

FROM RED TO TEAL – GENERATION Z AND ORGANIZATIONAL COLOR MODELS

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Purpose: The study aims to analyze Generation Z's preferences regarding organizational characteristics and their relationship with the type of work environment. The study seeks to determine which values and organizational features are most important to young people, and to what extent their declared preferences correspond to their perceptions of how these characteristics are implemented in various organizational models (red, amber, orange, green, and teal). Additionally, the study aims to understand how Generation Z combines aspirations toward idealistic work models (e.g., teal organizations) with realistic professional needs and employment stability.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was conducted in the form of a survey in May 2025 among students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdańsk. Respondents indicated their preferred type of organization and assessed the level of implementation of specific organizational characteristics that they consider important for their work environment. The analysis included calculating consistency indicators between the preferred type of organization and the preferred degree of implementation of particular characteristics, as well as interpreting the results in the context of the classification of organizational types: red, amber, orange, green, and teal.

Findings: The analysis of preferences among Generation Z participants shows that in evaluating organizational characteristics, students are guided by both aspirations and realistic needs. The highest value was attributed to *mutual respect*, aligning respondents most closely with the teal organizational model, while other traits related to collaboration and autonomy point toward green organizations, and procedural and efficiency-oriented features are associated with orange organizations. *Job stability*, on the other hand, most often corresponds to amber organizations, reflecting a need for predictability and structured order. The analysis of consistency between the preferred organizational type and the perceived level of implementation of individual characteristics indicates that the overall level of alignment is generally low. The highest consistency values were observed in areas such as cooperativeness, innovativeness, self-management, autonomy, and efficiency, while the lowest were found in stability, sense of security, proceduralism and loyalty. These results suggest that the respondents consciously distribute their preferences across different organizational models, selecting features that best match their current needs and experiences. In doing so, they combine aspirations toward teal and collaborative work models with the realistic demands of the labor market, such as structure, procedures, and security.

Research limitations/implications: The study is limited to a sample of students from a single faculty of the University of Gdańsk, which may affect the generalizability of the results. In the future, it would be worthwhile to conduct research involving a broader population of Generation Z representatives from various educational or professional backgrounds to determine whether the observed patterns are representative.

Practical implications: The results may help in designing programs for the onboarding and adaptation of young employees in the workplace, particularly in companies with a partnership-based or self-organizing structure. Employers can better tailor training processes, talent management, and organizational culture-building strategies to the expectations of Generation Z.

Social implications: The study indicates the need to educate young people about different types of organizations and corporate values, which may contribute to better functioning of the labor market and increased satisfaction and engagement in the workplace.

Originality/value: The article offers a new perspective on analyzing Generation Z's preparedness to function within different types of organizations, with particular emphasis on teal, green, and orange organizations. The value of this study lies in demonstrating how young people's declared preferences regarding the work environment correlate with their assessment of the implementation of key organizational characteristics. The research identifies gaps between Generation Z's aspirations and their practical alignment with organizational types, highlighting areas where greater awareness, education, and adaptation are needed—both on the part of employees and employers. Additionally, the study reveals that young people combine idealistic expectations related to teal models and collaboration with realistic needs connected to procedures, structure, and a sense of security, which may have significant implications for designing talent management strategies.

Keywords: Generation Z, Organizational Color Theory, Teal organizations, Organizational types.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The contemporary labor market is undergoing dynamic changes, with increasing emphasis on flexible forms of employment, employee autonomy, and a focus on values and meaningful work. Of particular interest is Generation Z, entering the workforce with a strong need for self-realization, work–life balance, and participation in decision-making processes. Young employees expect work environments that support collaboration, trust, and creativity. In this context, Teal organizations, which emphasize self-management, partnership-based relationships, and shared responsibility, are particularly relevant. Understanding the extent to which the values and preferences of Generation Z align with the principles of Teal management can help organizations better prepare for changes in team functioning.

In this article, it is hypothesized that, despite expressing appreciation for the values characteristic of teal organizations (autonomy, collaboration, mutual respect), Generation Z respondents most often choose work environments that do not fully embody these values in practice. This article aims to analyze the preferences of Generation Z regarding organizational

characteristics and their relationship with the type of work environment. The study focuses on the alignment between the declared attitudes of students at the Faculty of Management, University of Gdańsk, and the preferred type of organization (Red, Amber, Orange, Green, and Teal), as well as the extent to which respondents identify with the key characteristics associated with these models. The article seeks to identify areas where respondents' expectations align with organizational characteristics, as well as areas where discrepancies occur, to understand how attitudes toward specific organizational features shape perceptions of different types of firms.

Based on this framework, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Which organizational characteristics are considered most important by Generation Z, and to which type of organization do they correspond most closely?
2. To what extent does the preferred type of organization align with the perceived implementation of these characteristics in practice?
3. Which areas of values and organizational traits show the highest consistency between declared organizational preferences and the assessment of the extent to which these traits are realized?
4. Which areas exhibit the lowest consistency, potentially indicating flexibility or pragmatism in choosing a work environment?
5. How do young respondents balance aspirations for idealistic organizational models, such as Teal, with realistic expectations of work environments represented by Orange, Green, or Amber models?

Modern organizations need to continuously monitor the labor market to respond effectively to changes in employee values, attitudes, and expectations. Understanding the needs of current and future team members enables the adaptation of organizational structures, decision-making processes, and workplace culture. Recognizing the concerns and aspirations of Generation Z facilitates the creation of environments that foster engagement, creativity, and shared responsibility. Only organizations that respond proactively can maintain competitiveness and innovation, highlighting the relevance of this topic for the implementation of modern and flexible management models.

2. A Literature Review on Organizational Color Theory and Generation Z

Entrepreneurship has long been a subject of interest across multiple scientific disciplines, including economics, psychology, sociology, and management studies. Despite numerous efforts, no universal theory of entrepreneurship has been established, which can be attributed to its complexity and interdisciplinary nature (Carree, Thurik, 2010; Pablo-Lerchundi et al., 2015). In the literature, two main approaches are distinguished: entrepreneurship as a set of

individual traits and entrepreneurship as a process of creating and developing new ventures (Daszkiewicz, 2014). A classical contribution was made by Joseph Schumpeter, who regarded entrepreneurship as a driving force of economic development and innovation, introducing the concept of “creative destruction” (Schumpeter, 1960). Frank Knight emphasized the role of risk and uncertainty, noting that profit rewards decisions made under conditions of uncertainty (Jajuga, 2019). Entrepreneurs, endowed with the spirit of creative destruction, dismantle inefficient solutions and initiate new ones (Bławat, 2003). The Austrian School (Mises, Kirzner) focuses on the individual, subjective preferences, entrepreneurship, and market processes. It treats entrepreneurship as a process of discovery, while the market is seen as a learning and adaptive system. Ludwig von Mises highlighted the subjective theory of value and criticized state interventionism, whereas Israel Kirzner concentrated on detecting market opportunities and coordinating supply with demand (Gaweł, 2007). Contemporary theories link entrepreneurship with economic development (Lukas, Kihlstrom, Laffont) as well as with the theories of the firm and the learning organization. Today, entrepreneurship is defined in two ways: as a set of traits and behaviors (activity, innovativeness, risk-taking propensity, and opportunity recognition) and as a process of creating new value, where both individual predispositions and actions leading to the implementation of changes and generation of market benefits are essential (Janowski, 1998). Current perspectives also emphasize the impact of entrepreneurship on society and the environment, including social entrepreneurship, sustainable development, women’s initiatives, and inclusive regional development (Scartozzi et al., 2024). Research indicates that the social impact of entrepreneurship receives the most attention, while its environmental impact remains underexplored. Thus, entrepreneurship can be understood as a process integrating personality traits, managerial functions, and market activities - identifying opportunities, creating innovations, organizing resources, and undertaking risk - which collectively contribute to organizational and economic development (Gartner, 1988). The significance of entrepreneurship in this context lies in its role in preparing employees to actively participate in organizational life, develop innovative solutions, and make decisions in uncertain environments. Entrepreneurial skills, such as initiative, creativity, self-discipline, and the ability to collaborate, form the foundation for building modern organizational models based on autonomy, trust, and responsibility. As a result, employees not only perform their assigned tasks but also become active participants in decision-making processes and co-creators of organizational value.

