

# Exploring Job Satisfaction among Generation Z Employees: A Study in the SMEs of the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the determinants of job satisfaction among Generation Z (Gen Z) employees in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam. The objective is to identify key factors influencing job satisfaction and provide insights for SMEs to enhance employee well-being and organizational performance. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines qualitative expert consultation to refine survey instruments and quantitative analysis to evaluate the impact of various factors on job satisfaction. A sample size of 300 Gen Z employees was surveyed across SMEs in Can Tho and Vinh Long provinces, with 278 valid responses obtained. The findings indicate that job characteristics, training and learning opportunities, the work environment, autonomy in work, income and benefits, and promotion opportunities significantly influence job satisfaction among Gen Z workers. These results underscore the importance for SMEs to prioritize these factors in their human resource management strategies to cultivate a positive work environment and foster employee engagement and loyalty. By addressing these key determinants, SMEs can optimize their workforce's satisfaction levels, leading to improved performance and competitiveness in the dynamic business landscape of the Mekong Delta region.

## KEYWORDS

Job satisfaction; Gen Z workers; Small and medium-sized enterprises; Vietnam.

## 1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is undeniably a critical component for fostering a harmonious and productive work environment, benefiting both employees and employers alike. Within this framework, employees seek conducive working conditions that provide adequate support and attention from their employers, facilitating their ability to excel in their assigned tasks. Notably, the significance of employee satisfaction transcends individual fulfillment, extending to its pivotal role in enhancing overall productivity and job effectiveness within an organization (Wagner & Gooding, 1987). In the realm of SMEs, characterized by limited resources and assets, the cultivation of a satisfied and motivated workforce assumes paramount importance for driving innovation and achieving breakthroughs. However, SMEs often grapple with the challenge of devising effective strategies to bolster employee job satisfaction within the constraints of their operational framework.

The innovative aspect of this study lies in its nuanced exploration of job satisfaction factors, particularly within the context of the emerging Generation Z workforce in Vietnam. With the labor landscape evolving to encompass a diverse range of age groups and generational cohorts, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, understanding the unique dynamics and

preferences of each demographic segment becomes imperative (Biggs & Lowenstein, 2011). Generation Z, in particular, has emerged as a focal point of recruitment efforts owing to its youthful vigor, dynamism, and penchant for creativity. However, statistics from LinkedIn in Vietnam in 2022 reveal a notable trend indicating Generation Z's propensity towards job hopping, presenting a formidable challenge for recruiters and businesses alike (Alison, 2023).

By delving into the factors influencing job satisfaction among Generation Z, this study breaks new ground in addressing the contemporary challenges faced by businesses in managing this demographic cohort. It offers fresh insights into the motivations and aspirations of Generation Z employees, paving the way for the development of innovative management strategies tailored to their unique preferences and expectations. Moreover, by enhancing job satisfaction among Generation Z employees, businesses stand to improve overall efficiency and productivity, thereby securing a competitive edge in the dynamic business landscape of Vietnam. Thus, this study's approach will contribute to reshaping traditional models of workforce management to better suit Gen Z workers.

## **2. Theoretical foundation**

### **2.1 Job satisfaction**

Hoppock (1935) was the first to introduce the term "job satisfaction". He proposed that job satisfaction is the culmination of psychological, physiological, and environmental factors that lead individuals to express contentment with their work. In contrast, Vroom (1964) viewed job satisfaction as individuals' emotional responses to the tasks they undertake. Spector (1997) identified job satisfaction as the degree to which employees like or dislike their work. Additionally, alongside emotional engagement with work in general, job satisfaction is expressed through various job-related aspects such as the type of tasks performed, colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, and salary. According to Spector (1997), job satisfaction simply refers to individuals feeling positively about their work and its various aspects. As it is an overall evaluation, it constitutes an attitudinal variable. Job satisfaction can be understood as employees' affinity for their work, deriving joy from their tasks, and reluctance to leave their positions (Smith et al., 1969). Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as an emotionally rewarding or positive state resulting from job appraisal or work experience. Statt (2004) also assessed job satisfaction based on employees' satisfaction with what they derive from their work. Employees experience job satisfaction when their tasks align with their needs and preferences, when working conditions and rewards (such as salary) are reasonable, and when they have positive relationships with colleagues and superiors. Thus, despite differing perspectives on employee job satisfaction, there is consensus that it reflects the extent to which employees' needs or desires are met in their work environment. Therefore, in broad terms, job satisfaction reflects individuals' emotional responses to their work overall and specific job-related factors.

