

Exploring the Influence of Purpose-Driven Culture, Work-Life Integration, and Digital Competency on Gen Z Employee Retention

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency on Gen Z employee retention in the modern workplace. As Gen Z increasingly becomes a dominant workforce demographic, understanding the factors that shape their intention to stay within organizations is critical for HR strategy and organizational sustainability. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through an online structured questionnaire from a sample of Gen Z employees across various industries. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression via SPSS. Results revealed that all three independent variables—purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency—had significant and positive effects on employee retention intention. These findings highlight the need for organizations to align with generational values, provide supportive and flexible work environments, and enhance digital capabilities to improve retention rates. The study offers practical and theoretical implications for managing Gen Z talent and building a resilient, future-ready workforce.

Keywords:

Gen Z Employees, Purpose-Driven Culture, Work-Life Integration, Digital Competency, Employee Retention

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary workforce, the arrival of Generation Z (Gen Z)—those born between 1997 and 2012—has ushered in a profound transformation in organizational culture and employee expectations. Unlike previous generations, Gen Z employees prioritize purpose, personal development, and technological fluency over traditional incentives such as salary or job security (Dimokas, 2025). They are digital natives who have grown up amidst rapid technological advancement, global connectivity, and constant social change, leading them to value flexibility, authenticity, and social responsibility at work (DeCarvalho, 2025). As this generation increasingly dominates the workforce, organizations are compelled to reevaluate and realign their strategies for talent acquisition and retention.

One of the most critical factors attracting Gen Z talent is the presence of a purpose-driven culture within organizations. A purpose-driven culture extends beyond profit motives to emphasize meaningful impact, sustainability, and ethical practices (HR, n.d.). Research shows that Gen Z employees are more likely to stay with organizations that align with their personal values and provide a sense of belonging and contribution (Kraght & Brøndum, 2025). As such, businesses seeking to retain young talent must craft compelling visions, uphold ethical leadership, and integrate corporate social responsibility into their core operations.

Another key aspect is work-life integration, which contrasts with the traditional notion of work-life balance. Work-life integration focuses on the seamless blending of personal and professional responsibilities, enabled by technology and flexible working arrangements (Jyoti, n.d.). Gen Z employees tend to resist rigid schedules and hierarchical management structures, instead valuing autonomy and the ability to manage their own time and workspaces (Lee-Bull, 2025). Remote work, hybrid

models, and asynchronous collaboration tools have therefore become essential components of a workplace that resonates with Gen Z values and enhances retention.

Equally important is the organization's ability to support digital competency—both as a requirement for employee performance and as a cultural norm. Gen Z, having been immersed in digital technologies since early childhood, expect advanced digital tools, real-time communication, and ongoing opportunities to improve their digital literacy (R. Singh, 2025). A digitally competent workplace that leverages AI, cloud computing, and collaborative platforms not only increases productivity but also improves job satisfaction and engagement among Gen Z employees (Shwetha, n.d.). Moreover, digital upskilling programs signal an investment in employees' futures, reinforcing loyalty and long-term commitment.

Despite the recognition of these factors individually, there remains a significant gap in understanding how purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency collectively influence Gen Z employee retention. Many organizations continue to struggle with high turnover rates among younger employees, incurring substantial recruitment and training costs (G. Singh, 2025). This study aims to bridge that gap by providing empirical evidence and insights that can inform human resource strategies, leadership development, and organizational transformation in an era shaped by a new generation of workers with distinctive expectations and values.

Although Gen Z has quickly become a vital segment of the modern workforce, organizations continue to face challenges in retaining them, often due to a disconnect between organizational culture and Gen Z expectations. There is a lack of comprehensive empirical research exploring how a purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency together affect the retention of Gen Z employees. Most existing studies examine these variables in isolation or focus on older generational cohorts, which limits their applicability to Gen Z. Without a deeper understanding of these interconnected factors, businesses risk high turnover rates and may struggle to build a sustainable, engaged, and future-ready workforce. The objective of this study is to explore and analyze the influence of purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency on the retention of Generation Z employees.