Contemporary organizations operate in conditions of increasing competition and dynamic market changes, which necessitate the creation of environments conducive to innovation, employee engagement, and effective utilization of market opportunities. Understanding the mechanisms of entrepreneurship and the ways in which it is implemented within organizational structures allows managers to better align management strategies with market needs. One framework that aids in understanding organizational evolution is Frederic Laloux’s „Reinventing Organizations” theory, which distinguishes five types of organizations -

Red, Amber, Orange, Green, and Teal - reflecting levels of structural maturity, leadership style, and decision-making processes (Laloux, 2015). A Red organization represents an authoritarian model based on the power of the leader and employee loyalty, commonly observed in small family businesses. In such organizations, decisions are made rapidly, often impulsively, and employee initiative is limited, which facilitates flexibility in crises but constrains innovation. Amber organizations are characterized by stability, formal hierarchy, and adherence to procedures; examples include public institutions, administrative bodies, and religious organizations. In these structures, roles are clearly defined, and predictability and discipline enable efficient functioning, though often at the expense of creativity. Orange organizations focus on efficiency, growth, and results, offering employees greater autonomy and rewarding individual achievements, typical of corporations, banks, and technology firms. This model fosters a performance- and competition-oriented culture, where innovation is supported through recognition of creative solutions and initiatives. Green organizations emphasize values, collaboration, democratic decision-making, and employee development, placing people at the center of organizational priorities. Examples include cooperatives, creative organizations, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In such environments, relationship-building, dialogue, and a sense of belonging are central, and decisions are made collectively within a culture of trust and mutual support. Teal organizations represent the most advanced model, based on self-management, trust, and collective decision-making without traditional hierarchical positions. Employee motivation arises from a sense of purpose and influence on organizational outcomes, with a focus on long-term development and the common good. Examples include Morning Star, Buurtzorg, and Marco. In Teal organizations, engagement in the organization's mission, continuous learning, and adaptation to changing market conditions are prioritized, and accountability for results is distributed among all team members (Blikle, 2016; Gałat, 2018; Kalwa-Rojczyk, 2018; Borowiecki et al., 2021; Łyszkowska, 2023; El Khoury et al., 2024). To better understand the evolution of organizational consciousness, Laloux draws on Clare W. Graves's Spiral Dynamics framework, which describes the development of values and modes of thinking across eight color-coded levels. This model facilitates the analysis of how individuals and organizations progress from simple power-based systems to complex structures founded on collaboration, self-organization, and social responsibility (Graves, 2005; Rutkowska, 2020; Wasiluk, 2022).

The contemporary world of work is changing dynamically, and Generation Z, entering the labor market, is gradually shaping new standards for organizational functioning. Generation Z typically includes individuals born after 1989, sometimes after 1995 or even 2000 (Biernacki, 2014; Papież, 2016; Dolot, 2018; Titko et al., 2020). However, the precise year of birth is less important than the shared social experiences that shape an individual's values and behaviors. Some employees may not meet the age criteria yet still exhibit characteristics typical of Generation Z. A defining feature of this generation is a high level of familiarity with new technologies. Having grown up in a digital environment, they naturally utilize virtual tools and

online solutions (Muster, 2020). At the same time, they acknowledge that daily functioning without technological support is challenging (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, Chomątowska, 2014). Generation Z operates within groups but often settles for virtual interactions, and their well-being at work is considered as important as in their personal life. Respect for authority depends primarily on competence and achievements, rather than age or seniority (Ozkan, Solmaz, 2015). Individuals from Generation Z are characterized by high tolerance and social responsibility, making decisions quickly based on practical experience. They are capable of deep, specialized knowledge, though often find it difficult to place this knowledge in a broader context. Growing up in a world of computer games has fostered risk resilience and a willingness to experiment, treating work almost like a game, where failures are opportunities for learning. For young people, not only stable income but also meaningful work, autonomy, authentic relationships, and opportunities for personal development are important (Żarczyńska-Dobiesz et al., 2014; Warwas et al., 2018). They expect flexibility, remote work, equal opportunities, and real influence over organizational decisions (Papież, 2016). Their values partially align with the principles of Laloux's teal organizations, based on trust, partnership, and self-organization, where traditional hierarchical structures diminish and employees gain genuine autonomy in decision-making. However, the question arises whether Generation Z is truly ready to work within such a model. On one hand, young people have a natural need for autonomy, shared responsibility, and self-expression, but on the other hand, they may lack experience in self-discipline and self-leadership competencies required for full self-organization (Ragin-Skorecka et al., 2023). Implementing teal models therefore requires a gradual transformation, development of these competencies, and the creation of spaces for authentic participation, enabling Generation Z to become a catalyst for cultural change in organizations. Entrepreneurship becomes a key element in preparing Generation Z for modern organizations. It cultivates initiative, creativity, decision-making under uncertainty, and rapid problem-solving. It also develops digital competencies and the ability to collaborate virtually, which are essential in environments characterized by high autonomy and self-organization. Entrepreneurial attitudes among young employees not only allow them to effectively complete current tasks but also actively participate in creating innovations and organizational value, supporting the transformation of organizations in line with the teal models described in Frederic Laloux's theory of organizational colors.

3. Research methodology

In May 2025, a study was conducted among students of the Faculty of Management at the University of Gdańsk. The survey included 209 respondents, representing all programs and years of study. The aim of the study was to identify personality traits, stress coping strategies,

and students' preferences regarding organizational structure and workplace values, as well as their readiness to work in different types of organizations, including modern, flexible management models. The survey questionnaire was distributed electronically, with access provided via a QR code, enabling respondents to complete the form quickly and conveniently. Completion time averaged between 10 and 15 minutes.

Table 1.
Characteristics of Selected Questions in the Research Questionnaire

Questions	Characteristics
What type of organizational structure would you prefer the company you work for to have?	nominal dichotomous scale: rigid structure vs. flexible structure
In which company would you be most willing to work?	nominal scale: five management models described textually, reflecting varying levels of autonomy
How would you assess your approach to stress at work?	ordinal 5-point scale: from very poor to very good
Rate the extent to which the following organizational characteristics are important to you: sense of security within the hierarchy, stability, effectiveness, mutual respect, self-management, clear structure, creativity, employee engagement, cooperativeness, procedural adherence, loyalty, innovativeness, control and autonomy.	ordinal scale, 5-point – importance rating: from least important to most important
Gender	demographic item: nominal scale
Age	demographic item: ratio scale

Source: own elaboration.

The questionnaire comprised 12 items addressing stress-related approaches and preferences concerning organizational structure. It also included questions assessing the importance of selected organizational characteristics and workplace values, measured on a five-point Likert scale, as well as items regarding the choice of preferred company and type of organizational structure. Additionally, demographic questions were included, covering age, gender, and year of study. Some items were multidimensional, encompassing several thematic categories. The majority of the questions employed a rating scale, allowing precise determination of the importance attributed to specific traits, while single-choice closed-ended questions enabled respondents to select their most preferred option. Based on the responses, conclusions were drawn regarding stress coping strategies and the preferences of Generation Z students concerning professional values, expectations for organizational structure in the workplace, and their readiness to operate in environments characteristic of Teal, modern, and flexible organizations (Table 1). In the present study, due to the breadth of the topic and the complexity of issues related to students' organizational preferences and professional attitudes, only a portion of the questionnaire items was utilized. The focus was placed on those aspects that allow for the analysis of organizational characteristics, stress-coping strategies, and preferences regarding values and organizational structure in the workplace, with particular emphasis on readiness to function within modern, flexible, Teal organizations. The remaining questions, while representing valuable material, were omitted to enable a more precise and coherent analysis of the selected research areas.

