Keeping Pace with the Generations! Quantitative Job Insecurity and Retention in Gen Z Workers: The Mediating Roles of Affective Commitment and Psychological Empowerment

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ABSTRACT

The workforce is changing as new employees enter the labour pool. Malaysia's largest demographic segment is currently Gen Z, constituting 38% of the total population, and boasting a monthly disposable income of US$428 million. Over the next ten years, up to 10 million people in Malaysia born after 1995 (i.e., Gen Z) will enter the workforce. The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between job security and employee retention through the mediating mechanism of affective organizational commitment and employees' psychological empowerment among Gen Z, who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia. Gen Z is characterized by distinctive attributes, demanding that human resource management (HRM) professionals anticipate potential innovations in their recruitment and training methodologies. Among the paramount concerns confronting HRM lies the challenge of employee retention, which holds a pivotal position in the overall success of an organization. This centrality is underscored by the financial burdens linked to the recruitment and training of fresh personnel, the disruption of business continuity occasioned by employee departures (commonly referred to as 'turnover'), and the ensuing decline in productivity stemming from employee attrition. One strategy to increase retention is job security, because the finding of this research show that employees who have job security have high commitment and psychological empowerment, as well as high intention to stay in organizations. Implications for theory and research and management practice are discussed.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Gen Z, Job Insecurity, Psychological Empowerment, Retention
JEL Classifications: J28, J63, M12, M51, D23

1. INTRODUCTION

For the first time in Malaysia, Gen Z is now involved in the workplace at the same time as other generations (e.g., baby boomers). Contemporary organizations must acknowledge the potential disparities in work values, attitudes, and workplace behaviours among various generational cohorts (Twenge, 2010; Zemke et al., 2013). Achieving a competitive edge hinge on the equitable integration of these generational groups into the workforce and the creation of an inclusive environment that appeals to individuals from all age demographics (Twenge and Campbell, 2008). It is imperative to recognize that an organization's employees represent its most valuable assets

and the driving force behind its operations, without which the company would cease to function (Mohsan et al., 2011; Oraibi et al., 2022). Consequently, comprehending the factors influencing employee retention and attrition is paramount for organizational triumph. Recent scholarly investigations have affirmed the pivotal role of organizational commitment in promoting employee well-being, while also conferring competitive advantages upon organizations, particularly in terms of human performance indicators like turnover intention (Albdour and Altarawneh, 2014; Kanste, 2011).

This research endeavor aims to investigate the relationship between job security and employee retention within the context

of the Gen Z workforce in Malaysia. Our particular emphasis is on exploring how affective organizational commitment and employee psychological empowerment mediate the relationship in question. The study contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge by integrating motivation and job embeddedness theories. This approach addresses the increasing need for a more comprehensive understanding of the connection between perceived job insecurity and its implications for work-related outcomes, as highlighted in prior research (Jiang and Lavaysse, 2018; Selenko and Batinic, 2013). While responses to job insecurity can be diverse (Jiang and Lavaysse, 2018), our primary emphasis centers on voluntary turnover, given its profound consequences for both employees and organizations. This focus is noteworthy due to the substantial costs associated with recruiting and replacing individuals who voluntarily depart from their positions—a phenomenon defined as an individual receiving monetary compensation for participation in an organization voluntarily terminates their membership in said organization (Hom and Griffeth, 1995). According to Allen et al. (2010), these costs can escalate from 90% to 200% of an employee's annually earned wage. Current meta-analyses regarding job instability and employee attrition have focused on a limited number of studies related to voluntary turnover, despite the intrinsic connection between job insecurity and an individual's employment relationship with an organization. Only seven studies were found in this regard (Jiang and Lavaysse, 2018) and job security (only five studies found) (Rubenstein et al., 2018). This research seeks to address this gap by providing a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved in job security and its consequences, particularly within the unique context of the Gen Z workforce in Malaysia.

Besides, it is a widely accepted notion that organizational commitment tends to decrease linearly among younger generations, as articulated in the study by Otto and Remdisch (2015). This trend is supported by Singh and Gupta's (2015) findings, which indicate that younger cohorts exhibit lower commitment to their organizations compared to their older counterparts. Consequently, it is plausible to infer that Gen Z demonstrates an even lower level of organizational commitment than preceding generations, as evidenced in the works of Berkup (2014) and Campione (2015). This study's primary objective is to enhance our comprehension of this phenomenon by examining the interaction between job security and retention, with a focus on the mediating mechanisms of affective commitment and psychological empowerment. Moreover, turnover, as defined in academic literature, pertains to employees leaving an organization due to personal reasons stemming from workplace dissatisfaction or employer-initiated actions prompted by organizational challenges. This connection between turnover and job insecurity has been expounded upon by Abolade (2018). In the existing literature, various predictors of turnover intention have been identified, among which job security stands out. However, research on the perceptions of Gen Z individuals currently employed in the private sector and comprising a portion of the Malaysian workforce regarding job security, psychological empowerment, affective employee commitment, and turnover intention in a post-COVID context is notably scarce.

Moreover, as stated in the investigations conducted by Jiang and Lavaysse (2018) and Shoss (2017), job insecurity has been associated with various outcomes, including job search behavior and the propensity to leave one's current employment. Despite these findings, the present study has revealed inconsistent and weak direct connections between job insecurity and these consequences. Experts addressing this issue, such as Jiang and Lavaysse (2018), highlighted the limited exploration of mediating factors to elucidate the nuanced effects. The importance of this lies in the diverse evaluations and reactions individuals exhibit toward job insecurity, as discussed by Jiang and Lavaysse (2018) and Probst (2003). Scholars seeking to understand why certain employees actively pursue alternative employment and consider leaving their current organizations in the face of potential job loss have turned their attention to the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory proposed by Hobfoll (1989). As per the COR perspective, job insecurity is perceived as a threat to valuable assets, particularly employment, as a cherished resource that individuals strive to protect, secure, and enhance. The potential or actual loss of this resource triggers significant distress (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Although job insecurity may unfold gradually, it is conceptualized as a persistent stressor, as emphasized by De Witte (1999) and Mauno et al. (2001). Furthermore, despite the objective clarity associated with defining job insecurity, the emphasis in this context is placed on subjective job insecurity. This focus is warranted, as subjective job insecurity consistently demonstrates stronger associations with diverse work-related outcomes, as proposed by Sverke et al. (2002), and more effectively captures interpersonal variations in individuals' perceptions of job insecurity, as argued by Ferrie (2001). Moreover, the possibility of job loss is often subjectively perceived by employees, as underscored by Klandermans and van Vuuren (1999). Clarifying, it is essential to distinguish job insecurity from actual job loss, as the latter signifies a conclusive event, while job insecurity relates to the perception of potential loss.