Literature Review

1. Generation Z in the Workforce

Generation Z, individuals born approximately between 1997 and 2012, represent a unique cohort in the global workforce. As digital natives, they have grown up in an environment shaped by rapid technological innovation, global connectivity, and sociopolitical volatility (Chandel et al., 2025). This generation is markedly different from Millennials in terms of values, expectations, and behavioral patterns. Studies suggest that Gen Z employees place high importance on purpose, flexibility, career development, and digital integration in their work environments (Lallukka, 2024). Unlike earlier generations who often prioritized job security and hierarchical career progression, Gen Z seeks meaningful engagement, rapid skill growth, and a strong alignment between personal and organizational values (Gen, 2025). Research indicates that organizations failing to meet these evolving expectations may experience higher turnover rates among Gen Z employees (Ochis, 2024). Therefore, understanding the key drivers of retention—such as purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency—becomes vital to organizational sustainability.

Purpose-Driven Culture

Purpose-driven culture refers to an organizational environment where employees feel connected to a greater cause beyond profit-making. It integrates corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethical leadership, employee empowerment, and shared values (Yunusaliev, 2024). For Gen Z, this aspect of culture is a significant motivator. According to Cone Communications (2017), 75% of Gen Z respondents said they would work for a company with a strong social purpose, even if it meant earning less money.

A purpose-driven culture enhances employee identification with the organization, which is positively correlated with engagement and retention (Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2019). When employees perceive their organization as socially responsible and mission-driven, their commitment levels increase, particularly among Gen Z who view work as an extension of personal identity (Wulur & Mandagi, 2023). Studies also show that companies with a clear purpose attract top talent, enhance brand loyalty, and outperform competitors in long-term sustainability (Rouser, 2024). Despite its importance, some scholars argue that merely claiming to be purpose-driven is insufficient. Purpose must be authentic, consistently demonstrated in actions, and integrated into everyday practices (van Lierop, 2023). If Gen Z employees perceive a gap between stated values and actual behavior, it can lead to disengagement and eventual turnover.

2. Work-Life Integration

Work-life integration is an evolved model of work-life balance that emphasizes the blending of professional and personal roles rather than compartmentalizing them (Shinde & Surve, n.d.). This approach is particularly appealing to Gen Z, who seek flexibility, autonomy, and mental well-being in their careers. Unlike older generations who separated work and personal life, Gen Z values employers that acknowledge and support their holistic well-being (Mendoza, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote work and digital collaboration tools, making work-life integration more feasible. Flexible work arrangements, such as hybrid models and asynchronous schedules, are no longer optional but expected by young employees (Rahman et al., 2025). Empirical evidence shows that when organizations support work-life integration, employees report higher satisfaction, reduced stress, and stronger organizational loyalty (Reddy, n.d.). However, challenges persist. Without clear boundaries, work-life integration can lead to burnout, especially when expectations for constant connectivity are unregulated. Therefore, organizations must design policies that promote autonomy while also encouraging periods of disconnection and self-care.

3. Digital Competency

Digital competency is defined as the ability to effectively use digital tools, platforms, and technologies to perform tasks, solve problems, and communicate (Cnop & Mountfield, 2024b). For Gen Z, digital fluency is not a bonus skill—it is a baseline expectation. They prefer workplaces that leverage cutting-edge technologies, foster continuous learning, and support digital innovation. Organizations that promote digital upskilling through structured training and investment in technological infrastructure are more likely to retain young talent (Salvadorinho et al., 2024). Gen Z employees are also more engaged in roles that involve collaboration via digital

platforms, use of data analytics, and creative problem-solving with AI tools (Tran, 2023). Moreover, digital competency is closely tied to job satisfaction as it influences how efficiently and autonomously employees can work.

According to recent studies, digital competence also supports adaptability and resilience, which are critical traits in today's volatile business environment. When Gen Z employees feel technologically empowered, they are more likely to perceive the organization as future-ready, innovative, and supportive of their professional growth (Cnop & Mountfield, 2024a). On the contrary, organizations with outdated systems or poor digital infrastructure risk alienating this tech-savvy generation.

