

Determinants of Generations Y and Z retention: A Bibliometric analysis of Job Satisfaction as foundational mechanism at the workplace

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Abstract:

Purpose – This study illustrates the way research on the retention of Generations Y and Z is organized, aiming to identify gaps and guide future theoretical development.

Design/Methodology/Approach – A quantitative bibliometric analysis using science mapping techniques was conducted. Data were analyzed in R. The collected data represents the intellectual core of 104 studies after filtering.

Findings – Results reveal key research areas and help structuring an integrative framework that supports in filling existing gaps in the literature.

Research Limitations – The analysis is limited to Scopus-indexed publications and depends on selected keywords and inclusion criteria, which may cause bias.

Practical Implications – Findings encourage organizations to align leadership styles and soft HRM practices, while promoting flexibility, autonomy, recognition, and career growth enhancing retention.

Originality/Value – This study offers one of the first comprehensive bibliometric syntheses focused specifically on Generations Y and Z retention and provides a foundation for future empirical studies.

Keywords: Generation Y, Generation Z, Retention, Job Satisfaction, Bibliometric Analysis, Science Mapping, Bibliographic Coupling.

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Introduction

Contemporary workplaces are experiencing transformation due to the increased emergence of Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z into the labor market. These two cohorts are the youngest generations, and they present distinct values, beliefs and behaviors challenging traditional management practices (Mahmoud et al., 2021). Consequently, understanding their work-attitudes and perceptions has become imperative for organizations seeking to promote productive, consistent and sustainable work environment (Berber et al., 2022). Empirical evidence consistently indicates that younger employees exhibit high turnover intentions when their personal, professional and motivational expectations are ineffectively addressed by their organization (Vui-Yee & Paggy, 2020).

Prior research suggests that Generation Y place strong emphasis on both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, such as compensation and benefits, quick career advancement, work–life balance, engagement, and ways to make a positive difference in society (Bussin et al., 2019). In contrast, Generation Z employees have a higher priority for purpose and meaningful work, with a strong orientation to the satisfaction of intrinsic motivations (Popaitoon, 2022). Furthermore, empirical evidence indicates that Generation Z values flexible work arrangements, reduced hierarchy, and the satisfaction of both financial and psychological needs (Kgarimetsa and Naidoo, 2024). Meanwhile, Generation Y employees put a lot of value on autonomy, respect, and social influence, reflecting a strong desire for independence and recognition within society (Kopertyńska and Kmiotek, 2015). These generational differences bring important implications for leadership and management practices. When leading Generation Y employees, a combination of effective leadership, easy communication, personal and professional growth opportunities, social justice, and the recognition of employee's contributions (Torsello, 2019). Despite these insights, the existing literature remains fragmented, limiting the development of a comprehensible framework of employees' retention and among Generations Y and Z cohorts.

Accordingly, the present study adopts a bibliometric approach to systematically represent the existing literature on the retention and management of Generation Y and Z employees. By analyzing publication trends, intellectual structures, and thematic evolution, this research seeks to show the importance of the topic, captures the increasing attention it is receiving in research, and identifies key gaps that can shape future research directions. This evaluation aims to find major gaps in the current literature that could help shape future investigations. It also helps to identify the main factors that support this study, which will help create a theoretically-based conceptual model for future empirical research. Bibliometric analysis offers a strong and objective methodology for defining the outlines of a research field, uncovering underexplored areas, and guiding theory development in human resources management (Donthu et al., 2021).

In this study, data are collected from the Scopus database and exposed to a processing procedure, including preliminary refinement followed by detailed data cleansing, before being analyzed using R, a statistical computing environment. The findings offer three key contributions: first, they help analyzing existing knowledge about the retention of Generation Y and Z in the workplace; second, they help recognizing relevant authors, journals and geographic contexts of the topic; and third, they help identifying theoretical and practical gaps in the literature.

Research method and data analysis

Search strategy

This study adopts a quantitative bibliometric analysis with science mapping techniques to analyse the intellectual structure, through keyword co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, co-authorship and clustering, and trace the developmental trajectory of the research topic. Therefore, the data collection process, detailing the sources, the search strategy, and the refinement reflect the key steps to ensure the reliability and the comprehensiveness of our bibliometric design and analysis. The data was gathered using the Scopus database, which is a large collection of summaries and citations for peer-reviewed research articles in many fields, including science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and arts and humanities. Scopus is a database that has more than 20,000 journals that have been peer-reviewed. It has articles from well-known publishers like Elsevier, Emerald, Frontiers, Informs, Taylor & Francis, and Springer (Gemmano et al., 2020). First, we used the advanced search tool on the Scopus database to find the following keywords: ("Generation Y" OR "Millennials" OR "Generation Z" AND "Retention" OR "Motivation" OR "Job Satisfaction" OR "Leadership").

After that, 2573 results were found, which indicated that more refinements are needed through the filters available on Scopus. We only looked at publications from 2010 onward to make sure that our research findings were up-to-date and trustworthy. We improved the focus of our research by choosing fewer subject areas to study. We chose the following fields on Scopus: "Business, Management and Accounting," "Social Sciences," "Psychology," and "Decision Sciences." To make sure our results were reliable; we only looked at relevant published articles and conference papers. We carefully looked over the results and left out journals and sources that didn't fit with our research area. In accordance with language standards, only articles in English were kept for later analysis. After applying filters, the first 2573 documents were cut down to 185. This made sure that our investigation had a more focused and relevant collection of documents to begin working with.

Data processing technique

A thorough manual review of 185 documents is performed to ensure that our findings conform to the parameters of our research, including a careful analysis of titles and abstracts. This procedure eliminates documents considered irrelevant to the central theme (M'harzi Alaoui et al., 2025). Finding duplicate entries, entries that don't have an author, or entries that are missing important information should be removed from consideration. This strict process of ends with keeping 104 documents considered as accurate and relevant to the research topic. This refined sample constitutes the intellectual foundation of our research.

