

Reimagining Management and Sustainability through the Lens of Generation Z: Insights from the Future Workforce

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Generation Z's sustainability values and their expectations from managerial and organizational practices. As the newest generation entering the workforce, Generation Z brings a strong awareness of environmental and social issues, which significantly influences their perception of leadership and business responsibility. Unlike earlier generations, they expect organizations to go beyond profit-making and actively contribute to environmental protection, ethical governance, and social well-being.

The research focuses on how Gen Z views ethical leadership, corporate social responsibility, and environmentally sustainable workplace practices. It analyses whether sustainability plays a decisive role in shaping their expectations from managers and organizations. Through primary data collected using a structured questionnaire, the study identifies key patterns in how sustainability values influence career preferences and organizational choice.

The findings highlight that sustainability is not merely an additional feature but a core expectation among the future workforce. The study emphasizes the growing need for organizations to integrate sustainable practices into their management strategies in order to attract, engage, and retain Generation Z employees. Ultimately, the research contributes to understanding how sustainability is reshaping management thinking in the modern business environment.

Keywords: Generation Z, Sustainable Management, Ethical Leadership, Corporate Social Responsibility, Organizational Practices, Career Preferences, Environmental Sustainability, Workforce Expectations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability and Generation Z

Sustainability has become one of the defining priorities of the modern business environment. It is no longer limited to environmental protection but also includes social responsibility, ethical governance, and long-term value creation. Generation Z, having grown up in a world affected by climate change, social inequality, and rapid digital exposure, demonstrates a heightened awareness of these sustainability challenges. As a result, this generation views sustainability not as an optional corporate initiative but as a fundamental responsibility of organizations.

For Generation Z, sustainable practices reflect the authenticity and credibility of a company. Their environmental consciousness and social sensitivity influence how they evaluate brands, institutions, and employers. This shift highlights the growing connection between sustainability and the expectations of the emerging workforce.

Management and Generation Z

Management practices are evolving as new generations enter the workforce with different expectations and value systems. Generation Z seeks transparency, ethical leadership, and meaningful work experiences. Unlike previous generations that may have prioritized financial stability alone, Gen Z places equal importance on organizational values, workplace culture, and social impact.

They expect managers to demonstrate accountability, inclusivity, and long-term thinking. Leadership, in their perspective, is not just about decision-making authority but about responsibility and ethical conduct. These expectations are influencing recruitment practices, organizational policies, and overall management strategies.

Integrating Sustainability and Management: The Gen Z Perspective:

The intersection of sustainability and management becomes particularly significant when viewed through the lens of Generation Z. As the newest entrants into the workforce, Gen Z brings fresh perspectives that challenge traditional profit-centered management approaches. They expect sustainability to be embedded within everyday managerial decisions rather than treated as a separate corporate function.

This integration of sustainability into management practices is shaping career preferences and organizational choices among Gen Z professionals. Understanding this transformation is essential for developing sustainable, future-oriented management systems that align with the values of the upcoming workforce.

Scope of the Study

This study primarily concentrates on Generation Z respondents and their values regarding sustainability in the context of modern business practices. It seeks to understand how this emerging workforce perceives environmental responsibility, ethical conduct, and social accountability within organizations.

By focusing specifically on Gen Z, the research captures the mind-set of individuals who will soon occupy key roles in various professional sectors. The study also includes insights into their views on ethical leadership and socially responsible workplace policies, highlighting how sustainability is interpreted beyond environmental concerns.

Furthermore, the research investigates how these sustainability-oriented values influence Generation Z's expectations from managerial and organizational practices. It analyses the extent to which sustainability considerations shape their perception of effective leadership, workplace culture, and long-term organizational commitment. By examining the impact of sustainability on future workplace and management expectations, the study provides meaningful insights into how organizations can adapt their strategies to align with the priorities of the next generation workforce.

Literature Review

Sustainability and Corporate Management

1. Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*. Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). *Creating Shared Value*. Harvard Business Review.

Sustainability has evolved from a peripheral concern to a central strategic priority in modern management. According to Elkington (1997), the concept of the "Triple Bottom Line" emphasizes that organizations must focus on People, Planet, and Profit rather than financial performance alone. This framework suggests that

long-term organizational success depends on balancing economic, environmental, and social responsibilities. Similarly, Porter and Kramer (2011) introduced the concept of “Creating Shared Value,” arguing that businesses can generate economic value by addressing societal challenges. These studies highlight that sustainability is not merely ethical compliance but a strategic management approach.

2. Deloitte (2023). Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey. See miller, C., & Grace, M. (2016). Generation Z Goes to College.

Generation Z and Workplace Expectations:

Generation Z is widely recognized for its strong social awareness and digital orientation. Research by Deloitte (2023) in its “Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey” indicates that climate change and sustainability are among the top concerns for Gen Z respondents globally. The study reveals that many Gen Z employees prefer to work for organizations that demonstrate genuine environmental and social responsibility. Furthermore, See miller and Grace (2016) describe Generation Z as pragmatic, socially conscious, and purpose-driven, influencing how they evaluate employers and leadership styles. These studies suggest that sustainability plays a significant role in shaping the professional expectations of Generation Z.