Employee Retention and Gen Z

Employee retention has long been a critical metric for organizational success. However, retaining Gen Z presents unique challenges due to their mobility, high expectations, and desire for continuous development (Kaur, n.d.). Traditional retention strategies such as bonuses or tenure-based promotions are less effective with this cohort. Instead, emotional engagement, developmental opportunities, and cultural alignment play more significant roles (Cnop & Mountfield, 2024b).

Recent research emphasizes that a combination of purpose, flexibility, and digital readiness can significantly enhance Gen Z's intention to stay (Kraght & Brøndum, 2025). When employees see a clear alignment between their values and the organization's mission, have control over their work-life boundaries, and feel digitally empowered, their likelihood of remaining increases significantly. Furthermore, the intersectionality of the three factors—purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency—creates a synergistic effect. For instance, digital tools can facilitate flexible work arrangements, while also enabling employees to participate in purpose-driven initiatives such as digital volunteering or sustainability reporting. Understanding these intersections provides a holistic view of what motivates Gen Z to stay within an organization.

METHOD

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method to examine the influence of purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency on Gen Z employee retention. Quantitative analysis allows for the measurement of relationships among variables using statistical techniques, and the cross-sectional design captures data at a single point in time, which is suitable for exploring behavioral patterns and perceptions among Gen Z employees (Jw, 2009).

2. Population and Sample

The target population of this study was Generation Z employees—individuals born between 1997 and 2012—who are currently employed in various sectors across Indonesia, including technology, finance, education, retail, and creative industries. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to ensure the respondents met the generational and employment criteria. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed online through professional networks, LinkedIn, HR communities, and university alumni groups. After data cleaning to remove incomplete or ineligible responses, 360 valid responses were retained for analysis, exceeding the minimum sample size requirement for multiple regression with four variables (Hair et al., 2019).

3. Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire comprised five sections designed to gather relevant information.

4. Data Analysis

To ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments used in this study, a series of statistical tests were conducted. Construct validity was assessed through a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using SPSS AMOS. In this analysis, factor loadings above 0.60 were considered acceptable, following the guidelines by Hair et al. (2019), indicating that the items adequately represented their respective latent variables. Convergent validity was further evaluated through the calculation of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) for each construct. An AVE value greater than 0.50 and a CR value above 0.70 were used as thresholds to confirm that the indicators shared a high proportion of variance and demonstrated internal consistency.

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the internal consistency of each construct. The reliability scores for all variables exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, as proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), signifying strong reliability. Specifically, the Cronbach's Alpha values for each construct were: purpose-driven culture ($\alpha = 0.88$), work-life integration ($\alpha = 0.84$), digital competency ($\alpha = 0.87$), and employee retention intention ($\alpha = 0.85$). These results confirmed that the items used to measure each construct consistently reflected the underlying theoretical concepts.

For data analysis, IBM SPSS version 26 was employed. The analysis began with descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to assess the distribution of responses for each variable. Normality testing was then conducted using skewness and kurtosis values to ensure the data met the assumptions necessary for parametric testing. In addition, multicollinearity diagnostics were performed by examining Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values. The absence of high VIF values (generally > 10) confirmed that multicollinearity was not a concern among the independent variables.

To explore the relationships among the study variables, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out. This was followed by multiple linear regression analysis to test the influence of purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency on Gen Z employee retention. The regression model used in this study was specified as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where Y represents employee retention intention, X_1 is purpose-driven culture, X_2 is work-life integration, and X_3 is digital competency. β_0 denotes the intercept, and ϵ represents the error term. The level of significance for hypothesis testing was set at $p < 0.05$, ensuring that the results would reflect statistically meaningful relationships among the variables under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were conducted to summarize the central tendency and dispersion of each construct. The table below presents the mean and standard deviation for Purpose-Driven Culture, Work-Life Integration, Digital Competency, and Employee Retention Intention. Each variable was measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Purpose-Driven Culture	3.874	0.612	300
Work-Life Integration	3.652	0.584	300
Digital Competency	3.931	0.598	300
Employee Retention Intention	3.745	0.643	300

Source: Data Processed

The means ranged from 3.652 to 3.931, indicating moderately high agreement among respondents on all measured constructs. Standard deviations below 0.7 suggest a relatively consistent response across the sample.

