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Job Satisfaction: Key Factors and Unique Challenges for Gen Z in India's Retail and Healthcare Sectors

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ABSTRACT

The evolving workforce dynamics have brought Gen Z into the spotlight as a significant segment in India's labour market, particularly in the retail and healthcare sectors. This research explores the key factors influencing job satisfaction among Gen Z employees, considering their unique work expectations, digital proficiency, and inclination toward meaningful employment. The study highlights the challenges faced by organizations in attracting and retaining Gen Z talent, emphasizing the importance of career development opportunities, work-life balance, ethical work environments, and technology integration. Additionally, it underscores the impact of emotional labor, burnout, and organizational justice on job satisfaction. The findings offer insights for businesses to adapt their human resource strategies to align with Gen Z's aspirations, fostering a more engaged and productive workforce.

Keywords: Job-satisfaction, Gen Z, Retention, Attrition, Health Sector, retail sector

Introduction

The effectiveness of the organisation is always impacted by employee turnover (Attrition), and employee turnover is not cost-effective (Work Institute, 2019). An organisation must, therefore, comprehend the causes of employee attrition and how to draw in top personnel. Graduates' transition from college to the job is a significant change that involves ongoing learning, adjustment, and development. Graduates who successfully complete this path frequently experience rewarding career advancement and make substantial contributions to the field they have chosen. The criteria for the ideal employment role are different for Generation Z than for previous generations. During the early stages of their career, they frequently switch jobs. The numerous influencing elements that impact their retention and intention to remain at work will be examined in this study. According to Robbins et al. (2016), organisational culture is the most important element in keeping recent graduates in their jobs. According to Kim et al. (2014), while being one of the most investigated topics in the human resource arena, newcomers' turnover is yet unknown. According to a Deloitte Campus Workforce Trends report made accessible to the Economic Times exclusively, graduates had higher departure rates in 2022 than other degree holders. The first-year BE/BTech attrition rate in 2022 is 1.4 times higher than in 2021, according to Neelesh Gupta, director at Deloitte India (India Times.com). IT, ecommerce, unicorns, and startups are the industries with the highest demand for new engineers.

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In addition to creating an environment where workers can grow, learn, collaborate, and do what they do best every day, TN Hari, Bigbasket's chief human resources officer, pointed out that a culture of trust, autonomy, and flexible work schedules are essential for employee retention. According to Mathis and Jackson (2010), retention is the process of motivating staff members to remain with the company.

Different Generations at Work

In most of the organizations below mentioned, four generations are working together

The four generational categories are as follows:

Name of the Generation	Born Between
Generation Z (Gen Z)	Born in and after 1996
Generation Y or Millenials	1977-1995
Generation X	1965 -1976
Baby Boomers	1946 -1964

Relevance of Gen Z

With just under two billion individuals, Gen Z is the largest cohort in the world, comprising 26% of the global population. This generation is also well-represented in Asian and Latin American countries. In particular, countries within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are anticipated to benefit from the demographic advantage as the Gen Z population enters the labor force. (Cushman & Wakefield, July 2020). Understanding the unique goals of Gen Z, a group shaped by technology, is crucial for a company's growth and success. While there has been a lot of research on Millennials (Generation Y), there has not been enough study on what influences the work habits of Gen Z employees. Gen Z includes people born after 1995 (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014; Bolser & Gosciej, 2015), although some researchers believe this generation started in 1990 (Tulgan, 2013). This generation is often called "Generation Me" (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012), "Digital Natives" (Addor, 2011), "Internet Generation" (Lanier, 2017), and "Mobile Mavens" (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). It is interesting to note that Gen Z is the first group that might live to see the 22nd century. Gen Z also has a significant presence in the Indian workforce. Gen Z is in sync with the rapidly changing technological advances and digital interventions in all walks of life. Gen Z demonstrates adeptness in using technological and digital resources with extraordinary ease. They also expect their work environment to be equally innovative, digital, and responsive. According to Thangavel et al.(2022), this cohort has unique characteristics that drive their engagement and retention in the workplace, particularly in the retail and health sectors. Gen Z has seen many changes in society, the economy, politics, and technology. They live in a fast-paced world full of opportunities, social connections, and global links. This generation cares a lot about having experiences and values collaboration over just working for someone. They are also good at multitasking while being productive.

