

NAVIGATING CAREER ASPIRATIONS: CHALLENGES AND PERFORMANCE DYNAMICS OF GENERATION Z EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The career aspirations, workplace challenges, and performance dynamics of Generation Z employees reveal a cohort characterized by high ambition, technological fluency, and a strong desire for purpose-driven work. As Gen Z increasingly enters the workforce, organizations face evolving expectations and challenges regarding career growth and engagement needs. Key factors influencing Gen Z's pursuit of career aspirations include an emphasis on work-life balance, development opportunities, and alignment with personal values. Additionally, these aspirations intersect with performance outcomes, often impacted by barriers such as limited career advancement, workplace culture misalignment, and skill gap perceptions, which affect productivity and job satisfaction. Using a mixed-method approach, including surveys and interviews, this research captures the unique perspectives of Gen Z employees, highlighting pathways for organizations to support career goals while enhancing overall performance. Findings underscore the importance of adaptive management practices, continuous learning opportunities, and supportive workplace environments in facilitating career fulfillment and optimal performance among Generation Z employees.

Keywords: Career Aspirations, Challenges, Employee performance, Generation Z Employees, career advancement

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, comprising individuals born from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, now forms a vital part of the workforce, bringing with them a unique set of values, aspirations, and challenges. As they step into professional environments, they are redefining traditional career pathways and setting new standards for workplace culture. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z has been shaped by a digital-first world, marked by rapid technological innovation,

unprecedented global connectivity, and a shift in societal norms and values (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This cohort demands more than just a paycheck; they seek purpose, growth, and meaningful engagement in their work. The need to understand and adapt to their evolving career goals is essential for organizations aiming to attract, retain, and empower this new generation.

The career aspirations of Gen Z are intricately tied to the contemporary motivators that resonate with them, such as opportunities for personal growth, autonomy, flexibility, and social impact. According to Elizabeth Chacko et al. (2023), their expectations extend beyond traditional benefits; they prioritize a sense of purpose and alignment with organizational values. Organizations that recognize these unique aspirations and foster an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and career development are more likely to succeed in engaging Gen Z employees. The emphasis is now on creating workspaces that allow for flexibility, purpose-driven projects, and authentic growth opportunities—critical factors for a generation that values personal and professional alignment.

Despite these aspirations, Generation Z employees face numerous barriers on their journey to career fulfillment. A lack of job opportunities, financial constraints, and difficulties in balancing work with personal life represent some of the foremost challenges that can impede their professional development. Additionally, limited access to mentorship and career guidance leaves many without the necessary support structures to navigate their early careers. Educational limitations and perceived skill gaps also pose significant hurdles, particularly in competitive job markets where advanced qualifications and specialized expertise are increasingly required.

Furthermore, Generation Z employees often encounter geographic limitations, discrimination, and a restricted professional network, all of which can limit their career mobility and advancement potential. Company culture misalignment is another prevalent issue, affecting their engagement and long-term satisfaction when organizational values do not resonate with their personal ideals. For instance, when Gen Z professionals feel disconnected from a company's mission or experience a lack of inclusivity, they may find it challenging to fully invest in their roles, impacting both performance and career satisfaction.

Health issues and workplace harassment add further layers of complexity to these challenges, as these factors can influence not only job satisfaction but also the overall well-being of Gen Z employees. In environments where resources are limited, the potential for professional and personal development is often constrained, making it difficult for Gen Z employees to advance in ways that are meaningful to them. These obstacles underscore the need for supportive workplace environments and adaptive management practices that can help Generation Z navigate the evolving landscape of career growth.

CHALLENGES FACED IN PURSUING CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Generation Z, as they navigate their career aspirations, faces a range of challenges that impact their ability to achieve professional growth and satisfaction. These obstacles arise from economic, social, educational, and workplace-related factors, each influencing the trajectory of Gen Z's career journey. A key challenge is the lack of job opportunities that align with their values and career goals, as well as financial constraints that restrict their ability to invest in skill development, relocate for work, or take on internships and roles that may not offer immediate financial rewards but promise long-term career benefits.

Work-life balance issues further complicate the pursuit of career aspirations. Generation Z highly values flexibility and work-life integration, yet balancing personal well-being with professional demands can be difficult in many industries. This generation has voiced a strong need for roles that allow them to maintain both their mental health and productivity, and without this balance, they may struggle to stay engaged or see a clear path forward in their careers.

