



Talent Management: Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Generation Z

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine Talent Management: Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Generation Z. Considering that the objective of this research was to identify and prioritize strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z using operations research methods, the study is classified as applied research in terms of purpose. Additionally, this research is descriptive and non-experimental regarding data collection methods. Since the study utilized operations research approaches, the population under investigation comprised experts and senior specialists in the relevant field. For data collection, the opinions of 10 experts with substantial work experience, including human resource management in knowledge-based companies, were utilized. A purposive sampling method combined with a snowball technique was employed to identify these individuals. Information collection methods in this research were divided into two categories: library and field studies. In this study, interviews were conducted to identify components, during which experts were asked about strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z, leading to the identification of relevant factors. Subsequently, the prioritization of these factors was examined using fuzzy AHP. The results revealed that the criterion of utilizing technology and social media ranked first in priority, followed by the criteria of work-life balance, creating a positive employer image, learning and development opportunities, and perceived organizational support, which ranked second to fifth, respectively.

Keywords: Talent, Talent Management, Attraction and Retention, Generation Z Employees

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1. Introduction

Today, organizations face numerous challenges in the field of talent management. Human capital management is influenced by a variety of factors, among which generational typologies within organizations are particularly significant. Since employees from different generations are born during distinct time periods, they possess unique personalities, perspectives, and values, which can create fundamental challenges for organizations. Generation Z has now entered the workforce, and employers must be prepared with the necessary strategic plans to accommodate their integration [1].

Generation Z, known as the digital generation, leverages modern technologies and expects organizations to be up-to-date as well. In this regard, 70% of Generation Z employees seek employers who utilize advanced technologies and provide a digital workplace environment [2]. This factor not only influences the attraction and retention of Generation Z but also impacts the efficiency and productivity of organizations. Therefore, addressing talent management strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z has become a critical necessity for organizations in the contemporary era.

Talent management and strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z are recognized as vital research topics in today's world. Generation Z, approximately comprising individuals born after 1997, is rapidly entering the workforce. By 2025, it is projected to account for around 27% of the global workforce [3]. This generation is characterized by unique attributes such as a preference for flexible work environments, a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion, and expectations for organizations to demonstrate social responsibility. As such, organizations need to design effective strategies to attract and retain this generation to harness their potential benefits. Considering that 60% of Generation Z employees seek job opportunities that offer growth and development prospects [4], talent management as a strategic approach can significantly enhance organizational efficiency. Given Generation Z's unique characteristics, organizations must tailor their strategies to meet the needs and expectations of this generation. Research indicates that organizations addressing these needs can increase employee retention rates by up to 50% [5]. This improvement stems from creating a positive and supportive work environment, which Generation Z values highly. Moreover, by providing opportunities for career development and advancement, organizations can

boost motivation and commitment among Generation Z employees, subsequently improving organizational efficiency and productivity.

In addition, focusing on talent management in attracting Generation Z can reduce recruitment and training costs. By hiring suitable employees and retaining them within the organization, costs associated with searching for new talent and training them are minimized. For example, estimates suggest that the costs of searching for new talent can amount to 30% of an employee's annual salary [6]. Therefore, by implementing effective talent management strategies, organizations can achieve greater efficiency and cost reduction.

There are several fundamental challenges in talent management and strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z. One major challenge is the lack of sufficient understanding of Generation Z's characteristics and expectations. Many organizations have yet to gain a deep comprehension of this generation's needs and desires, leading to difficulties in attracting and retaining them. According to a study, 60% of employers believe they need to improve their understanding of Generation Z [7]. This lack of understanding can result in a mismatch between employee expectations and organizational policies. Another challenge is the intense competition to attract Generation Z talent. Since Generation Z seeks flexible working conditions and positive work environments, organizations must compete with one another to attract top talent. Reports indicate that 50% of Generation Z values employers who prioritize social and environmental responsibility [8]. This competition pressures organizations to create favorable working conditions and offer attractive benefits.

Various factors influence strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z. One of these factors is technology and digitization. As the digital generation, Generation Z expects organizations to use advanced technologies to streamline work processes and communication. Research shows that 75% of Generation Z seeks employers who utilize digital tools to enhance the work experience [9]. Therefore, organizations must align their strategies with modern technologies. Kazemi Mehrabadi and Kazemi Mehrabadi (2024) identified several factors affecting the attraction and retention of Generation Z employees, including cultural, communicative, managerial, structural, identity-based, occupational, and technological aspects [7].