### **2.2 Generation Z**

According to Kupperschmidt (2000), a generation refers to a group of individuals who share similarities in birth year, age, place of residence, and significant life events that influence their development. They are born within a similar timeframe and share important societal and historical experiences leading to the formation of common characteristics. Individuals within the same generation share similar emotions, attitudes, interests, and tendencies. Although there is no precise timeframe to delineate generations, the boundaries to define a generation are less significant than historical events or societal changes associated with each era (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Previously, researchers have proposed different timeframes to define Generation Z. According to a report released in 2022 by the U.S. Census Bureau, Generation Z is recognized as the most recent generation to enter adulthood, comprising individuals born between 1997 and 2013. In contrast, Statistics Canada, referencing data from the Pew Research Center, utilized a slightly different timeframe, considering Generation Z to span from 1997 to 2012 in their analysis of the 2021 census. In

their study, Generation Z is positioned as the cohort succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha, encompassing those born from 1996 to 2012. This generation has come of age and begun entering the labor market in Vietnam. According to data from the General Statistics Office, it is projected that by 2025, Generation Z will constitute nearly 30% of Vietnam's working-age population (General Statistics Office of Vietnam).

Generation Z is considered to have distinct characteristics compared to previous generations. In the future, Generation Z is expected to have a significant impact on recruitment, employee retention, and organizational development (Elena-Iuliana & Maria, 2016).

### **2.3 Theories and research on employee job satisfaction**

Numerous studies worldwide have delved into the intricacies of job satisfaction and the underlying factors influencing work motivation among individuals. These investigations often draw from foundational theories such as those proposed by A. Maslow and F. Herzberg, along with the utilization of established job satisfaction indices like the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) to evaluate worker contentment.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs theory, introduced in 1943, remains a cornerstone in understanding human motivation, positing that behavior is primarily driven by various needs arranged in a hierarchical structure. Herzberg et al. (1959) work on motivator and hygiene factors further elucidates the dichotomy between factors that contribute to job satisfaction and those that mitigate dissatisfaction. Additionally, Adams (1963) emphasizes the role of perceived fairness in the workplace in determining job satisfaction.

Weiss et al. (1967) and Carlson et al. (1969) contributed significantly to the development of job satisfaction assessment frameworks with the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and the Job Descriptive Index (JDI), respectively. These instruments consider a broad spectrum of criteria ranging from intrinsic job aspects to organizational policies and compensation.

Recent studies have expanded upon this foundation, identifying novel motivational factors such as appreciation of work, involvement in decision-making, and work environment quality. Boeve (2007) research on job satisfaction among medical school faculty and MilošHitka et al. (2019) analysis of motivational factors by region and age group exemplify this trend. Haryono et al. (2020) further underscore the significant impact of leadership, work environment, and motivation on job satisfaction and employee outcomes.

Innovation in these studies lies in their comprehensive examination of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing job satisfaction, employing sophisticated statistical methods to discern nuanced relationships. From traditional theories to contemporary analyses leveraging advanced statistical techniques, these studies underscore the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction dynamics in today's rapidly evolving workplace landscape.

In conclusion, these investigations shed light on the intricate interplay of various factors in shaping job satisfaction among employees. By elucidating these dynamics, researchers pave the way for informed interventions and strategies aimed at enhancing organizational success and employee well-being in an era characterized by technological advancement and global competition.

## **3. Research model**

### **3.1 The work environment**

The work environment is understood as the relationships among coworkers and supervisors in the workplace. Coworkers and supervisors are individuals working within the same organization or more closely, those working within the same department. Friendly and supportive relationships among coworkers and supervisors contribute to increasing employee job satisfaction. This factor is considered favorable when employees are willing to assist each other, collaborate effectively, and when the work environment is friendly and the relationships between individuals are trustworthy. The relationship

between the work environment factor and job satisfaction has been confirmed through various studies. Luddy (2005) research indicates that jobs demanding rigor but lacking coworker support are more likely to result in higher job dissatisfaction. Numerous experimental studies also demonstrate the positive correlation between receiving support and having a friendly, comfortable work environment leading to job satisfaction. Based on this evidence, we propose the hypothesis:

***H1: The work environment has a positive impact on job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.***

### **3.2 Job characteristics**

Job characteristics refer to the content of work that aligns with employees' abilities, inspiring them to unleash their potential. Appropriately structured job roles can harness employees' potential, increase labor productivity, and make employees comfortable in their work, thereby enhancing work effectiveness. In other words, employees are satisfied with their assigned tasks if those tasks align with their abilities (Neog & Barua, 2018). Therefore, the hypothesis H2 is proposed as follows:

***H2: Job characteristics have a positive impact on job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.***

### **3.3 Promotion opportunities**

Promotion opportunities involve the progression from one's current position to a higher position or more significant role within an organization. The concept of "promotion opportunities" reflects whether employees are provided with opportunities for career development and advancement within the organization/enterprise during their tenure. Promotion opportunities are considered a motivating factor for employees (Robbins, 2002). Ellickson & Logsdon (2002) assert that promotion opportunities and job satisfaction are closely related. Similarly, Kreitner & Kinicki (2001) also highlight a positive relationship between promotion opportunities and employee job satisfaction. Hence, the hypothesis H3 is postulated as follows:

***H3: Promotion opportunities have a positive impact on job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.***

### **3.4 Training and learning opportunities**

Training and learning opportunities are generally desired by employees to enhance their skills and job proficiency, thereby fostering a sense of satisfaction in their desire for knowledge, increasing credibility, and job effectiveness. The training and advancement opportunities provided by businesses have a highly motivating effect in current conditions. This is considered one of the factors that many people evaluate as highly important in employee satisfaction (Özkeser, 2019).

Training and learning opportunities are defined as employees being given the chance to receive training to improve their job skills and the possibility of being promoted to higher positions. Employees will feel satisfied with jobs that offer them training opportunities and help them advance in their careers. As outlined by Stanton and Crossley (2000), the availability of training programs and pathways for career advancement significantly influences how employees perceive their opportunities for personal and professional growth within an organization. These initiatives not only contribute to enhancing employees' skills and competencies but also facilitate their adaptation to evolving technologies and methodologies within the industry. Moreover, by investing in training and development, organizations empower their workforce to acquire the requisite skills needed for progression within the company and even to potentially fill managerial roles in the future. The quality of employees has become a competitive advantage for businesses; therefore, businesses should focus on training policies and creating opportunities for employee self-development (Özkeser, 2019). The proposed hypothesis is as follows:

***H4: Training and learning opportunities have a positive impact on job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.***

### 3.5 Autonomy in work

Autonomy in work entails employees' independence in executing tasks that correspond to their competencies and authority, inspiring them to unleash their potential. Aligning tasks with a certain degree of empowerment can unlock employees' capabilities, enhance labor productivity, and foster comfort in their roles, thereby enhancing overall work effectiveness. In essence, employee satisfaction with assigned tasks is intertwined with autonomy and decision-making authority within the scope of work, enabling them to proactively undertake tasks in accordance with their abilities (Neog & Barua, 2018). Based on this, the study posits the hypothesis:

**H5: Autonomy in work positively influences job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.**

### 3.6 Income and benefits

Income and benefits refer to the monetary compensation employees receive for their work and the additional perks provided by their employer beyond wages. Income encompasses the salary stipulated in the labor contract and other monetary incentives as per the policies of each organization. Benefits include social insurance, health insurance, statutory leave entitlements, sick leave, legal protection of employee rights by labor unions, annual vacations, job stability, among others. Employee satisfaction is often contingent upon whether their income and benefits align with or exceed their contributions (Iqbal, 2013). Income plays a pivotal role in employee satisfaction, as workers expect fair compensation for their efforts. Mismanagement and inequity in wage distribution contribute to growing dissatisfaction and strikes. Benefits, on the other hand, represent the additional advantages employees derive from their company beyond monetary compensation. According to Artz (2008), benefits significantly influence job satisfaction by constituting a portion of the remuneration package provided by the company, thus affecting overall job satisfaction. Additionally, benefits sometimes serve as substitutes for monetary compensation. In Vietnam, the benefits of most concern to employees include social insurance, health insurance, unemployment insurance, statutory leave entitlements, sick leave, annual vacations, congratulatory gestures, and condolences. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

