Evaluating the Impact of Generation Z on Human Resource Strategies in the South-South Region of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z is becoming an increasingly important component of the Nigerian workforce, creating pressure on organisations to reconsider conventional human resource (HR) strategies. This study evaluated the relationship between Generation Z workplace expectations and human resource strategies in South-South Nigeria. The study focused on the extent to which employee expectations correspond with organisational HR practices, within the broader context of workplace flexibility, learning and development, technology-enabled HR, career transparency and employee wellbeing. A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was adopted for the empirical analysis. Data were obtained from a dataset containing 120 respondent records, of which 117 complete cases were retained for analysis. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation and paired-samples *t*-test were employed. The findings showed that Generation Z workplace expectation indicators recorded an overall mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.32), while reported HR practice indicators recorded a comparable mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.33). Although the aggregate difference was not statistically significant, $t(116) = -1.68$, $p = .096$, significant differences were identified at specific item levels. The aggregate P–PR correlation was extremely strong, $r = .994$, $p < .001$; however, this result requires cautious interpretation because several corresponding indicators displayed identical response patterns. The study contributes to HRM literature by demonstrating that the impact of Generation Z should be examined through specific expectation–practice gaps rather than broad generational assumptions. It recommends evidence-based, flexible and context-sensitive HR strategies for managing the emerging workforce in South-South Nigeria.

Keywords: Generation Z, Human Resource Strategies, Employee Expectations, HR Practices, Workplace Flexibility, Employee Wellbeing, South-South Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The workforce is experiencing an important generational transition as Generation Z increasingly enters formal employment. Generation Z is generally associated with individuals born from the late 1990s to the early 2010s, although the precise boundaries vary across studies. This cohort has developed within an environment characterised by rapid technological advancement, social media, mobile communication, digital learning and changing expectations concerning work and personal life. As a result, organisations are increasingly required to reconsider traditional assumptions concerning recruitment, employee development, communication, performance management, engagement and retention.

Recent research suggests that Generation Z places considerable importance on flexibility, work-life balance, meaningful work, career development and inclusive leadership. A recent systematic review of empirical studies found that flexibility, work-life balance and meaningful work are among the important workplace expectations of Generation Z, while participatory, open and inclusive leadership can strengthen their workplace experience (Yohanes, et. al., 2025). Similarly, international evidence indicates that flexibility and work-life balance are prominent factors in Generation Z's employment preferences (Evelyn, 2024).

The growing significance of Generation Z has implications for Human Resource Management (HRM). HR departments are increasingly expected to design employment systems that accommodate changing expectations without compromising organisational productivity, fairness and strategic objectives. These changes include greater use of digital recruitment and onboarding, flexible working arrangements, continuous learning, transparent career pathways, employee wellbeing initiatives and more frequent communication between employees and supervisors.

The Nigerian context makes this issue particularly important. Nigeria has a youthful labour force, and younger employees constitute an increasingly important source of organisational talent. At the same time, Nigerian organisations are experiencing rapid digital transformation, changing employment expectations, talent shortages and increasing concern about employee engagement and wellbeing. A recent review of HRM in Nigeria identified digital transformation, remote work, employee experience, workforce diversity, talent shortages and mental-health concerns among the important contemporary issues affecting HR practice (Akeem & Idowu, 2024).

South-South Nigeria provides a particularly useful context for examining these developments. The region, comprising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States, contains diverse organisations operating across the oil and gas, public, private, financial, educational, health, humanitarian and service sectors. These organisations vary considerably in their levels of technological development, organisational structure and human resource capacity. Consequently, Generation Z may not influence HR strategies uniformly across the region.

One important issue is workplace flexibility. Younger employees increasingly expect organisations to provide some degree of flexibility regarding where, when and how work is performed. Contemporary research shows that flexible work arrangements can affect employee attitudes and turnover intentions among Generation Z, although the strength of the relationship can depend on supervisory support and other organisational conditions (Olga, 2024). Flexibility therefore represents not simply an employee benefit but a potentially important component of contemporary HR strategy.

Learning and development is another important dimension. Generation Z has entered employment during a period of rapid technological and occupational change (Ma & Fang, 2024). Continuous learning, upskilling, mentoring and career development can therefore become important mechanisms for retaining younger employees. Recent empirical work indicates that training and development, supportive working environments and role clarity can influence Generation Z retention.

Similarly, technology-enabled HR has become increasingly important. Generation Z's extensive exposure to digital technologies may create expectations for digital recruitment, communication, learning, performance management and employee services (Sood, 2026). Contemporary HRM research increasingly recognises artificial intelligence, digital platforms and other technologies as important components of HR transformation. However, the extent to which such technologies can be adopted in South-South Nigeria depends on organisational resources, infrastructure, digital competence and leadership commitment.

Employee wellbeing has also become an important HR concern. Younger employees may place greater emphasis on work-life balance, psychological wellbeing and supportive organisational environments. Recent research on younger workers highlights the growing importance of work-life balance and employee wellbeing in shaping workplace expectations (Trifan & Pantea, 2024).

Nevertheless, the concept of Generation Z should be treated cautiously. Generational categories can help identify broad social and historical influences, but they do not imply that every member of a generation possesses identical values or behaviours (Wang & Duan, 2025). Individual personality, education, socioeconomic background, occupation, organisational culture and career stage may also influence workplace attitudes. Consequently, HR strategies should respond to empirically demonstrated employee expectations rather than generational stereotypes.

This issue is particularly relevant to the present study because the attached dataset provides an opportunity to compare Generation Z-related workplace expectations with reported organisational HR practices (Strużyna, & Kania, 2026). The empirical analysis indicates that the overall expectation score was 3.82, while the corresponding HR practice score was 3.83, suggesting substantial aggregate alignment. However, the item-level analysis identified statistically significant differences in particular dimensions. This finding is important because it demonstrates that broad aggregate similarity may conceal specific areas in which HR practices either fall short of or exceed employee expectations.

Statement of the Problem and Research Gap

The growing participation of Generation Z in the workforce presents both opportunities and challenges for HR managers. While younger employees can contribute digital competence, adaptability, creativity and new perspectives, their workplace expectations may challenge conventional approaches to supervision, communication, career development, work arrangements and employee retention.

Despite increasing international research on Generation Z, empirical evidence concerning its influence on HR strategies in Nigeria remains relatively limited. Much of the existing literature has examined Generation Z in developed economies or other emerging markets. Although these studies provide useful insights, their findings cannot automatically be generalised to South-South Nigeria because of differences in economic conditions, organisational culture, infrastructure, labour-market structures and employment practices.

A further problem is that some discussions of Generation Z rely heavily on descriptive stereotypes. Generation Z is frequently described as technologically sophisticated, less tolerant of rigid structures, interested in flexibility and concerned about wellbeing. However, these descriptions do not necessarily establish whether organisations are actually modifying HR strategies in response to such expectations.

There is also an empirical gap concerning expectation–practice alignment. Existing studies frequently examine isolated outcomes such as job satisfaction, engagement or turnover intention, whereas less attention has been paid to the extent to which employee expectations correspond with organisational HR practices. This study addresses this gap by comparing two sets of indicators: Generation Z workplace expectation indicators (P1–P8) and reported HR practice indicators (PR1–PR8).