3. Brown, M. E., Trevino, L. K., & Harrison, D. A. (2005). Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective. Academy of Management Review. Freeman, R. E. (1984). Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach.

Ethical Leadership and Organizational Responsibility:

Ethical leadership is closely linked with sustainable organizational development. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) define ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships. Their research indicates that ethical leaders positively influence employee trust, satisfaction, and commitment. Additionally, Freeman (1984), through Stakeholder Theory, emphasizes that organizations must consider the interests of all stakeholders rather than focusing solely on shareholders.

These perspectives reinforce the idea that sustainability in management includes ethical decision-making, transparency, and stakeholder accountability—factors highly valued by Generation Z.

4. World Economic Forum (2022). Future of Jobs Report. Ng, E. S., Schweitzer, L., & Lyons, S. T. (2010). New Generation, Great Expectations. Journal of Business and Psychology.

Sustainability and Career Preferences:

Recent studies suggest that sustainability significantly influences job choice among younger generations. A report by the World Economic Forum (2022) highlights that younger employees increasingly seek employers aligned with environmental and social values. Similarly, research by Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons (2010) found that

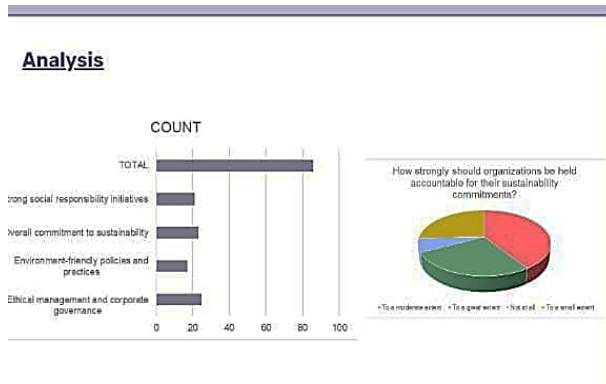
younger generations prioritize meaningful work and organizational values alongside financial rewards.

This literature supports the argument that sustainability considerations are becoming a decisive factor in career preferences and long-term organizational commitment among Generation Z.

Research Methodology:

Sampling Method	Stratified Random Sampling Method
Sampling Size	n(s) = 84.
Age range	Typically aged between 18– 26.
Data Collection Method	Primary data: Structured Questionnaire
Methodology	Descriptive Analysis
Tools used	MS Excel

Analysis



The above chart analyses Generation Z’s perception of organizational accountability towards sustainability commitments.

From the pie chart titled “How strongly should organizations be held accountable for their sustainability commitments?” the majority of respondents selected “To a great extent.” A significant portion also chose “To a moderate extent.” Only a small percentage opted for “To a small extent” or “To a very small extent.”

This clearly indicates that Generation Z expects organizations to take strong responsibility for their environmental, social, and governance commitments.

The bar chart further highlights key areas valued by respondents, including:

- Ethical management and corporate governance
- Environment-friendly policies and practices
- Overall commitment to sustainability

- Strong social responsibility initiatives

Among these, ethical governance and sustainability commitment appear to receive comparatively higher importance

Interpretation

The findings reveal that Generation Z, as the future workforce, places high importance on accountability and responsible management practices.

The fact that most respondents believe organizations should be held accountable “to a great extent” reflects a shift in management expectations. Unlike previous generations that focused mainly on profitability, Generation Z emphasizes transparency, sustainability, and ethical governance.

This suggests that modern management must move beyond traditional profit- centered approaches and adopt purpose-driven strategies.

- Generation Z expects organizations to:
 - Integrate sustainability into core business strategies
 - Maintain ethical leadership and transparent governance
 - Demonstrate genuine social responsibility
 - Take measurable action toward environmental protection

Therefore, reimagining management through the lens of Generation Z means building organizations that are value-driven, socially conscious, and sustainability-oriented.

The future workforce is demanding a transformation in managerial practices — one that balances profitability with accountability and long-term societal impact.

II. CONCLUSION

Generation Z, as the future workforce, places strong emphasis on accountability, transparency, and responsible management practices. A majority of respondents believe organizations should be held accountable to a great extent for their sustainability commitments, reflecting a clear shift from traditional profit-focused management approaches to value-driven and purpose-oriented strategies. Unlike earlier generations that prioritized profitability alone, Generation Z expects companies to integrate sustainability into their core business strategies, maintain ethical leadership and transparent governance, demonstrate genuine social responsibility, and take measurable action toward environmental protection. Therefore, reimagining management through the lens of Generation Z means creating organizations that balance financial performance with accountability and long-term societal impact, ensuring both business success and sustainable development.