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Rethinking Talent Management Strategies for Generation Z Employees in the Era of Digital Work Culture

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Abstract: The rapid development of digital work culture has transformed organizational approaches to managing human resources, particularly among Generation Z employees who possess distinct expectations regarding flexibility, technological integration, career development, and workplace engagement. This study aims to examine the influence of talent management strategies on employee engagement and employee retention among Generation Z employees in digital work environments. A quantitative explanatory approach was employed using a survey of 180 Generation Z employees working in digital-based organizations in the Greater Jakarta area. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected using structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling. The findings indicate that talent management strategies significantly and positively affect employee engagement and employee retention. Employee engagement also serves as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between talent management strategies and employee retention. These results suggest that organizations need to redesign conventional talent management practices by adopting more flexible, technology-oriented, and employee-centered approaches that align with the characteristics of Generation Z. This study contributes to the development of human resource management literature and provides practical insights for organizations seeking to attract, engage, and retain Generation Z talent in the era of digital work culture.

Keywords: Digital Work Culture, Employee Engagement, Employee Retention, Generation Z Employees, Talent Management Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed organizational work systems, creating a new paradigm commonly referred to as digital work culture. The adoption of hybrid work arrangements, digital collaboration platforms, artificial intelligence-based human resource practices, and virtual communication systems has altered the way employees interact with organizations. These changes have significantly influenced workforce expectations, particularly among Generation Z employees who have grown up in highly digitalized environments. As Generation Z increasingly enters the labor market,

organizations face growing pressure to redesign their talent management systems to accommodate the preferences and values of this emerging workforce. Recent evidence suggests that flexibility, continuous learning opportunities, career development, and technology-enabled work environments have become critical determinants of Generation Z's workplace engagement and satisfaction (Gupta et al., 2025).

Generation Z employees possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. Unlike earlier workforce cohorts, Generation Z demonstrates strong preferences for flexible working arrangements, rapid feedback mechanisms, collaborative environments, and personalized career development pathways. Research has shown that digital-native employees place greater emphasis on meaningful work experiences and organizational support than on traditional hierarchical career structures (Adhiati et al., 2025). Furthermore, studies indicate that Generation Z employees increasingly expect organizations to integrate technology into talent development processes and provide adaptive learning opportunities that support long-term career growth (Kulkarni & Rai, 2023). These expectations have created substantial challenges for organizations that continue to rely on conventional talent management approaches developed for previous generations.

Talent management has emerged as a strategic mechanism for attracting, developing, engaging, and retaining high-potential employees in increasingly competitive labor markets. In the digital era, effective talent management extends beyond recruitment and compensation by encompassing career management, employee development, performance support, and organizational culture. Recent studies have demonstrated that talent management practices significantly influence employee engagement and job satisfaction among Generation Z workers operating in digital environments (Achmad et al., 2023). Similarly, talent retention challenges have become more prominent as younger employees exhibit higher mobility and greater willingness to change employers when organizational expectations are not fulfilled (Spaeth & Björnbäck, 2023). Consequently, organizations must reconsider whether existing talent management strategies remain effective for sustaining Generation Z commitment and retention.

Although previous studies have extensively examined talent management, several important research gaps remain unresolved. First, many studies focus primarily on organizational performance, employee satisfaction, or turnover intention without specifically examining the mechanisms through which talent management influences employee retention among Generation Z employees. For example, Nurlina (2022) some studies concentrated on work engagement and job satisfaction outcomes, while other studies emphasized leadership, compensation, and organizational culture as primary predictors of employee attitudes. As a result, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the direct and indirect relationships between talent management strategies, employee engagement, and employee retention within digital work settings.

A second research gap concerns the contextual dimension of digital work culture. Existing studies frequently investigate Generation Z employee behavior without fully incorporating the influence of digitally mediated work environments. Research on work flexibility and quality of work life has demonstrated significant effects on loyalty among Generation Z employees (Sholekha & Esthi, 2025). Likewise, studies on employee retention have highlighted the importance of organizational culture and work-life balance in retaining young talent (Bahar et al., 2022). However, empirical models integrating talent management strategies, employee engagement, and employee retention within a digital work culture framework remain relatively limited, particularly in emerging economies such as Indonesia.

