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# Examining the Role of Supervisor Support on Generation Z's Intention to Quit

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine Generation Z's unmet expectations and work-related boredom and its impact on their intention to quit. The study investigates the moderating role of the supervisor support in the relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit. This research advances the understanding of the adverse effects of employees' unmet expectations and work-related boredom. Generation Z joins the organizations with unrealistic expectations of work that, in turn, promote lower levels of commitment and higher turnover, and therefore warrants more research. Data were collected from 336 Generation Z respondents working in the information technology industry. The data were analyzed using least square regressions and bootstrapping techniques. The findings confirm that supervisor support moderates the relationship between work-related boredom and employees' intention to quit such that if the degree of supervisor support is higher, then the relation is weaker. HRM practitioners need to be candid in explaining the job description and job specifications during the interview; more importantly, organizations need to address the expectations even before they are hired. The findings indicate that high supervisor support buffers the adverse effects of unmet expectations and work-related boredom. The study suggests that coaching could be an effective tool to support Generation Z's aspirations and well-being in the workplace. Therefore, organizations should make coaching a key element in the organization's culture and part of a manager's job.

## KEYWORDS

Generation Z, Unmet Expectations, Work-related Boredom, Supervisor Support, Intention to Quit

## INTRODUCTION

Organizations face a unique challenge in today's environment, with four generations working alongside for the first time (Lanier, 2017). Over the last decade, new theories and research emerged to understand the millennial mindset and their working styles. However, in the recent past, the focus has been shifted to understand a new cohort termed *Generation Z*, also known as iGeneration, post-millennials (Stillman and Stillman, 2017; Ismail et al., 2020). While there is a growing debate on the start year of Generation Z (Tapscott, 2009), the study considers people born in 1995 or later (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014; Budac and Baltador, 2014; Lanier, 2017). Succeeding millennials, Generation Z grew up in a technology environment and have not experienced life before the internet. Therefore, they cannot imagine a life without technology and the internet (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005). These characteristics

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had awakened a curiosity in researchers to understand Generation Z and their expectations in the workplace.

The cohort theory suggests that people experiencing the same historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural events share common values, preferences, and behaviors during their lives. Rahulan et al. (2015) further extending the cohort theory defined the generational cohort as a group of individuals born during the same period and who go through life together. It is a widely held view that the cohort demonstrates common characteristics through accumulated knowledge and shared experiences (Meredith and Schewe, 1994; Motta et al., 2002). Using the 2000/2001 generational split, Bloomberg explicates that Generation Z comprises 32% of the 7.7 billion population and little ahead of 31% millennials (Miller and Lu, 2019). Early borns in this generation have recently completed their college education and entered the workforce (Chillakuri and Mahanandia, 2018; Dwivedula et al., 2019; Schroth, 2019; Chillakuri, 2020b). This generation will continue to take over the workplace in the forthcoming years, and there is enough evidence that Generation Z plays a crucial role in the workplace. There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of Generation Z in the workplace. However, much of the research has been descriptive, and empirical studies on Generation Z are sporadic.

Previous research on Generation Z focused on understanding the inter-generational issues (Lanier, 2017; Grow and Yang, 2018). Koulopoulos and Keldsen (2014) argue that Generation Z should not be seen as a new generation; instead, it is viewed as a new set of behaviors and attitudes; therefore, studying and understanding their characteristics assumed significance. The extant literature also upholds this view, and thus the prior studies focused on examining the traits and characteristics (Bencsik et al., 2016; Lanier, 2017; Lazányi and Bilan, 2017; Chillakuri and Mahanandia, 2018; Robertson, 2018; Hoxha and Zeqiraj, 2019). Recent literature focused on understanding workplace expectations (Christensen, 2018; Fratričová and Kirchmayer, 2018; Dwivedula et al., 2019; Berge and Berge, 2019; Chillakuri, 2020a). The findings of these studies indicate that Generation Z prefers autonomy at work, proclivity for entrepreneurship, values education, financial stability, rewards, job security, flexibility, and work-life balance (Grow and Yang, 2018; Chillakuri and Mahanandia, 2018; Lazányi and Bilan, 2017). In addition, they value career advancement, continuous learning, and opportunities for professional development (Iorgulescu, 2016; Lanier, 2017; Fratričová and Kirchmayer, 2018). Besides, they have a job preference and have an idealistic picture that the work is exciting and has a sense of purpose (Schroth, 2019).

Generation Z's expectations of the workplace start right from pre-onboarding. In a survey by Korn Ferry, 25 % of the new hires reported that lack of onboarding experience is cited as a reason for quitting the job in the first six months (Korn Ferry, 2017). In another survey, Generation Z reported that they want to leave the job within three months, as they did not feel like a real job (Schroth, 2019). Besides, Generation Z is described as a cohort with no patience (Opris and Cenusa, 2017); thus, they feel bored and easily get disengaged from the work. In contrast, the literature indicates that Generation Z values coaching and support from their managers (Schroth, 2019). They prefer in-person feedback and coaching. Coaching has been receiving widespread acceptance among organizations. However, the literature on Generation Z is not clear if high perceived supervisor support or coaching would affect their intentions to quit; therefore, the present study addresses this gap.

