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Coaching and Its Effects on Work Motivation and Commitment Among Generation Z

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

Sukupolvi Z on työelämään siirtyvä nuorin sukupolvi, joten sen työelämäodotusten ymmärtäminen on organisaatioille keskeistä. Sukupolvea pidetään erityisenä sen arvojen ja odotusten osalta, jotka korostavat muun muassa työn merkityksellisyyttä, yksilöllisyyttä ja jatkuvaa palautetta. Organisaatioiden on tärkeää tunnistaa nämä tarpeet, jotta ne voivat kehittää johtamiskäytäntöjään sekä houkutella ja sitouttaa nuoria työntekijöitä. Valmentavan johtamisen tarkastelu on erityisen ajankohtaista, sillä se tarjoaa lähestymistavan näihin muuttuviin odotuksiin vastaamiseen työelämässä, jossa perinteiset johtamismallit eivät välttämättä enää ole riittäviä.

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan valmentavan johtamisen vaikutuksia Z-sukupolven työmotivaatioon ja organisaatiositoutumiseen. Tutkimus on toteutettu laadullisena tutkimuksena ja aineisto on kerätty yhdeksällä puolistrukturoidulla teemahaastattelulla. Haastateltavat edustivat eri toimialoja ja kaikki osallistujat kuuluivat Z-sukupolveen. Aineisto on analysoitu laadullisen sisällönanalyysin avulla, jonka kautta on tunnistettu keskeiset teemat ja merkitykset valmentavan johtamisen, työmotivaation ja organisaatiositoutumisen välisestä suhteesta.

Tulokset osoittavat, että valmentavan johtamisen keskeiset ominaispiirteet, kuten esihenkilön tuki, säännöllinen palautteenanto, yksilölliset vaikutusmahdollisuudet sekä työ- ja vapaa-ajan tasapaino muodostavat kokonaisuuden, joka edistää työntekijöiden autonomiaa, kyvykkyyttä ja yhteenkuuluvuuden tunnetta. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että valmentava johtaminen ei ainoastaan lisää työmotivaatiota, vaan myös vahvistaa työntekijöiden kokemusta osallisuudesta ja vaikutusmahdollisuuksista. Tutkimus korostaa, että sukupolvi Z arvostaa erityisesti palautetta sekä ihmislähtöistä johtamista. Valmentava johtaminen nousee keskeiseksi tekijäksi, joka mahdollistaa näiden tarpeiden kohtaamisen. Se tukee motivaatiota ja organisaatiositoutumista vahvistamalla työn merkityksellisyyden kokemusta, ammatillista kehittymistä sekä työssä viihtymistä. Vaikutukset ovat kuitenkin sidoksissa organisaatiokontekstiin ja siihen, miten johtamiskäytännöt toteutetaan.

Kokonaisuutena tutkimus osoittaa, että valmentava johtaminen on osa laajempaa työelämän murrosta, jossa työntekijälähtöisyys, vuorovaikutus, yksilöllisyys ja hyvinvointi korostuvat. Tutkimuksen perusteella organisaatioiden tulisi panostaa erityisesti esihenkilöiden vuorovaikutustaitoihin sekä palautekulttuurin kehittämiseen, jotta ne voivat vastata nuoremman työvoiman odotuksiin. Työelämän jatkuva muutos edellyttää organisaatioilta sopeutumiskykyä, jotta ne kykenevät houkuttelemaan, sitouttamaan ja pitämään osaavia työntekijöitä pitkällä aikavälillä.

Avainsanat: Sukupolvi Z, Valmentava johtaminen, Työmotivaatio, Organisaatiositoutuminen, Palaute, Työntekijöiden sitoutuminen

ABSTRACT:

Generation Z is the youngest generation entering the workforce, which makes understanding its work-related expectations essential for organizations. This generation is considered distinctive in terms of its values and expectations, which emphasize meaningful work, individuality, and continuous feedback. It is important for organizations to recognize these needs to develop leadership practices that attract and retain young employees. Examining coaching leadership is particularly relevant, as it offers an approach to addressing these changing expectations in a working life where traditional leadership models may no longer be sufficient.

This study examines the effects of coaching leadership on work motivation and organizational commitment among Generation Z. The study has been conducted as a qualitative study, and the data have been collected through nine semi structured thematic interviews. The participants represented different industries, and all interviewees belonged to Generation Z. The data have been analysed using qualitative content analysis, through which key themes and meanings related to the relationship between coaching leadership, work motivation, and organizational commitment have been identified. The aim of the study is to examine the significance of coaching leadership specifically in relation to the work motivation and organizational commitment of this generation.

The results indicate that the key characteristics of coaching leadership such as supervisor support, regular feedback, individual opportunities for influence, and work life balance form a framework that promotes employees' autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging. The findings suggest that coaching leadership not only enhances work motivation but also strengthens employees' experiences of participation and influence. The study highlights that Generation Z particularly values feedback and people-oriented leadership. Coaching leadership emerges as a key factor in meeting these needs. It supports motivation and organizational commitment by strengthening the experience of meaningful work, professional development, and job satisfaction. However, the effects are context dependent and influenced by how leadership practices are implemented within organizations.

Overall, the study demonstrates that coaching leadership is part of a broader transformation in working life, where employee centeredness, interaction, individuality, and well-being are increasingly emphasized. Based on the findings, organizations should invest particularly in supervisors' interaction skills and the development of a feedback culture to meet the expectations of the younger workforce. The continuous transformation of working life requires organizations to adapt to attract, engage, and retain skilled employees in the long term.

Keywords: Generation Z, Coaching leadership, Work motivation, Organizational commitment, Feedback, Employee engagement

Contents

1	Introduction	7
1.1	Purpose of the study and research questions	10
1.2	Structure of the Thesis	11
2	Generation Z in workplace	13
2.1	Key characteristics of Generation Z	13
2.2	Work expectations and preferences	15
2.3	Generation Z and the New Demands of Modern Leadership	18
2.4	Organizational and Managerial Challenges Related to Generation Z in the Workplace	20
3	Work motivation and Organizational commitment	22
3.1	Work Motivation Theoretical Perspectives	22
3.2	Organizational Commitment Theoretical Perspectives	26
3.3	Motivation and Commitment Among Generation Z employees	29
3.4	Concepts and Principles of Coaching	32
3.5	The relationship between coaching, motivation and commitment	34
4	Research Methodology	38
4.1	Data collection	39
4.2	Data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations	41
5	Research Findings	43
5.1	Perceived impact of coaching on work motivation	44
5.2	Perceived impact of coaching on organizational commitment	46
5.3	Feedback and Opportunities for Influence as Drivers of Motivation	48
5.4	Managerial support and leadership style	50
5.5	Coaching leadership as a driver of work motivation	53
5.6	Coaching leadership as a driver of work commitment	56
5.7	Summary	58
6	Discussion and conclusions	62
6.1	Comparison of Results with Previous Research	62

6.2	Significance and implications of the study	65
6.3	Limitations and critical reflection	67
6.4	Suggestions for future research	68
7	References	70

Figures

Figure 1	Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).	26
Figure 2.	Organizational commitment (Kiviranta, 2010).	27
Figure 3.	Theoretical framework. Model of the relationship between coaching leadership and organizational commitment among Generation Z employees, with motivation, quality of working life, and self-efficacy acting as mediating factors.	37

Tables

Table 1.	Interview details	40
Table 2.	Psychological needs based on Self-Determination Theory, supporting factors, interview examples, and organizational practices.	54
Table 3.	Forms of employee commitment, supporting factors, interview examples, and organizational practices.	56
Table 4.	The Relationship Between Coaching Leadership and Work Motivation and Commitment (Generation Z)	60

1 Introduction

Generation Z is the youngest generation in the labour market, and it differs significantly from previous generations in both its values and the expectations placed on employers (Kobis & Banasik, 2025). Generation Z possesses work-related values, preferences, motivational sources, communication styles, and expectations that differ from those of previous generations (Burger, Fisher, Hudson & Rader, 2021). These differences are explained by factors such as growing up in a digital environment, a high level of education, and the increased emphasis on individuality and meaningfulness in working life (Duffy, 2023). Indeed, Generation Z has often been described as the first “digital native generation” because they have grown up during technology and have been active on social media since childhood (Benítez-Márquez, Sánchez-Teba, Bermúdez-González & Núñez-Rydman, 2022). The generation is expected to be more educated than before and more prepared to change jobs flexibly as part of their career path (Duffy, 2023; Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

The ability of organizations to adapt their leadership and personnel strategies to these expectations can support the achievement of competitive advantage by attracting young and dynamic talent. Generation Z emphasizes responsibility, diversity, and ethics in their work, and work is often viewed not only as a livelihood but also to realize one's identity and values (Twenge, 2023). The interaction style of supervisors and their genuine interest in subordinates has been found to have a significant impact on the employee experience, as low levels of activity can be interpreted as a lack of interest in the employees (Mäkelä, Kangas, Korhakangas & Laitinen, 2023). Leaders must therefore know their team members as individuals and promote an open and diversity-valuing atmosphere characterized by psychological safety. When an individual's strengths are identified, they can be developed through training and utilized effectively within the organization (van Woerkom, Meyers & Bakker, 2020).

Although Generation Z (born 1995–2012) is only now entering the workforce and relatively little is known about their behaviour and expectations (Kobis & Banasik, 2025),

the topic has rapidly become a highly topical research subject. The position of Generation Z in the labour market is multifaceted: some are already in the workforce, some are still completing their studies, and some have only recently entered the labour market. In a fast-paced and constantly changing work environment, organizations face the challenge of developing human resource management practices that meet the needs and preferences of this new generation (Surugiu, Surugiu, Grădinaru & Grigore, 2025). Employees in the early stages of their careers differ markedly from older generations in both their ways of working and their expectations of employers. Age is a key factor in the formation of professional attitudes and expectations, which underscores the need for human resource management practices that respond to the reality of modern working life (Kobis & Banasik, 2025).

In the Nordic countries, it is generally recognized that resources are not limitless, which is why the expertise, energy, and creativity of young people must be utilized to the full. Organizations cannot afford to waste resources due to inadequate or outdated management practices. Nordic organizations have already learned to operate more agilely, and the largely free education system ensures that talented individuals can participate in value creation regardless of their background. Shared goals, transparency, and mutual trust are key success factors (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023). Generation Z makes up approximately 23% of the world's population, and by 2030, the entire age group will be of working age. This makes the topic critical as older generations retire and Generation Z takes their place (Twenge, 2023).

In current discourse, the adult population is often divided by generation from youngest to oldest: Generation Z, Millennials (Generation Y), Generation X, Baby Boomers, and the oldest pre-war generation. Although these classifications are widely used, information about generational behaviour is often superficial or taken for granted, and the discussion is frequently based on simplified media interpretations. Such generalizations can influence thinking and attitudes (Duffy, 2023). Despite this, certain specific skills have been observed in Generation Z. They are expected to surpass even

Millennials in educational level, which requires organizations to effectively manage a multi-generational workforce (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023; Surugiu et al., 2025). Employees today evaluate their relationship with their work increasingly critically and seek a balance where, in addition to financial compensation, leisure time and professional development are emphasized. In Europe, as many as 35% of those considering a job change feel that current performance demands are unsustainable, suggesting that organizations do not sufficiently consider the individual employee's experience of adequacy (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

When an individual's prospects weaken, it can have direct effects on well-being; for example, job insecurity has been found to affect the mental health of employees (Brougham & Haar, 2017). In this rapidly changing and uncertain environment, ensuring employee commitment has become a critical challenge for organizations (Tang, Shi, Liu, Liu, & Yang, 2024). Regardless of the origin of the change, it should be viewed as a human-centred process that can strongly affect individuals on an emotional level. This means that the adaptation challenges of organizations require more investment and participation from their members (Katsaros, 2024). However, the workplace should not be adapted solely to the needs of the newest generation; rather, the goal must be intergenerational cooperation and cohesion (Surugiu et al., 2025).

A coaching leadership style seeks to respond to these challenges by supporting and motivating employees and releasing their internal resources. This does not only promote individual professional development but also improves overall organizational performance and strengthens employee commitment (Tang et al., 2024). The generational shift has changed the role of supervisors from supervision to coaching support, and it is important to note that what worked for Millennials may not necessarily work for Generation Z (Kobis & Banasik, 2025). Several generations operate simultaneously in workplaces, each with different expectations regarding work. As diversity increases, organizations must adapt their leadership styles to the needs of

different generations to improve work performance and strengthen trust (Andri & Moko, 2024; Vaulos, 2024).

Previous studies have examined the motivation and commitment of Generation Z mainly from the perspective of structural factors and the work environment. However, the effects of leadership styles, especially coaching leadership, have not been extensively studied, even though they may play a key role in the commitment and motivation of Generation Z.

1.1 Purpose of the study and research questions

The aim of this study is to examine how coaching leadership influences the motivation and commitment of Generation Z in working life. Generation Z is the first age cohort that does not remember a childhood without digital technology, and they have transitioned into adulthood under conditions vastly different from previous generations. Because information and connections have always been readily available to them, their behaviours and expectations in the workplace are unique (Goryunova & Jenkins, 2023). For employers, understanding these characteristics is essential to effectively leveraging the digital expertise and distinct ways of working of this generation within organizations.

Research on Generation Z remains limited, even though it represents a large and increasingly significant share of the workforce (Katsaros, 2024). In particular, the relationship between coaching leadership and their motivation and commitment has been explored only to a limited extent. This study seeks to bridge this research gap by deepening the understanding of how a coaching approach supports young employees. The research is significant from both practical and theoretical perspectives: it provides new insights into the relevance of leadership theories in today's changing work environment and helps organizations develop practices that strengthen employee loyalty and corporate competitiveness.

The aim of this study is to answer the research question:

How do Generation Z employees experience coaching leadership in relation to their work motivation and commitment?

By examining the underlying reasons for this generation's behaviour and the factors shaping their professional actions, this study provides valuable perspectives for employers seeking to adapt their leadership practices. Implementing changes that support the values and priorities of the new generation can ultimately strengthen employee commitment and improve an organization's overall competitiveness in the modern labour market.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

This study is divided into six main chapters. It begins with an introduction, which presents the background and relevance of the research, as well as the purpose of the study and the research questions. It also outlines the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter focuses on Generation Z in the workplace, exploring their values, attitudes and expectations and highlighting how these differ from those of previous generations. It examines key characteristics of Generation Z, their work expectations and preferences, the new demands of modern leadership and the challenges employers may face when responding to the needs and expectations of Generation Z. It also considers generational differences within work communities and ways in which organizations can respond to these changes.

The third chapter addresses work motivation and organizational commitment. It discusses theoretical perspectives on work motivation and organizational commitment, different types of motivation, and various forms of commitment and their relationship to work engagement. It also examines motivation and commitment among Generation

Z employees. Furthermore, the chapter introduces the concepts and principles of coaching and explores the relationship between coaching, motivation, and commitment.

The fourth chapter presents the research structure, design, and methodological approach. It addresses data collection, data analysis, and issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

The fifth chapter investigates the perceived effects of coaching on work motivation and organizational commitment and provides a summary of the key findings. The sixth and final chapter of the study is the discussion and conclusions chapter, in which the results are evaluated.

2 Generation Z in workplace

This chapter examines the position and role of Generation Z in the workplace. Its purpose is to deepen the understanding of the values, beliefs, and attitudes held by members of this generation, as well as to explore how their characteristics and expectations differ from those of previous generations in terms of perspectives and behaviours. The chapter also addresses Generation Z's perception of meaningful work, its impact on motivation, and the development of commitment within organizations.

Furthermore, it considers intergenerational tensions and differences that may affect workplace functioning, collaboration, and leadership practices. The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how organizations can recognize and support the needs of Generation Z while aligning management and human resource strategies with the expectations of this new generation.

2.1 Key characteristics of Generation Z

Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2012 (Katsaros, 2024). This generation has grown up in a world where the internet, smartphones, and social media have been an everyday part of life from the start, shaping their communication styles, behaviour, and expectations in both personal and professional contexts (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Surugiu et al., 2025). Even the older members of Generation Z were still children when the first iPhone was introduced, an innovation that rapidly transformed modes of communication and leisure activities. The rapid diffusion of smartphones has fundamentally shaped this generation, distinguishing it from earlier cohorts. The label Generation Z is widely used, although it follows the naming conventions of previous generations, such as Generation Y (born 1980–1994), commonly referred to as millennials. In addition to Generation Z, alternative terms have been used, including iGen, which emphasizes growing up during the smartphone era, and Zoomers, a term highlighting the central role of digital communication and video-based platforms, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Twenge, 2023).

Earlier generations have grown up under very different societal conditions compared to Generation Z (Benítez-Márquez, Sánchez-Teba, Bermúdez-González & Núñez-Rydman, 2022). The Baby Boomers, born in the 1940s and 1950s, grew up in post-war Finland amid scarcity, yet they were characterized by a strong belief in a better future. Generation X, born in the 1960s and 1970s, grew up in an emerging consumer society, where increasing prosperity gradually began to appear as a given. Generation Y, or those born in the 1980s, grew up in an environment where material abundance was largely present, although the deep economic recession of the early 1990s partly overshadowed their childhood (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). Generation Z, in contrast, has grown up in a world characterized by digitalization, global crises, and continuous uncertainty as a central part of everyday life (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

In addition to their digital upbringing, members of Generation Z are often described as more pragmatic, career-conscious, and entrepreneurial than previous generations. They are aware of global and environmental phenomena, value social justice, and consider it important that their views are considered and respected (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Although Generation Z utilizes technology actively for information gathering, sharing, and work efficiency, they also place a high value on face-to-face interaction and close, guiding and supportive interpersonal relationships in working life (Goryunova & Jenkins, 2023). Generation Z is interested in jobs that promote corporate social responsibility and support societal well-being (Burger et al., 2021).

It is necessary to take a critical approach to the examination of generations. Although common traits can be identified in Generation Z, internal variation within the group is high and is influenced by factors such as education, living environment, and socioeconomic background. Birth year alone does not explain an individual's behaviour in working life, and excessive generalizations can lead to stereotypical leadership practices (Duffy, 2023). Although Generation Z has grown up in a digital environment, their skills are often focused on social media and leisure applications. This does not

necessarily translate to strong technical expertise or the ability to manage complex professional systems (Kobis & Banasik, 2025).

It is also important to note that Generation Z has grown up in a digital world, which has shaped their technical skills and the way they interact with electronic devices (Goryunova & Jenkins, 2023). They effortlessly navigate multiple interfaces simultaneously, which clearly differentiates them from earlier generations. This generation is receptive to new trends and technological innovations, bringing continuous opportunities for renewal and adaptation to the workplace (Kobis & Banasik, 2025).

These characteristics form a crucial foundation for understanding Generation Z's workplace behaviour and expectations. Recognizing these traits helps organizations and managers develop leadership practices and work environments that better meet the needs of Generation Z, while supporting their motivation, engagement, and well-being in the workplace.

2.2 Work expectations and preferences

Every generation has its own characteristics as well as typical expectations and demands associated with it (Zehetner et al., 2022). Generation Z usually makes career decisions based on their own interests (Burger et al., 2021). Work has historically been a significant part of human life and has long been seen as a key factor in individual well-being. Today, the quality of working life is considered one of the fundamental pillars of overall quality of life. High-quality working conditions are also crucial for organizations, as they help attract new employees and retain existing talent (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012).

Young generations face various expectations and challenge established practices with new perspectives. It has been suggested that especially Generations Y and Z may significantly influence the transformation of working life and societal structures. They appear willing to demand better organizations, higher-quality leadership, as well as more humane and individualized treatment (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). As younger employees

are typically in the early stages of their careers, they participate more actively in career planning and professional development. In addition, their technological competence and understanding of how to utilize it are emphasized, which makes them a valuable resource for modern organizations (Brougham & Haar, 2017).

Employer branding also plays an important role, as Generation Z wants to feel genuine pride in their employer (Burger et al., 2021). Employee engagement is significant for an organization's image and employer reputation. The quality of working life also has a major impact on organizational performance, as it is directly linked to employee motivation. Most studies have examined the relationship between the quality of working life and various variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work performance, turnover intention, and workplace relationships, as these factors significantly affect overall organizational well-being. Work engagement is primarily a concept related to motivation and refers to the active allocation of personal resources to tasks related to one's work role (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012). When working conditions are good and work feels meaningful, Generation Z stays longer in their jobs and performs more motivated work, which is as important to them as salary. A tense and stressful working environment, on the other hand, weakens commitment (Burger et al., 2021).

Generation Z has grown up in an uncertain and changing world, which is reflected in their expectations and desire to improve working life and demand better leadership and more humane treatment (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). Jobs that promote corporate social responsibility and improve societal well-being are of particular interest to Generation Z. For them, the boundary between work and leisure is often unclear, and they can adapt flexibly to different environments (Burger et al., 2021). Gen Z expects companies to provide contemporary tools that enhance productivity and improve teamwork, and the use of technology is central to attracting them and increasing both performance and job satisfaction (Živković, Adamek, & Brkić, 2025).

According to Tienari and Piekkari (2011), a conscious distancing from work or questioning the value of work has become an increasingly attractive option for Generation Z. Whereas such reflection was previously largely considered the privilege of older adults, even people in their thirties now regularly consider alternatives to continuous paid employment. According to survey on working life, more than 40 percent of young people feel that they can build their lives on their own terms in a way that unemployment is not necessarily seen as a problem, if financial security is ensured. This phenomenon raises the question of why such alternatives are being considered at increasingly younger ages. There are several explanations, one of which relates to broader structural changes in society. Most of Generation Y experienced their childhood during the economic recession of the 1990s, which has partly shaped their attitudes toward work (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011).

Technological competence and understanding of how to utilize it are emphasized among younger employees, but at the same time they expect close and supportive relationships from their supervisors (Brougham & Haar, 2017; Goryunova & Jenkins, 2023). Generation Z also has clear expectations of future leaders. They particularly value transactional leadership, which emphasizes non-financial rewards, as well as transformational leadership more than management based solely on money or punishment (Zehetner et al., 2022).

Young people do not necessarily commit to employers long-term or only do so for short periods, as they are also aware of employers' limited commitment to their employees. As a result, attachment to a single workplace is no longer automatically seen as a lifelong secure foundation (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). Generation Z does not usually stay in organizations where there are no opportunities for career advancement or where they feel their expectations are not met. They are strongly motivated by intrinsic interest and actively seek job opportunities but perform best when work-life balance and sufficient stability are in place (Burger et al., 2021).

Gen Z actively follows information and changes, but their communication styles differ from previous generations. They prefer fast digital communication methods such as social media, instant messaging, and video calls instead of traditional channels. This has changed both education and working life and requires organizations to adapt their communication practices (Živković et al., 2025).

The growing interest of young people in downshifting may also be explained by the perception of the excessive demands of current working practices. A fast work pace, increasing productivity requirements, and constant uncertainty about one's position are not attractive, especially if sufficient incentives are lacking. If work does not feel meaningful or fair and is carried out under uncertainty, additional effort is not considered worthwhile (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011).

2.3 Generation Z and the New Demands of Modern Leadership

Young employees are critical of traditional hierarchical structures and prefer egalitarian, open, and transparent working environments in which interaction is based on reciprocity (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). Leadership is also expected to promote diversity and enable the expression and consideration of different perspectives. Free and open flow of information is seen as a key prerequisite for organizational effectiveness, and access to information is expected to extend to the entire organization. As a result of these expectations, leadership practices are also under constant review, as the values and practices of young employees significantly shape organizational operations (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011; Zehetner et al., 2022).

Several studies show that employees often feel they receive too little feedback in their work, which affects motivation and development. In particular, the effectiveness of positive feedback is reduced when it is delivered simultaneously with corrective feedback. For this reason, coaching-style leadership emphasizes clear, constructive, and positive feedback aimed at strengthening an individual's motivation, self-confidence, and professional development (Carlsson & Forssell, 2012).

In recent years, the accelerating pace of change has guided organizations toward openness, flexibility, and adaptability instead of traditional hierarchical structures. This development is reflected in the fact that leadership is no longer seen as the responsibility of an individual, but increasingly as a shared task between teams and networks (Carlsson & Forssell, 2012; Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023). At the same time, technological development and digitalization have changed ways of working and increased the need for new leadership models (Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021).

Leadership style plays a key role in attracting and retaining motivated employees (Zehner, 2022). Generation Z prefers flexible working hours and shorter working periods, which has partly blurred the boundary between work and leisure time (Živković et al., 2025). This creates new demands for leadership, as organizations must consider both flexibility and the balance between work and recovery.

Digital transformation has also brought new psychosocial risk factors, such as technostress, information overload, and a weakening balance between work and leisure. These risks are particularly pronounced when employees do not receive sufficient organizational support or clear guidelines (Mateen, Ahmed Khoso, Ullah, Shakil, & Latif, 2025 et al., 2025). Research shows that a strong perceived organizational support reduces stress and improves well-being, which emphasizes the role of supervisors in supporting employees in a changing work environment (Mateen et al., 2025).

Traditionally, leadership has been associated with the use of power and control as well as a strong focus on results and competition. The significance of these characteristics has partly changed, but they do not need to be abandoned entirely. Instead, leadership should be developed and adapted to new requirements in which flexibility, interaction, and shared responsibility are emphasized (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

2.4 Organizational and Managerial Challenges Related to Generation Z in the Workplace

Leadership style plays a central role in attracting and retaining motivated employees (Zehner, 2022). Generation Z emphasizes flexibility, the use of technology, and modern ways of working in working life, which is particularly linked to the blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure as well as shorter and more flexible working hours (Živković et al., 2025). At the same time, the organization of work is undergoing a broader transformation, driven by the increasing prevalence of non-standard employment relationships as well as the growing use of technology and automation (Ray & Panacryan, 2021).

Traditional hierarchical leadership models are increasingly in conflict with the expectations of younger employees. Digitalization enables remote work and the functioning of virtual teams, which increases the need for more flexible and trust-based leadership practices. This changes organizational operations, as commitment is no longer based as strongly on physical presence or hierarchical control, but rather on job autonomy and experiences of meaningfulness (Kobis & Banasik, 2025).

The transition of Generation Z into working life is associated with several organizational challenges, particularly concerning employee motivation, communication, and engagement, as well as attracting and retaining the workforce (Burger et al., 2021). These challenges are also linked to individual-level factors such as variation in self-confidence, cognitive overload in attention span, and difficulties in critical information processing, which may affect task management and long-term work performance (Burger et al., 2021). Thus, the challenges are not limited to organizational-level management but also extend to employees' individual capabilities and expectations regarding working life.

Age is associated with many preconceptions, and these are not necessarily solely positive. Young employees are often subject to stereotypical assumptions that may

weaken both the functioning of the work community and individual performance (Kiviranta, 2010). When employees' strengths are identified and utilized in job tasks, both well-being at work and resilience can be improved (van Woerkom et al., 2020). In addition, a positive attitude toward young employees strengthens commitment and productivity, especially when tasks match their competencies (Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021).

The concept of generations provides a framework for examining the development of individuals and society and for structuring questions related to identity and societal change. However, discussions on generations are often based on generalizations and stereotypes, which may lead to misleading interpretations. Careful generational research can still produce valuable insights when the analysis focuses on structural and experiential factors instead of simplistic oppositions (Duffy, 2023).

For young employees, a key expectation of working life is flexibility, which can be divided into flexibility in employment relationships, working time, and place of work. Time and place flexibility can reduce stress, support work–life balance, and increase commitment to the workplace (Živković et al., 2025).

At the same time, structural changes in working life, such as digitalization, network-based ways of working, and the shift away from hierarchical control, challenge traditional understandings of motivation and commitment (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). Due to these changes, the commitment of Generation Z cannot be explained solely through age or generational perspectives. Instead, organizations must adopt a holistic approach to motivation and commitment that considers both individual experiences and broader structural factors shaping the conditions of working life (Duffy, 2023; Tienari & Piekkari, 2011).

3 Work motivation and Organizational commitment

This chapter examines work motivation and organizational commitment and the relationship between them in the workplace context. It begins by presenting key theoretical perspectives on work motivation and organizational commitment, including different types of motivation and dimensions of commitment, as well as their connection to work engagement and employees' intention to remain within an organization.

The chapter then explores how motivation and commitment manifest specifically among Generation Z employees. In addition, it introduces the concepts and principles of coaching and discusses how coaching-based leadership can influence motivation and organizational commitment. Finally, previous empirical studies related to these themes are reviewed, highlighting the theoretical foundations for the present study.

3.1 Work Motivation Theoretical Perspectives

Motivation generally refers to the desire or willingness to do something. It is a highly personal and individual-centred phenomenon involving choices, intentions, and desires. People's motives vary, as do the ways in which different motivational factors influence them. Motivation can also change over time (Kiviranta, 2010). It significantly guides an individual's work effort, persistence, and choice of strategies, and it directly affects learning, professional development, and job performance (Nicolau, Candel, Constantin & Kleingeld, 2025).

Motivation refers both to a theoretical framework that explains why certain factors influence behaviour and to an internal state that activates and guides behaviour toward a specific goal (Wietrak, Rousseau & Barends, 2021). From a work-life perspective, a key objective is to identify the factors that make different individuals motivated, inspired, or driven to pursue something. Motivation is often based on needs. Money and livelihood represent the fulfilment of basic needs. However, an even more significant factor is often the need for safety. The need for security functions as an important source of motivation

for both younger and older individuals. Among young people in particular, the need for self-actualization is emphasized, which is reflected in the desire to influence work content and ways of working (Kiviranta, 2010).

In addition to the need-based perspective, motivation can be examined through three action-oriented models based on rational, development-oriented, and internally driven motivational processes (Kiviranta, 2010). These models can also be interpreted through Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In rational motivation, individuals pursue outcomes such as pleasure, money, promotions, recognition, status, or other personally meaningful benefits. Some of these are perceived as more important than others, which guides individual choices and actions. In development-oriented motivation, learning, personal growth, and self-actualization are central sources of motivation. In this case, individuals are driven by opportunities to develop their skills and face new challenges. In process-oriented motivation, attention is focused on internal cognitive and decision-making processes, such as perceptions of self-efficacy, agency, and competence. From this perspective, motivation is largely built on individuals' own experiences, beliefs, and sense of control (Kiviranta, 2010). These factors are closely related to the experiences of autonomy and competence emphasized in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The foundation of motivation is built on an individual's thinking and their perception of themselves as an agent. In working life, the idea that performance and success are key drivers of behaviour is based on the view of humans as active agents who evaluate themselves and develop through experience (Kiviranta, 2010). When an individual's prospects weaken, this may affect their well-being and motivation. For example, job insecurity can negatively influence employees' mental health and motivation (Brougham & Haar, 2017).

In addition to the models described above, motivation can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation according to Ristikangas, Ristikangas, Ristikangas & Lönnroth (2021). In coaching leadership, motivation is not seen as something externally produced; instead, responsibility for being motivated lies with the individual. The role of the supervisor is to create conditions that enable the development of intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation refers to behaviour driven by external goals or rewards. In working life, such motivational factors include salary, recognition, or position. For some individuals, these external factors can be highly significant and even decisive in shaping work behaviour. Not all people are continuously intrinsically motivated by their work tasks; instead, they may work to achieve results or status that enable them to pursue personally meaningful goals.

An intrinsically motivated individual does not need to force themselves to perform a task, as their energy is naturally directed toward the activity itself. For this reason, work is less mentally taxing, as it does not require constant willpower or effort (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Intrinsic motivation directs individuals toward tasks that are perceived as meaningful and interesting. Its key components include autonomy, competence, benevolence, and relatedness. These factors closely correspond to the psychological basic needs described in Self-Determination Theory. When they are balanced, individuals are better able to act in a self-determined way, which strengthens the experience of meaningful work (Ristikangas et al., 2021).

According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), understanding motivation requires consideration of basic psychological needs. These needs include autonomy, competence, and relatedness. They form the foundation for psychological growth, well-being, and the development of intrinsic motivation. When these needs are satisfied, individuals experience their actions as meaningful and self-determined, which strengthens intrinsic motivation and well-being.

Social environments that support experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness foster intrinsic motivation, psychological growth, and the internalization of external motives. In such environments, individuals do not merely respond to external demands but begin to integrate goals into their own value system. Conversely, environments that frustrate these basic needs weaken motivation, performance, and overall well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In personal life, a goal is something that a person strives to achieve or accomplish. However, not all goals inherently increase motivation, as their effectiveness depends on commitment. Commitment is influenced by the perceived importance and attractiveness of the goal as well as the individual's confidence in their ability to achieve it (Wietrak et al., 2021).

Flexible working hours and the ability to influence one's own work significantly support psychological well-being and motivation. Previous research also shows that a sense of control over one's time and working conditions strengthens intrinsic motivation and increases employee commitment (Mateen et al., 2025). Common motivationally supportive flexible practices in working life include remote work, the possibility to take leave when needed, and flexible scheduling (Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021). At the same time, Generation Z recognizes that such flexibility cannot be expected in every workplace (Živković, Adamek, & Brkić, 2025).

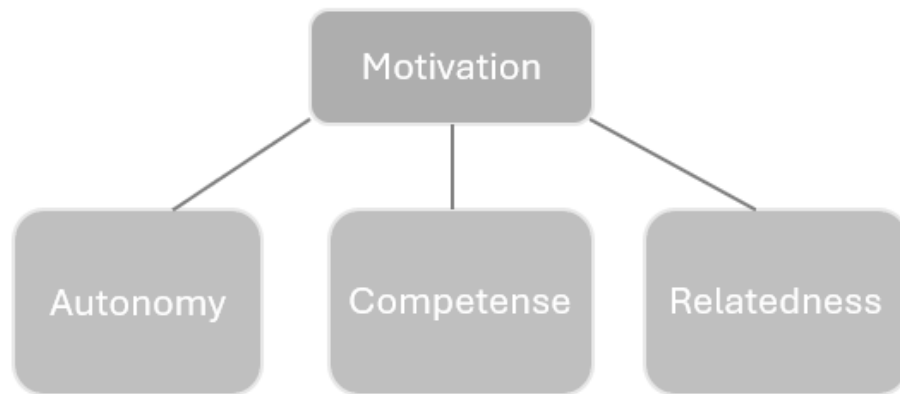


Figure 1. Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Understanding work motivation requires consideration of both conceptual definitions and theoretical frameworks. Various motivation theories provide a multifaceted perspective on how individuals become motivated in their work and how motivation influences performance, engagement, and well-being. Theoretical models particularly emphasize the importance of psychological basic needs, goals, and rewards, as well as the role of social and organizational factors in creating a motivating work environment.

