

## A Framework for Maximizing Potential and Planning Career Success of The Millennial and Z Generation Workforce

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### Abstract

*This study aims to develop a framework to address the gap between the career expectations of the Millennial and Z Generation workforce and the perceived importance (priority) of their career success. This research was conducted by collecting data from 139 respondents from the Millennial Generation and Z Generation at one of the private and public universities in Semarang using a questionnaire method. The questionnaire contains questions about what the Millennial Workforce and Z Generation expect in choosing a career and what factors are their priorities in achieving career success. The data collected was then analyzed using the gap analysis technique to find the gap between the desired things in choosing a career and the priority considerations in choosing a job. The results show that the Millennial Workforce and Z Generation have extrinsic career expectations such as salary, rewards, employment contracts, and future career opportunities. At the same time, considering interests or priorities in choosing a job is intrinsic, such as potential development opportunities, work-life balance, and company culture. In order to close the gap, this research will propose a framework that contains action plans that various stakeholders can carry out. This framework is expected to help the Millennial and Z Generation workforce maximize their potential and navigate them to achieve career success.*

**Keywords:** career expectations, career success, millennial and Z Generation workforce, career development framework

### Introduction

The generation gap in the workplace has recently been the focus of considerable attention among researchers. Millennials, born between 1980 and 1999, and the Z Generation, born between 2000 and 2013, have entered the industry world to fill positions within organizations and succeed the previous generation, the boomers. According to Gallup data, it has been revealed that since 2020, nearly half of the global workforce population consists of Millennials and Z Generation [1]. Each individual undoubtedly harbours hopes and desires related to their work, aligned with their distinct values, knowledge, and behaviours, which they bring to the organization. Organizations today face two challenges when managing younger generations of employees. Firstly, they must ensure that their knowledge, skills, and abilities align with the organization's needs. Secondly, they must deal with the new behavioural patterns developed among these generations due to their life experiences [2]. Millennials and Z Generation have grown up in rapid cultural changes and technological advancements. They are often called Digital Natives because they have been exposed to technology early and are adept at using information technology to access various information daily. Each generation has its own set of value priorities. Older generations tend to emphasise materialistic values such as economic and physical security, while younger generations prioritize post-materialistic values such as autonomy, freedom of

expression, and self-development. Advancements in technology and knowledge have given the younger generations distinct characteristics compared to their predecessors [3].

The ever-changing world, often described in Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA), also influences the challenges faced by graduates encountering a reality different from what the workforce traditionally expected. Similarly, organizations must prepare to welcome a new workforce with unique expectations, characteristics and competencies that must align with the organization's needs [4]. Millennials and the Z-generation in the workforce are considered generations oriented toward high achievement [5]. They live in an era characterized by better educational opportunities, economic well-being, and a greater understanding of diversity than previous generations. The evolving times experienced by Z Generation and Millennials have shaped their expectations and desires differently from those of earlier generations. Millennials and the Z-Generation in workforce management practices favour more inclusive practices, equality, human development, and workplace culture [6]. Organizations need to understand the expectations of job seekers to help find suitable candidates. Organizations must adapt their management perspective to a high influx of new workers replacing the previous generation. However, various studies reveal a gap between the career expectations of younger workers that companies must meet. This often results in a high turnover rate, and managers may develop negative stereotypes about them as a disloyal workforce.

In recent years, organizations have recognized that recruiting and retaining value-driven young employees has become increasingly competitive. Organizations state that the ever-changing business world requires knowledge, skills, and capabilities that support innovation, creativity, and adaptability [7]. However, it is often said that the younger workforce's experience and abilities must align with the organization's needs. Employers have different perceptions of the younger workforce, often believing they already possess sufficient knowledge, technology, economic and social skills. Three main challenges for current graduates in job hunting include skill mismatch, which affects organizations' ability to find suitable candidates; the presence of artificial intelligence, which can replace many jobs; and economic uncertainty, leading to reduced workforce demand [8].

This research is intriguing because previous studies have primarily focused on the management of young employees, such as unmet expectations or expectation gaps, rather than concentrating on the primary source of the workforce: recent graduates. Hence, there is a need for an effective bridge in understanding the career expectations of current prospective employees still undergoing higher education institutions and the organizations as potential employers. This research aims to provide a framework to bridge the gap by analyzing the extent to which Millennials and Z Generation understand their career success. This framework will guide Millennials and the Z Generation in achieving a career balance that accommodates their expectations and priority considerations in career choices.

