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Retention Strategies for Gen Z Employees in Private Metro Manila Construction Companies

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Abstract

Employee retention can affect project continuity in construction, while Generation Z employees entering technical roles place importance on flexibility, development, rewards, organizational purpose, stability, and support. Limited quantitative evidence has tested these factors simultaneously among Generation Z employees in private construction companies in Metro Manila. This study examined the relationships between six retention factors and retention intent and identified which factors independently predicted employees' intention to remain with their current employer. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used with 302 qualified Generation Z employees from private construction firms in Metro Manila; the final respondents were 24 to 30 years old. A researcher-developed, expert-validated questionnaire was analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Respondents strongly valued flexible work arrangements (M = 4.54), career growth as reflected in willingness to leave when growth opportunities were unavailable (M = 4.50), and work-life balance (M = 4.27). Project-based employment instability was the highest-rated retention challenge (M = 3.51). All six retention factors were significantly related to retention intent; well-being and support had the strongest observed association ($r = .623$, $p < .001$). The regression model explained 45.5% of the variance in retention intent ($R^2 = .455$). Significant predictors were well-being and support ($\beta = .556$, $p < .001$), career development ($\beta = .270$, $p = .006$), employer branding and purpose ($\beta = .219$, $p = .018$), and compensation and rewards ($\beta = .146$, $p = .021$). The findings distinguish highly valued employment preferences from factors with unique predictive effects. Private construction firms should prioritize well-being and supportive leadership, structured career development, credible organizational purpose, and fair rewards, while using role-specific flexibility and project-to-project workforce planning to support retention.

Keywords: Generation Z, employee retention, construction management, private construction companies, workplace well-being, Metro Manila

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INTRODUCTION

Employee retention is a continuing concern in construction because the loss of trained personnel affects more than staffing levels. