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A STUDY ON CAREER GROWTH EXPECTATIONS OF GEN Z EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on examining the career growth expectations of Generation Z employees and identifying the factors that influence their professional aspirations in the workplace. Generation Z, born in the digital era, enters the workforce with strong career ambitions, high adaptability, and a desire for rapid advancement. The main objective of the study is to analyses their expectations regarding promotions, salary growth, skill development, leadership opportunities, work-life balance, and organizational support.

The research is based on primary data collected through structured questionnaires and supported by secondary sources such as journals, reports, and previous studies. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and correlation analysis were used to interpret the data. The findings reveal that Gen Z employees prioritize continuous learning, performance-based promotions, mentorship, flexibility, and meaningful work over long-term job security. Career progression and professional development opportunities significantly influence their job satisfaction and retention levels. The study concludes that organizations must redesign their human resource strategies to meet the evolving expectations of Generation Z. Providing structured career paths, digital learning platforms, regular feedback systems, and supportive leadership will help organizations attract, engage, and retain Gen Z employees effectively in the competitive business environment.

KEYWORDS: *Gen Z, Career Growth Expectations, Employee Retention, Promotion, Skill Development, Work-Life Balance, Organizational Support*

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z refers to individuals born approximately between 1997 and 2012, who are now entering the workforce in significant numbers. As digital natives, they have grown up with advanced technology, social media, and instant access to information. This exposure has shaped their attitudes, values, and expectations, especially regarding their careers and professional growth. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z employees are highly ambitious, adaptable, and focused on achieving success at an early stage of their careers.

Career growth expectations play a crucial role in determining employee motivation, job satisfaction, and retention. For Generation Z, career growth is not limited to promotions and salary increments but also includes continuous learning, skill enhancement, meaningful work, leadership opportunities, and work-life balance. They expect organizations to provide structured career paths, regular feedback, mentoring support, and transparent promotion policies. Their preference for flexibility and innovative work environments further influences their career decisions.

This study aims to analyses the career growth expectations of Generation Z employees and identify the key factors influencing their professional aspirations. The findings will help organizations adopt suitable talent management practices to engage, motivate, and retain this emerging workforce generation.

KEY POINTS

1. Generation Z includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who are now entering the workforce.
2. They are digital natives and are highly influenced by technology and social media.
3. Gen Z employees are ambitious, career-focused, and goal-oriented.
4. Career growth is a major factor influencing their job satisfaction and motivation.
5. They expect rapid promotions and performance-based advancement.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the career growth expectations of Gen Z employees
- To analyses the importance of promotion and salary growth for Gen Z
- To examine the role of skill development and training programs
- To evaluate the impact of work-life balance on job satisfaction

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LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

1) The research is confined to a specific region and selected organizations.
2) Convenience sampling method was used, which may cause sampling bias.
3) The study is based on self-reported data, which may include personal bias.
4) Time and resource constraints limited the scope of the research.
5) The findings may not be applicable to all industries or countries.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on Gen Z employees working in sectors such as IT, retail, banking, and manufacturing. It analyses expectations related to:

- Promotion opportunities
- Salary growth
- Training and development
- Work environment
- Work-life balance

The study helps organizations design better HR policies to retain young talent.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In the modern workplace, organizations are increasingly facing difficulties in managing and retaining Gen Z employees due to their evolving career growth expectations. Gen Z employees enter the workforce with strong ambitions for rapid promotion, higher salary increments, continuous skill enhancement, leadership exposure, and meaningful job roles. Unlike earlier generations such as Millennials and Generation X, Gen Z employees are less willing to wait for long-term promotions and traditional hierarchical growth. When their expectations are not fulfilled within a short period, they tend to lose motivation and seek better opportunities elsewhere. This frequent job switching leads to increased employee turnover, higher recruitment costs, and disruption in organizational productivity.