Although empirical research on employees' intention to quit is growing (Fisher, 1993; Griffeth et al., 2000; Firth et al., 2004; Taris et al., 2006; Purani and Sahadev, 2008; Griffin and Moorhead, 2011; Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017; Gächter et al., 2013), more studies are required given the Generation Z entering the workforce. There is a dearth of empirical studies on Generation Z because very little is known about their workplace expectations and intentions to quit. Against this background, the study empirically examines the relationship between employee expectations, work-related boredom, supervisor support, and intention to quit.

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In particular, the study proposes a model that examines the moderating role of supervisor support in the relationship between work-related boredom and the intention to quit. Drawing on the social support theory, we posit that unmet expectations in the workplace create a sense of unrest, thereby leading to work-related boredom. Employees who do not find work interesting get disengaged from the work and are likely to quit the organization. There is a dearth of focus on what causes an employee to leave the organization. Therefore, it is important to examine the intention to quit, as it has spillover effects on the employees themselves and the organization. This research examines the moderating role of supervisor support in buffering the negative effects of unmet expectations and the work-related boredom on employee turnover. In doing so, this research highlights the importance of supervisor support. Although Generation Z differs from previous generations in terms of attitudes, values, and behaviors, they expect support from co-workers, and more importantly, from the reporting managers (supervisors).

The study makes several contributions to both theory and practice. First, the study advances the understanding of the Generation cohort theory (Mannheim, 1952; Strauss and Howe, 1997; Inglehart, 1997). Second, the study makes a theoretical contribution to Vroom's expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) that that the supervisors have access to employee instrumentality and valence factors. Third, the study examines the mediating role of work-related boredom in understanding the underlying mechanisms of unmet expectations and intention to quit. The study also extends the social support theory (Cohen and Wills, 1985), reconfirming that the negative impact of work stressors or work-related boredom is buffered by increased supervisor support. Finally, the study extends the literature on Generation Z, while the research on Generation Z is still at a nascent stage, empirical studies examining their intention to quit are notably absent.

The remainder of the study is structured as follows: First, we reviewed the literature on employee expectations, intention to quit, work-related boredom, and supervisor support linking it with the available literature on Generation Z. Based on the theoretical overview and past studies, we propose to test the hypotheses. Second, we present the research methodology, define the sample, sampling technique, justification of sample, and the survey instrument measures used to collect the data. Third, we present the findings and discussions in relation to the hypothesis framed. Finally, we conclude the study by discussing the findings' implications and providing directions for future research.

## THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### *UNMET EXPECTATIONS AND INTENTION TO QUIT*

Employees join an organization with many expectations that determine their emotions, attitudes, and behavior (Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017), and Generation Z is no exception to this fact. The new hires' expectations start even before they join, such as pre-employment expectations, training and development opportunities, culture fit, and work-life balance (Earl and Bright, 2007; Earl et al., 2011). When their expectations are met, they experience job satisfaction due to which their commitment to the job and the organization increases. Likewise, when their expectations are not met, they experience job dissatisfaction resulting in undesirable results (Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981). Porter and Steers (1973) describe unmet employee expectations as "discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he expected to encounter". Previous studies have reported that unmet job expectations causes low job satisfaction (Irving and Montes, 2009; Wanous et al., 1992), and eventually leads to high turnover intention (Proost et al., 2012; Turnley and Feldman, 2000; Taris et al., 2006).

Vroom's expectancy theory holds the view that performance and motivation are interlinked. In his seminal work, Vroom (1964) explains the theory of motivation through three terms – expectancy,

instrumentality, and valence. First, the employee believes that increased effort leads to improved performance. Second, the employee will be motivated when they know that their performance will be rewarded. Third, the importance the employee places on the expected outcome. The study extends the understanding of expectancy theory with the assumption that the supervisors have access to employee instrumentality and valance factors. Expectations from the managers have increased, as the transitioning from managers to coach is on the rise (Clutterbuck, 2008; Ellinger et al., 2011; Suiryan, 2013). As a coach, a manager asks questions rather than providing answers because without knowing what employees expect and what they want, it becomes difficult for the coach to understand how motivated they are (Chillakuri, 2018; Schroth, 2019).

Employees experience favorable outcomes when they encounter positive experiences or when organizations meet their expectations. Likewise, employees experience unfavorable results when they encounter negative experiences (Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017). Previous studies have indicated that boundaryless careers involving constant adaptation (Littleton et al., 2000), and jobs characterized by complexity, continual change, and chance (Bright et al., 2005) become more of an impediment than an asset. Furthermore, (Earl and Bright, 2007) argue that being decided results in more satisfying careers. Prior studies (Healy et al., 1985; Savickas, 1990; 2002) also explored the relationship among age, months employed, and career attitudes. These studies argue that employees with mature career attitudes are more likely to be successful in careers due to their awareness of the career decision-making process. The study assumes significance as Generation Z has recently entered the workplace (Lanier, 2017; Chillakuri and Mahandia, 2018; Schroth, 2019; Dwivedula et al., 2019). Generation Z expectations are different from the earlier cohorts; opportunities for learning & professional development, financial rewards, work culture, and flexibility are considered to be their highest motivators (Fratričová and Kirchmayer, 2018). Besides, they enjoy work with a sense of purpose, value relationships at work, and other work-related factors such as achievement, career growth, and recognition. Generation Z is career ambitious and has a proclivity for financial stability, flexibility, and a supportive work environment (Grow and Yang, 2018). Gkorezis and Kastritsi (2017), in their study, established that employees with intrinsic motivation believe that their expectations about their job have met, while the individuals with low-levels of intrinsic motivation feel that the organizations have not fulfilled their expectations.