3.2 Organizational Commitment Theoretical Perspectives

Organizational commitment refers to an employee's identification with the organization and the alignment of their goals and values with those of the organization, which is associated with better well-being at work, performance, and lower turnover intentions. Organizational commitment has also been found to be linked to employees' organizational citizenship behaviours and positive organizational-level outcomes (Pulido-Martos, Gartzia, Augusto-Landa & López-Zafra, 2024). Supervisors' leadership style plays a significant role in the formation and maintenance of employee commitment (Zehner, 2022).

Organizational commitment has been described as an employee's willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, remain a member of it, and accept its goals and values. It can be divided into three forms: affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is based on emotional attachment and identification with the organization's values, whereby the employee wants to contribute to the organization's success. Continuance commitment is based on perceived costs and benefits, where remaining in the organization is seen as more beneficial than leaving. Normative commitment stems from a feeling of obligation and moral responsibility, where the employee feels they ought to remain a member of the organization and contribute to its activities (Kiviranta, 2010).

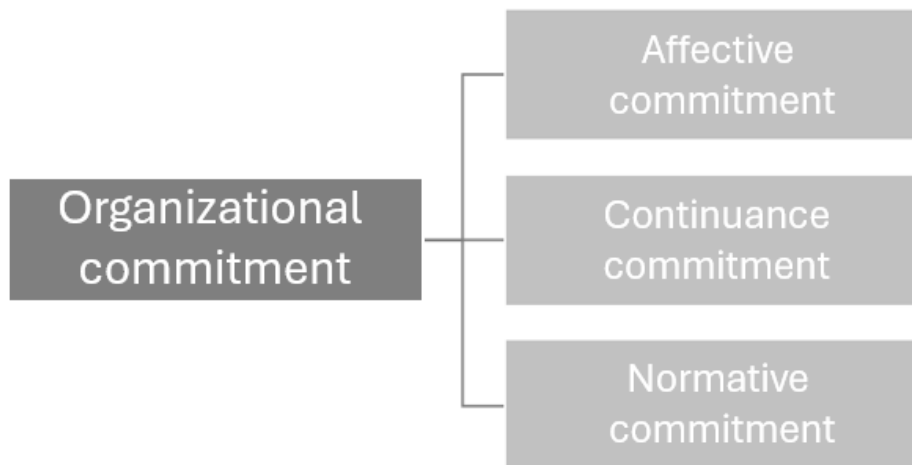


Figure 2. Organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

The formation of commitment is also influenced by the meaningfulness of goals and the nature of work tasks. Goals in themselves do not increase commitment; rather, what matters is how meaningful and attainable they are perceived to be. Commitment is strengthened by the personal significance of goals, their attractiveness, and an individual's belief in their own ability to achieve them (Wietrak et al., 2021). Unclear or

unnecessary tasks weaken the experience of meaningful work and may increase negative feelings toward work, thereby reducing organizational commitment (Karkkola, 2025).

The emotional climate of the work environment and perceived well-being are also key factors explaining commitment. Positive emotions and a supportive work atmosphere enhance commitment and improve organizational performance. Leadership practices and organizational culture directly influence employees' experiences, and a high-quality working life promotes both commitment and work–life balance (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012). In addition, work motivation and job satisfaction are strongly interconnected factors underlying commitment and are closely linked to the working conditions provided by the organization (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021).

According to research, Generation Z is flexible and quick to learn in the labour market, but their commitment to an employer is not as strong as that of previous generations. Employers perceive young employees as likely to change jobs easily, even though they adapt quickly to new work environments. This highlights the challenge of building long-term commitment, although the results may partly reflect local labour market practices (Kobis & Banasik, 2025).

According to the Generation on the Polish Labor Market report, employers often observe that Generation Z is prone to changing jobs. 63.3% of respondents stated that younger employees acquire new skills quickly and adapts effortlessly to different teams. Only 1% of surveyed employers identified loyalty to the company as a characteristic trait of Generation Z, which may indicate challenges in establishing long-term employment relationships (Kobis & Banasik, 2025). The result suggests that although Generation Z is flexible and eager to learn, their commitment to an employer cannot be taken for granted. On the other hand, this exceptionally low figure may also reflect cultural characteristics and traditional management practices in the Polish labour market and should not be generalized to the entire generation (Kobis & Banasik, 2025).

Recent studies indicate that positive emotions are key factors for organizational performance and employee commitment. Understanding employees' feelings is essential for human resource management, as leadership practices and organizational culture directly influence employee behaviour. The quality of work life, in turn, enhances organizational performance and employee commitment while supporting their ability to manage personal life (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012).

Although Generation Z is not generally considered highly loyal to employers, organizations can strengthen their commitment by building a positive organizational culture, supporting well-being, and utilizing participative and coaching-oriented leadership practices. In doing so, organizations can also leverage the strengths of this generation, such as flexibility, learning ability, and readiness to adopt new working methods.

3.3 Motivation and Commitment Among Generation Z employees

Individuals belonging to Generation Z are characterized by a strong need for creativity and innovation, which are considered key sources of motivation for this generation. Work is no longer perceived as the primary source of meaning in life, but rather as one aspect of life among many others (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). Intrinsic motivation is a central factor influencing work orientation, and young employees actively seek new career opportunities. They perform particularly well when work–life balance and sufficient financial and psychological stability are present (Burger et al., 2021). Short-term inspirations and experiences are often valued more highly than long-term career goals or status-related aspirations. Life is increasingly viewed as a project-like continuum composed of experiences and characterized by constant change (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011).

The meaningfulness of work plays a significant role in shaping motivation. Illegitimate tasks are associated with lower work motivation and may increase feelings of meaninglessness at work. However, this relationship appears to be reciprocal: low

motivation may increase the likelihood of perceiving tasks as illegitimate, whereas strong motivation may reduce such perceptions over time (Karkkola, 2025).

At the beginning of their careers, young employees actively evaluate different career options and consider alternative career paths more consciously than previous generations (Suh & Park, 2024). This reflects a broader shift in work-related attitudes, characterized by an increased emphasis on individuality. At the same time, a sense of community remains important, as the fundamental human need to belong to a group continues to play a central role in working life. However, the nature of communities has changed. Individuals can now choose, join, and leave communities more freely than before. At times, they may seek experiential and hedonistic communities, while at other times they may look for security and continuity in more traditional forms of community (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011). These characteristics directly influence how Generation Z employees become motivated at work and commit to organizations.

From the perspective of organizational commitment, young employees' behaviour is also influenced by the appeal of novelty (Voulos, 2024). Organizational commitment has become increasingly important in situations where expertise is needed but employment relationships may not provide long-term security or stability. Organizations seek to strengthen commitment particularly during the early stages of employees' careers because investments in training and development are substantial relative to productivity gains (Kiviranta, 2010). Career commitment, in turn, is reflected in a desire for advancement and may increase the likelihood of changing organizations. Research suggests that individuals often overestimate the opportunities offered by a new workplace compared to their current one, even when this assumption is not necessarily accurate (Voulos, 2024).

Commitment can manifest itself in various ways (Suh & Park, 2024). Employees may be committed to their work itself, professional development, salary, or career progression. When commitment is based solely on compensation, it can be described as economic

commitment, where employees choose to work wherever financial rewards are greatest. Commitment to a profession or professional growth reflects a desire to become competent and skilled in one's work. Career commitment, on the other hand, refers to prioritizing career advancement above other work-related goals. Employees who are strongly committed to their careers often change positions and organizations to progress professionally (Kiviranta, 2010). Nevertheless, the attraction of novelty remains a common human tendency, and studies indicate that individuals frequently assume a new job will provide better opportunities than their previous one, even though this may not always be the case (Vaulos, 2024).

Surugiu, Surugiu, Grădinaru, and Grigore (2025) examined Generation Z work motivation using a two-level research design that combined quantitative employee data with qualitative interviews conducted with supervisors from various industries. This approach enabled the phenomenon to be explored from both employee and managerial perspectives. Including supervisors in the study enriched the analysis and provided valuable contextual insights into Generation Z's workplace behaviour and expectations. The findings indicate that salary remains a significant motivational factor for Generation Z employees, but recognition, appreciation, and well-being are also highly valued.

The study by Ling and Lew (2024) complements these findings by highlighting the importance of work flexibility and hybrid work arrangements as key sources of motivation for Generation Z. Their research further demonstrates that employer branding is shaped largely by external sources, such as independent reviews and employee-generated social media content, whereas organizational communication has a more limited influence. These findings challenge organizations to view commitment and motivation more broadly by emphasizing authenticity, community, and perceived meaningfulness alongside formal workplace practices.

Although both studies provide valuable insights into Generation Z work motivation, their findings should also be interpreted critically. In the study by Surugiu et al. (2025), the

inclusion of supervisors' perspectives adds contextual depth but may simultaneously place greater emphasis on managerial interpretations at the expense of employees' own experiences. Furthermore, the generalizability of the findings may be limited by industry-specific differences. Similarly, Ling and Lew's (2024) emphasis on flexibility and hybrid work may reflect contemporary workplace trends, raising questions about the long-term applicability of their conclusions.

In summary, the work motivation of Generation Z cannot be explained by a single factor. Rather, it is shaped by a combination of economic, structural, and social influences. This highlights the need for a holistic approach when seeking to motivate and retain Generation Z employees.

3.4 Concepts and Principles of Coaching

Coaching leadership refers to managerial work in which employees' strengths are identified and developed in a goal-oriented manner. It supports the development of competence and learning while aiming to improve both individual and organizational performance (Mäkelä et al., 2023). Coaching, in turn, is a goal-oriented and structured developmental process aimed at promoting the development of both the individual and the organization. It provides a personal and practical approach to developing leadership and managerial work (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

Coaching leadership combines cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural factors, and it emphasizes the appreciation of employees' competence as well as the recognition of their development potential (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). The coaching relationship differs from mentoring in that it is typically time-bound or goal-bound and does not require the coach to have deep subject-matter expertise in the coachee's work tasks but instead focuses on learning and personal growth (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016).

The coaching relationship is based on a confidential interaction that enables open discussion and a sense of psychological safety. This relationship is a key prerequisite for

successful coaching, as it directly affects the coachee's commitment and willingness to reflect on their own actions (Carlsson & Forssell, 2012). The aim of coaching is a lasting behavioural change that may be reflected in an individual's thinking, actions, and organizational practices (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023). Its effectiveness is based on concrete results and actions, as without them the process may remain at the level of discussion (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

Goals are a central part of the coaching process, as they increase direction, effort, and commitment. Clear, challenging, and personally meaningful goals improve both performance and well-being (Nicolau et al., 2025). Coaching and mentoring relationships also differ in that mentoring is often based on long-term career development and the expertise of a more experienced individual, whereas coaching focuses on a shorter, goal-oriented learning process and individual development (Jones et al., 2016).

