



Let's Go Barbie!

Gen Z Women's Perceptions on the Work Environment as They Approach Entry-Level Jobs: A Case Study

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Purpose & Problem of Practice

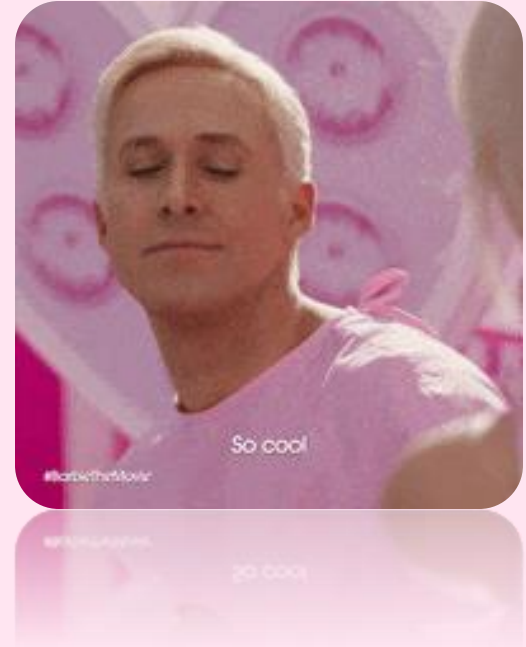
Attracting and retaining Gen Z talent is a critical issue for organizations.

Gen Z brings new attitudes, beliefs, and expectations.

The challenge for organizations is to understand and adapt to these expectations to remain competitive in talent retention.

Research Question

What are Gen Z women's attitudes toward entering the current workforce?



Literature Review

- The workplace is inequitable for women (Joshi et al., 2015).
- COVID-19 disrupted workplace dynamics, highlighting the inadequacies of accommodating employees' diverse needs and circumstances, especially for women.
- Gen Z lacks exposure to pre-pandemic workplace norms (Stiller Rikleen, 2021).

Organizational Justice Theory

- Rooted in equity theory – individuals engage in comparative evaluations of fairness in their organizations.
- Individuals adjust their work-related behaviors and work output in response to perceived disparities in treatment.
- Distributive Justice: perceived fairness in outcomes from leadership decisions
- Procedural Justice: perceived justice of systems/processes
- Interpersonal justice: perceived justice in relationships with colleagues
- Informational justice: the fairness in sharing, explaining, and disseminating information.

Literature Review (cont.)

- Little research on Gen Z women's attitudes toward work compared to other generations.
- In-office work is not necessary to productivity (Kossek et al., 2021) or outcomes (Chandra et al., 2020).
- Gen Z is interested in “work to live” instead of “live to work,” which differs from previous generations (Mawhinney, 2019).
- Prioritize work-life balance (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021), hybrid/remote work (Stiller Rikleen, 2021), and quiet quitting (Klotz & Bolino, 2022).
- Deeper understanding of political and cultural phenomena, e.g. lack of parental leave policies (Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, 2023).
- Emphasize higher pay and understand gender pay gap (Grow & Yang, 2018).

Methodology

Participants:

- Gen Z women (18 – 26 years old)
- Within 2 years from graduating with undergraduate degree
- University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC) business students
- Active members in University's Women In Business Club

Single-case study approach:

- Followed Yin's (2018) guidelines
- To capture the common feelings Gen Z women have on entering the current workforce
- Specifically, the participant's perceptions about the four dimensions of organizational justice

Data Collection Procedures

- Gained IRB approval for recruitment flyer, interview guide, and ethical approach.
- UMKC faculty distributed recruitment flyer to club members.
- Participants completed an eligibility survey.
- Interviewed Gen Z women using Zoom.
 - Received informed consent.
 - Used open-ended questions during semi-structured interview.
- Cleaned interview transcripts.
 - Pseudonyms were created for participant's confidentiality.

Demographics

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>Previous Work Experience</u>	<u>First Generation College Student</u>	<u>Starting Salary Expectation</u>
Rosella	Human Resource Management	Yes	No	\$60,000
Francis	Finance	Yes	No	\$60,000
Mona	Marketing	Yes	Yes	\$50,000
Abigail	Marketing	Yes	Yes	\$50,000
Madison	Business Management	Yes	No	\$95,000

Data Analysis Procedures

- Coded the Gen Z women's interview transcripts.
 - Developed themes.
- Each researcher reviewed another's coding.
- Results were the agreed-upon findings.

