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PERCEPTION OF WORKPLACE CHANGES BY GENERATION Z REPRESENTATIVES

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to identify the expectations of surveyed representatives of Generation Z regarding changes in the work execution process and the ways work will be performed in the coming years.

Design/methodology/approach: Following a literature review on the subject, directions of change in the work execution process were identified. A survey was then conducted among representatives of Generation Z in Poland. This made it possible to understand the values and expectations of Generation Z in the context of changes in the work process, including modern work trends and digital technologies.

Findings: The study revealed that Generation Z highly values flexible forms of work. The most desired work models are hybrid work (82.3%) and flexible working hours (75.16%). Remote work (44.72%) and a four-day workweek (45.34%) are also popular, indicating a strong desire to achieve a work-life balance. Preferences for working in international teams (34.78%) and business travel (37.58%) reflect a desire to gain global professional experience. Freelance work (22.98%) and project-based work (22.05%) are less preferred, suggesting concerns about job stability and financial security. The least preferred form of work is traditional office work (13.66%).

Research limitations/implications: The main limitation of the study is the use of an online survey, which may lead to capturing the expectations of only those respondents who are more technologically advanced.

Practical implications: The study points to important trends that companies should consider when designing workplaces. Businesses should offer flexible work options, such as hybrid models and flexible hours, to attract and retain Generation Z employees. Additionally, it is important to utilize technologies that support remote work execution.

Social implications: The study results may contribute to improving employees' work-life balance and increasing flexibility in how work is performed. They may also drive changes in the structure of work itself.

Originality/value: The paper provides insights into Generation Z's preferences, helping companies, HR professionals, and decision-makers adapt to the evolving expectations of younger workers.

Keywords: Generation Z, Future of Work, Hybrid Work, Flexibility, Remote Work.

Category of the paper: Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior.

1. Introduction

In the context of ongoing transformations driven by digitalization, automation, and the increasing need to reconcile professional and personal life, the vision of the future of work is gaining significance (Jaworska, 2014, p. 10; Szymański, 2017, p. 93). The perspectives of Generation Z, which is currently entering the labor market, play a particularly crucial role in shaping contemporary work models. This cohort, comprising individuals born after 1995, is characterized by high mobility, flexibility, and proficiency in utilizing the Internet, emerging technologies, and digital applications. They demonstrate a strong preference for remote and hybrid work arrangements, perceiving geographical and cultural boundaries as relatively insignificant barriers (Kukla, Nowacka, 2019a). Similar to preceding generations, they prioritize health, autonomy, and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, they exhibit a strong inclination towards rapid career development and job satisfaction, often displaying a readiness to change their place of employment or residence when necessary (Kołodziejczyk, 2021, p. 7; Hysa, 2016, p. 390). As their presence in the labor market becomes increasingly pronounced, they pose both challenges and opportunities for employers and human resource professionals.

The growing prevalence of remote and hybrid work models, as well as flexible working hours, imposes new demands on employers in terms of workforce management and operational efficiency. Organizations must refine their employment strategies to align with these evolving trends. A comprehensive understanding of the expectations of Generation Z is essential for the development of effective human resource policies, which hold significant implications not only for the labor market but also for broader socio-economic well-being.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the expectations of Generation Z regarding transformations in work processes and employment structures in the coming years. The research seeks to validate the following hypotheses:

- Remote and hybrid work arrangements constitute the predominant employment models anticipated by Generation Z representatives.
- Flexible working hours represent a fundamental aspect of their employment expectations.

The study aims to address key research questions, namely: What are the specific expectations of Generation Z regarding work execution? What changes are most preferred by this cohort, and which employment models align most closely with their professional aspirations?

To achieve these research objectives and provide empirical insights, a systematic literature review was conducted, complemented by a survey-based study and a subsequent analysis of the collected data. The findings contribute to the formulation of recommendations that may serve as strategic guidelines for organizations in designing employment policies that cater to the

evolving workforce landscape. The originality of the presented material lies in the analysis of Generation Z representatives' expectations regarding the future of work. Attention is given to their preferences for work flexibility, including remote and hybrid work, as well as their approach to technology and well-being in the workplace.

