



Research Article

## A Systematic Literature Review: From Engagement to Loyalty: Employees' Retention Drivers for Gen-Z and Millennials

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### Abstract

The latest corporate world is witnessing a significant revolution driven by the unfolding workplace expectations of Gen-Z and Millennial employees. Organisations are facing out-of-the-ordinary challenges with talent drain among younger cohorts and high turnover rates since traditional retention strategies have become increasingly disused. There remains a critical gap in understanding the specific, multidimensional factors that genuinely secure the long-term loyalty of these younger generations, while existing literature extensively covers general employee engagement. By exploring what truly motivates young professionals to stay, this research aims to bridge the gap present in existing literature. Four key independent variables of this study are Workplace Flexibility, Relational Leadership, Total Rewards and Career Growth, and Ethical Alignment and Purpose, on the dependent variable, Employee Retention Intent. The primary objective of this study is to empirically investigate the impact of these variables. This paper outlines the shift from mere transactional engagement to deep-rooted loyalty by analysing how these core drivers cater to the psychological, financial, and ethical needs of Gen-Z and Millennials. Ultimately, by providing actionable strategies to redesign workplace ecosystems, reduce turnover, and foster an environment where top talent naturally envisions a long-term future, the findings of this research will serve as a practical playbook for human resource leaders and organisations. This research is based on the Bibliometric analysis using R-Studio and the Biblioshiny web interface, a total of 126 publications. including 20 databases from Scopus, 66 from Taylor and Francis, 28 from JSTOR and a 20 publications database from Google Scholar, without filtering the other parameters. The analysis generated a conceptual structure, the author's performance across the globe and thematic mapping. The core 24 Papers for the thematic review of the study are being extracted using the PRISMA framework.

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**KEYWORDS:** Employee Retention Intent, Generation Z, Millennials, Workplace Flexibility, Relational Leadership, Total Rewards and Career Growth, Ethical Alignment, Talent Management.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Home away from home” is a modern benchmark for meaningful connection between an organisation and its employees. Also, loyalty is not given – it is earned by making employees feel comfortable, providing them with a consistent engagement and emotional value. Since the world today is driven by experience, employees (Gen-Z or Millennials) no longer seek job security, services, or products; instead, they seek belonging, purpose, and authenticity. Therefore, the traditional engagement that was loyalty dynamic has now transformed to building a continuous relationship on shared values and emotional resonance.

This topic, “From Engagement to Loyalty: Retention Drivers for Gen-Z and Millennials,” delves into how the professional world or organisations can sustain these relationships beyond transactional exchange.

Organizations should provide such an environment where employees should feel seen, heard and valued that will make them working at work place feel like working at home. Due to this, they will tend to retain and remain loyal to the organisation. The term “from engagement to loyalty draws attention to the movement from monetary satisfaction to providing commitment.

The factors that drive the loyalty of Millennials and Gen-Z towards the organisation are not the same. For millennials, the factors influencing their commitment can be job security, flexibility, authenticity, and a purpose-driven value system, whereas for Gen-Z, it can be driven by inclusivity, interactive sessions, immediacy, etc. These factors all increase the engagement of the employees as well.

But of course, employee engagement does not mean that employees will remain loyal to the organisation and will tend to stay. There are several challenges that are faced by organizations to sustain employees in the professional world. The loyalty among Gen-Z and Millennials is like fluid and can be easily influenced by new opportunities or divergent priorities. The challenges that are faced can be sustaining relationships by delivering empathy, meaning and shared purpose continuously. To eliminate these challenges organizations should plan future retention strategies that combine emotional intelligence, technological personalisation, and authenticity that will create long-lasting bonds between the organisation and employees.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this study is to examine the factors affecting the retention rate of employees, mainly Gen-Z and Millennials, in a professional environment using surveys, industrial visits, questionnaires, and interviews with human resource managers and employees.

