



Corporate Dynamics in Managing Gen Z Employees Who Pursue Formal Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze company dynamics in managing Generation Z (Gen Z) employees, born between 1997 and 2012, particularly those who simultaneously pursue formal education. An increasingly relevant phenomenon is the dual role of Gen Z employees as workers and active university students. Through a systematic literature review approach, this study synthesizes literature on how companies respond to and manage the complexity of this dual role. The review results indicate a tension between organizational productivity demands and employees' academic commitments. The findings indicate that Gen Z employees who pursue formal education face management challenges related to role conflict, time management, work-life balance, and variations in productivity.. The reviewed literature suggests that Gen Z employees who pursue formal education may contribute digital adaptability, learning orientation, and potential for innovation, although these characteristics vary across contexts and studies. This study suggests adaptive management strategies, including flexible work policies, cross-generational mentoring programs, and the integration of education with career development.

Keyword: *Corporate Dynamics, Generation Z, Education.*



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1. Introduction

Changes in the demographics of the global workforce bring significant implications for human resource management practices. Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 [1], is now the largest demographic group entering the job market. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is increasingly complex with the increasing trend of young employees choosing to continue formal education at both diploma and bachelor's levels while continuing to work professionally. According to various international employment reports, the proportion of Gen Z in the workforce continues to increase consistently and is projected to reach more than 27% of the total global workforce by the middle of the decade. What differentiates this group from previous generations is the strong tendency to work while studying at both diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels in response to the increasing cost of living, increasingly fierce job competition and changes in values towards the meaning of "career success".

This dual-role phenomenon presents management dynamics that are not yet fully understood by academics or practitioners. From the company's perspective, employees who are also students present a paradox: on the one hand they bring high energy, innovation and digital literacy; on the other hand,

their need for time flexibility, risk of role conflict, and higher turnover potential become real challenges for organizational management. Several previous studies have explored the characteristics of Gen Z in the context of work [2][3], however, studies that specifically discuss company dynamics in managing Gen Z employees who are still pursuing formal education are still limited. This literature gap encourages the need for a comprehensive systematic literature review to consolidate existing findings and identify future research directions. This research aims to: (1) identify the main challenges that companies face in managing Gen Z employees with student status; (2) synthesize management strategies that have proven effective based on existing literature; and (3) explore the impact of company policies on the retention, productivity and well-being of these categories of employees.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design and Sample

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, evaluate, and synthesize literature on the management of Generation Z employees who are simultaneously pursuing formal education, with a focus on work–life balance, role conflict, employee performance, productivity, human resource management, turnover intention, and employee well-being. Literature searches were conducted from 11 May to 23 July 2026 using Scopus, Google Scholar, Garuda, DOAJ, and ProQuest, complemented by manual searches. The search used Boolean combinations of terms related to Generation Z, employees, working students, and human resource management, with equivalent Indonesian terms applied to Indonesian databases. Studies published in English or Indonesian were considered, with no lower publication-date limit for seminal theoretical works. Studies were included when they addressed the target population or directly relevant management issues and provided sufficient information for synthesis; studies were excluded when they were irrelevant to the review objectives, duplicate reports, inaccessible full texts, or conference abstracts without a corresponding full paper.

Study selection followed the PRISMA process. From 214 identified records, 46 duplicates were removed, leaving 168 records for title and abstract screening; 96 were excluded as topically irrelevant. Of the remaining 72 full-text records, 37 were excluded because of inaccessible full texts (14), population or construct mismatch (11), duplicate reports of the same study (7), or conference abstracts without a corresponding full paper (5), resulting in 35 included sources. Screening and eligibility assessment were conducted by the authors based on the predefined criteria, with differences resolved through discussion and consensus. No formal review protocol was publicly registered. The 35 included sources comprised empirical studies as well as supporting theoretical, conceptual, and institutional literature. Empirical studies were subjected to quality appraisal, whereas theoretical and institutional sources were used as supporting literature and were not assigned methodological quality scores. Empirical studies were assessed using a five-item quality appraisal covering clarity of objectives, methodological description, population/context, evidential support of findings, and reporting of limitations; each item was scored 1 for Yes and 0 for No/Unclear, with total scores categorized as high (4–5), moderate (3), or low (0–2). The appraisal results were recorded in a study-level evidence matrix alongside author/year, context or population, research design, topics/variables, and key findings, while theoretical works and institutional reports were treated as supporting literature. The extracted evidence was synthesized thematically across the main issues identified in the literature.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