The present dataset provides useful evidence but also reveals important methodological limitations. The two aggregate scales demonstrate very high correlation, $r = .994$, while several corresponding items display identical response patterns. This suggests that future research should use clearly differentiated and independently validated measures of specific HR dimensions. Thus, rather than interpreting the current evidence as proof that Generation Z causes HR transformation, the study uses the results to identify areas of alignment and potential expectation–practice gaps.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of Generation Z on human resource strategies in South-South Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the level of Generation Z workplace expectations in relation to organisational HR practices;
2. determine the extent of alignment between Generation Z workplace expectations and reported HR practices;
3. identify specific areas in which HR practices differ significantly from Generation Z workplace expectations;
4. examine the relationship between Generation Z workplace expectations and HR strategy indicators; and
5. provide evidence-based recommendations for developing HR strategies appropriate for the emerging Generation Z workforce in South-South Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of Generation Z workplace expectations among the respondents?
2. What is the level of reported organisational HR practices?

3. Is there a significant difference between Generation Z workplace expectations and reported HR practices?

4. What relationship exists between Generation Z workplace expectations and HR practice indicators?

5. What HR strategy adjustments are required to improve alignment with Generation Z expectations?

Contribution to Human Resource Management Literature

The study contributes to HRM literature in several respects.

First, it shifts attention from the general description of Generation Z characteristics to the empirical relationship between employee expectations and organisational HR practices. This provides a more useful approach for HR practitioners because organisations need to know not simply what Generation Z is assumed to value but where actual expectations differ from existing HR provision.

Second, the study contributes South-South Nigerian evidence to a literature that remains heavily concentrated in non-Nigerian settings. This geographical contribution is important because HR practices are shaped by institutional, technological, cultural and economic contexts.

Third, the study provides evidence that aggregate alignment can conceal specific areas of divergence. Although the overall expectation and HR practice means were almost identical, significant differences were identified at particular item levels. This suggests that HR managers should use detailed employee diagnostics rather than relying solely on overall measures.

Finally, the study contributes a methodological caution to the emerging Generation Z literature. The exceptionally high correlation between the two blocks in the supplied dataset demonstrates the importance of ensuring that expectation and HR-practice constructs are independently worded, conceptually distinct and psychometrically validated before causal conclusions are drawn.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Generation Z

Generation Z is the cohort that follows the Millennial generation and is commonly defined as individuals born from approximately the late 1990s through the early 2010s. The cohort's formative experiences have included rapid digitalisation, social media, mobile technologies, global economic uncertainty and the COVID-19 pandemic (Khan, et. al., 2024). These experiences may influence how younger employees approach work, communication, learning and career development.

Lazar et al. (2023) describe the emerging Generation Z workforce within the context of digital transformation, emphasising the implications of technological familiarity for workplace cooperation and organisational change. Similarly, Mahmoud et al. (2021) found that motivational preferences vary across generations, although generational differences should be interpreted alongside organisational and individual characteristics.

Recent systematic evidence continues to identify flexibility, work-life balance and meaningful work as prominent Generation Z expectations, while open and inclusive leadership can contribute to positive workplace experiences (Yohanes, et. al., 2025).

Thus, Generation Z should be understood as a workforce cohort whose experiences may influence workplace expectations, rather than as a homogeneous population with predetermined behaviours.

Human Resource Strategies in the Contemporary Workplace

Human resource strategies involve deliberate organisational approaches for attracting, developing, motivating,

engaging and retaining employees in support of organisational objectives. Strategic HRM therefore connects people-management practices with organisational performance.

Contemporary Nigerian HRM is being influenced by digital transformation, remote work, employee experience, talent shortages, workforce diversity and employee wellbeing (Akeem & Idowu, 2024). The increasing presence of Generation Z intensifies these pressures because organisations must simultaneously maintain established systems while responding to new expectations.

Important HR strategy areas include flexible work, recruitment and employer branding, digital HR, learning and development, performance management, career development, rewards and employee wellbeing.

Generation Z and Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility refers to organisational arrangements that provide employees with greater choice concerning work location, working hours or scheduling. It can include remote work, hybrid work, flexible hours and other arrangements that enable employees to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

Flexibility has become particularly relevant to Generation Z. International evidence indicates that Gen Z places considerable importance on flexibility and work-life balance when evaluating employers (Evelyn, 2024). Research also suggests that flexible work arrangements can influence turnover intentions among Gen Z, with supervisor support and total rewards potentially shaping these relationships (Olga, 2024).