Besides in the literature, as outlined by De Witte et al. (2010) and Sender et al. (2017), a distinct delineation is established between two facets of job insecurity. Quantitative job insecurity revolves around the apprehension of potential job loss, whereas qualitative job insecurity is focused on the potential loss of valuable job-related benefits. This viewpoint observes job security as a subjective encounter grounded in an individual's personal evaluation of their working conditions. Even in comparable work environments, employees may grapple with differing levels of insecurity, as evidenced in the investigations conducted by Piccoli et al. (2019). Within the Malaysian setting, Gen Z employees working in the business sector, as opposed to those in the state sector where job security is relatively high, confront challenges associated with holding renewable contracts. Consequently, they may encounter heightened levels of quantitative job insecurity.

In addition to what was mentioned above, there is also a contextual contribution to knowledge that this study makes. Prior studies have explored the constructs of job security and employee retention, often incorporating intervening variables, yet these investigations have predominantly cantered on cross-cultural disparities in Western and non-Western contexts rather than

scrutinizing generational distinctions, especially within an Asian or more precisely, Malaysian milieu (Singh and Mohanty, 2011; Ucanok and Karabati, 2013). A review of the literature highlights the limited understanding concerning the distinctive behaviours of Gen Z. Notably, members of Gen Z have grown up in an era dominated by the internet, in contrast to preceding generations who encountered the internet at later stages in their lives. This contrast, coupled with various other disparities, underscores that the way Gen Z perceives, experiences, and adapts to the changing aspects of their personal and professional environment differs from that of previous generations (Klaffke, 2014). Scholarly works also point to disparities in commitment behaviour between Gen Z and older generations (Aggarwal et al., 2020; Otto and Remdisch, 2015; Singh and Gupta, 2015). Furthermore, Mannheim (1952) asserted that generational affiliation is influenced not only by the temporal era in which individuals are born but also by geographical location and the prevailing social context. This study, therefore, concentrates on Gen Z within the Asian context, specifically in Malaysia. This approach enhances the scholarly landscape by addressing the dearth of research dedicated to Gen Z in this particular setting. Additionally, it contributes to the broader understanding of generational differences across diverse regions and continents, as most studies on generations and generational disparities have predominantly originated in North America. For instance, the formation of generations is often linked to specific historical events, such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy or the September 11 attacks (Parry and Urwin, 2011). But even if authors look at the studies on generations from a perspective other than generalization, the context in which this study was conducted adds to its importance, according to Mannheim (1952) who noted that authors need studies on generations in different geographical distance and social environments because that might make a certain generation (i.e., Gen Z) unique in comparison with similar others of the same generation who lived in other geographical distance and social environments or countries. Furthermore, most investigations into generational distinctions rely on qualitative interview-based methodologies rather than quantitative designs, as noted by Parry and Urwin (2011). Therefore, there is a compelling need for empirical investigations in this field. This research aims to close this disparity by empirically investigating the following research question: Does the job security of Generation Z workers who are currently employed in Malaysia have a correlation with their retention? We specifically focus on how affective organizational commitment and employees' psychological empowerment mediate this relationship. It is crucial to underscore that relying solely on generational categorization is insufficient as an explanatory framework. Rather, this approach serves as a valuable perspective for gaining insights into the unique viewpoints and behaviours of Gen Z employees.

The remaining sections of this paper are structured as follows: The first section identifies pertinent theories and formulates hypotheses, along with the conceptual model. Subsequent sections elucidate the research methodology, encompassing aspects such as the sample and data, variable measurement, and analytical techniques. The study then presents the findings. Finally, the last two sections discuss the empirical results, highlighting their theoretical and managerial implications, and suggest potential avenues for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Job Security and Turnover Intention

The belief held by employees that they will be able to hold onto their jobs for as long as they want without any apparent subjective or objective threats to their job stability is known as job security (Abolade, 2018). This sense of assurance holds paramount significance not only for employees but also for employers (Kayar and Yeşilada, 2023). Previous research has indicated that individuals with a robust sense of job security are less prone to contemplate leaving their current roles (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Conversely, job insecurity involves the belief in the potential for involuntary job loss. Thus, the potential depletion of resources within the existing organization, as highlighted by De Witte (1999), is encapsulated in the perception of job insecurity. This perception is recognized as a threat to one's employment, identified as a valuable resource according to König et al. (2010). Valued for its capacity to enable the acquisition of various resources like income, benefits, social standing, and interpersonal relationships, employment is highly esteemed by people. Beyond its instrumental role, employment also fosters meaningful and fulfilling social connections. The perceived risk of losing these vital resources can instigate a stress response, as noted by Hobfoll (1989), motivating individuals to address their situations proactively. While employees may lack the power to directly tackle the root causes of job insecurity within their organizations, they may nonetheless endeavor to improve this unfavorable circumstance. Involving an intentional, self-regulatory process, individuals use emotions, behaviors, and cognitive processes to prepare for departure from their current roles and explore new job opportunities elsewhere. Hence, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 1: Job Security has a negative relationship with turnover intention among Gen Z who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia.

2.2. Job Security and Affective Organizational Commitment

Considerable research consistently supports the idea that job security plays a crucial role in fostering and maintaining organizational commitment. Numerous studies emphasize the positive correlation between job security and organizational commitment, highlighting the importance of providing employees with a stable and secure work environment to enhance their engagement, productivity, and overall well-being (Anand et al., 2023). Meyer et al. (2004) identified a positive connection between affective commitment and intrinsic motivation, suggesting that affective commitment is likely to have a positive link with intrinsic (cognitive) work values. Similarly, Oliver (1990) discovered a reverse relationship between instrumental work values and loyalty to the company. Affective commitment falls within the domain of attitudinal commitment, as defined by Allen and Meyer (1990), and this reflects the depth of an individual's allegiance to their institution (Ammari et al., 2017). Thus, devotion may be interchangeable with effective organizational commitment. Expanding on this, Meyer and Allen (1996) identified organizational attributes that contribute to an employee's sense of "psychological well-being," which, in turn, is closely connected to the individual's affective commitment.

These attributes include factors like recognition and job security and can be associated with affective work values.

Furthermore, Bashir and Gani (2020) have suggested that organizational commitment is significantly impacted by job security. When employees have concerns about the security of their positions, it markedly influences their organizational commitment, leading to a decrease in their dedication and enthusiasm for their work. Similarly, Hur (2022) has revealed significant associations between job security and various work-related attitude variables, including organizational commitment. Highlighting the essential function of job security, these results emphasize its pivotal role in shaping and augmenting employee commitment. Accordingly, it is hypothesized:

> Hypothesis 2: Affective organizational commitment is positively impacted by job security among Gen Z who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia.

2.3. Job Security and Employee Physiological Empowerment

In the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs theory, Maslow postulated the existence of the quintessential divisions of human needs, (specifically encompassing physiological requirements, safety and security, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and the pursuit of self-actualization) that should be progressively fulfilled hierarchically (Akilu and Junaidu, 2015). In the organizational context, attaining employee job satisfaction and subsequent high performance is achievable when the work environment adequately addresses these foundational needs. This theory encompasses a range of motivating factors and their integration into the organizational structure (Singhapakdi et al., 2015). An organization that takes care of employee needs related to job security and compensation is considered as meeting the initial three fundamental needs outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically physiological needs, safety and security, and a sense of belonging (Akilu and Junaidu, 2015). The fulfillment of physiological needs, such as financial stability, in the workplace (George, 2015) subsequently nurtures a sense of belonging due to the prior satisfaction of these prerequisites.

According to Ekwoaba et al. (2015), the assurance of job security aligns with and satisfies physiological needs. This assurance, along with financial security, effectively addresses workforce necessities within the second tier of Maslow's hierarchy. By addressing the initial two levels of Maslow's hierarchy, workers become well-prepared to address subsequent needs, including a sense of belonging. As noted by Ishtiaq et al. (2022), job security emerges as a foundational element that not only impacts employees' sense of stability, but also influences their psychological empowerment. When individuals feel secure in their positions and have confidence in the continuity of their employment, it empowers them to take ownership of their work and make meaningful contributions. In light of the above discussion, the subsequent hypothesis was formulated:

> Hypothesis 3: Job security has a positive effect on employee physiological empowerment among Gen Z who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia.

2.4. Organizational Commitment and Employee Retention

Affective commitment among employees holds significant importance, as the trust and dedication they demonstrate towards their organization greatly contribute to the organization's goal achievement. Organizational commitment plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee performance and directly contributes to the realization of a company's objectives (Glazer et al., 2019). Affective commitment is characterized by a strong emotional connection and attachment that employees feel toward their organization. This connection becomes apparent when an employee's enthusiasm, values, and priorities align closely with those of the organization. It is imperative to underscore the significance of emotional commitment, as this component has been both argued for and demonstrated to exhibit a more robust and consistent relationship with outcomes related to the organization and its employees (Odoardi et al., 2019).

Research has indicated that employees with a high level of affective commitment tend to experience positive emotions, making them more likely to remain with their respective organizations (Ferreira et al., 2010; Glazer et al., 2019). Moreover, several studies have established that organizational commitment exerts a substantial and direct negative influence on employees' intentions to leave their current positions (Bello and Steil, 2020; Murray and Holmes, 2021; Putra and Suwandana, 2020). In simpler terms, higher organizational commitment translates to a reduced likelihood of employees seeking alternative employment. Positive emotions denote that employees are generally content with their current roles, rendering them more inclined to remain with their organization and less likely to contemplate switching to other employers unless specific circumstances arise. Affectively committed employees strongly identify with their workplace, leading them to prefer continued employment with the same organization (Naim and Lenka, 2018). Therefore, this study puts forward a hypothesis as follows:

> Hypothesis 4: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on employee retention among Gen Z who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia.

2.5. Employee Psychological Empowerment and Turnover Intention

In accordance with Thomas and Velthouse (1990), the Cognitive Empowerment Model asserts that psychological empowerment can be understood as the cognitive assessment individuals make of their work. This suggests that individuals with an elevated sense of psychological empowerment not only tend to harbor positive perceptions of their work environment but also demonstrate improved job performance, resulting in increased allegiance and emotional connection to their institution. Such individuals are less prone to entertain thoughts of leaving their current positions compared to those with lower levels of psychological empowerment (Meyerson and Kline, 2008). As elucidated by Spreitzer (1995), psychological empowerment is intricately connected to individuals' confidence in their ability to excel in an empowered work context. Those who have faith in their capacity to perform effectively in their roles are more absorbed in their engagement in work and encounter heightened job contentment.

Consequently, this strengthens their sense of affiliation with the institution, making them unlikely to explore alternative job opportunities (Coomber and Barriball, 2007). Research conducted by Prati and Zani (2016) emphasizes that empowered members of the healthcare workforce exhibit a greater inclination to remain with their current organization rather than contemplate departure. Conversely, a perceived lack of empowerment instills a sense of diminished control over the management of one's resources among employees, fostering a pronounced feeling of job insecurity and a desire to exit their current employment (Liu et al. 2011; Seibert et al., 2011). Consequently, a hypothesis has been formulated:

> Hypothesis 5: Employee physiological empowerment has a negative effect on employee retention among Gen Z who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia.