2. Literature Review

The labor market is undergoing significant transformations due to technological advancements and socio-political factors. The success of organizations operating within a knowledge-based economy primarily depends on their competitiveness. One of the key trends shaping the future of work is the increasing prevalence of remote and hybrid work models (Kawecka-Endler, 2014, p. 124; Lubrańska, Musialik, 2024, p. 52). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this phenomenon, and an increasing number of employees now embrace these employment forms due to their flexibility and the ability to balance professional and personal responsibilities. The growing significance of remote work is also a consequence of rapid technological progress, the expansion of the service sector, and the implementation of legal regulations that standardize remote work practices (Muster, 2022, p. 33; Krzysztofek, 2015, pp. 19-20). According to the report Living, working and COVID-19 by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, remote work and telework are expected to become dominant forms of employment (Eurofound, 2020; Kawa, Grewiński, 2020, p. 4).

Changes in work models also result from labor market fluctuations and uncertainty. Globalization, digitalization, and increasing competition among companies and employees necessitate adaptation to evolving conditions (Majewski, Leja, 2023, p. 43). In the context of a knowledge-based economy, human capital, knowledge, and innovative technologies are of paramount importance (Mizerska, 2023). These factors determine the development potential of both individuals and entire organizations. The digital economy significantly influences the future labor market, with digital competencies playing a crucial role. The ability to critically and responsibly utilize new technologies has become a fundamental prerequisite for professional success. Digitalization compels employees to continuously develop their skills, acquire new knowledge, and adapt to changing conditions (Gasz, 2025, p. 45). Additionally, employment forms such as civil-law contracts, self-employment, and gig work are becoming increasingly common (Grewiński, Kawa, 2021, pp. 5–6).

A notable trend in the evolving labor market is the rise of coworking spaces and the so-called digital nomad work model. A growing number of professionals perform their job duties flexibly, utilizing dedicated workspaces such as cafés, parks, coworking centers, and even public transportation (Sęczkowska, 2019, p. 12; Wiśniewski, 2014, p. 80). This approach offers

greater freedom and flexibility, attributes particularly valued by Generation Z (Budniak, Grzybowski, Olszewski, 2017, p. 52).

Workplace flexibility entails the ability to choose working hours, a factor that significantly enhances job satisfaction (Mockałło, Barańska, 2022, p. 10). Organizations are increasingly adapting their management models to accommodate employee expectations. Many companies implement flexible working hours, allowing employees to tailor their schedules to their individual needs. Such solutions not only improve work-life balance but may also contribute to increased productivity. Technological advancements facilitate the virtualization of work, enabling remote access to corporate resources, applications, and data (Grzeganek-Więcek, Szopa, Więcek, 2014, p. 80).

In this context, a particularly important issue is employees' mental well-being, which gains special significance especially in remote and hybrid work models. Mental well-being at work can be understood as a subjective sense of satisfaction with one's job, positive attitudes toward professional duties, as well as a sense of balance between work and private life (Tabor, 2022, pp. 47-55). According to Ryff's definition, mental well-being encompasses six dimensions, among which the most relevant in the context of remote work are: a sense of autonomy, control over working time, a sense of purpose in work, and interpersonal relationships (Karaś, 2019, pp. 17-18).

Remote and hybrid work models significantly influence employees' mental well-being. Within these models, the organization of work and the way collaboration is managed play a crucial role in shaping employee experiences. Remote and hybrid work structures involve various forms of task organization and interaction, such as flexible working hours, the possibility to choose one's work location, and different collaboration approaches—both synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous collaboration, based on real-time interactions, can be associated with time pressure and increased stress, whereas asynchronous collaboration, allowing flexibility and self-management of time, fosters greater control over work, which can contribute to improving employees' mental well-being. Preferences regarding work organization, including the choice between these models, can impact the sense of work-life balance, stress levels, and the quality of interpersonal relationships in the workplace (Muster, 2022, pp. 29-44).

The emergence of Generation Z in the labor market presents new challenges for contemporary organizations. Upcoming changes must be addressed effectively to ensure efficient human resource management. For many business leaders, this necessitates a reassessment of existing strategies. Recruitment processes, talent utilization, motivation, and employee evaluation methods are evolving (Dolot, 2018, pp. 45-46; Messyasz, 2021, pp. 103-106). As the expectations of younger generations shift, employers must adapt their human resource strategies accordingly (Gajda, 2019, p. 96). Generation Z seeks not only competitive salaries but also an inspiring work environment, respect, opportunities for personal development, and the ability to leverage their potential (Ławińska, Korombel, 2023, p. 13).