At the same time, many organizations continue to follow conventional career development practices that may not match the fast-paced expectations of Gen Z. There exists a significant gap between organizational career structures and the growth aspirations of young employees. Employers often struggle to provide immediate promotions, or high salary increments due to organizational policies, financial constraints, and performance evaluation systems. As a result, dissatisfaction, reduced engagement, and lower organizational commitment may arise among Gen Z employees. Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is to analyses the career growth expectations of Gen Z employees and to identify how organizations can redesign their human resource strategies to bridge this gap and ensure long-term employee retention and satisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Kumar, R. & Singh, P. (2021) conducted a study on career aspirations of Gen Z employees in the Indian IT sector. The study found that young employees strongly prefer rapid career progression, skill-based promotions, and continuous learning opportunities. The research highlighted that structured training programs and transparent appraisal systems significantly influence job satisfaction among Gen Z employees.
2. Sharma, M. (2022) examined employee retention challenges among Gen Z in Indian corporate organizations. The findings revealed that salary growth, work-life balance, and supportive leadership are the primary factors affecting retention. The study emphasized that organizations must adopt flexible HR policies to meet the expectations of the younger workforce.
3. Patel, D. & Verma, S. (2020) analysed generational differences in workplace expectations in India. The study compared Gen Z with earlier generations such as Millennials and found that Gen Z employees prioritize career growth speed and meaningful work more than job security. The research suggested that organizations should redesign career planning strategies to accommodate these changing expectations.
4. Reddy, K. (2023) conducted research on skill development and employability among Indian Gen Z employees. The study revealed that Gen Z prefers organizations that provide continuous upskilling opportunities, certification programs, and mentorship support. Learning and development initiatives were found to directly impact employee engagement and productivity.
5. Gupta, A. & Nair, L. (2021) studied work-life balance expectations of Gen Z employees in Indian metropolitan cities. The findings showed that flexible working hours, hybrid work models, and mental health support significantly influence job satisfaction. The study concluded that organizations failing to address work-life balance concerns may face higher turnover rates among Gen Z employees.
6. Chilukuri (2020) highlighted that mentoring, supportive leadership, and technological integration are important for Gen Z career development. They expect structured career planning from employers. Organizations must adapt strategies to retain this generation.

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7. Kirchmayer and Fratricidal (2020) found that Gen Z prefers flexible career paths and global exposure. They value skill-based promotions rather than seniority-based advancement. Career mobility is considered an important factor in their long-term employment decisions.
8. Deloitte (2021) reported that Gen Z prioritizes purpose-driven work and career mobility over long-term job security. They expect continuous skill enhancement and digital learning platforms. Growth opportunities strongly impact their commitment to organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the career growth expectations of Gen Z employees. Both primary and secondary data sources are used for the research. Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to Gen Z employees working in various sectors such as IT, banking, retail, and manufacturing. The questionnaire includes questions related to promotion expectations, salary growth, skill development, work-life balance, leadership support, and job satisfaction.

The sample size for the study consists of 150 respondents selected using the convenience sampling method. The target population includes employees belonging to Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012). The collected data is analysed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, ranking method, and simple tabular presentation to interpret the findings effectively. The methodology helps in understanding the relationship between career growth expectations and employee satisfaction. Although the study is limited in scope, it provides meaningful insights into how organizations can align their HR policies to meet the expectations of Gen Z employees.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

TABLE 1:

Expectation of Promotion Timeline

Promotion Expectations	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Within 1 Year	60	40%
Within 2 Years	45	30%
Within 3 Years	30	20%
More Than 3 Years	15	10%

Interpretation

Most respondents (40%) expect promotion within one year, indicating that Gen Z employees prefer rapid career advancement. Only 10% are willing to wait more than three years for promotion.

