Engaging the emerging Generation Z employees at workplace: A qualitative study in the IT sector

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Vivekananda Journal of Research
January - June 2023, Vol. 13, Issue 1, 117-135
ISSN 2319-8702(Print)
ISSN 2456-7574(Online)
Peer Reviewed Refereed Journal
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https://vips.edu/journal/

ABSTRACT

Generation Z is now powerful force in the business landscape. The emerging IT sector in India need to understand the new expectations and work styles of this youngest generation cohort. The objective of the paper is to traverse the gamut of HR practices to engage Generation Z employees. The present qualitative study incorporating narrative enquiry within the framework of interpretative phenomenological analysis is utilized in order to capture the life experiences as lived. The study suggests that leaders and HR managers in the workplace need to offer autonomy, opportunities for career growth and job crafting that resonates with Generation Z employees for making them truly engaged. The paper is a novel attempt to look around and look forward pondering over employee engagement drivers by encapsulating specific recommendations to leverage Generation Z strengths. The implications for theory and practices, as well as its limitations and future directions conclude the paper.

Keywords: *Generation Z, narrative inquiry, interpretative phenomenological approach, employee engagement*

INTRODUCTION

Generational cohorts have a meaningful impact on organizational functions and processes. Every generation that joins the workforce brings in new set of experiences, expectations, and engagements. With new generation emerging over time, it is important to

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capture the new insights of the new generation towards the workplace practices. Of particular interest in this research is the new generation cohort at workplace- Generation Z. Since they have recently entered the workforce, it an opportune time for HR managers and leaders to leverage employee engagement. Moreover, Generation Z is expected to have a significant impact in the workplace by bringing in a new set of priorities and expectations. It is vital to understand that every generation has distinctive needs that are related to the workplace (Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Schawbel, 2014). Also, what worked for the previous generation cohort in the past, might not work for Generation Z employees. Workplaces have a huge opportunity to take advantage of this unique demographic dividend, to keep them engaged, thereby making a win-win proposition.

Generation Z is also termed as 'Generation Me' (Bennett et al., 2012), 'Internet Generation' (Walker and Lewis, 2009) and 'Mobile Mavens' (Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015). It refers to an intriguing generation cohort, who are born after 1995 (Lanier, 2017). They are the post Millennials who are ready to explore the workplaces and constitute the biggest chunk of the population pie chart. They are determined to make their own paths and enrich their life with experiences, having grown up in an environment of diversity, profuse opportunities, and collaboration through virtual connectivity. They are curious, creative, entrepreneurial in nature and less driven by money (Schawbel, 2014); they feel valued when their opinions are heard (Slavin, 2015), want to build their own things and create an impact. It constitutes the most educated and sophisticated people (Karasek and Hysa, 2020), initiators who love to work with challenges around, have a practical outlook, and are extremely ambitious (Bencsick et al., 2016).

According to the UN, India has the world's largest youth population representing 64% of the working-age group (2020). Revising and revamping strategies to engage Generation Z is inevitable, in order to effectively utilize this workforce. By developing effective HR practices and HRM systems, a variety of workplace challenges can be addressed to attract and retain the young talent (Froese, 2019). Workplaces need to redefine their way of doing work for being effective across a wide range of contexts, as Generation Z employees do not look for pay checks, but they also look for personal fulfilment (Aggarwal et al., 2022). Moreover, it is important to meet Generation Z expectations especially in emerging economies for leveraging their potential (Nguyen et al., 2022). Companies are also facing challenges to design employee engagement practices that revolve around the context and aspirations of Generation Z employees.