**H6: Income and benefits have a positive impact on job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam.**

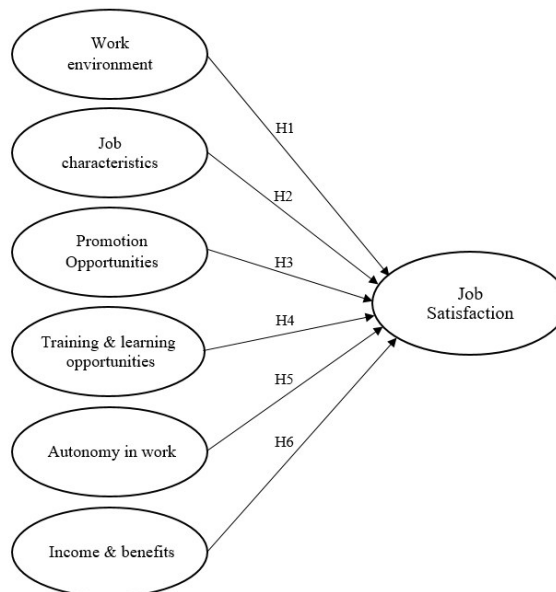


Figure 1 Research framework

#### 4. Research methods

This study was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the authors utilized an expert panel approach, drawing upon expert opinions and group discussions to refine the measurement scales and design the survey questionnaire before conducting a pilot survey. Subsequently, a pilot survey was conducted among experts to assess the clarity and unambiguity of survey aspects, aiming to enhance the questionnaire prior to the formal survey. The formal survey questionnaire comprised 28 observed variables, covering six influencing factors and one observed factor used to evaluate job satisfaction level, all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. In this study, the authors surveyed 300 Gen Z employees in SMEs in two provinces and cities: Can Tho and Vinh Long, located in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. The survey yielded 278 valid responses. In the second stage, the authors conducted reliability testing of the measurement scales using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and regression analysis to evaluate the impact of each factor.

#### 5. Research results

##### 5.1 Statistical description of the study sample

Regarding Gender: Among the 278 valid observations, 67% were female employees, totaling 186 individuals, while the remaining 33% were male employees, comprising 92 individuals.

Regarding Age: Among the 278 Gen Z employees, the average age of all respondents was 25.82 years old. The youngest employee was 23 years old, and the oldest was 27 years old. The distinctive characteristic of the Gen Z workforce is their youthful vigor, having been born and raised in the era of rapid technological advancement. They are known for their dynamism, eagerness to learn, and adeptness in adapting to new technologies. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge for SMEs when implementing human resource policies to enhance operational efficiency and improve employee satisfaction.

Regarding Educational Attainment: Out of the 278 valid observations, 102 individuals, accounting for 36.7%, held a bachelor's degree, while 26 individuals, representing 9.3%, held a postgraduate degree. This indicates that, overall, the educational attainment level of Gen Z employees in SMEs in the Mekong Delta region is relatively high.

Table 1 Characteristics of the study sample

Item	Frequency	Ratio
Gender		
Male	186	67.0
Female	92	33.0
Educational Attainment		
High school	28	10.1
Vocational schools	63	22.7
College	59	21.2
University	102	36.7
Postgraduate	26	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>100.0</b>

##### 5.2 Reliability testing of the measurement scale

To assess the reliability of the measurement scale, this study employed the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient as the evaluation criterion. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.6 and a total inter-item correlation coefficient greater than 0.3 are considered acceptable standards (Hair et al., 2009). Observations with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients failing to meet these standards are deemed non-standard variables, lacking sufficient reliability to proceed with further testing, and are therefore excluded from the study. The results of the reliability testing of the measurement scale are presented in Table 2.



Table 2 Results of the measurement scale reliability analysis

Factor	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha Coefficient
The Work Environment	5	0.739
Job Characteristics	4	0.815
Promotion Opportunities	5	0.873
Training and Learning Opportunities	3	0.779
Autonomy in Work	4	0.716
Income and Benefits	4	0.831
Job Satisfaction	3	0.864

From Table 2, it can be observed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of all measurement scales are satisfactory ( $> 0.6$ , ranging from 0.716 to 0.873), and the total inter-item correlation coefficients of the factors are all greater than 0.3. Therefore, we proceed to utilize all 28 variables across the 7 factors in the exploratory factor analysis.

