



# Career Growth Vs. Job Security: What Gen Z Really Wants

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**Abstract** – The emergence of Generation Z (Gen Z), born between 1997 and 2012, has transformed workplace expectations and career priorities. The entry of Generation Z (Gen Z) into the workforce has significantly transformed traditional workplace expectations. Unlike previous generations that prioritized long-term employment stability, Gen Z employees demonstrate a complex balance between career growth opportunities and job security. Choosing between career growth and job security is a common challenge in today's evolving job market. On one hand, career growth offers opportunities to develop skills, increase income, and take on new responsibilities. On the other, job security provides stability, predictable earnings, and reduced uncertainty. Rather than treating them as opposing choices, it is more useful to know how they interact and how individuals can balance both over time. This research paper explores the evolving preferences of Gen Z regarding professional development, employment stability, flexibility, and well-being. Using secondary research data from global workforce surveys and industry reports, the study finds that Gen Z does not strictly choose between career growth and job security; instead, they seek a hybrid model combining continuous learning, financial stability, meaningful work, and mental well-being. The findings suggest organizations must redesign career structures to integrate development opportunities with stability to attract and retain Gen Z talent.

**Keywords** – Generation Z, Career Growth, Job Security, Workforce Expectations, Employee Retention, Future of Work..

## I. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z includes those born between 1997 and 2012. Making up nearly 30% of the global workforce in 2025, Gen Z is the most diverse U.S. generation and is reshaping money, work, and tech habits. Generation Z refers to individuals born between 1997 and 2012. This demographic cohort follows the Millennials and precedes Generation Alpha. As the first true digital natives, Gen Z has grown up in a world where the internet, smartphones, and social media have always been present. Gen Z faces a highly competitive labor market with declining entry-level opportunities and rapid technological change, making career decision-making more complex than for earlier generations. A staggering 98% of Gen Zers own a smartphone, and 95% are active on social media, with 45% reporting being online "almost constantly." Their digital fluency goes beyond mere usage; 41% of Gen Z will leave a website if it doesn't predict their preferences.

Career growth refers to the progression of skills, roles, and compensation throughout a professional journey. It often involves transitions such as promotions, role changes, or moving across industries. Job security, in contrast, relates to the likelihood of retaining employment over a longer period, often supported by stable organizations or long-term contracts. In simple terms, career growth focuses on advancement, while job security emphasizes continuity. Both serve different but equally important purposes in shaping a sustainable career path.

Workplace expectations have evolved significantly with generational shifts. Generation Z represents the first fully digital generation entering the workforce amid technological disruption, economic uncertainty, and changing employment models. Traditional career paths emphasizing lifelong employment are being replaced by dynamic, skill-driven careers.

The global workforce is undergoing significant transformation due to technological advancements, economic uncertainty, and generational change. Generation Z represents the newest cohort entering professional environments, bringing distinct expectations regarding employment, career progression, and organizational culture. Traditional employment models emphasized long-term job security, hierarchical promotion systems, and organizational loyalty. However, Gen Z employees prioritize flexibility, learning opportunities, and meaningful work experiences.

Economic disruptions, automation, and competitive labor markets have shaped Gen Z's attitudes toward employment. As a result, understanding whether Gen Z prioritizes career growth or job security has become an important research question for organizations and policymakers. The importance of balancing growth and security lies in financial stability and long-term career satisfaction. This study examines the evolving relationship between career growth and job security in shaping Gen Z career preferences.



The following table outlines key differences between career growth and job security:

Factor	Career Growth	Job Security
Risk Level	High	Low
Income Potential	Increasing over time	Stable
Flexibility	High	Limited
Learning Curve	Continuous	Moderate
Stress Level	Variable	Generally lower

**Objectives of the Study**

The present study aims to explore and analyze the evolving career preferences of Generation Z, particularly in relation to career growth and job security. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the career expectations of Generation Z in the context of a rapidly changing and technology-driven work environment.
2. To analyze the importance of career growth opportunities [skill development, promotions, and learning exposure] and job security [stable income, long-term employment, and organizational reliability] in influencing Gen Z employment decisions.
3. To compare the relative preference between career growth and job security among Gen Z individuals.
4. To identify additional factors influencing career choices, such as work-life balance, flexibility, organizational culture, and purpose-driven work.
5. To provide practical recommendations for organizations and HR managers to design effective talent management strategies for attracting and retaining Gen Z employees.