Data overview and annual science production

Findings show that our research is based on an analysis of 104 documents from 2010 to 2025. In this collection, 52 sources focus on the topic of retention among employees from Generations Y and Z, written by 241 different authors. There are 96 articles and 8 conference papers in this group of documents. The annual scientific production is the number of scholarly

works that have been indexed in the SCOPUS database over the span of one year. These works include research articles, conference papers, reviews, and other academic publications. It is interesting to see the increasing trend of Generations Y and Z retention in scientific production over the past five years. Based on Figure 1, the significant increase from 11 articles in 2020 to 20 articles in 2022 indicates a substantial surge in interest and research on this topic. In 2023, the number of publications decreased to nine pieces, then had a little rise to thirteen articles in 2024, maintaining that level in 2025.

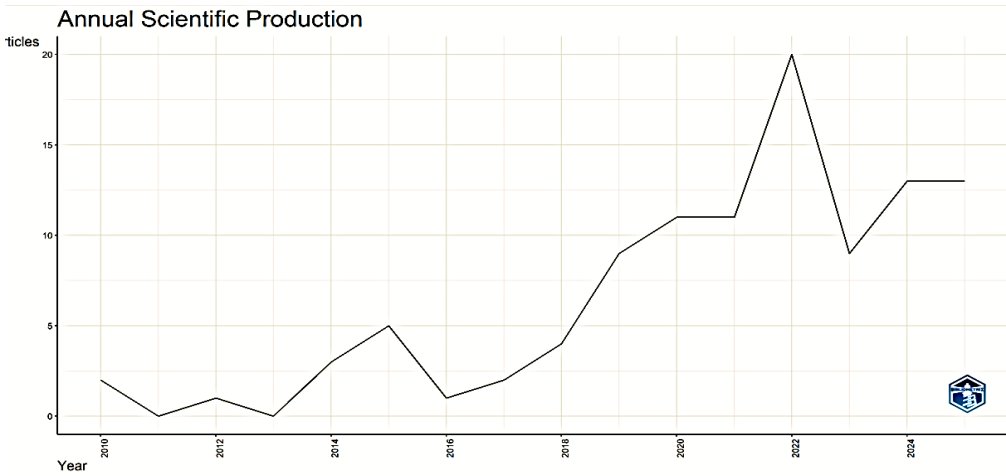


Figure 1: Annual Scientific Production

A total of 41 sources were published in the study of employee retention belonging to Generation Y and Z. Table 1 illustrates the top 10 sources of contributions, with the SA Journal of Human Resources and Management being the most important. This insight provides researchers with an insight of their future collaborations.

Table 1: Most Relevant Sources

Sources	Articles
SA Journal of Human Resource and Management	7
Sustainability (Switzerland)	5
Employee relations	4
Evidence-Based HRM	4
Journal of Business and Psychology	4
Problems and Perspectives in Management	4
Proceedings of the European Conference on Management,	4
Business Perspectives and Research	3
Frontiers in Psychology	3
International Journal of Business Excellence	3

Word's frequency over time

From 2015 to 2025, the terms "Generation Y" and "Millennials" consistently exhibited the highest levels of co-occurrence, surpassing all other terms in the management literature.

This trend indicates that "Millennials" is a thoroughly established and extensively researched cohort.. On the other hand, "Job satisfaction" was the second most used keyword in the literature on staff management and retention. This shows how important it is as a factor in research on retention. Between 2020 and 2025, the keyword "Generation Z" became more common, which suggests that this group is becoming an important and growing topic of academic study. In 2024, a connection between Generation Z and leadership was also found, showing that leadership dynamics are becoming more important for this younger workforce. Recent keyword co-occurrence patterns also show that the relationship between retention and motivation is getting stronger, especially in the last few years. This shows that studies on employee's motivation and retention are still going strong. By 2025, retention and human resource management were even more closely related, showing that HRM practices had an effect on retention results.

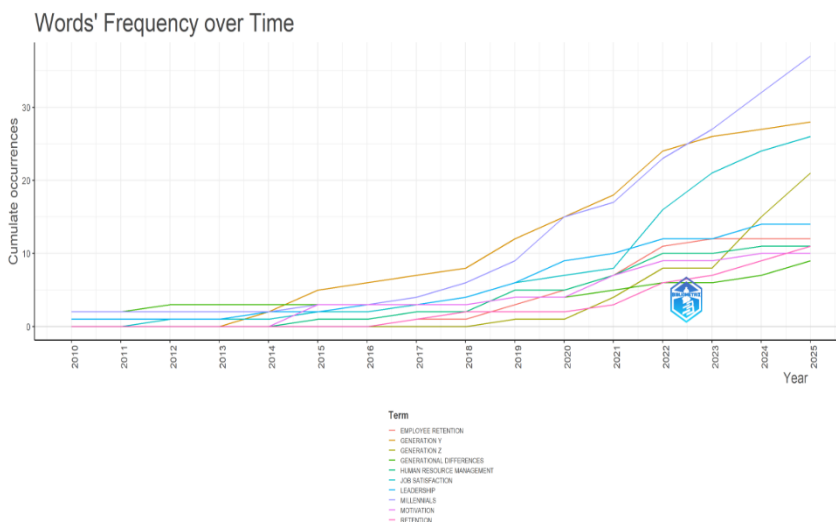


Figure 2: Word's frequency over time

Most relevant authors

Upon the investigation of the articles that are referred into their respective journals (Figure 3), Hassan M.D. and Jambulingam M., considered as prominent authors in the field, have extensively inquired into the subject of retaining young employees in the workplace, having contributed to a total of 7 publications. Their focus primarily centres on addressing the turnover challenges confronting Generation Y at work, attributed to diminished job satisfaction (Islam et al., 2019). Their research has revealed that servant leadership exerts a positive influence on the retention of Generation Y employees (Islam et al., 2019). They also coped in their research with work-life balance and determined that it has a positive impact on retaining Generation Y employees (Bahar et al., 2022). Moreover, Islam, et al. (2020) examined the influence of the work environment, whether encouraging or creative, on the retention intentions of Generation Y employees. Christopher Lee and his co-authors investigated how generational differences influenced workplace motivation and retention in the workplace (Lee et al., 2022).