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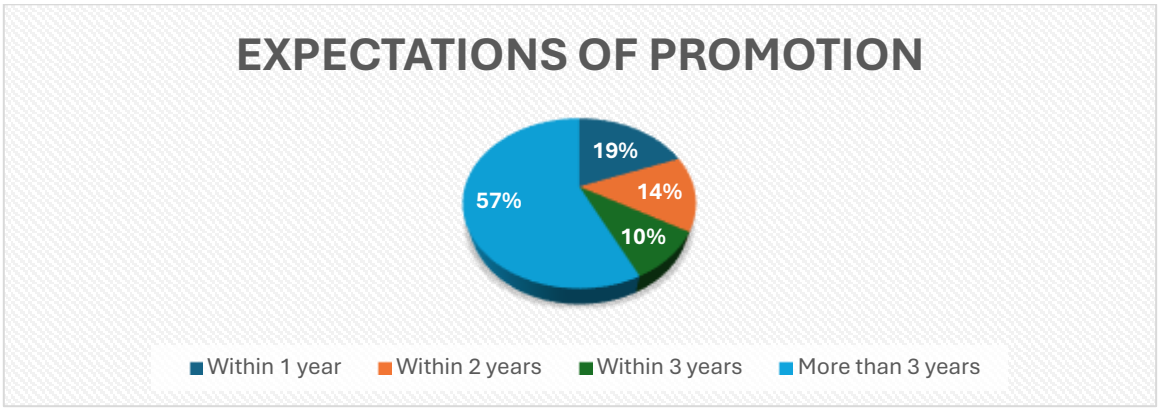


TABLE 2

Importance of Salary Growth

Level of Importance	Respondents	Percentage
Very important	75	50%
Important	45	30%
Moderate	20	13%
Less important	10	7%

Interpretation

Salary growth is considered very important by 50% of respondents, showing that financial progression plays a key role in career satisfaction among Gen Z employees.

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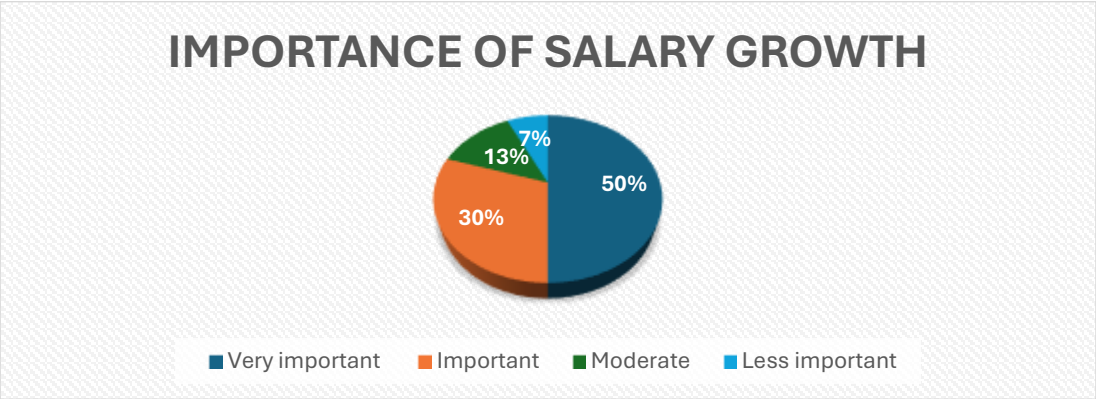


TABLE 3
Preference for Skill Development Programs

Training Availability	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Preferred	70	47%
Preferred	50	33%
Neutral	20	13%
Not preferred	10	7%

Interpretation
A large majority (80%) prefer organizations that offer regular training and development programs, indicating that continuous learning is a major expectation.

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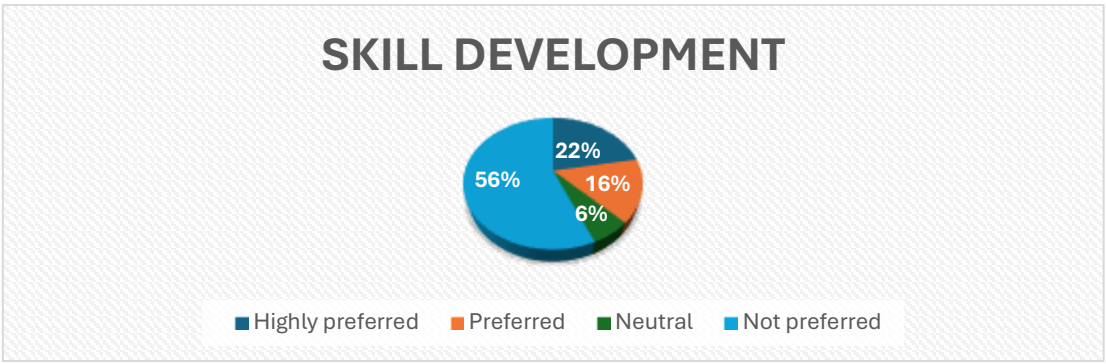


TABLE 4
Importance of Work-Life Balance

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Important	65	43%
Important	50	33%
Moderate	25	17%
Less Important	10	7%

Interpretation
Work-life balance is highly important for 43% of respondents. This shows that flexible working conditions significantly influence job satisfaction.