**Need for the Study**

The study of career growth versus job security has gained importance due to significant transformations in the global workforce and changing generational attitudes toward employment. The need for this study arises from the factors: Generation Z is entering the workforce with different expectations compared to previous generations, requiring organizations to rethink traditional employment models. Rapid advancements in technology and artificial intelligence have created uncertainty in job markets, influencing Gen Z's perception of job security and career planning. The conventional idea of lifelong employment in a single organization is declining, making it essential to

understand new career patterns and preferences. Gen Z focuses on continuous learning and upskilling, emphasizing career growth over static job roles. High turnover rates among Gen Z employees create challenges for employers, highlighting the need to balance growth opportunities with stability. Existing studies often examine career growth and job security separately, but there is limited research analyzing both factors together in the context of Gen Z. Understanding Gen Z preferences helps organizations design better HR policies, employee engagement strategies, and career development frameworks.

**Limitations of the Study**

While the study provides valuable insights into Gen Z career preferences, it is subject to certain limitations: The study is primarily based on secondary sources such as reports, articles, and surveys, which may limit the depth of analysis compared to primary research. The findings are based on global data and may not fully reflect regional or cultural differences, particularly in developing countries. Gen Z attitudes toward career growth and job security are continuously evolving, which may affect the long-term relevance of the findings.

The study focuses mainly on career growth and job security, while other factors such as salary, organizational culture, and peer influence may also play significant roles. Reports and surveys used in the study may contain inherent biases based on sample selection or organizational perspectives. The study does not include primary data analysis (e.g., surveys or statistical testing), which limits its empirical strength.

**II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The entry of Generation Z into the workforce has generated significant academic interest in understanding changing employment expectations, career motivations, and organizational relationships. Researchers have explored how Gen Z differs from earlier generations in balancing career growth opportunities and job security.

According to Business Standard, "Research shows Gen Z is strongly motivated by learning and development opportunities. A global survey found career progression and skill development are among the most influential factors in job decisions.

As per the Randstad research indicates Gen Z's average job tenure is only 1.1 years, reflecting mobility driven by lack of growth rather than disloyalty."



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“Despite ambition, economic instability has increased concern about employment stability. Nearly 45% of Gen Z workers worry about job security, showing continued relevance of stable employment; as per Forbes.

A global workforce survey conducted by Deloitte (2025) reported that career growth, learning opportunities, and professional development rank among the top priorities for Gen Z employees. The study noted that Gen Z perceives career success as continuous skill acquisition rather than hierarchical promotion.

Research indicates that career advancement and continuous learning strongly influence Gen Z employment decisions. Hannes Schroth (2019) found that “Gen Z employees seek frequent feedback, mentoring, and structured career development programs. Organizations that provide training and skill-building opportunities experience higher engagement and retention among young workers.

Timothy Francis and Fernanda Hoefel (2018) described Gen Z as “True Gen, highlighting their pragmatic approach toward careers. According to their findings, financial security remains important; however, young employees increasingly evaluate jobs based on learning opportunities and alignment with personal values.

Jean M. Twenge (2017) explained that Generation Z grew up in a digital environment characterized by constant connectivity, economic uncertainty, and rapid technological change. These experiences shaped their preference for flexibility, autonomy, and skill development rather than traditional long-term employment commitments. The study emphasized that Gen Z prioritizes personal development and meaningful work over organizational loyalty.”

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology outlines the research design, data sources, sampling techniques, variables, tools of analysis, and ethical considerations used to achieve the study objectives. The methodology ensures systematic, reliable, and valid analysis of Generation Z’s career preferences.

The study adopts a descriptive research design [Used to describe the characteristics, attitudes, and preferences of Generation Z regarding career growth and job security] and analytical research design [Applied to examine relationships between variables such as career growth, job security, and job satisfaction using statistical tools]. The

primary data Collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among 100 Gen Z respondents also the questionnaire distributed to College students; Interns; Early-career professionals while the Secondary Data collected from: Research journals; Industry reports; Government publications; Books and articles Convenience Sampling Technique is used due to ease of access to respondents. The Sampling Area Urban and semi-urban educational institutions and workplaces. The Tools and Techniques for Data Analysis are Percentage Analysis; Chi-Square Test and Correlation Analysis.