## **Literature Review**

### **Career Expectations and Preferences of Millennial and Z Generation**

Millennials are the generation born between 1981 and 2000. Furthermore, the generation born between 2000 and 2013 is called Z Generation [9]. Numerous studies have revealed that the characteristics of the Z Generation and Millennials share commonalities. Both generations value work-life balance, aspire to leadership roles, exhibit high entrepreneurial spirit, and prefer digital Communication [10]-[12]. Z Generation and Millennials, now entering the workforce, have grown up with different experiences, technologies, and cultures compared to previous generations. This shapes their preferences and expectations regarding job choices and conditions [13]. Each generation possesses its own set of motivations, values, and preferences, which, in turn, influence an individual's work experience and internal feelings, such as adaptability, career resources, engagement, and the intention to stay with or leave an organization [14]. Besides addressing materialistic needs, organizations should also focus on psychological and career adaptability resources concerning workplace engagement across various generational groups. Interventions designed by organizations must be tailored to the workforce's career needs, preferences, motivations, and aspirations to aid in employee retention and development [15].

Career preferences, as defined by Coetzee et al., encompass actions related to career activities guiding long-term career growth and direction, distinct from career values, which represent the cognitive expression of ideas, needs, and philosophies considered necessary by individuals. In essence, the two are interrelated [16]. Individual career preferences are influenced by one's intrinsic values, requiring understanding value concepts to comprehend the concept of preferences better. Career preferences consist of four elements: specialization or expertise, managerial roles, creativity or variation, and autonomy or self-direction [16].

Z Generation and Millennials were born during rapid information, technological, and scientific growth. As they transition into the industrial world and become the dominant workforce, it is essential to treat them differently from

previous generations [17]. Aside from influencing the formation of unique characteristics, the environmental conditions experienced by Z Generation and Millennials as they grew up ultimately affect their views on careers and career expectations.

According to Nguyen et al. [11], career expectations encompass everything a person anticipates and hopes for in their job. Macky et al. [18] state that career expectations are a person's beliefs about a particular job and how the organization or employer should treat its employees. Ludviga [19] divides career expectations into two types: explicit expectations, typically mentioned in employment contracts, and implicit expectations, referred to as psychological contracts. Psychological contracts are not formally written but still need to be understood and addressed by organizations through strategies for managing young employees. Amankwah et al. [20] define intrinsic components as how individuals perceive and experience the job, such as helpful work to society, employee autonomy, work-life balance, and assumptions about work. Extrinsic components emphasize how individuals obtain material and social benefits from their jobs, such as job security, income, and promotion prospects.

Younger generations have a different perspective on work. The concept of a lifelong job needs to be updated for Millennials and Z Generation in the workforce [21]. Regarding communication style, the Millennial and Z Generation are known for their preference for non-formal Communication compared to previous generations that prioritised formal Communication. They favour equal Communication with senior management to expedite message delivery [6]. Younger employees have various career outlooks, including opportunities to prepare for long-term Success in the company based on knowledge. They expect organizations as employers to provide opportunities for knowledge acquisition and specialization in current and future fields, often referred to as internal learning opportunities [22]-[23]. Millennials desire organizational leaders who can enhance their professional development. They hope for a cooperative and positive working atmosphere among employees, fostering strong motivation in the workplace [24].

According to Nguyen et al. [11], Z Generation and Millennials have their employment expectations. They value work-life balance, input from their supervisors, and the use of technology for productivity, flexible work, and facilitating human relationships. In terms of work, a study by Sagita et al. [25] states that young job seekers are also interested in tangible benefits from organizations. They seek clear targets, a positive attitude, clear instructions from workplace leadership, workplace training, meaningful work, performance feedback, personal relationships, and learning and development [26]. Regarding salary offers, studies show that younger workers are interested in organizations that offer more than just good salaries. They express that they want competitive and role-appropriate wages. Other incentives that support long-term potential, such as health insurance, will enhance work productivity.

## **Career Success of Millennial and Z Generation**

Adhiatma et al. [27] define career success as a combination of achieving a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic expectations in line with what an individual does, leading to enjoyment, happiness, and satisfaction in both life and the chosen career. Extrinsic outcomes of career success are called objective Success and encompass observable results such as salary, promotions, and bonuses. In contrast, the intrinsic outcomes of career success are termed subjective Success and include unobservable results like a sense of security, comfort, and the accomplishment of personal and organizational goals. Zacher [15] defines career success as a collection of achievements from work experiences.