Growing up with lots of opportunities, online connections, and diversity, Gen Z believes in the importance of meaningful work. Because of this, traditional human resources (HR) methods for hiring, motivating, and keeping employees need to change. By 2020, it was expected that Gen Z would outnumber Millennials and change the workplace significantly. Unlike earlier generations, Gen Z workers are not afraid to leave a job if it does not match what they value. A Gallup report from 2019 found that 73% of American Gen Z employees quit their jobs because their workplace expectations were not met. They want honest information about job roles, as misleading details can lead them to leave. The Deloitte 2018 Survey revealed that 61% of Gen Z employees plan to leave their jobs in a couple of years. Since they often switch jobs,

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it is important for companies to find ways to keep them engaged. Employers need to modernize how they manage younger workers, as sticking to old methods can hurt businesses in the future.

In 2023, Gen Z will be an increasingly significant segment of India's labor market, especially in the retail and health sectors, contributing substantially to the country's economy. According to the Ministry of Labor and Employment in India, retail is expected to grow to \$1.3 trillion by 2024, while the health sector will reach \$370 billion by 2022 (Niti Aayog, 2019).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is very important in the workplace and has become a key goal for companies around the world. Researchers have defined it as a mix of physical, mental, and environmental conditions that help employees feel happy with their jobs. Hoppock (1935) introduced the term, while Saleem (2015) describes it as a situation that makes employees feel good about their work. When managers promote job satisfaction, they can bring out the best in their employees and help the organization reach its goals. Job satisfaction is affected by many factors, including personal beliefs, values, personality, the work environment, relationships with coworkers, the company culture, and both internal and external motivators.

On the flip side, low job satisfaction can lead to problems like decreased motivation, high employee turnover, and absenteeism. This makes it very important for HR managers and researchers to understand job satisfaction, as it greatly impacts employee commitment and overall company performance. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to support the organization's goals more effectively. Research by Kim and Ryu (2017) shows that when employees are happy with their jobs, they are more likely to be committed to their organization.

Gen Z in India's Workforce: Current Status and Projections

Research indicated that employee turnover is strongly associated with attitudes toward work and organizational commitment among different generations. Specifically, it has been noted that Gen Z individuals born in or after 1996 are likelier to switch jobs frequently compared to other generations. Khan (2019) further establishes an inverse relationship between age and employee attrition, meaning that the percentage of individuals frequently changing jobs decreases as age increases. According to Deloitte Touch Tohmatsu (September 2021), in organizations where more than 50 percent of the employees are from Gen Z, the average attrition rate is significantly higher, at 28 percent, compared to 20.1 percent in companies with a relatively older employee base. The need for significant work and a culture of support emerged as an important factor influencing Job Satisfaction in Gen Z employees. Unlike other generation cohorts that may have given more importance to financial gains and stability at work, Gen Z seeks roles aligned with their values, offers upskilling and growth opportunities, and promotes social impact. Employers must recognize these changes in expectation, especially in the context of the rapid evolution and growth of the economy in India and transformative changes in the Retail and Health sectors. Providing a structured career-pathing, inclusive, and collaborative work environment is essential in attracting and maintaining the talent of Gen Z. As Gen Z is growing amid important environmental and social changes like Global warming and political agitation, Gen Z is inclined toward authenticity and transparency. They value organizations with ethical practices and commitment to social responsibility (Pandita, 2022). They like to work with companies that demonstrate Corporate social responsibility and initiatives. Employers can effectively use the Gen Z's preference for authenticity in creating a connect with the workers. This may lead to greater job satisfaction amongst Gen Z employees.

The distinct characteristics of the Gen Z, in particular, their desire for significant work, collaborative environments, and global support for their mental health - recover the need for

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> organizations to re-evaluate their human resources practices. In this way, they can improve Job Satisfaction rates and encourage a more involved and productive workforce in the context of the rapidly evolution economic landscape of India. Professional satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that includes various dimensions, including but not limited to the nature of work, working conditions, and relationships with colleagues and supervisors (Locke, 1976; Hulin & Judge, 2003). In particular, Job Satisfaction represents a critical psychological state that affects the mental health of employees and overall performance. High levels of Job Satisfaction have been constantly associated with improved motivation, increased work performance, and a positive work environment (Judge et al., 2001). In addition, it has been suggested that Job satisfaction acts as an essential bearing against professional stress factors, thus contributing to an improvement in psychological well -being between employees (Kahn et al., 1964). Employees of the Gen Z of the highest socioeconomic origins generally show greater job satisfaction since their financial stability allows them to prioritize job satisfaction and work culture during merely economic survival. In contrast, those of lower socioeconomic origins often see employment mainly through a utilitarian lens, focusing on job security and immediate financial yields. This disparity can lead to a paradox in which the less privileged background employees are more prone to quitting due to the lowest levels of job satisfaction linked to limited professional progression and inappropriate job support (Ganguli & Padhy, 2023). In particular, the economic conditions in India, characterized by high youth unemployment rates, add to this problem since the employment applicants of the lowest socio-economic strata may be forced to accept positions that are not aligned with their educational qualifications or as per their expectations. India's retail and healthcare sectors must have a thorough and correct understanding of Gen Z preferences and priorities, as this will help them create better Job satisfaction amongst them. Employers are likely to meet Gen Z's expectations with innovative practices. Gen Z expects to have a supportive work environment that aligns with their personal values.

