

Gen Z's Great Discontent: An Exploratory Study Unpacking the Dealbreakers Pushing Them from Dissatisfaction to Departure

Summary

Gen Z is the tech-savvy generation that enters organisations with its unique set of attributes, preferences, and fresh ideas. While Gen Z tends to switch organisations in search of new experiences and this gives management a hard time. Organisations are expanding their horizons, crossing borders, and exploring new opportunities to retain talented Gen Z professionals. This study focuses on the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals at work so that organisations can manage them to retain employees and reduce attrition. An exploratory qualitative approach has been followed, where interviews and focus group discussions have been conducted to collect invaluable insights from 22 working professionals about the Gen Z dynamics at work. The impact of identified dealbreakers can be further studied on the organisation-related, job-related, and individual-related outcomes in organisations. The measures have been suggested to assist the management in managing the dealbreakers to reduce turnover and encourage a prosperous organisational environment.

Abstract

Generation Z is the generational cohort that has been getting a lot of attention lately. This tech-savvy generation enters organisations with its unique set of attributes, preferences, and fresh ideas. While Gen Z plans to stay in an organisation for less than a year, as they tend to switch organisations in search of new experiences and this gives management a hard time. Organisations are expanding their horizons, crossing borders, and exploring new opportunities to retain talented Gen Z professionals. Several studies have been conducted to determine the factors that can enhance their satisfaction at work. However, this study focuses on the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals at work so that organisations can manage these dealbreakers to retain employees and reduce attrition. An exploratory qualitative approach has been followed, where interviews and focus group discussions have been conducted to collect invaluable insights from 22 working professionals about the Gen Z dynamics at work. The impact of identified dealbreakers can be further studied on the organisation-related, job-related, and individual-related outcomes in the workplace. The measures have been suggested to assist the management in managing the dealbreakers to reduce turnover and encourage a progressive and prosperous organisational environment.

Keywords: Generation, Gen Z, Dealbreakers, Regulatory Focus Theory

Introduction

Generation Z is the generational cohort that has been recently studied by several researchers (Barhate and Dirani, 2022; Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Generation Z (Gen Z) is the generational cohort born in the world of technology, where they are exposed to hyperconnectivity and advanced technology from the early years of their lives (Cohen, 2022; Francis and Hoefel, 2018; Lev, 2021). This generation is now joining the workforce, and the management needs to prepare to accommodate and retain these talented Gen Z professionals (Schroth, 2019). Generations have been studied for a long time, and each generation has been found to possess unique attributes, which makes research on each generation essential. According to the generational theory, each generation has different experiences and history that influence their expectations, lifestyles, and behavioural patterns (Strauss and Howe, 1991). Researchers have studied their behavioural patterns (Cresnar and Nedelko, 2020; Maloni et al., 2019), their approach toward work (Chillakuri, 2020), and the traits that make them unique and distinguish them from previous generations (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Hernaus and Pološki Vokic, 2014). Gen Z was born in the world of variety, where they tend to switch among various options offered to them (Thomas and Setyobudi, 2024). Gen Z prioritises exploring and experiencing new things and opportunities rather than sticking to an organisation for longer durations (Anh Do et al., 2023; Chillakuri, 2020). It has been surveyed and reported that Gen Z switches among jobs and organisations more often than any other generation (Deloitte, 2022; Suryakumar et al., 2024). Organisations are facing the challenge of crossing borders and exploring new opportunities to construct sustainable strategies to enhance the satisfaction and reduce counterproductive work behaviour of Gen Z professionals (Gaan and Shin, 2023). Several studies have been conducted to determine the factors that can enhance satisfaction at work (Cheong, 2024; Fleeton, 2024; Kompa, 2019). Researchers have studied the impact of Gen Z's job satisfaction on outcomes like turnover intentions, culture, and meaningful work (Rohayati et al., 2023). Researchers have highlighted the importance of mitigating attrition by focusing on the contribution of satisfiers (Suryakumar et al., 2024). However, it is imperative to study the dealbreakers or dissatisfiers for Gen Z professionals to reduce counterproductive behaviour and encourage a progressive and prosperous organisational environment.

The determinants of job dissatisfaction and its impact on the counterproductive behaviour of the staff of the education industry have also been studied in the literature (Yean et al., 2022). The factors of dissatisfaction of retail employees have also been studied by researchers (Pandey et al., 2021). The literature on the determinants of dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals has been less explored. This study aims to identify the dealbreakers and demotivators among Gen Z working professionals leading to their deviant workplace behaviour. An exploratory study approach has been utilised that aims to explore the factors that are dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals at the workplace, leading to their attrition and counterproductive outcomes in organisations. This study will assist the management of organisations in understanding Gen Z by highlighting their demotivators, and it will enrich the quality of the literature on Gen Z by extending the scope of generational theory. This study delves into the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals, which will assist organisations in identifying effective ways to retain, motivate, and mitigate dissatisfaction among these talented professionals within the organisation. This study aims to suggest some measures that can be considered by the management for cultivating a progressive environment in the organisations.