They demonstrate a stronger inclination toward informal learning, highlighting their adaptability and eagerness to acquire new skills (Oxford Economics, 2021). Some organizations have begun employing Generation Z consultants, altering communication strategies and career development planning in response to these changes (Dorsey, Villa, 2023, p. 23).

As a new workforce segment, Generation Z introduces distinct values and expectations regarding employment. This generation has grown up in a digital world and is unfamiliar with a reality devoid of the Internet, smartphones, and social media. As a result, they possess unique technological competencies and exhibit a strong propensity for utilizing modern work tools (Chomątowska, Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, 2016, p. 63). Generation Z is characterized by pragmatism, creativity, and a drive for independence (Piotrowska, 2022, p. 5). They expect flexible working conditions, work-life balance, and rapid career development opportunities. Their entrepreneurial mindset enables them to generate innovative ideas and collaborate on solving global challenges. They also recognize the positive impact of automation and new work models on professional experiences (Wawrzonek, 2023, p. 87).

The future of work will be shaped by rapid technological advancements, the expansion of the knowledge economy, and the evolving expectations of younger generations (Tomaszewska, 2020, pp. 163-165; Tworóg, Mieczkowski, 2019, pp. 20-24). As a new professional group, Generation Z is setting new standards and values that organizations must acknowledge to remain competitive in the talent market. Key factors for success will include flexibility, adaptability, and investment in digital competencies, which are expected to become fundamental tools for professional activities in the coming decades (van Laar, van Deursen, van Dijk, de Haan, 2020).

3. Methodology

To achieve the research objective, an online survey method was employed, enabling the collection of opinions from representatives of Generation Z. The study was conducted between October and December 2024. Respondents answered questions developed based on a review of the relevant literature. For the purposes of this study, Generation Z was defined as individuals born after 1995. The sample selection was purposive. A total of 322 individuals participated in the survey, all of whom met the age criteria. Among the respondents, 190 were men (59%), 130 were women (40.4%), and 2 individuals (0.6%) chose not to disclose their gender.

Regarding educational and professional activity, 140 participants (43.5%) were students, 178 individuals (55.3%) combined work and studies, and 4 respondents (1.2%) focused exclusively on professional work. This sample structure provided diverse insights into the expectations of Generation Z, encompassing both those still pursuing education and those already engaged in the labor market.

The criteria included in the research questionnaire were based on a review of the existing literature. By analyzing the obtained results, it is possible to verify the extent to which the discussed variables reflect the actual preferences of the respondents and how significant they are for their perception of the future of work.

4. Results

To determine anticipated directions of change, respondents were asked about their opinions on the future of work models. Participants could select up to five responses, which facilitated the identification of the most significant trends likely to shape organizational operations in the coming years. The obtained results are presented in the chart below.

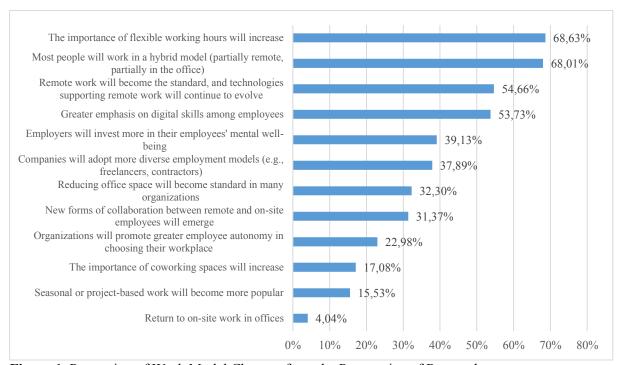


Figure 1. Perception of Work Model Changes from the Perspective of Respondents.

Source: Own elaboration based on survey research.

Survey results indicate that the future of the labor market will be dominated by flexible employment forms and new technologies supporting remote work. The most frequently mentioned trends are the increasing importance of flexible working hours (68.63%) and the hybrid work model (68.01%), confirming that employees expect greater freedom in organizing their work time and location. Remote work as a standard (54.66%) and the development of technologies supporting this model indicate long-term changes in how professional duties are performed. Along with this, there will be a growing emphasis on digital skills (53.73%), suggesting an increasing need to adapt to new tools and communication methods. Representatives of Generation Z expect organizations to place a greater emphasis on employee

well-being (39.13%) and implement more diverse employment models (37.89%), which may mean a higher number of freelancers and contractors. At the same time, reducing office space (32.30%) and the development of new forms of collaboration between remote and on-site employees (31.37%) indicate the gradual evolution of traditional offices.

