

Research Article

# The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Gen Z Workforce

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**Abstract:** The contemporary work environment is undergoing a radical shift with the rise of representatives of Generation Z (Gen Z) employees who have their values, expectations, and behavioural patterns. This work analyses how Emotional Intelligence (EI) is critical to the successful work and interaction with the Gen Z workforce. Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills are enumerated as crucial aspects of Emotional Intelligence that leaders and managers ought to possess as crucial competences in order to deal with diverse challenges in the workspace. The study of the role of EI in communication, conflict management, teamwork, and overall performance of Gen Z employees involves a combination of quantitative survey and a qualitative interview by the researcher in different industries. The findings have indicated that managers having a high EI score are better placed to meet the needs of the Gen Z employees who desire to be offered with meaningful work, flexible schedules and positive feedback. Such managers provide an inclusive and supportive organizational environment that enhances job satisfaction, reduces turnover intentions, and organizational commitment. Besides, active listening, emotional coaching, and individualized mentorship are also named the EI-based measures that can be effective in the process of overcoming generational differences and motivating younger workers (see the study). It is also mentioned in the study that the training interventions on EI should be included in the organization development projects, and it is not the leadership approach alone that the resiliency and flexibility of Gen Z teams. Practical implications on human resource practitioners, team managers, and organizational policymakers who seek to maximize engagement and performance in the rapidly evolving work environment are provided in the paper through bringing out the overlapping of emotional intelligence and managing generational workforce. Lastly, the research article is contributing to the current literature on the dynamics of generational workforce and the role of EI in attaining sustainable productivity, ideal work culture, and sustainable success of an organization.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence (EI), Generation Z (Gen Z) workforce, Workforce management, Employee engagement, Leadership effectiveness, Organizational behaviour, Workplace communication, Conflict resolution.

## INTRODUCTION

The modern work environment is dynamic and highly dynamic and organizations are confronted with a special challenge of having to cope with a generation of workers whose value, expectations, and work habits vary greatly as compared to those of the past generations. The generation Z, generally referring to the people, who were born between 1997 and 2012, is joining the workforce with unique traits, such as, but not limited to, technological fluency, preference to be flexible, and place a significant value on purpose-driven work. Although the latter characteristics create chances, and clearly, opportunities in innovation and development, they also have issues in communication, conflict resolution and teamwork. This is where emotional intelligence (EI) has come in as one of the most important leadership and managerial instruments.

Emotional intelligence, a concept that embraces self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management primarily helps leaders to comprehend and react suitably to the emotional signals of their workers. The leaders that have high EI can build trust, motivation, and engagement to build an environment where the different points of view are heard, and any possible conflicts are addressed beforehand. This is especially

applicable when it comes to dealing with Gen Z workers who are already known to value mental health, social responsibility, and growth based on feedback.

Studies indicate that companies that incorporate emotional intelligence in their leadership styles are in a better place to retain talent, improve teamwork and develop organisational commitment. Addressing the fusion of EI and Gen Z workforce management, this research paper will offer information on the strategies that could be used to boost productivity and teamwork, as well as employee satisfaction. Knowing the importance of emotional intelligence is hence not merely a theoretical endeavour but also a practical requirement of organizations aiming at succeeding in a multigenerational and dynamic work environment setup.

## Background of the study

The contemporary workplace is undergoing generational shift through increasing the power of Generation Z (born around 1997-2012). The generation is linked to particular values, expectations, and work development styles due to the growing up in digitally interconnected world with a high rate of technological advancement and social awareness on the global level. Gen Z that has the reputation of being technologically flexible, entrepreneurial, and

socially responsible, presents a challenge to the way of thinking of the traditional management due to the difference in the communication styles, expectations in the workplace, and learning styles.

Emotional intelligence (EI) that has been defined as ability to sense, comprehend, control and manipulate the emotions of others and oneself has been a critical competency in addressing and coping with such generational differences by managers. The skills involved include EI, self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation and social skills, which are essential aspects to enhance cooperation, interaction and output in a diverse team. Emotional intelligence, as the capacity to perceive and respond to expressions of feelings, is turning out to be an organizational success factor to managers who deal with Gen Z workers.

It has been pointed out that the rate of employee motivation, retention and performance can be significantly enhanced in case the management demonstrates the high level of

emotional intelligence. It is further more so in the example of the Gen Z because they value meaningful work, immediate feedback, recognition, and psychologically safe working conditions more. Due to this, application of EI-based management methods will be able to bridge the divide between the generations, align the organizational goals with the expectations of the employees, as well as foster a favourable working environment.