RQ 1: What are the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals in the workplace?

The following sections of this article include the contextual background, followed by the methodology opted for in this study. Furthermore, the analysis and results have been discussed, followed by the implications, limitations, future scope, and conclusion of this study.

Contextual Background

Generation Z

Generation refers to the troop of individuals born in the same timeframe and confronted with similar experiences (Barhate and Dirani, 2022; Twenge et al., 2010). The generational theory states that people belonging to the same generation possess similar characteristics based on their common life experiences (Twenge et al., 2010). Generation Z or Gen Z is the generation that was born between 1995-2010 (Cohen, 2022). This generation has also been labelled as Gen Zers, iGen, and Digital Natives (Magano et al., 2020; Maan and Srivastava, 2023). Researchers have found Gen Z to be self-confident, realistic, and entrepreneurial (Maan and Srivastava, 2023; Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy, 2021). Gen Z arrived in a world where technology and the internet were handy and readily accessible (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). They have been exposed to technology all their lives (Francis and Hoefel, 2018). They frequently utilize e-learning options for upskilling themselves, which leads to their individualistic working behavioural tendencies rather than the social approach to work. They experience issues with working in teams in organisations (Pichler et al., 2021). Their exposure and connectivity to the world at all times affect their variety-seeking behavioural patterns (Thomas, E. and Setyobudi, 2024). Gen Z prioritises exploring and experiencing new things and opportunities rather than sticking to an organisation for longer durations (Anh Do et al., 2023; Chillakuri, 2020). They are raised in a better economic condition, and they are well-educated (Schroth, 2019). Gen has been discovered as more welcoming regarding diversity and inclusion than their predecessors, but they are more likely to suffer from unhealthy mental health conditions (Pichler et al., 2021; Schroth, 2019). However, they need to be valued and supported by the organisations to enhance their performance and upgrade their skillset and knowledge. (Pichler et al., 2021). It has been stated that Gen Z has a unique set of characteristics and behavioural patterns that distinguish them from the previous generation (Maan and Srivastava, 2023; Seemiller and Grace, 2017). Due to these differences from the previous generation, it becomes highly challenging for the management to integrate Gen Z professionals into the organisation without incorporating novel interventions (Singh, 2014; Thangavel et al., 2021). The management needs to understand the

dealbreakers for them while working in an organisation to enhance their positive experience and performance, leading to the achievement of organisational goals and success.

Dealbreakers

Dealbreakers have been defined as the workplace events and situations that induce employees to re-evaluate their organisational commitment and often trigger their turnover intentions (Klotz and Bolino, 2016). In the literature, it refers to the violation of implicit agreements and expectations of employees that may damage their relationship with the organisation (Rosenfeld et al., 1995). They act as push factors like perceived injustice, misalignment of values, and lack of development that may encourage counterproductive work behaviour among employees (Hom and Griffeth, 1995). This study aims to identify and examine critical workplace factors that may serve as dealbreakers for Gen Z employees, potentially influencing their work-related attitudes and behaviours within organisational settings.

Theories of Motivation and Demotivation

The concept of motivation and demotivation has been extensively researched in the literature by several researchers. This widely recognised topic led to the development of several theories of motivation and demotivation, approaching this concept from various perspectives.

Dual-Factor Theory given by Frederick Herzberg (1959, 1966). Herzberg proposes that motivation and demotivation can not be measured on the same continuum (Worlu and Chidozie, 2012). The dual-factor theory categorises the factors contributing to motivation and demotivation into two categories: Motivation Factors and Hygiene Factors (Alshmemri et al., 2017). Motivation factors measure the presence and absence of motivation. These factors contribute to the motivation of individuals to improve their morale and performance in organisations (Worlu and Chidozie, 2012). Hygiene factors measure the presence and absence of demotivation (Alshmemri et al., 2017). The absence of hygiene factors causes demotivation among individuals (Worlu and Chidozie, 2012).

Regulatory Focus Theory was developed by Higgins (1997). This theory focuses on two self-regulatory systems, i.e. promotion focus motivation system and the prevention focus motivation system, by which individuals seek pleasure and avoid pain (Higgins, 2012). Promotion focus highlights the pleasure in the presence and pain in the absence of the means of positive motivation (Brockner et al., 2004). Prevention-focus highlights pleasure in the absence and pain in the presence of negative consequences leading to dissatisfaction (Brockner and Higgins, 2001; Johnson et al., 2015).