Another important gap lies in the mediating role of employee engagement. Previous studies have acknowledged that employee engagement contributes significantly to retention outcomes among younger employees (Lee et al., 2024). Nevertheless, most existing research treats employee engagement either as an independent outcome variable or as a separate organizational construct. There remains insufficient empirical evidence explaining whether

employee engagement functions as a mediating mechanism through which talent management strategies enhance employee retention among Generation Z employees. Addressing this issue is particularly important because employee engagement represents a critical psychological condition that reflects employees' emotional attachment, commitment, and willingness to contribute to organizational objectives.

Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, this study aims to examine the influence of talent management strategies on employee engagement and employee retention among Generation Z employees working in digital-based organizations. Furthermore, this research investigates the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between talent management strategies and employee retention. By focusing on Generation Z employees in organizations operating within digital work environments, this study seeks to contribute to the contemporary human resource management literature while providing practical recommendations for organizations seeking to attract, engage, develop, and retain talent in an increasingly digitalized workplace.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research approach to investigate the relationships among Talent Management Strategies, Employee Engagement, and Employee Retention within the context of Digital Work Culture. Quantitative research is particularly suitable for testing theoretical relationships and examining causal associations among latent variables through statistical procedures (Plugge & Nikou, 2024). An explanatory design was adopted because the study aims to explain the influence of talent management practices on employee engagement and employee retention among Generation Z employees. Furthermore, a cross-sectional survey design was utilized, whereby data were collected at a single point in time, which is widely recommended for organizational behavior and human resource management studies examining employee perceptions and attitudes (Fawehinmi et al., 2024). The conceptual framework positions Talent Management Strategies as the independent variable, Employee Engagement as the mediating variable, and Employee Retention as the dependent variable.

Research Population and Sample

The population consisted of Generation Z employees working in digital-based organizations located in the Greater Jakarta area, including Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi. Generation Z employees were defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2006 who were actively employed during the period of data collection. The study employed a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, which is appropriate when respondents must meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Rahman, 2023). A total of 180 respondents participated in the study. This sample size satisfies the minimum sample requirements for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling and is considered adequate for estimating complex structural relationships involving mediation effects.

Respondents were selected based on four criteria: (1) belonging to Generation Z, (2) having at least six months of work experience in their current organization, (3) working in organizations that actively utilize digital technologies and digital work systems, and (4) regularly using digital communication and collaboration platforms in their daily work activities. These criteria were established to ensure that participants possessed sufficient experience in digital work environments and could accurately evaluate organizational talent management practices.

Data Collection Procedures

Primary data were collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. Online surveys are considered efficient and appropriate for collecting data from digitally connected respondents and have become increasingly common in contemporary organizational research (Khan, 2024). Prior to the main survey, a pilot study involving 30 respondents was conducted to evaluate the clarity, comprehensibility, and contextual relevance of the measurement items. Feedback obtained during the pilot testing process was used to refine questionnaire wording and improve measurement accuracy.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section collected respondents' demographic information, including age, gender, educational background, organizational tenure, and industry classification. The second section measured Talent Management Strategies. The third section assessed Employee Engagement, while the fourth section evaluated Employee Retention. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), which is commonly used in behavioral and management research because of its ability to capture respondents' perceptions effectively (Fangni, 2025).

Measurement of Variables

Talent Management Strategies were operationalized through indicators related to talent acquisition, talent development, career advancement opportunities, succession planning, performance management, and organizational support. Employee Engagement was measured through indicators reflecting vigor, dedication, enthusiasm, commitment, and emotional attachment to the organization. Employee Retention was assessed through indicators representing employees' willingness to remain employed, organizational loyalty, and long-term employment intentions. The measurement scales were adapted from established human resource management and organizational behavior literature to ensure content validity and theoretical consistency. The adaptation process involved contextual modifications to align the items with Generation Z characteristics and digital workplace environments while maintaining conceptual equivalence (Jacques, 2025).