While in Lee and Lim (2024), authors have examined the moderating effect of generations on the relationship between leadership style and employee's commitment in the workplace.

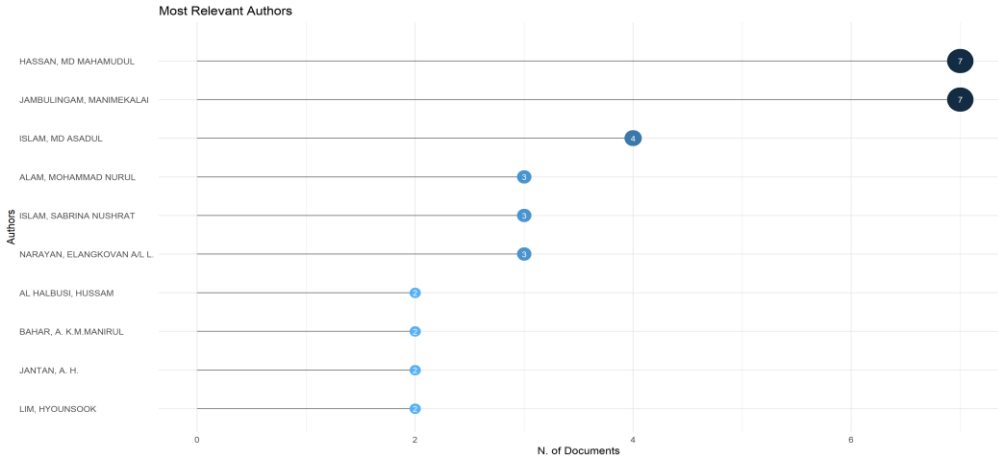


Figure 3: Most relevant authors

Table 2 synthesizes the contributions of the most prominent authors, presenting their publications, sources, methodological approaches, and principal research objectives, thereby offering a structured reference to inform and guide future investigations in the field of employee retention.

Table 2: Most prominent authors' articles

Article	Source	Approach	Objectives
Hassan et al. (2020)	Global Business Review	Quantitative	Examining the retention of Generation Y employees in the workplace through management initiatives, soft human resource management, work-life balance and employee satisfaction.
Hosen et al. (2023)	International Journal of Business and Globalization	Quantitative	Studying the mediating role of job satisfaction in the retention of Generation Y employees in the workplace.
Uzir et al. (2020)	International Journal of Business Excellence	Quantitative	Examining the relationship between soft human resource management and Generation Y employees' retention through the mediating role of job satisfaction.
Islam et al. (2020 a)	International Journal of Business Innovation and Research	Quantitative	Studying the retention of Generation Y employees through the emphasis on leadership and intrinsic motivation.

Islam et al. (2022 a)	International Journal of Process Management and Benchmarking	Quantitative	Examining the importance of soft human resource management for the job satisfaction of Generation Y employees.
Kultalahti & Viitala (2015)	Journal of Managerial Psychology	Quantitative	Understanding the key elements for Generation Y employees' psychological contracts in the workplace, and how the results affect human resource management practices.
Hassan et al. (2021)	International Journal of Business Innovation and Research	Quantitative	Investigating the effects of retention elements on Generation Y employees.
Sarwar et al. (2024)	International journal of business innovation and research	Qualitative	Studying the causes, effects and precautions actions of quiet quitting of Generation Y employees.
Islam et al. (2022 b)	Business Strategy & Development	Quantitative	Examining the effect of green human resources management practices on Generation Y employees' retention.
Islam et al. (2020 b)	International Journal of Business Excellence	Quantitative	Studying the relationship between organizational culture and intention to stay of Generation Y employees through the managers' leadership practices.
Bahar et al. (2022)	International Journal of Process Management and Benchmarking	Quantitative	Examining the work-life balance effect on the retention of Generation Y employees through the mediation of job satisfaction.
Jayathilake et al. (2021)	Benchmarking: An International Journal	Literature review	Examining the literature review on employee development, organizational performance and retention of Generation Z employees.
Lee et al. (2022)	Evidence-based HRM	Quantitative	Examining the moderating role of generations on the elements of retention and motivation of employees in the workplace.

While going through the articles of the mentioned authors in the field, it is apparent that Generation Y has been more extensively researched than Generation Z, and this represents a

possible field for future investigation. Among the articles already mentioned in Table 2, only one has centred its interest on studying Generation Z motivation and job satisfaction in the workplace.

Three-Field Plot

The three-field plot is a bibliometric visualization used to illustrate the relationships among key elements within a research domain. In this representation, the connections between references, authors and keywords are mapped, providing a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure of the field (Chhetri et al., 2024). This plot makes it easier to find important themes, new trends, and important contributors. On the left side of the plot, you can see the references that are used in the field. The middle part refers to the authors who developed the research themes, and the right side shows the keywords, which stand for the main trends and important topics that were examined.