Victor Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) views motivation as a goal-oriented behaviour (Lee, 2007). This theory states that motivation depends upon the intensity of effort taken and the strength of the belief of an individual that a certain behaviour can lead to an outcome that is valuable for the individual (Suciu et al., 2013). The expectancy theory highlights three determinants of motivation: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy refers to the strength of the expectation of effort required for a successful performance to achieve the desired goal (Atkinson, 1957). Instrumentality refers to the belief that certain behaviour will lead to achieving a certain goal (Lee, 2007). Valence refers to the importance and value an individual places on the goal. The goal needs to be desired and valuable for the individual or else the individual will not be motivated to achieve it (Suciu et al., 2013). The absence of any determinant leads to demotivation among individuals (Suciu et al., 2013).

Job Demand-Resource Theory highlights the relationship between job demands, job resources, employee engagement, and burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands refer to the physical

and mental aspects of organisations that require and demand physical and mental costs (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job Resources refer to organizational and social aspects offered by the organization and its environment, which may lead to: 1) A reduction in psychological costs related to job demands, 2) Assist in the achievement of job-related goals, 3) Encourage learning agility and growth (Demerouti et. al., 2001). High job demands lead to demotivation and stress among individuals (Mladenova, 2024). On the other hand, job Resources offered by the organisations enhance motivation among individuals (Babakus et al., 2008). The demotivation among individuals can be reduced by job resources (Tiggelaar et al., 2024).

Methodology

This study has focused on the qualitative approach to explore and understand the demotivators for Gen Z professionals working in organisations. In this research study, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) have been conducted to explore and determine the dealbreakers for Gen Z working professionals based on their work experience in the service sector. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions have been famously utilised in social qualitative studies (Flick et al., 2004; Rajashekar and Jain, 2024). This exploratory study aims to explore the demotivators and dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals.

Data Collection

The sample of this study comprises working professionals who belong to Generation Z. The age range of the sample was 19-30 years of age to ensure that they are legally working as full-time employees at the organisations. The sample respondents possess work experience as full-time professionals in organisations. The working professionals working in the service sector have been interviewed for this study. The data saturation procedure has been followed to determine the size of the sample (Nadia et al., 2020). The appropriate sample size to determine the point of saturation in the data has been found to be twelve interviews (Guest et al., 2006). However, in this study, 22 working professionals were contacted for participation to ensure the degree of saturation in the data. A purposive and snowball sampling technique has been utilised to identify the respondents while building the sample of this study. The sample population includes professionals who have been working in one or more organisations from various industries like Education, IT, Finance, etc. Multiple industries have been considered to ensure the generalizability of the results obtained after the analysis. Respondents have been contacted and interviewed after the fixation of the time. The interviews have been conducted online to ensure the comfort and convenience of the respondents. The interviews and FGD were recorded after obtaining the consent of the respondents to mitigate the ethical concerns. Anonymity has been promised to the respondents to ensure their willingness to provide unbiased perspectives and not socially desirable responses. The questions have been framed in a way to obtain the information to answer our research question and to keep the respondents comfortable in answering and sharing their experiences.

Data analysis

The interviews and FGD have been conducted online. The verbatim approach has been followed, and Gioia's method of thematic analysis has been utilized for the coding, in which data leads to the identification of first-order themes, which lead to the identification of second-order themes and aggregate dimensions (Gioia and Corley, 2013). The transcriptions of the interviews and FGD have been cleaned and coded for further analysis. Thematic analysis has been conducted to identify the major themes and patterns based on the interviews to understand the dealbreakers among Gen Z professionals in organisations. Thematic Analysis has been found to be free from the constraints of epistemological and theoretical perspectives, which makes this analysis more versatile (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire, 2017). They have been

analysed using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, Atlas. Ti. The responses have been used to determine the first-order themes for the thematic analysis. The first-order themes have been utilised to determine the second-order themes. The second-order themes have been discussed in detail in the findings section of this paper. The review from the experts was gathered and it confirmed the alignment with the themes identified in the analysis.

Findings

Dealbreakers for Gen Z

The findings have been discussed to answer the research question and achieve the objectives of this study. The responses have been analysed and themes have been identified. The identified first-order themes highlight the dimensions and lead to the identification of second-order themes which are the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals in organisations. The identified dealbreakers are categorised into five categories: Toxic Work Environment, Compromising Integrity, Lack of Time Pressure, Uncomplicated Work, Inflexibility, and Ineffective Communication. The first-order themes and second-order themes have been presented in Figure 1.