Research shows that organizational support is associated with lower levels of work-related stress (Mateen et al., 2025). Coaching can therefore promote well-being by supporting individual reflection, learning, and development, as well as strengthening the sense of control and psychological safety. It requires the coach to have both people management and business understanding, as its aim is to integrate individual development with organizational goals (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

The effectiveness of coaching is enhanced by clear goal setting and follow-up. The purpose of reporting is not control but to strengthen the coachee's own responsibility and commitment. A functional interactional relationship is a key prerequisite for success, and it includes a sense of safety and being understood (Carlsson & Forssell, 2012). Coaching also includes reflection, feedback, and receiving feedback, as well as evaluating one's own actions in relation to set goals (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

The tension between confidentiality and transparency is a central challenge in organizational communication. In particular, the expectations of Generation Z emphasize

transparency, which increases pressure towards openness. Thus, balancing confidentiality and openness is an ongoing part of organizational practice and one of the most significant future leadership challenges (Tienari & Piekkari, 2011).

Leadership effects are not one-directional, as employees' experiences can also influence the behaviour of managers (Mateen et al., 2025). Coaching is a multidisciplinary field of study that combines perspectives from psychology, business studies, education, and philosophy, but its most important success factor is the trusting relationship between the coach and the coachee (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023).

3.5 The relationship between coaching, motivation and commitment

The quality of working life, which is formed by the content of work, the work environment, and the ways in which work is organized, is closely related to motivation and occupational well-being (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012). Motivation thus functions as a mediating factor between coaching leadership and commitment, and it can also be explained from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When work provides physically and psychologically safe conditions as well as opportunities to influence one's own tasks, it supports employees' motivation and commitment to the organization (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012).

Leadership style plays a major role in attracting and retaining motivated employees (Zehner, 2022). Generation Z requires appreciation and recognition from supervisors to experience motivation and improve their job performance. Personal attention, social and immediate feedback, as well as rewards for work strengthen motivation and commitment to the organization. If these factors are lacking, Generation Z employees may seek other positions that offer more meaningful and development-oriented work opportunities, which highlights the importance of leadership, recognition, and coaching support for organizational success (Surugiu et al., 2025).

According to Kanten & Sadullah (2012), the quality of working life is closely related to occupational well-being, but it cannot be equated solely with job satisfaction, as it covers the effects of work on an individual's entire life. Working conditions and job demands affect an employee's ability to cope both at work and outside of work, and if work does not meet employees' needs or expectations, it may increase stress, reduce work ability, and decrease commitment. In this context, coaching leadership can promote the quality of working life by providing individual support, open communication, and opportunities for skill development. Through the coaching process, employees can strengthen their sense of control and the meaningfulness of work, which supports motivation and commitment and reduces work-related strain. Especially for Generation Z employees, coaching leadership can meet expectations for continuous feedback, development opportunities, and individual support, thereby strengthening the quality of working life and organizational commitment (Kanten & Sadullah, 2012).

From the perspective of individual differences, young employees, including Generation Z, may still have a developing understanding of working life, which in some cases may influence their perceptions of their own abilities. However, job performance is not based solely on competence, but also on an individual's belief in their own abilities, i.e., self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is built on prior experiences, successes, and life course development. Conversely, challenging life experiences may weaken its development (Kiviranta, 2010).

The generational transition in working life has also made the role of supervisors more demanding. Their responsibilities are no longer limited to control, but they are also expected to act as coaching supporters and enablers of development in a changing work environment (Kobis & Banasik, 2025). When examining the formation of motivation and commitment, it must be noted that the effects of leadership are not one-directional, as employees' experiences and actions may also influence supervisors' behaviour and managerial practices (Mateen et al., 2025).

In conclusion, coaching leadership can provide Generation Z with opportunities to receive feedback, experience success, and develop a more realistic understanding of their own competence. Coaching leadership affects employees' motivation and commitment primarily indirectly, as it strengthens the quality of working life and the sense of self-efficacy. Through these mechanisms, the meaningfulness of work increases, as does the willingness to invest in and commit to the organization. This chain of effects is particularly significant for young employees and members of Generation Z, whose experiences and expectations of working life are still forming.

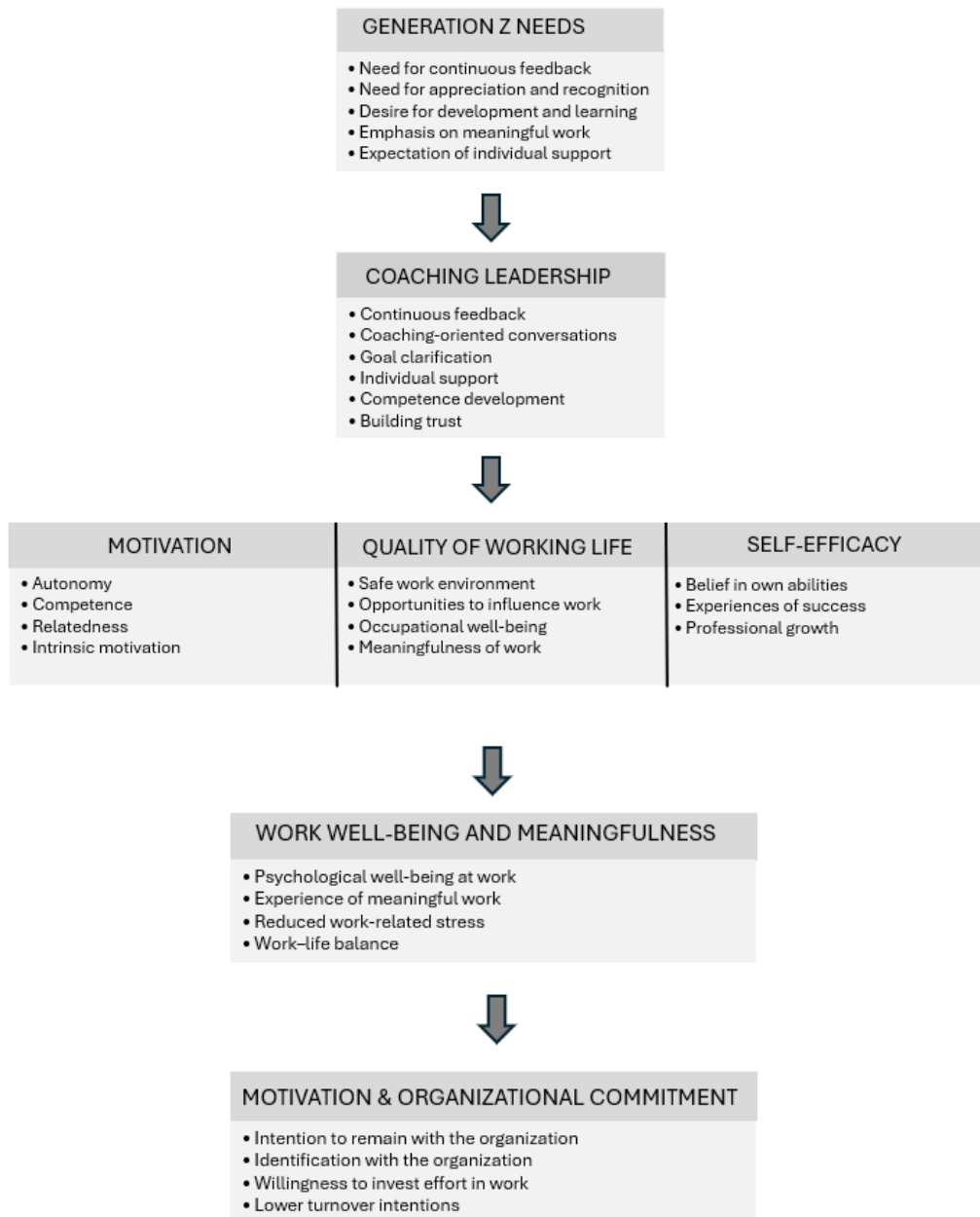


Figure 3. Theoretical framework. Model of the relationship between coaching leadership and organizational commitment among Generation Z employees, with motivation, quality of working life, and self-efficacy acting as mediating factors.

4 Research Methodology

In qualitative research, the most common data gathering methods include interviews, surveys, observations, and data gathered from various documents. These methods can be used either alternatively, in parallel, or in combination, depending on the phenomenon under study and the available research resources. A key advantage of interviews is their flexibility. In an interview situation, the researcher can repeat questions, clarify expressions, correct potential misunderstandings, and engage in interactive discussion with the participant. Such flexibility is not possible, for example, in postal surveys, where all respondents receive the same questionnaire and the researcher has no opportunity to clarify responses (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2024).

In qualitative research, the aim of interview questions is to produce rich and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation. An interview guide can include themes and prompts that encourage participants to describe their experiences in a nuanced and comprehensive way. It is therefore essential that the questions are understandable and meaningful from the participants' perspective. The interview atmosphere and the extent to which participants perceive the situation as clear and safe can also influence responses (Bearman, 2019).

The order of questions can also be adjusted according to the flow of the conversation and the situation (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2024). In semi-structured interviews, the process is not entirely predetermined, and flexibility is often required during the interview. The researcher must make decisions about which themes to explore in more depth and how to follow up on the experiences shared by the participant. For this reason, the questions are not only intended to guide the discussion but also to allow for appropriate follow-up questions depending on the context (Bearman, 2019).

The goal of the interview is to obtain the most comprehensive and in-depth understanding possible of the phenomenon under study. For this reason, it is justifiable to provide the interview questions or themes to participants in advance. This allows

participants to prepare and supports the qualitative richness of the data. From an ethical perspective, it is also important to inform participants in advance about the topics of the interview, ensuring that participation is based on informed and voluntary consent (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2024).

4.1 Data collection

The study employed a qualitative research approach, as outlined in section 5.1, because its aim was to understand the experiences of Generation Z employees regarding coaching leadership and its effects on work motivation and organizational commitment. A qualitative approach allows for the exploration of individual experiences, meanings, and interpretations, which is particularly important when studying leadership and workplace phenomena that are inherently subjective and context dependent (Thomas, 2006).

The participants were selected from the Generation Z cohort, born between 1995 and 2012, and employed in various organizations, roles, and industries. A total of nine individuals participated in the study.

The data were collected through semi-structured thematic interviews. This method was chosen because it allows for the systematic exploration of predefined themes while also giving participants the opportunity to express their own perspectives and experiences. The interview themes were based on the study's theoretical framework, particularly the concepts of coaching leadership, work motivation, and organizational commitment (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2024).

The interviews were conducted individually and audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis. The data were analysed using theory-driven content analysis, guided by key themes derived from previous research. The interviews were conducted between March 4 and March 23, 2026. All

interviews were held via Teams, and they were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The duration of the interviews ranged from 25 to 41 minutes.

Interviewee number	Roles	Lenght of the interviev
Interviewee 1	Plumber	28 min
Interviewee 2	Early Childhood Education Teacher	31 min
Interviewee 3	Physiotherapist	41 min
Interviewee 4	Early Childhood Education Teacher	30 min
Interviewee 5	Registered Nurse	38 min
Interviewee 6	Supply Chain Analyst	39 min
Interviewee 7	Personal Assistant	29 min
Interviewee 8	Logistics Worker	41 min
Interviewee 9	Baker	25 min

Table 1. Interview details.

