

**GENERATION Z'S FIRST JOB EXPECTATIONS IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE**

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**Abstract**

Individuals born between 1997-2012, known as Generation – Z, form the significant portion of the Indian population. Their characteristics, personality traits and attitudes differ significantly from their previous generations. These individuals enter the workforce with their own priorities, preferences and expectations. With the technological advancements and changing work structures, the expectations of these cohorts from their first job differ significantly from their counterparts. This paper aims to examine the expectations of the graduates, who are about to enter the workforce, from their first job. For this purpose, the study administers a structured questionnaire to UG and PG graduates. The data gathered will be analyzed using SPSS through cross tabs, charts and graphs to draw inferences on the expectations of these individuals from their first job and/or employers. The findings reveal the graduates' priorities and expectations from their employers. These results will help the employers and organizations to align their organizational practices as per the needs and requirements of the job seekers. It will also help the higher education institutions to prepare these individuals for the job market and also train them on fulfilling their career aspirations and goals.

**Key words:** Generation Z, Expectations, Factors, Priorities, Employers, First Job.

**Introduction**

India enjoys its demographic dividend (UNFPA, 2016) with its large population in the age group of 15-64 years with median age being 28 years driving to economic growth. With the rapid expansion of technology, the demand for Indian workforce has increased globally. On the other hand, each year lakhs of students graduate from higher education institutions and enter the job market (Branine 2008; Rae 2007) resulting in over supply of graduates. With the changing dynamics of workplace and work culture due to technological advancements and global pandemic, the priorities and preferences of the workforce has changed drastically (Bews & Rossouw, 2002). These forces have shifted the traditional work structures to remote and flexible structures (Wale et al., 2018; Bews & Rossouw, 2002) demanding digital literacy and continuous skill development among the employees. The rapidly changing job market is

demanding new set of skills and abilities from their workforce which requires the fresh graduates to align their skills and abilities with the labour market requirements and expectations. Therefore, hiring the right employees appears to be the most crucial and challenging task for any human resources department (Velasco, 2012). As the individuals expect more flexible and social work environments, it is necessary for the organizations to understand the priorities of the employees when recruiting them. Therefore, many firms are working on providing social and workplace environments which in turn work towards employee well-being in terms of their mental health and work-life balance.

With such rapidly evolving employment landscape and changing work structures, organisations expectations of skills from the fresh graduates is evolving in the same pace. However, the supply of these graduates from the Higher Education Institutions is not being met with the industry expectations. This is also evident from reports by tech-giants such as Deloitte and Accenture that the skills possessed by the fresh graduates do not fulfill their requirements, thus leading to demand and supply mismatch and also skills mismatches in the labour market. As these individuals transition from education to employment, their expectations from their first job and/or employers are significantly different from other generation individuals. These individuals' expectations define their career paths and the organizations/sectors they choose to work. As the organizations are not fully aware of the Generation Z expectations, what they offer differs from what these individuals expect. As a result, it leads to high attrition rates, dissatisfaction and low engagement of these workforce. Therefore, considering the expectations of Generation Z, helps the employers to attract, retain and engage the right workforce in their firms. Also, it is pertinent to examine if these graduates fit the labour market requirements on one hand, and whether the rapidly evolving job market fits to the preferences and expectations of these job seekers on the other. In this background, this study is taken up to examine the expectations of these individuals from their first job in their career.

### ***Traits and preferences of Generation Z***

Individuals born in the year 1997 - 2012 are regarded as Generation Z as per the Generational Pyramid. These individuals, born with internet and mobile devices, are regarded as technically and digitally sound (Lanier K., 2017) with the rapid advancements in technology, social media and global connectivity. Schwieger, D., & Ladwig, C. (2018) analysed habits and characteristics of Generation Z individuals and found that these individuals are tech-savvy, individualistic, entrepreneurial, money conscious and multitasker. In line with this, Iorgulescu, M. C. 2016; Weller, 2017 studies highlight Generation Z are characterized by entrepreneurial mindsets, risk –takers, creative and more technological oriented. This cohort understands the importance of lifelong learning and continuous development in order to stay relevant in the job market (Jenkins, 2015b; Patel, 2017). They have well-defined career expectations and development plans and these aspirations are based on various intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

While some authors debate that these individuals are risk-averse as they prefer security and stability in their careers (Weller, 2017). A study conducted by Nguyen Ngoc T. & et al., (2022) in Vietnam found that Generation Z individuals placed high value to symbolic attributes such as office atmosphere & ethics, sincerity, social environment and flexibility. While instrumental

attributes such as compensation and other benefits were ranked only after the symbolic factors. Contrary to this, studies like Half, (2015) & Patel, (2017) found that financial and job security were the two factors that were ranked as top priorities among the Gen-Z individuals. Promotion, training opportunities, workplace stability, conducive workplace environment, flexible working hours, managers' integrity and honesty are some of the top ranked factors by the Generation Z cohorts (Earst & Young, 2017). A study conducted by Lalic & et al., (2020) analysed the career expectations of generation z individuals in Serbia and found that work-life balance, freedom and learning were the most important factors for them. Job satisfaction, work-life balance and flexible working hours are the top most factors considered by individuals born between 1995 and 2000 years, according to a study conducted by Fodor et al. (2018).

