Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Institute for Management Development, Mysuru, India
**13th International Conference on "HR 5.0: The Human-Centric Future of Work",
on 18 and 19 December 2025**

A Study on Gen-Z's Mental Health and its Influence on Today's Work Culture

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Abstract

This research paper looks at the link between Generation Z's mental health and its impact on today's work culture. As the newest members of the professional world, Gen-Z individuals, born roughly between 1997 and 2012, have unique psychological profiles shaped by fast technological change, social connections, and global uncertainty. The study examines how key mental health factors like anxiety, depression, burnout, and resilience among Gen-Z employees affect their engagement, productivity, and overall contributions to their workplaces. Increased awareness and willingness to talk about mental health have led this generation to redefine traditional workplace expectations, valuing emotional well-being just as much asprofessional success.

Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, including surveys, interviews, and analysis of existing data, the study identifies new trends in work preferences. Gen-Z shows a strong focus on flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, and psychological safety. They look for meaningful roles, inclusive leadership, and organizations that actively support mental health programs. The findings suggest that companies that foster empathetic cultures, encourage open conversation, provide mental health resources, and work to reduce stigma are more likely to attract, motivate, and keep Gen-Z talent.

Additionally, the research highlights how Gen-Z's values are changing organizational structures and management styles. Traditional hierarchical models are slowly being replaced by collaborative, transparent, and people- focused work cultures. Employers are increasingly rethinking how they measure performance, valuing well-being and personal growth alongside efficiency. By understanding the connection between Gen-Z's mental health needs and workplace dynamics, organizations can better respond to changing employee expectations and build sustainable environments that support both productivity and mental wellness. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that supporting mental health is not just a moral duty but also a key factor in achieving long-term success for organizations in today's world.

Keywords

Generation Z; Mental health; Workplace culture; Work-life balance.

Introduction

The mental health challenges faced by Generation Z (Gen Z) have become a significant concern today. This generation reports higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression compared to previous generations. Factors such as extensive social media use, economic uncertainty, academic pressures, and global unrest contribute to their heightened mental health issues. Unlike older generations, Gen Z is more open to discussing mental health openly and actively promotes awareness and destigmatization. This shift has encouraged institutions and employers to provide resources that address the unique mental health needs of this generation. Work-life balance plays a crucial role in supporting Gen Z's mental well-being. The evolving work culture acknowledges that productivity and personal fulfillment must coexist. Modern workplaces have introduced flexible hybrid models, employee wellness programs, and inclusive policies that aim to reduce stress and improve overall satisfaction. Balancing professional demands with personal life helps prevent burnout, fostering healthier individuals who feel supported both at work and outside of it.Generational differences in work culture also shape these mental health outcomes. Compared to older generations like Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers, Gen Z approaches work with distinct expectations around flexibility, inclusivity, and purpose. While earlier generations often experienced rigid, hierarchical workplaces, Gen Z employees thrive in environments that emphasize diversity, equity, inclusion, and mental health support. This generational transition is reshaping organizational cultures worldwide, highlighting the importance of

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creating empathetic, adaptable workplaces that promote long-term employee well-being and productivity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Simon and Schuster(2023)

The study covers the aging of the Romanian population and, by extension, the workforce, is one of the most significant democratic phenomena of our day. This issue has multiple ramifications for the management of human resources in businesses. Managers will have to deal with a number of generational variances among their staff as generation Z gets ready to enter the workforce The study's findings shed light on generation Z's expectations and objectives for their career, their top priorities when choosing a job, and their impression of the ideal workplace and working environment. Future research directions and the study's ramifications are considered.

Gopal P Mahapatra et, al(2022)

This study describes the parallels and contrasts in work values and job preferences amongst generations X, Y, and Z. Since cultural environment plays a significant role in contributing to generational disparities, the writers focus on India in their endeavor to comprehend Gen Z's work values and job preferences (Generational disparities Between India and the US, Harvard Business Review). This article aims to comprehend the emergence of Gen Z in light of the COVID-19 epidemic and how it corresponds with or calls for change in renowned developmental theories, despite the fact that researchers portray generational values as frequently developing in the early years. These results may serve as a foundation for further studies and have ramifications for communities, managers, organizations, and individuals.