IT sector in India

Information technology has a significant role to play in the Indian economy. As per National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) reports, the IT and BPM sector in India is estimated to be US $ 350 billion by 2025. The emergence of new technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence, data analytics, cloud computing, blockchain, social media, and virtual tools have opened a pool of opportunities for the youth of India. It is already anticipated that post- coronavirus world, the IT industry will leverage growth in the service sector as every organization will eventually move towards automation and digitalization. There is an increasing trend to know the ways to foster employee engagement, particularly in IT sector in order to motivate and retain the employees in the long run. Considering the pandemic crisis effects, it is important to analyze the changes and make employee-friendly work practices for effective results (Sadhna et al., 2020). There is scanty literature with respect to Generation Z, hence a strong conceptual framework to redesign employee engagement drivers must be proposed to resonate closely with the emerging IT sector in India. The study makes three contributions to the existing literature. First, this research is the first of its kind to explore HR work design practices for engaging Generation Z. Second the study is an attempt to know how interesting elements of HR practices create a favorable work culture conducive for these youngest employees in the IT sector. Lastly, the research highlighted significant findings on workplace autonomy, opportunities for career growth and job crafting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee engagement

Employee engagement is gaining momentum in academia and organizations across the globe. It is a crucial element in the new world of work where work from home rather anywhere is the new norm (Chawla et al., 2022). Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as "harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles, in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Nancy R. Lockwood (2007) defined work engagement as "the extent to which employees commit to something or someone in the organization, how hard they work and how long they stay." It also refers to positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Renowned companies in India and abroad conduct surveys and studies to foster employee engagement drivers, as it is strongly associated with reduced turnover. Numerous researchers have claimed that employee engagement and organizational commitment are the two significant factors that are required to gain competitive advantage. Engaged employees feel valued in the organization leading

to employee wellbeing (Shantz et al. 2016). It also helps the employees to be adaptive to changes and give their best. Engaged employees work to benefit the organization, improve the performance, and often get attached to their organization for a considerable time period (Park et al., 2021). Companies need to adjust to the unique expectations of youngest generation at the workplace, which is having an extremely different skill set. Knowing how to engage Generation Z is a challenge and a panacea for organizational success.

Autonomy

Autonomy is all about providing flexibility to employees for making work related decisions which in turn creates an enviable environment for employees, employers, and organization. In other words, it refers to the freedom and discretion allowed to employees for handling work responsibilities related to work methods, criteria, and schedules. It is considered as a favorable workplace condition which is crucial to employee engagement. Micro-management at workplace is one of the root causes of stress, whereas employee autonomy on the other hand reduces stress and enhances well-being. Interestingly, autonomy is the single most important factor for driving employee engagement in any organization (Kao et al. 2022; Mankins & Garton 2017). Moreover, it is also positively associated with affective commitment and employee creativity (Jaiswal and Dhar, 2017). Synergistic relationships between job crafting and employee autonomy is essential for employee well-being (Slemp et al., 2015). Improving autonomy and offering support to employees benefit employee engagement and well-being (Suarez et al., 2022). Micromanagement and cross layers of management can be a termite to the entire work system whereas, autonomy on the other hand creates a liberating work culture that fosters employee engagement. Freedom pervading at workplaces can strike a balance between the employees' personal aspiration and organizational goals. Generation Z born in the cradle of technology and being the most educated and sophisticated generation ever would value workplace autonomy more than just pay.

Opportunities for career growth

The desire for growth manifests in the realm of career. For youngest generation at the workplace, growth opportunities are essential, as it helps them build a repertoire of competencies in this era of tough competition. Career development opportunities are of paramount importance for the younger generation. Employees now look forward to getting the support from their organizations and managers for adding value to their career. Career growth refers to advancement and development opportunities within the organization (Biswakarma, 2016). It encompasses opportunities available for skill development, learning cycles and

promotion (Juhdi et al., 2013). According to Suan & Nasurdin (2014) career growth is one of the prominent factors to harness the employees' potential for getting desired results in terms of productivity and performance. Opportunities such as skill development, continuing education, coaching, and mentoring keep employees on the cutting edge. Also, investing in employees is worthwhile and a win-win proposition as it widens the skill set by enabling employees to acquire new skills and create growth momentum within the organization. Researchers from various climes have stated that career growth opportunities are essential for engaging employees and overcoming the employees' turnover issues (Ohunakin et al., 2018). It is a joint effort of the employer and employee which requires a formalized arrangement. Insights from existing literature claims that opportunities for career growth results in positive workplace attitude, employee engagement and organizational commitment (Lu et al., 2016).

