



EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND CAREER UNCERTAINTY AMONG GEN Z EMPLOYEES AND ITS IMPACT ON JOB SWITCHING BEHAVIOUR

Mr. Karthik T¹, Dr. K. Priyatharsini²

¹II MBA, Sakthi Institute of Information and Management Studies, Pollachi-01

²Assistant Professor, Sakthi Institute of Information and Management Studies, Pollachi-01

ABSTRACT

Generation Z employees have become an important part of the modern workforce and are highly focused on career growth, work-life balance, recognition, and job satisfaction. However, increasing workplace pressure, emotional exhaustion, and uncertainty regarding career growth have created major challenges for organizations in retaining young employees. Factors such as excessive workload, lack of recognition, unclear promotion policies, and job insecurity influence employees' attitudes and increase their tendency to switch jobs frequently. The present study focuses on emotional exhaustion, career uncertainty, and job switching behaviour among Generation Z employees working in selected organizations in Coimbatore.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 176 Generation Z employees through a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. Percentage analysis and chi-square analysis were used for data interpretation. The findings reveal that emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty significantly influence job switching behaviour among employees. The study concludes that organizations should focus on employee well-being, supportive leadership, career development opportunities, recognition systems, and work-life balance initiatives to improve employee satisfaction and retention among Generation Z employees.

KEYWORDS: Emotional Exhaustion, Career Uncertainty, Generation Z Employees, Job Switching Behaviour, Workplace Stress, Employee Retention, Career Growth, Job Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, organizations have experienced significant changes in workforce composition with the increasing entry of Generation Z employees into professional environments. Generation Z, generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents a technologically skilled, ambitious, and career-focused generation. These employees prioritize career growth, work-life balance, recognition, flexibility, and meaningful work experiences. As Gen Z employees continue to occupy important roles across industries, organizations are facing challenges in understanding their expectations, attitudes, and workplace behaviour. One of the major concerns in modern organizations is the increasing level of emotional exhaustion among employees. Emotional exhaustion refers to a psychological state in which employees feel emotionally drained, mentally exhausted, and physically tired due to continuous workplace stress. Excessive workload, long working hours, unrealistic deadlines, lack of managerial support, workplace pressure, and insufficient recognition are some of the important factors contributing to emotional exhaustion. Employees experiencing emotional fatigue often show reduced motivation, lower job satisfaction, decreased organizational commitment, and poor work performance.

At the same time, career uncertainty has become another important issue among Generation Z employees. Career uncertainty refers to confusion or insecurity regarding future career growth, promotion opportunities, skill development, and long-term job stability within the organization. Generation Z employees strongly value continuous learning, professional

development, and rapid career advancement. When organizations fail to provide clear career paths and growth opportunities, employees may feel dissatisfied and insecure about their future. The combined effect of emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty often leads to job switching behaviour. Job switching behaviour refers to the tendency of employees to leave their current organization and search for better opportunities elsewhere. Frequent job switching has become increasingly common among Generation Z employees, creating challenges for organizations in terms of employee retention, productivity, recruitment costs, and organizational stability.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty among Generation Z employees and analyse their impact on job switching behaviour. The study also seeks to provide useful suggestions for organizations to improve employee well-being, career development opportunities, and retention strategies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report (2022) highlighted that Generation Z employees prioritize mental health, career growth, work-life balance, and organizational culture more than previous generations. The report revealed that emotional exhaustion and lack of growth opportunities are among the major reasons influencing employee turnover intention among young employees. **Kundi and Badar (2021)** examined the relationship between job insecurity, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. Their findings indicated that employees experiencing uncertainty regarding their future



career are more likely to experience emotional fatigue and develop intentions to leave their organization. **Singh and Gupta (2020)** studied employee retention challenges among Generation Z employees in Indian organizations. The study found that workload stress, lack of recognition, poor managerial communication, and unclear career growth opportunities significantly increase turnover intention among young employees. **Jiang, Hu, and Wang (2019)** conducted a study on burnout and turnover intention among early-career employees. The research revealed that emotional exhaustion strongly influences employees' willingness to search for alternative job opportunities. **Brougham and Haar (2018)** examined generational differences in workplace stress and found that younger employees are more sensitive to workplace pressure, work-life imbalance, and lack of flexibility. The study concluded that emotional exhaustion significantly influences turnover intention among younger generations. **Akkermans and Tims (2017)** focused on career adaptability and career uncertainty among employees. Their findings revealed that employees who lack career development opportunities experience greater career uncertainty and lower job satisfaction.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To study the level of emotional exhaustion among Generation Z employees in the workplace.
- To identify the level of career uncertainty among Generation Z employees regarding growth and job security.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine emotional exhaustion, career uncertainty, and job switching behaviour among Generation Z employees. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale from 176 Generation Z employees working in selected organizations in Coimbatore. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling method based on accessibility and availability. The questionnaire consisted of demographic details and statements related to emotional exhaustion, career uncertainty, and job switching behaviour. Secondary data were collected from journals, books, research articles, websites, and previous studies related to employee stress, career uncertainty, and employee turnover. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and chi-square analysis were used for analyzing and interpreting the collected data.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 01: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	No of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	102	57.9%
	Female	74	42.1%
Age	21–23 Years	68	38.6%
	24–25 Years	72	40.9%
	26–27 Years	36	20.5%
Educational Qualification	Diploma	16	9.1%
	Undergraduate	64	36.4%
	Postgraduate	96	54.5%
Industry	IT	58	33.0%
	BPO	36	20.5%
	Sales	52	29.5%
	Banking	30	17.0%
Work Experience	Less than 1 Year	58	33.0%
	1–2 Years	72	40.9%
	2–3 Years	46	26.1%