However, flexibility should not be implemented indiscriminately. In South-South Nigeria, differences between industries, occupations and organisational resources mean that remote or hybrid arrangements may be more feasible in some organisations than others. HR strategy should therefore combine flexibility with clear performance expectations, accountability and fairness.

Learning and Development

Learning and development involves organisational activities designed to improve employees' knowledge, skills, competencies and career capabilities. For Generation Z, learning is increasingly connected with employability and career progression.

The rapid pace of technological change means that formal education alone may not provide all the competencies required throughout an employee's career. Consequently, organisations may need to provide continuous professional development, mentoring, coaching, digital learning and career development opportunities.

Research on Generation Z employees indicates that training and development can contribute to retention, particularly when combined with supportive working environments and role clarity. This implies that learning and development should not be treated merely as an administrative HR activity but as part of a broader employee value proposition.

Technology-Enabled Human Resource Management

Technology-enabled HRM involves the use of digital platforms and technologies in recruitment, onboarding, communication, learning, performance management, employee records and workforce analytics.

Generation Z's extensive exposure to digital technologies may increase expectations for efficient and accessible digital HR services. Lazar et al. (2023) identify digital transformation as an important context for understanding the emerging Gen Z workforce. Contemporary HR research also highlights the growing use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies in HR processes.

However, technological adoption requires more than employee preference. Organisational infrastructure, cybersecurity, management capability, financial resources and digital skills determine whether digital HR

systems can be successfully implemented. In South-South Nigeria, therefore, the impact of Gen Z on digital HR strategies must be considered alongside organisational readiness.

Career Transparency and Development

Career transparency refers to the extent to which employees understand career pathways, promotion requirements, performance expectations and opportunities for advancement. Clear career pathways can strengthen employees' perceptions of fairness and organisational commitment.

Generation Z employees may place considerable emphasis on visible opportunities for progression because they often expect regular feedback and rapid skills development. Recent literature on Gen Z career aspirations emphasises the importance of meaningful career development and organisational support.

For HR managers, this means that organisations should clearly communicate promotion criteria, competency requirements and development opportunities. Mentoring and coaching can further strengthen employees' understanding of how their current roles connect with longer-term career objectives.

Employee Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing encompasses physical, psychological, social and work-related conditions that influence employees' ability to function effectively. Contemporary HRM increasingly recognises wellbeing as an organisational responsibility rather than solely an individual matter.

Younger workers have demonstrated increasing concern about work-life balance and wellbeing. Recent research identifies wellbeing as an important component of contemporary workforce expectations (Trifan, & Pantea, 2024). Consequently, organisations may need to strengthen mental-health support, workload management, psychological safety, flexible work arrangements and employee assistance mechanisms.

However, wellbeing initiatives must be substantive. Symbolic programmes without corresponding changes in workload, leadership behaviour and organisational culture may have limited effect.

Employee Engagement and Retention

Employee engagement refers to the degree to which employees are psychologically connected to and willing to invest effort in their work. Retention refers to the organisation's ability to maintain employees over time.

Generation Z may be particularly sensitive to organisational experiences involving flexibility, development, leadership, recognition and purpose. Evidence from recent research indicates that supportive workplace conditions and development opportunities can contribute to Generation Z retention.

The implication for HR strategy is that retention should not depend solely on financial compensation. Organisations should construct a broader employee value proposition encompassing development, recognition, flexibility, supportive leadership, meaningful work and wellbeing.

Theoretical Framework

Generational Cohort Theory

Generational Cohort Theory provides the primary conceptual foundation for understanding Generation Z. The theory proposes that individuals who experience similar social, technological and economic conditions during formative years may develop broadly similar orientations. In this study, the theory helps explain why Generation Z may demonstrate workplace expectations that differ from previous cohorts.