4. Characteristics of Respondents and Their Preferred Organizational Structure

The study sample consisted of 58.9% female and 41.1% male participants. The gender composition and age distribution of the respondents are presented in Figures 1 and 2. The age distribution is bimodal, with two predominant peaks at approximately 20.4 and 23.1 years, indicating the presence of two main age groups within the sample: a younger group (undergraduate students) and an older group (graduate students).

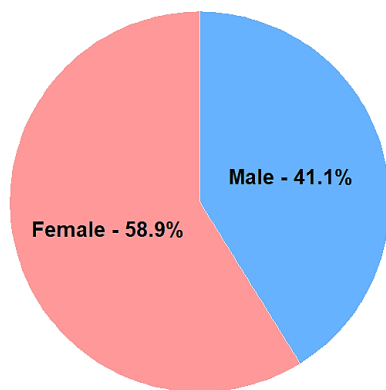


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by gender.

Source: own elaboration.

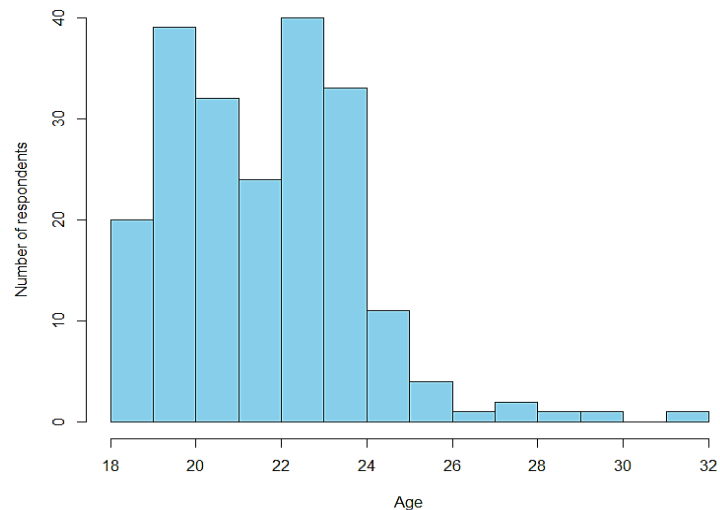


Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents (in years).

Source: own elaboration.

The largest group consisted of second-year master's students (49 individuals). Slightly fewer were third-year undergraduate students (45 individuals) and first-year master's students (42 individuals). First-year undergraduate students (40 individuals) and second-year undergraduate students (33 individuals) represented the smallest groups. In total, the study involved 118 undergraduate students and 91 master's students. The distribution of participants by year of study is relatively balanced, although there is a slightly higher representation of students from the lower years (Figure 3). Within the studied group, students predominantly prefer a flexible organizational structure (70.8%) - characterized by low levels of formalization and hierarchy, collaboration, rapid decision-making, and ease of adaptation to change. A minority (29.2%) prefer a rigid structure, with clearly defined rules and hierarchy, where decisions are primarily made at higher levels (Figure 4).

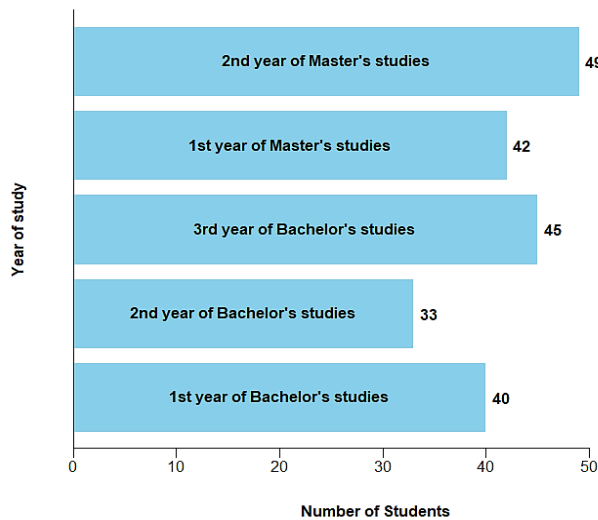


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by year of study.

Source: own elaboration.

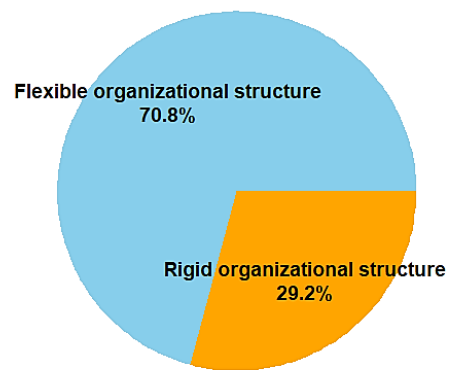


Figure 4. Preferred organizational structure.

Source: own elaboration.

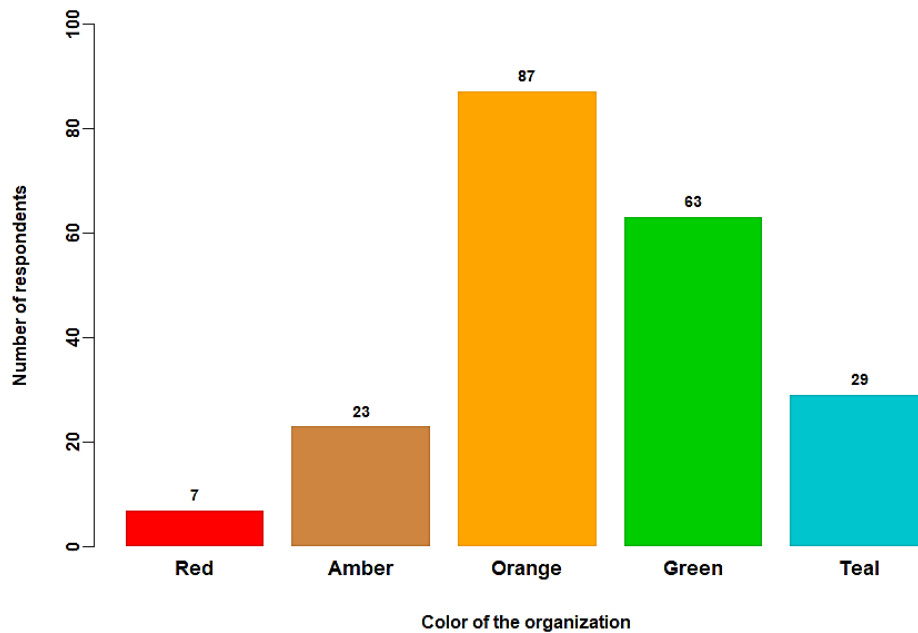


Figure 5. Distribution of students' preferences by organizational type (color-coded).

Source: own elaboration.