The purpose of the sample was to obtain a comprehensive and diverse understanding of Generation Z employees' experiences, particularly regarding their motivation and commitment at work. The interviews aimed to identify both common themes and differences in perspectives across industries, job roles, and organizations. The selection process ensured diversity in participants' backgrounds, such as the nature of their work, the size of their organization, and their industry, to capture a broad representation of young employees' experiences of motivation and commitment. This approach also allows for an examination of which factors enhance or hinder young employees' organizational commitment and how their motivation is influenced by their supervisor's leadership style.

4.2 Data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations

In qualitative research, the development of the study's argumentation often relies on an interaction between previous research literature and the researcher's own interpretations. Studies typically draw on earlier scientific publications, which allow the researcher to incorporate knowledge produced by other scholars as part of their own analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018). When the analysis is based on a synthesis of previously published empirical and theoretical studies, combined with the researcher's reflective consideration, the boundary between empirical and non-empirical knowledge is not always clear (Thomas, 2006). This interpretive nature is a central feature of qualitative research, in which meanings are constructed through a dialogue between the data, theoretical frameworks, and the researcher's perspective (Kallio, 2006).

In this study, the data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews. All interviews were conducted with participants' consent and audio-recorded, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis. The study adhered to principles of good scientific practice and research ethics, including voluntary participation and informing participants about the purpose of the study and the handling of the data. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants were ensured throughout the research process, and no individual participant can be identified from the results. The data were analysed using theory-driven content analysis, guided by key themes derived from previous research. During the analysis process, meaningful segments of the data were identified and grouped into relevant themes.

Assessing trustworthiness in qualitative research can be challenging (Kallio, 2006). In this study, trustworthiness was enhanced by carefully documenting the analysis process and by making transparent how the data were interpreted. The researcher continuously reflected on their own influence on the interpretation of the data, which helped to reduce potential bias and increase the credibility of the analysis. Ethical considerations

were maintained throughout the research process, ensuring that participants' perspectives and experiences were respected and accurately represented in the analysis.

5 Research Findings

This chapter examines the research findings derived from qualitative interview data. The research data have been collected through semi-structured interviews, the aim of which has been to obtain a diverse and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. The participants in the interviews shared their own experiences, perspectives, and interpretations, which form the central data of the study. The aim of the research is to describe and understand the experiences and perceptions of Generation Z representatives regarding coaching leadership and its effects on work motivation and organizational commitment. The findings are based on the participants' own experiences.

The data have been analysed using qualitative methods, and the analysis has identified recurring themes and meanings. These themes are illustrated in this chapter with direct quotations. The quotations have been selected to best reflect the participants' perspectives and to support the presented analysis.

The findings are presented thematically, and direct quotations from the interviews are used within each theme to illustrate the data and support interpretation. Presenting the participants' own words increases the transparency and reliability of the study and helps the reader understand how the findings are grounded in the data. At the same time, the quotations make the findings more concrete and bring the participants' voices into the research as part of the overall study.

The research findings are divided into four main themes. The first section addresses the participants' work motivation and how it is manifested in practical working life. The second section examines organizational commitment, that is, how committed Generation Z employees perceive themselves to be and which factors influence their commitment. The third section describes the relationship between coaching leadership, work motivation, and organizational commitment. The final section explores how

supervisory practices support employees' motivation and commitment to the organization.

5.1 Perceived impact of coaching on work motivation

The interviewees described the sources of their work motivation in a diverse manner. The data highlighted, among other things, the meaningfulness of work, job satisfaction, colleagues, experiences of success, receiving new tasks, and financial factors.

The meaningfulness and purpose of work and professional development.

The meaningfulness and purpose of work emerged as central sources of work motivation for several interviewees. Many participants emphasized that perceiving their work as meaningful and significant strengthens motivation and increases the willingness to invest effort in their tasks. Furthermore, opportunities for professional development and the acquisition of new responsibilities were identified as key factors enhancing motivation.

“I really have to mention that the meaningfulness of the work is one big motivator. Also, the way the managers appreciate the work we do increases work motivation. When you know that others also value what you do on a daily basis, it strengthens your own motivation.” (Interviewee number 4)

“Well, probably the fact that, for the most part, I like my job and it gives more than it takes.” (Interviewee number 3)

“At the moment, what motivates me is probably that there have been new and different types of tasks or responsibilities compared to before. Variety is motivating. When you get those feelings of success or things move forward, that also increases motivation.” (Interviewee number 6)

Financial factors

Salary and financial factors emerged in several interviewees' responses as factors that enhance work motivation. Salary increases and positive salary development were also seen as signs of appreciation for the work, which in turn increased motivation.

“Money, successes at work, and colleagues. Right now, probably mostly the money.” (Interviewee number 2)

“At the moment, what motivates me in this job is purely the money. I work to fund my life alongside my studies.” (Interviewee number 7)

“A universal answer, but yes, money also motivates one to work.” (Interviewee number 6)

“The fact that salary is reviewed and responded to positively is a sign that the work is valued.” (Interviewee number 1)

Good colleagues and work atmosphere

The work community and a positive atmosphere were viewed as central factors supporting motivation.

“When you get to help people, it usually gives you a pretty good feeling and puts you in a good mood. I guess one thing that motivates me is having good colleagues and it being nice to go to work.” (Interviewee number 1)

“Probably the biggest thing is job satisfaction. That it's pleasant to go to work and you don't come back home feeling completely broken.” (Interviewee number 8)

“Taking and carrying responsibility and having a good work atmosphere and a team. Those are perhaps the biggest things that motivate me to keep going.” (Interviewee number 9)

Leadership and autonomy

Leadership and autonomy emerged as factors that can both support and undermine motivation. Several interviewees described how excessive control or micromanagement reduces motivation.

“If there is a lot of micromanaging, it definitely weakens motivation.”
(Interviewee number 6)

5.2 Perceived impact of coaching on organizational commitment

The interviewees emphasized that commitment to both the work and the organization depends on the appreciation of the work as well as the opportunity to influence one's own tasks and their development.

Organizational and role commitment

Commitment to the organization and the role was identified as a factor supporting both motivation and retention. Employees expressed that organizational interest, appreciation, and recognition of their work strengthened their commitment. At the same time, career development opportunities were seen as important, as lack of progression could affect long-term commitment even if the organization itself was valued.

“I don't see myself in the same role in the future, but I could otherwise work there [in the same organization]. There is nothing wrong with the organization itself, but I want to move forward in my career, so

that is perhaps the only thing that might affect it.” (Interviewee number 2)

“They are interested and they appreciate the work, and it is shown in some way. If no one were interested in what I do, my commitment would suffer too.” (Interviewee number 3)

Appreciation of work and rewarding

Appreciation of work and rewarding were seen as factors that strengthen employees' willingness to stay within the organization. Salary reviews and even small pay increases were perceived as signs that the work is valued. Being heard and having one's opinions considered were seen as important for strengthening commitment, while their absence could weaken it.

“When talking about why one wants to stay with a company, it doesn't just depend on the employee having to ask for a raise themselves. For example, the fact that the salary is reviewed and reacted to positively. Even if it's just a small increase is a sign that something has been done right and that the work is appreciated.” (Interviewee number 1)

“If my opinions were not noticed or if it wasn't shown that they matter, I don't think I would be as committed.” (Interviewee number 9)

Opportunities for influence and involvement

The opportunity to influence one's own work and participate in the dialogue was seen as a factor that strengthens commitment.

“Perhaps specifically things like being able to influence the work itself, having broad decision-making authority, and knowing that your own opinion can actually make a difference.” (Interviewee number 4)

“It is important to maintain an open dialogue with employees and to stay actively in contact, rather than just closing oneself behind closed doors.” (Interviewee number 5)

Organizational culture

An understanding that it is not possible to influence every task or operational practice within the workplace.

“The fact that you can influence things to even some extent is clearly a positive thing. At the same time, however, one must accept that you cannot, and do not even need to, influence everything; some things inevitably progress in a certain way.” (Interviewee number 5)

5.3 Feedback and Opportunities for Influence as Drivers of Motivation

The interviewees emphasized that feedback, opportunities for influence, and managerial support significantly impact work motivation and job satisfaction.

Feedback and development opportunities

Feedback and opportunities for professional growth were seen as important sources of motivation. Constructive feedback and recognition of employees’ strengths were valued and increased motivation. Opportunities for development and career advancement were also considered important, especially among younger employees.

“Feedback is extremely important, and probably quite few people feel they get enough of it. It would be good to provide more constructive feedback. I feel that Generation Z has a desire to develop and advance in their careers, and for me it is important that opportunities are provided and that development is supported.” (Interviewee number 2)

“If you get good feedback from your supervisor, it always motivates you to continue in this company and gives a good feeling. Then it’s also likely that there’s no need to even try to change companies, for example.” (Interviewee number 1)

“Yes, I would hope that the manager would recognize, for example, what I am particularly good at, and would also be able to acknowledge the strengths that I apply in my work, rather than just seeing me as one of the crowds.” (Interviewee number 7)

Opportunities to influence work and working hours

Opportunities to influence work and working hours increased work meaningfulness and motivation. Flexibility in scheduling was seen as important, especially among younger employees. Employees also valued being able to participate in decisions about their own tasks instead of top-down assignment.

“Having the opportunity to influence not only the work itself but also having flexibility, for example, regarding vacations or unpaid leave, is really important to me. This is particularly significant for my generation, and it feels like it is valued more than it was by previous generations.” (Interviewee number 4)

“It would be good to ask the person who does the work, rather than just deciding tasks from the top down. Too often tasks are assigned without asking what the employee themselves would like to do.”
(Interviewee number 3)

Work-life balance

Work-life balance was perceived as an important factor for occupational well-being and motivation.

“The balance between work and the rest of life is important. Work shouldn't be everything. There needs to be time and energy left for other things as well.” (Interviewee number 6)

“There has to be more to life than just work. Of course, you do the job properly, but not in a way that you dedicate your whole life to it.”
(Interviewee number 8)

"Things that support well-being at work, such as various employee benefits and recreational days, should be emphasized so that work doesn't dominate life too much and a balance between work and leisure is maintained. I think that would be very welcome."
(Interviewee number 7)

5.4 Managerial support and leadership style

The interviewees emphasized that managerial support, accessibility, a coaching leadership style, and listening to employees' support work motivation and organizational commitment.

Managerial support

Managerial support was perceived as significant for employee motivation and a sense of meaningfulness at work. Based on the interviews, employees valued managers who were approachable and showed genuine interest, treating employees as individuals. The manager's presence in everyday work, open dialogue, and listening to and considering employees' views were seen as important. Supporting employees' development and professional growth was also emphasized.

“You don't have to worry about disturbing the manager or feel that they are too busy for you to approach them. They are easily accessible and show that they have time. In the work community, we aren't just 'robots'. People are met as individuals, and there is a genuine interest in them.” (Interviewee number 3)

“Sometimes it's good to go out 'into the field' and ask how things are going. This kind of approach reduces the feeling that work is just staring at screens at a computer, and it supports cooperation with the employees.” (Interviewee number 5) “

“Open dialogue and listening to employees' opinions, as well as taking them into account, are important. At the same time, it is essential to create an encouraging approach where there is a desire to develop employees and support their professional growth.” (Interviewee number 5)

Managerial accessibility

Managerial accessibility was identified as a key factor enhancing motivation. Managerial accessibility emerged as an important factor in employees' experiences. The

interviewees emphasized that managers should be easy to reach and respond to messages quickly, as delays weakened the sense of support.