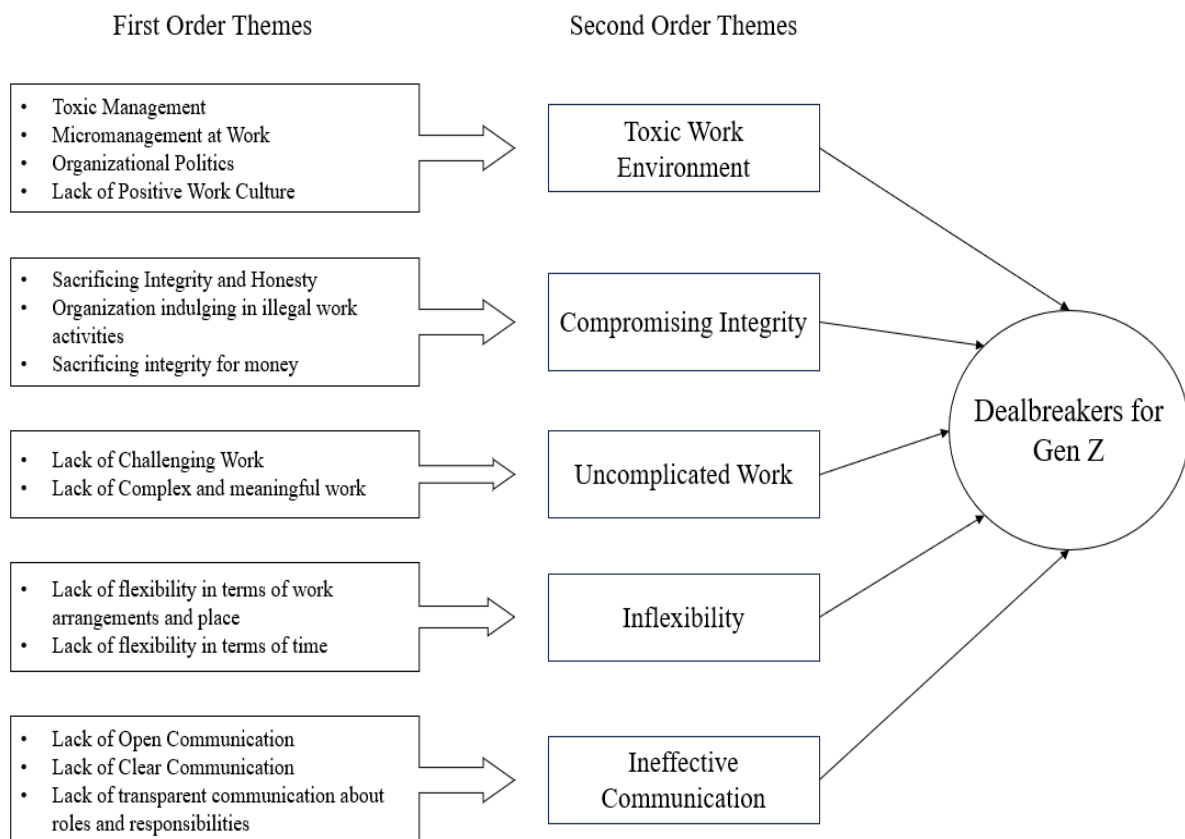


Figure 1: Dealbreakers for Gen Z Professionals

Source: Author's Creation

Toxic Work Environment

The participants stated that the toxic work environment was the most crucial dissatisfier or demotivator for them while working in an organisation. They shared that it negatively impacts their well-being in the workplace.

“The environment, and people should not be like toxic, I believe. Because it will impact my mental health and physical health and worklife balance.” (Participant 3)

Other participants have stated their dealbreakers under the dimension of toxic work environment as Toxic Management, Micromanagement at Work, Organisational Politics, and Lack of Positive Work Culture. The participants stated that toxicity in terms of harassment and micromanagement by managers during work negatively affects them and their intention to stay with the organisation. Organisational politics was another dimension stated by the participants, generating a sense of toxic culture for them at work. Toxicity in the culture and environment encourages turnover among Gen Z professionals as the participants have mentioned that they were ready to leave their jobs if they found their work environment to be toxic. The following statements have been shared by the participants under the toxic work environment category:

“So, if I am working in an environment and if I see I can not you know I can not work under that said manager who is being very toxic. So, I will leave the organisation. It is as simple as that.” (Participant 4)

“I don't believe in harassment in terms of let's say if you cannot complete your task or something, harassing professionals is not a good part. And as I have faced something. Like that. So, I would say like if I heard something about someone is harassing me, I would just leave the organisation without any hesitation.” (Participant 6)

“Work culture is very important because I will be going to spending a lot of my time of my very important life there. So, work culture takes the first place if it is good, if my peers, if my team is good, then I will definitely be joining that organisation. If it's not that good or if it is turning toxic, I would separate myself or I will just remove myself from that organisation.” (Participant 11)

“I think that the culture should shouldn't be toxic.” (Participant 21)