Less popular but still significant predictions include employee autonomy in choosing their workplace (22.98%) and the growing role of coworking spaces (17.08%). Meanwhile, a return to fully on-site work (4.04%) was indicated as unlikely, proving that the traditional office-based work model is losing relevance.

In the opinion of Generation Z representatives, the future of work will be based on flexibility, hybrid and remote work, digital skills development, and greater support for employee well-being. The traditional on-site work model is expected to give way to modern solutions better suited to employees' needs. Respondents also assessed the significance of various changes for the future labor market using a five-point scale (where "1" meant insignificant and "5" meant crucial). The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.Changes in Work Organization According to Generation Z Representatives

Parameter	Arithmetic Mean			Coefficient of Variation (%)		
	A	W	M	A	W	M
Increasing emphasis on digital skills	4,18	4,24	4,13	18,96%	20,97%	19,58%
Remote work will become the standard	4,08	4,29	3,93	22,64%	20,60%	23,56%
Most people will work in a hybrid model	4,08	4,22	3,99	21,12%	19,39%	22,03%
Growing importance of flexible working hours	3,99	4,03	3,97	20,63%	22,05%	19,73%
Employers will invest in employee well-being	3,93	4,08	3,82	24,64%	20,05%	26,18%
Companies will adopt more diverse employment models	3,72	3,85	3,64	25,19%	20,68%	25,55%
New forms of collaboration will emerge	3,70	3,73	3,67	22,10%	21,32%	22,73%
Return to full on-site work in offices	2,64	2,49	2,74	40,79%	45,03%	37,85%
Organizations will promote greater autonomy	3,59	3,60	3,58	22,63%	31,18%	22,48%
Growing importance of coworking spaces	3,53	3,75	3,37	26,83%	29,96%	28,83%
Reducing office space will become standard	3,50	3,61	3,42	29,68%	25,13%	31,02%
Seasonal or project-based work will become more popular	3,25	3,37	3,17	30,73%	26,38%	32,19%

Legend: W – Women, M – Men, A – All.

Source: Own study based on survey research.

Analysis of differences between the responses of women and men reveals certain distinctions in the perception of the future of work. The survey results highlight several key changes shaping the future of work. Forecasts related to remote work (mean 4.08) suggest that it will become a standard. Moreover, a coefficient of variation of 22.64% indicates a fairly consistent belief among respondents that this form of work will dominate the future. Women (mean 4.29) show a stronger belief in remote work becoming the norm compared to men (mean 3.93), which may stem from their greater need for flexibility in work organization. A similar result (4.08) was obtained in the case of the hybrid work model, indicating the belief that this model will also become standard. In this case, the coefficient of variation is 21.12%,

and women (mean 4.22) are again more inclined to view the hybrid model as the future norm, while men (mean 3.99) show slightly less conviction.

On the other hand, the results concerning a return to on-site office work (mean 2.64) point to lower conviction among respondents regarding a return to the traditional work model. A coefficient of variation of 40.79% shows that opinions on this matter are more varied, and results differ by gender. A noticeable gender gap is due to lower support for on-site work among women (mean 2.49), who show a greater preference for flexibility, compared to men (mean 2.74), who seem slightly more open to returning to the office. While some people express the belief that we will return to offices, the overall trend points to a stronger preference for remote or hybrid work.

In the context of flexible working hours, the mean of 3.99 suggests that time flexibility will gain importance. Women (mean 4.03) indicate slightly higher importance for flexible working hours than men (mean 3.97), which may reflect a greater need for work-life balance among women. A low coefficient of variation (20.63%) indicates high agreement among respondents, suggesting that flexibility will become an essential element of work organization. Similarly, the growing importance of new forms of collaboration (mean 3.70) is also evident. Women (mean 3.73) indicate slightly stronger belief in the future of such collaborative forms than men (mean 3.67), with a coefficient of variation of 22.10%, suggesting a relatively consistent belief that such collaboration will continue to develop.

The results concerning the increasing emphasis on digital skills point to a clear trend of development. A mean of 4.18 and a low coefficient of variation (18.96%) confirm that the majority of respondents recognize digital skills as crucial for the future of work. The high average suggests that almost all respondents are convinced of the growing importance of digital competencies, which form the foundation for adapting to new technologies and maintaining competitiveness in the labor market. However, women (mean 4.24) perceive the development of digital skills as more essential in the future, while men (mean 4.13) show slightly less certainty regarding this direction.