Participants were asked to indicate the type of organization in which they would like to work, based solely on a description of its characteristics, without being informed of the corresponding organizational „color“. The analysis of students' preferences (Figure 5) shows that the largest number of respondents chose organizations of the Orange type (87 individuals) and Green type (63 individuals). These organizations are characterized by a clear structure, efficiency, and cooperativeness, while maintaining a certain degree of autonomy. Organizations of the Red type (7 individuals) and Amber type (23 individuals), characterized by stronger control, hierarchical structures, and strict adherence to rules and procedures, were selected

considerably less frequently. Teal organizations were indicated by 29 respondents, representing a relatively low level of interest. This finding may appear somewhat surprising, as the values associated with Teal organizations - such as autonomy, trust, shared responsibility, and an open work environment based on respect, collaboration, diversity, and transparent communication - are frequently highlighted in the literature as particularly important for Generation Z. These results may suggest that, despite declarative support for these principles, young people still tend to prefer organizations that offer more stable and clearly defined operational structures, rather than fully self-managed and flexible organizational models.

Table 2.

Organizational color preferences and self-reported approaches to work-related stress

		Assessment of approaches to work-related stress				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	1	2	1	3	0
	Amber	4	5	9	4	1
	Orange	3	11	31	40	2
	Green	6	14	27	16	0
	Teal	0	7	14	8	0
	Total	14	39	82	71	3

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2 presents the relationship between preferred organizational type and self-reported approaches to coping with work-related stress. The figures along the main diagonal indicate respondents whose declared organizational color preferences correspond with the stress-coping style typical for that type of organization. These individuals account for 25.4% of all participants. The highest congruence is observed for Orange organizations (31 individuals) and Green organizations (16 individuals), whereas the lack of alignment for Teal organizations suggests that respondents aspire to Teal values (autonomy, self-management, collaboration) but do not reflect these in their self-reported stress management approaches. Off the main diagonal, it is evident that individuals preferring Orange organizations frequently report stress-coping styles characteristic of Green organizations (40 individuals), indicating a desire for a supportive and cooperative environment despite a preference for efficient and well-structured systems. Similarly, respondents who select Green organizations report stress-coping styles corresponding to Orange organizations (27 individuals), which may reflect an intention to balance autonomy with structured processes. Generational preferences regarding workplace type and organizational style are thus multidimensional: participants may value efficiency and clearly defined structures while simultaneously requiring support, trust, and a sense of security within the work environment.

5. Analysis of Organizational Characteristics in the Context of the Organizational Color Theory

The analysis of the results concerning organizational color preferences and attitudes toward the sense of **security within hierarchical structures** indicates that, for the majority of respondents, security derived from order, rules, and predictability - values typical of Amber organizations - is of key importance (Table 3). It was the Amber sense of security that received the highest number of indications, suggesting that, regardless of the preferred work style, participants still require clear structures and hierarchies that provide them with stability. The Orange sense of security, based on efficiency, measurable principles, and a rational approach to operations, ranked second. This result suggests that respondents value not only order and stability but also fairness and transparent “rules of the game” oriented toward success. Among those who preferred Orange organizations, a tendency toward balancing stability (Amber) with autonomy (Teal) was observed, indicating that even in performance-oriented environments, elements of trust and flexibility are necessary. Individuals identifying with Green organizations, despite their focus on collaboration and relationships, also most frequently pointed to Amber sources of security. This may be interpreted as a need for clearly defined organizational frameworks that create safe conditions for open dialogue. Meanwhile, those aligned with Teal organizations - the most advanced model based on self-management and trust - often feel more secure in more structured systems, such as Amber or Orange organizations. This may stem from difficulties in fully trusting completely decentralized forms of work. A sense of security within organizations thus remains strongly associated with hierarchy and structure. Even when respondents express appreciation for modern, partnership-based organizational models, they tend to feel emotionally safer within systems that offer clear rules, defined roles, and stability. Psychological safety - characteristic of Green and Teal organizations - is acknowledged but does not constitute the primary source of security in hierarchical contexts. These findings suggest that the evolution of organizational culture toward greater maturity and self-organization does not always correspond with the emotional readiness of respondents to operate within less predictable structures.

The analysis of organizational color preferences in the context of job **stability** reveals a clear trend: the majority of respondents feel safest in an Amber environment (Table 4). Amber stability received the highest number of indications (90), confirming that people value predictability, clear rules, and durable structures, regardless of their preferred work style. The second position was occupied by Red stability, based on the leader’s power and control, which is high in the short term but fragile in the longer perspective. Orange stability received 33 indications and represents a conditional model dependent on efficiency and performance outcomes. Stability within Green and Teal organizations was indicated much less frequently (12 and 3 responses, respectively), as it primarily derives from relationships, trust,

and organizational culture rather than fixed structures. In practice, this means that even in modern, partnership-oriented, and self-organizing organizations, most individuals seek a sense of security within predictable, hierarchical frameworks, while stability stemming from autonomy, trust, and a flexible culture is appreciated to a lesser extent.

Table 3.

Organizational Color Preferences and the Approach to the Sense of Security within Hierarchical Structures

		Sense of Security within the Hierarchy				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	0	3	3	1	0
	Amber	6	6	5	4	2
	Orange	13	29	18	10	17
	Green	9	24	11	10	9
	Teal	6	5	10	4	4
	Total	34	67	47	29	32

Source: own elaboration.

Table 4.

Organizational Color Preferences and the Approach to Job Stability

		Job Stability				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	0	1	3	2	1
	Amber	8	12	3	0	0
	Orange	33	38	8	7	1
	Green	21	26	13	2	1
	Teal	9	13	6	1	0
	Total	71	90	33	12	3

Source: own elaboration.

The data presented in Table 5 reveal a relationship between respondents' organizational color preferences and their perceptions of organizational **effectiveness**. The highest number of indications in the effectiveness category was attributed to Teal (71) and Green (70) organizations, whereas the lowest scores were recorded for Red (5) and Amber (19) organizations. These results suggest that students associate the highest level of effectiveness with modern organizational models grounded in trust, self-management, and shared responsibility - features characteristic of Green and Teal organizations. In contrast, traditional organizational forms based on hierarchy, control, and rigid rules (Red and Amber models) were evaluated as less effective. A noteworthy discrepancy was also observed between workplace preferences and perceived effectiveness. Although respondents frequently indicated Orange or Green organizations as their preferred work environments, the highest effectiveness was ascribed to Teal organizations. This finding may indicate that the Teal model is perceived as efficient in theory but is not necessarily associated with respondents' actual professional experiences. The overall structure of the results reflects a growing awareness of the importance

of contemporary management models emphasizing autonomy, collaboration, and trust. Respondents appear to recognize that such principles foster organizational effectiveness, even if their personal experiences are primarily linked to traditional, hierarchical structures. Consequently, the findings point toward a potential cultural shift - from control-based organizational models toward more partnership-oriented and co-responsibility-driven structures.

Table 5.
Organizational Color Preferences and the Approach to Effectiveness

		Effectiveness				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	0	1	3	2	1
	Amber	1	5	3	9	5
	Orange	3	9	17	27	31
	Green	1	3	12	24	23
	Teal	0	1	9	8	11
	Total	5	19	44	70	71

Source: own elaboration.

Table 6.
Organizational Color Preferences and the Approach to Mutual Respect

		Mutual Respect				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	1	1	2	1	2
	Amber	0	1	4	6	12
	Orange	1	4	11	10	61
	Green	0	2	5	8	48
	Teal	2	0	2	4	21
	Total	4	8	24	29	144

Source: own elaboration.