To achieve career success, there needs to be alignment and shared responsibility between the individual and the organization. Individuals should commit to creating more diligent performance, which is complemented by organizational support for the development of its members, as represented by the perception of employee development experienced by those working in the organization [28]. Each individual has goals they strive to achieve on their path to career success. Individuals who feel successful within themselves will influence how they work and stay committed to helping achieve the organization's goals. Therefore, every organization must consider the achievement of career success for its members.

Millennial and Z Generation workers are more optimistic, creative, open-minded, highly mobile, multitasking, adaptable, informal, and fond of entertainment [10]-[29]. The characteristics of this new workforce have been extensively surveyed and researched, leading to the conclusion that young workers no longer focus on commitment to the organization but on achieving career success. They can quickly leave one organization for another that understands their interests and helps them attain career success [27]. From an organizational standpoint, policies should be formulated to achieve extrinsic and intrinsic career success. Young workers appreciate psychological well-being, such as feeling valued and placed on an equal footing with their peers, even superiors. They value mentorship from their superiors, which can help them enhance their skills to complete tasks, leading to increased self-confidence and career satisfaction [20]. According to Wang et al. [30], organizations need to prioritize transparency regarding clear and beneficial objectives. An individual's alignment with their organization should start from recruiting

candidates, with transparency related to compensation and benefits, development programs, and clarity on career paths being essential for the younger workforce in achieving career success.

## Research Method

### Data and Data Collection Methods

The research was conducted on students from two universities in Semarang. From these two universities, students from the faculties of Economics, Engineering, and Medicine were selected as the criteria. The chosen students were also the top candidates with indicators of a GPA of  $\geq 3.30$  for the Engineering and Medicine faculties and  $\geq 3.50$  for the Faculty of Economics. The data collected for this research amounted to 139 respondents per the predefined criteria. These final-year students should clearly understand career planning after graduating, including considerations when choosing a career and the criteria they perceive as indicators of career success.

Data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part presented questions to the respondents regarding what considerations millennials and the Z-Generation consider when choosing future careers. In this first part, the researcher provided sixteen criteria for what millennials and the Z-generation consider and desire from organizations as employers. These sixteen criteria were compiled based on the analysis of previous research. The researcher also included open-ended questions to allow respondents to mention any criteria not covered in the first part but deemed necessary in choosing future careers.

The second part presented questions about the priority level of each criterion asked in the first part, serving as indicators of career success, using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1, indicating the least priority, to 4, signifying very high priority. After both parts of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, rankings would be conducted to determine whether there was a gap between what millennials and Z Generation consider when selecting future careers and the priority of career expectations, which serves as a measure of their career success. The list of questions developed in the two sections of the questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Measurements

Question	Factors	References
1. What factors do you consider and expect from a company when choosing a job?	1. Salary and benefits	[6], [7], [11], [21], [30]
2. Once you have chosen a job, provide an assessment of what constitutes the criteria for your career success.	2. Flexible working hours	
	3. Promotion	
	4. Job benefits to the environment and social	
	5. The environmental and social reputation of the company	
	6. Progressive job training	
	7. Office location	
	8. Company stability	
	9. Full-time employment contract	
	10. Good work rewards	
	11. Cooperation and Communication among employees	
	12. Work-life balance	
	13. Vacation and leave opportunity	
	14. Variety and creativity at work	
	15. Company leaders or mentor	
	16. Company culture	

## Result and Discussion

### Result

This research successfully obtained 139 respondents who met the target criteria. The respondents collected for this study are students from Sultan Agung Islamic University (n=96) and Diponegoro University (n=43), hailing from the faculties of Engineering (n=29), Medicine (n=24), and Economics (n=86). They are students who have completed semester 6 (n=69), semester 8 (n=62), and semester 10 (n=8), with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of  $\geq 3.50$  for students in the Faculty of Economics (n=87) and  $\geq 3.30$  for students in the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering (n=52).

The first-stage questionnaire aims to identify the considerations of prospective workers currently pursuing higher education institutions regarding their career expectations in the future. Table 2 compares the findings based on the responses from the first questionnaire (criteria for career choices) and the second questionnaire (determinants of career success). These responses are from both the first and second-stage respondents.