A lack of mentorship and career guidance also presents a significant barrier for many Gen Z professionals. With limited access to mentors who can offer advice, skill-building opportunities, and connections, many feel uncertain about the best steps to achieve their goals. Mentorship is particularly valuable during early career stages, providing support and a sense of direction, which are crucial for individuals trying to establish themselves professionally. Without this support, many Gen Z employees may feel isolated and underprepared to navigate their chosen career paths.

Educational limitations and perceived skill gaps further add to the challenges, especially as competitive job markets place high expectations on candidates for specialized skills and advanced qualifications. In cases where Gen Z employees do not have access to continuous learning or reskilling programs, they may struggle to meet these demands, impacting their employability and career advancement potential. Geographic limitations, particularly for those in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, restrict opportunities for career mobility and access to larger professional networks. Discrimination, whether based on gender, race, or other factors, and biases within the workplace continue to be a challenge. These barriers not only affect job satisfaction but also limit career advancement and equal access to opportunities. Company culture misalignment further complicates matters, as Gen Z employees, who seek meaningful work that aligns with their personal values, may experience disengagement or dissatisfaction in environments that do not reflect inclusivity, transparency, or social responsibility. The competitive nature of today's job market adds pressure on Gen Z employees to differentiate themselves, often resulting in increased stress and uncertainty about their career trajectories. Health issues, including both mental and physical health concerns, and instances of workplace harassment also impact their ability to perform optimally and feel safe in their work environments. Finally, the lack of access to resources, such as networking platforms, training programs, and career development tools, can further impede their progress toward fulfilling their aspirations. Addressing these challenges requires targeted support from employers and policymakers. By creating work environments that prioritize mentorship, inclusivity, mental well-being, and access to skill development, organizations can help Generation Z overcome these obstacles and enable them to pursue meaningful, successful careers in line with their aspirations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Employee performance has consistently been a critical focal point for organizations aiming to gain and maintain a competitive edge. High-performing employees contribute not only to productivity but also to overall organizational health, innovation, and market positioning. As Generation Z increasingly populates the workforce, organizations face the challenge—and opportunity—of adapting management strategies to engage this digitally native, purpose-driven generation. Gen Z employees bring unique characteristics, including technological fluency, a preference for meaningful work, and a strong emphasis on work-life balance, which set them apart from previous generations (Tarigan et al., 2022; Sijabat et al., 2022).

To harness the full potential of Gen Z employees, organizations must evolve beyond traditional management techniques to create an environment that resonates with their expectations and values. This transformation includes not only integrating advanced digital tools and flexible work models but also understanding the unique drivers of Gen Z employee performance. Research indicates that factors such as career development opportunities, autonomy, and alignment with organizational values play a significant role in influencing their job satisfaction and engagement levels (Aggarwal et al., 2022). Understanding these antecedents is essential, as they not only affect individual performance but also have profound implications for organizational commitment, long-term retention, and ultimately, the organization's success in a competitive business landscape. In light of these dynamics, there is an increasing imperative to explore and understand the factors that drive Gen Z employee performance and the broader impacts on job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, and business outcomes. Organizations that successfully address these factors will be better positioned to enhance employee engagement, foster innovation, and achieve sustained growth.

In the context of career planning and development, Kumar et al. (2018) examined the partial effect of employees' perspectives on career planning and its influence on their satisfaction. Their findings indicate that a positive correlation exists between employees' opinions toward career development and their overall satisfaction with their career trajectory. Specifically, the study reveals that as employees develop more favorable views on career planning initiatives, their satisfaction levels also increase, holding other variables constant. This significant positive effect underscores the importance of career development programs that align with employees' aspirations, suggesting that such initiatives can substantially enhance employee satisfaction. For Generation Z employees, this dynamic is particularly relevant. As a generation that prioritizes career growth, personal fulfillment, and meaningful work, Gen Z's satisfaction is closely tied to opportunities for career development. Therefore, organizations aiming to attract and retain Gen Z talent must understand that career planning and supportive development structures are essential drivers of satisfaction and engagement, leading to improved performance and organizational commitment. A significant research gap exists due to the lack of empirical studies focused on identifying the specific factors influencing Generation Z employee performance. Although various studies have analyzed performance drivers for prior generations, such as Millennials and Generation X (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Jayathilake et al., 2021; Rampen et al., 2023), the unique qualities and work expectations of Gen Z necessitate a more targeted examination. Gen Z's distinct values—including their affinity for digital tools, desire for purposeful work, and prioritization of work-life balance—call for specialized research to identify what truly motivates, engages, and challenges them within the workplace. This knowledge is essential for organizations striving to cultivate a high-performing, Gen Z-inclusive workforce. By uncovering and addressing the factors that impact Gen Z's performance, companies can implement strategies that harness this generation's strengths while mitigating potential obstacles. Understanding these unique dynamics will enable organizations to create work environments that not only support Gen Z's career aspirations but also drive enhanced productivity and engagement.