Findings

- Gen Z women expect a “what should be” workplace culture.
 - Benefits offered
 - Inclusion of diversity
 - Interpersonal relations
 - Acknowledgement of their contributions
- Gen Z women acknowledge the current workplace policies and the issues with those policies.
 - Maternity and paternity leave programs
 - Pay raise and promotion factors
 - Mental health resources

More Findings!

- There is apprehension about entering the workforce for Gen Z women.
 - Difficulties in getting a job
 - Low expectations for entry-level positions
 - Younger generation stigmas
- Gen Z women lack organizational loyalty.

A “What Should Be” Workplace Culture

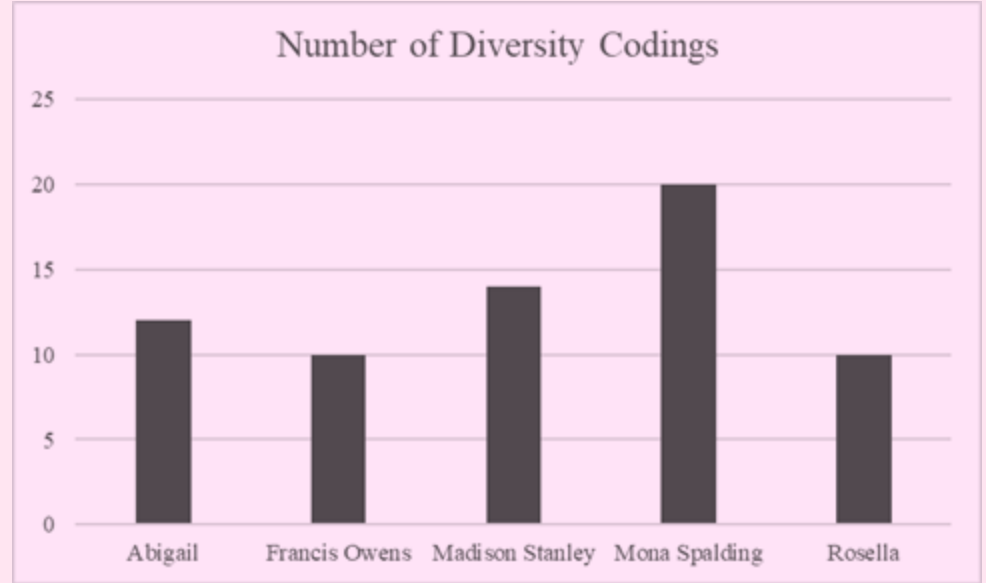
“I think that’s my number one thing of really feeling comfortable with the people around and like, really enjoying that time...they’re like your second family right? And you’re spending most of your day with them like you might as well really like the people around you.” – Mona

“Yeah, I am terrified.” – Abigail

“I have asked around about advice on how to like, get that trust and respect from them.” – Madison

“having a sense that your work actually sees the light of day and that it actually has a payoff. I think that’s something for me that really helps...I appreciate that...it actually worked like my thought process worked. It was good.” – Rosella

Diversity Codings



Issues with Current Workplace Policies

“I think I would love that to be like a law, of course, so definitely the paid maternity leave for the first few months is definitely one that I feel like should be obligatory to women and honestly, men as well. I feel like I would love to get more of a paternity leave presence in the United States.” – Francis

“You have to go almost the extra mile all the time...I’m very much aware that, you know, a man probably doesn’t have to try as much sometimes than a woman does. It’s like that qualification like when applying for a job; they say that women feel like they need to fit every single checkbox in the job application, and men feel like, ‘Oh, I just need like a couple, and I’ll be good for it’ so I think that really does seep into the workplace.” – Mona

Workforce Apprehension

“I feel a little, I guess, I’ll say, cautious about it. And maybe even a bit like it’s out of my control, like I can put in as many applications as I want.”— Rosella