1. To conduct a Systematic Literature Review on the topic of Retention Drivers for Gen-Z and Millennial Employees.
2. To identify the factors impacting employees’ retention intent from the existing studies in the context of employees’ retention drivers.
3. To identify the global research landscape of employees’ retention drivers and identify key contributors and notable authors.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Prisma Framework

PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) is a guideline for reporting SLRs (Moher *et al.*, 2009). This is used to ensure the transparency and accuracy of the related papers. The Data was collected from the: PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)”, which is a guideline for reporting SLRs (Moher *et al.*, 2009). This is used to ensure the transparency and accuracy of the related papers.

The Data was collected from the SLR, which is the systematic method for “identifying, evaluating and synthesising” the literature as the existing study (Moher *et al.*, 2009). This study has adopted the explorative approach and analysed existing published literature according to the databases like Scopus, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis and Google Scholar for the systematic literature review. The Data was collected from these databases. The initial response of the 126 datasets from all these databases was gained. Further, the 24 articles were selected for the final literature review after applying filters.

Boolean Operator for the Study:

("Employee retention" OR "Employee engagement" OR "Employee commitment") AND ("Gen-Z" OR "Generation Z" OR "post-millennials") AND ("Millennials" OR "Generation Y").

**Table 1:** Inclusion and Exclusion of Documents in PRISMA

<b>Database</b>	Scopus, JSTOR, Taylor and Francis and Google Scholar.
<b>Articles</b>	
<b>Keywords</b>	Employee Retention Intent, Generation Z, Millennials, Workplace Flexibility, Relational Leadership, Total Rewards and Career Growth, Ethical Alignment, Talent Management.
<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Domains:</b> Business, Management & Accounting, Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics & Finance, Decision Sciences, Psychology, Arts & Humanities, Environmental Science, Multidisciplinary. <b>Language:</b> English <b>All Open Access Documents meeting the eligibility Criteria</b> <b>Document Type:</b> Articles and Conference Papers
<b>Exclusion</b>	<b>Domains:</b> Health Sciences, Law, and Bioscience <b>Document types:</b> Books and Book matter

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Bibliometric Approach

Bibliometric Systematic Literature Review Analysis is used to synthesise and advance the understanding of the impact of

retention driver strategies on employees’ intent to retain. The bibliometric approach provides an objective assessment of a particular field as it helps identify specific publication networks, authors, changing patterns and trends with large

interconnections of countries within a selected research topic (Marzi *et al.*, 2024).

This study follows a systematic research approach, in which first a Bibliometric Mapping of a total of 126 papers, 23 records from the Scopus database, 28 from JSTOR, 66 from Taylor and Francis and 12 from Google Scholar were identified to analyse the global trends, authors and patterns from this specific research field (using R Studio (Bibliography) and Vosviewer). Later, to find the most highly correlated studies for my research, the PRISMA Framework is applied to filter the studies from 126 to the Core 24 Papers.

### 3.2 A Bibliometric Overview: GLOBAL TRENDS

A macro-level analysis of current studies is performed. The following data provides insight into the global trends and Literature expansion of Retention Drivers for Gen-Z and Millennial Employees, which is being considered the emerging topic of research, supporting this study of the impact of Retention Strategies on Employee Retention Intent.

#### 3.2.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence



Source: R Studio

Fig 1: Keyword Co-occurrence Network]

Fig. 1 represents the Keyword Co-occurrence network, which highlights the very often used words and thematic clusters from the current available research articles on the Scopus database. The noteworthy keywords, such as "Millennials", "Employee Engagement", and "Generational Differences", show the core focus areas of the literature. Moreover, the link with sub-themes like "Motivation," "Employee Retention," "Work-Life

Balance," and "Generation Z" indicates the multidisciplinary nature of this domain. This network strongly supports the base of our research, focusing on employee engagement, generational traits, and retention drivers, which are deeply linked and extensively discussed topics in modern HR research.