Nevertheless, the theory should not be used to assume that every Gen Z employee behaves identically. Organisational culture, education, occupation and socioeconomic conditions may moderate generational influences.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory explains the reciprocal relationship between employees and organisations. Employees are more likely to respond positively when they perceive that organisations provide valuable resources, support, fairness and development opportunities.

The theory is relevant to Generation Z because HR strategies such as flexibility, learning opportunities, wellbeing support and transparent career progression can represent organisational investments that employees reciprocate through engagement, commitment and retention.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model explains how perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence individuals' acceptance of technology. The model is relevant to this study because Generation Z's extensive exposure to digital technologies may influence expectations concerning technology-enabled HR services.

However, employee acceptance alone does not determine successful digital HR adoption. Organisational readiness, infrastructure and leadership support remain important.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the research and the empirical dataset, the study conceptualises Generation Z workplace expectations as the explanatory construct and HR practices as the organisational response.

Generation Z Workplace Expectations

- Workplace expectations/preferences
- Flexibility
- Learning and development
- Technology orientation
- Career expectations
- Wellbeing expectations

Human Resource Strategy Responses

- Flexible work practices
- Learning and development
- Digital HR
- Career management
- Employee wellbeing
- Engagement and retention practices

Employee Outcomes

- Employee experience
- Engagement

- Intention to remain
- Retention

The empirical dataset contains original respondent-level observations coded as P1–P8 and PR1–PR8**,** representing the participants stated opinions and corresponding responses captured directly from the administered questionnaire. These variables therefore constitute the primary empirical evidence used in assessing Generation Z workplace expectations and their relationship with human resource strategies. The analysis retains the original P and PR coding from the dataset to preserve the integrity of the participants' responses and avoid altering or reinterpreting the source data.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical literature provides support for the importance of flexibility, development, technology and wellbeing in managing Generation Z.

Kästner and Mattutat's international research found that flexibility was particularly important to Generation Z, with work-life balance and flexible working arrangements emerging as significant employer considerations (Evelyn, 2024). This supports the proposition that flexibility should be considered in contemporary HR strategy.

Similarly, research on flexible work arrangements among Generation Z demonstrates that flexibility can influence turnover intentions and that supervisor support and total rewards can play important roles in this relationship (Olga, 2024). This indicates that HR strategy should not treat flexibility as an isolated policy but integrate it with leadership and reward systems.

Recent systematic evidence further indicates that Generation Z values flexibility, work-life balance and meaningful work, while responding positively to participatory, open and inclusive leadership (Yohanes, et. al., 2025). These findings strengthen the argument for employee-centred HR strategies.

Research on contemporary HRM in Nigeria similarly identifies digital transformation, remote work, employee experience, workforce diversity, talent shortages and mental-health concerns as emerging HR issues (Akeem & Idowu, 2024). This suggests that the Nigerian HR environment is already undergoing transformation within which Generation Z's increasing participation becomes particularly relevant.

The empirical results from the present dataset add an important dimension to this literature. The overall mean of Generation Z workplace expectation indicators (3.82) was almost identical to the mean for reported HR practice indicators (3.83). Although the overall paired difference was not statistically significant, significant differences emerged for specific item pairs. This suggests that organisational HR strategies may be broadly aligned with employee expectations while still exhibiting important gaps in particular areas.

The extremely high aggregate correlation between P and PR ($r = .994$, $p < .001$) should, however, be interpreted cautiously because several corresponding indicators displayed identical response patterns. This finding highlights the importance of independent measurement and construct validation in future research.

Research Gap and Hypotheses

The reviewed literature demonstrates growing international interest in Generation Z and workplace transformation, but three gaps remain.

First, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining Generation Z and HR strategy alignment in South-South Nigeria. Second, much of the literature focuses on individual outcomes such as satisfaction or retention rather than examining expectation–practice alignment. Third, relatively little research addresses whether apparent generational effects remain after considering organisational and contextual factors.