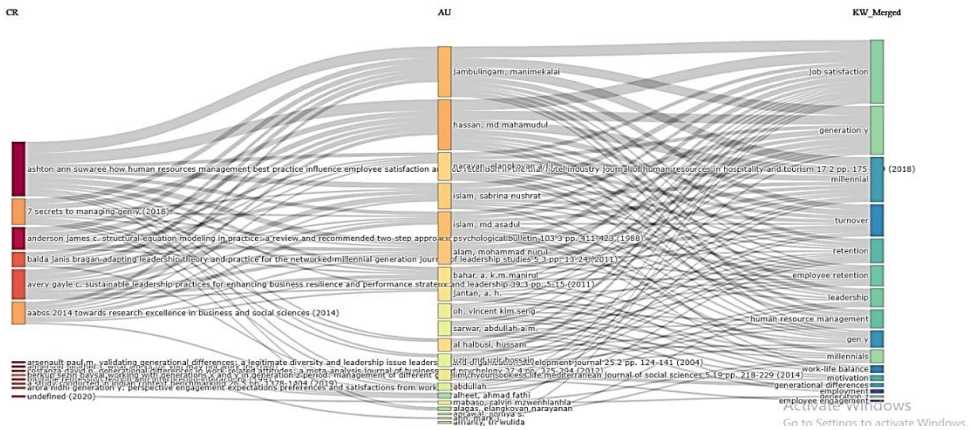


Figure 4: Three-Field Plot

Upon analysis of the plot, the most prominent keywords are listed on the right side beginning with "job satisfaction" and "generation Y". These terms reflect well-developed themes that have been extensively addressed by authors in the field. In the middle of the right list we can plot the terms "Turnover" and "Retention" that are less examined by authors in the field. And on the bottom of the right list, we can plot the terms "motivation" and "Generation Z", being underdeveloped areas that warrant further investigation. This observation aligns with the inferences drawn from the previous analysis of the thematic map.

Thematic map

The thematic map, generated from R program, is a plot that shows the research clusters identified in a certain field and their positioning regarding centrality and density, where centrality refers to the strength of the theme among other themes in the field while the density represents the internal solidity in the theme itself, in other words, it shows the extent to which it is examined and developed in the field (Tsakalerou et al., 2025). The analysis of the thematic map indicates that the blue cluster ("millennials", "Generation Y", "Generation Z") and the

purple cluster ("job satisfaction", "retention", "millennial") positioned toward the middle and lower areas of the upper-right quadrant, are well integrated within the field yet remain underdeveloped. Furthermore, the "work motivation" cluster, situated in the lower-left quadrant, exhibits both low centrality and density signifying its status as an emerging theme that presents valuable opportunities for future exploration. To conclude, combining the "motivation", "job satisfaction" and "retention" of "millennials" and "generation Z" employees will be good research for future examinations.

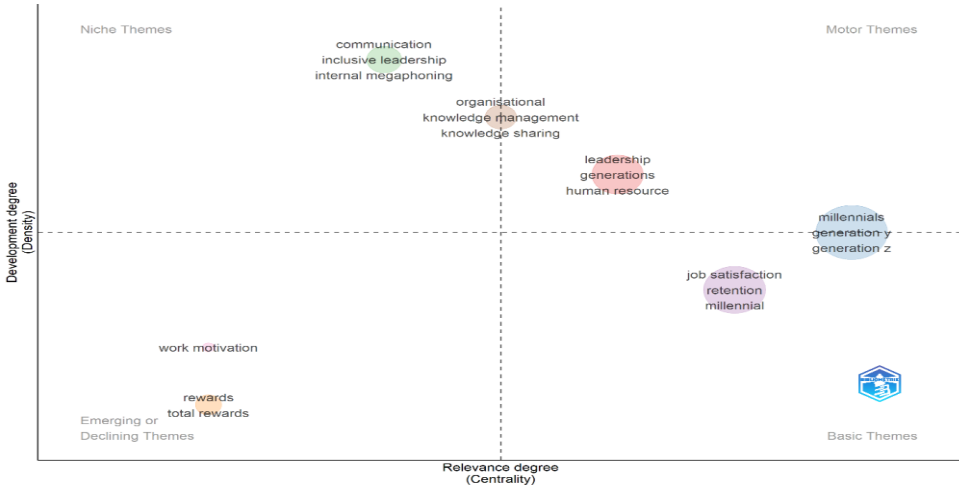


Figure 5: Thematic map

Bibliographic coupling

Bibliographic coupling is explained by examining shared references in published articles, enabling the identification of clusters that define the topic and summarize dominant research themes (Casprini et al., 2020). Figure 4 shows the network of documents that have the same references grouped into clusters. Each cluster is shown in a different colour. In this case, the analysis shows that there are nine distinct clusters. This network makes it easier to find articles that have similar sources and references. This feature allows figuring out authors, which helps in connecting articles for a better understanding of the existing literature. The documents were grouped using the bibliographic coupling technique in R software.

The dataset, exported from Scopus, was uploaded into R software, with bibliographic coupling selected as the analysis type. The unit of analysis was set to individual documents, and the counting method was applied using the default setting of full counting. Nine different clusters are being identified. To analyse the bibliographic coupling network, it is important to know that the number of links between articles reflects the degree of relatedness of the underlying theme or topic within the overall field of study, a metric referred to as centrality. A cluster having high centrality represents an essential theme that is well integrated within the domain. Additionally, the size of each node corresponds to the density of the corresponding theme, indicating the level of internal development and maturity of that topic.

