

19 - 21 December 2025

Berlin , Germany

Decoding Generational Wellbeing: Insights From Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Enhancing Practices in The Workplace

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Abstract

The growing presence of Generation Z in the workforce raises critical questions about how organizations can sustain employee well-being while adapting HR practices across generations. Guided by the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework, this study examines how AMO-enhancing practices influence employee well-being among Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z in Malaysia. A total of 450 employees (150 per cohort) participated in the survey, and data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with Multi-Group Analysis (MGA). Findings reveal that ability-enhancing practices exert a stronger influence on well-being among Generation X compared to Generation Y and Generation Z. Conversely, motivation-enhancing practices are significantly more influential for Generation Z compared to Generation X, reflecting the younger cohort’s emphasis on recognition and motivational drivers. Opportunity-enhancing practices, however, showed no significant differences across groups, suggesting uniformity in their impact. This study contributes to AMO theory by contextualizing generational variations in HR practices, offering new insights into workforce dynamics. Practically, the results highlight the need for generationally tailored HRM strategies by strengthening skills and training for older cohorts while emphasizing motivational initiatives for younger workers. Beyond organizational relevance, this research aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on Good Health and Well-being and SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth by demonstrating how inclusive and targeted HR practices foster healthier, more engaged, and productive employees across generations.

Keywords: Generation X; Generation Y; Generation Z; Pls-Sem, Mga Analysis