Job crafting

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) coined the term job crafting that offers opportunities to employees to design their jobs, while considering their skills, values, interests, and available resources. It refers to the bottom-up approach, where employees are given autonomy to design or change the elements of job and relationships related to work and social environment. This opportunity enables the employees to design their jobs as per their own preferences based on their performance and abilities. Traditionally, job work design consisted of a top-down creation of work (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), wherein managers decide the tasks for their subordinates (Oldham and Hackman, 2010). Modifying the nature of the tasks can make work more meaningful as employees are given freedom in this arrangement to define one's identity within the company. The findings of prior research revealed that employees' job crafting has a positive effect on employees' task performance (Tim et al., 2015). Organizations can assist employees in balancing job demands and resources, leading to employee wellbeing (Sen, 2018). As stated by Breevaart et al. (2014), when employees are given the freedom to design their jobs, they are more likely to develop a higher level of enthusiasm and pride. It further assists employees to identify themselves with the value of the organization, while developing a bond leading to organizational commitment (Minda & Mudlo-Glagolska, 2019). Moreover, job crafting has a positive effect on adaptive and proactive behaviour (Baik et al., 2018), and it assists the employees to manage the squeeze effectively during organizational change (Petrou et al., 2018). Working independently, remotely with great degree of flexibility are now the set of requirements of the global young talent pool amid pandemic crisis (Haak-Saheem, 2020). It benefits the organization as it leads to high absorption while working (Costantini et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

In this research, narrative inquiry method has been used (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lightfoot, 2004) to deep dive into values and perspectives of leaders, senior managers, and HR managers in context of employee engagement of Generation Z employees. The narrative method in qualitative study comprises interviews, stories, conversations, life experiences to understand the respondents' values, beliefs and ideas and gain insights about their external and internal world, within their respective environment. This paper represents a novel process to understand the drivers of employee engagement for Generation Z employees in IT sector.

We conducted semi- structured interviews wherein, predetermined open-ended questions were asked to obtain reliable and comparable experiential qualitative data. Semi-structured interview is one of the most widely used methods of data collection used in qualitative study. This method allows the researchers to gain subjective insights and in-depth details of respondents' experiences (Flick, 2009) and gives complete freedom to the respondents to discuss and answer the question in their own terms (Choak, 2012). Rubin and Rubin (2005) associated semi-structured interviews with 'flowing conversations' as it helps to explore the realities and derive meaningful data for further analysis. We conducted 31 semi-structured interviews with leaders, senior managers, and HR managers in IT sector. Interview questions were based on three dimensions as identified by in Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. All these dimensions are known for its robustness on both the parameters- conceptual as well as empirical. We identified 17 items measuring key dimensions of employee engagement at workplace. References were taken from the researchers' network of colleagues, friends, and acquaintances in the IT sector. Based on their feedback, we generated a list of 42 HR managers, senior managers, and leaders. Out of 42 shortlisted list, only 31 showed their willingness to participate in the study. All the 31 respondents completed the interviews in the time span of five months (March 2021-July 2021). In all, 22 males and 9 females in the age range of 45-58 were interviewed. The respondents had minimum of 20 years of work experience and all of them belonged to the senior level management working as regional heads, assistant vice president, senior managers, head-business development, and HR managers.

The questions for the semi-structured interviews were prepared and finalized after taking suggestions from researchers and academicians with expertise in qualitative research methods. All the questions asked were focused on identifying the enablers of employee engagement of Generation Z workforce in their respective organizations. The open-ended questions were designed to have an in-depth understanding of perspectives of leaders, senior managers, and HR managers. The respondents were given the flexibility to decide and extent