Contrary to this, Ghura (2017) argues that Generation Z lacks intrinsic motivation; as a result, they quit the organization when their expectations are not fulfilled. A pre-hire assessment firm, ThriveMap, supports the argument with its findings. A recent survey that studied Generation Z, aged 18 to 24, reported that 73% leave the job for not meeting the expectations (HR Dive, 2019). These findings are in line with the previous research (Proost et al., 2012; Taris et al., 2006; Hobfoll, 2002) that when employees' expectations differ from the workplace realities, they experience a motivational decline resulting in an employee quitting the organization. Against this background, we propose to investigate the relationship between Generation Z expectations from the workplace and their turnover intentions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1:* Employee unmet expectations are positively associated with intention to quit.

### THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK-RELATED BOREDOM

A significant association between unmet expectations and the employees' intention to quit is well established. The literature on Generation Z asserts that employees seek meaningful work with a sense of purpose (Schroth, 2019; Chillakuri, 2020a). Further, they consider themselves as hardworking professionals and want work to be fun and exciting. One way to keep them engaged is to challenge them constantly. In the absence of an exciting and challenging job, they do not shy away from leaving

the organization. Considering this, the study proposes the mediating impact of work-related boredom between employees' expectations and intentions to quit.

In the previous section, it is argued that employees quit the organization when there is a disconnect between their expectations and reality. Extant literature indicates that employee intention to quit is a widely researched construct due to its significance to organizational success and employee productivity. Intention to quit has been investigated both from a new hire (Taris et al., 2006; Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017) and experienced employee perspectives (Purani and Sahadev, 2008; Griffeth et al., 2000; Gächter et al., 2013). Past studies also investigated the antecedents of employees intention to quit, such as the absence of job satisfaction, job commitment (Firth et al., 2004; Griffin and Moorhead, 2011), social stressors (Harris et al., 2009; Jawahar, 2002), locus of control (Firth et al., 2004; Rahim and Psenicka, 1996), emotional dissonance (Abraham, 1999), and job boredom or work-related boredom (Fisher, 1993; Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017). The study supports evidence from previous observations (Saks, 2006; Halbesleben; 2010; Agarwal et al., 2012) that work engagement is negatively correlated with turnover intentions. Contrary to this, when people get bored, they become disengaged and decide to leave the organization.

Job boredom is different from burnout as the later refers to a state of mental exhaustion that involves a negative attitude toward work resulting in depletion of one's accomplishments, increased psychological distance from one's job, and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001; World Health Organization, 2019). Job boredom is defined as an unpleasant state of discomfort that involves a lack of interest in a work situation and difficulties concentrating on them (Mikulas and Vodanovich, 1993; Fisher, 1993). When employees' expectations are not met, the unmet expectations are likely to produce negative emotions such as work-related boredom (Gkorezis and Kastritsi, 2017). Prior literature indicates that job boredom is associated with monotonous, low skilled work (Harju et al., 2014), lack of challenge, or insufficiently challenging demands (Reijseger et al., 2013). However, Harju and Hakanen (2016) indicate that job boredom encompasses a wide range of jobs and is not determined by certain work types. The adverse outcomes of boredom result in counterproductive work behavior, poor health, and inability to perform tasks (Bruursema et al., 2011; Skowronski, 2012; Harju et al., 2014); as a result, employees are likely to quit the organization. Although there is a plethora of research on the intention to leave, empirical research on turnover has produced inconsistent results owing to the complexity of defining and the varied work contexts. However, research has shown a considerable degree of consistency that dissatisfied employees are likely to quit. Job satisfaction differs based on the individual's perceptions and evaluations of a job, and the perception depends upon their needs and expectations.

Generation Z literature indicates that they are career ambitious, highly skilled, and high on entrepreneurial orientation (Bencsik et al., 2016; Ghura, 2017). Managing Generation Z's expectations are crucial to the organizations, as they have an idealistic view that the work assigned to them is exciting and meaningful. Moreover, they expect their managers to hear and implement their ideas and get a chance to work with everyone in the organization (Schroth, 2019). Given an opportunity, they like to work in an organization that provides career advancement, continuous learning and growth (Fratričová & Kirchmayer, 2018), and low proclivity to work in a startup organization (Iorgulescu, 2016). As a generation, who seeks a sense of purpose in the job they do, uninteresting or monotony in work is less likely to engage them in work (Fratričová & Kirchmayer, 2018). As a result, employees feel bored at work and can quickly translate into stress, forcing them to quit the job. Generation Z is described as a cohort that has zero patience (Opris and Cenusa, 2017). As digital natives, they have far higher and different expectations from the organization right from the onboarding. They want everything to happen quickly and prefer real-time feedback (Lazányi and Bilan, 2017; Lanier, 2017). Therefore, managers have to be cautious while engaging them in low-value add or repetitive tasks. As mentioned, they are a generation with no patience and thus have a high tendency for boredom resulting in leaving

the job. They do not want to attend a class just for attendance; instead, they want to be fully engaged in the class (Kozinsky, 2017). Likewise, they want to be fully involved in the organization and not want to come to the organization just for the paycheck. Employees' unmet expectations are negatively related to intrinsic motivation. Work-related boredom is a state of unpleasant situation disengaging from work resulting in negative intrinsic work. Thus, it can be understood that work-related boredom is negatively related to intrinsic motivation.