Based on these gaps and the empirical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed for future validation using a refined instrument:

H1: Generation Z workplace expectations significantly influence the adoption of human resource strategies in South-South Nigeria.

H2: Generation Z workplace expectations regarding flexibility significantly influence flexible HR practices.

H3: Learning and development opportunities significantly influence Generation Z employee retention.

H4: Technology-enabled HR practices significantly influence Generation Z employee experience and retention.

H5: Wellbeing-oriented HR practices significantly influence Generation Z employee engagement.

H6: Career transparency significantly influences Generation Z intention to remain with an organisation.

H7: Leadership support strengthens the relationship between Generation Z workplace expectations and HR strategy adoption.

H8: Employee experience mediates the relationship between Generation Z workplace expectations and employee outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study originally proposed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design to investigate how Generation Z influences HR strategies and organisational outcomes. The research specified HR professionals and Generation Z employees as the target population and proposed survey and qualitative components.

For the present empirical article, however, the analysis is based exclusively on the attached quantitative survey dataset. Consequently, the realised study is treated as a cross-sectional quantitative survey design. This approach permits empirical assessment of Generation Z workplace expectations and their correspondence with reported HR practices.

The dataset contains 120 respondent records and 16 substantive Likert-scale indicators divided into two blocks: eight P indicators and eight PR indicators. The demographic variables comprise age, sex, educational qualification and work experience. The questionnaire responses were coded on a five-point scale, where higher scores represent stronger endorsement of the underlying statement.

Population, Sample and Data Preparation

The study concerns employees and HR-related workplace experiences relevant to Generation Z and HR strategy adaptation. The original research defined the population as HR managers/professionals and Generation Z employees within Nigerian organisations.

The attached dataset contains 120 records (N = 120). After screening, 117 cases contained complete responses across the demographic and substantive variables and were therefore used for the principal analyses. Three records contained missing demographic/substantive observations and were excluded from complete-case analyses.

The usable sample was predominantly female (92; 78.6%), while 24 respondents (20.5%) were male and one respondent (0.9%) was recorded in the third sex category. Respondents aged 25–34 constituted the largest age group (83; 70.9%), followed by those aged 35–44 (23; 19.7%) and 18–24 (11; 9.4%). Regarding educational qualification, 77 respondents (65.8%) reported HND/Bachelor's-level qualifications, 26 (22.2%) reported

OND/NCE, 11 (9.4%) reported postgraduate qualifications, and 3 (2.6%) were classified under other qualifications.

Work experience was concentrated in the 4–6-year category (55; 47.0%), followed by 1–3 years (38; 32.5%), 7 years or more (14; 12.0%) and less than one year (10; 8.5%).

Measurement of Variables

The dataset contains two substantive blocks:

- P1–P8: Generation Z workplace preference/expectation indicators.
- PR1–PR8: reported HR strategy/practice indicators.

The questionnaire responses were captured in the original dataset using the identifiers P1–P8 (Participant opinions) and PR1–PR8 (Participant responses)**.** Each observation represents the actual opinion or response provided by an individual participant. The study therefore analyses these variables as original empirical responses rather than reconstructed or model-generated measures. The original coding has been retained throughout the analysis to ensure that the statistical results remain directly traceable to the respondents' reported views.

Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each item. Internal consistency was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. Pearson correlation and paired-samples tests were used to assess the association and mean differences between the P and PR blocks.

The original research anticipated reliability assessment using Cronbach's Alpha, factor analysis, multivariate regression and, where appropriate, SEM. Given the structure and size of the supplied dataset, the present analysis focuses on descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation and paired comparisons.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Python-based statistical procedures equivalent to standard statistical software procedures. Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine the association between the aggregate P and PR scores. A paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether the overall mean of Generation Z workplace expectations differed significantly from reported HR practices.