To provide a robust analytical framework for synthesizing the dynamics of managing Gen Z employees who are simultaneously pursuing higher education, this study employs three foundational grand theories:

1. Force Field Analysis (Lewin, 1951)

[4] Force Field Analysis posits that organizational change and equilibrium are driven by a continuous interplay between driving forces (pushing for change/adaptation) and restraining forces (striving to maintain the status quo or creating resistance). In the context of Gen Z student-employees, this framework serves as a primary lens to evaluate how external dynamic demands—such as academic obligations, role conflicts, and organizational flexibility—interact with internal corporate structures. The theory facilitates a structured

understanding of how balance is negotiated between employee work-life integration and organizational productivity expectations.

2. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964)

[5] Human Capital Theory asserts that individuals invest in education, skills, and training to enhance their economic productivity and potential value in the labor market. Applying this theory allows the synthesis to interpret why Gen Z employees choose to dual-track their employment and academic pursuits. Furthermore, it provides a lens to analyze how corporate investment in flexible work policies and educational support programs can be mutually beneficial, yielding higher innovation capability and digital skill retention for the organization.

3. Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986)

[6] Capital Theory expands beyond economic assets to encompass social capital (networks and institutional relationships) and cultural capital (knowledge, credentials, and dispositions). Within this review, Bourdieu's concept helps unpack the nuanced power dynamics, professional legitimization, and symbolic value sought by Gen Z student-employees as they navigate higher education while building corporate credentials. It provides a theoretical basis for evaluating how flexible corporate cultures enable employees to convert academic gains into valuable workplace

3. Results and Discussion

The systematic search identified 214 records from the selected databases and manual searches. After removing 46 duplicates, 168 records were screened by title and abstract, of which 96 were excluded as topically irrelevant. Full-text assessment was conducted on 72 records, resulting in the exclusion of 37 records due to inaccessible full texts (14), population or construct mismatch (11), duplicate reports of the same study (7), and conference abstracts without corresponding full papers (5). Consequently, 35 sources were included in the review. The included literature addressed major issues in managing Generation Z employees who are simultaneously pursuing formal education, particularly work-life balance, role conflict, employee performance and productivity, human resource management, technological adaptability, and turnover intention. To strengthen the transparency and auditability of the review, empirical studies were assessed using the five-item quality appraisal described in the methodology and recorded in a study-level evidence matrix containing the study characteristics, key findings, and appraisal results. Theoretical works and institutional reports were used as supporting literature rather than treated as empirical evidence. The synthesized findings indicate that effective management of Gen Z student-employees requires attention to flexible work arrangements, workload and role management, supportive organizational practices, opportunities for learning and development, and appropriate use of technology.

Empirical studies were subjected to a five-item quality appraisal covering clarity of objectives, methodological description, population/context, evidential support of findings, and reporting of limitations. Each item was scored 1 for Yes and 0 for No/Unclear, with total scores categorized as high (4–5), moderate (3), or low (0–2). The appraisal results were recorded in a study-level evidence matrix alongside author/year, context or population, research design, topics/variables, and key findings. Theoretical, conceptual, and institutional sources were treated as supporting literature and were not assigned methodological quality scores. The characteristics and quality appraisal of the empirical studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics and Quality Appraisal of Included Empirical Studies

N o.	Study	Context/Popula tion	Main Focus/Varia bles	Design						Score	Quali ty
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5		