Technological proficiency plays a crucial role as a key driver of Generation Z employee performance. Growing up amid rapid advancements, Gen Z has developed a natural ease with digital technologies, enabling them to navigate modern work environments with agility. Their comfort with digital tools—from collaborative platforms to data analytics software—empowers them to streamline workflows, enhance productivity, and quickly adapt to emerging technological trends. As Sijabat et al. (2022) and Waworuntu et al. (2022) suggest, this

ingrained digital fluency sets Gen Z apart, positioning them as valuable assets in tech-driven roles where efficiency, innovation, and adaptability are essential for organizational success.

Suneetha Naisa & Suresh Kumar (2024) highlight that for Generation Z employees, key employability skills such as knowledge acquisition, sharing, and effective digital communication are vital in navigating career aspirations within a competitive landscape. Gen Z values learning and knowledge-sharing abilities as foundational to career growth, while HR managers prioritize email communication, judgment, and organizational stability, underscoring the importance of well-rounded competencies. This dual emphasis on technical communication and strategic decision-making reflects the challenges Gen Z faces in aligning personal career goals with workplace expectations, emphasizing that adaptability in both communication and organizational skills is crucial for their performance and satisfaction in modern work environments.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Navigating the career aspirations of Generation Z employees poses unique challenges for organizations, particularly given the distinct characteristics, expectations, and professional dynamics this generation brings to the workforce. While prior studies have investigated various generational cohorts' behaviors and performance dynamics, limited research specifically examines the multilevel effects of leadership and talent management strategies tailored to Gen Z, especially in rapidly evolving sectors like technology and software. This gap is further highlighted by the changing professional landscape, which demands adaptive and resonant leadership approaches to address the specific challenges Gen Z faces, such as role transitions, skill development, and engagement in team-based and project-oriented tasks (Gaan & Shin, 2022; Lenka & Tiwari, 2016). Drawing from career stage theory, this study recognizes that careers are not merely a succession of job roles but rather a progression of subjective experiences and transitions across life stages (Super, 1957; Sullivan & Crocitto, 2007). Gen Z employees, who are in the early stages of their professional journeys, face transitions that require unique career competencies—skills, knowledge, and abilities central to career development (Akkermans et al., 2013). In this context, career management becomes a continuous process, influenced by Gen Z's interactions with digital advancements, career aspirations, and shifting workplace norms (Barnes et al., 2022). This study aims to address these gaps by investigating how organizations can effectively navigate and support Gen Z's career aspirations through targeted strategies that account for both organizational goals and individual needs. Key research questions include understanding the role of leadership styles, such as resonant leadership, in fostering Gen Z's performance, engagement, and job satisfaction. This research also explores how integrating TQM principles with talent engagement can enhance Gen Z employees' attitudinal responses, leading to sustainable and effective performance outcomes in the hospitality sector and beyond (Tarigan et al., 2022). Ultimately, this study provides insights into developing robust managerial interventions to attract, retain, and motivate Gen Z talent, fostering a workplace environment that aligns with their aspirations while advancing organizational success.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Identify the Key Factors and Challenges Influencing Gen Z Employee Performance and Career Aspirations
2. To Assess the Role of Leadership and Career Competencies in Enhancing Engagement and Retention Among Gen Z Employees

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this study on the challenges and performance dynamics of Generation Z employees involves a structured approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing their career aspirations and performance in the workplace.

Research Design

This study will adopt a descriptive and exploratory research design. The descriptive aspect will help in identifying and understanding specific challenges and performance factors, while the exploratory component will uncover new insights into how these factors interact within the Generation Z cohort.

Data Collection Methods

Quantitative Data: Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to Generation Z employees across different industries. This survey will focus on measuring various factors related to career aspirations, such as access to career development resources, mentorship, technological fluency, and organizational support. A Likert scale will be used to gauge the extent to which each factor affects their career aspirations and performance.

