

17 - 19 October 2025

Lyon , France

The Misalignment Between Gen Z Career Expectations and Traditional Corporate Structures: Transitioning Toward New Work Models

Bahar Divrik

İzmir University, Turkey

Abstract

This study explores the growing misalignment between Generation Z's career expectations and the rigid frameworks of traditional corporate structures. As Gen Z becomes a dominant presence in the global workforce, organizations are increasingly challenged to adapt to their evolving needs, particularly in terms of flexibility, purpose-driven work, and digital integration. The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 participants — 12 Gen Z professionals from diverse industries and 8 human resources or employer branding specialists from mid-to-large-sized companies. The findings reveal that Gen Z professionals seek autonomy, rapid skill development, and meaningful engagement in their careers, often clashing with hierarchical promotion systems, rigid job roles, and outdated performance metrics. HR experts acknowledge the growing gap and report organizational inertia in shifting toward more agile, project-based, and hybrid career models. The study also highlights innovative organizational practices such as internal gig marketplaces, purpose-oriented employer branding, and redefined career pathways. This research contributes to the literature on generational dynamics in the workplace and provides practical insights for organizations aiming to attract and retain Gen Z talent by rethinking traditional career structures.

Keywords: Gen Z, Career, Career Expectations, Workplace