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical findings, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. H1: Talent Management Strategies have a positive and significant effect on Employee Engagement among Generation Z employees in digital work environments.
2. H2: Talent Management Strategies have a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention among Generation Z employees in digital work environments.
3. H3: Employee Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Employee Retention among Generation Z employees in digital work environments.
4. H4: Employee Engagement mediates the relationship between Talent Management Strategies and Employee Retention among Generation Z employees in digital work environments.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Measurement validity and reliability were evaluated using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling procedures. Convergent validity was assessed through outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted values. Outer loading values greater than 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted values above 0.50 indicate satisfactory convergent validity. Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability coefficients, with recommended threshold values exceeding 0.70.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio criterion, where values below 0.90 indicate adequate discriminant validity among latent constructs (Henseler et al., 2021). Additionally, multicollinearity was evaluated using Variance Inflation Factor values, with values below 5.00 suggesting the absence of critical collinearity issues within the structural model.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.0. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling was selected because of its suitability for predictive research, mediation testing, and complex models involving latent constructs measured through multiple indicators. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure consisting of measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. The measurement model assessment included tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated through path coefficient analysis, coefficient of determination, effect size, predictive relevance, and mediation analysis. Statistical significance was assessed through bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples, which is recommended for obtaining robust estimates of direct and indirect effects. Hypotheses were accepted when the t-statistic exceeded 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05.

Research Procedure

The research was conducted through several stages. First, an extensive literature review was performed to establish the conceptual framework and formulate research hypotheses. Second, the questionnaire instrument was developed and subjected to expert evaluation and pilot testing. Third, data were collected from eligible Generation Z employees working in digital-based organizations throughout the Greater Jakarta area. Fourth, the collected data underwent screening and cleaning procedures before statistical analysis. Finally, the empirical findings were interpreted and discussed in relation to existing theoretical and empirical literature to derive both theoretical contributions and practical implications for talent management in digital work environments.

RESULTS

Respondent Profile Analysis

The study involved 180 Generation Z employees working in digital-based organizations across the Greater Jakarta area. Based on gender distribution, 54.4% of respondents were female, while 45.6% were male. The majority of respondents (61.1%) were aged between 22 and 26 years, followed by those aged 27–29 years (23.3%) and below 22 years (15.6%). Regarding educational background, 68.9% held a bachelor's degree, 21.1% possessed a diploma qualification, and the remaining 10.0% held postgraduate degrees. In terms of organizational tenure, 57.8% had worked for their current organizations for one to three years, indicating that most respondents had sufficient experience to evaluate talent management practices within digital work environments.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 180)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	82	45.6
	Female	98	54.4
Age	<22 Years	28	15.6
	22–26 Years	110	61.1
	27–29 Years	42	23.3

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education	Diploma	38	21.1
	Bachelor	124	68.9
	Postgraduate	18	10.0
Tenure	<1 Year	34	18.9
	1–3 Years	104	57.8
	>3 Years	42	23.3

The demographic profile indicates that the respondents adequately represent Generation Z employees who actively participate in digital work environments. The dominance of employees aged 22–26 years reflects the increasing participation of Generation Z in the workforce. Furthermore, the educational profile suggests that respondents possess sufficient educational qualifications to understand organizational talent management initiatives. The tenure distribution also indicates that most participants have accumulated adequate organizational experience to provide meaningful evaluations of talent development and retention practices. Consequently, the respondent profile supports the validity of the study findings.

Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

The measurement model was evaluated through convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity assessments. The results demonstrated that all indicators achieved outer loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70. Average Variance Extracted values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values surpassed 0.70, confirming acceptable internal consistency reliability.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Reliability Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Talent Management Strategies	0.914	0.931	0.692
Employee Engagement	0.901	0.924	0.671
Employee Retention	0.889	0.918	0.652

The findings confirm that all constructs satisfy the recommended validity and reliability criteria. Talent Management Strategies exhibited the highest Composite Reliability value (0.931), indicating strong measurement consistency among indicators. Employee Engagement and Employee Retention also demonstrated robust psychometric properties. Since all AVE values exceeded 0.50, more than half of the variance in each construct was explained by its indicators. Therefore, the measurement model was deemed appropriate for further structural model analysis.