Qualitative Data: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a smaller sample of Generation Z employees to gather in-depth insights into their perspectives on career challenges, expectations, and the role of organizational leadership. This will allow the study to capture nuanced information that the survey may not fully reflect.

Sampling Technique and Population

Population: The target population includes Generation Z employees currently employed in various sectors, including technology, finance, healthcare, and retail.

Sampling Technique: A stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure diverse representation across industries and job roles. This approach will enhance the generalizability of findings while ensuring the sample reflects different employment contexts relevant to Generation Z employees.

Sample Size

A sample size of approximately 300 Generation Z employees is estimated for the quantitative survey, while around 20-30 participants will be selected for the qualitative interviews. The sample size for the survey is determined based on a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level to ensure statistical reliability.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative Data Analysis: Statistical tools like SPSS will be used for quantitative data analysis. Factor analysis will identify the most significant factors influencing Generation Z career aspirations and performance. Multiple regression analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between these factors and employee performance outcomes.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Thematic analysis will be used to analyze the qualitative interview data. This process involves coding the data and identifying recurring themes related to challenges, motivations, and expectations within the Generation Z workforce.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability: Cronbach's alpha will be used to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A score of 0.7 or above will indicate acceptable reliability of the scales.

Validity: The study will ensure content validity by conducting a pilot test with a subset of the target population to refine the survey instrument. Expert validation from HR professionals and researchers will further enhance the validity of the measurement tools.

Factor Analysis

In this study, factor analysis is applied to distil 15 initial career challenges facing Generation Z employees into a more concise set of factors, aiding in a streamlined exploration of the issues impacting their professional growth and satisfaction. Starting with variables such as financial constraints, lack of mentorship, work-life balance issues, and inadequate skills, the analysis identifies patterns in how these factors correlate. Factor analysis helps reveal underlying themes—often termed "latent factors"—which consolidate related variables. For instance, factors like "limited professional network" and "lack of career guidance" may merge into a broader category labeled "Limited Access to Resources." Similarly, "discrimination or bias" and "workplace harassment" might align under "Workplace Environment Challenges." By using statistical techniques like Principal Component Analysis (PCA) or Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), we reduce the 15 factors to approximately eight broader categories, such as *Limited Access to Resources*, *Inadequate Skills or Education*, *Company Culture Misalignment*, and *Work-Life Balance Issues*. This process makes it possible to focus on the core challenges affecting Gen Z employees, enabling targeted insights and recommendations to help organizations effectively address these key areas of concern.

Limitations

- Potential limitations of this study include the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce response bias, and the cross-sectional nature of the research, which limits the ability to make causal inferences.
- Additionally, the study's findings may not be fully generalizable to Generation Z employees in non-corporate or entrepreneurial settings.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL FIT FOR NAVIGATING CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND PERFORMANCE DYNAMICS OF GENERATION Z EMPLOYEES USING STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING

The dynamic work environment and evolving aspirations of Generation Z employees have necessitated a deeper understanding of the factors that influence their career development, engagement, and overall performance. As Generation Z becomes a significant segment of the workforce, organizations are challenged to address the unique career expectations, performance drivers, and workplace challenges specific to this demographic. To explore these dimensions effectively, a conceptual model offers a structured framework that identifies and measures the relationships among key variables impacting Gen Z career aspirations and performance outcomes. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) serves as an ideal analytical tool for this purpose, as it enables the simultaneous examination of complex relationships between multiple observed and latent variables. By leveraging SEM, this study seeks to validate a conceptual model that encapsulates the primary challenges and performance determinants specific to Generation Z employees. This approach not only provides a robust quantitative

assessment of the variables but also offers insights into the underlying mechanisms that influence the career trajectories of Gen Z employees. The findings aim to guide organizations in implementing tailored strategies that foster Gen Z talent development, motivation, and retention within the workplace.

The variables used in the structural equation model are

Observed, endogenous variables

1. Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations
2. Overall Performance of the Employees

Observed, exogenous variables

1. Limited access to resources
2. Job market competitiveness
3. Inadequate skills or education
4. Workplace harassment
5. Company culture misalignment
6. Financial constraints
7. Lack of mentorship
8. Work-life balance issues

Unobserved, exogenous variables

1. Error 1 for Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations
2. Error 2 for Overall Performance of the Employees

Table – 1

Summary of the variables used for the analysis

Number of variables in your model	12
Number of observed variables	10
Number of unobserved variables	2
Number of exogenous variables	10
Number of endogenous variables	2

Source: Output generated from Amos 20.