Cultural and social factors also significantly impact strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z. This generation values diversity and inclusion and expects

organizations to uphold these principles. Therefore, organizations must design strategies to address these needs and foster an inclusive and diverse environment [10]. Poor talent management and inadequate strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z can pose serious challenges for organizations. With intense competition for Generation Z talent and misalignment between their expectations and organizational policies, many organizations face high turnover rates and employee dissatisfaction. Reports suggest that the turnover rate among Generation Z is, on average, 30% higher than other generations [11]. This situation not only increases recruitment and training costs but also negatively impacts organizational efficiency and service quality.

The negative consequences of unresolved talent management issues can be observed across various domains. From a cultural perspective, neglecting Generation Z's needs and expectations can lead to a negative organizational culture and decreased employee commitment. Socially, this issue can increase dissatisfaction and reduce trust in organizations. Economically, high costs associated with recruiting and training new employees can reduce organizational profitability. Psychologically, job dissatisfaction can elevate stress levels and diminish employees' mental well-being, adversely affecting their quality of work life.

To address existing issues in talent management and strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z, organizations must focus on creating positive and supportive work environments. This includes offering educational and developmental opportunities, designing fair reward systems, and fostering an inclusive organizational culture. Additionally, leveraging modern technologies and addressing Generation Z's cultural and social needs can improve their attraction and retention. Ultimately, the research question could be formulated as: "What strategies can improve the attraction and retention of Generation Z in public organizations?"

2. Methodology

Given that the objective of the present study is to identify and prioritize strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z using operations research methods, this research is classified as applied research in terms of its purpose. Furthermore, it is descriptive and non-experimental in terms of data collection methods. The population includes a combination of units that share common characteristics.

The sample consists of a subset of these units selected from the larger population, representing the entire population. The process of selecting a sample is known as sampling.

Since this study employs operations research approaches, the target population comprises experts and senior specialists in the relevant field. Data collection throughout all phases of the study utilized the insights of experts and specialists from knowledge-based companies in Tehran. As this research involves multi-criteria decision-making and pairwise comparisons, a large sample size is not required. Saaty (2002) posited that ten experts are sufficient for studies based on pairwise comparisons. Similarly, Reza and Vazilis (1998) recommended a total of 5 to 15 experts for such interviews, emphasizing that the number of interviewees should not be excessively large.

In this study, data were collected from 10 specialists with substantial work experience, including human resource management in knowledge-based companies. These individuals were identified through purposive sampling and the snowball method. Specialists with high levels of expertise, experience, and a strong professional background in human resource management were selected. During interviews with each participant, subsequent participants were identified and recommended through the Delphi process. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

Characteristics of participants included:

- Over 10 years of executive experience.
- A minimum of a bachelor's degree in fields such as human resource management and public management.
- Research experience in areas such as human resource management, information technology, and talent management.

Data collection methods were divided into two categories: library-based and field-based approaches. Information related to the literature review and research background was gathered through library methods, while field methods were used to collect data for investigating the study's objective. The library-based component involved reviewing texts, articles, and other foundational resources. Field data were ultimately collected using expert questionnaires, including pairwise comparison AHP questionnaires.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research tools, validity and reliability tests were conducted. Validity refers to the extent to which a tool measures the intended concept and is crucial for ensuring accuracy. Reliability, on the other

hand, indicates whether the measurement tool produces consistent results when used repeatedly over a short time for the same group. Since operations research methods were utilized in this study, and criteria were compared using pairwise comparisons, the tools can be considered to have logical and content validity. All criteria were evaluated in pairs, ensuring their consideration and expert approval, thus affirming their validity.

Reliability was assessed using the inconsistency rate. If the inconsistency index exceeds 0.1, the criteria must be revised.

After data collection, the next step in the research process was data analysis. To identify the components, interviews were conducted, during which experts were asked about

strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z, leading to the identification of key factors. Subsequently, the prioritization of these indicators was performed using fuzzy AHP.

3. Findings and Results

As previously mentioned, expert opinions were initially utilized to identify the indicators. Experts were asked to specify the strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z and the indicators associated with these strategies. After analyzing and categorizing their responses, the strategies for attracting and retaining Generation Z are presented in [Table 1](#):