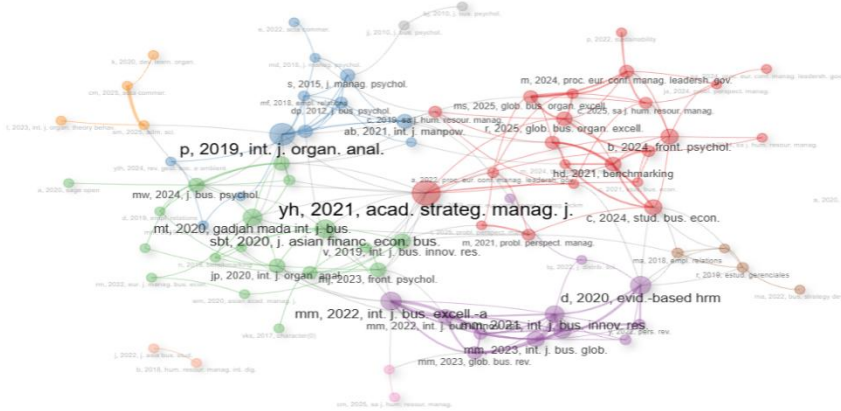


Figure 6: Bibliographic Coupling via R

The largest cluster identified (red) is composed of 22 articles that focus on generation Z employees. Holban and Bedrule-Grigoruță (2025) pointed up the significance of employee-manager relationships and highlighted their important consequence of enhancing the motivation and strengthening the retention of Generation Z employees in the workplace. Plakhotnik et al. (2024) and Silva et al. (2025) stated that organizations that aim to motivate and retain Generations Y and Z employees should align current work activities with their preferred job characteristics. According to Lopez et al. (2025), the key element of employee retention is found to be job satisfaction, as employees who are content with their jobs are less likely to fetch new opportunities, while for (Lee & Lim, 2024) intellectual stimulation has been shown to increase employee retention, through the mediating effect of employee engagement. In addition, to foster greater employee engagement and retention, organizations should implement flexible work arrangements, provide regular feedback, offer professional development opportunities and cultivate a positive workplace culture (Sarwar et al., 2024). According to Kgarimetsa and Naidoo (2024), the retention of Generation Z employees is primarily driven by employee recognition and the provision of flexible work arrangements.

For Popaitoon (2022), Generation Z work retention is enhanced by task significance, through making work more meaningful and fostering a sense of purpose. Generation Z employees' retention is also found to be influenced by democratized learning, reverse mentoring and intrapreneurship through the mediating role of employee development (Jayathilake et al., 2021). Yılmaz et al. (2024) examined the leadership viewpoint of Generation Z and discovered that they prefer supportive and developmental leadership styles when managing subordinates. While Prund (2021) investigated how leaders must modify their human resource management procedures to accommodate Generation Z employees and concluded that embracing technology advancements and fostering diversity are essential.

Dwivedula (2025) examined the key drivers of Generation Z motivation at work and found that they care more about their own interests and inner drive. Novel and Tresna (2024) and Nakash (2024) both examined the expectations of Generation Z workers in their job search,

revealing that they prioritize compensation, a good work environment, and flexible working circumstances.

Additionally, Nakash (2024) highlighted the significance of career advancement for Generation Z searching for new job opportunities.

Jasmine and Utomo (2024) examined the role of transformational leadership, work-life balance and employee engagement on Generation Z employees' organizational commitments and the findings reveal that Generation Z employees regard engagement as a pivotal factor influencing their commitment, surpassing the impact of transformative leadership and work-life balance. This is the largest cluster characterized by many interconnections yet containing small nodes signifies a theme that is highly relevant to the field but remain underdeveloped, thereby considering the cluster of Generation Z an opportunity for future scholar investigations.

The second identified cluster (blue) comprises 12 articles, where the majority examining generational differences. Mahmoud et al. (2021) study of generational disparities in work motivation reveals that Generation Z exhibits heightened sensitivity to "amotivation" and prioritizes extrinsic material rewards alongside intrinsic motivation, whereas Generation Y moderately values "introjected" regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation. Mehra and Nickerson (2019) studied the influence of generational cohorts on the correlation between organizational communication and work satisfaction, revealing that Generation Y exhibited the lowest levels of satisfaction.

For Lee et al. (2025) as well, Generation Y employees demonstrate the lowest retention rates across generations, which might be improved with a clearly defined hierarchical culture. According to Bussin et al. (2019), each generation has its own characteristics and beliefs so it will be motivated and retained differently. Generational differences were also examined in work-related attitudes, where the relationships between both were found to be moderate and zero in some cases (Costanza et al., 2012). Studying generational cohorts and inferring their differences helps leaders identify the factors that increase employee engagement for enhancing employee productivity (Hurtienne et al., 2022). This cluster contains articles represented by larger nodes, exhibiting a moderate number of interconnections, indicating that this theme is well-developed in the field.

The third identified cluster (green) encompasses 18 articles, where the majority embraces the topic of leadership. In Arora and Dhole (2019) research, respondents consider corporate leadership to be a significant element affecting Generation Y employees' work perspectives. When investigating the causes of high turnover rates inside a corporation, attention should not just be directed towards the behavioral and generational characteristics of its personnel, but also towards organizational culture factors, including leadership, trust, and socialization (Torsello, 2019). Coun et al. (2023) reveal the importance of servant leadership for all generational cohorts in the context of remote work condition.

The fourth cluster (purple) consists 11 articles, where the majority examines the job satisfaction of Generation Y employees. Job satisfaction is an important factor for Generation Y employees' retention (Hosen et al., 2023). It is affected by soft human resources management and work environment (Islam et al., 2022 a). Servant leadership was also tested to have direct positive influence on job satisfaction of Generation Y employees and by the mediation of intrinsic motivation (Islam et al., 2020 a). Work-life balance is tested to enhance job satisfaction of Generation Y, which in turn increases employees' retention (Bahar et al., 2022), (Hassan et al., 2020). According to Hassan et al. (2021) as well, job satisfaction is positively related to

servant leadership, management initiative, soft human resources management, and work-life balance. For Chavadi et al., (2021), job satisfaction depends on personal growth, salary, interpersonal relationships, work itself, leader behavior, and job competencies. The job satisfaction of Generation Y employees negatively affects turnover intention, meaning that higher job satisfaction leads to lower turnover intention (Chavadi et al., 2021).