2.6. The Mediating role of Organizational Affective Commitment

As indicated by Schneier et al. (1979), Battaglio (2010), and Goodman and Mann (2010), various conceptual frameworks offer valuable insights into comprehending the intermediary function played by organizational affective commitment. Theoretical viewpoints, such as the theory of job insecurity and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, provide valuable perspectives on this phenomenon. Scholars contend that the establishment of a less stable work environment can result in diminished organizational commitment, decreased work motivation, and reduced productivity. The theory of job insecurity, specifically, garners robust support in this context (Ashford et al., 1989; Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Job insecurity encompasses an employee's perception of subjective threats to their job security, often rooted in objective threats. Therefore, scholars posit that job insecurity can significantly affect employee attitudes and behaviors, subsequently influencing their commitment and inclination to depart from the organization (Bosman et al., 2005; Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984; Silla et al., 2009). Theoretical foundations strongly indicate that a reduction in job security may displace or weaken internal incentive and erode staff spirit. Empirical investigations (e.g., Yang and Kassekert, 2009) substantiate this by illustrating that a decline in employees' sense of job security is linked to adverse effects on their commitment to organizations. Conversely, other research findings (e.g., Coggburn et al., 2010; Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2003) suggest that the organization benefits from strengthened employee commitment through a perceived sense of job security.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory asserts that equitable recruitment and selection procedures furnish employees with the means to achieve and sustain their employment, thereby satisfying their physiological needs. Upon satisfying these physiological requisites, the guarantee of job security and the resulting financial steadiness align with the second stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs for employees (Ekwoaba et al., 2015). Having accomplished the first two tiers in Maslow's hierarchy, employees are more proficient in attending to the subsequent level of needs, emphasizing a sense of belonging. Similarly, these functions afford employees the opportunity to cultivate a robust connection with their employer, fostering a stronger rapport and commitment to the

organization (Rubin and Babbie, 2016). Accordingly, this study posits the following hypothesis:

> Hypothesis 6: The relationship between job security and employee retention among Gen Z workers in Malaysia is mediated by affective commitment.

2.7. The Mediating Effect if Effective Employee Psychological Empowerment

Shin and Hur (2021) illuminated the adverse impacts of job insecurity on employees, affecting their physical, psychological, and mental well-being, ultimately compromising their overall health. Conversely, employment stability serves as a catalyst for employee empowerment, inspiring them to maintain allegiance to the organization and exert heightened effort in pursuit of its objectives. Moreover, the assurance of employment for employees is acknowledged as a factor that plays a role in meeting their physiological needs, guaranteeing their safety and security, thus nurturing a feeling of belonging. This is because having secure employment gives workers an avenue to strengthen their bonds with coworkers and strengthen their sense of belonging to the organization (Rubin and Babbie, 2016). Ishtiaq et al. (2022) posits that job security emerges as a foundational element impacting not only employees' sense of stability but also their psychological empowerment. When individuals feel assured in their roles and trust in the continuity of their employment, it empowers them to assume ownership of their work and make substantial contributions. This psychological empowerment, in turn, significantly influences their level of engagement with their tasks, colleagues, and overall organizational objectives. Van Osch et al. (2018) reported that those who took part in their study valued the opportunities to freely voice their opinions and concerns and getting updates on key initiatives, which, in turn, enhanced their willingness to persist in their association with the organization. However, when employees perceive less security in their jobs, it can render them feeling vulnerable and less empowered, leading to an increased inclination to depart (Heffernan and Rochford, 2017). Thus, the authors suggest:

> Hypothesis 7: The relationship between job security and employee retention among Gen Z workers in Malaysia is mediated by employee psychological empowerment.

The conceptual framework for this research is designed to explore the relationship between job security and employee retention through the mediating mechanism of affective organizational commitment and employees' psychological empowerment among Gen Z, who are currently working and making up part of the workforce in Malaysia. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1 which indicates the research hypotheses based on the above discussion.

3. METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

3.1. Design and Participants

The authors conducted a survey to gather data from full-time employed individuals of the Gen Z demographic working in diverse privately owned organizations across nine distinct states,

namely Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca, Johore, Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Terengganu, and Pahang, during the period from January to April 2023. Participation in the online surveys was voluntary, and a total of 900 employees meeting the screening criteria were invited to participate. The survey instruments assessed variables such as job insecurity, employee commitment, psychological empowerment, and turnover intention. A total of 420 respondents, representing a response rate of 46.7%, provided complete survey responses. Those who did not respond to all survey items were excluded through listwise deletion, resulting in a final sample size of 394 employees. Consequently, this sample size of 394 adhered to the criteria necessary for testing the hypothesized model.

3.2. Procedure
Individuals employed in diverse privately owned enterprises were invited to participate voluntarily in this research endeavour. The entire process was conducted via an online survey. Working in conjunction with the Human Resources departments of these entities, the questionnaires were disseminated electronically, safeguarding the anonymity and voluntary nature of participation. Participants were furnished with an online survey link encompassing the requisite scales, and the survey commenced with a consent section. The completion of the questionnaire generally necessitated 10–15 min.

3.3. Measures
Unless explicitly specified, the researchers gauged all parameters utilizing 5-point Likert-type scales, with values ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.4. Demographic Information
A demographic questionnaire was employed to evaluate participants' characteristics, encompassing aspects such as gender, educational attainment, years of work experience, and professional title.

3.5. Affective Organizational Commitment
Authors measured affective organizational commitment using the six-items scale by (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Sample items are "I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization" ($\alpha = 0.92$).

3.6. Job Security
We measured job security using a four-item scale developed by Mauno et al. (2001), with a representative item being "I am concerned about the prospect of termination" ($\alpha = 0.90$).

3.7. Psychological Empowerment
The psychological empowerment measurement used was a twelve-item scale developed by Spreitzer (1995). A sample item is "I have significant influence over what happens in my department" ($\alpha = 0.89$).

3.8. Turnover Intention
To quantify turnover intentions, Kelloway et al. (1999) developed a four-item measurement. A sample item is "I am thinking about leaving this organization" ($\alpha = 0.63$).