The demographic analysis reveals that the majority of respondents are male employees (57.9%), while female employees constitute 42.1% of the total respondents. Most respondents belong to the age group of 24–25 years (40.9%), followed by 21–23 years (38.6%), indicating that the study mainly focuses on Generation Z employees in the early stages of their careers. Regarding educational qualification, a majority of respondents are postgraduates (54.5%), followed by undergraduates (36.4%) and diploma holders (9.1%). This indicates that most respondents are well educated and capable of understanding workplace-related issues effectively. The

industry-wise analysis shows that most respondents are employed in the IT sector (33.0%), followed by Sales (29.5%), BPO (20.5%), and Banking (17.0%). This reflects that the study covers employees from various service-oriented industries. The work experience analysis reveals that 40.9% of respondents have 1–2 years of experience, followed by 33.0% with less than 1 year and 26.1% with 2–3 years of experience. This indicates that the majority of respondents are relatively new employees, which is suitable for studying Generation Z workplace behaviour.



Table 02: Employees Feeling Emotionally Exhausted Due to Work Pressure Response

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	12	6.8%
Disagree	18	10.2%
Neutral	34	19.3%
Agree	63	35.8%
Strongly Agree	49	27.9%
Total	176	100%

The analysis shows that 35.8% of respondents agree and 27.9% strongly agree that they feel emotionally exhausted due to work pressure. This indicates that emotional exhaustion is highly prevalent among Generation Z employees. A smaller

percentage of respondents disagree or strongly disagree, while some remain neutral. Overall, the findings reveal that workload and workplace stress significantly affect employee well-being.

Table 03: Career Uncertainty Regarding Growth Opportunities

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	10	5.7%
Disagree	22	12.5%
Neutral	41	23.3%
Agree	61	34.7%
Strongly Agree	42	23.8%
Total	176	100%

The findings indicate that 34.7% of respondents agree and 23.8% strongly agree that they experience career uncertainty regarding future growth opportunities. The results show that many Generation Z employees are uncertain about career

advancement and long-term job stability within their organizations.

Table 04: Chi-Square Analysis for Emotional Exhaustion and Career Uncertainty

Variable	Chi-Square (χ^2)	df	p-value
Emotional Exhaustion	92.48	4	<0.001
Workload and Deadlines	101.36	4	<0.001
Lack of Recognition	84.72	4	<0.001
Career Uncertainty	95.64	4	<0.001
Job Insecurity	88.25	4	<0.001
Lack of Career Growth	90.18	4	<0.001

The chi-square results for all variables are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the responses of Generation Z employees are not due to random chance. The findings confirm that emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty are major workplace concerns among employees. Among all variables, workload and deadlines show the highest chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 101.36$), indicating that excessive workload and work pressure are the major contributors to emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion itself also shows a high chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 92.48$), confirming that many employees experience mental fatigue and stress in the workplace. Career uncertainty ($\chi^2 = 95.64$) and lack of career growth ($\chi^2 = 90.18$) also show strong statistical significance, indicating that employees are uncertain about their future growth opportunities and professional development within the organization. Job insecurity and lack of recognition further contribute to employee dissatisfaction and emotional strain. Overall, the analysis confirms that emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty significantly affect the attitudes and workplace experiences of Generation Z employees.

FINDINGS

The study found that emotional exhaustion is highly prevalent among Generation Z employees due to excessive workload, deadlines, workplace pressure, and lack of recognition. Many employees feel mentally exhausted and emotionally drained because of demanding work environments. The study also identified that career uncertainty is a major concern among Generation Z employees. Employees expressed dissatisfaction regarding unclear promotion policies, limited growth opportunities, and job insecurity.

The findings further revealed that job switching behaviour is common among Generation Z employees. Many respondents expressed willingness to switch jobs for better salary packages, career growth opportunities, recognition, and work-life balance. The chi-square analysis confirmed that emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty significantly influence job switching behaviour among Generation Z employees.



SUGGESTIONS

- Organizations should reduce excessive workload and unrealistic deadlines to minimize emotional exhaustion among employees.
- Companies should provide clear career growth opportunities and transparent promotion policies to reduce career uncertainty.
- Regular training and skill development programs should be conducted to improve employee confidence and career advancement.
- Organizations should introduce employee wellness programs, stress management sessions, and counseling support to improve mental well-being.
- Management should recognize and appreciate employee contributions through rewards, incentives, and recognition programs.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to understand the level of emotional exhaustion, career uncertainty, and job switching behaviour among Generation Z employees in selected organizations. The findings of the study reveal that a large number of employees experience emotional exhaustion due to excessive workload, workplace pressure, lack of recognition, and tight deadlines. This satisfies the first objective of the study, which focused on identifying the level of emotional exhaustion among Generation Z employees. The study also identified that many Generation Z employees experience uncertainty regarding career growth, promotion opportunities, and job security within their organizations. Employees expressed concerns about limited career advancement and lack of clarity regarding their professional future. This fulfills the second objective related to identifying the level of career uncertainty among Generation Z employees.

Finally, the study suggests that organizations should implement employee wellness programs, supportive leadership practices, transparent promotion systems, career development initiatives, and flexible work policies to reduce emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty. These measures can help organizations improve employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and retention among Generation Z employees. Thus, the fourth objective of suggesting measures to reduce emotional exhaustion and career uncertainty has also been achieved successfully.

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