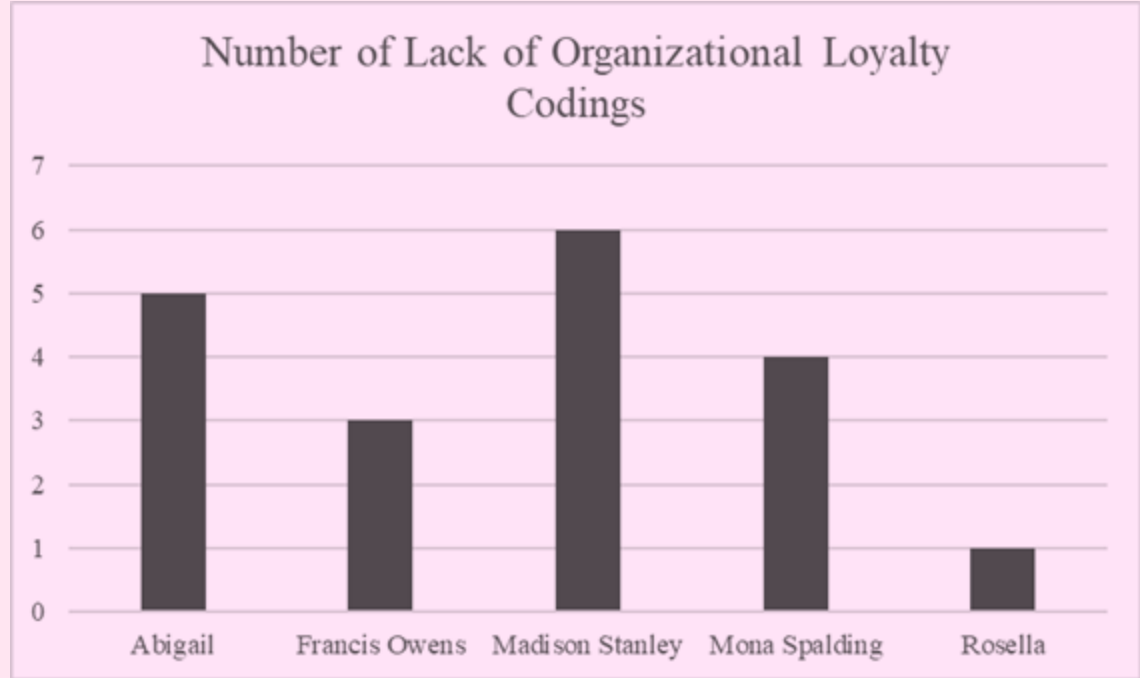
“I’m hoping it’ll be better since it’s more of a professional environment than like a restaurant. But I’m not gonna set my expectations of it being an amazing inclusive environment, especially if it’s just an intro role because I feel like those are where you’d get kind of like picked on the most.” – Abigail

Lack Organizational Loyalty

“Company loyalty was a bigger thing in the past, and it’s like nonexistent now. Pretty much like company loyalty doesn’t really mean anything. I feel like maybe minimum a year, maybe year and a half. If I like it, I’ll stay there. But if I don’t, I think that’s kind of the point where I would feel like, okay, I got a lot of learning opportunities from this. I’m going to take those skills and apply it to the next place.” – Rosella

“It’s really good in the beginning stages of your career to like move often...to move often enough to have skills. Probably move like once a year or 2, probably because I think that, especially early on, you have to get a lot of skills...I’m learning something new, and I think that’s a really big thing for me is like I have to feel like I’m constantly learning something new and, like I said doing something purposeful to feel like I could stay at a job.” – Mona

Lack of Organizational Loyalty Codings



Discussion

- Elements of interpersonal dimension:
 - Inclusion and equitable treatment
 - Comfortable environment
- Elements of distributive dimension:
 - Importance of performance-based pay
- Elements of informational dimension:
 - Trust between companies and employees with information
- Elements of procedural dimension:
 - Acknowledging mental health
- Theoretical Implications:
 - Extending OJ theory, Gen Z and women within the workplace literature
 - Reinforced theory regarding Gen Z's work-to-live mentality

Inequitable Treatment

“every time I’ll go up and shake a man’s hand, they shake mine a lot lighter and more gingerly than they do a man’s, which...I see it as them trying to be kind, but it definitely still feels a little condescending...I like people to view me just as myself, and not necessarily like as a woman.” – Francis

Practical Implications

- Consider offering benefits similar to ones Gen Z employees expect.
- Provide ways to further an employee's skillset.
- Provide opportunities to learn and grow within the company.

Going Forward

- We have interviewed an additional 5 Gen Z women over the summer.
- Within this fall semester, we intend to interview around 5-10 more participants.
- Limitations:
 - 5 participants
 - Generalizability concern
 - Bias from previous work experience



Thank you!