#### 3.2.2 Most Relevant Sources

Sources	Articles
ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES	2
SUSTAINABILITY (SWITZERLAND)	2
ADVANCES IN DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES	1
COMMUNICATIONS IN COMPUTER AND INFORMATION SCIENCE	1
EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKPLACE	1
ELGAR ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LEADERSHIP	1
EVIDENCE-BASED HRM	1
GLOBAL BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE	1
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL DIGEST	1
INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL TRAINING	1

Source: R Studio

Fig 2: Most Relevant Sources of Article Publications

Fig. 2 indicates the most applicable scientific journals and publications contributing to this domain of research. As per the Scopus data, journals such as "Sustainability (Switzerland)" and "Administrative Sciences" top the contributions with the highest number of published articles. Other important sources include "Evidence-Based HRM," "Advances in Developing Human Resources," and "Global Business and Organisational

Excellence." This delivery of sources represents that research on Gen-Z and millennial employee retention is highly cross-disciplinary, covering human resources, organisational sustainability and management science.

### 3.2.3 Annual Scientific Production

Year	Articles
2021	1
2022	4
2023	3
2024	2
2025	10
2026	3

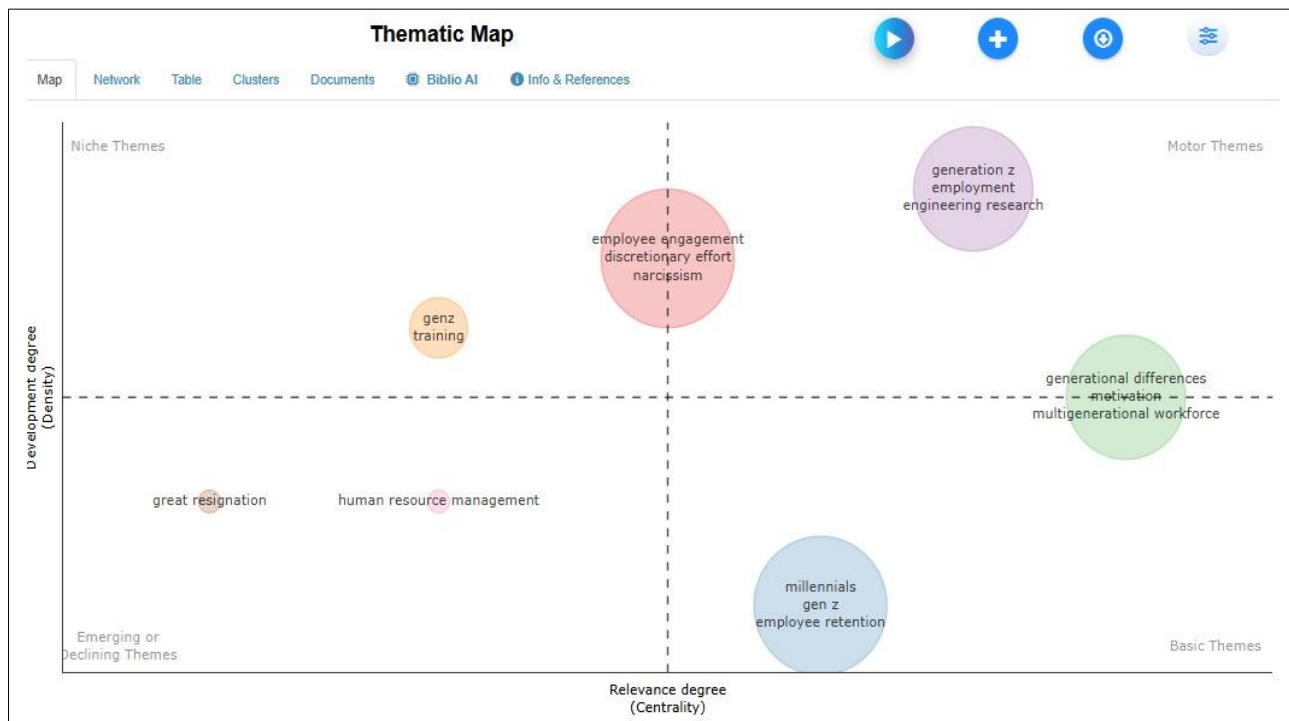
Source: R Studio

Fig 3: Year-wise Annual Scientific Production

Fig. 3 represents the year-wise annual scientific presentation of research articles in the Scopus database from 2021 to 2026. The data demonstrates an initial aggregation in academic interest related to this research area. While the publications initiated steadily with 1 article in 2021, the domain saw a huge surge, peaking at 10 publications in the year 2025. This significant rise