Table 1. Components and Indicators for Attracting and Retaining Generation Z

Component	Indicators
Use of Technology and Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on digital platforms - Automating organizational processes
Creating a Positive Employer Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilizing digital advertising and engaging content to capture Generation Z's attention - Communicating organizational values and culture - Promoting collaboration, respect, and support in the workplace - Organizing team-building and social activities to strengthen employee relationships - Sharing positive employee experiences and success stories to attract and retain Generation Z
Perceived Organizational Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing transparent and fair performance evaluation systems - Developing technological infrastructures to facilitate work - Maintaining friendly relationships with employees to express concerns and issues - Creating equitable reward systems - Providing regular and constructive feedback to improve employee performance and career growth
Learning and Development Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting training programs and workshops - Providing easy access to information and resources needed for tasks - Offering opportunities to participate in innovative projects and creative challenges - Creating a creative environment for idea sharing - Collaborating with universities and other knowledge-based companies - Providing career advancement opportunities
Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting mental health - Facilitating remote work infrastructure - Organizing recreational programs for employees - Implementing flexible work policies

The prioritization of each component was subsequently analyzed. For the hierarchical analysis, the primary criteria were pairwise compared based on the study's objective. Pairwise comparison is straightforward, requiring all elements within each cluster to be compared in pairs.

Thus, 10 pairwise comparisons were conducted based on expert opinions. These expert perspectives were quantified using a fuzzy scale. Initially, expert opinions were gathered using Saaty's nine-point scale and subsequently transformed into fuzzy values. The geometric mean method was used to aggregate expert opinions in the fuzzy AHP process.

Once the pairwise comparison matrix was constructed, the fuzzy sum for each row was calculated. To normalize preferences for each criterion, the sum of that criterion's values was divided by the total preferences (column elements). Since the values are fuzzy, the fuzzy sum of each row was multiplied by the reciprocal of the total sum. The reciprocal total sum was calculated, and the resulting values were the normalized fuzzy weights for the main criteria. Finally, defuzzification was performed, and crisp values were computed.

Table 2. Defuzzification and Normalized Weights of the Main Study Variables

Main Components	X1max	X2max	X3max	Deffuzy	Normalized
Use of Technology and Social Media	0.315	0.312	0.310	0.315	0.302
Work-Life Balance	0.215	0.213	0.211	0.215	0.206
Creating a Positive Employer Image	0.198	0.196	0.194	0.198	0.189
Learning and Development Opportunities	0.163	0.161	0.159	0.163	0.156
Perceived Organizational Support	0.152	0.151	0.149	0.152	0.146

Key findings include:

- The criterion "Use of Technology and Social Media" ranked first with a normalized weight of 0.302.
- The criterion "Work-Life Balance" ranked second with a normalized weight of 0.206.
- The criterion "Creating a Positive Employer Image" ranked third with a normalized weight of 0.189.
- The criterion "Learning and Development Opportunities" ranked fourth with a normalized weight of 0.156.
- The criterion "Perceived Organizational Support" ranked fifth with a normalized weight of 0.146.

The inconsistency rate for the pairwise comparisons was 0.088, which is smaller than the acceptable threshold of 0.1. Therefore, the pairwise comparisons are reliable.

The components identified in the study were analyzed in detail in subsequent sections.

Initially, calculations were made for fuzzifying the experts' average opinions to determine the priority of the sub-criteria for the use of technology and social media. Following the formation of the pairwise comparison matrix, the fuzzy sum for each row was calculated. Given the complexity of the fuzzification process, the results of the defuzzified fuzzy weights for the sub-criteria related to the use of technology and social media are presented in the table below:

Table 3. Defuzzification of Normalized Weights for the Use of Technology and Social Media

Main Components	X1max	X2max	X3max	Deffuzy	Normal
Attention to Digital Platforms	0.640	0.635	0.631	0.640	0.619
Automating Organizational Processes	0.271	0.269	0.266	0.271	0.262
Using Digital Advertising and Engaging Content to Capture Generation Z's Attention	0.122	0.121	0.120	0.122	0.118

Based on the results:

- Attention to digital platforms ranked first with a normalized weight of 0.619.
- Automating organizational processes ranked second with a normalized weight of 0.262.
- Using digital advertising and engaging content to capture Generation Z's attention ranked third with a normalized weight of 0.118.

The inconsistency rate for the pairwise comparisons was 0.087, which is less than 0.1, indicating that the pairwise comparisons can be trusted.