> Recent labor market trends also highlight the importance of job satisfaction for the Gen Z cohort. Gen Z is likely to exhibit a high propensity to switch jobs and are conditioned to consider work a constantly evolving and dynamic experience. This leads to high attrition when their expectations are not met. In the Indian retail sector, which is shifting towards rapid digitization and e-commerce, creating a rewarding workplace is very important. On the other hand, the Health Sector has its own challenges in promoting Job Satisfaction amongst Gen Z workers. Traditionally, this sector is considered stable; however, due to evolutionary demands caused by the pandemic, the expectations of young professionals saw considerable change. Gen Z employees in this sector seek flexibility in work, mental health support, and work-life balance. Due to the high-stress environment in the healthcare sector, this support may result in high job satisfaction and a significant reduction in exhaustion in healthcare workers. High job satisfaction among healthcare workers ultimately increases the quality of patient- care.

Gen Z in India's Retail Sector

The retail sector is very challenging and demanding due to its dynamic nature. Gen Z employees have heavy workloads and irregular working hours. Their role requires availability during nights, weekends, festivals, and holidays. Such demanding work schedule disrupts their personal lives and lead to stress as they try to balance work and personal life. Soni and Vohra (2023) point out that emphasis on balancing professional and personal life is increasing among younger professionals; however, the traditional retail work structure has not adapted quickly enough to meet this need. Consequently, Gen Z employees may feel dissatisfied because their personal lives are compromised due to the specific job characteristics. Agrawal (2023) emphasizes that job instability stands out as a great concern for Gen Z in the Retail Sector of India. The growing prevalence of contracts and temporary jobs exacerbates feelings of

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> insecurity among young workers, which leads to greater anxiety about their job security. Due to relatively flat organizational structures that are commonly found in retail environments, younger employees may have difficulty finding senior models that can offer advice and support. This absence of tutoring can inhibit career progression, resulting in frustration and decreased job satisfaction, particularly as people in Gen Z generally value personal development and progression within their careers. Soni and Vohra (2023) highlight that many retail organizations in India lack structured tutoring programs, which are crucial for professional development and orientation. In general, the retail sector in India poses important challenges for the workers of the Gen Z. The interaction between job instability, the lack of tutoring opportunities, and the quick change of consumer behaviors due to the repercussions of COVID-19 have deep implications for job satisfaction. As organizations strive to involve and retain this emerging workforce, addressing these challenges will be essential to promote a more satisfactory and supportive work environment. Understanding these dynamics is essential for interested parties that seek to improve employee experience and boost participation in a rapidly evolving industry. Gen Z workers actively seek purpose in their roles, understanding that their contributions impact financial outcomes, consumer experience, and the brand image of the organizations in which they work. Maan and Srivastava (2023) suggest that Retail companies can further enhance this sense of purpose by integrating sustainability and social responsibility, value-driven initiatives into their corporate strategies. When employees perceive that their work reflects their values, it bolsters intrinsic motivation and enhances job satisfaction. Integration of technology into retail practices is another significant factor influencing Job Satisfaction among Gen Z employees. As digital natives, Gen Z workers are accustomed to technology being intertwined in all aspects of their lives. Therefore, companies that utilize advanced technology, such as artificial intelligence, automation, and mobile platforms, are likely to attract and retain the talent of Gen Z. Implementing easy-to-use software for inventory management or customer relationship management can optimize operations and reduce the burden on employees, which in turn enhances their satisfaction at work.

