevra et al. (2015) reinforces the notion that career development strategies can serve as essential mechanisms through which purpose-driven leadership influences employee retention. They argue that integrating supportive developmental frameworks into organizational culture can significantly enhance employee engagement and commitment, thus reducing turnover intentions among younger workers. Furthermore, customized career strategies that account for individual aspirations boost the effectiveness of purpose-driven leadership, ultimately fostering a more resilient workforce.

In conclusion, integrating purpose-driven leadership with career development strategies can both maintain and strengthen employee retention among Gen Z workers. This relationship illustrates that organizations aiming to cultivate a loyal workforce must consider both how leaders articulate and embody purpose and how effectively they support employees in their career journeys.

3.5. Conceptual Model of Synthesis Results

The conceptual model highlighting the relationship between purpose-driven leadership, employee engagement, value alignment, and retention, supplemented by opportunities for career development, is critical for contemporary organizational dynamics. This integrative framework posits that effective leadership is pivotal to fostering an environment that promotes employee satisfaction while enhancing organizational loyalty and performance.

Purpose-driven leadership, characterized by leaders articulating a clear vision that aligns with employee values, stimulates higher levels of engagement. Eberly et al. present a comprehensive process model of leadership, illustrating how various loci and mechanisms operate within leadership events to foster engagement and retention in organizations (Eberly et al., 2013). This interplay is crucial because leaders who align with organizational values can create a sense of belonging among team members, thereby reinforcing their commitment to the organization.

Additionally, the relationship between leadership style and employee retention underscores this model. Research by Tanuwijaya and Jakaria indicates that transformational leadership positively influences job satisfaction, which subsequently affects employee retention (Tanuwijaya & Jakaria, 2022). Their findings suggest that transformational leaders, who emphasize individual consideration and intellectual stimulation, can effectively mitigate turnover intentions among employees. This perspective is further supported by Ribeiro et al., who argue that purpose-driven leadership enhances engagement and contributes to a stronger organizational reputation and performance through an aligned workforce (Ribeiro et al., 2024).

Career development opportunities are essential elements that enhance this process. The study by Macphee et al. emphasizes the importance of empowerment in career development, demonstrating how structured development pathways contribute to positive outcomes for nurse leaders and promote a culture of retention (MacPhee et al., 2011). This suggests that when employees see prospects for growth and advancement within the

organization, their engagement and commitment levels increase, ultimately improving retention. Similarly, Lochmiller et al. highlight leadership's crucial influence on teacher retention in challenging environments, emphasizing that supportive career development initiatives are vital for maintaining workforce stability in public education settings (Lochmiller et al., 2024).

Furthermore, incorporating ethical leadership into this framework can enhance the organizational climate conducive to retention. Morin and Talbot's findings illustrate the influence of contextual factors on ethical leadership, which plays a pivotal role in fostering an environment where employees feel valued and aligned with the organization's mission (Morin & Talbot, 2023). Such alignment significantly enhances retention rates, as employees are more likely to remain when their values correspond with those of their organization. In conclusion, the synthesis of leadership styles grounded in purpose and ethics, coupled with developmental opportunities, forms a comprehensive integrative framework for enhancing employee engagement and retention. Future research should expand on these dynamics to examine longitudinal effects and industry-specific variations relevant to this model.

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Interpretation of synthesis results

The findings show that purpose driven leadership has a stronger relevance than traditional leadership styles in the context of Generation Z retention. This is due to the characteristics of Gen Z who place values, meaning, and social impact as important factors in their work experience. Purpose-oriented leadership not only provides direction and vision, but also builds a sense of emotional connection that increases employee commitment. On the other hand, career development opportunities act as a catalyst that strengthens Gen Z's loyalty to the organization. This generation shows high expectations for a clear career path, opportunities for self-development, and access to mentorship And upskilling. Thus, when organizations are able to combine purpose-based leadership with structured career development programs, Gen Z employee retention tends to increase significantly.

4.2. Theoretical contributions

This synthesis provides a theoretical contribution by enriching the framework. Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Career development opportunities answer the need for competence, while purpose-driven leadership answers the need for relatedness. The combination of the two strengthens sustainable intrinsic motivation. In addition, the findings can also be explained through the perspective of Job Embeddedness Theory. Leadership that gives meaning and clear career opportunities to improve fit (congruence of individual and organizational values), links (social and professional ties), as well as sacrifice (psychological or professional losses when leaving the organization).

4.3. Practical contribution

Practically, this research provides recommendations for HR managers to manage Gen Z retention through combination strategies. First, organizations need to emphasize purpose alignment in communicating the company's vision, values, and social impact. Second, the company must provide structured career growth through transparent career paths, continuous training, and systems mentorship. The integration of these two strategies not only strengthens retention, but also builds the organization's reputation as an employer of choice for young talents.

4.4. Literature limitations

Despite providing important insights, the existing literature still has limitations. First, most of the studies analyzed focused on Western contexts, so generalization to Asian contexts,

particularly Indonesia, is limited. Second, the lack of longitudinal studies makes it difficult to understand how Gen Z retention evolves over the long term.

4.5. Future research agenda

Based on these limitations, future research agendas need to be directed toward cross-cultural empirical studies to capture the differences in Gen Z values and expectations across contexts. Furthermore, exploration of other mediating and moderating variables, such as work-life balance, digital leadership, as well as technological factors can provide a more comprehensive understanding of Gen Z retention mechanisms.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this narrative study show that purpose-driven leadership has a significant influence on the retention of Generation Z talent. Leadership that focuses on vision, values, meaning, and social impact not only increases employees' emotional engagement but also strengthens their commitment to the organization. Furthermore, career development opportunities act as a reinforcement of this relationship by providing concrete growth paths, including clear career paths, training programs, mentorship, and ongoing upskilling. The combination of these two factors creates a synergy between meaning (meaning) and growth (growth), so that it can increase Generation Z loyalty more effectively than traditional retention approaches. Academically, this research expands the generation-based HRM study by adding a perspective. purpose-driven leadership as an important determinant in the retention of young talent. These findings add to the literature on intrinsic motivation and talent management strategies relevant to a generation seeking meaning and self-development in their work. In practice, the research results confirm that organizations need to integrate strategies/purpose alignment with a structured career development path. In this way, companies can not only reduce Gen Z turnover rates but also build a reputation as a meaningful and progressive workplace, capable of attracting and retaining the best talent from future generations. This study emphasizes the urgency for organizations to create a meaningful, adaptive, and progressive work environment for Generation Z. A combinative approach that integrates purpose driven leadership and career development opportunities is key to building an organization that is not only productive, but also able to fulfill the aspirations and values of future generations, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organization.

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