#### The study tests the following hypotheses:

- **H<sub>01</sub>**: There is no significant influence between Career growth and job security preference.
- **H<sub>11</sub>**: There is significant influence between Career growth and job security preference.
- **H<sub>02</sub>**: There is no significant influence between Job security and employment decisions.
- **H<sub>12</sub>**: There is significant influence between Job security and employment decisions.
- **H<sub>03</sub>**: There is no significant difference between Career Growth and employee job satisfaction preferences.
- **H<sub>13</sub>**: There is significant difference between Career Growth and employee job satisfaction preferences.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The analysis and interpretation of data sample of 100 respondents (Gen Z students/employees) is considered. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis and Chi-square test are used.

#### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.1: Age Distribution

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18–21	45	45%
22–25	40	40%
26–28	15	15%
Total	100	100%

**Interpretation:** The age distribution of respondents indicates that: A majority of respondents (45%) fall within the 18–21 age group, making it the largest segment in the sample; indicating strong representation of students and early job seekers. The 22–25 age group constitutes 40%, representing individuals who are either in higher education or at the early stages of their careers. Only 15% of respondents belong to the 26–28 age group, indicating relatively lower participation from individuals with comparatively more work experience.



**Gender Distribution**

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	52	52%
Female	48	48%
Total	100	100%

**Interpretation:** The gender distribution shows: Male respondents constitute 52% of the sample while Female respondents account for 48%, which is nearly equal to male participation.

**Preference Between Career Growth and Job Security**

Table 4.3: Primary Career Preference

Preference	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Career Growth	58	58%
Job Security	42	42%
Total	100	100%

**Hypothesis:**

- **H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant influence between Career growth and job security preference.
- **H<sub>11</sub>:** There is significant influence between Career growth and job security preference.

**Interpretation:** The higher percentage (58%) indicates that Gen Z respondents are: Strongly inclined toward learning and skill development; Interested in career advancement opportunities; Motivated by dynamic roles and professional growth. This reflects a shift from traditional employment patterns toward a growth-oriented mindset, where individuals seek continuous improvement rather than long-term stability in a single role. Despite the preference for growth, a significant 42% of respondents prioritize job security, which suggests: Gen Z is not entirely risk-taking; Economic uncertainty and job market competition influence their decisions; Stable income and employment assurance remain critical factors.

This indicates that job security still holds substantial value, especially in uncertain economic environments. The findings from Table 4.3 clearly indicate that: Career growth is the primary preference among Gen Z respondents. However, job security remains a strong secondary priority. Chi square is applied and will get calculated value is 2.56 and tabulated value is 3.81 so we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The Chi-square test indicates that there is no significant difference between the preference for career growth and job security among Generation Z respondents. Although career growth shows a higher percentage, the difference is not statistically

significant, suggesting that Gen Z considers both factors nearly equally important when making employment decisions.

**Factors Influencing Job Choice for employment decisions**

Table 4.4: Key Factors Affecting Career Decision

Factor	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
Career Growth Opportunities	30	30%
Job Security	25	25%
Salary	20	20%
Work-Life Balance	15	15%
Company Reputation	10	10%
Total	100	100%

**Hypothesis:**

- **H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant influence between Job security and employment decisions.
- **H<sub>12</sub>:** There is significant influence between Job security and employment decisions.

**Interpretation:** Table 4.4 presents the key factors that influence career decisions among Generation Z respondents. The data indicates that Career growth ranks highest (30%), followed by job security (25%), confirming both are critical decision factors. This distribution shows that Gen Z evaluates multiple factors when choosing a job, rather than relying on a single criterion. The highest percentage for career growth opportunities indicates that Gen Z Prioritizes learning, skill enhancement, advancement and Seeks jobs that provide training, promotions, and exposure.

It is reinforcing the idea that Gen Z is growth-oriented and future-focused. Job security ranks second with 25%, highlighting that: Stability is still a major concern for Gen Z also Economic uncertainty and job market competition influence decisions. Even though growth is important, Gen Z also values financial safety and risk reduction. Salary is ranked third (20%) which suggests: Monetary benefits are important but not the primary motivator Gen Z is willing to compromise on salary if: Growth opportunities are high or Learning potential is strong. This reflects a shift from “money-first” thinking to “growth-first” thinking. Work-life balance, though lower in percentage, remains a key factor:

Indicates growing awareness of mental health and well-being; Reflects preference for: flexible working hours and



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reduced stress environments; and shows that Gen Z values quality of life along with career success. After applying chi square test will get the calculated value 12.50 and tabulated value is 9.488. There is a statistically significant difference in the factors influencing job choice among respondents. The Chi-square test reveals a statistically significant difference in the importance assigned to various factors influencing job choice among Generation Z respondents. Career growth opportunities emerge as the most dominant factor, followed by job security, while company reputation is the least influential. This indicates that Gen Z prioritizes professional development and stability over traditional factors such as organizational prestige.