Figure – 1

Unstandardized estimate for Structural Equation Model of the navigating career aspirations and performance dynamics of generation z employees

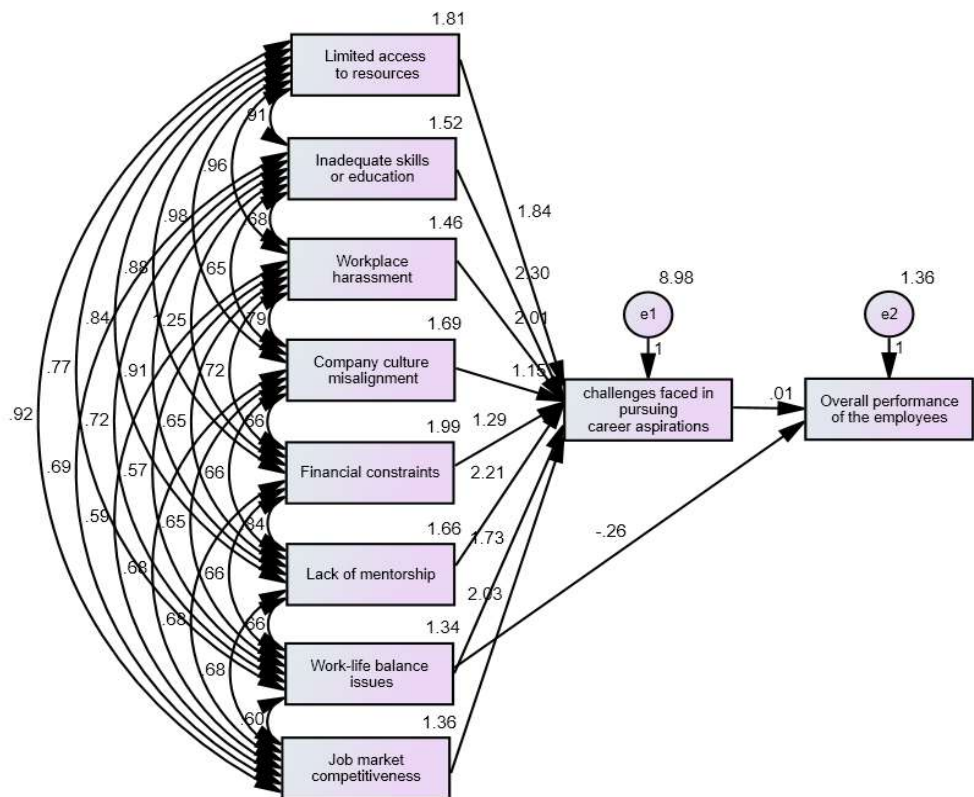


Figure – 2

Standardized estimate for Structural Equation Model of the navigating career aspirations and performance dynamics of generation z employees