Surrounding these debates, this study considers to examine the most important and preferred factors by the Generation Z individuals residing in Hyderabad region. The factors considered are intrinsic factors – career prospects, learning opportunities, autonomy, challenges, etc. and extrinsic factors – monetary benefits, work environment, job security, work-life balance, superior and team support etc. Considering all such factors, it is pertinent to capture Generation Z expectations and priorities from their job and/or employers as these individuals are soon entering the job market and are significantly different from previous generations in terms of their characteristics, traits, attitudes and priorities.

### **Objective of the study**

The main aim of this paper is to examine the expectations of Generation Z individuals i.e., those born between 1997-2012 from their first job.

### **Methodology**

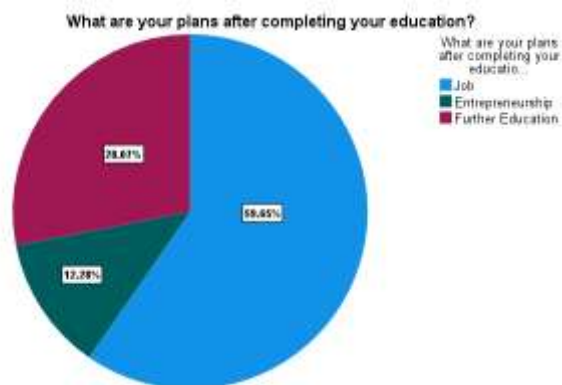
This study administers a structured questionnaire to 228 undergraduate and postgraduate students who belong to Generation Z i.e., born between 1997-2012. The data gathered is analyzed using SPSS to understand the expectations of this cohort from their first job.

### **Research implications**

The study findings will help the employers and organizations to align their recruitment and selection practices as per the needs and requirements of the job seekers. It will also help the higher education institutions to prepare these individuals for the job market and also train them on fulfilling their career aspirations and goals.

### **Analysis and discussion**

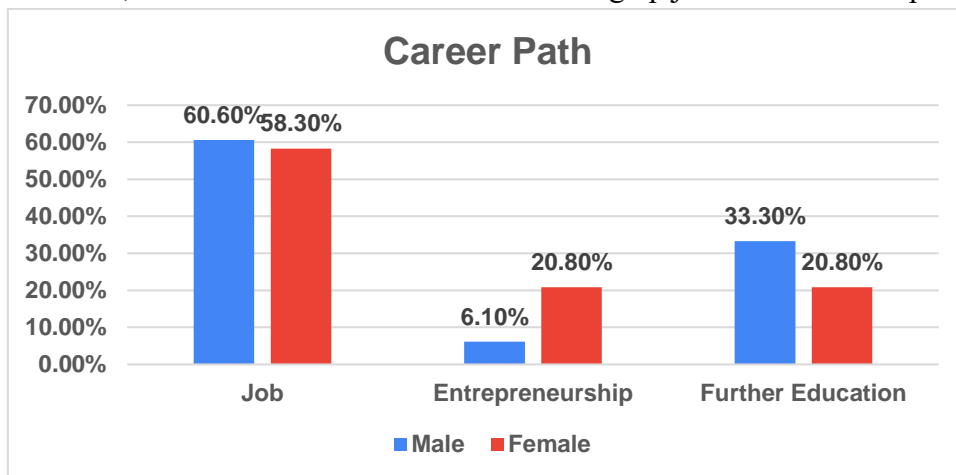
The data is captured from 228 students studying UG and PG courses from various colleges residing in Hyderabad region only. The respondents cover 132 male graduates (57.9%) and 96 female graduates (42.1%) of the total.



Source: Primary Survey

The above pie-chart depicts the responses of the individuals on their future plans after formal education. Majority of the respondents i.e., almost 60% are interested to enter into job market while 28.07% respondents are interested to take up entrepreneurship as their career path and the remain chose to go for further education.

The chart below indicates career paths chosen based on gender. It is observed that more number of female (20.8%) are interested in entrepreneurship compared to their counterparts (6.1%). While the number remains higher for males in case of both job (60.6%) and further education (33.3%). However, both are inclined more towards taking up job as their career path.