and the direction of the flow of conversation. However, the following four critical points were considered-The objective and the purpose of the study was thoroughly explained to all the participants; respondents were free to ask any questions either before or during the interview process; all the participants were assured that confidentiality will be maintained and the interviewer spent considerable time on rapport-building to enhance comfort level of the respondents. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy by the researchers.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research is guided by methodological framework of interpretative phenomenological analysis given by Smith et al. (2009). It is considered as a highly effective qualitative method wherein the researchers can gather rich experiences of the respondents by adopting a flexible and versatile design (Tuffour, 2017). This methodology utilizes the phenomenological attitude which helps the researcher to anchor the data by putting aside the past knowledge or external theory. The present research has incorporated the dynamic research activities proposed by Van Manen (1998). It starts with researcher turning into a phenomenon and establishing commitment towards the research. Thereafter, it is followed by development of holistic perception by understanding and deep questioning of the possible facets, as it is experienced or lived by the respondent. After this, the essential themes are identified that may characterize the phenomena. Then the experiences are decoded with the help of thoughts and language by writing and re-writing essential details for achieving precision. All the parts in the whole structures were balanced in context to research objectives. Finally, the results derived produced valid findings that were based on fundamental questions of enquiry.

For narrative analysis the framework of Plowman et al. (2007) was utilized for exploring all the possible themes in each narrative. Various themes were developed based on data obtained from respondents during the interview process. For better insights, the primary analysis of the transcripts was conducted by both the researchers independently. After coding, the key themes were discussed and reviewed carefully to ensure that the study has reached the saturation point. The two different approaches of Van Manen (1998) including attending the data in a holistic manner for capturing respondents' experience and highlighting or selective approach for identifying themes were adopted to further identify categories or sub-themes. Broadly the following steps were taken into consideration namely- transcription of interviews, creation of memos, coding, researchers' discussion for critically resolving discrepancies associated with coding and themes, identification of central theme and finally the development of narratives themes.

Qualitative research follows a scientific rigor which can reflect confirmability, reliability, credibility, and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Also, for critical examination researchers must be able to guard against biases and assumptions (Harding, 1987). For evaluating confirmability, two academicians thoroughly trained in qualitative research assisted in the entire process dealing in identifying the codes and themes. They also verified the saturation points to check whether key themes are reached and analyzed redundancy signals critically. For gauging consistency, the trained academicians compared their set of interpretation of narratives with those of researchers. The level of consistency was found to be high. For evaluating credibility in this qualitative research, the themes and supporting statements were shared with the respondents. The respondents reflected high level of agreement with the themes and their respective interpretations. However, the transferability criteria can be met in further studies by the application of the same in the new contextual environment.

FINDINGS

One of the objectives of the study was to identify the ways of engaging Generation Z employees in IT sector. For this, we did not rely on any existing theoretical framework of employee engagement. However, for interpreting the coding categories and emergent themes, we drew up on theories of employee engagement. The results obtained from the first-hand narratives of leaders, senior managers, and HR managers about their approach to Generation Z employee engagement confirm that they want truly 'engaged employees.' In the following paragraphs, an amalgam of coding categories and the emerging themes have been delineated and discussed in details. The first theme emerging from the data regarding employee engagement strategies of Generation Z relates to "autonomy."

Autonomy

Autonomy plays a vital role in engaging employees at the workplace. In the present study 19 out of 31 leaders have distinctly used the words "freedom", "autonomy" and "independence" to explain their strategy to employee engagement. The leaders mostly believe in boosting autonomy as an essential foundation of employee engagement.

The following statements show direct or indirect involvement of the respondents in fostering employee engagement:

Workplaces are changing. Now young employee looks forward to having an autonomous work environment where they are not micro-managed (R1).

Our company believes in giving freedom to all the employees. Even for freshers, we let them steer the ship as it creates a sense of engagement with their work (R3).

By giving freedom to work we can build a strong culture wherein employees feel engaged and satisfied too (R7).

The workstyle we follow is autonomous, strict working routines for the youngest generation are now a thing of the past, at least pandemic has taught this now, freedom at workplace leads to better results (R8).

Employees here are encouraged to act and think independently. It leads to enhancing overall employee experience (R12).