Compromising Integrity

Another identified category of dealbreakers and demotivators was compromising integrity. This dimension focuses on the reluctance of Gen Z professionals to compromise their integrity at work. It was discovered that Gen Z was unwilling to compromise their integrity and honesty for work to misdirect and benefit the organisations in unethical ways. The participants implied that if the organisations expect them to alter their values like honesty to get the work done then they may ask the management to transfer the task to other professionals in the organisation. Moreover, the participants claim that if the organisations are indulged in unethical practices and are harming society and the environment, then it would be a dealbreaker for them leading to their counterproductive behaviour and attrition. The following statements are given by the participants in support of this category:

“Like personal integrity and honesty. During this ESG reporting, I was you know, given some news that the data should consider these businesses and these businesses should not be there. I did not comply. I spoke to my manager, but he was like, okay you are doing it right you should improve our businesses. So, if like I would have gotten, you know answers like where I am compromise myself like my honesty with my work. So, I would have gone to the senior leadership and even if then I had no answers. So, I would simply tell them that I can't do it. Ask somebody else to do it.” (Participant 12)

“If some organisation is doing a kind of work which is like highly affecting a particular country’s, let’s say security or something for that matter. Or let’s say environmentally, which is not really good. I will better, you’re going to a job which is maybe not paying that much, but I know that I am not a part of that community which is doing such kind of work. So that is the thing. And this is from a broader perspective, it has say from a personal perspective.” (Participant 14)

“So, the organisation is going against nature, I can’t work with that. That is the first thing. I mean, I know development for example sustainable development has three angles environmental, the economical, and the social. But if there is a severe compromise on the environment part, I won’t be able to work with that organisation.” (Participant 18)

Uncomplicated Work

Uncomplicated work or routine work was found to be another category of dealbreakers for Gen Z working professionals. Under this dimension, participants have stated that the absence of challenging work and the absence of meaningful work cause demotivation among them while working in an organisation. Participants have mentioned that they did not want to perform routine and trivial tasks at their workplace. They wanted to work on projects that were challenging and solve complex problems at work. They have also highlighted that their work needs to have a meaningful impact and purpose in the organisation. The tasks allotted to them must make a difference for the organisations. It has been found that a lack of challenging and meaningful work demotivates Gen Z professionals. According to the participants, uncomplicated work seems to become the factor on which Gen Z professionals evaluate their decision to join the organisation. Gen Z was found to wait for the opportunity where they were offered complex and meaningful work because they were born into families with better economic conditions and less pressure to work to sustain themselves financially but they were not willing to join the organisations where they were being offered uncomplicated and inconsequential work. The responses shared by participants under this category are:

“I think how interesting the work is because pehle it was fine. I was also like acha main fresher hu, to inko bahut kuch sikhana padega mujhe, I understand if they’re giving me very very operational or very you know thik thak se task, theek hai mujhe dimaag zyada nhi lagana just do what they tell you but now since I have worked for 2 years and then there internship then MBA also, MBA ke time pe bhi you do internship, and you do live project, and this and that to now I don’t want to compromise on the type of tasks or the role that they are giving me, that is also actually something which I look at while evaluating a job profile ki what are they making me do”. (Participant 16)

“I don’t want to spend time in that organisation where the work is not meaningful for me. I’m young. My parents can feed me for a couple of months. I have a couple of bucks in my bank account so I can shift, I can change.” (Participant 18)

Inflexibility

Additionally, the participants stated inflexibility as another category of dealbreakers among Gen Z professionals in work settings. Inflexibility in terms of place or work arrangements has been found as a dealbreaker among them at the workplace. They have highlighted that flexibility in terms of their workplace and work arrangement options like remote working, hybrid working, etc., was desirable for them to keep themselves motivated at work. The

participants have mentioned another dimension i.e., inflexibility in terms of time was another dealbreaker for them. The importance of flexibility in terms of time was mentioned by the participants and they have stated that they can not compromise on flexibility while working at an organisation. They have highlighted that the absence of flexibility in terms of work arrangement and time offered at the organisations leads to dissatisfaction and demotivates them at work leading to their attrition. Gen Z perceived that they could maintain their work-life balance if the organisation offered them flexibility in terms of time and work arrangement. However, inflexibility has a negative impact on their work-life balance and it could lead to their turnover. Gen Z stated that they could compromise if the organisation did not actively take the initiative to maintain their work-life balance but if the organisations could at least offer them flexibility then they could maintain their work-life balance themselves. Inflexibility in terms of time and work arrangement in the organisations could encourage attrition among Gen Z professionals. The following statements showcase the dissatisfaction caused by inflexibility in the workplace.