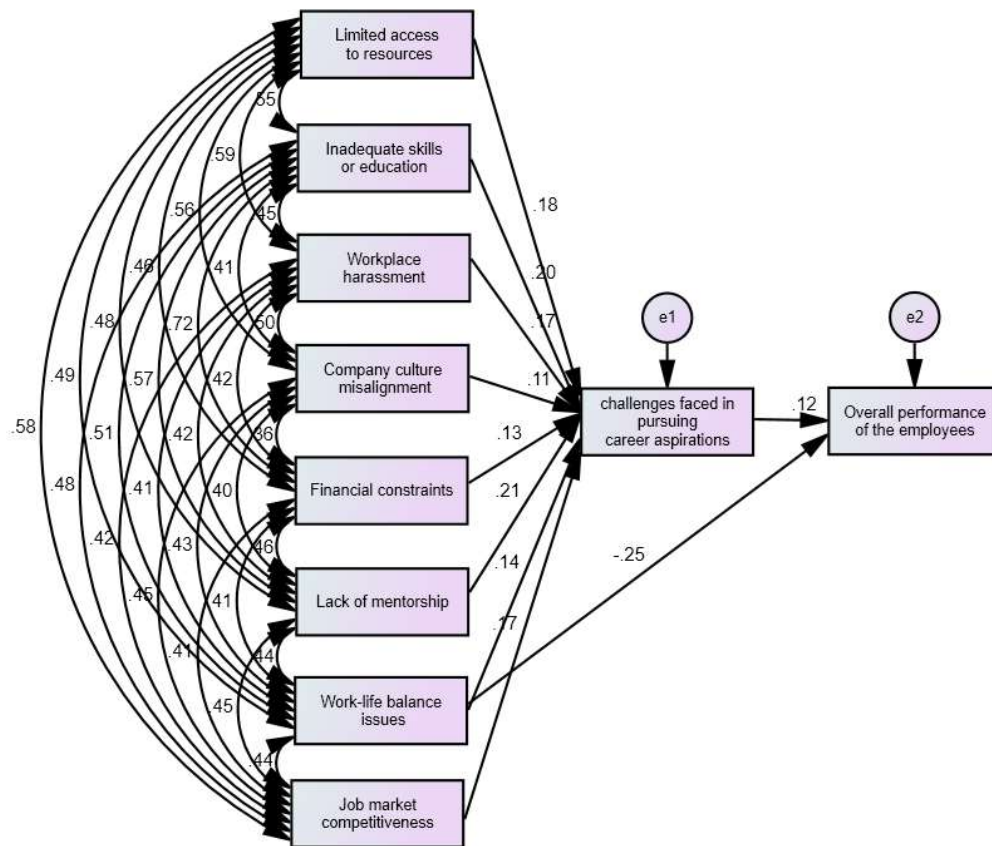


Table – 2

Regression weights for Structural Equation Model for the navigating career aspirations and performance dynamics of generation z employees

Regression Weights	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Value
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Limited access to resources	1.840	.179	.123	14.947	***
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Inadequate skills or education	2.303	.205	.147	15.685	***
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Workplace harassment	2.008	.175	.119	16.882	***
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Company culture misalignment	1.152	.108	.108	10.631	***
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Financial constraints	1.293	.131	.114	11.340	***
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Lack of mentorship	2.214	.206	.110	20.095	***
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Work-life balance issues	1.731	.144	.119	14.531	***

Regression Weights	Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Value
Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations <--- Job market competitiveness	2.030	.171	.123	16.552	***
Overall Performance of the Employees <--- Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations	.010	.121	.004	2.500	.012
Overall Performance of the Employees <--- Work-life balance issues	-.255	-.249	.050	-5.125	***

Source: Output Generated from Amos 26

In the Structural Equation Model (SEM) examining Generation Z employees' career aspirations, the regression weight between "Limited Access to Resources" and "Challenges Faced in Pursuing Career Aspirations" reveals a significant positive effect. The unstandardized estimate of 1.840 indicates that for every unit increase in limited resources, there is a corresponding increase of 1.840 units in career-related challenges. This impact is further supported by a standardized estimate of 0.179, which shows a moderate effect of limited resources, scaled for comparison with other variables. The standard error of 0.123 suggests strong precision in this measurement, while the high Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 14.947 confirms the robustness of this relationship. Finally, the p-value ($p < 0.001$) underscores the statistical significance of this finding, demonstrating that the connection between limited resources and career challenges is highly unlikely to be due to random chance. Together, these results emphasize that restricted access to essential resources notably contributes to the obstacles Generation Z faces in achieving their career goals, highlighting an area for targeted organizational support to facilitate their professional growth.

In the SEM analysis of Generation Z employees' career aspirations, "Inadequate Skills or Education" significantly influences "Challenges Faced in Pursuing Career Aspirations." The unstandardized estimate of 2.303 implies that each unit increase in skill or education inadequacy results in a 2.303-unit increase in the challenges faced. The standardized estimate of 0.205 reflects a moderate effect size, indicating that inadequate skills or education moderately yet meaningfully contribute to career-related obstacles. The standard error of 0.147 points to precise measurement in this relationship, while the high Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 15.685 strengthens the reliability of this association. With a p-value of less than 0.001 (***), the relationship is statistically significant, confirming that the link between insufficient skills or education and career challenges is robust and not likely to occur by chance. This result highlights that limited skills or educational qualifications present a considerable barrier for Generation Z employees, stressing the need for skill development initiatives to enhance their career growth opportunities.