We propose the mediated relationship between employee expectations and intention to quit through work-related boredom in view of the arguments presented above. We anticipate that the work-related boredom is likely to serve as an underlying mechanism through which employee expectations affect the employees' intention to quit. Therefore, we propose:

*H2:* Unmet expectations are positively related to work-related boredom

*H3:* Work-related boredom is positively associated with intention to quit

*H4:* Work-related boredom mediates the relationship between unmet expectations and intention to quit

### *THE MODERATING ROLE OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT*

The literature on organizational behavior and psychology literature has studied supervisor support's role in mitigating job burnout and stress. In the previous section, we argued that job boredom is different from job burnout. Therefore, the study restricts investigating the moderating role of supervisor support on the relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit, not on job burnout. Supervisor support is defined as the extent to which employees perceive their supervisor's interest in their well-being and job performance (Maertz et al., 2007). Prior studies have investigated the moderating effect of supervisor support (Muhammad and Hamdy, 2005; Ru Hsu, 2011; Choi et al., 2012; Chauhan et al., 2017) on job satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2019), stress, burnout, training, work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2008; Ling Suan and Nasurdin, 2016; Rai et al., 2017). These studies have shown that supervisor support can have powerful effects on employees. Therefore, we propose investigating the moderating role of supervisor support on work-related boredom and intention to quit.

When individuals perceive supervisor support, they feel valued and possess a feeling of belongingness and a feeling of being a group member (Sarafino and Smith, 2014). The literature provides examples of perceived supervisor support that helps individuals in coping with the stressors. In this paper, we argue that supervisor support helps employees, especially Generation Z, understand the organizational expectations and work demands, as the supervisor is responsible for managing their work. We argue that individuals with higher perceived supervisor support will better communicate the expectations to the supervisor. Individuals with low perceived supervisor support are likely to face less work satisfaction and possibly leave the job. We base our assumption on social support theory (Cohen and Wills, 1985), which states that the negative impact of work stressors or work-related boredom is buffered by increased supervisor support. Frequent conversations with the supervisor help both the employee and the manager, as the latter will have an opportunity to understand the employee expectations and provide appropriate direction (Chillakuri, 2018). In contrast, the employee feels that he/she is valued and has the supervisor's support.

Organizations have long moved away from traditional managerial roles, and therefore, in today's workplace, a manager performs multiple roles – trainer, mentor, coach, and leader (Barry, 1992). As a coach, the manager develops leadership competencies that will enable a team to perform more

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effectively. The literature on coaching confirms a positive correlation between coaching and retaining employees (Ellinger et al., 2011; Wheeler, 2011; Theeboom and van Vianen, 2014). In addition, coaching helps the supervisor identify, develop, and, if required, advise the team member to take up a different job that suits the candidate skills and interests, thus focusing on the overall career development. The coach provides custom-tailored learning and development process using a collaborative, reflective, goal-focused relationship to achieve professional outcomes. Generation Z embraces collaborative learning than an instructing approach (Schroth, 2019). Through consultative coaching, the supervisor helps employees explore alternatives and challenges them by effective probing rather than telling them what to do (Schroth, 2019). We assume that the supervisor's coaching, guiding, and investment in employees' careers may buffer the boredom, leading to employees staying with the organization.

Generation Z likes to work with all levels of employees, and as such, they do not have a generational preference for supervisors (Jiří, 2016). However, they prefer to work with a manager who values their career aspirations and well-being. Generation Z values organizations that provide greater flexibility, a supportive work environment, work ethics, learning opportunities, career advancement, and work-life balance (Grow, Yang, 2018; Fratričová & Kirchmayer, 2018). Prior studies found significant evidence necessary for this study. While they like being independent and prefer virtual teamwork (Bencsik et al., 2016), when it comes to feedback, they prefer in-person feedback and values traditional opportunities for advancement (Lazányi and Bilan; Lanier, 2017). They expect leaders to be knowledgeable and value leaders who provide instant, real-time feedback. As career ambitious generations, they expect to quickly climb the corporate ladder and seek support from the supervisor. Moreover, they like to understand the leader's career progression and what it takes to be a leader. The study supports the observations (Engelbrecht et al., 2014; Smith, 2019) that leaders who self-regulate their behaviors are better positioned to motivate the team members, which corroborates with Generation Z's expectations; therefore, we propose:

**H5:** Supervisor support moderates the relationship between work-related boredom and employees' intention to quit, such that the relationship is stronger when supervisor support is low, and the relationship is weaker when supervisor support is high.