“Can't compromise, hmm. One is again flexibility. I don't want to compromise on flexibility.” (Participant 16)

“It should provide me some kind of flexible work options, like, I should be able to work remotely if needed. And flexible hours. I also like a flexible work hours is very important important to me as well.” (Participant 19)

“Work life balance, I think I would be I would be ready to compromise a bit on that if I'm given flexible, flexibility, flexibility in terms of timings and having being physically present.” (Participant 22)

Ineffective Communication

Ineffective communication has been stated as another category under the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals working at organisations. Gen Z professionals highlighted the importance of effective communication for them to be motivated and satisfied in the workplace. It has been observed that ineffective communication can also lead to the counterproductive behaviour of the Gen Z professionals which can lead to their turnover intentions. The participants mentioned that it was essential for them to have open and clear communication between the supervisor and subordinates to ensure a healthy professional relationship among them. Some of the participants find ineffective communication as a toxic work practice. It has been observed from the responses of the participants that ineffective communication distances the subordinates from the management. Gen Z perceived that ineffective communication could lead to workplace conflicts, distrust, and feelings of being disregarded at work which negatively affect their intention to stay in the organisation. Some of the statements focussing on this category of dealbreakers are showcased below:

“So, things that I can't compromise on while working in an organisation are number one clarity that there needs to be open communication with regards to expectations of the work that is to be done. If a manager is being very ambiguous with the scope of the work that I'm supposed to do along with the deadlines. That is a situation, if that happens for too long, what ends up happening is you're not able to get on the same page and you know there will be a lot of misunderstandings and if that happens over and over again either the manager has been wrong or you have been wrong. So, that open line of communication and clarity that needs to have been there with your manager is something that needs to be like a big part of or something that is very big non-negotiable.” (Participant 5)

“And I think that the culture should shouldn't be toxic, there should be a clear communication and clear standard operating procedures for anything.” (Participant 21)

“If there is no clarity and I am doing something like Other than whatever mentioned in the JD or what they actually hired me for and that that is one point. I would just leave the organisation without any hesitation.” (Participant 6)

Discussion

This study aims to examine the factors contributing as the demotivators or dealbreakers among Gen Z employees. The motivation and demotivation frameworks, like Dual-Factor Theory, Regulatory Focus Theory, Job Demand-Resource Theory, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory, have been widely studied by researchers. The demographic details of the participants have been discussed in *Appendix 1*. This study aims to answer the research question, focussing on the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals working in organisations. The exploratory qualitative approach has been followed, and semi-structured interviews and FGD were conducted to determine the dealbreakers. Thematic Analysis has been conducted to determine the dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals at their workplace. The results of the thematic analysis highlight the five categories of dealbreakers: Toxic Work Environment, Compromising Integrity, Uncomplicated Work, Inflexibility, and Ineffective Communication. These dealbreakers are presented in Figure 1. These dealbreakers showcase the causes of dissatisfaction for Gen Z professionals at work, leading to their rising attrition. The identification of these dealbreakers will assist management in formulating policies and practices to manage them and reduce attrition of Gen Z. The identified dealbreakers can be examined from the theoretical framework of regulatory focus theory given by Higgins (1997). This theory focuses on two self-regulatory systems, i.e. promotion focus motivation system and the prevention focus motivation system, by which individuals pick pleasure and avoid pain (Higgins, 2012). The analysed themes can be viewed from the perspective of the prevention-focussed motivation system, which highlights pleasure in the absence and pain in the presence of negative consequences (Brockner and Higgins, 2001; Johnson et al., 2015). The presence of the identified dealbreakers causes pain and demotivates the professionals at work. The identification of these dealbreakers stretches the boundaries of regulatory focus theory.

The results of the analysis indicate that the most crucial dissatisfier for Gen Z working professionals has been the toxic work environment. Under this category, dimensions like Toxic Management, Micromanagement at Work, Organisational Politics, and Lack of Positive Work Culture were found to negatively impact the professionals at work. The findings of this category have been supported by studies where toxic work cultures were found to encourage turnover intentions among Gen Z workers (Daniel and Sanjaya, 2024, Wijanarko, 2024). Researchers have also found that a toxic work environment leads to quiet quitting intentions due to stress and burnout among Gen Z professionals in Vietnam (Nguyen and Vu, 2025). The analysis reflects that the presence of a toxic work environment demotivates Gen Z professionals at the workplace.

Compromising Integrity was found to be the second category under the dealbreakers among Gen Z working professionals. The analysis revealed that compromising their values enhances dealbreakers among them. Moreover, organisations' involvement in illegal activities or activities that can cause damage to the environment and society also leads to their counterproductive behaviour in the organisations. Researchers have studied the inclination of Gen Z toward the values given by the Schwartz theory (Dokoupilová, 2024). Benevolence value which focuses on kindness, honesty, empathy, etc., and Universalism which focuses on the concern about society, environmental sustainability, etc., were found to be the most

important values for Gen Z (Dokoupilová, 2024; Schwartz, 1992). The findings of this study highlight that compromising integrity and honesty as a dealbreaker among Gen Z professionals in the workplace. Researchers have also studied about the awareness and concern of Gen Z towards the environment (Agrawal et al., 2023; Gallego-Álvarez and Pucheta-Martínez, 2020; Sarode, 2024). Gen Z professionals are highly demotivated at work if they are expected to compromise their values for work and they are reluctant to compromise their integrity and honesty at work.