The highest number of indications in the category of mutual respect was attributed to Teal organizations (144) and Green organizations (29), whereas significantly fewer respondents associated this value with Orange (24), Amber (8), and Red (4) organizations (Table 6). These results suggest that respondents perceive the highest level of mutual respect in modern organizations grounded in trust, partnership, and self-management - characteristics typical of Green and Teal models. In such environments, respect functions as an integral element of a culture of collaboration and responsibility, independent of hierarchy or performance outcomes. It was observed that, regardless of the preferred type of organization as a workplace, respondents most frequently indicated the Teal model as the one in which mutual respect is highest. This trend was also apparent among individuals who preferred Orange or Amber organizations; for example, 61 respondents who favored the Orange model identified Teal as best representing mutual respect. A similar pattern was observed among those preferring Green organizations, who 48 times indicated the Teal type as most conducive to partnership-based relationships. These findings highlight a distinction between workplace preferences and the

perceived level of mutual respect. Respondents primarily associate this value with modern, flexible management models, while their professional experiences may involve more traditional organizational structures. In this context, the Teal model serves as a reference point for understanding structures based on trust, collaboration, and shared values, where interpersonal relationships are significant regardless of hierarchy or performance outcomes.

Table 7.
Organizational Color Preferences and the Approach to Self-Management

		Self-Management				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	1	0	1	2	3
	Amber	8	6	2	4	3
	Orange	8	10	33	23	13
	Green	10	15	18	13	7
	Teal	1	3	10	9	6
	Total	28	34	64	51	32

Source: own elaboration.

The analysis of the data presented in Table 7 indicates associations between respondents' organizational color preferences and their attitudes toward **self-management**. The highest number of indications in this category was attributed to Orange organizations (64). This result may be explained by the fact that respondents associate autonomy not only with formal team independence but also with the opportunity to take initiative and influence decisions within structures with which they have professional experience. Although Orange organizations are theoretically less self-managed than Teal ones, they provide space for individual initiative in achieving goals and results, which likely contributed to the high number of responses in this category. Green organizations, which promote a partnership-based approach and shared decision-making, are also perceived as conducive to self-management; however, some decisions remain under the authority of managerial staff, which may explain lower indications compared to Orange organizations. In the case of Teal organizations, the lower number of indications relative to the theoretical level of self-management may result from respondents perceiving them as more demanding in practical implementation. Respondents may recognize the potential of Teal organizations for full self-organization but do not fully associate this with their professional experience or actual work conditions. Red and Amber organizations received the fewest indications, which aligns with expectations based on Laloux's theory.

According to Table 8, only 23.4% of respondents declared an approach to **control** that aligns with their preferred organizational type, indicating a limited correspondence between preferences and the perceived role of control. The function of control varies across organizational models: in Red and Amber structures, it is dominant and constitutes the basis of hierarchy and order, whereas in Green and Teal models, control yields to autonomy, trust, and self-management. Respondents' declarations most frequently corresponded to Orange and Amber models, where control remains a significant management element, serving different

purposes: in Amber organizations, it ensures stability and adherence to rules, while in Orange organizations, it supports goal attainment and efficiency. Relatively few indications were assigned to Green and Teal models, demonstrating that values based on trust, self-management, and partnership-oriented approaches to control are not yet widely accepted by respondents. The majority of participants expect a high level of control in the workplace, reflecting the persistence of traditional management attitudes and limited familiarity with alternative, more autonomous organizational models.

Table 8.

Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Workplace Control

		Workplace Control				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	1	2	4	0	0
	Amber	4	6	6	4	3
	Orange	19	23	26	8	11
	Green	7	14	20	15	7
	Teal	2	12	10	4	1
	Total	33	57	66	31	22

Source: own elaboration.

Table 9.

Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Loyalty

		Loyalty				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	2	1	2	2	0
	Amber	6	4	3	5	5
	Orange	28	11	17	17	14
	Green	15	14	12	12	10
	Teal	6	2	10	6	5
	Total	57	32	44	42	34

Source: own elaboration.

Table 9 reveals discrepancies between the declared preferred type of organization and respondents' perceptions of **loyalty**. Some participants select modern organizational models, such as Orange, characterized by goal orientation and efficiency, yet their approach to loyalty aligns more closely with traditional patterns - based on hierarchy, subordination, and the need for stability - typical of Red and Amber organizations. Individuals preferring Green and Teal organizations, where loyalty is founded on collaboration, trust, and responsibility, do not always fully identify with this approach. The results indicate that the concepts of partnership and self-organization are still less widespread among respondents, and loyalty in its modern, relational sense is only beginning to be understood and embraced. Consequently, although participants express a desire to work in more open and flexible organizations, their understanding of loyalty more frequently remains consistent with traditional models of workplace attachment, grounded in stability and hierarchy.

Approaches to innovativeness do not always align with the declared preferred type of organization. The highest number of indications in this category corresponds to the Orange type, suggesting that respondents primarily interpret innovativeness in practical and efficiency-oriented terms (Table 10). For the majority of participants, new solutions are valued primarily when they lead to improved outcomes, streamlined processes, or competitive advantage. In this perspective, innovativeness is perceived mainly as a tool for achieving goals and enhancing efficiency, rather than as an element of a culture of openness or self-organization, which is characteristic of Green and Teal organizations. Among respondents' indications, the Orange interpretation predominates: innovation is appreciated mainly when it produces measurable results. The Teal approach, in which innovativeness emerges from autonomy, self-management, and trust, appears less frequently. This indicates that values such as autonomy, self-organization, and trust-based creativity are not yet widely internalized. For individuals declaring a preference for Green organizations, responses are predominantly both Orange and Green, suggesting that while innovativeness is considered important, it is primarily perceived through the lens of collaboration and team security rather than radical change or experimentation. In Amber and Red organizations, innovativeness is marginal. These results reflect the fact that traditional structures, hierarchy, and repetitive routines dominate these models, limiting opportunities for experimentation and the implementation of new solutions.

Table 10.

Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Innovativeness

		Innovativeness				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	0	0	3	3	1
	Amber	3	3	13	3	1
	Orange	1	10	36	17	23
	Green	2	11	25	15	10
	Teal	0	2	12	8	7
	Total	6	26	89	46	42

Source: own elaboration.

Table 11 presents the declared significance of **cooperativeness** in relation to organizational types. The highest importance of cooperation was attributed to Teal and Green organizations, in which cooperativeness - including joint decision-making, partnership, and team collaboration - constitutes a fundamental aspect of organizational functioning. The results indicate that some respondents who prefer Orange or Green types declare cooperativeness values characteristic of Teal organizations. This suggests that, although participants choose more traditional or partnership-oriented work models, they perceive cooperativeness as an important element of organizational functioning in practice. The alignment between declared attitudes toward cooperativeness and the preferred type of organization amounts to 29.7%, indicating a limited consistency between expectations regarding collaboration and the actual preferred

organizational model. At the same time, the results highlight the importance of cooperative values among respondents, regardless of their chosen organizational type.

Table 11.
Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Cooperativeness

		Cooperativeness				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	2	0	5	0	0
	Amber	1	5	2	9	6
	Orange	3	2	17	29	36
	Green	1	3	5	25	29
	Teal	0	2	7	7	13
	Total	7	12	36	70	84

Source: own elaboration.

Table 12.
Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Autonomy

		Autonomy				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	0	0	2	2	3
	Amber	3	2	6	8	4
	Orange	4	10	27	29	17
	Green	3	9	22	20	9
	Teal	0	3	10	7	9
	Total	10	24	67	66	42

Source: own elaboration.

Respondents' declarations regarding **autonomy** indicate that the greatest importance is attributed to independence in Orange, Green, and Teal organizations (Table 12). In Teal organizations, autonomy encompasses independent decision-making and team self-organization; in Green organizations, it is linked with partnership and collaboration; while in Orange organizations, it signifies freedom in achieving goals and performance outcomes. At the same time, some respondents who identify with organizations exhibiting lower levels of autonomy, such as Amber or Red, also recognize autonomy as an important attribute. This indicates that expectations regarding autonomy do not always align with the preferred type of organization. The correspondence between the declared approach to autonomy and organizational type preference amounts to 27.8%, confirming a limited correlation between these areas. The results demonstrate that autonomy is perceived as a desirable value, particularly in the context of flexible and partnership-oriented organizational models; however, the interpretation of this concept among respondents is varied and often independent of the indicated organizational type.