clearly shows that the retention and engagement of the multigenerational workforce (specifically Gen-Z and Millennials) has recently become a significant and critical area of academic and corporate research.

### 3.2.4 Thematic Map Analysis



Source: R Studio

Fig 4: Thematic Map of the Research Domain

Fig. 4 indicates the Thematic Map, differentiating the research themes based on their Centrality (relevance degree) and Density (development degree) into four different quadrants: Motor Themes, Niche Themes, Emerging/Declining Themes, and Basic Themes. The Motor Themes (top right quadrant) indicate "Generation Z," "Engineering Research", and "Employment" as well-developed and highly relevant topics driving the field. The Basic Themes (bottom right quadrant) highlight core initial topics such as "Millennials," "Gen Z," and "Employee

Retention," alongside "Generational Differences" and "Motivation." These represent the fundamental base of this research area.

The Emerging or Declining Themes (bottom left quadrant) show concepts like "Great Resignation" and "Human Resource Management," highlighting shifting trends in recent literature.

### 3.2.5 Tree Map Analysis



Source: R Studio

Fig 5: Tree Map of Keyword Frequencies

Fig. 5 indicates a Tree Map that optically quantifies the fraction of different keywords within the selected 23 Scopus documents. The size of each block corresponds to the repetitiveness of the concept in the literature. The largest blocks are influenced by "Employee Engagement" (11%) and "Millennials" (10%), followed by "Generation Z" (4%) and "Generational Differences" (6%). Other remarkable variables, such as "Motivation," "Employee Retention," "Employment," and "Career Development", hold significant proportions (2% - 3%). This map authenticates the selection of our research variables and validates that motivation, engagement, and generational traits form the core foundation of modern employee retention studies.

### 4. RESEARCH GAP

While all the previous studies broadly examine how rewards and career development opportunities help in employee retention, there is a significant theoretical gap with respect to Theory Z, developed by William Ouchi as a retention framework for Gen-Z and Millennials. The models for employee retention used currently often treat employees' personal well-being as a secondary benefit rather than a foundational organisational philosophy. There is a lack of first-hand evidence on how Theory Z contribute towards long-term employment, collective decision-making, and holistic concern

for the individual, aligning with the unique psychological contracts of these younger generations in the Indian context. There are a few more gaps identified, such as companies do not usually offer work from home, and employees who are in other states tend to quit. And there is very little study done on how counselling and mentoring can improve employee retention. So, this study intends to find how Theory Counselling and Mentoring, and offering "Work from Home", promotes or aids employee retention.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The contemporary world is driven by digitalisation, and experience there is a shift from employee engagement to employee loyalty, which marks a critical transformation in employee retention in the workplace or organisation. Today's workforce, either Gen-Z or Millennial, expects more than financial rewards; they want inclusion, emotional connection, flexibility in working hours and a sense of shared purpose. Employee retention strategies that were effective earlier may not perform well in today's time. Now employees not only want to have a good working environment or high pay, but also want flexible working hours, opportunities for rapid growth, maintain work-life balance, an inclusive work culture, and mental well-

being. If companies fail to meet their expectations, these talents tend to leave. So, organisations need to enhance and develop new retention techniques to meet the expectations of the employees.

As the workforce is dominated by Millennials and Gen Zs, the retention strategies must evolve holistically, and that includes empathy, purpose, and flexibility. Ultimately, building a workplace where employees choose to stay because they are understood, valued, and emotionally invested in the organisation's goal will lead to retention of the employees.

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