Initially, calculations were made for fuzzifying the experts' average opinions to determine the priority of the sub-criteria for creating a positive employer image. Following the formation of the pairwise comparison matrix, the fuzzy sum for each row was calculated. Given the complexity of the fuzzification process, the results of the defuzzified fuzzy weights for the sub-criteria related to creating a positive employer image are presented in the table below:

Table 4. Defuzzification of Normalized Weights for Creating a Positive Employer Image

Main Components	X1max	X2max	X3max	Deffuzy	Normal
Communicating Organizational Values and Culture	0.294	0.288	0.282	0.294	0.279
Promoting Collaboration, Respect, and Support in the Workplace	0.241	0.235	0.230	0.241	0.229
Organizing Team-Building and Social Activities to Strengthen Employee Relationships	0.253	0.261	0.269	0.269	0.255
Sharing Positive Employee Experiences and Success Stories in Attracting and Retaining Generation Z	0.249	0.243	0.237	0.249	0.237

Based on the results:

- Communicating organizational values and culture ranked first with a normalized weight of 0.279.
- Organizing team-building and social activities to strengthen employee relationships ranked second with a normalized weight of 0.255.
- Sharing positive employee experiences and success stories in attracting and retaining Generation Z ranked third with a normalized weight of 0.237.
- Promoting collaboration, respect, and support in the workplace ranked fourth with a normalized weight of 0.229.

The inconsistency rate for the pairwise comparisons was 0.012, which is less than 0.1, indicating that the pairwise comparisons can be trusted.

Initially, calculations were made for fuzzifying the experts' average opinions to determine the priority of the sub-criteria for perceived organizational support. Following the formation of the pairwise comparison matrix, the fuzzy sum for each row was calculated. Given the complexity of the fuzzification process, the results of the defuzzified fuzzy weights for the sub-criteria related to perceived organizational support are presented in the table below:

Table 5. Defuzzification of Normalized Weights for Perceived Organizational Support

Main Components	X1max	X2max	X3max	Defuzzy	Normal
Establishing Transparent and Fair Performance Evaluation Systems	0.314	0.311	0.308	0.314	0.300
Developing Technological Infrastructures for Ease of Work	0.195	0.193	0.191	0.195	0.186
Maintaining Friendly Relationships with Employees to Express Concerns and Issues	0.137	0.135	0.134	0.137	0.131
Creating Equitable Reward Systems	0.199	0.197	0.194	0.199	0.190
Providing Regular and Constructive Feedback to Improve Employee Performance and Career Growth	0.202	0.200	0.198	0.202	0.193

Based on the results:

- Establishing transparent and fair performance evaluation systems ranked first with a normalized weight of 0.300.
- Providing regular and constructive feedback to improve employee performance and career growth ranked second with a normalized weight of 0.193.
- Creating equitable reward systems ranked third with a normalized weight of 0.190.
- Developing technological infrastructures for ease of work ranked fourth with a normalized weight of 0.186.

- Maintaining friendly relationships with employees to express concerns and issues ranked fifth with a normalized weight of 0.131.

The inconsistency rate for the pairwise comparisons was 0.088, which is less than 0.1, indicating that the pairwise comparisons can be trusted.

Initially, calculations were made for fuzzifying the experts' average opinions to determine the priority of the sub-criteria for learning and development opportunities. Following the formation of the pairwise comparison matrix, the fuzzy sum for each row was calculated. Given the complexity of the fuzzification process, the results of the defuzzified fuzzy weights for the sub-criteria related to learning and development opportunities are presented in the table below:

Table 6. Defuzzification of Normalized Weights for Learning and Development Opportunities

Main Components	X1max	X2max	X3max	Defuzzy	Normal
Training Programs and Workshops	0.109	0.109	0.108	0.109	0.106
Providing Easy Access to Information and Resources Needed for Tasks	0.167	0.165	0.164	0.167	0.161
Providing Opportunities to Participate in Innovative Projects and Creative Challenges	0.187	0.186	0.184	0.187	0.181
Creating a Creative Space for Sharing Ideas	0.133	0.131	0.130	0.133	0.128
Collaborating with Universities and Other Knowledge-Based Companies	0.190	0.189	0.187	0.190	0.184
Career Advancement Opportunities	0.247	0.246	0.244	0.247	0.239

Based on the results:

- Career advancement opportunities ranked first with a normalized weight of 0.239.

- Collaborating with universities and other knowledge-based companies ranked second with a normalized weight of 0.184.

- Providing opportunities to participate in innovative projects and creative challenges ranked third with a normalized weight of 0.181.
- Providing easy access to information and resources needed for tasks ranked fourth with a normalized weight of 0.161.
- Creating a creative space for sharing ideas ranked fifth with a normalized weight of 0.128.
- Training programs and workshops ranked sixth with a normalized weight of 0.106.

The inconsistency rate for the pairwise comparisons was 0.019, which is less than 0.1, indicating that the pairwise comparisons can be trusted.