The SEM analysis reveals a substantial effect of "Workplace Harassment" on the "Challenges Faced in Pursuing Career Aspirations" for Generation Z employees. With an unstandardized estimate of 2.008, this suggests that each unit increase in workplace harassment correlates with a 2.008-unit increase in the challenges encountered in career pursuit. The standardized estimate of 0.175 indicates that workplace harassment exerts a moderately impactful influence on these challenges. A standard error of 0.119 supports the precision of this measurement, and a Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 16.882 underscores the reliability of this relationship. The p-value of less than 0.001 (***), confirms the statistical significance of this connection, indicating that the association is both meaningful and unlikely to result from random variation. This finding highlights the critical role of a supportive work environment, as harassment notably hampers

career advancement and job satisfaction for Generation Z, underscoring the need for organizational policies that prevent harassment to promote career growth and retain talent.

The analysis shows that "Company Culture Misalignment" significantly impacts the "Challenges Faced in Pursuing Career Aspirations" among Generation Z employees. With an unstandardized estimate of 1.152, this indicates that each unit increase in company culture misalignment corresponds to a 1.152-unit increase in the challenges that Generation Z employees encounter as they pursue their career goals. The standardized estimate of 0.108 reflects a moderate effect, suggesting that misalignment with company culture contributes notably to these career-related challenges. A standard error of 0.108 indicates a reasonable level of precision in this estimate, and a Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 10.631 reinforces the reliability of this finding. The p-value of less than 0.001 (***), which marks high statistical significance, confirms that this relationship is robust and not due to chance. This outcome highlights the importance of organizational culture alignment, as misalignment can serve as a barrier to career satisfaction and progression, especially for Generation Z employees who prioritize value congruence in their work environments.

The relationship between "Financial Constraints" and the "Challenges Faced in Pursuing Career Aspirations" among Generation Z employees is significant, as shown by the unstandardized estimate of 1.293. This value indicates that for each unit increase in financial constraints, there is a corresponding 1.293-unit increase in the challenges faced by Generation Z employees in their career pursuit. The standardized estimate of 0.131 reflects a moderate effect size, suggesting that financial challenges play a meaningful role in creating barriers to career advancement. A standard error of 0.114 shows a reasonable degree of precision in this measurement, while the Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 11.340 demonstrates the reliability of this finding. With a p-value of less than 0.001 (***), this relationship is statistically significant, confirming that financial constraints are a critical factor in the challenges faced by Generation Z employees as they navigate their career paths. This underscores the importance of addressing financial support mechanisms and resources within organizations to facilitate smoother career progress for this generation.

The relationship between "Lack of Mentorship" and the "Challenges Faced in Pursuing Career Aspirations" is notably strong and significant for Generation Z employees. The unstandardized estimate of 2.214 indicates that an increase in mentorship deficiency by one unit results in a 2.214-unit rise in the challenges encountered in career advancement. This substantial impact is reinforced by a standardized estimate of 0.206, suggesting that a lack of mentorship has a considerable effect size in shaping career challenges for this generation. The standard error of 0.110 suggests reliable precision in this estimate, while the Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 20.095 highlights the robustness of this result. The highly significant p-value ($* < 0.001$)** further confirms that the absence of mentorship is a crucial factor that intensifies the career-related challenges for Generation Z. This finding underscores the critical need for organizations to invest in mentorship programs to foster career development, guidance, and support, ultimately helping Generation Z employees overcome barriers and achieve their professional aspirations.

The relationship between "Work-life balance issues" and the "Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations" reveals a significant impact for Generation Z employees. The unstandardized estimate of 1.731 indicates that for each unit increase in work-life balance issues, there is a corresponding increase of 1.731 units in the challenges encountered by employees in pursuing their career goals. This suggests that difficulties in managing work and

personal life significantly contribute to the barriers faced in career progression. The standardized estimate of 0.144 shows that work-life balance issues have a moderate but notable effect on career challenges. The standard error of 0.119 indicates reasonable precision in this estimate, and the Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 14.531 further confirms the strength of this relationship. The highly significant p-value ($* < 0.001$)** affirms that work-life balance issues are a crucial factor influencing the challenges Generation Z employees experience in their career development. This finding highlights the importance of organizations providing flexible work arrangements and support for work-life balance to mitigate these challenges and enhance employee performance and satisfaction.