3.9. Data Analysis Technique
Initially, the examination employed Harman's single factor test to evaluate the potential presence of methodological bias. The findings revealed that the initial factor explained 19.11% of the variance, falling below the 40% threshold, thereby indicating the absence of common method variance in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Subsequently, the inquiry utilized Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM) through SmartPLS 4 software to calculate both measurement and structural models, following the methodology delineated by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Fit assessment adhered to specific criteria: a $\chi2$/df ratio below 5, CFI and TLI values surpassing 0.90, and RMSEA and SRMR values equal to or <0.08, in accordance with the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999). Furthermore, the approach suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), two-step method and the bootstrapping method (with 5000 resamples), as endorsed by Hair et al. (2014), applied to scrutinize indirect effects and establish the statistical significance of the path coefficient.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Respondents' Profile
Derived from the demographic attributes of the participants, the average age within the sample stands at 22.64 years, with an average professional experience of 1.2 years. The respondent distribution reveals that 93.1% occupy junior positions, while 6.9% hold senior roles. Moreover, the gender distribution indicates that 77.2% of respondents are male, while the remaining 22.8% are female.

4.2. Measurement Model Evaluation
In this inquiry, the analytical approach utilized to scrutinize the research model was Partial Least Squares (PLS). The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 software, following the two-stage analytical framework advocated by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), as well as the guidelines delineated by Hair et al. (2014) and Ramayah et al. (2013). The researchers initially evaluated the measurement model and, subsequently, the structural model. The significance of the path coefficients and loadings was ascertained through a bootstrapping procedure, as specified by Hair et al. (2014).

Figure 1: Conceptual Model
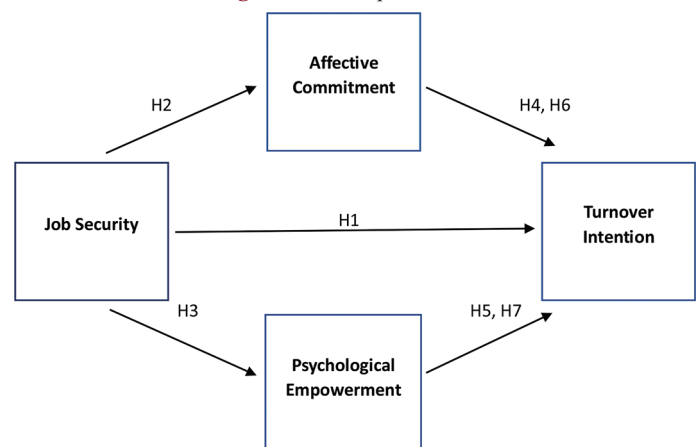
To furnish more comprehensive information, an evaluation of the measurement model included a scrutiny of convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was appraised by examining composite reliability, loadings, and the average variance extracted (AVE), adhering to the criteria set by Hair et al. (2014). As illustrated in Table 1, the loadings for each construct exceeded the threshold of 0.7. Furthermore, the composite reliability (CR) for all constructs surpassed 0.7, and the AVE values were above 0.5, aligning with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2014).

In this investigation, the assessment of discriminant validity, which gauges the extent to which items effectively capture distinct concepts, was undertaken. To evaluate this aspect, the researchers followed the criteria outlined by Fornell and Larcker (1981), comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlations between constructs. As Table 2 illustrates, the prominently highlighted square root of the AVE values along the diagonal exceeds the corresponding values in the linked rows and columns. This finding validates

the presence of discriminant validity in the measures, thereby confirming the achievement of both forms of validity in this study.

4.3. Structural Model Evaluation
With a reliable and valid measurement model in place, the researchers advanced to inspect the structural model. Their goal was to analyze the hypothesized relationships among the variables in this study, as advised by Hair et al. (2014). In accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2014), the researchers, as shown in Table 3, scrutinized the standardized beta coefficients and their corresponding t-values.

The t-values were generated using a bootstrapping technique involving 5000 resamples. Following the guidelines outlined by Hair et al. (2014), the researchers calculated the predictive relevance of the model (Q^2) and the effect sizes of each predictor on the dependent variables (f^2). All associations in this study are presented in terms of standardized beta coefficients. Moreover, when evaluating relationships within the structural model, the researchers adhered to the recommendations of Hair et al. (2014) by establishing significance levels at $P < 0.001$ and $P < 0.05$ (one-tailed).

4.4. Result of the Direct Effect
Table 3 discloses a positive correlation between Job Security and Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.295$; $t = 6.809$; $P < 0.00$), thereby corroborating H1. Moreover, a statistically significant positive association is observed between Job Security and Affective Commitment ($\beta = 0.612$; $t = 14.743$; $P < 0.00$), validating the support for H2. The findings also illustrate a noteworthy positive connection between Job Security and Psychological Empowerment ($\beta = 0.547$; $t = 12.613$; $P < 0.00$), confirming the validity of H3. Similarly, a significant positive correlation is established between the Affective Commitment and Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.358$; $t = 7.817$; $P < 0.00$), providing support for H4. Finally, the results indicate a significant positive relationship between Employee Psychological Empowerment and Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.262$; $t = 5.707$; $P > 0.00$), supporting H5.

4.5. Result of the Interaction Effect
As depicted in Table 4, the mediating analysis discloses that affective commitment acts as an intermediary in the association between job security and employee retention ($\beta = -0.219$; $t = 7.017$; $P > 0.00$), thereby endorsing H6. Similarly, employee psychological empowerment is recognized as a mediator in the job security-employee retention relationship ($\beta = -0.143$; $t = 5.595$, $P < 0.00$), providing support for H7.

Table 1: Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Affective Commitment	AOC1	0.936	0.808	0.944
	AOC2	0.943		
	AOC3	0.760		
	AOC4	0.943		
Employee Retention	ER 1	0.786	0.696	0.811
	ER 2	0.871		
	ER 3	0.900		
	ER 4	0.927		
	ER 5	0.828		
	ER 6	0.707		
	ER 7	0.889		
Employee psychological Empowerment	EPE1	0.939	0.764	0.928
	EPE2	0.941		
	EPE3	0.794		
	EPE4	0.899		
Job Security	JS 1	0.909	0.810	0.927
	JS 1	0.932		
	JS 1	0.858		

AVE: Average variance extracted, CR: Composite reliability

Table 2: Discriminant validity

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affective Commitment					
2. Employee Retention	**0.739**				
3. Employee psychological Empowerment	0.320	**0.763**			
4. Job Security	0.477	0.515	**0.688**		