Jelcy Mae Vejano et, al(2021)

This study showed that Suicide is the third most common cause of death for those aged 15 to 19 and claims the lives of almost 800,000 people annually (WHO, 2019). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes and help-seeking behaviors of 150 Generation Z students, ages sixteen (16) to eighteen (18), with reference to mental health.. Although it is categorized as a very weak association, the study's findings indicate that attitudes and behaviors related to obtaining mental health care are related. It's critical to have sound beliefs and practices regarding mental health in its whole. "Holistic Reinforcement-

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Self as a Present" is the eidetic insight that emerged from the themes and forms the foundation of the program that promotes mental health among senior high school students.

Lakshmi Kannan and T Praveen Kumar(2022)

The study finds out that Due to the ongoing epidemic, social media is now more useful and widely used in society. Increased use of social media and digital platforms has an impact on users' mental and emotional well-being. The way the mind interprets, and experiences information is reflected in mental health. The ability to express and control emotions is a sign of emotional well-being. This study aims to examine the effects of social media on the mental and emotional well-being of a segment of Gen Z (15–24 years old) in Bangalore city, drawing on the displacement hypothesis and gratifications theory.

Statement of the Problem

Generation Z is facing unusually high levels of stress and anxiety in today's workplace. As they enter professional environments with different values and expectations than previous generations, they prioritize flexibility and a balanced approach to work and life. However, many organizations still operate with outdated structures that don't support these needs. This mismatch creates significant challenges for Gen Z employees, affecting their mental well- being and diminishing their productivity. Although mental health initiatives at work are increasing, they often fall short of addressing the real pressures and priorities this generation experiences. Understanding how shifting workplace expectations and work-life balance priorities impact Gen Z's mental health is essential for developing effective strategies that foster a supportive, healthy, and productive work culture.

Objectives of the Study

•Understanding Gen-Z's mental health challenge

•Work life balance and mental health

•Comparing generational difference in work culture

Need For the Study

•High Levels of Workplace Stress and Anxiety

•Changing Workplace Expectations

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•Shift in Work-Life Balance Priorities

Influence on Workplace Productivity

Increasing Workplace Mental Health Initiatives

Research Methodology

A Mixed-method research approach (combining qualitative and quantitative methods) is used for a Descriptive study. The primary data has been used to determine objectives and the secondary data has been collected through various resources from the websites, journals, newspaper, articles.

Sample Design

SAMPLE TECHNIQUE: This study involves gathering the data from various GEN-Z' people who fall into the category of early 20's and also late millennials through questionnaire. This sampling technique assists in collecting a detailed and expected answers from the population that extracts accurate outcomes based on given inputs.

Sampling:

TARGET POPULATION: All the people who fall into the category of GEN-Z and also millennials [to provide the contrary or explain the other side of the coin].

SAMPLING FRAME: Data through questionnaire, word of mouth, observation methods assist in accessing the elements in the target population.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE: Convenient sampling SAMPLE SIZE: The sample size is 100.

SAMPLE AREA: Bangalore

Tools For Data Collection

•Case studies

•Online questionnaire

•Observation

•Word-of-mouth

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Limitations of the Study

•The study covers only covers the city of Bangalore.

•The respondents' biases or prejudgments.

•The study is based on a limited sample area, and there is a restriction of time constraints.

Findings

Demographic Insights Relevant to Gen Z Mental Health:

Among the 100 respondents, 20% identified as Gen Z, with Zillennials (49%) and Millennials (31%) forming the comparative cohorts, enabling generational analysis. Females comprised 52% of the sample, alongside 27% non-binary respondents, reflecting diverse identities linked to Gen Z's mental health vulnerabilities. Postgraduates (35%) dominated qualifications, and freelancers (27%) were the largest employment group, highlighting modern work patterns influencing well-being.