Moreover, flexibility in working conditions serves as an enhancer for job satisfaction (Graczyk-Kucharska, 2019). This cluster is characterized by a moderate number of interconnections and relatively small nodes; therefore, it represents an opportunity for further investigation, potentially in conjunction with other themes to enhance its coherence and integration within the field.

The fifth identified (orange), is consisted of 4 articles that deals with the employee engagement. Krishna and Agrawal (2025) reveal that in order to enhance their job satisfaction and engagement towards the organization, Generation Z employees value more intrinsic factors such as autonomy, competence and relatedness. For Mabaso (2025), to maintain job satisfaction and engagement towards organization, Generation Z prioritizes extrinsic rewards, including remuneration, bonuses, and acknowledgment, with, intrinsic motivators including personal growth, a feeling of purpose.

Jena and Nayak (2023) found that job engagement and organizational engagement mediate the relationship between organizational career development and employee retention. Whereas, Aziz (2020) investigated employee engagement among Generation Y, revealing that these employees prioritize continuous feedback, autonomy, leadership opportunities, involvement in decision-making, and a focus on technology and innovation.

The bibliographic coupling analysis showed that the main cluster, which stands for Generation Z employees, has many connections but relatively small node sizes. This shows that the subject is an emerging theme that is central to the field of retention, but it is still new and needs more examination. The second-largest cluster, which is focused on leadership, interacts strongly with a lot of other clusters. This indicates that leadership is a significant element in the retention of young employees. On the other hand, the blue cluster that illustrates generational differences theme has fewer links but larger nodes. This proposes that, while generational differences are recognized as a significant and well established topic within the field. The purple cluster that focused on job satisfaction is also well connected, revealing its importance when dealing with young employees' retention.

Literature review

Generation Y and Generation Z in the workplace

According to Howe and Strauss (1991), a generation is defined as a distinct cohort, shaped by shared peer characteristics, historical events, and social trends through the same stage of life (Bussin et al., 2019). Generation Y, born from the early 80s till the early 2000s (Valldeu et al., 2021), occupy the largest place in the latest workforce (Solomon and Van Coller-Peter, 2019). Generation Y is motivated by stability of job, supportive work environment, work-life balance and opportunities for career advancement. Generation Z, born from the mid-90s (Nakash, 2024), is expected to be the largest generation in ten years (Kgarimetsa and Naidoo, 2024). Designing future work environment that meet characteristics,

needs and expectations of young generations, leaders must understand their ideal workplace (Nakash, 2024).

Generation Z work values are reflected in strong commitment to working hard, relocation for better compensation, job security, work-life balance and opportunities for career development (Jasmine and Utomo, 2024). Hence, organizations must adopt sustainable strategies that leverage their talent while addressing their communication habits and workplace expectations (Novel and Tresna, 2024). This study focuses on Generations Y and Z, as these cohorts constitute the largest share of the contemporary labor force.

Data pertaining to these two generations are collected and subsequently analyzed in the following sections. A bibliometric analysis is employed to generate the results required for this research. A bibliometric analysis is applied to reveal key authors, journals, fields of research and countries that are involved in this research. In addition to that, a bibliometric analysis is used for various purposes; it is becoming nowadays an important scientific research assessment method, plus it allows researchers to treat an exceptionally large amount of data in the easiest way possible (Ortiz-Pimentel et al., 2020).

Employee retention among Generation Y and Z

Employee retention is the process by which organizations try to keep skilled workers by coming up with and putting into action plans that make them want to stay with the company (Kgarimetsa and Naidoo, 2024). Retention challenges are especially significant among Generation Y and Z employees in complicated work environments, where job demands surpass available resources or competencies, leading to heightened stress, dissatisfaction, and intentions to leave (Lopez et al., 2025). Young people are less likely to stay in their jobs because of two main types of factors: psychological factors like feeling ignored, not getting enough recognition, and not getting enough support, and organizational issues like poor communication, inconsistent feedback, and a bad work-life balance (Sarwar et al., 2024). These factors make young workers less engaged and committed, which leads to less job satisfaction and more turnover. Organizational policies, labor market conditions, and employees' perceptions of their work environment further influence turnover intention (Rathaba and Naong, 2024).

Therefore, it's important to keep an eye on the risk of employee turnover on a regular basis because getting employees to stay is a measurable way to improve the performance of the organization (Pasko et al., 2020). Therefore, organizations should strive to acknowledge the unique attributes and expectations of each generational cohort and modify their policies and practices accordingly (Hassan et al., 2020).

Retention practices in the workplace: a theoretical framework

After a careful manual review of the studies generated by the bibliometric analysis, the initial collection of 104 articles was reduced to 33 that specifically addressed the retention domain, with employee retention as the dependent variable. These 33 papers constitute the data repository for our research. Seven significant criteria influencing the retention of young employees were found among these articles. In the subsequent sections, we shall elucidate the principal determinants and their theoretical contexts.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance refers to the equilibrium between an individual's professional responsibilities and private life (Hosen et al., 2023). Numerous academics underscore the significance of work-life balance in the retention of young individuals inside the workplace. Employee retention may be improved by implementing extrinsic elements like work-life balance, and Bahar et al. (2022) indicate that the social exchange theory significantly elucidates Generation Y's both employee retention and job satisfaction.