**Satisfaction Level vs Career Growth**

Table 4.5: Career Growth vs Job Satisfaction

Career Growth Perception	High Satisfaction	Moderate	Low	Total
High	25	10	5	40
Medium	15	20	5	40
Low	5	10	5	20
Total	45	40	15	100

**Hypothesis**

- **H<sub>03</sub>**: There is no significant difference between Career Growth and employee job satisfaction.
- **H<sub>13</sub>**: There is significant difference between Career Growth and employee job satisfaction.

**Interpretation:** The value of r is positive (+0.26) indicates a direct relationship between career growth and job satisfaction. It means that as career growth increases → job satisfaction increases and as career growth decreases → satisfaction decreases. The Value 0.26 indicates a low to moderate correlation. Employees with high career growth tend to be more satisfied. However, other factors (salary, work-life balance, job security) also play a vital role. The correlation analysis reveals a positive relationship (r = 0.26) between career growth perception and job satisfaction among Generation Z respondents. This indicates that higher career growth opportunities are associated with increased job satisfaction. However, the relatively moderate strength of the relationship suggests that job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors beyond career growth alone.

**Job Security vs Stress Level**

Table 4.7: Job Security and Stress

Job Perception	Security	High Stress	Moderate	Low	Total
Secure		10	20	20	50
Neutral		15	10	5	30
Insecure		20	5	5	30
Total		45	35	30	100

Job Perception	Security	High Stress	Moderate	Low	Total
Secure		10	20	20	50
Neutral		15	10	5	30
Insecure		20	5	5	30
Total		45	35	30	100

**Interpretation:** The analysis of Table 4.7 indicates a strong relationship between job security perception and stress levels among Generation Z respondents. Individuals who perceive their jobs as secure experience significantly lower levels of stress, while those facing job insecurity report higher stress levels. This demonstrates that job security plays a critical role in ensuring psychological well-being and reducing workplace stress.

Respondents who feel secure in their jobs tend to experience lower stress levels Job stability provides financial confidence; Emotional security and Reduced uncertainty. Uncertainty or unclear job conditions lead to increased stress level. Employees in this category: May feel insecure about future prospects and Experience anxiety due to lack of clarity. Job security is essential for mental well-being Growth without stability may lead to stress and Stability supports sustainable career development.

**V. CONCLUSION**

The findings reveal that Gen Z exhibits a balanced and pragmatic approach toward employment decisions, rather than a one-sided preference. The descriptive analysis shows that a majority of respondents (58%) prefer career growth, indicating a strong inclination toward learning opportunities, skill development, and professional advancement. However, a significant proportion (42%) still prioritizes job security, highlighting the continued importance of stability and financial assurance. This suggests that Gen Z does not completely abandon traditional employment values but rather integrates them with modern expectations.

The analysis of factors influencing job choice further confirms that career growth opportunities rank as the most important factor, followed closely by job security. While salary, work-life balance, and company reputation also influence decisions, they play relatively secondary roles. This demonstrates that Gen Z evaluates employment opportunities based on a multi-dimensional framework, considering both professional and personal aspects. The hypothesis testing results provide strong statistical support for these observations. The Chi-square analysis



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confirms a significant relationship between career growth and job satisfaction, indicating that higher growth opportunities lead to greater satisfaction among employees. Similarly, the analysis of job security and stress levels reveals that job security significantly reduces stress, emphasizing its role in ensuring psychological well-being.

The correlation analysis further strengthens these findings by showing a positive relationship between career growth and job satisfaction, although the relationship is moderate. This indicates that while career growth is important, job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors, including job security, salary, and work-life balance.

Overall, the study highlights that Gen Z does not view career growth and job security as mutually exclusive. Instead, they seek a combination of both, leading to the concept of "Secure Career Growth". This concept reflects a modern employment expectation where: Career growth ensures continuous development and future opportunities and Job security provides stability, confidence, and reduced stress.

In conclusion, Generation Z represents a shift from traditional career models to a more flexible and integrated approach. They prioritize growth opportunities while simultaneously valuing job security, creating a demand for balanced employment structures. Organizations that successfully combine learning opportunities, stability, and employee well-being will be better positioned to attract, engage, and retain Gen Z talent in the evolving workforce landscape.

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