Among respondents, there is a strong preference for a clear structure and explicit organizational hierarchy (Table 13). The highest number of indications was attributed to Amber (61) and Orange (51) organizations, indicating a predominance of preferences for models based on formal order, clearly defined roles, and accountability, while simultaneously incorporating

elements of efficiency and competition characteristic of Orange organizations. A noticeable increase in respondents selecting Green and Teal organizations is also observed, reflecting a gradual shift in values toward collaboration, trust, and flexibility. Within Generation Z, there is a discernible need to balance clarity of rules with freedom of action. Despite the declared appreciation for values characteristic of Green and Teal organizations, such as autonomy, collaboration, and partnership-based relationships, relatively few respondents chose these models as their preferred work environment. This may result from a need for security and stability, which more structured organizational types provide. Younger respondents tend to prefer environments that combine autonomy with a clear structure, clearly defined roles, and responsibilities. They expect frameworks that ensure transparency and order while simultaneously allowing for independence and initiative. The results suggest that organizations aiming to remain attractive to younger employees should combine a clear structure with a management style that is flexible and oriented toward partnership.

Table 13.

Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Clear Structure

		Clear Structure				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	3	4	0	0	0
	Amber	13	5	4	1	0
	Orange	15	27	22	16	7
	Green	6	21	13	15	8
	Teal	3	4	12	6	4
	Total	40	61	51	38	19

Source: own elaboration.

In the context of the declared approach to **creativity**, the highest number of indications corresponds to Green (69) and Teal (62) organizations, suggesting that respondents associate creativity with workplaces based on collaboration, autonomy, and innovativeness (Table 14). A substantial number of indications for Orange organizations (43) suggest that creativity is also valued in efficiency and results-oriented environments, although in this context it assumes a more instrumental role, serving the achievement of organizational goals. In Red and Amber models, the number of indications is considerably lower (9 and 26, respectively), indicating that in highly formalized and hierarchical structures, creativity plays a less prominent role. Among Generation Z representatives, creativity is closely linked to values characteristic of Green and Teal organizations, such as autonomy, collaboration, and flexibility. At the same time, some respondents recognize the importance of creativity in Orange organizations, where innovativeness is connected to efficiency and the achievement of results. The findings indicate that respondents perceive creativity as a critical component of work primarily in environments that foster collaboration and independence, such as Green and Teal organizations, while it is considered less significant in organizations with traditional structures and hierarchical management systems, including Amber and Red organizations.

Table 14.
Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Creativity

		Creativity				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	1	1	3	1	1
	Amber	1	8	6	8	0
	Orange	6	7	15	28	31
	Green	1	7	17	17	21
	Teal	0	3	2	15	9
	Total	9	26	43	69	62

Source: own elaboration.

Table 15.
Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Employee Engagement

		Employee Engagement				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	1	0	3	2	1
	Amber	2	2	5	8	6
	Orange	0	5	13	31	38
	Green	1	2	9	21	30
	Teal	0	3	6	12	8
	Total	4	12	36	74	83

Source: own elaboration.

Table 16.
Organizational Color Preferences and Declared Approach to Procedural Adherence

		Procedural Adherence				
		Red	Amber	Orange	Green	Teal
Workplace preference	Red	0	3	1	1	2
	Amber	4	9	1	2	7
	Orange	11	25	19	11	21
	Green	6	20	13	11	13
	Teal	7	4	9	8	1
	Total	28	61	43	33	44

Source: own elaboration.

Table 15 presents the relationship between the declared approach to **employee engagement** and organizational color preferences. The highest number of indications corresponds to Teal (83) and Green (74) organizations, suggesting that respondents associate high levels of engagement with workplaces based on autonomy, self-management, and partnership-based relationships. Orange organizations (36 indications) are also perceived as environments that foster engagement; however, in this context, engagement has a task-oriented character and is primarily linked to efficiency and the achievement of goals. In Amber (12) and Red (4) models, engagement is rated the lowest, which can be associated with the dominance of hierarchy, formal procedures, and limited autonomy. The findings indicate that respondents attribute the greatest importance to engagement in organizations that enable independence, transparency of actions, and shared responsibility, whereas traditional hierarchical structures are perceived as less conducive to activity and initiative.

Table 16 presents the perceived level of procedural adherence across different types of organizations. The highest number of indications corresponds to Amber (61) and Red (28) organizations, reflecting their highly formalized nature based on hierarchy and clearly defined operating rules. In Orange organizations (43), procedures primarily serve as tools supporting the achievement of goals and work efficiency. In Green (33) and Teal (44) structures, formal rules are less prominent and play a supportive role, maintaining transparency and coordinating activities without limiting autonomy or collaboration. Respondents prefer environments in which procedures ensure order and predictability but do not create barriers to independence and initiative. Therefore, the most attractive organizations are those that combine clarity of rules with a flexible approach to their implementation.

6. Preferences and Fit with the Organization

The analysis of Generation Z respondents' preferences in the context of organizational characteristics reveals interesting relationships between the type of work environment in which young students would feel most comfortable and the nature of specific traits. The results presented on a 1 to 5 scale should be interpreted as a measure of preference for a particular type of organization. The highest value in the study was attributed to Mutual Respect (4.4), indicating that this trait aligns respondents most closely with Teal organizations, environments based on trust, partnership-based relationships, and a culture of respect. Other traits related to relationships and collaboration, such as Employee Engagement (4.1), Cooperativeness (4.0), Effectiveness (3.9), Creativity (3.7), and Autonomy (3.5), suggest affiliation with Green organizations, which promote autonomy, collaboration, and joint decision making. Traits more closely associated with procedures, structure, and task management, such as Innovativeness, Stress, Self Management, Procedural Adherence, Sense of Security, Control, Loyalty, and Clear Procedures, indicate that respondents would function best in Orange organizations, which combine a results-oriented approach with clearly defined operational frameworks and procedures. Stability of Work occupies a unique position, showing that in this area, respondents most frequently resemble Amber organizations, reflecting their need for predictability and an orderly structure in the workplace (Figure 6).