TABLE 2. Comparative Analysis

Career Consideration Factors		Determinants of Career Success	
Factor	Frequency	Factor	Average
Salary and Benefits	115	Work-life balance	3,85
Good work rewards	108	The environmental and social reputation of the company	3,80
Promotion	106	Variety and creativity at work	3,79
Company culture	98	Progressive job training	3,78
Environmental and social benefits of work	94	Environmental and social benefits of work	3,77
Work-life balance	92	Salary and Benefits	3,76
The environmental and social reputation of the company	75	Cooperation and Communication among employees	3,73
Progressive job training	73	Promotion	3,69
Company stability	68	Good work rewards	3,69
Flexible working hours	64	Company culture	3,65
Cooperation and Communication among employees	62	Company leaders or mentors	3,60
Company leaders or mentors	54	Vacation and leave opportunities	3,60
Full-time employment contract	50	Flexible working hours	3,55
Variety and creativity at work	50	Company stability	3,33
Vacation and leave opportunities	43	Full-time employment contract	3,14
Office Location	32	Office Location	3,05

Table 2 compares the factors considered when choosing a career and the determinants of career success perceived by respondents. There are differences in the responses from the first and second parts of the questionnaire. In the first-stage questionnaire regarding the criteria they consider when choosing a job in the future, the criteria with the highest frequency are dominated by extrinsic factors such as salary, performance recognition, company culture, and promotions. However, when it comes to the criteria that indicate career success, intrinsic factors are found, including work-life balance, the company's reputation in terms of environmental and social impact, variety and creativity in work, and several other points.

Overall, this comparison shows a gap between the considerations when choosing a career and the understanding of career success among millennial and Z Generation workers currently in higher education institutions. This gap is reflected in the differing criteria considered when choosing a career; prospective workers tend to prioritize extrinsic criteria. Still, when evaluating the criteria indicating career success, they favour intrinsic criteria. Based on the analysis of the findings in this research, there needs to be more consistency in the understanding of careers among prospective workers currently in higher education institutions. Therefore, a systematic and structured strategy involving prospective workers, universities, and the organizations that will hire them to align with the organization's goals is

needed. The strategy developed in this research is expected to positively impact the potential development of prospective workers and make it easier for organizations to recruit workers who meet their expectations.

## Discussion

Based on the differences in factors considered when choosing a career and determinants of career success, it can be concluded that Generation Z and millennials have career success expectations that balance subjective or intrinsic factors and objective or extrinsic factors. Specifically, each individual must achieve career success, which refers to the level of individual satisfaction related to everything relevant to their career. Supporting and understanding the factors determining individual Success in achieving career success will help organizations retain motivated and competent individuals [31]. The balanced fulfilment of individual needs between extrinsic and intrinsic elements allows individuals to achieve career success [32]. Career success, represented by job satisfaction, is essential for the individual and influences organizational Success due to their contributions to achieving organizational goals. Individuals who achieve career success will enhance their confidence and feel happier, leading to more tremendous objective Success. Extrinsic career success, or objective perception, is related to observable achievements such as salary, promotions, and status. In contrast, intrinsic career success, or subjective perception, represents individual achievements in less visible aspects such as job satisfaction, flexibility, and company culture [33]. The findings in this research align with Aydogmus's study [34], emphasizing the importance of considering both objective and subjective career success achievements for the modern workforce, such as millennials and Generation Z, assisting them in planning appropriate career growth strategies.

This study proposes recommendations to stakeholders involved in preparing the careers of millennials and Gen Z to shape the future workforce in choosing and achieving career success. The research findings recommend three key stakeholders: the workforce, universities, and companies. First, for individuals to understand their future careers, everyone needs to comprehend themselves about their careers, starting from personality, mentality, morality, and spirituality. Second, individuals need an open mindset and a commitment to continuous learning and self-development. According to Emre [33], commitment to one's career is a strong perception of identification, persuasion, active involvement, and development in the career goals of each individual. Through strong career commitment, individuals will contribute significantly to their careers through active involvement in career planning, learning activities, and development, ultimately helping them achieve career success and acquire new knowledge and skills [35]. Furthermore, this will affect how they sustain their careers to achieve Success.

As the primary shaper of workforce career readiness, higher education institutions must provide resources to help students understand career success. First, they should collaborate with businesses and the government to create innovations and talent development opportunities. Additionally, government regulations allowing students to learn off-campus, such as internships or innovation projects, should be supported by universities. Second, higher education institutions must accelerate education and skill development by balancing fundamental learning, such as soft skills, and pragmatic learning, such as hard skills. Third, higher education institutions must support the growth of students in a more dynamic and innovative community. According to Ibourk [36], higher education institutions need to create policies to enhance graduates' career paths and employability skills, providing a balanced learning experience between soft skills and hard skills. The continuously changing conditions in the job market due to automation and artificial intelligence influence the demands on higher education institutions to identify the most needed skills and build individual agility for career readiness [37]. Experiences during the learning process are essential for individuals to understand career paths and provide value to compete in an increasingly competitive job market. Universities can make efforts to enhance understanding of career paths, including establishing a career centre for their students that provides job orientation, job search training, soft skills training, information on industry sectors, internship programs, and entrepreneurship development [38].

Preparing a prospective workforce requires collaboration between industry and higher education institutions. Collaboration between higher education institutions and industry can be done in various aspects of practical training tailored to globalization, technological advances, and the latest evolving knowledge. Integrating learning based on industrial developments is an effort to meet the needs of a complex and competitive global era, making higher education institutions relevant to industry and societal trends [39]. According to Inada [40], collaborative learning between industry and higher education institutions enhances student knowledge in forming ideas, problem-solving, and confidence to execute challenging projects. Therefore, collaboration in practical learning encourages joint creation, improves educational quality, and helps students build better careers. Organizations, as recruiters of the new workforce generation, must be involved in developing candidates and meeting their career expectations. They can expedite inclusive development programs for students, collaborate on projects with universities, open internship programs, recruit students to identify the best talents while they are still in college, and create member management

policies to meet extrinsic and intrinsic career expectations. This will help modern workforces understand and meet their career success expectations.

Therefore, Figure 1 presents a framework illustrating the determinants forming the career balance for millennials and the z generation.

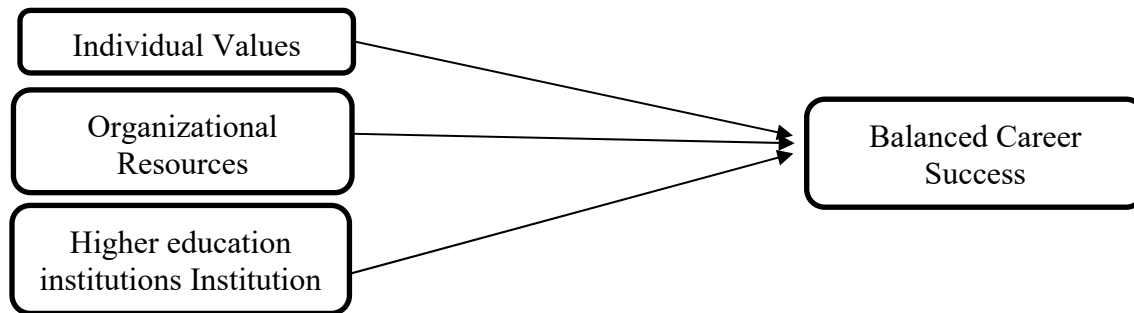


FIGURE 1. Framework for Shaping Career Success

## Conclusion and Future Research

The conclusion of this study reveals the career expectations and criteria held by millennials and the Z Generation when considering their career success. Candidates from these generations, who are still in higher education institutions, exhibit distinct career aspirations and characteristics compared to previous generations. The traditional concept of a lifelong commitment to a single job is considered outdated by millennials and the Z Generation. They tend to align themselves with the organisation's values but quickly switch jobs if the organization does not fulfil their career expectations.

Based on the findings of this research, candidates from Z Generation and millennials have a limited understanding of the meaning of career success. This is evident in the difference between the criteria they consider when choosing a career and the criteria they prioritize as indicators of career success. While considering extrinsic criteria when making career choices, they prioritize intrinsic criteria when evaluating career success. Therefore, a conceptual framework involving individual values, university resources, and organizational resources would assist millennials and Z Generation in maximizing their potential and establishing a clear understanding of career success.

The future of research needs to test the influence of each variable, as in the framework in this study, starting from individual values and the role of higher education institutions and organizations. This will create a balanced understanding of the modern workforce from the millennial and z generations regarding career success, both subjective or intrinsic career success and objective or extrinsic career success. Validation testing of this framework can be done through a quantitative approach.

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