Diagonals (in bold) signify the square root of the average variance extracted whereas the off-diagonals rep- resent the squared correlations

Table 3: Results of the structural model (direct effect)

Hypothesis	Relationships	Beta	t-value	P-value	Decision
H1	Job Security -> Employee Retention	0.29	6.809	0.000**	Supported
H	Job Security -> Affective Commitment	50.61	14.74	0.000**	Supported
H3	Job Security -> Employee psychologica	20.547	312.613	0.000**	Supported
H4	l Empowerment	0.358	7.817	0.000**	Supported
H5	Affective Commitment -> Employee Retention	0.262	5.707	0.000**	Supported
	Employee psychological Empowerment -> Employee Retention				

**P<0.01

Table 4: Results of the structural model (mediating effects)

Hypothesis	Relationships	Beta	t-value	P-value	Decision
H6	Job Security -> Affective Commitment -> Employee Retention	0.219	7.017	0.000**	Supported
H7	Job Security -> Employee psychological Empowerment -> Employee Retention	0.143	5.595	0.000**	Supported

**P<0.01

The coefficient of determination (R^2) is a vital metric in assessing the structural model's effectiveness. With a value of 0.603 for employee retention, it signifies that the collective influence of job security, affective commitment, and employee psychological empowerment accounts for 60% of the observed variations in employee retention. Moreover, the R^2 for affective commitment is 0.30, suggesting that job security elucidates 30% of the variances in employee psychological empowerment. Similarly, the R^2 for employee psychological empowerment is 0.374, signifying that job security accounts for 37% of the variations in affective commitment. Categorizing R^2 values based on Chin's (1998) classification, those at 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered weak, moderate, and substantial, respectively. In this study, the R^2 values fall within the moderate category.

In evaluating a structural model, another criterion to consider is the effect size (f^2), which measures the impact of specific exogenous latent variables on the endogenous ones. As per Cohen's (1988) classification, the effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are categorized as small, medium, and large, respectively. The effect sizes (f^2) related to Job Security, affective commitment, and employee psychological empowerment on employee retention are 0.124, 0.178, and 0.107, indicating medium and small effects. Additionally, the effect size (f^2) of job security on affective commitment is 0.598, signifying a large effect. Similarly, the effect size (f^2) of job security on employee psychological empowerment is 0.428, reflecting a substantial effect.

In assessing the final criterion, predictive relevance (Q^2), which is measured through construct-cross validated redundancy, a model is considered having predictive relevance if the Q^2 value is greater than zero, as suggested by Geisser (1975). The Q^2 values for employee retention, affective commitment, and employees' psychological empowerment are 0.428, 0.370, and 0.428, respectively—all exceeding zero. This observation confirms the predictive relevance of the model in this study.

5. DISCUSSION

This research begun with the investigation titled, "Keeping Pace with the Generations! Quantitative Job Insecurity and Retention in Gen Z Workers: Affective Commitment and Psychological Empowerment as Mediators." The primary aim was to explore non-monetary factors contributing to the retention of Gen Z talent within organizations. Specifically, the research pursued to examine the influence of job security on the departure of Gen Z personnel from organizations, with affective commitment and psychological empowerment serving as mediating mechanisms. The findings indicate a robust negative impact of job security on the turnover intention of Gen Z employees in the private sector in Malaysia. In essence, heightened job security correlates with a reduced intention to leave the organization among Gen Z personnel. These results

validate the adverse effect of job security on turnover intention, consistent with prior research by Davy et al. (1997) and Cinar et al. (2014). Davy et al. (1997) demonstrated that organizational changes generating uncertainty intensified perceptions of low job security, prompting thoughts of leaving current employment. For Gen Z, a confluence of significant national and global events, personal experiences, and societal and technological influences has collectively shaped their collective consciousness, placing a heightened emphasis on the importance of job security, as elucidated by Sakdiyakorn et al. (2021). The intention to leave is viewed as a coping mechanism in response to stress arising from perceived job insecurity within the company. Similarly, the study by Cinar et al. (2014) underscores the correlation between high job insecurity, elevated rates of absenteeism, and turnover intention among employees.

Moreover, among presently active Gen Z employees in the private sector in Malaysia, the investigation unveiled a positive correlation between job security and affective organizational commitment. In essence, increased job security for Gen Z personnel corresponds to an enhanced commitment to the organization, driven by a sense of duty. These results emphasize the pivotal role of job security in shaping and boosting employee commitment, aligning with previous research (Anand et al., 2023; Ammari et al., 2017; Bashir and Gani, 2020). The existing body of literature consistently emphasizes the favorable connection between job security and organizational commitment, highlighting the importance of providing employees with a stable and secure work environment to foster overall engagement and commitment. Similarly, Hur (2022) identified significant connections between job security and various work attitude variables, including organizational commitment. This aligns with Yang and Kassekert's (2009) assertion that a decrease in civil service protection leads to heightened job insecurities, subsequently exerting adverse effects on organizational commitment. Notably, this study sheds light on the observed variations in commitment behavior between Gen Z and older generations, a topic emphasized in current literature (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Previous research, for instance Singh and Gupta (2015), has consistently shown that younger generations tend to exhibit lower levels of commitment to their employers, with loyalty decreasing linearly (Berkup, 2014; Otto and Remdisch, 2015). Furthermore, it has been posited that Gen Z, in particular, lacks emotional attachment to their employers (Scholz, 2014). What sets this study apart is its contribution to existing literature, providing insight into the root cause of diminished commitment among younger generations. The findings suggest that this decline is primarily linked to a perceived lack of job security.

Additionally, the investigation disclosed a positive correlation between job security and psychological empowerment among Gen Z employees currently active in the private sector workforce in Malaysia. Specifically, heightened job security for Gen Z personnel corresponds to an increase in their psychological empowerment.

This finding aligns with the observations of Ishtiaq (2022), who posits that job security serves as a foundational element influencing not only employees' perceptions of stability but also their psychological empowerment. When individuals feel secure in their roles and possess confidence in the continuity of their employment, it empowers them to assume ownership of their work and make meaningful contributions.