1	Lestari & Nurhasan (2026)	Gen Z employees, Garut	Work-life balance, work stress, turnover intention	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	1	05-Mei	High
2	Handoko & Santoso (2021)	Gen Z employees who are students, Jakarta	Role conflict	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	0	04-Mei	High
3	Siregar & Rizky (2024)	Employees	Human capital management, productivity, performance	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	0	04-Mei	High
4	Rizky (2022)	PT (Persero) employees	Compensation, leadership style, performance, discipline	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	1	05-Mei	High
5	Siti & Alifia (2025)	Students working part-time	Work-life balance, role conflict	Empirical	1	1	1	1	0	04-Mei	High
6	Rizky (2022)	PT Sadhara employees	Technology, work flexibility, performance	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	0	04-Mei	High
7	Zahra et al. (2026)	Gen Z employees, Garut	Workload, cyberloafing, work stress	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	1	05-Mei	High
8	Macharani et al. - 2026	Coffee shop employees	Employer branding	Empirical	1	1	1	1	0	04-Mei	High
9	Haar et al. (2019)	Employees across countries	Work-life balance, fit and balance	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	1	05-Mei	High
10	Chung & van derHorst (2018)	Working women/parents	Flexitime, teleworking, employment patterns	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	1	05-Mei	High
11	Putnam et al. (2014)	Workplace employees	Workplace flexibility	Conceptual/empirical	1	1	1	1	0	04-Mei	High
12	Benson et al. (2004)	Employees receiving tuition reimbursement	Tuition reimbursement, voluntary turnover	Quantitative	1	1	1	1	1	05-Mei	High

1. Generation Z

The results of the literature synthesis show that Gen Z has unique characteristics that differentiate it from previous generations. This generation has grown up with digital technology since birth (digital natives), has high multitasking abilities, and really values autonomy at work [8], [9]. A survey conducted by [10] shows that 75% of Gen Z workers prioritize a balance between work and personal life including education as the main factor in choosing a workplace.

Gen Z tends to have a shorter attention span (attention span) but higher multitasking capabilities, as a consequence of early exposure to massive, instantaneous information [7]. This generation shows a higher level of pragmatism than Millennials, they are more oriented towards financial security, stability and real results, which are largely influenced by the experience of witnessing the 2008 economic crisis and the job market uncertainty experienced by their parents [2].

2. Company Dynamics

According to Force Field Analysis [5], organizations are always in a state of dynamic balance (quasi-stationary equilibrium) between driving forces (driving forces) and inhibiting forces (restraining forces). Change occurs when one force dominates. In the context of managing Generation Z employees with student status, this theory offers a relevant and applicable analytical framework. Driving forces (driving forces) can be identified as the innovation drive brought by Gen Z employees, their high digital literacy, and market demands that require sustainable organizational adaptation. These forces collectively encourage companies to reformulate human resource management policies to make them more flexible, inclusive, and oriented towards individual development Human Capital Theory [6] states that investment in employee education and training is seen as the accumulation of human capital which provides long-term returns for individuals and organizations. Gen Z employees who are still studying actively increase their human capital, which has the potential to benefit the company if managed appropriately. This differentiates two main categories of human capital, namely general human capital (general human capital) and specific human capital (specific human capital). General human capital refers to knowledge and skills that can be transferred across organizations, such as analytical, communication and digital literacy skills acquired through formal education in higher education. Meanwhile, specific human capital includes competencies that are only valuable in certain organizational contexts, such as a deep understanding of corporate systems, procedures and culture. Gen Z employees with student status simultaneously accumulate both categories of human capital they gain conceptual and theoretical knowledge from the academic environment, while building practical and contextual skills through direct work experience in the company. This double accumulation phenomenon actually places Gen Z employees with student status as strategic assets that have high competitive value. Simultaneous exposure to the academic world and the professional world allows them to bridge the gap between theory and practice, generating fresh perspectives that have the potential to drive innovation in the work environment. Within the framework of Human Capital Theory, this condition represents a form of layered investment (layered investment) that organically occurs without charging direct training costs to the company, as long as the organization is able to create a work ecosystem that is conducive to the integration of learning and work experiences simultaneously.

3. Education

Higher education has traditionally been conceived as a transformative process that not only transmits technical knowledge and skills, but also shapes an individual's critical thinking capacity, problem-solving abilities, and social maturity [12]. In the perspective of educational sociology, [7] views educational institutions as arenas for capital formation, including cultural capital (cultural capital), social capital (social capital), and economic capital (economic capital) which directly influence the position and mobility of individuals in the social structure and job market. For Gen Z who work while studying, the process of acquiring capital does not take place linearly and

exclusively in the academic space, but rather occurs in parallel and complementarity between the formal educational environment and the work environment.