Individual P–PR item pairs were also compared to identify areas where reported HR practices appeared to lag behind or exceed corresponding expectations.

Statistical decisions were based on a 5% significance level ($p < .05$).

RESULTS

Respondents' Characteristics

The analysis produced 117 complete cases. The sample was predominantly female (78.6%), and 70.9% of respondents were aged 25–34 years. Approximately two-thirds (65.8%) possessed HND/Bachelor's-level qualifications. In terms of experience, 47.0% had between four and six years of work experience.

These characteristics indicate that the dataset largely represents relatively young, professionally qualified employees, making it relevant to the study's examination of Generation Z-related workplace expectations and HR strategies.

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

The overall mean score for the P block was 3.82 (SD = 0.32), while the PR block recorded an almost identical mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.33).

At the item level, P1, P2, P3 and P6 recorded particularly high mean scores, ranging from 4.47 to 4.50, whereas P5 and P8 recorded the lowest mean of 2.97. Within the PR block, PR1, PR3, PR6 and PR8 recorded means of approximately 4.50, while PR2 and PR5 recorded 2.97.

Measure	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
P1–P8: Gen Z expectations/preferences	3.82	0.32	0.6
PR1–PR8: HR practices/strategies	3.83	0.33	0.62

The results presented in this study are derived directly from the original participant-level responses contained in the CSV dataset. The variables P1–P8 and PR1–PR8 preserve the original coding used to capture respondents' opinions and responses. Accordingly, the descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlations and comparative tests reported in this study reflect the actual responses recorded from the participants and have not been substituted with simulated, reconstructed or externally generated observations.

This is an important methodological finding because the research originally specified $\alpha \geq .70$ as the reliability criterion.

Correlation and Overall Comparison

A Pearson correlation between the aggregate P and PR scores produced an exceptionally strong positive relationship: $r = .994$, $p < .001$ ($n = 117$).

However, this result should be interpreted cautiously. Inspection of the dataset reveals that several P and PR variables contain identical response patterns, particularly P3/PR3 through P7/PR7. This produces substantial artificial overlap between the two composite measures. Consequently, the correlation should not be interpreted as definitive evidence that Generation Z causes HR strategy adaptation.

The paired-samples t-test showed that the overall difference between P and PR was not statistically significant, $t(116) = -1.68$, $p = .096$. Thus, at the aggregate level, the evidence does not demonstrate a statistically significant gap between reported Generation Z expectations and HR practices.

Item-Level Comparison

The most notable differences occurred in P2/PR2 and P8/PR8.

Pair	P Mean	PR Mean	Mean Difference	t	p	Decision
P1–PR1	4.48	4.5	−0.02	−1.00	0.319	Not significant
P2–PR2	4.47	2.97	1.5	17.32	<.001	Significant
P3–PR3	4.5	4.5	0	—	—	Identical
P4–PR4	3.5	3.5	0	—	—	Identical
P5–PR5	2.97	2.97	0	—	—	Identical
P6–PR6	4.5	4.5	0	—	—	Identical

P7–PR7	3.18	3.18	0	—	—	Identical
P8–PR8	2.97	4.5	−1.52	−18.17	<.001	Significant

The findings therefore reveal substantial differences in two dimensions, while the remaining paired indicators show identical or near-identical patterns. Because the dataset does not provide the original item wording, these differences cannot responsibly be labelled as "flexibility," "technology," "learning," or "mental health" without access to the questionnaire.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The findings provide preliminary empirical evidence that Generation Z-related workplace expectations and reported HR strategies are broadly aligned at the aggregate level. The mean expectation score (M = 3.82) was almost identical to the HR practice score (M = 3.83), and the paired comparison was not statistically significant (p = .096). This suggests that respondents generally perceive a reasonable level of correspondence between younger employees' workplace expectations and organisational HR responses.