The third category has been found to be uncomplicated work as the category of dealbreakers among Gen Z professionals in the workplace. This category was related to the absence of challenging work and complex and meaningful work in organisations. The analysis revealed that the presence of routine and trivial work demotivates professionals. Gen Z seeks challenging and meaningful work to stay satisfied and motivated in the organisations. The absence of complex tasks and meaningful tasks which may have an impact on the success of the organisations causes demotivation among Gen Z professionals. The researchers discovered that work meaningfulness has a significant impact on the intention to stay in organisations among Gen Z professionals (Cheong, 2024). Researchers have found that routine tasks cause boredom among Gen Z (Nagy and Tomm, 2023). The impact of satisfaction at work on the performance of Gen Z professionals has been studied in the literature (Aggarwal et al., 2022). The literature states that Gen Z seeks challenging and evolving tasks to stay interested and motivated at work (Nagy and Tomm, 2023). The importance of meaningful work which allows them to make a difference in the organisation has been discussed by the researchers (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Nagy and Tomm, 2023). The presence of uncomplicated work demotivates Gen Z professionals in organisations.

The analysis reflects inflexibility as the fourth category of dealbreakers among Gen professionals. This category was related to inflexibility in organisations in terms of work arrangements and place. The participants highlighted that inflexibility in terms of work arrangement demotivates them and affects their performance at work. Researchers have also discovered that flexible work arrangement impacts the productivity of Gen Z professionals at work (Febriana and Mujib, 2024). Under this category, another dimension has been found i.e., inflexibility in terms of time. The literature states that flexibility has not only been defined in terms of work arrangements like work from home, hybrid work, etc. but it has also been defined in terms of time which empowers the employees to manage their time and work (Becker, 2022; Schroth, 2019). It has also been discussed in the literature that Gen Z expects their employers to provide them flexibility in the workplace to retain them in the organisation (Field, 2024; Nagy and Tomm, 2023). Inflexibility causes dissatisfaction and demotivates Gen Z professionals in the workplace.

Lastly, ineffective communication was found to be another category of dealbreakers among Gen Z professionals at work. The ineffective communication category was related to the absence of open communication, clear communication, and transparent communication about roles and responsibilities. The analysis reflects that ineffective communication encourages misunderstandings and conflicts among the professionals and management leading to their demotivation and dealbreakers. The literature states that transparent communication impacts commitment and satisfaction among Gen Z professionals at work (Kompa, 2019). Researchers have also found that effective communication impacts the understanding of roles and responsibilities, and relationships at the workplace leading to satisfaction among Gen Z professionals in Vietnam (Ly-Le and Le, 2024). The ineffective communication among Gen Z professionals demotivates in the workplace.

Implications

This study contributes to the literature regarding Generation Z. Gen Z is going to cover the majority of the workforce population shortly, which makes it essential from the managerial perspective and the academicians to understand and study them.

Theoretical

According to the generational theory, each generation has different experiences and history that influence their expectations, lifestyles, and behavioural patterns (Strauss and Howe, 1991). This study extends the applicability of this theory by covering Gen Z, which is the new generation that is entering the workplace. This study contributes to the literature about Gen Z by highlighting the dealbreakers for them while working in organisations. This study broadens the boundaries and scope of generational studies by adding another generation that is ready and making its way toward the workplace. It will direct the researchers towards studying this generation further, which will exist and take a large part of the workplace in the coming years. This study stretches the boundaries of generational theory. Generational theory states that people belonging to the same generation possess similar characteristics based on their common life experiences (Twenge et al., 2010). This study utilises a generational theory perspective to study the unique set of dealbreakers among Gen Z working professionals. Their unique set of characteristics and attributes encourages the need for this study. This study also describes the intricacies of dealbreakers identified through the thematic analysis from the lens of regulatory focus theory. The prevention focus motivation system focuses on pleasure due to the absence and pain due to the presence of consequences (Higgins, 1997). The presence of the dealbreakers causes pain and demotivates individuals. However, their absence has the potential to provide pleasure to the individuals. This study contributes to enriching the quality of literature on regulatory focus theory by identifying the dealbreakers that can demotivate professionals at work. Generations have been studied for a long time, and each generation has unique attributes that make research on each generation essential. These dealbreakers can be studied further from the viewpoint of other theoretical frameworks of demotivation and motivation, like Dual-Factor Theory, Regulatory Focus Theory, Job Demand-Resource Theory, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory.