## SAMPLE AND STUDY PROCEDURE

The study collected data from the service sector, utilizing the snowball approach. The study chose to investigate the service sector for three key reasons. First, the service sector is the largest in India, contributing 54.17 percent of India's Gross Value Added (GVA) at the current price in 2018-19 (Indian Brand Equity Foundation, 2020). Second, Generation Z is considered the first digital native generation, raised with technology, and as such, their traits are suited for organizations characterized by rapid changes (Grafton, 2011; Ghura, 2017). Third, most Generation Z aspires to work in technology, and therefore, software engineering is their most-preferred job (Glassdoor Economic Research, 2019). Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that the researchers generally use when it is hard to identify the sample. As the study focused on Generation Z, identifying these cohorts is the first step in data collection. After identifying the initial respondents, they were requested to provide references to other respondents belonging to the Generation Z cohort. The sample for the study was collected from services organizations (Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services companies). A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from the respondents. A total of 600 respondents were invited to participate in the study. These respondents were requested to complete an anonymous survey resulting in 348 responses. The only criterion that we had employed to decide the sample is age. As the study focuses on Generation Z, we have carefully vetted the data to include only those born in 1995 or later (Bassiouni and Hackley, 2014; Budac and Baltador, 2014;

Lanier, 2017). The data were carefully checked for missing or incomplete information, and the usable responses were 336. The sample consisted of 154 female and 182 male participants. 98 percent of the respondents were between 22 to 25 years old, while 2 percent of them were under 22 years old. 86.5 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 13.5 percent had a master's degree.

### MEASURES

Standard scales were adopted to measure the variables on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). All the items used to measure are mentioned in Appendix.

### EMPLOYEE UNMET EXPECTATIONS

Literature indicates a lack of availability of existing measures to assess unmet expectations. Although Yang et al. (2018) recently developed a two-dimension 12-item measure. These items were based on existing measures (Lait and Wallace, 2002; Robinson, 1996). We have adopted a 4 item scale developed by Wallace and Mueller (1994) that seemed more accurate as some of the questions were put in reverse order. Sample items are "All in all, I am disappointed in this job" and "My experiences in this job have been better than I originally expected" (R).

### INTENTION TO QUIT

Intention to quit was measured using a three-item scale of Sjöberg and Sverke (2000). The sample item includes "I am actively searching for other jobs" and "If I had a free choice, I would quit this job", and "I feel that I could leave this job".

### WORK-RELATED BOREDOM

We used a 5-item scale developed by van Hooff and van Hooft (2014) to measure work-related-boredom. Sample Items are "I think my work is boring", and "There are long periods of boredom on my job".

### SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

We assessed supervisor support using the 6-item scale developed by Wolken and Good (1995) to measure supervisor support. The sample item includes "My supervisor went out of his/ her way to make my life easier for me" and "It was easy to talk with my supervisor".

### RESULTS

All the four measures used in the study are standard scales; however, these have been developed in the western context. Therefore, the instruments are vetted with academicians for face and content validity tests, following which we conducted a pilot survey and received 80 responses. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to validate the measures. The results of these measures are reported in Appendix. Cronbach's alpha values for all the four scales were greater than 0.7, indicates acceptable internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Values are within the suggested limits for reliability measures, and therefore no items were removed in the final study.

Common method bias (CMB) is a commonly found bias in the self-administered survey method. The study followed the recommendations (Podsakoff et al., 2003; 2012) to reduce the likelihood of

common method variance (CMV). The study used established scores, and the order of items was randomly arranged, with few questions arranged in reverse order. For instance, an item in unmet expectations had items such as "My experiences in this job have been better than I originally expected".
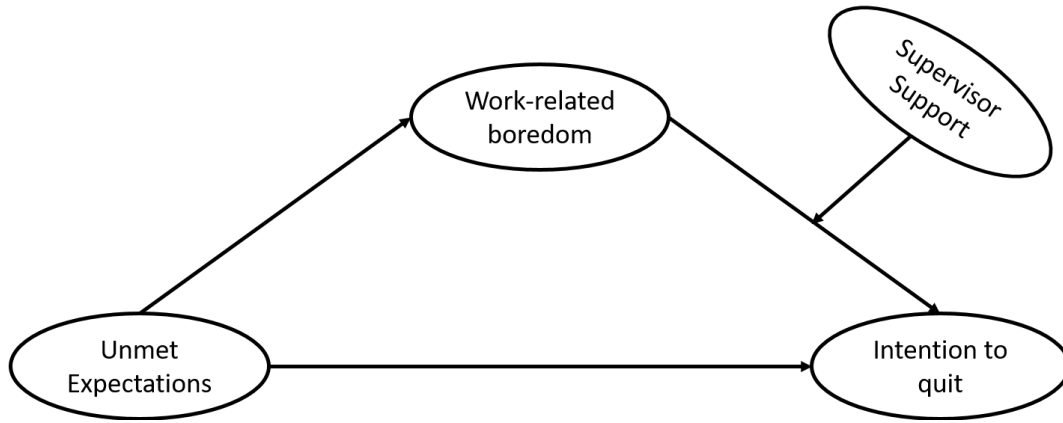


**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

## *MEASUREMENT MODEL*

The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1. The model fit indices were above the recommended statistical values ($\chi2=592.97$; $p<0.05$, GFI=0.901, CFI=0.940, TLI=0.923, and RMSEA=0.063). Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to measure the constructs' convergent validity. Table 1 presents the mean, SD, CR, and AVE values. As can be seen from Table 1, the composite reliability for all constructs is above 0.80, and the average variance extracted (AVE) values range from 0.524 to 0.856. The values were above the accepted values of 0.70 for CR (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988), and 0.50 for AVE (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In addition to convergent validity, the study also considered discriminant validity. Hair et al. (2011) suggest that the AVE's square root should be greater than the correlations of each variable to support the discriminant validity. Table 1 presents the result of correlation values for all constructs and that all the values are lesser than the square root of AVE. Hence, the study fulfilled the discriminant validity criteria.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics

| Constructs | Cronbach *a* | CR | AVE | Mean | SD | UE | WB | SS | IQ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UE | 0.827 | 0.824 | 0.781 | 2.40 | 1.02 | (0.81) | | | |
| WB | 0.832 | 0.881 | 0.856 | 3.28 | 1.91 | 0.58** | (0.82) | | |
| SS | 0.749 | 0.821 | 0.625 | 2.68 | 1.82 | 0.42** | 0.46** | (0.77) | |
| IQ | 0.778 | 0.813 | 0.524 | 2.37 | 1.09 | 0.42** | 0.45** | 0.46** | (0.71) |