Moreover, Hassan et al. (2021), based on the social exchange theory, reveal that employees will exhibit favorable attitudes, such as high job satisfaction and low turnover rates, when organizations offer policies that encourage work-life balance. While Hosen et al. (2023) based their findings on Herzberg's two-factor theory, work-life balance is perceived as being a hygiene element that mitigates discontent and hence reduces turnover intentions.

Servant leadership

Servant leadership is defined as a committed leadership that is adaptable, innovative, approachable, flexible, and service-oriented for workers (Islam et al., 2019). Prior research indicates that servant leadership has a positive impact on the job satisfaction of Generation Y employees, which in turn promotes their retention in the workplace (Islam et al., 2020 a). The social exchange theory was adopted by Hassan et al. (2021) for explaining the correlation between servant leadership and Generation Y employee retention.

On the other hand, Herzberg's two-factor theory was adopted by Hosen et al. (2023) and Islam et al. (2020 a) to explain the relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction that in turn, exhibiting higher retention rates. While Islam et al. (2019), reveal the significance of the servant leadership theory, enhancing staff wellness lowering stress, hence mitigating burnout and minimizing Generation Y employee turnover.

Organizational career development

Organizational career development is a mechanism that enables employees to thrive professionally by finding the best way to aid the business reach its goals (Jena and Nayak, 2023). For them, when employees are given multiple prospects to grow professionally and move forward in a company, they become more attached to the organization (Jena and Nayak, 2023). In their study, they employed the social exchange theory, positing that when a company provides career development opportunities; Generation Y employees perceive themselves as valued, and prompting reciprocal behavior.

Kgarimetsa and Naidoo (2024) reveal that organizational career development refers to how workers view the organization's commitment to their personal growth and well-being, which impacts their choice to remain with the organization. They stated that Generation Z employees seek clear career paths and opportunity for progress. Kgarimetsa and Naidoo (2024) adopted Herzberg's two-factor approach, considering career development as an organizational policy that serves as a motivational element that creates a long-term job satisfaction in the workplace.

Flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements have been demonstrated to improve Gen Z employee retention, since employees who receive adequate help and facilitation are more likely to stay with the company (Kgarimetsa and Naidoo, 2024). Providing flexible work arrangements where Gen Z employees feel encouraged to achieve both their professional and private goals is crucial for organizational success (Holban and Bedrule-Grigoruță, 2025).

Flexible work arrangements' are characterized by two primary types of flexibility: temporal and spatial (Berber et al., 2022). According to Berber et al. (2022), Flexible work arrangements are projected to have a favorable impact on Generation Y and Z employees' behavior by increasing job satisfaction while also lowering turnover intentions, based on the social exchange theory. While Kgarimetsa and Naidoo (2024) adopted Herzberg's two-factor theory, considering flexible work arrangements a hygiene factor that prevent dissatisfaction.

Employee Recognition

Recognition pertains to the perception or position one adopts towards another (Kgarimetsa and Naidoo, 2024). According to Kgarimetsa and Naidoo (2024), recognition is considered as a motivational element for Gen Z workers, relying on Herzberg's two-factor theory, which contributes to employee retention. In this study, a direct significant relationship exists between employee recognition and Generation Z employees' retention.

Elaboration of an integrative conceptual and theoretical framework

After an in-depth examination of the intellectual core of the bibliometric analysis, 33 articles out of 104 have dealt with the employee retention of Generations Y and Z as a dependent variable. Following such analysis, the focus was as well centred on examining the factors that affect these cohorts' retention at the workplace. From these 33 articles, a set of key determinants influencing the retention of young employees is revealed. Figure 7 reveals the key determinants that have been empirically validated for affecting the retention of Generation Y and Generation Z at the workplace.

Following an in-depth review extending beyond the corpus of studies identified through the bibliometric analysis, two additional determinants of Generations Y and Z employees' intention to stay emerged: the perceived organizational support and job autonomy. Perceived organizational support reflects employees' generalized belief that the organization values their contributions and genuinely cares about their well-being (Arasanmi and Krishna, 2019). Perceived organizational support refers to employees' perception that the organization values their efforts and is genuinely concerned for their welfare (Weng et al., 2023). Perceived organizational support also improves employees' faith in their organizations, as they believe their firms are acting in their best interests (Freiha and Sassine, 2023). According to Kalhoro et al. (2025), perceived organizational support exhibits a significant negative correlation with the turnover intention of employees. Perceived organizational support enhances workers' adaptation to the organizational context (Arasanmi and Krishna, 2019), relying on the advancements of social exchange theory implying that when a company fairly values and

appreciates the work of its employees, the employees feel a lot of support from the company and feel like they have to give back their support as well.

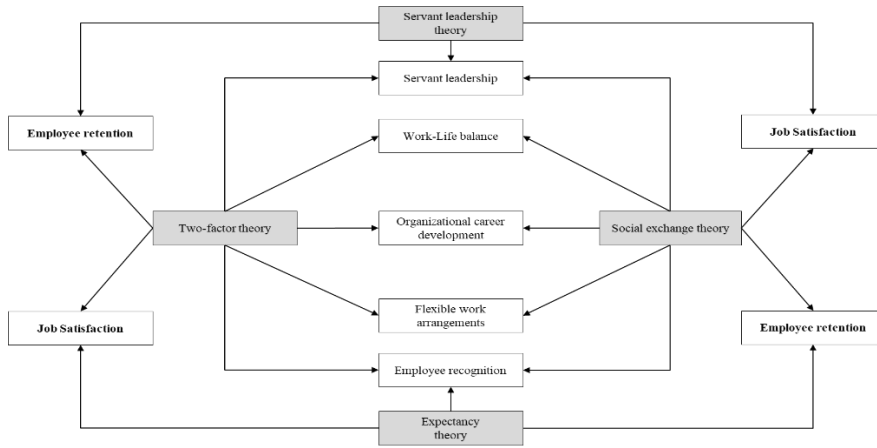


Figure 7: Conceptual framework from bibliometric analysis

In parallel, job autonomy, determining procedures, prioritizing tasks, and making decisions related to the execution of their responsibilities (Prakash et al., 2025). Prakash et al. (2025) stated autonomy as a core psychological requirement that enhances people’s inner drive and satisfaction with their work, as proposed by the self-determination theory. In light of the self-determination theory, as workers value and experience greater autonomy, they are more inclined to put in effort and perform effectively for the organization, which, in turn, strengthens their motivation and sense of independence at work (Prakash and Philimis, 2025). Munir et al. (2025) employed in their study the social exchange theory, which conceptualizes the relationship between employees and employers as one of mutual obligation.