> Thangavel et al. (2022) assert that a workplace culture rich in innovation makes Gen Z feel valued, as their tech-savvy insights—shaped by growing up in a digital age—are essential for transforming customer interactions amid this rapid digital transition. When the employees of Gen Z perceive their compensation as inadequate compared to their workload or as disproportionately low compared to their peers in different sectors, it directly affects their motivation and commitment. High turnover rates often derive from its employees since they seek better remuneration opportunities in more profitable sectors. In retail, where roles can often be seen as entry-level with a limited career progression, studies have shown that employees who report greater professional satisfaction are more likely to remain with their organizations (Wai et al., 2024). In particular, factors such as remuneration, advancement opportunities and recognition have often been mentioned as fundamental to improve the sense of satisfaction of employees. The dynamic nature of the retail sales environment, combined with the growing expectation of Gen Z for significant work, places further emphasis on the need for companies to cultivate a satisfactory work experience (Bennett & Hodge, 2020). In the retail sector, Gen Z anticipates environments that favor collaboration and creativity. They prefer organizations that emphasize the customer's experience and social responsibility, evaluating roles that allow them to make positive contributions to the company. In addition, the research indicates that this generation seeks rapid advancement opportunities and a clear sense of career trajectory, indicating a shift towards meritocratic ideals with respect to progressions based on consolidated seniority (Patel et al., 2023). In addition, the concept of organizational justice plays a fundamental role in modeling professional satisfaction within the retail sales environment. Khanam et al. (2024) define organizational justice as the perception

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of equity in work procedures, results, and interpersonal interactions. In the context of retail sales, Gen Z employees are likely to be more sensitive to the injustices received relating to the way they are treated by the Management and how work and beneficial loads are assigned. The cases in which employees feel unjustly marginalized or treated can lead to disillusionment and disengagement from their work, which subsequently affects conservation rates. The interaction between these challenges reveals an urgent necessity for retail organizations to cultivate an environment in the workplace that recognizes the needs and unique expectations of the employees of Gen Z. Tackling work safety problems, guaranteeing wage structures Eques, reducing turnover rates and improving the perceptions of organizational justice can significantly improve Job Satisfaction levels.

Gen Z in India's Healthcare Sector

The incorporation of technology in health practices was a turning point for professional satisfaction among the employees of Gen Z. As digital natives, the members of this generation are at ease with technology and often expect it to be an integral part of their professional lives. Hameed and Nigam (2023) articulate that dependence on technology in health care, in particular through telemedicine, electronic medical records, and diagnostics led by AI, has the potential to create a more efficient work environment. The adoption of these technologies not only improves productivity but also allows healthcare professionals to focus more on the care of patients rather than administrative activities, which can be a source of frustration. Consequently, the alignment of this technological progress with the preferences of Gen Z can lead to greater professional satisfaction since employees feel authorized and equipped to make a significant contribution to the patients. However, the rapid rhythm of technological change also has unique challenges. Gen Z employees can experience anxiety and need for continuous learning to keep up with technological progress, with consequent double pressure to perform effectively by guaranteeing continuous professional development. The demand for the health sector's constant skills updates can lead to stress linked to work, affecting overall professional satisfaction. Key among these challenges are emotional labor, burnout, and the effects of institutional hierarchies.

Emotional connection is vital in healthcare, where staff frequently navigate high-stress circumstances while managing their emotions in patient interactions. Mallieswari et al. (2023) highlight that Gen Z employees are particularly sensitive to the emotional demands of their roles. The pressure to maintain a positive appearance, even in the face of serious medical issues, can create a discord between genuine feelings and the emotions they are expected to portray. This discord can lead to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction. Additionally, Gen Z's focus on authenticity and transparency amplifies the challenges of emotional labor; they may have stronger emotional reactions when their work does not align with their core values or emotional realities, resulting in a deeper sense of disconnection from their jobs.

Burnout is another previously faced challenge by Gen Z health professionals. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified pre-existing challenges in the healthcare sector, resulting in increased workloads, extended hours, and heightened emotional strain for employees. Mammadli (2023) points out that Gen Z, typically viewed as less resilient than previous generations, may struggle to manage the cumulative pressure of high-demand jobs. environments. The prevalence of exhaustion may result in mediocre work performance and a greater propensity to leave the health sector completely. Moreover, as it is more likely that this generation prioritizes mental health and the balance between professional and personal life, the failure of health employers to provide proper support can further decrease satisfaction and retention at work. As noted by Aslan et al. (2024), attracting and retaining talent relies not only on offering competitive salaries but also on fostering a culture that values employee opinions and recognizes their