**Notes.** UE – Unmet expectations; WB – Work-related boredom; SS – Supervisor support; IQ – Intention to quit; CR – composite reliability; AVE – average variance extracted. **$p<0.01$

## *RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TESTING*

The study used ordinary least squares regression with the path-analytic conditional process modeling (PROCESS) macro for SPSS introduced by Hayes (2013) to test the hypothesis. The advantage of the

PROCESS macro is that it allows testing for direct, indirect, and conditional indirect effects in moderated-mediation models and mediated-moderated models. Therefore, the mediated moderation model was tested using Hayes (2013) PROCESS macros. The process helps calculate bootstrapped indirect and conditional indirect effects along with their confidence intervals at a given error level.

Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were tested using regression analyses with bias-corrected bootstrap-mediated effects recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). In Tables 2 and 3, we present the results of regression analyses and bootstrapping in PROCESS. As can be seen in Table 2, unmet expectations were positively related to intention to quit (H1: $\beta$ = 0.029, $p < 0.01$), work-related boredom (H2: $\beta$ = 0.754, $p < 0.01$). Likewise, work-related boredom is positively related to intention to quit (H3: $\beta$ = 0.152, $p < 0.01$). We have also tested the relationship between supervisor support and intention to quit ($\beta$ = -0.027, $p < 0.05$) and the relationship between supervisor support and work-related boredom ($\beta$ = -0.022, $p < 0.01$), evidencing the negative relation.

Further, the study examined the work-related boredom mediating the relationship between unmet expectations and intention to quit (H4). As can be seen in Table 2, there is a significant direct relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit ($\beta$ = 0.152, $p < 0.01$), and the relationship between unmet expectations and work-related boredom are also found to be significant ($\beta$ = 0.754, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, we conclude that unmet expectations influence the intention to quit; however, it also influences indirectly through work-related boredom, supporting an inference of full mediation (H4).

**Table 2.** Regression Results

| Variables | Model 01 (Work-related Boredom) β | Model 02 (Intention to Quit) β | Results |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unmet Expectations | 0.754*** (0.224) | 0.029*** (0.231) | *H1 is supported* *H2 is supported* |
| Work-related Boredom | | 0.152*** (0.069) | *H3 is supported* |
| Supervisor Support | -0.022** (0.167) | -0.227*** (0.086) | |
| Work-related Boredom X Supervisor Support | | -0.039*** (0.194) | |
| | | | *Results for H1, H2, and H3 imply that H4 is supported* *Results for H3 and H4, imply that H5 is supported* |
| **Control Variables** | | | |
| Education | 0.543* (0.323) | 0.294** (0.362) | |
| Tenure | 0.463 (0.286) | 0.239** (0.322) | |
| Age | 0.384 (0.261) | 0.227 (0.314) | |
| R² | 0.229*** | 0.072*** | |
| N | 336 | 336 | |

Hypothesis 5 was testing using Model 7 of Hayes's PROCESS macro. We examined the moderating effects of supervisor support on the relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit. We propose a negative moderating effect of supervisor support such that the positive relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit weakens when employees receive high supervisor support. Using Model 7, we examined the moderating effect of supervisor support. First, in the PROCESS macro, the effects of the moderator (supervisor support) on the relationship between the dependent variable (intention to quit) and the mediator (work-related boredom) are examined (H3). As highlighted in Table 2, the interaction term (work-related boredom x supervisor support) is negative and statistically significant ($\beta$ = −0.039, p < 0.001). This suggests that supervisor support moderates the relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit, in line with Hypothesis 2. In other words, the effects of work-related boredom on the intention to quit are weaker when the employees have a higher level of supervisor support.

We further calculated the moderated or conditional effect of unmet expectations on the intention to quit via work-related boredom at three levels of the moderator (low, moderate, and high). The study used bias-corrected bootstrapping drawing on 5000 samples at a 95% confidence interval. As shown in Table 3, the conditional indirect effect of unmet expectations on the intention to quit via

work-related boredom is significant at low and moderate levels of supervisor support. In contrast, it is not significant at high levels of supervisor support. Therefore, the results support hypothesis 5. The plotted interaction presented in figure 2 shows that employees who have strong supervisor support experienced lower levels of intention to quit than employees who have lower supervisor support. The simple slopes analyses demonstrate that the effect of work-related boredom on intention to quit was significant at low level of supervisor support (-.438, [LLCI = -.623, ULCI = -.244]) and moderate levels of supervisor support, (-.233, [LLCI = -.385, ULCI = -.087]), but not at high levels (-.164, [LLCI = -.346, ULCI = .186]). These results indicate that supervisor support negatively moderates the relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit supporting Hypothesis 5.