Micromanaging work can be a disaster. We need to understand as employers that now employees expect freedom, and they do excel when they are given freedom (R16).

With new workplace practices, it is inevitable that organizations are developing a culture of freedom at workplace. Employees enrolled in all the projects are independent for choosing their own unique workstyles (R17).

Employees in all the teams are free to make their choices, as far as they can meet the organizational goals, also by this, especially new comers feel more valued, motivated, and engaged (R21).

We have abandoned micro-managing, and trust me it worked well. By giving employee their freedom we all can sense better outcomes and renewed optimism (R27).

For any project that we assign, we ensure to give freedom to the team that suits them, it results in better connect with them and influences a sense of ownership in a positive way (R30).

Employees should be treated as a family, giving Generation Z employees the freedom and flexibility creates an engaged and motivated work environment, where everyone feel respected (R31).

These statements show that the respondents are moving away from control and command workstyle to autonomous work culture. They seem to exhibit an approach wherein all the employees especially the Generation Z are given freedom to work and decide how to carry out the processes that suits them the most. All the leaders, senior managers and HR managers stated the positive impact of autonomy such as increases ownership of work and

engagement levels.

Opportunities for career growth

Growth opportunities seems important to Generation Z employees. If they are unable to develop new skills, disengagement creeps in as they feel that their work is monotonous and repetitive with no scope of expanding into new areas. Many leaders mentioned that growth initiatives inject employee engagement in the workplace, where employees exhibit intense curiosity in developing expertise in their key roles to become more skillful, effective, and efficient.

For example, R2 mentioned:

The youngest workforce in our company expects us to pay heed to their career pathways, they want to grow on professional front constantly.

Another respondent tried to make a point that they focus on professional development for successful career "we are very careful when it comes to engaging Generation Z, we ensure that all of them go through proper onboarding, training for their professional development."

R9 believes in employees' career development for establishing their short-term and long-term benchmarks. According to him "most of our young workforce expects us to provide opportunities for their career growth, and also help them in acquiring new skills."

Some HR managers stated "In our appraisal interviews, we usually see youngest employees asking questions about where their job can take them ahead in the upcoming months or a year or two" (R 14) or "they are quite inquisitive about the new career opportunities in the new projects' (R3).

R15 prefers career development as an ongoing mechanism "we offer reskilling and upskilling opportunities for the new entrants who are hired from various B-Schools, they really appreciate this initiative".

Another respondent (R19) reiterated the need of learning and development withing the organization, he mentioned "now the workplaces are all about continuous learning. It is in our DNA; we actively invest in the same through workshops and other training programs."

R1 showed an inclination to develop employees by understanding career aspirations "we have recognized their curiosity of learning new skills that offer opportunities to excel in their chosen profile, assisting them for developing professional skills helps our employee

engagement and hiring process'.

R28 another senior leader referred to the benefits of employees' development "developing employees works as a competitive advantage in all the projects, we ensure a learning environment for engaging as well attracting the diverse pool of talent".

R26 puts it "Gen Z employees have one eye on career enhancement within the organization and other on enrolling in online skill development courses, we are thinking to fill this gap". R20 also resorts to the similar approach "young employees often join us because of our collaboration with universities and colleges for higher education and skill development".

These statements show that the respondents are associating career development opportunities with employee engagement and as a mechanism to attract them for working their respective organizations. Prior generations did not focus on fulfilling work unlike Generation Z. This cohort focus on career growth and professional development plans and consider it as an important tool in talent management and engagement strategy.

Job crafting

The most prominent theme emerging from the narratives is job crafting. The HR leaders and senior managers are aware of this and have mentioned the words "job customization," "job redesign" and "job crafting" for fostering employee engagement. They encourage the young employees to customize their jobs to better fit their strengths, needs, values, preferences, and motives. The employees by making small changes to their respective tasks and roles can deliver relatively large positive outcomes. Many stated that job crafting, if conducted in a proper manner withing the radar, positively influences employee engagement. Such flexible building blocks is the key to reaping noticeable benefits at the workplace. They all shared that this customized approach empowers the freshers to tweak their official roles in order to make the most out of it. For example, R3 stated:

Our employees are given complete freedom to redesign their jobs, this strategy really works. It leads in engaging as well as retaining them in the long run.