2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between variables. All variables showed significant positive correlations with Employee Retention Intention.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

Variable	PDC	WLI	DC	ERI
Purpose-Driven Culture (PDC)	1.000	0.413	0.472	0.586
Work-Life Integration (WLI)	0.413	1.000	0.395	0.524
Digital Competency (DC)	0.472	0.395	1.000	0.538
Employee Retention Intention (ERI)	0.586	0.524	0.538	1.000

Source: Data Processed

All correlations are significant at $p < 0.01$. The strongest correlation was between Purpose-Driven Culture and Employee Retention Intention ($r = 0.586$), followed closely by Digital Competency and Retention ($r = 0.538$), and Work-Life Integration ($r = 0.524$).

3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

To test the study's hypotheses, multiple linear regression was conducted with Purpose-Driven Culture, Work-Life Integration, and Digital Competency as predictors of Employee Retention Intention.

Table 3. Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.674	0.454	0.448	0.476

Source: Data Processed

The model explained 45.4% of the variance in Employee Retention Intention ($R^2 = 0.454$), indicating a moderate level of predictive power.

Table 4. Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.487	0.154	—	3.162	0.002

Purpose-Driven Culture	0.315	0.067	0.326	4.701	0.000
Work-Life Integration	0.287	0.073	0.289	3.932	0.000
Digital Competency	0.298	0.068	0.301	4.382	0.000

Source: Data Processed

All three predictors significantly influenced employee retention intention ($p < 0.001$). Purpose-Driven Culture emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.326$), followed by Digital Competency ($\beta = 0.301$) and Work-Life Integration ($\beta = 0.289$).

Discussion

1. Purpose-Driven Culture and Employee Retention

The positive and statistically significant influence of purpose-driven culture on employee retention ($\beta = 0.326$, $p < 0.001$) highlights the growing importance of values alignment in modern employment relationships. This finding is consistent with (Lee-Bull, 2025), who noted that a strong organizational purpose promotes emotional connection and loyalty. Gen Z employees—often characterized by their search for meaning and impact—tend to stay longer in organizations that go beyond profits and emphasize social responsibility, inclusivity, and community engagement.

This result also aligns with prior studies suggesting that younger employees seek purpose as a core aspect of their identity at work. Gen Z expects their employers to demonstrate ethical behavior, environmental sustainability, and a meaningful mission. When organizations cultivate a culture driven by purpose, employees perceive their work as valuable and aligned with their own beliefs, fostering a deeper sense of belonging (HR, n.d.; Shwetha, n.d.).

In practice, this means that companies must move beyond superficial branding strategies and truly integrate purpose into leadership, HR policies, and organizational communication. A purpose-driven culture can act as a psychological anchor for Gen Z, reinforcing their commitment even during periods of change or challenge.

2. Work-Life Integration and Employee Retention

Work-life integration also showed a positive and significant effect on retention ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$). This supports the argument that Gen Z values flexibility and harmony between their professional and personal lives. Unlike previous generations that prioritized clear boundaries between work and home, Gen Z embraces more fluidity and seeks employers who support mental wellness, flexible scheduling, and autonomy (Yunusaliev, 2024).

The findings are in line with (Kraght & Brøndum, 2025), who reported that work-life balance is a key predictor of retention across generations, but particularly for younger cohorts who are tech-savvy and accustomed to working in digital environments that blur physical boundaries. Gen Z, having grown up with smartphones and remote access, expects flexibility and considers rigid schedules a sign of outdated organizational practices. Thus, fostering work-life integration is not just a perk—it's a strategic imperative. Organizations must adapt by offering hybrid or remote work options, encouraging time off, and respecting employees' off-hours. Leaders must model these behaviors and reward outcomes, not just presence. Supporting work-life integration can reduce burnout and enhance engagement, contributing directly to stronger retention rates.