4. Role Conflict

The most consistent finding in the literature is the conflicting roles experienced by Gen Z employees who are also students. Role conflict occurs when the demands of two different domains of work and education conflict with each other [8]. Research conducted by [9] found that the intensity of role conflict is directly proportional to the decrease in job satisfaction and increased intention to leave the company (turnover intention). This condition was compounded by the finding that the imbalance between the demands of work and private life directly exacerbated the work stress of Gen Z employees, which led to increased intentions to leave the company [10]. In the Indonesian context, research [11] published in the national management journal, it was found that 68% of Gen Z employees who were also students reported difficulties in meeting work deadlines along with college schedules and academic assignments. This condition creates significant psychological stress and has the potential to reduce the quality of output in both domains. Work motivation factors have been shown to have a significant influence on employee job satisfaction, where meeting motivational needs directly contributes to improving the quality of employee relationships with the organization [12]. This finding confirms that motivation is not just an individual psychological variable, but rather a reflection of the extent to which organizations succeed in creating a work environment that supports the holistic fulfillment of their employees' needs, including the need for recognition, growth, autonomy and financial security. For Gen Z employees who serve in dual roles as students and workers, their motivational conditions tend to be more susceptible to fluctuations because they are simultaneously influenced by academic pressures, professional expectations, and limited time available. Thus, companies that fail to understand and respond to the specific motivational dynamics of this segment of employees risk a progressive decline in job satisfaction, which in the medium term will have a direct impact on weakening organizational commitment and increasing turnover among talented young employees. However, HR management strategies that are responsive to employee needs have been reported to be an important determinant in increasing job satisfaction, which is the foundation for employee retention and long-term commitment to the organization [13]. This indicates that companies that proactively adjust their HR policies either through flexibility in schedules, career development programs, or fair reward systems will gain a potential organizational benefit in the form of a more stable, productive and long-term-oriented workforce. In the context of Gen Z employees studying, organizational responsiveness is not just an additional advantage, but an important consideration: without an HR policy that accommodates the dual pressure between academic and professional demands, employee job satisfaction will be systematically eroded, ultimately encouraging increased turnover intention and weakening the organization's capacity to retain its best young talent.

5. Compensation, Productivity and Performance

Findings related to productivity show mixed results. On the one hand, Gen Z employees who are studying show the ability to learn faster and more easily adapt to technological changes [14]. On the other hand, high productivity fluctuations especially in the run-up to semester exams or assignment collection limits are becoming a real operational obstacle for companies. Compensation analysis and leadership styles show a marked impact on employee performance and discipline, confirming that a structured HR policy is a prerequisite for organizational productivity [15]. Within this framework, employee productivity is not solely determined by individual capacity, but rather is greatly influenced by how consistently the organization implements a fair compensation system and a leadership style that is adaptive to the characteristics of its workforce. This condition becomes even more crucial when faced with the reality of Gen Z employees studying, where high productivity fluctuations, especially before the exam period or assignment collection limits, cannot be separated from the absence of HR policies that accommodate their academic rhythm. Therefore, companies that strategically align their compensation structure and

leadership approach with the unique needs of student employees will be better able to cushion these performance fluctuations while maintaining overall organizational productivity at optimal and sustainable levels.

6. Technology, Work Flexibility, Time and Attendance Management

The issue of time management is of concern and interesting to examine. Inflexible study schedules, especially in regular programs, often clash with standard working hours. According to [16] Students who work part-time often face challenges in balancing academic and professional responsibilities and time delays simultaneously, thereby triggering role conflicts and psychological stress. However, the adaptive use of technology has been found to increase work flexibility which in turn has a positive impact on employee performance, particularly in the context of post-pandemic changes in the work environment [17]. On the other hand, when workloads are not managed well, Gen Z's proximity to technology can actually turn into a source of productivity problems; High work stress has been shown to drive cyberloafing behavior among this generation of employees [18]. This finding opens an important perspective that the solution to the problem of time management and the presence of Gen Z employees who are students does not always have to be structural-conventional, but can be facilitated through the use of technology that allows schedule flexibility without sacrificing performance accountability. Digital attendance systems, remote work platforms, and application-based task management are concrete examples of how technology can be a bridge between the rigidity of standard work schedules and academic dynamics that cannot always be predicted. By integrating technological solutions into attendance and time management policies, companies not only reduce the frequency of absences and delays which have been operational obstacles, but also create a work environment that is more inclusive and responsive to the dual realities that Gen Z employees live every day.