“The manager supports me specifically by being available, but at the same time, they give me responsibility. For my work motivation, I need the manager to trust me and give me the opportunity to handle my tasks independently.” (Interviewee number 6)

“It is very important to me that my supervisor is reachable. I’ve noticed that if a supervisor responds to messages only after, for example, three days, I don’t like it. I would hope that the supervisor is accessible.” (Interviewee number 7)

“We need people who are close to the daily work and easily accessible with a low threshold. Support should be immediate; it shouldn't be that you send a message and then, a few weeks later, they remember something needed to be handled. You should be able to get help right away.” (Interviewee number 5)

Leadership style and coaching approach

A coaching leadership style was perceived as a modern and motivating way to lead employees. Traditional top-down leadership was seen as outdated, while a coaching-oriented and more collaborative style was preferred. Employees emphasized that managers should be part of the work community, provide continuous feedback, and clearly communicate goals and expectations.

“That kind of traditional leadership role isn't really very contemporary. It might depend on the field, but especially in the field where I work,

a traditional leadership style doesn't really work. I feel that coaching is the more appropriate way.” (Interviewee number 2)

“I think that top-down leadership is a rather outdated way to lead. It is also important to think of the manager as a part of the work community.” (Interviewee number 4)

” From my perspective, it’s more modern to be more like a coach than some kind of dictator. And perhaps being more like friends, rather than having an authority based on a power-struggle dynamic.” (Interviewee number 9)

” Continuous feedback and goal setting. And that it has been made clear to the employees themselves what is wanted and expected of them.” (Interviewee number 7)

5.5 Coaching leadership as a driver of work motivation

As discussed in Section 3.1, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a useful framework for understanding employee motivation and organizational commitment. The theory emphasizes three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Table 2 illustrates how these psychological needs were reflected in the interview data and the organizational practices through which they can be supported.

Psychological Need (SDT)	Factors Supporting Employees	Interview Examples	Organizational Practices
Autonomy	Opportunities to influence tasks, decision-making, flexible working hours	<p>“Having the opportunity to influence not only the work itself but also having flexibility, for example, regarding vacations or unpaid leave, is really important to me. This is particularly significant for my generation, and it feels like it is valued more than it was by previous generations.” (Interviewee number 4)</p> <p>“It would be good to ask the person who does the work, rather than just deciding tasks from the top down. Too often tasks are assigned without asking what the employee themselves would like to do.” (Interviewee number 3)</p>	Participative and coaching leadership, possibility to choose tasks, influence working hours and decisions
Competence	Constructive feedback, recognition, opportunities to develop	<p>“Feedback is extremely important, and probably quite few people feel they get enough of it. It would be good to provide more constructive feedback. I feel that Generation Z has a desire to develop and advance in their careers, and for me it is important that opportunities are provided and that development is supported.” (Interviewee number 2)</p> <p>“If you get good feedback from your supervisor, it always motivates you to continue in this company and gives a good feeling. Then it’s also likely that there’s no need to even try to change companies, for example.” (Interviewee number 1)</p>	Constructive feedback, giving recognition, coaching leadership style
Relatedness	Sense of belonging at work, social support, accessibility, work–life balance	<p>“The balance between work and the rest of life is important. Work shouldn’t be everything. There needs to be time and energy left for other things as well.” (Interviewee number 6)</p> <p>“It is very important to me that my supervisor is reachable. I’ve noticed that if a supervisor responds to messages only after, for example, three days, I don’t like it. I would hope that the supervisor is accessible.” (Interviewee number 7)</p>	Social support, accessibility, flexible working hours, practices supporting well-being

Table 2. Psychological needs based on Self-Determination Theory, supporting factors, interview examples, and organizational practices.

The findings suggest that Generation Z employees are particularly motivated and committed when they can influence their work, receive feedback on their successes, and experience a sense of belonging within the work community. Opportunities to participate in decision-making, influence task content, and an open communication culture support employees' autonomy and strengthen their experience of meaningful work.

The results can also be examined from the perspective of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is based on interest, enjoyment, and the inherent meaningfulness of an activity, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors such as recognition, rewards, or other incentives (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Based on the interview data, opportunities for influence, meaningful work, and participation in decision-making appear to be key sources of intrinsic motivation. At the same time, constructive feedback and recognition of achievements function as important extrinsic factors that support employees' motivation and willingness to continue in their roles.

Constructive feedback and recognition of achievements also strengthen employees' sense of competence, which motivates them to develop their skills and continue in their roles. The sense of relatedness is reflected in commitment and the experience of social acceptance. Feeling noticed, valued, and included within the work community strengthens employees' emotional attachment to the organization.

From the perspective of SDT, the findings also help explain why managerial support, accessibility, and a coaching leadership style were emphasized in the interviews. When managers provide clear guidance, feedback, and opportunities for independent work, they support employees' autonomy and competence. At the same time, open dialogue and collaboration strengthen the sense of relatedness.

5.6 Coaching leadership as a driver of work commitment

Form of Commitment	Factors Supporting Employees	Interview Examples	Organizational Practices
Affective commitment	Appreciation of work, interest in the employee, sense of meaningfulness	<p>“They are interested and they appreciate the work, and it is shown in some way. If no one were interested in what I do, my commitment would suffer too.” (Interviewee number 3)</p> <p>“If my opinions were not noticed or if it wasn’t shown that they matter, I don’t think I would be as committed.” (Interviewee number 9)</p>	Showing appreciation, active interaction, acknowledging employees
Normative commitment	Opportunities to influence, participation, feeling heard	<p>“Perhaps specifically things like being able to influence the work itself, having broad decision-making authority, and knowing that your own opinion can actually make a difference.” (Interviewee number 4)</p> <p>“It is important to maintain an open dialogue with employees and to stay actively in contact, rather than just closing oneself behind closed doors.” (Interviewee number 5)</p>	Participative leadership, open discussion culture, involving employees in decision-making
Continuance commitment	Financial factors (salary), pay raises, benefits provided by the job	<p>“The fact that salary is reviewed and responded to positively is a sign that the work is valued.” (Interviewee number 1)</p> <p>“At the moment, what motivates me in this job is purely the money. I work to fund my life alongside my studies.” (Interviewee number 7)</p>	Competitive pay, rewards, financial incentives
Factors supporting commitment	Commitment to the organization vs. the role, career development opportunities	<p>“At the moment, what motivates me is probably that there have been new and different types of tasks or responsibilities compared to before. Variety is motivating.” (Interviewee number 6)</p> <p>“I don’t see myself in the same role in the future, but I could otherwise work there [in the same organization]. There is nothing wrong with the organization itself, but I want to move forward in my career, so that is perhaps the only thing that might affect it.” (Interviewee number 2)</p>	Providing career paths, internal mobility, supporting development opportunities
Work–life balance	Work–life balance, overall well-being	<p>“There has to be more to life than just work. Of course, you do the job properly, but not in a way that you dedicate your whole life to it.” (Interviewee number 8)</p> <p>“The balance between work and the rest of life is important. Work shouldn’t be everything. There needs to be time and energy left for other things as well.” (Interviewee number 6)</p>	Practices supporting well-being, consideration of work–life balance

Table 3. Forms of employee commitment, supporting factors, interview examples, and organizational practices.

Organizational commitment refers to an employee's psychological attachment to the organization and their willingness to remain a member of it (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). Based on the interview data and Meyer & Allen (1991), commitment appears primarily as affective commitment, which is strengthened through experiences of meaningful work, appreciation, and a sense of belonging within the work community. Normative commitment, which is based on feelings of obligation or external expectations, may contribute to retention; however, its influence appears weaker when organizations do not provide opportunities for personal development or experiences of meaningful work.

Based on the interview data, commitment appears to be primarily rooted in the affective dimension. Employees expressed a desire to be part of the organization, which reflects experiences of meaningful work as well as a sense of belonging within the work community. This highlights the importance of emotional attachment as a foundation of commitment.

In addition to affective commitment, normative commitment also emerged to some extent in the data. According to the findings of this study, it is particularly evident in situations where the organization provides employees with opportunities to develop, influence their own work, and receive recognition for their efforts. These factors can be interpreted as generating experiences of reciprocity and a sense of obligation toward the organization.

Financial factors were also mentioned as influencing commitment, but they were primarily viewed as indicators of appreciation rather than as core determinants of commitment. Salary and reward practices were associated with the organization's recognition of employees' contributions. Overall, commitment in the data is shaped by

experiences of meaningful work, perceived appreciation, and opportunities for influence, rather than by formal obligation toward the organization.

Coaching leadership, particularly managerial support, can strengthen employees' perception of being valued by the organization and thereby support commitment. In practice, this is reflected in managerial accessibility as well as genuine career development opportunities, which enhance employees' sense of continuity within the same organization.

5.7 Summary

Based on the interview data, the meaningfulness and purpose of work emerged as key sources of work motivation. Many interviewees felt that perceiving their work as meaningful increases their willingness to invest effort in their tasks and strengthens intrinsic motivation. Coaching leadership supports this experience by emphasizing openness, clarifying goals, and linking employees' roles to the broader organizational context, thereby making the purpose of work more visible.

In addition, opportunities for professional development and taking on new responsibilities were identified as important factors enhancing motivation. Coaching leadership supports learning through continuous feedback, guidance, and individualized development support, which aligns particularly well with the expectations of younger employees, such as Generation Z, regarding continuous development and career opportunities.

Salary and financial factors emerged as elements that increase motivation; however, they were also interpreted as signals of appreciation for work. From the perspective of coaching leadership, the sense of appreciation is not built solely through financial compensation, but also through interaction, feedback, and recognition, which strengthen the perception that employees' contributions are acknowledged.

The importance of the work community and a positive working atmosphere was highlighted as a key factor supporting motivation. Coaching leadership strengthens this by fostering an open, inclusive, and interactive working culture in which employees feel a sense of belonging and are heard.

Regarding leadership and autonomy, the findings showed a dual perspective: autonomy enhances motivation, whereas excessive control and micromanagement weaken it. Coaching leadership is based precisely on supporting autonomy, where the supervisor acts as a guide rather than a controller. This increases employees' sense of responsibility and ownership of their work, thereby strengthening motivation.

In terms of commitment, the key factors identified were appreciation of work, opportunities to influence, and being heard. Coaching leadership supports these elements by emphasizing employee involvement, dialogue, and shared decision-making. When employees feel that their views matter, their commitment to the organization is strengthened.

Feedback and managerial support emerged as significant sources of motivation and perceived meaningfulness. In coaching leadership, continuous constructive feedback and the manager's presence in daily work are central practices that support employee development and reinforce feelings of appreciation.

Managerial accessibility was highlighted as an important factor. Delays in communication weakened the perceived sense of support, whereas an easily approachable manager strengthened feelings of safety and trust. Coaching leadership emphasizes managerial presence and accessibility as part of everyday leadership practice.

Coaching leadership was perceived as a modern and motivating leadership style in the data. Traditional top-down leadership was seen as outdated, whereas a more interactive,

goal-clarifying, and employee-involving approach better meets employees' expectations. From the perspective of Generation Z in particular, coaching leadership appears as a model that integrates meaningfulness, autonomy, development, and social support into a coherent whole.