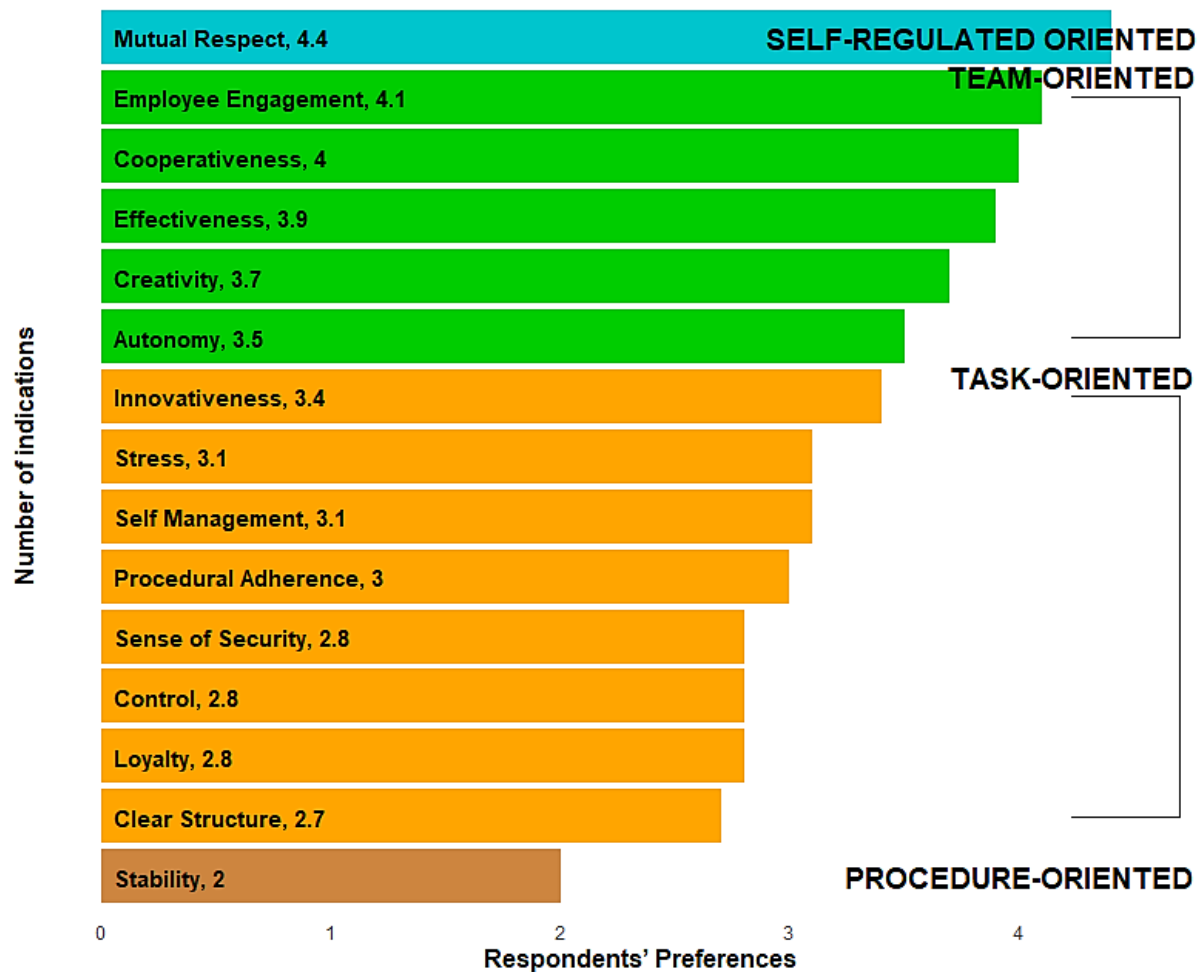


Figure 6. Four Preference Orientations of Respondents and Types of Organization.

Source: own elaboration.

The respondents focus on relationships and collaboration, valuing autonomy and creativity, while simultaneously needing environments that provide clear procedures and support in task management. The color assigned to each characteristic indicates the type of organization that best fits the students based on that trait - only Mutual Respect aligns them with Teal organizations, whereas most other responses suggest that they would function best in Orange companies, or possibly Green ones. Ideal alignment for this group involves balancing the structure and procedures typical of Orange organizations with environments that support collaboration and autonomy, characteristic of Green organizations. Teal organizations appear only in the context of relational values, such as Mutual Respect, and thus do not constitute the dominant environment for this generation. However, this outcome may be due to the respondents' limited professional experience and limited familiarity with models based on full self-management and trust. Generation Z is only beginning to enter the labor market, and despite their openness to collaboration, they still expect clear frameworks, rules, and predictability. Therefore, Teal organizations, as the most advanced but also most demanding form, remain outside their natural comfort zone for the time being.

Table 17.
Alignment of Organizational Type with Organizational Characteristic

Organizational Characteristic	Measure of Alignment	Organizational Type with the Highest Alignment	Two Most Preferred Types of Organization	
			First	Second
Cooperativeness	29.7%	Green	Teal	Green
Innovativeness	29.2%	Orange	Orange	Green
Self Management	28.2%	Orange	Orange	Green
Autonomy	27.8%	Orange	Orange	Green
Effectiveness	27.3%	Green	Teal	Green
Stress	25.4%	Orange	Orange	Green
Creativity	23.9%	Green	Green	Teal
Control	23.4%	Orange	Orange	Amber
Clear Structure	23.4%	Orange	Amber	Orange
Employee Engagement	21.5%	Green	Teal	Green
Mutual Respect	20.1%	Teal	Teal	Green
Procedural Adherence	19.1%	Orange	Amber	Teal
Loyalty	19.1%	Orange	Red	Orange
Sense of Security	18.2%	Orange	Amber	Orange
Stability	12.1%	Amber	Amber	Red

Source: own elaboration.

The analysis of the alignment between the preferred type of organization and the assessment of how individual characteristics are implemented (Table 17) shows that the overall level of consistency is generally low. The values of the conformity measure range from 12.1% (Stability) to 29.7% (Cooperativeness), indicating that the declared preferences regarding the type of organization do not always align with the respondents' perceptions of how the corresponding organizational values are realized in practice. In other words, the type of organization respondents consider most desirable does not necessarily correspond to how they perceive its actual functioning. The highest levels of consistency are observed for characteristics such as Cooperativeness (29.7%), Innovativeness (29.2%), Self-management (28.2%), Autonomy (27.8%), and Effectiveness (27.3%). This suggests that in areas related to teamwork, creativity, and independence, respondents consider the realization of these values - typical of Green and Orange organizations - to be satisfactory. They do not aspire to the most advanced, Teal model of collaboration, but rather to one that combines clear structure and efficiency (Orange type) with partnership and trust (Green type). This indicates a preference for a balanced level of autonomy and cooperation without the need for full self-organization typical of Teal environments. The lowest levels of consistency - Stability (12.1%), Sense of Security (18.2%), Procedural Adherence (19.1%), and Loyalty (19.1%) - show that respondents do not clearly associate these values with any specific type of organization. This does not reflect a lack of awareness or random choices; rather, Generation Z consciously distributes its preferences across various organizational models. In practice, this means that some characteristics are identified with Orange organizations, others with Green, while still others may be associated with Amber, Red, or even Teal structures.

These patterns of preferences can be summarized into four main orientations: Self-Regulated Oriented, valuing autonomy and creativity; Team-Oriented, prioritizing collaboration and partnership; Task-Oriented, focusing on efficiency and goal achievement; and Procedure-Oriented, emphasizing stability, predictability, and clear rules. These orientations provide a concise way to understand the dominant traits that may guide Generation Z respondents toward organizational environments in which they are most likely to thrive. At the same time, young respondents do not limit themselves to a single orientation - their preferences show an ability to combine different traits depending on needs and circumstances. They blend idealistic aspirations, for example, those related to Teal values such as trust and shared decision-making, with realistic work expectations, such as a sense of security, stability, and predictability. In practice, this translates into a flexible and pragmatic approach: they consciously balance between different types of organizations, selecting elements from each that best match their current needs, experiences, and expectations regarding the work environment.