Initially, calculations were made for fuzzifying the experts' average opinions to determine the priority of the sub-criteria for work-life balance. Following the formation of the pairwise comparison matrix, the fuzzy sum for each row was calculated. Given the complexity of the fuzzification process, the results of the defuzzified fuzzy weights for the sub-criteria related to work-life balance are presented in the table below:

Table 7. Defuzzification of Normalized Weights for Work-Life Balance

Main Components	X1max	X2max	X3max	Deffuzzy	Normal
Supporting Mental Health	0.222	0.220	0.217	0.222	0.214
Providing the Necessary Infrastructure for Remote Work	0.362	0.358	0.354	0.362	0.349
Considering Recreational Programs for Employees	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.218	0.211
Flexible Work Policies	0.235	0.232	0.229	0.235	0.226

Based on the results:

- Providing the necessary infrastructure for remote work ranked first with a normalized weight of 0.349.
- Flexible work policies ranked second with a normalized weight of 0.226.
- Supporting mental health ranked third with a normalized weight of 0.214.
- Considering recreational programs for employees ranked fourth with a normalized weight of 0.211.

The inconsistency rate for the pairwise comparisons was 0.006, which is less than 0.1, indicating that the pairwise comparisons can be trusted.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined “talent management: strategies for attracting and retaining generation Z”. It was discussed that today, various generations of employees coexist in the workplace. Each generation has its own distinct characteristics, values, and behaviors, and managing these generations effectively poses a significant challenge for organizations. Therefore, understanding and recognizing these characteristics, values, and behaviors are essential for retaining these generations. Retention encompasses various subcategories, with this study focusing on the compensation and benefits system. Generation Z, which follows Generation Y, has been the subject of limited studies, while the increasing entry of this generation into the workforce

will add complexity to managing and working with different generations, particularly Generation Z.

This study, based on expert opinions, identified that the criterion of using technology and social media is the highest priority, followed by work-life balance, creating a positive employer image, learning and development opportunities, and perceived organizational support, in that order. Accordingly, it can be concluded that when attracting and retaining Generation Z employees, the use of technology and social media is the most important factor. This finding can be attributed to the fact that Generation Z, as the digital generation, has grown up with technology and the internet. This generation has been raised in a world where modern technologies and social media are integral parts of their daily lives. According to a study, 95% of Generation Z youth own smartphones, and 45% of them use social media continuously. This reliance on technology means that organizations must leverage digital tools and platforms to attract this generation. Social media serves as a powerful tool for talent acquisition. According to LinkedIn data, Generation Z uses social media networks to search for job opportunities. This implies that organizations must maintain an active presence on these platforms and utilize them to promote organizational culture and job openings. Furthermore, targeted advertising on social media can assist in attracting specific talents. The use of social media allows organizations to create a positive image as an employer, as a significant percentage of job seekers examine reviews and experiences of former employees about organizations on social media and job websites. Therefore, organizations

must create positive and engaging content about their culture and values to attract Generation Z.

Additionally, Generation Z values quick and effective communication. The use of technology and social media allows organizations to rapidly connect with employees and applicants. Research has shown that Generation Z prefers employers who promote open and transparent communication. This communication can include immediate feedback, online meetings, and information sharing through digital platforms. In fact, technology can help enhance the work experience for Generation Z employees. Generation Z employees seek work environments that utilize modern technologies to facilitate tasks. This includes online collaboration tools, project management software, and digital performance evaluation systems. Using these tools can contribute to higher job satisfaction and employee retention. Furthermore, Generation Z places a high value on continuous learning and development. Technology and social media can serve as tools to deliver online courses and learning resources. Generation Z employees seek learning opportunities at work. This suggests that organizations must use technology to offer training courses and learning resources to attract and retain this generation.

Ultimately, it can be stated that the use of technology and social media in attracting and retaining Generation Z employees is crucial due to this generation's familiarity with technology, talent acquisition, creating a positive employer image, effective communication, employee retention, and learning and development opportunities. Organizations must address these needs to attract and retain Generation Z talent within their workforce. In this regard, the following recommendations are provided to the managers of knowledge-based companies:

- Pay attention to racial, gender, and cultural diversity in recruitment and create an environment where all employees feel valued.
- Design inclusion programs that help employees engage in decision-making processes and social activities.
- Sharing success stories and positive workplace experiences can help attract new talent.
- Utilize digital tools and online collaboration software to facilitate communication and teamwork. Generation Z is accustomed to modern technologies and expects organizations to leverage these tools.
- Provide opportunities for involvement in innovative and research projects that allow employees to develop their skills.
- Create an environment where employees can share their ideas and participate in decision-making processes. Organizing brainstorming sessions and creative challenges can help achieve this goal.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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