### 5.3 Exploratory factor analysis

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted, yielding a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy at 0.812, which surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.5. Additionally, the Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated statistical significance with a P-value of 0.000, affirming the presence of correlations among variables. The total variance explained by the analysis was 72.373%. However, during scrutiny, one variable within the promotion opportunities construct displayed a factor loading below 0.5 and was subsequently excluded from further analysis in accordance with established guidelines (Hair et al., 1998). Following this adjustment, the final EFA outcomes were obtained, with the KMO measure increasing to 0.843, signifying high sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test remained statistically significant with a P-value of 0.000, reaffirming the data's suitability for factor analysis. The total variance explained was 71.469%, indicating that the observed variables accounted for a significant portion of the total variance (Hair et al., 1998). The EFA identified the formation of 6 factors, while the remaining variables constituted unidimensional scales with no cross-loading, thereby validating the suitability of EFA for these measurement scales.

Additionally, the EFA results for the dependent factor "Job Satisfaction" demonstrated the formation of a single factor. The KMO measure for this factor was 0.731, exceeding the threshold of 0.5, and Bartlett's test indicated statistical significance with a P-value of 0.000, confirming the adequacy of correlations among variables. The total variance explained by the analysis amounted to 61.428%, surpassing the recommended threshold of 50%. Consequently, the "Job Satisfaction" scale was deemed unidimensional, forming a single factor. These findings suggested that the reorganization of scales based on the earlier analysis was appropriate, providing a foundational basis for adjusting research hypotheses to align with empirical findings and the study population.

### 5.4 The linear regression analysis

The outcomes of the linear regression analysis (presented in Table 3) unveil significant relationships between the independent variables—Work Environment, Job Characteristics, Promotion Opportunities, Training and Learning Opportunities, Autonomy in Work, Income and Benefits—and the dependent variable, Job Satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta. All t-tests associated with these independent variables yielded p-values below 0.05, affirming their statistical significance and leading to the acceptance of hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. The model's R-squared coefficient of 0.582 indicates that approximately 58.2% of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by the independent variables. Moreover, none of the variables display multicollinearity, as evidenced by all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values falling below 10.

In light of these findings, the standardized regression equation characterizing the influence of various factors on job satisfaction among Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta is reformulated as follows:

$$\text{Job Satisfaction} = 0.294 \times \text{The Work Environment} + 0.336 \times \text{Job Characteristics} + 0.251 \times \text{Promotion Opportunities} + 0.302 \times \text{Training and Learning Opportunities} + 0.267 \times \text{Autonomy in Work} + 0.252 \times \text{Income and Benefits}$$

Table 3 Results of the linear regression model

Factor	Beta Coefficient	P-Value	VIF	Hypothesis	Result
The Work Environment	0.294	0.026	1.201	H1	Accepted
Job Characteristics	0.336	0.000	1.185	H2	Accepted
Promotion Opportunities	0.251	0.030	1.123	H3	Accepted
Training and Learning Opportunities	0.302	0.001	1.184	H4	Accepted
Autonomy in Work	0.267	0.000	1.103	H5	Accepted
Income and Benefits	0.252	0.001	1.025	H6	Accepted
Adjusted R-squared value					58.2%
P-Value					0.000

The qualitative and quantitative findings of this study reveal a strong relationship between the influencing factors and the job satisfaction of Gen Z workers in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Among these factors, Job Characteristics demonstrate the most significant impact on job satisfaction, with a standardized regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) of 0.336. This quantitative result aligns with prior research by Neog and Barua (2018), highlighting the pivotal role of Job Characteristics in shaping the job satisfaction of Gen Z workers. Therefore, it is imperative for businesses to pay close attention to job design to ensure the right person is assigned to the right task, facilitating task rotation to prevent job monotony. Business leaders should also focus on assigning tasks tailored to employees' professional competencies, skills, and strengths, thereby aiding them in efficiently completing their tasks and recognizing the importance of their work within the organization.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that Training and Learning Opportunities emerge as the next influential factor positively affecting job satisfaction among Gen Z employees. This finding resonates with research by Stanton & Crossley (2000) and Özkeser (2019). Businesses should provide opportunities for Gen Z employees to engage in training programs aimed at enhancing their professional and vocational skills, thereby benefiting both the employees and the organization.

The Work Environment emerges as the subsequent significant factor impacting job satisfaction among Gen Z employees. This outcome is supported by Luddy (2005) study. To enhance this factor and increase employee satisfaction, businesses should organize cultural, artistic, and team-building activities to foster emotional bonds among team members, facilitating better mutual understanding and a more cohesive work environment.

Autonomy in Work is evaluated to have the next positive impact on job satisfaction. Businesses need to uphold democratic principles in drafting regulations and policies for employees, ensuring that employees can contribute their opinions to draft proposals. Establishing channels for employees to easily report, exchange, or receive attention and assistance from superiors when needed, along with reasonable delegation of authority, empowers Gen Z employees to exercise appropriate autonomy in their work.