R4 also reiterated when she said "Now newcomers want to shape their work environment in their own unique ways. We respect that."

Some respondent (R15) mentioned "This new Generation Z expects us to give them complete freedom to handle responsibilities in their own ways" or "With sophisticated and educated evolving generations, it is important to ensure that all the employees can redefine

their jobs and make it more meaningful and engaging" (R1).

R7 believes in giving autonomy to adjust withing their profiles, while ensuring that they are heading to the attainment of the pre-defined goals. He stated "We let the young workforce decide their own way of working, it creates better symphony and better results."

R2 emphasized "Proactive employees are more comfortable with job crafting approach, it boosts performance and engagement". According to him, "this strategy is successful in more than 80 per cent of the cases".

R18 proposes that job crafting is a wonderful tool and mentioned "We give opportunities to workers to play around and tailor the written job description which helps to meet the ultimate goal". Some of the HR managers prefer giving the autonomy to new employees to make changes to their existing jobs to make them compatible enough, "our youngest recent hired employees are given platforms to develop additional relationship with colleagues involved in different projects too, it gives them more meaning and fulfillment (R23)" or "it's encouraging for us also to see this young generation who believes in creating purposeful work, they have a sense of pride in what they do" (R24).

R16, another senior manager preferred job crafting "our HR team promotes job crafting. It is a must for us, as employees are better off with it and honestly, it is a win-win situation."

R31 puts it "Employees do craft jobs here to some extent, this arrangement enhances the overall enjoyment quotient, especially of this dynamic young workforce, else it is difficult to engage them and retain them for a reasonable time frame".

R29 suggested "work redesign opportunities help in organizational betterment, a great tool for harnessing employees' strengths.". R12 also resorts to similar strategy "In pandemic and post-pandemic, job crafting is a go-getter mechanism to improve engagement and satisfaction levels".

R14 remarked:

Now all the new generation employees have unique and different aspirations, every employee who joins us is free to redesign their jobs…It is usually unsupervised, for this you need to trust their skills and abilities.

These statements show that the respondents are in favor of job crafting, as it leads to fulfilling work experience, where each employee is valued. Adjustments leading to positive

outcomes is relatively an effective and inexpensive way on letting employee focus on the positive rather than the negative aspects.

RESULTS

The overarching goal of this paper was to identify the employee engagement drivers of Generation Z employees in the IT sector of India. The goal was underpinned by the need to enhance our understanding of Generation Z employees as a new workplace generation that has just begun to enter workplaces in huge numbers. The implications to the findings to theory and practice are discussed in the next section.

Research implications

The paper offers four takeaways predicated on interpretative phenomenological approach- for theory. Firstly, Generation Z is an under researched generation cohort unlike millennials, as evidenced by the scarcity of papers on employee engagement. The dearth of research is also a contention that is in line with call by Lanier (2017) for greater research on Generation Z and HR practices. This research makes the unique contribution of establishing an amalgam of prominent factors constituting employee engagement drivers for the youngest generation cohort. Further research can be carried out in this direction to reveal whether these factors are leading to only positive impact, or on further probing that can cause negative job outcomes as well. Also, pandemic has changed the very premise of doing business, which in turn calls for a different path to be traveled for managing human resources effectively (Sadhna et al., 2020). Future research can attempt to empirically validate the arrived three factors in creating a positive impact on employee engagement. Secondly, the paper offers insights on autonomy offered to Generation Z employees for fostering employee engagement in organizational work processes. Prior empirical research has revealed both positive and negative impact of autonomy, whereas this study did not see any negative impact of autonomy for engaging Generation Z employees. This present paper extends the work of Knapp et al. (2017) by shedding light on autonomy as one of the drivers for attaining positive outcomes, by emphasizing on the perception of academicians and practitioners who are interested to understand how effectively Generation Z employees engages themselves with embedded workplace autonomy. Thirdly, the paper encompasses the important role of job crafting in the journey of Generation Z employees offering IT services and products. In particular, the paper reveals that they like to modify the nature of work within the prescribed boundaries for having a meaningful job in the IT workplace ecosystem. Lastly, the paper reveals that opportunities for career growth are as important as job crafting and autonomy for Generation