Discriminant Validity Assessment

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio criterion. The results revealed that all HTMT values remained below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among constructs.

Table 3. HTMT Results

Construct	TMS	EE	ER
Talent Management Strategies (TMS)	-		
Employee Engagement (EE)	0.762	-	
Employee Retention (ER)	0.688	0.798	-

The HTMT values demonstrate that each construct measures a conceptually distinct phenomenon. The highest HTMT value (0.798) was observed between Employee Engagement and Employee Retention, indicating a strong but acceptable relationship. The findings suggest that multicollinearity and construct overlap are not significant concerns within the measurement model. Therefore, the constructs exhibit adequate discriminant validity and can be retained for structural model evaluation.

Structural Model Assessment

Before hypothesis testing, collinearity diagnostics, explanatory power, and predictive relevance were evaluated. Variance Inflation Factor values ranged from 1.72 to 2.64, indicating the absence of critical multicollinearity. The coefficient of determination revealed substantial explanatory power for both endogenous variables.

Table 4. Structural Model Quality Assessment

Variable	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ²
Employee Engagement	0.524	0.521	0.331
Employee Retention	0.638	0.634	0.427

The R² value of 0.524 indicates that Talent Management Strategies explain 52.4% of the variance in Employee Engagement. Meanwhile, Talent Management Strategies and Employee Engagement jointly explain 63.8% of the variance in Employee Retention. The positive Q² values demonstrate adequate predictive relevance of the model. These findings suggest that the proposed framework possesses satisfactory explanatory and predictive capabilities in explaining retention behavior among Generation Z employees.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The results indicate that all direct relationships were statistically significant.

Table 5. Direct Effects Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	TMS → EE	0.724	15.481	0.000	Supported
H2	TMS → ER	0.341	4.862	0.000	Supported
H3	EE → ER	0.512	7.244	0.000	Supported

The findings reveal that Talent Management Strategies significantly influence Employee Engagement ($\beta = 0.724$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. This result suggests that effective talent acquisition, development, and career management practices substantially enhance engagement levels among Generation Z employees. Talent Management Strategies also exert a significant positive effect on Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.341$; $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Furthermore, Employee Engagement significantly influences Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.512$; $p < 0.001$),

supporting H3. The stronger coefficient of Employee Engagement indicates that engagement plays a crucial role in encouraging Generation Z employees to remain with their organizations.

Mediation Effect Analysis

The mediating role of Employee Engagement was examined through indirect effect analysis. The results indicate that Employee Engagement significantly mediates the relationship between Talent Management Strategies and Employee Retention.

Table 6. Indirect Effect Testing

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H4	TMS $\rightarrow$ EE $\rightarrow$ ER	0.371	6.458	0.000	Supported

The indirect effect coefficient ($\beta = 0.371$) was found to be statistically significant, indicating that Employee Engagement functions as a partial mediator. Since both direct and indirect effects remain significant, the mediation is categorized as partial mediation. This finding demonstrates that talent management strategies not only directly improve employee retention but also enhance retention indirectly by strengthening employee engagement. Consequently, organizations seeking to retain Generation Z employees should focus on creating talent management systems capable of fostering high levels of engagement.