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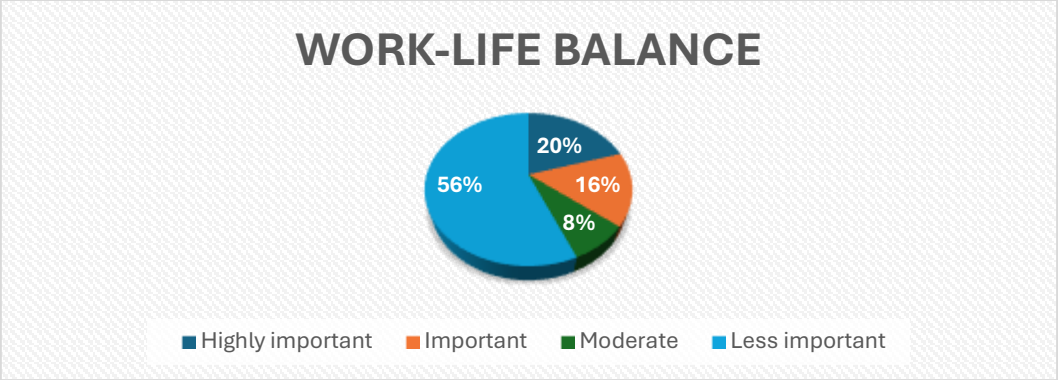


TABLE 5
Main Reason for Job Switching

Reason	Percentage
Better Salary	35%
Faster career growth	30%
Better work environment	20%
Learning opportunities	15%

Interpretation
Better salary and faster career growth are the top reasons for job switching among Gen Z employees, indicating the importance of financial and professional advancement.

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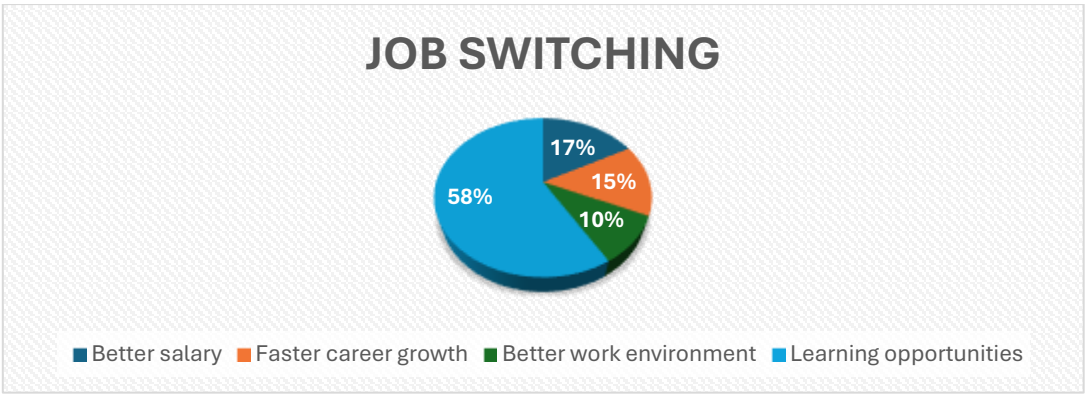