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> contributions. This applies specifically to both sectors, highlighting the necessity for organizations to nurture a workplace culture that encourages active participation. This is especially true in healthcare, where interpersonal relationships greatly influence job satisfaction; providing opportunities for feedback and professional development can help alleviate feelings of burnout and discontent. A recent study highlighted that the professionals of the Gen Z in Healthcare express concerns about burnout and the balance between work and private life, indicating a fundamental necessity for supporting work cultures that give priority to mental health and professional development (Sharma & Gupta, 2023). In addition, as health care evolves with technological integration, these employees seek environments that promote innovation and use of cutting -edge solutions to improve patient care, indicating a demand for continuous learning opportunities. The health sector in India is experiencing a significant transformation motivated by technological progress, the change in patient expectations, and an increasing demand for quality services. In this evolutionary landscape, Gen Z (individuals born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s) presents distinct expectations and challenges that shape their satisfaction at work. At the heart of their professional attitudes are aspects such as employment safety, mentoring, and skills development, which are essential to navigate in a rapidly evolving environment (Khanam et al., 2024). Jena and Nayak (2023) point out that Gen Z displays a strong desire for clear career trajectories and growth potential in their organizations. Unlike previous generations, this cohort values transparent pathways for the promotion and continuous development of skills, which they associate with long-term job satisfaction. In the health sector, where rapid advances in technology and practices are predominant, the ability to access continuous education and training opportunities serves as a critical factor in talent retention and the promotion of satisfaction among young health professionals (Jena & Nayak, 2023).

> Research indicates that the safety of jobs considerably influences Job satisfaction, because uncertainty in the workplace can lead to a decrease in motivation and commitment (Mildy et al., 2023). In the context of the Indian health sector, where the demand for qualified professionals is high, the perception of stability becomes essential. Institutions that offer clear pathways for career advancement and articulate their commitment to employee retention are more likely to effectively engage Gen Z.

Mentoring appears as another key determinant of Job Satisfaction among professionals of the Gen Z of healthcare Sector. This cohort values the advice of experienced professionals when they go into the workforce. The presence of mentoring programs facilitates not only the acquisition of skills but also promotes a feeling of belonging and professional identity within organizations (Desai et al., 2023). A study by Khanam et al. (2024) underlines that structured mentoring initiatives can considerably improve Job Satisfaction by responding to the need for support to navigate complex healthcare environments. This generational cohort is looking for mentors that are accessible, favorable and willing to invest time in their development, which ultimately leads to higher retention rates and more fulfilled employees.

The intersection of employment safety, mentoring, skills development and organizational support is essential in determining the Job Satisfaction of Gen Z in the health sector of India. Understanding these dynamics is essential for healthcare organizations aimed at optimizing their workforce and improving employee retention in the midst of rapid changes in the industry; the integration of technology and digital transformation has fundamentally reformulated the experience in the workplace of Gen Z, particularly in the retail and health sectors in India. Like the first generation to grow with ubiquitous technology, Gen Z displays unique expectations and preferences for their work environments and organizational structures. Choudhary et al. (2024) emphasize that technology plays a key role in increasing Job Satisfaction in this

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demography, facilitating communication, promoting flexibility and allowing innovative workflows.

In the health sector, technological innovations, including telemedicine, electronic health records, and AI-oriented analysis tools, transform patient care and operational dynamics. Gen Z employees are not only looking for traditional Job security but also seek opportunities to work in environments where technology and innovation are used on day-to-day basis. (Choudhary et al., 2024).

Organizational Implications and Recommendations

Both industries encounter the dual challenges and opportunities brought by technology. The work of researchers like Aslan et al. (2024) and Mayott Jr. (2023) highlights pathways for organizations seeking to cultivate a responsive and committed workforce, addressing the challenges posed by the unique characteristics of this generation and emphasizing that cultural and strategic adaptability is crucial for enhancing job satisfaction in an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment market. In addition, generational attitudes towards mental health and well-being are significant in modeling their professional satisfaction. The Gen Z is considerably more open to the discussion of mental health problems than previous generations, expecting that employers understand and support these needs (Awasthi, 2023). The organizations within the retail and health sales sectors must adapt to these evolving expectations, moving towards well -being strategies of the most holistic employees to improve professional satisfaction.

The research indicates that Job satisfaction plays a crucial role in the retention of employees, in particular within sectors characterized by high turnover rates, such as retail sales and health care. In the same way, in the health sector, professional satisfaction significantly influences retention rates, with health workers who face unique stress that can affect their levels of Job Satisfaction. Factors such as emotional exhaustion, workload and support of colleagues are essential to model the perceptions of health workers on their work (West et al., 2014). Studies have shown that health personnel who report greater Job Satisfaction tend to show lower levels of exhaustion and higher levels of commitment to their organizations, which is particularly relevant to the growing demand for the health workforce in India (Wai et al., 2024). The preference for inclusive and various workplaces is pronounced in Gen Z, which was observed to respond positively to organizational cultures that prioritize collaboration, Open communication, and ethical practices (Hameed & Nigam, 2023). Retail and health organizations that cultivate a culture of support not only attract young talents but also improve the involvement and loyalty of employees.

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