The results of the study indicate a strong belief among Generation Z respondents in the growth of remote and hybrid work, with less support for a return to exclusively on-site work. The increasing importance of flexible working hours, new forms of collaboration, and digital skills forms the foundation for the future of work, pointing to growing organizational adaptation to dynamic changes in employee preferences and technological demands. In the conducted survey, representatives of Generation Z also indicated their preferences regarding the most attractive forms of work. Participants were allowed to choose up to five work formats they considered most aligned with their expectations. The results are presented in figure 2, illustrating the popularity of different work models.

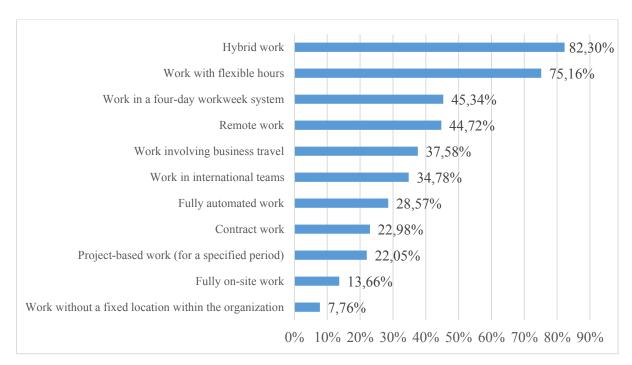


Figure 2. Preferred Work Forms According to Generation Z Representatives.

Source: Own study based on survey research.

Surveyed representatives of Generation Z primarily prefer flexibility in work organization. The most desired work models are hybrid work (82.3% of responses) and flexible working hours (75.16%), indicating a strong demand for the ability to adjust working hours to personal needs. Remote work (44.72%) and the four-day workweek (45.34%) are also highly popular, suggesting that work-life balance and efficiency gained through a shorter workweek are crucial. The opportunity to work in international teams (34.78%) and its connection to business travel (37.58%) are significant for respondents, possibly due to the desire to gain professional experience in an international environment.

Less popular work models include technology-driven automated work (28.57%), contract work (22.98%), and project-based work (22.05%). This may be due to concerns about job security and financial stability associated with these employment forms. The least interest is in fully office-based work (13.66%) and work without a fixed location within the organization (7.76%), confirming the trend of moving away from the traditional office model in favor of more flexible solutions.

The survey results show that Generation Z prefers work models that offer flexibility, remote work opportunities, and a balance between professional and personal life. Traditional office work is losing significance, while flexible working hours and the ability to choose a workplace are becoming essential.

Summarizing the research results, several significant trends can be identified that may shape the future of the labor market. Most notably, respondents most frequently chose the hybrid work model (82.3%) and flexible working hours (75.16%). In addition, remote work and a shorter workweek also attracted considerable interest, indicating preferences related to achieving work-

life balance. Less popular, though still noteworthy, are forms of employment such as freelance or project-based work, which may be associated with concerns about job stability. The traditional office-based model generated the least interest, which may suggest a growing preference for flexible organizational solutions.

At the same time, the results concerning digital skills, remote work, and new forms of collaboration point to long-term changes in the organization of work. These findings highlight the importance of technology and the need to tailor work formats to the individual needs of employees—particularly in the context of Generation Z. Forecasts related to on-site work indicate that the traditional office model is losing relevance, while preferences for remote and hybrid work are gaining momentum.

5. Discussion

The conducted research captured key preferences and expectations of Generation Z regarding work execution. The results align in many aspects with previous studies and findings from other authors, although some differences and new trends are noticeable. The study clearly indicates that Generation Z prefers flexible work arrangements, particularly hybrid and remote work. The results confirm that the most significant factors are flexible working hours (68.63%) and the hybrid model (68.01%). Similar trends were observed in a PwC study, where 77% of respondents preferred the hybrid model as the desired future solution (PwC, 2021). Piotrowicz also highlights dominant preferences among both employees and managers for hybrid work, emphasizing the need to maintain team integration in office spaces (Piotrowicz, 2023, pp. 83-84). Similar conclusions can be drawn from Deloitte's research, where nearly half of respondents (49.6%) preferred working from various locations while maintaining flexibility in working hours. Meanwhile, in the same Deloitte study, only 10% of respondents favored the traditional office model, which aligns with the low attractiveness ratings of fully office-based work in this study (average score of 2.64) (Deloitte, 2021).