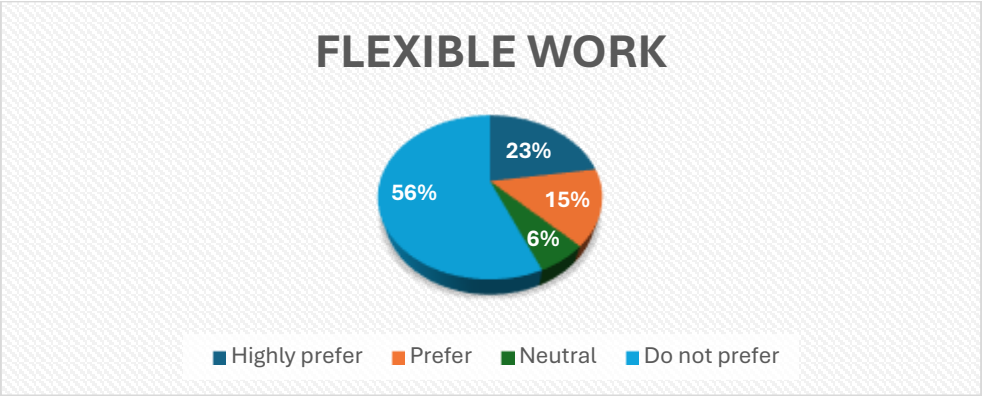
TABLE 6
Preference for flexible work options

Flexible-Work Preference	Number of respondents	Percentage
Highly Prefer	72	48%
Prefer	48	32%
Neutral	20	13%
Do Not Prefer	10	7%

Interpretation
A vast majority of respondents (80%) prioritize both salary growth and flexible work options, with "Very important" and "Highly prefer" being the top respective choices. Conversely, only 7% of the group expressed low interest or preference for these factors, highlighting their critical role in employee satisfaction.

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FINDINGS

- ✓ Most respondents prioritize career advancement and flexibility, with 80% valuing salary growth and flexible work, while 70% expect a promotion within two years.
- ✓ Most surveyed individuals prioritize career growth and work-life balance, as 80% consider salary growth highly important, 80% prefer flexible work options, and 70% expect a promotion within the next two years.
- ✓ A significant majority of respondents value career advancement and flexibility, with 80% prioritizing salary growth, 80% preferring flexible work, 80% favouring skill development, and 70% expecting a promotion within two years.
- ✓ The vast majority of surveyed respondents prioritize personal and professional growth, with 80% valuing salary increases, 80% preferring flexible work, 80% favouring skill development, and 70% expecting a promotion within two years.
- ✓ Across multiple survey categories, the vast majority of respondents prioritize professional and personal balance, with 80% valuing salary growth, 80% favouring flexible work, 80% preferring skill development, 76% emphasizing work-life balance, and 70% expecting a promotion within two years.
- ✓ Across multiple survey categories, the vast majority of respondents prioritize professional and personal balance, with 80% valuing salary growth, 80% favouring flexible work, 80% preferring skill development, 76% emphasizing work-life balance, and 70% expecting a promotion within two years.

SUGGESTIONS

- Organizations should provide clear and structured career progression plans for Gen Z employees.
- Regular training and skill development programs should be conducted to enhance professional growth.
- Performance-based promotions and timely salary increments should be implemented.
- Flexible work options such as hybrid or remote work should be encouraged.
- Mentorship programs and continuous feedback systems should be introduced.
- Organizations should focus on maintaining a healthy work-life balance to improve retention.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that Generation Z employees possess dynamic and growth-oriented career expectations. They seek rapid promotions, continuous skill development, and meaningful job roles that align with their personal values and long-term goals. Career advancement is not viewed as a long-term waiting process but as a continuous journey of learning and achievement.

The research findings emphasize that structured career paths, regular performance feedback, mentoring support, and digital learning opportunities significantly influence their motivation and commitment. Gen Z employees also expect flexibility in work arrangements, work-life balance, and a positive organizational culture. Financial benefits are important, but professional growth and recognition play a more crucial role in their career decisions.

Furthermore, the study reveals that organizations failing to meet these expectations may face higher turnover rates, as Gen Z is more willing to explore alternative job opportunities. They value transparency, innovation, and leadership opportunities at an early stage of employment.

In conclusion, organizations must redesign their talent management strategies by focusing on career planning, upskilling programs, employee engagement initiatives, and supportive leadership practices. Meeting the evolving career growth expectations of Generation Z employees is essential for long-term organizational success and workforce stability.

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