**Table 3.** Test of the Moderating Role of Supervisor Support in the Relationship Between Work-Related Boredom and Intention to Quit

| Level of Supervisor Support | Effect | Standard Error | LLCI | ULCI |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low | -0.438*** | 0.109 | -0.623 | -0.244 |
| Medium | -0.233** | 0.086 | -0.385 | -0.087 |
| High | -0.164 | 0.115 | -0.346 | 0.186 |



**Figure 2.** The Plotted Interaction of the Moderating Effect of Supervisor Support in the Relationship Between Work-Related Boredom and Intention to Quit

## DISCUSSION

The study assumes significance at a time when large numbers of Generation Z are joining the workforce. The extant literature indicates that employees have a set of expectations, which are likely to impact their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Likewise, employers also have certain expectations from employees. Turnley and Feldman (2000) define the employer-employee relationship as a psychological contract. Violation of such an agreement will have repercussions for both the employer and the employee. We found that Generation Z is likely to quit the organizations within three months when they see a discrepancy between what they do versus what they have expected. Our findings are

consistent with the previous research that shows that unmet job expectations cause higher turnover intention (Janssen et al., 1999; Turnley and Feldman, 2000; Houkes et al., 2003; Taris et al., 2006; Proost et al., 2012; Maden et al., 2016).

The findings from the study on Generation Z, a new cohort, extend the theoretical contribution, highlighting the importance of supervisor support for Generation Z in the initial years of their careers. The present study examined whether supervisor support buffers the negative effects of work-related boredom leading to intention to quit. While employees join the organization with a set of expectations, these expectations at times could be unrealistic, causing severe ramifications. Such expectations affect not only themselves but also the business; therefore, it is important to manage their expectations by providing a realistic job preview (Schroth, 2019). The realistic job preview provides them an idealistic picture of the job, challenges, and the job's positive and negative aspects. Moreover, extant literature indicates that Generation Z is impatient and exhibits a lack of tolerance (Opris and Cenusa, 2017; Dwivedula et al., 2019; Chillakuri, 2020b). Managing these expectations should start right from the interview, while onboarding can be an effective tool in setting the expectations and reducing the new hires' anxiety (Schroth, 2019; Chillakuri, 2020b). American Psychological Association (2018) reports that Generation Z is more likely than any generation to report anxiety order, and feel the need for emotional support. Likewise, in a recent empirical study (Chillakuri, 2020b), Generation Z participants emphasized the need for personal connect with the managers and the need for handholding in the early days of their careers. Supervisors are expected to coach, guide, and mentor the new hires to maximize their performance and well-being. Immediate supervisors as a coach will produce a profound effect than assigning a coach other than the manager (Wilson, 2011).

In particular, we identify supervisor support as a critical resource that can reduce the negative effects of unmet expectations and the work-related boredom associated with it. In examining supervisor support's moderating role, we drew on the social support theory (Cohen and Wills, 1985). Generation Z values supportive co-workers (Berge and Berge, 2019) and the supervisors, who support their career aspirations and well-being (Dwivedula et al., 2019; Chillakuri, 2020a). Consistent with the previous findings that supervisor support plays a critical role in employee careers (Skakon et al., 2010; Nielsen and Randall; 2013; Horan et al., 2018), our findings indicate that Generation Z seeks more support from their supervisors. High supervisor support enables a manager to relate to their team members and have an open dialogue discussing their ideas, flexibility, and career path. In the absence of such supervisor support, Generation Z is quick to quit the organization, and a majority of them leave the work in three months (Schroth, 2019). Therefore, we suggest regular coaching discussions to understand the work, provide feedback, and implement course correction, if any. These coaching discussions help the manager understand the employee expectations and provide opportunities for the employees to be more successful in their work (Chillakuri, 2018; Chillakuri, 2020b).

## THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study presents three important implications. First, the study enriches the understanding of Generation Z, their characteristics, and the expectations from the workplace. There is a dearth of empirical studies on Generation Z expectations at the workplace and their intention to leave. Therefore, the study makes a unique contribution to Generation Z literature and the cohort theory.

Second, the study made a theoretical contribution to the expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964). Vroom's theory has its share of criticism. The majority of the scholars opine that the theory is based on the assumption that the employer will fairly reward employee performance is misleading. However, the theory still holds relevance in today's organizational context, as supervisors have access to employee instrumentality and valance factors. In fact, Generation Z is open to sharing their expectations and likes during in-person discussions. The study also accounts for the criticism leveled

against the expectancy theory that individuals' needs are different, and thus the study supports individualized coaching, as desired by Generation Z.

Finally, the study extends the understanding that unmet expectations lead to disengagement. The monotonous, low-value add or redundant tasks make the employees feel bored, resulting in quitting the organizations. The study extends the understanding of social support theory and the underlying role the reporting supervisor plays in helping the employees shape their careers. The results of the findings resonate with the prior empirical studies. Past research studies (Turnley and Feldman, 2000; Maden et al., 2016; Proost et al., 2012) have established the relationship between unmet expectations and the intention to quit. The inclusion of work-related boredom as a mediator further enhanced the study in understanding the intentions to leave. Expectations from the managers are on the rise. Therefore, the study investigated the moderating role of supervisor support, and as assumed, higher perceived supervisor support is negatively associated with intentions to quit.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study suggests that unmet expectations may lead to negative consequences, leading to boredom and intention to quit. In the next few years, organizations will be filled with half of Generation Z employees (Miller and Lu, 2019). Therefore, organizations need to be in sync with their expectations. First, organizations must be candid in explaining the job profile during the interview; more importantly, organizations need to address the expectations even before they are hired.