The relationship between "Job market competitiveness" and the "Challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations" demonstrates a substantial effect for Generation Z employees. The unstandardized estimate of 2.030 suggests that with each unit increase in job market competitiveness, the challenges encountered by employees in pursuing their career aspirations rise by 2.030 units. This indicates that a highly competitive job market is a significant barrier to career advancement for Generation Z. The standardized estimate of 0.171 shows that job market competitiveness has a moderate impact on career challenges, signifying that the increased competition in the job market is a noteworthy factor influencing their career development. The standard error of 0.123 reflects a reasonably precise estimate, while the Critical Ratio (C.R.) of 16.552 further supports the strength of this relationship. The highly significant p-value ($* < 0.001$)** confirms that job market competitiveness is a major factor affecting the difficulties Generation Z employees face in their career pursuits. This finding emphasizes the need for organizations to adopt strategies that help these employees navigate competitive job markets, such as providing career development opportunities and mentorship programs.

The regression results show a statistically significant but minimal impact of challenges faced in pursuing career aspirations on overall performance of employees. The unstandardized estimate of 0.010 indicates a very small increase in employee performance for each unit increase in challenges. The standardized estimate of 0.121 reflects a weak positive relationship, suggesting that while challenges may slightly influence performance, the effect is not substantial. The critical ratio of 2.500 and the p-value of 0.012 confirm that this relationship is significant, although the size of the impact is small. This suggests that while challenges in career aspirations may contribute to a sense of urgency or resilience, they do not have a large direct effect on employee performance.

The regression results indicate a significant negative relationship between work-life balance issues and overall performance of employees. The unstandardized estimate of -0.255 suggests that for each unit increase in work-life balance issues, employee performance decreases by 0.255 units. The standardized estimate of -0.249 reinforces this negative relationship, indicating that work-life balance issues have a moderate negative effect on performance. The critical ratio of -5.125 and the p-value of less than 0.001 (***), which is statistically significant, further highlight that this negative impact is robust. These results suggest that work-life balance challenges, such as overwork or difficulty in managing personal and professional responsibilities, significantly hinder employees' overall performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study on navigating career aspirations and performance dynamics of Generation Z employees, several key recommendations can be made to improve

their overall performance and effectively address the challenges they face in pursuing their career goals:

1. **Enhance Access to Resources:** Organizations should invest in tools, platforms, and training opportunities that promote career growth. Ensuring that Generation Z employees have access to necessary resources such as mentorship programs, educational content, and upskilling opportunities can reduce barriers to career progression and improve job satisfaction.
2. **Address Inadequate Skills or Education:** Employers must focus on bridging skill gaps by providing targeted training and development programs. These initiatives should align with the evolving job market to ensure that Gen Z employees are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in their careers.
3. **Create a Supportive Work Environment to Combat Workplace Harassment:** Companies need to foster a safe and inclusive work environment. Clear policies and actions against workplace harassment should be enforced, along with support systems for affected employees, to ensure a healthy and productive work atmosphere.
4. **Improve Company Culture Alignment:** Aligning company culture with the values and expectations of Generation Z employees is crucial. Organizations should focus on creating a culture of transparency, collaboration, and flexibility to meet the desires of Gen Z workers for a balanced and meaningful work experience.
5. **Provide Financial Support:** Addressing financial constraints by offering competitive salaries, performance-based bonuses, or student loan assistance programs can alleviate stress and enhance employee motivation, leading to better career performance.
6. **Promote Mentorship Programs:** Organizations should implement robust mentorship and coaching programs to guide Gen Z employees. Providing career guidance and advice from experienced leaders will help them navigate career challenges and foster career growth.
7. **Support Work-Life Balance:** Given the significant negative impact of work-life balance issues on performance, employers should implement policies that allow flexibility in working hours and remote work options. This can help Gen Z employees manage their professional and personal responsibilities more effectively.
8. **Assist in Navigating Job Market Competitiveness:** Providing career counseling and networking opportunities can help Gen Z employees understand the competitive job market. Building professional networks and offering platforms for career advancement are essential to their career success.

CONCLUSION

The study on Navigating Career Aspirations and Performance Dynamics of Generation Z Employees highlights several critical factors influencing the career progression and performance of this cohort. The findings emphasize the importance of addressing challenges such as inadequate resources, work-life balance issues, financial constraints, and a lack of mentorship in enhancing the overall performance of Generation Z employees. Workplaces that invest in these areas and foster a supportive, inclusive, and resource-rich environment are more likely to retain high-performing Gen Z employees. Additionally, organizations must focus on providing developmental opportunities and a flexible work environment to cater to the unique needs of this generation. By addressing these key factors, businesses can enhance employee satisfaction, performance, and engagement, which ultimately contributes to long-term organizational success.

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