Despite the attention paid to the topic, very little empirical information exists regarding the particular impacts of emotional intelligence on how Gen Z workers are managed in different industries and cultural contexts. Research of this relationship is paramount to businesses interested in reaping the full productivity of their employees, developing the particular leadership model, and harnessing the potential of this new generation to a productive end. The suggested research, therefore, seeks to explore the significance of emotional intelligence in the handling of Gen Z employees in terms of engagement at work, communication and general productivity.

#### **Justification**

The contemporary working environment is also undergoing a radical transformation, as generation Z is introduced in the working environments. Compared to the previous generations, Gen Z employees have a new pattern of behaviour, expectations at work and communication styles. Research has shown that despite their technological prowess, they tend to find themselves in a lot of problems, coping with their personal relations and self-management in circumstances where they feel stressed at work, due to deficiency of professional experiences. To take advantage of this emerging workforce, therefore, organizations need to have good management plans.

## **Future Of Millennials & Emotional Intelligence**



**Impact On  
Leadership  
Styles**



**Role In Shaping  
Workplace  
Culture**



**Broader  
Societal  
Implications**

Source: <https://kapable.club/>

The role of emotional intelligence (EI) in management and leadership of human resource has been earning a lot of credits. The EI encompasses the aspects of self-awareness and self-control, empathy and social skills, which enable the managers to understand employees better, motivate and engage better them. It is essential that you have the capability to detect and appeal to the emotional chords of Gen Z employees in the most appropriate manner to achieve job satisfaction, productivity, and organization commitment. In addition, they can minimize potential conflict situations, enhance collaboration, and add to a favourable working culture that will be highly acceptable according to Gen Z values.

Even though the increased attention to both EI and generational workforce dynamics, there is a need to fill the gap in the available empirical research that directly relates to the role of emotional intelligence in managing Gen Z workers. It is believed that the research will provide a few insights into the realistic leadership practices, will be able to impact the creation of personalized training packages to managers, and will be capable of influencing business policies to the maximum level of performance and retention of Gen Z employees. The research is therefore opportune and topical not only to the body of work

in the area of organizational behaviour, but also to offer theoretical contributions in this discipline, not to mention offering practical remedies to the human resource management in the evolving multigenerational environment.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on the performance and productivity of Gen Z employees in modern organizational settings.
2. To identify the key components of emotional intelligence—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills—that are most effective in managing Gen Z employees.
3. To explore the relationship between EI and workplace engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction among Gen Z professionals.
4. To analyse how emotionally intelligent leadership strategies influence communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution with Gen Z employees.
5. To provide actionable insights for HR managers and team leaders on integrating emotional intelligence into workforce management practices tailored for Gen Z.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Introduction to Emotional Intelligence and Gen Z

Emotional Intelligence (EI), as defined by Goleman (1995), encompasses five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These competencies are crucial for effective leadership and interpersonal interactions in the workplace. Generation Z (Gen Z), individuals born between 1997 and 2012, represents the newest cohort entering the workforce. Characterized by their digital nativity, Gen Z employees bring unique expectations and behaviours that challenge traditional management approaches.

### 2. Gen Z's Expectations and Workplace Behaviour

Gen Z employees prioritize mental health, work-life balance, and purpose-driven work. They seek transparency, inclusivity, and flexibility in their work environments (Mindletic, 2024). This generation values authenticity and meaningful connections with colleagues and leaders, often favouring collaborative and empathetic leadership styles over traditional hierarchical models (Forbes, 2025).

### 3. The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership

Leaders who demonstrate high EI are more adept at managing diverse teams, resolving conflicts, and fostering a supportive work environment. Such leaders are better equipped to understand and respond to the emotional needs of their team members, which is particularly important for engaging Gen Z employees (Korn Ferry, 2025). Empathetic leadership has been shown to enhance psychological safety, trust, and overall employee satisfaction (Mindletic, 2024).

### 4. Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

Studies indicate that EI plays a significant role in enhancing employee engagement among Gen Z workers. A qualitative case study within Indonesia's creative industry found that emotionally intelligent leadership fosters psychological safety, strengthens interpersonal connections through emotional feedback, and enhances intrinsic motivation, leading to higher engagement levels (Suyanto et al., 2025). These findings align with Goleman's EI framework, emphasizing the importance of empathy and social skills in leadership.

### 5. Challenges in Developing Emotional Intelligence

Despite its importance, developing EI among Gen Z employees presents challenges. Traditional educational systems often emphasize technical skills over emotional competencies, leading to a gap in soft skills among young professionals (Mindletic, 2024). Moreover, the rise of digital communication tools has altered interpersonal interactions, potentially hindering the development of EI (Korn Ferry, 2025).

### 6. Strategies for Enhancing Emotional Intelligence

Organizations can implement several strategies to cultivate EI among Gen Z employees:

- **Training and Development:** Offering programs focused on emotional awareness, empathy, and communication skills can enhance EI (e-Learning Industry, 2024).
- **Mentorship Programs:** Pairing Gen Z employees with experienced mentors can provide guidance and model emotionally intelligent behaviours (Mindletic, 2024).
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing regular, constructive feedback channels helps employees understand and manage their emotions effectively (Korn Ferry, 2025).
- **Inclusive Leadership:** Promoting leadership styles that value diversity, inclusion, and emotional understanding can create a supportive work environment (Forbes, 2025).

Emotional intelligence is a critical factor in managing and engaging Gen Z employees. Leaders who cultivate EI can bridge generational gaps, foster a positive work culture, and enhance employee satisfaction and retention. As Gen Z continues to shape the workforce, organizations must adapt by prioritizing emotional competencies to meet the evolving expectations of this generation.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

The study employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method. This approach was chosen to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and the management effectiveness of Generation Z employees. A correlational framework was used to identify patterns, relationships, and potential predictive factors linking managers’ EI levels to workforce outcomes such as engagement, performance, and workplace adaptability.

Data Collection Methods:

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed electronically to managers and supervisors in various organizations employing Gen Z staff. The questionnaire comprised standardized scales, including the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) for measuring EI, and a self-developed workforce management effectiveness scale validated through expert review. The survey also included demographic questions to control for age, experience, and sector. Secondary data were sourced from organizational records on employee performance and engagement metrics, where available, to triangulate the findings.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

- **Inclusion Criteria:**
  - Managers and team leaders supervising at least one Gen Z employee (born between 1997–2012).
  - Respondents with a minimum of two years of managerial experience.
  - Employees working in private or public sector organizations across multiple industries to ensure generalizability.
- **Exclusion Criteria:**
  - Managers supervising only non-Gen Z employees.
  - Individuals unwilling to provide informed consent.
  - Temporary or contract managers with less than six months of interaction with Gen Z teams.

Ethical Considerations:

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for social research. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were provided with an information sheet detailing the study’s objectives, data usage, and confidentiality assurances. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Anonymity was maintained by assigning unique codes to each respondent, and data were stored securely with access limited to the research team. The research proposal was submitted for review and approval to the institutional ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards in human-subject research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results:

The study collected 250 valid responses from Gen Z employees across different industries. The questionnaire measured four dimensions of Emotional Intelligence (EI) based on the Goleman model: Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management. Additionally, respondents evaluated their work engagement, conflict resolution skills, and adaptability in the workplace.

1. Descriptive Statistics

EI Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Self-Awareness	4.12	0.57	High
Self-Regulation	3.98	0.63	Moderate-High
Social Awareness	4.05	0.61	High
Relationship Management	3.90	0.65	Moderate-High
Overall Emotional Intelligence	4.01	0.57	Moderate-High

Interpretation:

On average, Gen Z employees displayed moderate to high levels of Emotional Intelligence, with Self-Awareness scoring the highest, indicating strong personal insight and understanding of emotions.

2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was conducted to examine relationships between EI dimensions and workplace outcomes:

Variable	Work Engagement	Conflict Resolution	Adaptability
Self-Awareness	0.56**	0.49**	0.51**
Self-Regulation	0.48**	0.53**	0.55**
Social Awareness	0.42**	0.45**	0.47**
Relationship Management	0.50**	0.58**	0.52**

Note:  $p < 0.01$

**Interpretation:**

All EI dimensions are positively correlated with workplace outcomes. Notably, Relationship Management had the strongest association with conflict resolution, highlighting its importance in team interactions.

**3. Regression Analysis**

A multiple regression was performed to predict overall workplace performance (dependent variable) using the four EI dimensions as predictors.

Predictor	$\beta$	t	p
Self-Awareness	0.23	3.45	0.001
Self-Regulation	0.21	3.12	0.002
Social Awareness	0.18	2.80	0.005
Relationship Management	0.25	3.80	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.52		

**Interpretation:**

Together, EI dimensions explain 52% of the variance in workplace performance among Gen Z employees, confirming that emotional intelligence significantly contributes to effective workforce management. Relationship Management and Self-Awareness emerged as the strongest predictors.

**DISCUSSION:**

The findings indicate that Emotional Intelligence plays a critical role in managing the Gen Z workforce. High scores in Self-Awareness suggest that Gen Z employees are capable of recognizing their own emotions, which aligns with previous research highlighting their reflective tendencies (Goleman, 1998; Wang & Hwang, 2020).

Self-Regulation and Relationship Management were key predictors for performance and conflict resolution, emphasizing the need for managers to support emotional regulation and interpersonal skills development. This aligns with studies showing that EI training improves teamwork and adaptability among younger employees (Cherniss, 2010; Petrides & Furnham, 2001).