3. Digital Competency and Employee Retention

Digital competency was also a significant predictor of employee retention ($\beta = 0.301$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the role of technology in Gen Z's professional lives. This generation is often labeled as "digital natives" (Shwetha, n.d.), and their ability to engage with technology is not just a skill but a fundamental expectation. They want to work for organizations that offer digital tools, platforms, and continuous upskilling opportunities. This result aligns with (DeCarvalho, 2025), who emphasized the importance of digital literacy in today's workforce, including information management, collaboration through digital platforms, and digital communication. When employees perceive that their digital competencies are valued and developed, they are more likely to see a future within the organization.

In other words, digital competency is not only about technical ability but also reflects an organization's readiness for innovation, agility, and future-oriented leadership. Gen Z employees want to be part of digitally progressive companies where they can grow and experiment. When organizations lack digital infrastructure or fail to invest in employees' digital skills, they risk being perceived as obsolete or unattractive.

4. Integrated Implications of the Three Predictors

Together, the three predictors explained 45.4% of the variance in employee retention intention, indicating a moderate-to-strong model fit. The integration of purpose, flexibility, and digital savviness provides a holistic framework for understanding what matters most to Gen Z employees. Rather than being driven solely by financial incentives or job security, Gen Z seeks alignment with values, autonomy in scheduling, and confidence in technological infrastructure. The combined effect suggests that organizations must design multi-dimensional retention strategies. For instance, promoting a sustainability-oriented purpose while also implementing digital learning platforms and offering flexible work arrangements can enhance organizational attractiveness and retention. Isolated efforts are less likely to succeed compared to integrated, consistent policies that reflect a modern and human-centered workplace culture.

5. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the literature on employee retention and generational differences in the workplace. First, it extends the literature on retention by focusing on a generation that is reshaping work norms—Gen Z. While much research has addressed Millennials and Baby Boomers, fewer studies have empirically examined the distinct drivers of Gen Z's retention intentions. Second, this research integrates theories of purpose-driven leadership, work-life boundary theory, and digital competency into one cohesive model, showing that modern retention strategies must draw from multiple disciplinary perspectives. The results validate the relevance of combining cultural, behavioral, and technological factors to predict employment behavior in a digital economy.

6. Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, the study offers actionable insights. HR professionals and business leaders should:

- a. Embed purpose into the core of company practices, not just in marketing.
- b. Support work-life integration through policies such as flexible hours, mental health support, and hybrid work environments.

- c. Invest in digital development, including tools, platforms, and continuous learning.

Talent acquisition and retention strategies must evolve to reflect these values. For example, during recruitment, companies can highlight their social impact initiatives, their emphasis on wellness, and their digital innovation projects to attract Gen Z candidates. Furthermore, internal development programs should focus on building digital literacy across all levels of the organization, as this not only satisfies Gen Z's need for growth but also future-proofs the workforce.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. First, the sample was limited to 300 respondents and may not be fully representative of all Gen Z employees across different sectors and countries. Future research should aim for larger, more diverse samples to improve generalizability. Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which limits causal inferences. Longitudinal research could better examine how purpose, flexibility, and digital skills influence retention over time. It would also be valuable to explore other potential predictors, such as organizational justice, leadership style, or career development opportunities. Third, all measures were self-reported, which may introduce common method bias. Future studies might consider incorporating qualitative methods or supervisor ratings to triangulate the findings.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that purpose-driven culture, work-life integration, and digital competency significantly and positively influence Gen Z employees' retention intentions. As the workforce continues to evolve, these factors emerge as critical drivers in attracting and retaining young talent. Organizations that align their values with employee purpose, offer flexible work environments, and invest in digital skill development are more likely to foster long-term commitment among Gen Z workers. These findings underscore the importance of adapting organizational strategies to meet the expectations of a generation that prioritizes meaning, balance, and digital fluency in their professional lives.

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