Coaching Leadership Trait	Impact on Motivation	Impact on Commitment
Encouraging feedback	Increases sense of meaningful work and experiences of success	Strengthens the desire to stay in the organization
Supervisor support and accessibility	Increases sense of safety and motivation	Builds trust in the organization
Listening to employees	Increases feeling of being valued	Strengthens commitment
Supporting autonomy	Enhances intrinsic motivation	Increases responsibility and commitment
Supporting development	Increases motivation to learn	Promotes long-term commitment
Involving employees in decision-making	Increases sense of meaningfulness	Increases commitment to work
Enabling flexibility	Supports well-being at work	Reduces turnover

Table 4 The Relationship Between Coaching Leadership and Work Motivation and Commitment (Generation Z)

Table 4 illustrates the impact of these factors on motivation and commitment. Managerial support and the provision of feedback are particularly emphasized because they influence multiple aspects of the employee experience simultaneously.

Overall, the findings indicate that coaching leadership functions as a key mechanism that integrates perceived meaningfulness of work, appreciation, autonomy, feedback, and development opportunities into a mutually reinforcing system. Rather than affecting isolated aspects of work experience, it builds a broader perception that work is meaningful, employees are valued, and their development is actively supported. This holistic configuration strengthens both work motivation and organizational commitment, as employees experience support, influence, and feedback that together enhance intrinsic motivation and emotional attachment to work. Particularly among Generation

Z employees, coaching leadership emerges as a response to key workplace expectations such as continuous development, open communication, and the emphasis on meaningful work.

6 Discussion and conclusions

This chapter focuses on the conclusions of the study and the interpretation of the findings. The interview results are compared with previous research and literature to examine whether they support earlier observations regarding Generation Z's work motivation, commitment, and occupational well-being. Specifically, the chapter explores how coaching leadership practices such as feedback, managerial support, active listening, fostering autonomy and involvement, and providing development opportunities impact motivation and commitment. Furthermore, the practical implications for management are discussed, highlighting areas that organizations should consider and develop to promote employee commitment and well-being. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the study's reliability, an acknowledgment of its limitations, and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Comparison of Results with Previous Research

The findings of this study indicate that coaching leadership has a significant influence on Generation Z employees' work motivation and organizational commitment. In particular, the experience of meaningful work, continuous feedback, opportunities for development, and the supervisor's interactive and supportive presence emerged as key factors that strengthen both intrinsic motivation and commitment to the organization. The results are consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which suggests that motivation is built upon experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Based on the interview data, coaching leadership supports all three dimensions. It enhances employees' autonomy by providing opportunities to influence their work, strengthens competence through continuous feedback and learning, and fosters relatedness through open and supportive interaction.

Regarding autonomy, the findings revealed a clear distinction between autonomy-supportive and controlling leadership. Excessive micromanagement was perceived as demotivating, whereas coaching and autonomy-supportive leadership increased

employees' sense of ownership and responsibility. This finding strongly aligns with Self-Determination Theory, according to which autonomy-supportive environments enhance intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and well-being (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021).

The findings also support Meyer and Allen's (1991) model of organizational commitment, particularly from the perspective of affective commitment. When employees perceive their work as meaningful and feel valued by the organization, their emotional attachment to the organization is strengthened. Coaching leadership therefore appears to be a key mechanism through which both motivation and commitment are developed.

Feedback and managerial support emerged as important sources of motivation and meaningfulness. Continuous feedback was perceived not only as a tool for development but also as a sign of appreciation. This supports previous research suggesting that the quality of feedback is associated with motivation, job performance, and organizational commitment (Hilvo & Rubanovitsch, 2023). Coaching leadership, which is based on ongoing interaction, creates an environment that supports learning and development, thereby strengthening both competence and motivation.

Managerial accessibility was also perceived as an important factor in creating a sense of support and psychological safety. Delayed communication or distant leadership weakened employees' feelings of security, whereas approachable leaders strengthened trust and perceptions of support availability. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of managerial presence in building trust, well-being, and commitment. This finding is consistent with coaching literature emphasizing psychological safety and trust as central conditions for effective coaching relationships (Carlsson & Forssell, 2012).

The importance of quality of working life was also highlighted in the findings. When work is well organized, psychologically safe, and provides opportunities for employees to

influence their own work, it supports both well-being and motivation. Quality of working life can also be examined through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, as opportunities for influence, a safe work environment, and positive workplace relationships support experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Consequently, motivation does not appear solely as an individual characteristic but rather as a phenomenon that develops through the interaction between the work environment, leadership practices, and individual factors.

The findings are particularly significant in the context of Generation Z employees. Consistent with previous research, this generation values continuous development, timely feedback, autonomy, and meaningful work. Coaching leadership responds to these expectations by providing individualized support, participative interaction, and opportunities for professional growth. If these needs are not fulfilled, employees may be more inclined to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, coaching leadership appears to be an important means of strengthening Generation Z employees' commitment and reducing employee turnover (Figure 3).

Although the effects of coaching leadership were largely positive in the interview data, it is important to acknowledge that not all employees necessarily require the same balance between autonomy and guidance. Particularly at the beginning of their careers, some employees may benefit from clearer direction before taking on greater responsibility and self-directed work. This suggests that the effectiveness of coaching leadership may also depend on individual factors, such as employee experience, job characteristics, and readiness for self-directed working.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that motivation and commitment are not one-directional phenomena. Instead, they are formed through continuous interaction between employees and supervisors. Employees' experiences, expectations, and behaviours also influence leadership practices, highlighting the dynamic nature of leadership in contemporary working life.

Previous studies partially support the findings of this research. According to a study conducted in Romania by Surugiu et al. (2025), salary serves as a central motivational factor for Generation Z, but recognition, appreciation, and well-being are also highlighted as significant factors. The results of this study are aligned with those findings, especially regarding non-financial factors, as the importance of feedback, the experience of appreciation, and occupational well-being were emphasized in the interviews.

Although the study by Surugiu et al. (2025) was conducted via a questionnaire in Romania and this study was carried out in Finland using qualitative interviews, the results complement each other across different contexts and methods. This suggests that certain motivational factors, such as appreciation, feedback, and well-being, are central to Generation Z regardless of culture. On the other hand, it must be noted that the labour market situation, cultural factors, and economic conditions of different countries may influence how central factors such as salary or work appreciation are perceived. Consequently, the generalizability of the results should be viewed critically.

6.2 Significance and implications of the study

Based on this research, it can be concluded that coaching leadership plays a central and significant role in the work motivation and organizational commitment of Generation Z. The results demonstrate that employees particularly value managerial support, regular and constructive feedback, opportunities to influence their own work, and work-life balance. Through these factors, employees perceive their work as meaningful and experience a sense of belonging to the work community, which in turn strengthens commitment to the organization and enhances job satisfaction.

In practice, this means that a traditional, hierarchical leadership style is no longer sufficient to meet the expectations of Generation Z in the modern workplace. Instead, an inclusive and interactive leadership approach is required. This involves a culture where employees are genuinely listened to, their perspectives are valued, and they are

granted responsibility. Furthermore, employee development must be actively supported through opportunities such as training, mentoring, and continuous learning. This emphasizes the role of the supervisor as a coach who enables growth and success instead of merely directing and monitoring tasks.

On a broader scale, the study suggests that the world of work is undergoing a transformation, and organizations must adapt their leadership practices to meet the evolving expectations of younger generations. Work meaningfulness, employee well-being, and opportunities for influence are emerging as key drivers of the employee experience. This shift is reflected in organizational culture, leadership development, and human resource strategies, where it is increasingly vital to consider individual needs and experiences. Commitment is no longer rooted solely in duty, loyalty, or financial incentives, as it is more frequently based on experiential and psychological factors. The meaningfulness of work, the sense of being appreciated, and the opportunity for professional growth are essential factors in strengthening commitment. Consequently, organizations must invest holistically in the employee experience to retain Generation Z talent in the long term.

Today, a long-term career within a single organization is not valued as it was in the past, and employee priorities have shifted significantly. Generation Z is not as tied to a single employer as previous generations; they are more inclined to change jobs in pursuit of better development opportunities, more meaningful content, or a superior work-life balance. This presents new challenges for employers, particularly regarding talent acquisition and retention. High employee turnover is both costly and time-consuming for organizations. Recruitment, onboarding, and training require substantial resources, and the loss of expertise and tacit knowledge can undermine an organization's efficiency, productivity, and continuity. Therefore, it is crucial for employers to develop strategies that reinforce commitment and reduce turnover.

Salary alone is no longer a sufficient motivator. While competitive compensation remains an important component, employees increasingly value other factors, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, a positive and encouraging work atmosphere, and work-life balance. The meaningfulness of work and the ability to influence one's own tasks are also central motivational factors that enhance job satisfaction and commitment. Career and development opportunities are especially critical from the perspective of young employees. Organizations that offer clear career paths, continuous learning, and skill development are more likely to engage their staff over the long term. Simultaneously, open communication, appreciative leadership, and active listening foster trust and strengthen the functionality of the work community.

Overall, the research indicates that coaching leadership is not merely an isolated management method but part of a broader paradigm shift in working life that emphasizes employee-centricity, interaction, individuality, and well-being. In the future, success will belong to those organizations that can understand the changing needs of their employees and respond to them with flexibility and versatility. As working life continues to evolve, organizations must adapt to these developments to effectively attract, engage, and retain skilled professionals in the long run.

6.3 Limitations and critical reflection

This study is based on the employees' own experiences, which may influence the results. For example, interviewees might emphasize positive experiences or evaluate their managers solely from their own perspective. In future research, it would be beneficial to examine the phenomenon from the perspective of managers as well or to utilize other datasets, such as employee surveys.

On a broader scale, it can also be questioned to what extent the results of the study relate specifically to Generation Z and to what extent they reflect a more general change in working life. The emphasis on work meaningfulness, flexibility, and well-being is observable across several different age groups, suggesting that this may be a broader

cultural and societal shift rather than a phenomenon tied exclusively to a specific generation.

As previously discussed in the theoretical framework, Generation Z is interested in freedom. However, in the interviews conducted for this study, comments related to remote work did not emerge. With a larger sample or with different interviewees, it is possible that the opportunity for remote work and the freedom it provides would emerge and significantly influence both individual work motivation and commitment to the work.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

The results of this study open several possible directions for future research, although the study also has limitations that affect the interpretation of the findings. This study was conducted as qualitative research with a limited sample, which means the results cannot be widely generalized. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future research to examine the same phenomena using a larger quantitative dataset. A survey-based approach could determine how prevalent the coaching leadership factors identified in this study, such as managerial support and opportunities for influence, are among Generation Z and how strongly they correlate with work motivation and commitment.

However, a purely quantitative study may not necessarily capture the depth of employee experiences in the same way as qualitative research. For this reason, it could be useful for future research to combine different methods to obtain both broader and more in-depth information about the phenomenon.

Future studies could also examine the phenomenon across different industries and organizations. The results obtained in this study may vary depending on organizational culture, management practices, and the nature of the work. For example, in expert work, autonomy may be emphasized differently than in operational work, which can affect how coaching leadership is perceived and how it impacts motivation and commitment. It is

also possible that coaching leadership does not function in the same way in all work environments.

In addition to these perspectives, it would be important to investigate the role of compensation in different economic contexts. For instance, in countries such as Romania, where there are significant disparities between low income and high-income earners, the impact of salary on motivation may differ from more egalitarian economies. Future research could explore the significance of pay levels for Generation Z's work motivation and commitment across various European countries to understand how macroeconomic factors influence expectations regarding work.

Through these research lines, more precise information could be obtained regarding the factors related to the work motivation and commitment of Generation Z and how coaching leadership functions in different situations.

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