Furthermore, the investigation discerned that affective commitment and psychological empowerment acted as mediators in the connection between intrinsic motivation stemming from job security and turnover intention. As per the outcomes of the study, affective commitment and psychological empowerment function as channels through which the impact of job security translates into individual behavior (intention). This is in accordance with the hierarchical satisfaction of human needs (physiological, safety and security, belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization) emphasized by Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory.

As reported by Singhapakdi et al. (2015), there are numerous factors influencing employee motivation and the structuring of their work. An organization effectively addressing workers' desire for employment stability and competitive salaries satisfies the initial three fundamental needs within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, covering physiological needs, safety and security, and a sense of belonging (Akilu and Junaidu, 2015). Fulfilling these physiological needs ensures financial comfort for employees in their workplace (George, 2015), thereby fostering a sense of belonging. Additionally, job assurance plays a crucial role in meeting these physiological needs. As stated by Ekwoaba et al. (2015), as the needs are met, employees' job security and financial stability fulfill the second tier of Maslow's hierarchy. With the initial two levels of Maslow's hierarchy addressed, employees can advance toward satisfying their need for a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, Gen Z workforce is inclined toward organizations that acknowledge their skills and contributions, seeking social recognition as a motivating factor that enhances their morale and personal fulfilment. Consequently, Gen Z's intrinsic work motivations, including job security, psychological empowerment, and affective commitment, are influenced by both individual life journeys and parental narratives during their formative years (Aggarwal, 2022). Research conducted by Author Mahmoud et al. (2020), which explored generational distinctions in valuing workplace motivators among Gen X, Y, and Z, indicates varying regressions of six motivators on overall employee motivation. In the case of Gen Z employees, intrinsic motivation exerts a more significant impact on their overall work motivation compared to Generation X and Generation Y. Gen Z employees thrive on continuous motivation, with job security being a paramount concern. By offering job security, employers can enhance employees' psychological empowerment, commitment, and decrease turnover rates. Notably, significant positive correlations were observed among the hypothesized relationships. However, it is important to acknowledge that these correlations do not establish causal relationships. To ascertain that age-related or other external factors do not solely account for the observed outcomes, a longitudinal or time-lagged study would be necessary.

5.1. Implications for Practice

Hypotheses H1–H7 were partially substantiated, revealing significant correlations between job security and turnover intention. The analysis indicated a substantial negative correlation between job security and turnover intention, a significant positive correlation between job security and affective commitment, job security and psychological empowerment, and significant negative correlations between affective commitment and turnover intention, and psychological empowerment and turnover intention. In practical terms, this implies that fostering certain intrinsic motivations valued by employees can augment their commitment to the company.

The inclusion of Gen Z in the workforce has heightened the challenges faced by managers. This generation is characterized by a profound sense of curiosity and impatience. Their limited work experience, coupled with the pervasive influence of smartphones, widespread use of online interaction platforms, participation in equality campaigns, and upbringing in a safety-conscious environment have collectively shaped the unique individuality of Gen Z. Managers now carry an augmented responsibility to assess employees' interests and intrinsic work motivations continuously. This proactive approach is crucial for mitigating job insecurity, enhancing psychological empowerment, and cultivating affective commitment.

Various scholars have emphasized the heightened expectations that Gen Z holds for their managers compared to preceding generations. Despite their inclination toward independence, this cohort actively seeks to establish meaningful workplace relationships that extend to their interactions with supervisors, who are anticipated to play a pivotal role in their psychological empowerment.

As mentioned in Barhate and Dirani (2021), Gen Z places value on managers capable of providing coaching, recognizing their individual and professional worth, and aiding in the identification and harnessing of their strengths (Pandita, 2021; Henderson et al., 2009). Effectively managing Gen Z employees is a continuous learning journey, necessitating managers to adjust and lead proficiently. Managers who embrace diverse employee behaviours can establish authentic communication channels within their teams. The shift to work-from-home during the COVID-19 not only required managers to adapt to remote work environments but also tasked them with the responsibility of training, managing, and motivating Gen Z employees. While many organizations successfully adjusted to virtual processes, the accelerated work dynamics left limited room for psychologically empowering junior staff. Consequently, managers are now expected, more than ever, to assume roles beyond that of merely a "manager" and instead become leaders and mentors. The unique characteristics of Gen Z, marked by curiosity, impatience, limited work experience, and the influence of technology, social media, social justice movements, and a safety-centric upbringing, underscore the necessity for managers to take on these expanded roles (Schroth, 2019). Some managers have encountered situations where their team members were unprepared for increased responsibilities or struggled to cope with workplace challenges. To be effective in their roles, managers should consider creating a culture of empowerment, engaging in

mentoring, and fostering collaboration, which may even involve reverse mentoring (Jayathilake et al., 2021).

Furthermore, organizations have the capacity to enhance employee dedication even when employees opt to disassociate from the organization. By instituting a resilient support infrastructure and sustaining transparent channels of communication throughout the departure procedure, organizations can safeguard their public standing, reputation, and mitigate the risk of unauthorized information disclosures. This affords organizations the chance to address employee apprehensions and uncertainties by actively acknowledging the contributions individuals have made. For example, the creation and clear communication of an exit plan can alleviate anxiety, maintain the efficiency of remaining personnel, and cultivate collective regard (Skowronski & Bedi, 2022). Additionally, organizations with a favorable reputation are better positioned to allure top talent and attract a larger pool of job candidates (Turban and Cable, 2003). In the digital age, an organization's reputation has gained amplified significance, given that present and past employees can publish evaluations on employment platforms, influencing the organization's standing and its capacity to entice new talent. Therefore, organizations should conscientiously observe and document the rationales presented by departing employees, utilizing this information to devise strategies aimed at retaining their workforce.

In conformity with Chong & Eggleton (2007), utilizing incentives is another crucial tactic aimed at fostering confidence in employees' associations with leadership and heightening their allegiance to the organization. Indications from recent studies on generational diversity in the workforce highlight that crucial motivators for employees across various generational groups include compelling or satisfying compensation and the pursuit of job security (Woodward et al., 2015). Additionally, ensuring accessibility to valuable learning prospects holds importance as a motivator, particularly for individuals in the initial stages of their careers. As part of a comprehensive initiative to enhance morale, overall well-being, and allegiance to the institution, managers are advised to communicate information about the spectrum of benefits accessible to employees proactively.