This trend is further confirmed by the Ernst & Young Work Reimagined Employee Survey, in which 88% of employees stated they would strongly demand flexibility in terms of work time and location. At the same time, Ernst & Young found that 84% of employers recognize this need, though 35% still plan to reinstate full office work post-pandemic. This indicates a discrepancy between employee preferences and employer expectations, which may lead to future labor market tensions. The present study confirms that Generation Z clearly expects flexibility to be a permanent feature of work organization (Ernst & Young, 2021).

Further evidence of the consistency of these findings with previous research comes from Waszkiewicz (2022, pp. 50-51), who emphasizes that among Generation Z, the hybrid model dominates, even if one might intuitively expect greater popularity for fully remote work.

Notably, men in Generation Z more frequently express a need for higher levels of remote work, which was not directly verified in this study. However, the sample structure (59% men) may have influenced the strong preference for hybrid and flexible work.

It is also worth noting that compared to studies conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic by Bartkowiak and Krugiełka, a significant shift in attitudes is evident. At that time, young respondents showed reluctance toward flexible employment forms, preferring stable and traditional job models (Bartkowiak, Krugiełka, 2013, pp. 46-47). In contrast, in the current study, not only remote work but also flexibility in work time organization was rated as an essential element of the future job market (average score of 4.00). It is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerated digital transformation significantly influenced these changing attitudes, as highlighted by Dolot (2020, pp. 35-43) and PwC (2021).

The expectation of increased emphasis on digital skills also plays a significant role in this study (average score of 4.18). This result aligns with PwC's research, which shows that 57% of respondents see new technologies more as an opportunity than a threat (PwC, 2021). Similarly, Dolot's studies emphasize that digital skills and knowledge of remote work tools are becoming essential for adapting to new market conditions (Dolot, 2020, pp. 42-43).

Additionally, this study highlights the growing importance of employee well-being (39.13% of responses, average score of 3.93). Although not the highest-rated factor, its significance aligns with broader trends observed in the literature (Dolot, 2020, pp. 40-41; Piotrowicz, 2023, p. 82).

Moreover, the relatively low rating of a full return to office-based work (average score of 2.64) aligns with PwC and Waszkiewicz's studies, which indicate that support for this model is marginal, especially among younger age groups (PwC, 2021; Waszkiewicz, 2022, pp. 48-50). At the same time, Waszkiewicz's research reveals that Generation Z does not seek fully remote work but rather prefers a hybrid model, a finding corroborated by the present study (Waszkiewicz, 2022, p. 52).

6. Conclusions

The future of the labor market is evolving towards greater flexibility and digitalization, which is particularly reflected in the expectations of Generation Z. The most significant trends include the growing importance of hybrid and remote work, flexible working hours, and the use of modern technologies supporting these employment models. Simultaneously, there is an increasing emphasis on digital skill development and the ability to adapt to dynamic changes in the work environment. Generation Z particularly values work-life balance, which is evident in their preference for flexible employment forms and a shorter workweek. The traditional office-based work model is losing significance, being replaced by more modern and individualized solutions.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that organizations and policymakers take action to align work strategies with the expectations of Generation Z. It is essential to invest in the development of employees' digital skills, enabling them to effectively use modern technologies in their daily work. Furthermore, implementing hybrid work policies and flexible working hours could significantly increase satisfaction and engagement among younger employees. Organizations should also focus on promoting employee well-being by offering appropriate tools and support to help maintain a healthy work-life balance.

However, this study had some limitations. It relied on an online survey, which may affect the sample structure and representativeness, as respondents were actively using the internet, potentially not reflecting the full Generation Z population. The use of this research method may have excluded younger individuals who do not use digital technologies, which could limit the ability to generalize the results to the entire Generation Z population. Additionally, the study only included individuals born after 1995, which might have influenced the results concerning differences between younger and older members of this group. Future research should employ qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, to better understand young workers' motivations and values. It is also recommended to use a broader sampling method to increase representativeness and the ability to generalize the results to the entire Generation Z population. Expanding the analysis to compare different generations in the labor market could also help determine how Generation Z's preferences differ from older workforce groups. Further studies could also focus on long-term trends, examining how work expectations evolve as Generation Z gains professional experience.

Overall, the study results indicate that the future labor market will prioritize flexibility, technology, and employee-centered solutions. The conducted research captured key preferences and expectations of Generation Z. The recommended actions may be a key element in the process of adapting organizations to the challenges posed by the new demands of Generation Z.

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