Second, the study presents that work-related boredom may lead to intention to quit; therefore, organizations need to pay attention to the quality of work. Although Generation Z is mostly new hires, they have expectations about the quality of work. They do not want to be considered a novice and entrusted with small, low-value, redundant tasks. Previous research indicates that Generation Z is a hardworking, entrepreneurial balance (Grow and Yang, Chillakuri and Mahanandia, 2018; Lazányi and Bilan, 2017; Chillakuri, 2020a) and therefore expect managers to hear their ideas and be allowed to implement them. This will create higher engagement and also a sense of ownership and belongingness for the employees.

Third, supervisor support plays a vital role in shaping organizational culture. Given Generation Z's lack of patience and preference for in-person meetings and feedback, managers need to provide customized, one-on-one feedback. Schroth (2019) holds the view that coaching offers emotional support and reduces stress on employees. Therefore, organizations need to develop managers as a coach and establish organizational expectations. The coaching conversations should not be a mere listening and understanding of their expectations but should also help identify the desired outcomes, set goals, identify strengths, and formulate an action plan. Finally, it is also equally crucial for the organizations to create a culture of coaching across levels and that the feedback from the coaching conversations is valued.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Although the study has a number of strengths in presenting a Generation Z perspective and their intentions to quit, it also suffers from certain limitations. First, the study uses cross-sectional data, which is a limitation to establish a causal relationship between the variables. Therefore, we suggest further studies to consider conducting longitudinal panel-design, where the relationship between the variables can be mapped over time. Second, the study was undertaken in the Information Technology sector and a particular country with a small sample size; therefore, caution must be applied, as the findings are not necessarily generalizable to other sectors and countries, in particular. Future studies

should explore cross-cultural research to examine the relative strength of the hypothesized relationships.

Third, the study focused on examining the unmet expectations and their impact on employee turnover. Future studies can complement the study by investigating workplace expectations. For instance, Chillakuri (2020a) examined Generation Z expectations from an onboarding program. In the next few years, organizations will have a significant number of Generation Z employees than any other cohort. Therefore, future studies may explore their expectations. Unmet expectations, as a concept, is an important issue for future research. However, the extant literature indicates a lack of availability of existing measures to assess unmet expectations, and therefore calls for further investigation. Further research can be done to investigate other outcomes of unmet expectations and work-related boredom such as stress, depression, and a supervisor's role in helping Generation Z cope with the unmet expectations. We argued that supervisor support buffers the negative effects arising out of unmet expectations and work-related boredom; future studies may ascertain other variables that buffer the negative effects. From a theoretical perspective, HRM researchers should examine the specific conditions under which supervisor support negatively moderates the relationship between work-related boredom and intention to quit. For instance, (Newman et al., 2012) argue that higher supervisor support may seem detrimental to the organization. Due to the strong attachment, employees might leave the organization if the supervisor leaves the organization. Therefore, further research is required to examine the level of support that Generation Z requires.

## CONCLUSION

Although Generation Z has attracted scholarly attention, it is still at a nascent stage as a concept. The literature on Generation Z indicates that recent studies have focused on understanding Generation Z's attitudes, preferences, and behaviors (Scholz, 2014; Turner, 2015; Bencsik et al., 2016; Chillakuri and Mahanandia, 2018). The present study is an attempt to contribute to the existing literature and provide an empirical investigation into the relationship between unmet expectations, work-related boredom, supervisor support, and the intention to quit. Generation Z joins the organizations with unrealistic expectations of work that, in turn, promote lower levels of commitment and higher turnover, and therefore warrants more research. Further research on Generation Z would help the organization, HR managers, and the reporting managers understand and provide necessary coaching to bridge the gap between unmet expectations and work expectations. When their expectations are met, they are likely to experience job satisfaction fostering a higher level of organizational and job commitment.

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## APPENDIX

Item Loading (CFA results)

| Constructs | Measurement Item Loading |
|---|---|
| **Unmet Expectations (UE)** | |
| All in all, I am disappointed in this job | 0.92 |
| My experiences in this job have been better than I originally expected (R) | 0.86 |
| Generally, this job is not what I thought it would be | 0.68 |
| This job has lived up to the expectations I had when I first started (R) | 0.82 |
| **Work-related boredom (WB)** | |
| I think my work is boring | 0.89 |
| There are long periods of boredom on my job | 0.76 |
| My job goes by slowly | 0.88 |
| I often get bored with my work | 0.81 |
| The time seems to go by slowly when I'm at work | 0.63 |
| **Supervisor Support (SS)** | |
| My supervisor went out of his/ her way to make my life easier for me | 0.78 |
| It was easy to talk with my supervisor | 0.64 |
| My supervisor could be relied on when things got tough for me at work | 0.90 |
| My supervisor was willing to listen to my personal problems | 0.58 |
| My supervisor respected me | 0.82 |
| My supervisor appreciated the work I did | 0.77 |
| **Intention to Quit (IQ)** | |
| I am actively looking for other jobs | 0.84 |
| If I had a free choice, I would quit this job | 0.91 |
| I feel that I could leave this job | 0.76 |

**Notes.** R – reverse order items