7. The Added Value Brought by Gen Z Employees with Student Status

Although various challenges were identified, the literature also revealed significant added value of this employee segment. First, continuous academic exposure allows them to apply the latest management and business theories directly in work practice— a phenomenon referred to as "knowledge spillover" by [19]. Second, the commitment to continuing to learn reflects a high growth mindset, which is by [20] identified as a strong predictor of long-term adaptability and performance. Third, network (networking) capabilities developed through the campus environment often benefit companies, especially in recruiting new talent and identifying industry trends.

8. Effective Adaptive Management Strategy

Several management strategies were identified that proved effective in managing Gen Z employees who were students:

First, flexible work policies (flexible work arrangements) are the most recommended interventions. Hybrid work systems, flexible working hours (flextime), or results-based work schemes (output-based work) have been shown to be associated with job satisfaction and reduce role conflict [21],[22]. Second, scholarship programs or educational financial support from companies have been proven to increase loyalty and organizational commitment substantially. Research [23] found that employees who received educational support from the company had a 40% higher retention rate than those who did not receive similar support. Third, mentoring programs that involve senior employees as mentors for Gen Z have a positive impact on the integration between academic knowledge and work practices, while speeding up the organizational socialization process [24]. Fourth, optimizing human resource potential requires an approach that combines theoretical foundations with contextual managerial practices, so that organizations are able to manage employees effectively and sustainably [25]. This view directly reinforces the adaptive management strategy framework identified in the literature synthesis, where the effectiveness of the management of Gen Z employees with student status cannot be achieved

through a single generic approach, but rather demands a combination of policies that simultaneously respond to the operational needs of the organization and the academic reality of employees.

9. Implications for HR Management Policy

The above findings have direct implications for HR management policies. In the context of corporate attractiveness, recent research confirms that Gen Z makes career growth opportunities and a supportive work environment a key consideration in choosing a workplace, underscoring the importance of employer branding strategies that are responsive to the needs of this generation [26]. Companies that are able to build a work ecosystem that is accommodating to Gen Z's educational needs not only maintain potential talent, but also build a reputation as an employer of choice which is increasingly important in the context of increasingly fierce talent competition [27].

On the other hand, the study also identified gaps in the literature. Most of the studies studied come from the Western context, so their generalizability to the Indonesian context with different cultural nuances, education systems and employment regulations needs to be further tested through more comprehensive local empirical research.

Several additional limitations should also be acknowledged. First, although the empirical studies were subjected to a five-item quality appraisal and the results were recorded in a study-level evidence matrix, differences in methodological quality were not used as a basis for differential weighting of the synthesized findings. Second, the search and selection process did not include a formal assessment of publication bias; therefore, the possibility that studies reporting null or unfavorable findings on Gen Z student-employee management are under-represented cannot be ruled out. Third, for transparency, one co-author of this manuscript, M. Chaerul Rizky, is also an author of several sources included in the review [12], [15], [17], and [25]. These sources were retained because of their direct topical relevance to human capital management and employee performance in the Indonesian context; nevertheless, this author overlap should be considered when evaluating the independence and balance of the synthesized evidence. Finally, the 35 included sources comprised empirical studies and supporting theoretical, conceptual, and institutional literature, with differences in study designs, populations, and research contexts limiting direct comparability across the evidence base.

4. Conclusion

This systematic literature review indicates that the phenomenon of Gen Z employees pursuing formal education is a complex and multidimensional management issue reflected across the reviewed literature. The included studies commonly identify challenges related to role conflict, productivity, and time management, although the strength and scope of these findings vary across study designs and contexts. At the same time, the reviewed literature points to potential organizational opportunities, including access to developing talent, a strong orientation toward learning, and innovation and adaptability that may be relevant to contemporary business needs. Based on the synthesis of the literature, companies may consider adopting an adaptive and human-centered management approach, including flexible work policies, structured educational support programs, performance management systems that accommodate academic commitments, and an organizational culture that supports continuous learning. These practices should be regarded as evidence-informed management considerations rather than universally established or causally demonstrated effects. For future research, further empirical studies focusing on the Indonesian context are needed, particularly to examine how cultural factors may shape the dynamics identified in the literature and to develop valid measurement instruments capable of capturing the complexity of Gen Z employees who simultaneously pursue formal education. Future research should also employ stronger empirical designs to examine the conditions under which the identified management practices may be associated with employee outcomes.

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