Source: Primary Survey

### Work environment

	Highly structured and rule based	Moderately structured with little flexibility	Creative and innovation focused	Highly dynamic and flexible
<b>Male</b>	9.10%	21.20%	54.5%	15.20%
<b>Female</b>	8.3%	12.50%	79.20%	0
<b>Total</b>	8.8%	17.5%	64.9%	8.8%

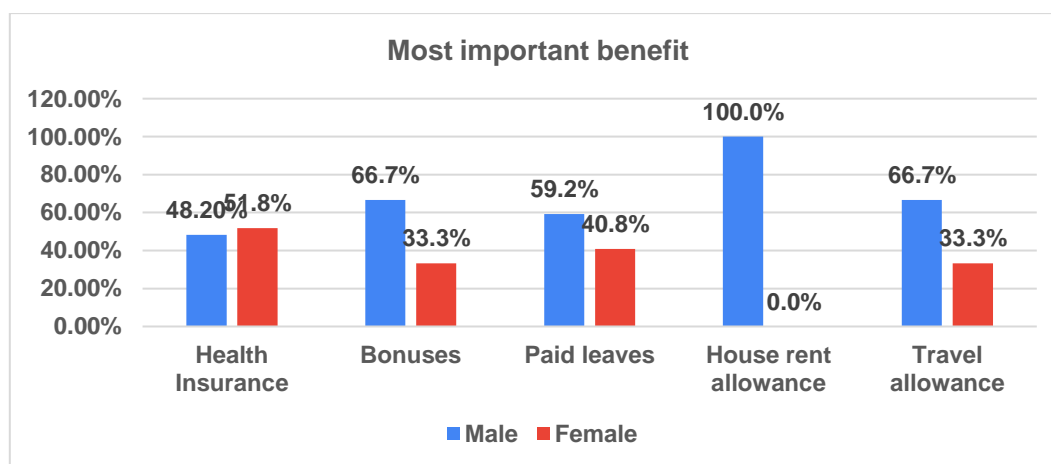
*Source: Primary Survey*

The above table depicts the type of environment preferred by Generation Z individuals in their first job. 64.9% respondents prefer to work in creative and innovation focused environments while only 8.8% prefer highly structured and rule based work environments and also highly dynamic and flexible work environments. This indicates the Gen Z cohorts prefer to work in environments where their creative and innovative ideas are heard and considered rather than following routine and rigid tasks. The same holds good if gender-based preference is to be considered i.e., creative and innovation focused. However, preference for other type of work structures for male and female individually is only a small percentage share.

	Control by the supervisor in the work			Preference to work		
	Fully guided	No control	Moderate control	Individually	Team work	Both
Male	57.9%	86.4%	54.5%	61.1%	73%	50%
Female	42.1%	13.6%	45.5%	38.9%	27.0%	50.0%

*Source: Primary Survey*

Generation Z individual prefer moderate control and interference by their manager. However, majority of the male respondents prefer not to have any control by their managers. Whereas most of the female respondents prefer to have moderate interference or fully guided by their managers in performing their job roles. Considering how these individuals prefer to work in the organisations, it is evident from the above table that 50% of male and female respondents prefer to work both individually as well as in teams. Contrary to this, majority of the male respondents (73%) prefer working in teams whereas 38.9% of the female respondents prefer working individually.