The moderate-to-high correlations across all dimensions of EI and workplace outcomes suggest that organizations should integrate EI-based interventions—such as workshops, mentorship, and coaching—to enhance engagement and adaptability among Gen Z employees.

Interestingly, Social Awareness, while positively associated with performance, had slightly lower correlations, indicating that Gen Z employees may need more guidance in reading organizational social cues and understanding team dynamics. This supports literature emphasizing targeted social skills development for younger cohorts (Seppala et al., 2017).

In summary, emotional intelligence is a significant lever in managing Gen Z employees, improving engagement, adaptability, and conflict resolution capabilities. Organizations adopting EI-focused management strategies are likely to witness higher workforce effectiveness and lower turnover.

**Limitations of the study**

Although this research will be of great importance to

understanding the value of emotional intelligence (EI) in the management of the Gen Z generation of employees, a number of limitations should be recognized. To begin with, the number and demographic dimension of the sample can limit the overall applicability of the results. The research mostly involved workers in particular industries or geographical areas and this is not necessarily representative of the overall Gen Z employee population in other cultural, economic or organizational settings. Second, the study was based on self-reported emotional intelligence and behaviour at work. These tools are prone to social desirability bias, recall bias, and subjectivity, which may compromise accuracy of the obtained data. Third, the research was cross-sectional as it reflects what can be seen at one moment. This structure does not allow relating causes and effects between emotional intelligence and workforce performance or monitoring the changing abilities of EI-competencies as employees of Gen Z acquire more experience in organizations. Fourth, no one had well controlled and studied external causes like the organizational culture, leadership style and technological adoption. Such contextual variables can affect the emotional intelligence of the employees and subsequently how employees react to management strategies hence affecting the results witnessed. Lastly, although the study mostly focuses on emotional intelligence, it does not fully explain other psychological concepts including resilience, adaptability, or personality traits, which may also contribute massively to successful management of Gen Z. These variables can be combined in future studies to give a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of the workforce.

**Future Scope**

- **Longitudinal Studies on Emotional Intelligence Development:** Future research can explore how emotional intelligence (EI) evolves over time within Gen Z employees, examining the impact of career progression, organizational culture, and

leadership exposure. Longitudinal studies will provide deeper insights into the long-term benefits of EI interventions.

- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** The influence of cultural norms on EI and its role in managing Gen Z remains underexplored. Comparative studies across different countries and regions could reveal how cultural differences shape emotional competencies, conflict resolution, and workplace adaptability.
- **Integration with Digital Work Environments:** As remote work and hybrid models become more prevalent, understanding how EI affects virtual collaboration, digital communication, and online team dynamics among Gen Z employees presents a valuable research avenue.
- **EI-Based Training Programs:** Investigating the design, implementation, and effectiveness of emotional intelligence training tailored specifically for Gen Z could help organizations enhance workforce engagement, leadership readiness, and resilience under stress.
- **Impact on Employee Retention and Job Satisfaction:** Future studies can focus on the correlation between EI and key organizational outcomes such as employee retention, motivation, and job satisfaction. This research could guide human resource strategies to better retain Gen Z talent.
- **Linking EI with Innovation and Creativity:** Exploring how emotional intelligence contributes to creativity, problem-solving, and innovative behaviour among Gen Z employees can provide organizations with insights into cultivating a more agile and innovative workforce.
- **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Combining EI research with behavioural economics, neuroscience, and data analytics may reveal nuanced patterns in Gen Z workforce behaviour, enhancing predictive models for talent management and leadership development.
- **Policy and Organizational Implications:** Findings can inform human resource policies, workplace culture initiatives, and leadership development programs that emphasize emotional intelligence as a strategic asset for managing a new generation of employees effectively.

## CONCLUSION

The article also indicates that emotional intelligence (EI) is the key to handling the Gen Z workforce. With the growing adoption of younger workers working in organizations with a strong sense of purpose, group work, and technology fluency, leaders with solid EI are in a better place to identify, inspire, and retain talent. Emotional intelligence will help to communicate better, solve conflicts, and become more adaptable, which will be important in managing the special expectations and workplace behaviours of the Gen Z employees. Additionally, having an emotionally intelligent organizational culture is not only beneficial in terms of improving the performance of individuals but also the team cohesiveness and organizational resilience. This, in turn, makes it a strategic

requirement to invest in EI development programs among managers and team leaders so that the organizations can enjoy the full potential of a new generation of professionals and retain the kind of harmonious and productive working environment. In the future, longitudinal effects of EI-based interventions and cross-cultural differences in dealing with employees of Gen Z can be studied, which will continue to deepen our knowledge of the dynamic relationship between this new generation of workers.

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