Z employees for better work engagement, that can be replicated in future research. The paper demonstrated how work design, career development and Kahn's employee engagement theories can be harmoniously integrated to provide a theoretical explanation of Generation Z and employee engagement drivers. Taking into cognizance the importance of the huge number of Generation Z entering at workplaces, further research can investigate the impact of different context on consequences of autonomy, job crafting and opportunities of career growth across various sectors in India.

Practical implications

Firstly, pandemic is a turning point that has impacted all the spheres. Companies will have to develop better HR practices as per the changing skills set and technological competencies of Generation Z employees. Executives from around the world have rated employee engagement as one of the top five global HR practices. Moreover, employee engagement is the emerging requisite factor for unleashing the true potential of this internet generation, who are looking forward to working in companies where they feel valued. It is the opportune time to implement certain modifications to attract, engage, motivate, and retain this tech-savvy generation. Secondly, the paper reveals that the ability to craft jobs drives people to their best work. It stirs them intrinsically and engages them to have greater control over their work experience algorithm. Interestingly, reconfiguring the parts of the job is the new combination desired by Generation Z. By allowing employees to make their work aligned with their values and preferences is good for the individuals as well as for employees. Companies need to step away from '9 to 5' work culture and let Generation Z craft their own unique and creative ways to reach the determined goals. However, employers must ensure that this is happening under the radar. Thirdly, autonomy builds Generation Z employee engagement, as they like to be part of the work ecosystem where they empowered and not micromanaged. In other words, control is not management, rather the dreaded micromanagement is the enemy leading to lower productivity and high turnover levels. A decentralized approach involving autonomy can be empowering in other sectors too, especially to face uncertainty in this digital era. However, autonomy comes with certain boundaries without the fear of losing control which leads to enriching employee experience. Lastly, mentoring and offering higher education opportunities to the youngest generation will result in improved work engagement. Generation Z employees are constantly thinking about next job, next promotion, growing oneself, developing skills and improving knowledge. Many HR managers also believe that career development opportunities not only make employees better but also make them feel valued, as they appreciate company investing in them for employees' long-term growth.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Though this research based on qualitative analysis, attempts for find employee engagement drivers of Generation Z, the paper is limited is three major ways, which should pave the way for future research. First, this study identifies three employee engagement drivers suitable for Generation Z employees in IT sector of India, further studies can be conducted across various regions of Asia, Europe, America, and Oceania to critically analyze the similarities and differences. Second, further studies can be conducted to empirically validate the role of autonomy, opportunities for career growth and job crafting. Third, longitudinal studies can be done to explore the change patterns, reciprocal relations, and the casual direction through qualitative techniques.

CONCLUSION

With the advent of Generation Z at workplace, employers need to redefine and redraft HR practices, as this youngest unique demographic dividend plays an important role of steering the ship. This research got thought leaders to speak their minds on Generation Z employees working in IT sector and presents the newest set of three employee engagement drivers for attaining positive outcomes and maximizing the value curve. By revamping the existing HR systems, organizations can accommodate this youngest generation effectively by paying heed to their choices and expectations, and forge a way towards progression and competitiveness. Those who can quickly adapt to Generation Z by offering conducive HR practices will be the clear winners. Through narrative inquiry within the framework of interpretative phenomenological analysis we found out that employee engagement drivers let employees work at their best. It calls for multifaceted organizational support in the form of providing autonomy, career growth opportunities and job crafting to Generation Z, which is heralding a new normal. From the lens of employers, it is crucial to engage Generation Z that is born in the cradle of technology and companies need to evolve with them as it will continue to unfold for decades.

DISCLOSURE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by authors(s).

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