Structural Model

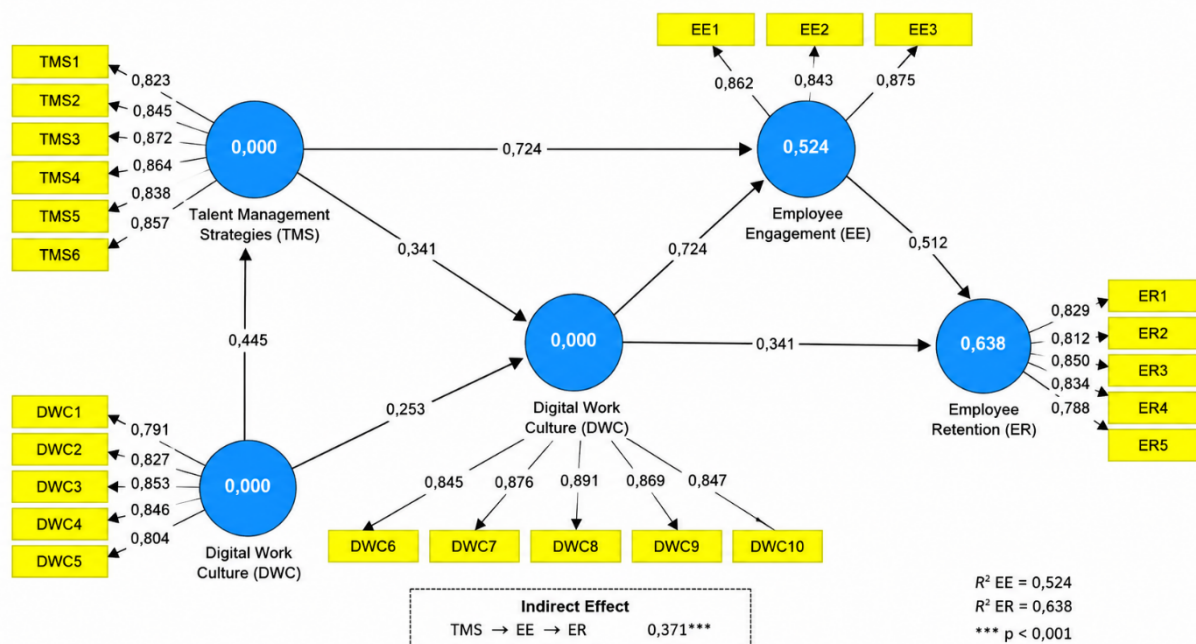


Figure 1. Final Structural Model Results (SmartPLS)

The final structural model confirms that Talent Management Strategies serve as the primary driver of Employee Engagement and Employee Retention among Generation Z employees. Employee Engagement emerged as a significant mediating mechanism that strengthens the effectiveness of talent management practices. The relatively high R^2 values indicate that the model successfully explains a substantial proportion of variance in both endogenous constructs. Overall, the results support all proposed hypotheses and provide empirical evidence that talent management strategies should be redesigned to align with the

expectations and work preferences of Generation Z employees operating in digital work cultures.

DISCUSSION

The first major finding of this study demonstrates that Talent Management Strategies have a significant and positive effect on Employee Engagement among Generation Z employees ($\beta = 0.724$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that organizations capable of providing structured career development, continuous learning opportunities, talent development programs, and transparent performance management systems are more successful in fostering employee engagement. From a theoretical perspective, this finding supports the principles of Social Exchange Theory, which argues that employees tend to reciprocate organizational investments through higher levels of commitment, involvement, and discretionary effort when they perceive organizational support and development opportunities (Rajâa & Mekkaoui, 2025). Furthermore, this result aligns with the findings of Dawwas (2022), who reported that talent development initiatives significantly enhance employee engagement by strengthening employees' perceptions of organizational support and career prospects. The similarity between the present study and previous research lies in the positive contribution of talent management to employee engagement. However, this study differs because it specifically focuses on Generation Z employees operating in digital work environments, a context that has received relatively limited empirical attention. This distinction highlights the novelty of the present research, as it confirms that talent management remains highly relevant even within technologically driven workplaces where employee expectations are rapidly evolving.

The second finding reveals that Talent Management Strategies significantly influence Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that effective talent management not only contributes to employee development but also encourages employees to remain within the organization for a longer period. Human Capital Theory explains that organizations investing in employee capabilities create mutual value, increasing employees' willingness to maintain long-term relationships with their employers (Teodorovicz et al., 2024). The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Jin et al. (2025), which demonstrated that strategic talent management practices positively influence retention intentions among young professionals in technology-intensive industries. Both studies indicate that employees are more likely to remain in organizations that actively support career progression and skill development. Nevertheless, the present study extends previous findings by demonstrating that retention decisions among Generation Z employees are strongly influenced by the alignment between talent management practices and digital work culture. This finding is particularly important because Generation Z employees often exhibit greater career mobility and higher expectations regarding workplace flexibility than previous generations. Therefore, talent management must evolve beyond traditional retention mechanisms and incorporate digitally adaptive practices.