Understanding Gen-Z's Mental Health Challenges:

A notable 27% of respondents reported good mental health status, with moderate to positive well-being prevailing over poor categories. Meanwhile, 51% confirmed no mental health issues, 19% experienced them, and 30% were uncertain, suggesting varied challenges within younger cohorts. Additionally, 57% believed Gen Z does not face higher mental health issues than older generations, challenging prevalent narratives.

Work-Life Balance and Mental Health:

Half (50%) of respondents felt their work culture inadequately supports mental well-being, underscoring a critical gap in contemporary workplaces. Notably, 58% had taken mental health days off, indicating proactive balance-seeking behaviors amid stress. However, 53% prioritized career development over work-life balance, revealing tensions in mental health management.

Generational Differences in Work Culture:

Preference for mental health management leaned toward mindful meditation and sports (34%), with therapies (18%) less favored, differing from traditional generational coping mechanisms. Comfort in sharing issues was moderate (29% somewhat comfortable), with only 6% feeling entirely at ease, pointing to evolving destigmatization across cohorts.

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Suggestions

Understanding Gen-Z's Mental Health Challenges:

Gen Z individuals should prioritize self-analysis to identify personal mental health triggers, complemented by practices like sports for mind-body alignment and gratitude journaling for emotional clarity. Engaging in meditation, yoga, singing, dancing, gardening, and spiritual connections fosters resilience against generational stressors. Selecting supportive peer groups enhances coping mechanisms, promoting destigmatization through shared experiences.

Work-Life Balance and Mental Health :

Balance professional and personal life by evaluating company policies that support mental well-being, such as flexible hours and wellness benefits. Incorporate me-time, to-do lists, andhealthy diets to sustain energy, while interacting socially and connecting with nature to prevent burnout. These habits ensure work demands align with personal recovery needs.

Comparing Generational Differences in Work Culture:

Organizations should integrate Gen Z's positives with company strengths by offering mental health applications and inclusive policies, differing from older generations' rigid structures. Encourage collective bonding over traditional hierarchies, analyzing work-life factors holistically to build adaptive cultures that prioritize individual mental health over mere productivity.

Conclusion

This study on Gen Z's mental health and its influence on today's work culture reveals critical insights into how younger workers are reshaping professional landscapes. Aligned with the objectives of understanding Gen Z's mental health challenges, exploring work-life balance in relation to mental health, and comparing generational differences in work culture, the findings underscore a workforce prioritizing well-being amid evolving expectations. Among 100 respondents, including 20% Gen Z, 27% reported good mental health with moderate to positive well-being dominant, while 51% experienced no issues—yet 50% felt their work culture inadequately supports mental health, and 58% had taken mental health days off. Notably, 53% prioritized career growth over work-life balance, and 57% believed Gen Z does not face higher mental health issues than older generations, challenging common perceptions.These results highlight Gen Z's distinct approach compared to prior cohorts like

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Millennials and Boomers. While older generations often endured rigid hierarchies and longer hours with less emphasis on psychological safety, Gen Z demands flexibility, inclusivity, and open discussions—evident in preferences for mindful meditation, sports (34%), and moderate comfort sharing issues (29%). This generational shift influences retention, productivity, and culture, as inadequate support prompts turnover, contrasting the loyalty of earlier workers.To address these dynamics, recommendations emphasize proactive strategies: Gen Z should engage in self-analysis, sports, meditation, yoga, spiritual practices, nature connections, and gratitude journaling to build resilience. Evaluating company policies for mental health support, choosing wise peers, and balancing social interactions with personal recovery foster sustainable habits. Organizations must integrate these by promoting inclusive cultures, wellness apps, and flexible models—bridging individual positives with company strengths for holistic well-being.Ultimately, fostering empathetic workplaces benefits everyone. By adapting to Gen Z's needs—through destigmatization, balanced policies, and recreation—employers can reduce burnout, enhance retention, and drive long-term sustainability. This evolution not only honors generational differences but creates thriving environments where mental health fuels productivity and fulfillment for all.

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