Managerial

This study will help organisations to understand the new generation that is entering the workforce. Generational diversity reflects that each generation has its value system and differs from each other due to various factors like environmental conditions in which they grew up and events like pandemics, economic recessions, etc., which shape their characteristics, viewpoints, needs, and expectations from the workplace. It will also help in understanding the professional front of this new generation. This study highlights the importance of identifying and managing the demotivators and dealbreakers to ensure positive outcomes at work. These dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals may have an impact on their attrition, retention, turnover intentions, organisational commitment, engagement, and other organisational outcomes. The management can work on the policies to mitigate the impact of these dealbreakers on the professionals. The delegation of complex and meaningful work, policies related to the flexibility offered by the organisation in terms of place and time, the establishment of effective communication channels, and policies to ensure a positive work culture can help the management to reduce the impact of the dealbreakers and enhance the satisfaction among the professionals. This study suggests that organisations need to manage these dealbreakers to motivate Gen Z and enhance their satisfaction in the organisation which will eventually lead to positive outcomes at work like a reduction in attrition rate etc. It will help to reduce their

counterproductive behaviour and will improve their productivity, performance, and overall well-being in the organisations.

Social

Gen Z will be the future in the workplace in the coming years and it will impact the market for years. One of the objectives of this study was to determine and locate the research gaps so that the needs and preferences of Gen Z can also be studied in depth which will help in the betterment of society and secure our future which will be in the hands of the next generation “Gen Z”. This study helps in understanding the Gen Z better and identify of dealbreakers among them to manage them at work. The mobility of Gen Z among the organisations will impact the success and growth of the organisations which will eventually impact society. It determination of dealbreakers for Gen Z professionals will impact the awareness about their behavioural patterns and their wellbeing which will concern the society as a whole.

Limitations and Future Scope

Every study is bound to have a few limitations, and this research study is no different. A few of the shortcomings of this research study include the cross-sectional design of the study. Researchers can follow the longitudinal study design to identify if the dealbreakers change with time and experience. In this study, the themes have been identified through thematic analysis which is a flexible approach but it is also subject to researcher bias. Although the review from the experts was gathered and it confirmed the alignment with the themes identified in the analysis. Future studies may consider triangulating thematic analysis with additional qualitative analysis techniques to enhance trustworthiness and reliability of the findings. Moreover, the sample population consists of participants working in the service sector of a variety of industries like Education, Finance, IT, etc. However, other sectors like manufacturing, energy production, etc., and other industries like manufacturing, hospitality, media, and entertainment, etc., can be explored by future researchers to identify the industry-specific dealbreakers and to expand the scope of generalization of this research. This study highlights that the motivation and demotivation frameworks, like Dual-Factor Theory, Regulatory Focus Theory, Job Demand-Resource Theory, and Vroom’s Expectancy Theory, have been widely studied by researchers. These frameworks can be utilised for further research depending on the context of the study. This research study suggests that future researchers can test the impact of the dealbreakers identified in this study on organisational outcomes like workplace conflicts, retention, attrition, commitment, etc. The impact of these dealbreakers on job-related outcomes like performance, work-related stress, work engagement, etc. can also be studied in future research. This study also suggests that the impact of dealbreakers can also be studied on individual outcomes like burnout, productivity, well-being, experience, etc. The identified themes can be tested empirically by future researchers. The participants of this study possess work experience of less than 10 years. Gen Z was the focus of this study whereas the other generations working in the organisations may also experience dealbreakers at work. This study suggests that a comparative study can be done to identify the common and uncommon dealbreakers among professionals belonging to different generations.

Conclusion

Gen Z is entering the organisations, and it will be dominating the businesses and economies of the world for a while. Organisations are revolutionising their practices and strategies to integrate Gen Z into the workforce. Gen Z has been raised in a highly connected world where they have been utilizing technology to stay connected with the world at all times, and it provides them with the privilege to choose among a variety of options, which affects their commitment towards things and organisations. Gen Z may stay in an organisation for less than

a year as they tend to switch organisations in search of new experiences, and this gives management a hard time. Organisations are facing the challenge and crossing borders to determine sustainable strategies to enhance retention and reduce attrition of Gen Z professionals. The management needs to determine the dealbreakers for Gen Z to mitigate attrition and encourage retention for the success and growth of organisations.

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Appendix 1

Demographic Details of Interview Participants

Participants	Gender	Marital Status	Education
Participant 1	Female	Married	Post-Graduate
Participant 2	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 3	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 4	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 5	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 6	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 7	Male	Married	Post-Graduate
Participant 8	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 9	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 10	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 11	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 12	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 13	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 14	Male	Married	Post-Graduate
Participant 15	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 16	Female	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 17	Female	Married	Post-Graduate
Participant 18	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 19	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate

Participant 20	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 21	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate
Participant 22	Male	Unmarried	Post-Graduate