The third finding shows that Employee Engagement significantly affects Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$), making it the strongest direct predictor of retention in the structural model. This result supports the Job Demands–Resources Theory, which posits that employees who experience adequate organizational resources and meaningful work environments tend to develop stronger engagement and lower turnover intentions (Mazzetti et al., 2023). The findings are in line with the work of Jena & Nayak (2024), who found that engaged employees demonstrate stronger organizational attachment and significantly higher retention intentions than less engaged employees. The similarity between the current study and prior research lies in recognizing engagement as a critical antecedent of retention behavior. However, the present study contributes additional insight by confirming that engagement plays an even more prominent role among Generation Z employees, who prioritize meaningful work experiences, continuous feedback, and psychological connection with their organizations. This

result suggests that retention strategies focusing solely on financial incentives may be insufficient for younger employees. Instead, organizations should foster work environments that encourage active participation, recognition, and professional growth.

An important contribution of this study emerges from the mediation analysis, which reveals that Employee Engagement partially mediates the relationship between Talent Management Strategies and Employee Retention ($\beta = 0.371$, $p < 0.001$). This finding indicates that talent management contributes to retention both directly and indirectly through increased employee engagement. The result can be explained through Organizational Support Theory, which suggests that employees who perceive organizational investment in their development are more likely to develop emotional attachment and loyalty toward the organization (Manelkar et al., 2023). Similar findings were reported by Shahzad et al. (2024), who found that engagement acts as a critical psychological mechanism linking human resource practices to employee retention outcomes. While previous studies have generally examined engagement as an outcome variable, the present research positions engagement as an intervening construct that explains how talent management strategies generate retention benefits. This perspective represents a meaningful theoretical advancement because it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which talent management influences employee behavior. Consequently, the study enriches contemporary human resource management literature by integrating talent management, engagement, and retention into a single explanatory framework.

The overall findings of this study highlight the growing importance of redesigning talent management systems to accommodate the characteristics of Generation Z within digital work cultures. Unlike previous generations, Generation Z employees seek flexibility, technological integration, personalized career development, and meaningful organizational relationships. The strong explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.524$ for Employee Engagement and $R^2 = 0.638$ for Employee Retention) indicates that talent management and engagement together represent substantial determinants of retention behavior among Generation Z employees. These findings support recent discussions regarding the emergence of employee-centered and digitally enabled talent management systems that emphasize adaptability, continuous learning, and employee experience (Wei & Fu, 2026). Compared with previous studies that often examined these variables separately, this research offers a more integrated perspective by simultaneously investigating direct and indirect relationships within a digital workplace context. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Generation Z employees in digital-based organizations and its demonstration of the mediating role of Employee Engagement, thereby providing both theoretical contributions and practical guidance for organizations seeking to attract, engage, and retain future workforce talent effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that talent management strategies play a fundamental role in enhancing employee engagement and employee retention among Generation Z employees operating within digital work environments. The findings confirm that well-designed talent management practices, encompassing talent development, career advancement opportunities, performance support, and organizational growth initiatives, significantly strengthen employee engagement while simultaneously increasing employees' intentions to remain within the organization. Furthermore, employee engagement was found to function as a significant partial mediating mechanism, indicating that the effectiveness of talent management strategies in promoting employee retention is strengthened when employees develop a strong psychological connection and commitment to their organizations.

The study contributes to the advancement of human resource management knowledge by providing empirical evidence that traditional talent management approaches are no longer sufficient to address the expectations and work preferences of Generation Z employees. Instead,

organizations must rethink talent management strategies by adopting more flexible, technology-enabled, and employee-centered practices that align with the characteristics of a digitally connected workforce. The results also extend existing talent management literature by integrating employee engagement as an explanatory mechanism linking talent management and retention outcomes within the context of digital work culture. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organizations seeking to improve workforce sustainability should prioritize the development of adaptive talent management systems that foster engagement, support continuous learning, and create meaningful employee experiences. Consequently, this study offers valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners in understanding how organizations can effectively attract, engage, develop, and retain Generation Z talent in the evolving digital workplace.

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