7. Conclusion

The most significant characteristic identified among the surveyed students is Mutual Respect, which aligns them with teal organizations, defined by trust, partnership, and participative relationships. Other attributes related to collaboration, autonomy, and teamwork - such as Engagement, Cooperativeness, Effectiveness, Creativity, and Autonomy - indicate a preference for green organizational environments, which emphasize cooperation, empathy, and collective decision-making. In contrast, features associated with procedures, structure, and task management - including Innovativeness, Stress, Self-management, Procedural Adherence, Sense of Security, Control, Loyalty, and Clear Structure - are predominantly linked by respondents to orange organizations, which value efficiency, goal orientation, and individual initiative. Meanwhile, Job Stability is primarily associated with amber organizations, characterized by hierarchy and predictability. The overall level of alignment between the preferred organizational type and the perceived realization of specific characteristics is relatively low, ranging from 12.1% (Stability) to 29.7% (Cooperativeness). This suggests that although students demonstrate clear preferences regarding organizational models, their perceptions of how these values are implemented in practice do not always correspond to their declared ideals. The highest alignment levels are observed for Cooperativeness, Innovativeness, Self-management, Autonomy, and Effectiveness, indicating that respondents perceive the realization of values typical of green and orange organizations as satisfactory, without requiring the full implementation of the more advanced teal model of self-management and shared responsibility. The lowest levels of

alignment, found for Stability, Sense of Security, Procedural Adherence, and Loyalty, suggest that respondents do not associate these characteristics consistently with any particular organizational type. This pattern reflects a dispersion of preferences - some traits correspond to the orange model, others to the green, while certain values resonate with the amber or even red types of organizational structures. Overall, Generation Z appears to combine aspirational inclinations toward teal values - such as trust, co-decision, and partnership - with a realistic approach to the work environment that prioritizes structure, predictability, and a sense of security. In practice, this translates into a preference for the orange organizational model, seen as the most attainable compromise between autonomy and development on one hand, and stability and clarity of rules on the other. Green elements of collaboration and independence are appreciated, yet full teal-style self-organization remains more of an aspiration than a current standard in young employees' expectations.

The most significant characteristic identified among the surveyed students is mutual respect, which aligns them with teal organizations characterized by trust and partnership. Other traits related to relationships, autonomy, and collaboration, such as engagement, cooperativeness, efficiency, creativity, and autonomy, indicate a preference for green organizational environments that promote teamwork and participative decision-making. Conversely, characteristics associated with procedures, structure, and task management - such as innovativeness, stress, self-management, procedural adherence, sense of security, control, loyalty, and clear structure - are primarily attributed by the respondents to orange organizations, while job stability is predominantly associated with amber organizations. The level of congruence between the declared preferred type of organization and the assessment of the realization of specific traits is generally low, ranging from 12.1% (stability) to 29.7% (cooperativeness). This indicates that although students have defined preferences regarding organizational types, their perception of how these traits are realized in practice does not always correspond to their stated choices. The highest congruence was observed for traits such as cooperativeness, innovativeness, self-management, autonomy, and efficiency. In these areas, respondents consider the level of value implementation typical of green and orange organizations to be sufficient, without requiring the full adoption of the more advanced teal model. The lowest levels of congruence were observed for stability, sense of security, procedural adherence, and loyalty, indicating that respondents do not unequivocally associate these values with a specific type of organization. This distribution of preferences demonstrates that certain traits are selected in forms typical for orange organizations, others for green organizations, and some may correspond to amber or red structures. Generation Z combines aspirations for teal values, such as trust, participative decision-making, and partnership, with a realistic approach to the work environment. In practice, this means selecting the orange model as the most achievable compromise between autonomy and professional development and a clear structure, rules, and predictability. Green elements of collaboration and independence are appreciated, but full teal self-organization remains an aspiration rather than

a current standard in young employees' expectations. The analysis of Generation Z preferences confirms the proposed hypothesis. Despite the declared appreciation among Generation Z students for values characteristic of teal organizations - such as autonomy, collaboration, mutual respect, and partnership - in practice, they most frequently choose work environments that do not fully realize these values. By opting for the orange model, partially supplemented with green elements, respondents prioritize the need for clear structure, predictability, and stability, which allows them to pursue their professional aspirations in a more accessible and secure manner. Teal values remain aspirational, while actual career choices reflect a compromise between idealistic expectations and the realities of the labor market. Teal organizations continue to constitute a niche in the labor market, whereas most companies operate according to the orange model with elements of green, offering clear structures, measurable goals, and performance-based reward systems. For Generation Z, autonomy, opportunities for development, and influence over work outcomes are of key importance. The orange model facilitates the realization of these needs while providing stable organizational frameworks that support the development of professional competencies in an orderly environment. The teal approach, based on full self-organization and co-responsibility, may be perceived as demanding and less accessible to individuals entering the labor market. Consequently, Generation Z aspires to teal values but chooses the orange environment as the most realistic and secure option. Teal remains an aspirational direction - a symbol of meaningful work and partnership - while the orange model combines autonomy with a clear structure and predictability. As young employees gain professional experience and increasing influence over organizational culture, it can be expected that they will increasingly operate within models that combine efficiency with partnership and independence, characteristic of a green-teal approach.

8. Discussion

The results of the study indicate that Generation Z's workplace preferences are complex and multidimensional, combining aspirations for modern, partnership-oriented organizational models with the need for stability and clearly defined operational frameworks. While prior literature highlights that young employees value autonomy, collaboration, self-organization, and meaningful work - traits characteristic of teal organizations - our findings show that, in practice, Generation Z more frequently aligns with orange and green models. Respondents rated interpersonal traits such as mutual respect, cooperativeness, and engagement the highest, suggesting an identification with values close to a teal organizational culture. **Novelty of findings.** A key contribution of this study is demonstrating that although Generation Z declares a preference for teal-like values, their practical choices reflect a hybrid approach, combining aspirational and realistic considerations. Previous research has identified the importance of

autonomy and collaboration for young employees (Titko et al., 2020; Ragin-Skorecka et al., 2023), but the present study systematically shows how these preferences are distributed across organizational types and where discrepancies occur. This highlights a gap between idealistic aspirations and practical decision-making in early career stages. **Assessment of hypotheses.** The initial hypothesis - that Generation Z would prefer work environments fully embodying teal values - was only partially confirmed. While respondents identify with autonomy, collaboration, and mutual respect, their actual choices favor organizations offering structure, stability, and predictability. This confirms the pragmatic approach of young professionals: they aspire to teal values but prioritize security and clarity when entering the labor market. **Comparison with existing literature.** Our results align with prior findings indicating that teal organizations are perceived as effective and supportive of mutual respect (Blikle, 2016; Łyszkowska, 2023), yet few young employees choose them as their preferred workplaces. This study extends the literature by showing which specific traits - such as autonomy, innovation, and self-management - are valued across organizational types, and which - like stability, procedural clarity, and loyalty - are less aligned with aspirational values. Unlike some earlier research focusing primarily on declared preferences (Papież, 2016; Muster, 2020), our findings integrate both preferences and perceptions of trait realization, offering a more nuanced picture of Generation Z's workplace orientation. **Theoretical implications.** The study suggests that theories of organizational color models, particularly Laloux's Teal model, should account for the transitional nature of early-career employees' preferences. While idealized models promote self-management and shared responsibility, young professionals may require hybrid structures that provide guidance and predictability alongside autonomy. This highlights the importance of integrating developmental considerations into organizational design, especially when introducing self-organizing frameworks. **Practical implications.** For organizations seeking to attract and retain Generation Z talent, the findings underscore the need to balance **aspirational values** with **practical structural elements**: Combine autonomy, collaboration, and trust with clear procedures, role definitions, and predictable workflows. Use elements of orange structures - such as measurable outcomes, hierarchy, and clear responsibilities - to facilitate gradual skill development and self-management. Introduce opportunities for participation in decision-making and meaningful engagement, even in traditionally structured environments. Such an approach allows organizations to harness Generation Z's innovative potential while addressing their realistic needs for security and stability. **Future research directions.** Further studies could investigate how professional experience and exposure to different organizational models affect the evolution of Generation Z's preferences over time. Additionally, research on managerial practices that effectively support the adoption of teal values without increasing uncertainty would provide actionable guidance for organizations aiming to implement self-organizing or partnership-based structures. **Conclusion of discussion.** In sum, Generation Z exhibits a pragmatic blend of aspiration and realism: while they value autonomy, collaboration, and partnership,

their practical choices favor environments that offer security and structural clarity. This dual orientation highlights the importance of designing organizational models that integrate **flexibility, trust, and shared responsibility** with **efficient, predictable structures**, bridging the gap between idealistic expectations and practical workforce needs.

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