*Source: Primary Survey*

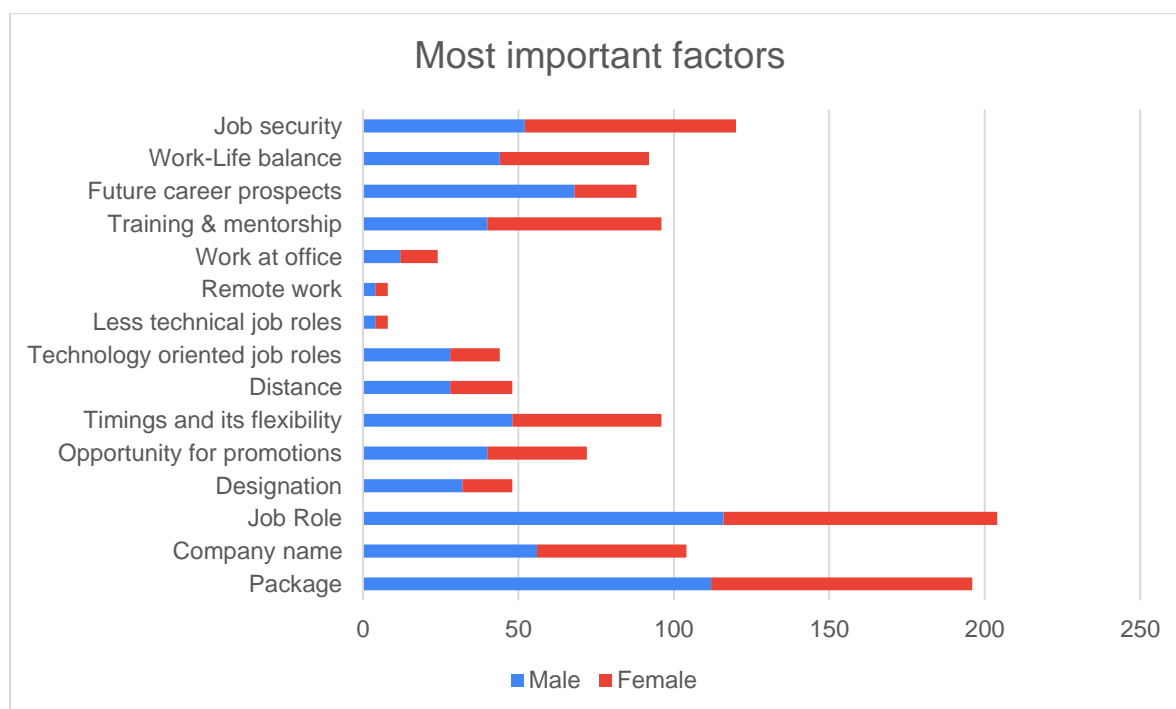
The survey captures the data on most important benefits Gen Z individuals prefer to have apart from their regular salary. It can be inferred from the above chart that there is significant difference in the preferences among the male and female respondents. For the male respondents, house rent allowance is the most preferred benefit followed by bonuses, travel

allowance, paid leaves and health insurance in the descending order. While their counterparts give the top priority to health insurance followed by paid leaves, bonuses and travel allowance in the order of high to low preference. However, house rent allowance was not among their top priorities.

What do you prefer among the following?		
	Attractive salary with routine and not so creative job tasks	Not so attractive salary with challenging and innovative job tasks
Male	66.70%	50.0%
Female	33.3%	50.0%

*Source: Primary Survey*

If these cohorts were to choose between “Attractive salary with routine and not so creative jobs” and “Not so attractive salary with challenging and innovative job tasks”, majority of the male respondents (66.7%) chose attractive salary with routine and not so creative jobs while most of the female respondents chose challenging and innovative job tasks despite of inattractive salaries.



*Source: Primary Survey*

When the respondents were asked to choose the most important factors they consider while choosing their first job, it is evident from the graph above that job role is the top most factor for both the genders taken together, followed by package, job security and company name. The next important factors which ranked same are timings & flexibility and training & mentorship, followed by work-life balance, future career prospects and opportunity for promotions. The

lower ranked factors are designation, distance, technology oriented jobs and work at office. The least considered factors are less technical job roles and remote work. Considering this analysis, it is evident that the job role, package, job security, company name and timings & flexibility are the top five factors considered by Generation Z individuals. Work-life balance, designation, work from office or remote work, distance and technically sound or low job roles are the factors considered only later than the top five factors mentioned above.

If the factors among the genders is to be analysed, again job role and package stood highest for both male and female graduates. Future career prospects is the third most important factor for male respondents while it is job security for the female counterparts. Company name stood fourth for male graduates while training and mentorship for female graduates, followed by timings and flexibility for male and work-life balance for female cohorts.

### **Conclusion**

Generation Z represent a significant portion of the current workforce transitioning from education to employment characterized by strong technological exposure, rapidly evolving job markets, globalisation and global connectivity. These factors contribute to their characteristics, personality, attitudes, behaviour and preferences towards their work choices and career paths. Although there are innumerable studies on previous generations, research on Generation Z cohort is limited and to be explored in detail. The findings from this study contributes to the existing literature and attempts to provide details on choices and preferences of these cohorts. These individuals lay equal emphasis to both intrinsic such as and extrinsic factors such as monetary benefits. They prefer not only financial stability in terms of package, bonuses, allowances and insurance but also challenging job tasks, creative and innovative job roles, social and conducive environment, work-life balance and job security. Analysing the difference in the preferences among the gender, the study found package, job security and company name as the top ranked factors by both the genders which indicates their preference for financial stability as well as secure jobs. These individuals prefer to work both individually as well as in teams with little or no interference and control from their superiors. This indicates their ability to learn and adapt to the volatile environments.

Overall, the findings of this study will help the organisations and/or employers to align their practices with the aspirations of emerging workforce to remain competitive in the global market.

### **Further scope for research**

This study is limited to a specific sample of UG and PG graduates residing in Hyderabad region only, however it may be extended across different regions and educational backgrounds. Additionally, factors influencing Generation Z traits and personalities may also be analysed.

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