Figure 8 illustrates the new integrative conceptual and theoretical framework, which has been altered to represent a new framework, gained from the expanded literature analysis.

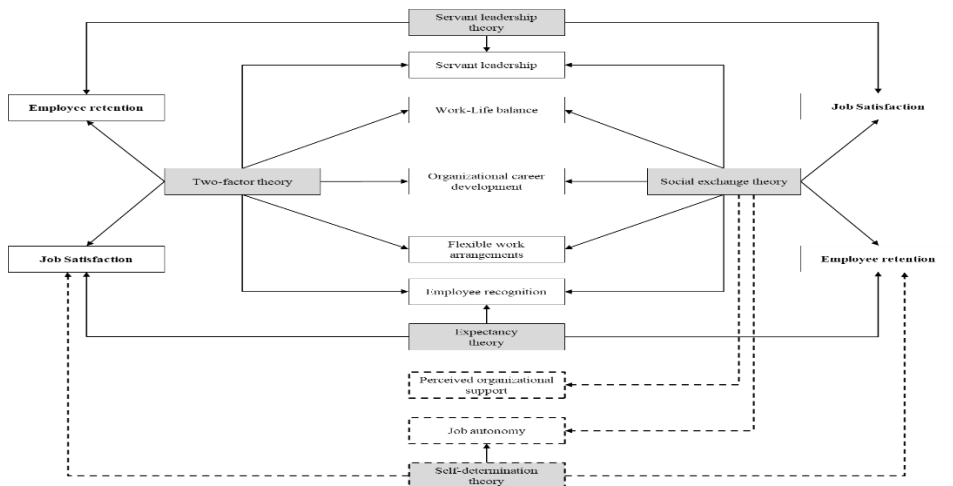


Figure 8: Integrative conceptual framework

Gap identification and limitations

This bibliometric analysis reveals several notable gaps in the literature on Millennials and Generation Z employee retention. First, based on the Words' frequency over time, the studies of the most relevant authors in the field, and the three-field plot, Generation Z proves to be relatively underdeveloped, highlighting the need for future examinations. Second, despite the recognized advantages of methodological triangulation, few studies have employed a mixed-method approach, limiting the richness of the findings. Next, the integration of employee retention with other constructs like Millennials, Generation Z, motivation and job satisfaction all together is limited, yet not existing, which offers a more comprehensive understanding of employee behaviour.

This bibliometric analysis has resulted in valuable insights; however, it is important to recognize its limitations. The research solely utilizes Scopus-indexed publications, potentially excluding pertinent studies from other reputable databases. Second, the results depend on the keywords and inclusion criteria that were used. This means that studies with similar or slightly different terms may have been missed, which could have caused a bias in the thematic mapping. Despite this limitation, this study presents a comprehensive overview of the field, emphasizing significant authors, journals, and research trends, thereby establishing a solid foundation for future theoretical and empirical investigations into the retention of Generations Y and Z employees.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis systematically outlines the intellectual core, thematic evolution, and emerging trends regarding the retention of Generations Y and Z employees in the workplace. This study gives an overview of the most important research studies, the most important theoretical foundations, and the most important authors. The findings indicate that employee retention is increasingly vital as generations evolve. Generation Y employees are currently the largest demographic of workers, and as an increasing number of Generation Z individuals enter the workforce, they are projected to exceed all other cohorts in the global labor market. This change in demographics makes it even more important to know what keeps younger people in the workplace.

The bibliographic coupling study underscores the significance of leadership and job satisfaction regarding the retention of Generations Y and Z in the workforce, as demonstrated by their strong connections with other thematic clusters. This structural positioning indicates that these concepts serve as fundamental elements within the field of study. Moreover, the Generation Z cluster is distinguished by numerous interconnections with other clusters and relatively modest nodes, signifying that although Generation Z is acquiring conceptual significance, it remains underdeveloped and necessitates further empirical investigation.

A comprehensive analysis of the intellectual core uncovers a significant conceptual deficiency: the combination of motivational and organizational dynamics within a singular conceptual framework. There is a significant lack of research utilizing mixed-method designs to examine retention variables that affect young employees' intentions to remain with their organizations. Employing mixed-method techniques, which integrate the precision of

quantitative research with the depth of qualitative research, could result in a more comprehensive research outcome. These results explain the current literature and establish a goal for future research. Finally, this study proposes a comprehensive conceptual model grounded in a robust theoretical framework, providing a strong foundation for future empirical research.

Implications for future research

This bibliometric analysis does not declare to be the definitive representation of the present research landscape; instead, it offers a fundamental framework for subsequent inquiries. Future studies must implement a broader and more inclusive methodology in the analysis of Generations Y and Z employees' retention, striving to minimize any potential bias related to inclusion and exclusion criteria to the greatest extent possible. Future research should delve deeper into the key determinants identified in this study to uncover any additional relationships, theories, or information that could contribute to the development of a more comprehensive model for testing.

Declaration of conflicts of interest

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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