This finding is relevant to the original research problem, which argues that Nigerian organisations face pressure to modernise HR systems in response to Generation Z's expectations concerning flexibility, digitalisation, development and wellbeing.

However, the item-level findings reveal that alignment is not uniform. Two dimensions exhibited statistically significant gaps. In P2/PR2, the expectation scores substantially exceeded the reported practice score, indicating an area in which organisational HR responses may not adequately match employee expectations. Conversely, PR8 significantly exceeded P8, suggesting an area where organisational provision may be stronger than employee expectation.

These findings support the research's argument that organisations should move beyond generic assumptions about Generation Z and identify the specific HR domains in which adaptation creates value.

Theoretical Contribution

The findings contribute to Strategic Human Resource Management literature by providing preliminary evidence that the relationship between Generation Z and HR strategy should be understood in terms of alignment rather than simple generational difference.

The results also support the research's conceptual position that Generation Z expectations may influence HR strategy adoption while organisational characteristics and contextual factors shape the resulting relationship.

Importantly, however, the very high P–PR correlation should not be interpreted causally because of the apparent duplication between several paired variables. The strongest contribution of the present dataset is therefore its identification of specific expectation–practice gaps, rather than evidence of causal impact.

Practical Implications

HR managers should regularly compare employee expectations with actual HR provision rather than assuming that existing policies adequately address Generation Z needs. The substantial gap observed in P2/PR2 demonstrates the value of conducting item-level workforce diagnostics.

Organisations should also prioritise transparent communication, continuous employee listening, digital HR capability, development opportunities, flexibility and wellbeing support, consistent with the strategic priorities identified in the original research.

The findings further suggest that HR strategies should be evidence-based and differentiated. A single "Gen Z strategy" may be inappropriate because employee expectations and organisational responses can differ considerably across specific HR domains.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the relationship between Generation Z workplace expectations and HR strategies using the supplied survey dataset. The analysis of 117 complete cases indicates that the overall level of Generation Z workplace expectations (M = 3.82) is closely aligned with reported HR practices (M = 3.83). The overall paired difference was not statistically significant, suggesting broad aggregate alignment.

Nevertheless, the item-level analysis identified significant gaps in two areas, demonstrating that aggregate alignment can conceal important differences between employee expectations and organisational responses. The evidence therefore supports a central proposition of the original research research: HR strategies for Generation Z should be based on empirical assessment of specific workplace expectations rather than assumptions about an entire generation. The research specifically calls for evidence capable of identifying HR domains most influenced by Gen Z and translating the findings into practical HR strategies.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the dataset contains only 120 respondents, substantially below the approximately 700 respondents proposed in the original research design. Second, the available dataset contains only quantitative responses; therefore, the qualitative interview and focus-group component proposed in the research design could not be analysed. The research originally envisaged approximately 50 qualitative participants.

Third, the CSV does not contain the actual questionnaire statements or construct labels for P1–P8 and PR1–PR8. Consequently, individual indicators could not be confidently assigned to flexibility, learning and development, technology, wellbeing, career transparency or other HR domains.

Fourth, the reliability coefficients for the two eight-item blocks were below 0.70. Finally, several P–PR item pairs appear to contain identical response patterns. This creates an exceptionally high aggregate correlation (r = .994) and prevents the correlation from being interpreted as strong evidence of causal impact.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should employ the full instrument containing clearly labelled and theoretically distinct constructs for workplace flexibility, learning and development, technology-enabled HR, career transparency, wellbeing, employee experience, engagement and retention, as specified in the original research.

A substantially larger sample covering multiple organisations and sectors across South-South Nigeria would improve generalisability. Longitudinal research should also examine whether HR adaptations produce sustained improvements in Generation Z retention, engagement and performance. Finally, qualitative interviews with HR leaders and Generation Z employees should be incorporated to explain why particular HR strategies succeed or fail. This would fulfil the original research's objective of combining quantitative evidence with employee experiences to develop a Nigeria-specific HR strategy framework.

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