Income and Benefits also emerge as factors positively impacting job satisfaction among Gen Z employees. Businesses should progressively refine internal spending regulations and compensation and benefits policies tailored to the abilities and working hours of each individual, avoiding generalizing wage and bonus levels, which may create frustrations for employees making significant contributions to the enterprise.

Finally, Promotion Opportunities are identified as the factor with the smallest yet statistically significant positive impact on job satisfaction among Gen Z employees in small and medium-sized enterprises. This finding is consistent with previous experimental studies by Kreitner & Kinicki (2001), Ellickson & Logsdon (2002) and Robbins (2002). Businesses should establish and improve career



development pathways for employees at all positions within the enterprise to dispel the notion that career advancement or promotion opportunities are reserved for older employees with more seniority and experience. Additionally, promotion policies should be fair and attractive to motivate employees to strive harder, fostering stronger commitment and contributions to the enterprise's development.

## **6. Conclusion**

The satisfaction of Generation Z (Gen Z) employees within the context of SMEs operating in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam is profoundly influenced by several key factors. Among these, Job Characteristics, Training and Learning Opportunities, The Work Environment, Autonomy in Work, Income and Benefits, and Promotion Opportunities stand out as crucial determinants. The findings underscore the imperative for SMEs to prioritize these areas and implement tailored strategies to bolster employee morale and satisfaction.

Job Characteristics emerge as a cornerstone in shaping the satisfaction levels of Gen Z employees. The nature of tasks, responsibilities, and prospects for growth inherent in their roles significantly impacts their overall contentment. Moreover, providing avenues for skill enhancement and career advancement through Training and Learning Opportunities is vital. SMEs should invest in comprehensive training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives to empower their Gen Z workforce and foster a culture of continuous learning.

The Work Environment plays a pivotal role in influencing job satisfaction. Creating a conducive workplace atmosphere characterized by camaraderie, mutual respect, and support can significantly enhance employee morale. Initiatives such as team-building activities, open communication channels, and a flexible work environment contribute to fostering a positive workplace culture, thereby boosting job satisfaction among Gen Z employees.

Autonomy in Work is another crucial factor that contributes to employee satisfaction. Empowering Gen Z employees with the autonomy to make decisions and execute tasks in alignment with their skills and competencies fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility. SMEs should adopt decentralized decision-making processes and delegate authority appropriately to enable Gen Z employees to take ownership of their work, thereby enhancing job satisfaction.

The significance of Income and Benefits cannot be overstated in influencing job satisfaction. Offering competitive salaries, performance-based incentives, and a comprehensive benefits package demonstrates the organization's commitment to employee well-being and contributes to overall satisfaction levels. Additionally, Promotion Opportunities serve as a motivational factor for Gen Z employees, signaling recognition of their contributions and providing avenues for career advancement within the organization.

In essence, SMEs must prioritize and continuously improve Job Characteristics, Training and Learning Opportunities, The Work Environment, Autonomy in Work, Income and Benefits, and Promotion Opportunities to enhance job satisfaction among Gen Z employees. By addressing these critical factors, SMEs can create a conducive work environment that fosters employee engagement, productivity, and long-term commitment, ultimately driving organizational success.

However, it's important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in this study. Firstly, the structure of the survey subjects revealed a significant imbalance in gender representation, with female employees accounting for a higher proportion compared to male employees. This gender imbalance may introduce bias into the results, as gender-specific factors could influence job satisfaction differently. Future research endeavors should aim to achieve a more balanced representation of gender within the sample to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings across diverse demographic groups.

Secondly, the sample size remains relatively small. Small sample sizes can limit the statistical power of the analysis and may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. As such, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to SMEs in other regions or industries.

Future studies could benefit from larger sample sizes to enhance the robustness and reliability of the findings.

Additionally, while linear regression is a commonly used statistical technique, it may not fully capture the complex interplay of factors influencing job satisfaction among Gen Z employees. Future research endeavors could explore the application of advanced analytical techniques, such as structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study offer valuable insights for SMEs seeking to enhance the job satisfaction of their Gen Z workforce. By addressing the identified factors and considering the aforementioned limitations, organizations can develop more effective strategies to optimize employee satisfaction and drive organizational success in the dynamic landscape of the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam.

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