As Gen Z enters the workforce, they bring unique attributes shaped by their contemporary context. To harness their potential, organizations must reevaluate recruitment, retention, and talent development strategies. Gen Z values practical approaches and clear, genuine communication. Understanding their distinct perspectives on jobs is crucial for effective HR practices. Skilled talent management requires ongoing evaluation and improvement to align with evolving trends and employee expectations. Leaders should adopt strategies that foster intrinsic motivation, job security, technology-driven processes, psychological empowerment, and well-being. Proficient leaders must also promote diversity and innovation, ensuring organizational principles align with Gen Z's values.

5.2. Theoretical Implication
The study's findings provide valuable insights into the distinctions in work values and organizational commitment across generations and sociodemographic factors. These insights hold the potential to aid companies in their endeavors to attract and retain employees. Notably, the research reveals significant connections between generational variations and organizational commitment, underscoring the presence of divergent work values and corresponding behaviors in different generational cohorts (Al-Asfour and Lettau, 2014; Gursoy et al., 2013). This comprehension of how varied work values, as associated with different generations, influence an individual's commitment to an organization, carries particular relevance for leaders (Kuron et al., 2015). Furthermore, authors have previously emphasized the utility of understanding specific generational work values in mitigating conflicts and fostering alignment around shared organizational objectives, such as organizational commitment and employee retention (Gibson et al., 2009).

Additionally, it is noteworthy that this study was conducted in the Asian context, thereby supplementing the existing body of research, which has predominantly centered on North American and European regions. Considering the scarcity of longitudinal empirical studies on generational aspects, especially concerning Gen Z, with respect to job security and employee retention, further research is warranted to elucidate the factors contributing to the observed high turnover rates among Gen Z employees. Given the limited number of studies exploring generational dynamics beyond North America, these subject warrants increased attention and more comprehensive examination in future studies, particularly within the Asian context.

Individuals make up a fundamental cornerstone of an organization's achievements. The findings of this research suggest that aligning support with the individual career aspirations, family objectives, and life circumstances of employees has the potential to bolster their commitment to the organization and improve retention rates. Furthermore, the examination of mediating factors, such as affective commitment and psychological empowerment, indicates that custom-tailored strategies designed for diverse groups of service members may prove more effective than a uniform, one-size-fits-all approach. These research findings represent valuable contributions to the body of knowledge in the domain of turnover, while also offering insights into retention strategies tailored for Gen Z organizations.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research
Future research endeavors should explore the applicability of their findings across various occupational sectors and consider comparative analyses to identify commonalities in behaviors. Moreover, it is advisable for forthcoming studies to revisit this investigation after some years have passed, given the increasing presence of Gen Z members in the workforce, as a substantial portion of this generation is currently at a relatively young age.

Additionally, a prospective avenue for research lies in the incorporation of alternative outcome measures, including parameters such as public trust and objective performance indicators. Future studies should also account for potential confounding factors that influence employee commitment,

retention, and job security, such as the influence of labor unions and congressional oversight. The consideration of diverse variables, both as outcome measures and confounding elements, holds significant importance in shedding light on the results obtained in the present study.

In accordance with the conventions of empirical research, this investigation is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the implementation of a cross-sectional data collection approach hinders the establishment of causal relationships among variables (Hansen and Hill, 1991). The utilization of data gathered at a singular point in time introduces complexities in deciphering the true nature of the relationships under scrutiny (Rumelt, 1991). To address this limitation, it is advisable to engage in longitudinal research by either replicating the study or broadening the research scope to encompass diverse domains within the same population.

Another limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported data from respondents, carrying the inherent risk of response bias and common method bias (CMB). Self-reporting bias in organizational behavior research often arises from concerns about organizational access to responses, and survey respondents commonly exhibit a predisposition towards presenting themselves in a positive light (Donaldson and Grant-Vallone, 2002). To counteract this inclination, the research prioritized participant anonymity and confidentiality, aiming to offset respondents' tendency to provide socially acceptable responses rather than candid ones. While the study employed scales previously scrutinized for CMB, the potential for distortion in the assessed relationships within a single questionnaire remains. Recommendations for future research involve conducting multiple surveys with the same population at different intervals, incorporating interview-based research, and integrating objective measures, such as observations, alongside self-reporting. Additionally, instances were noted where respondents did not respond to all questions, potentially due to questionnaire fatigue, inadvertent oversight, or a deliberate choice not to answer. A suggested remedy for this issue in future research is to structure surveys to mandate sequential answering of each question before proceeding to the next.

Finally, concerning the representativeness of the sample, it is crucial to acknowledge that the survey predominantly targeted the Malaysian context. Consequently, the findings of this study should not be broadly generalized. Nonetheless, a notable strength of this empirical investigation lies in its status as one of the initial studies concurrently examining all components of Meyer and Allen's (1991) organizational commitment, Mauno et al.'s (2001) job security, Kelloway et al.'s (1999) turnover intention, and Spreitzer's (1995) psychological empowerment within the framework of a Gen Z study. Future research endeavours may explore additional variables or characteristics influencing organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, and employee retention.

6. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to scrutinize the causes behind the elevated turnover rates observed among Gen Z employees.

The findings of this investigation reveal a significant and negative correlation between job security and employee retention, both directly and through the intermediary mechanisms of affective organizational commitment and psychological empowerment. In essence, the study suggests that higher levels of job security correspond to greater commitment to the organization, as employees feel a sense of obligation. Concerning affective employee commitment, it was observed that individuals born in 2000 or later exhibit significant commitment to the organization, primarily due to their sense of obligation and the perceived high costs associated with leaving, especially when job security is robust.

To attract and retain employees, it is imperative for managers to cultivate organizational commitment. Organizational commitment should be fostered throughout the entire workforce without recourse to generational stereotypes, which may unjustly discriminate against certain employee groups. The empirical evidence available in research regarding consistent generational values remains limited, with many studies yielding mixed outcomes. This research domain presents complex challenges that raise questions about the feasibility of developing organizational strategies solely based on generational values to enhance organizational performance.

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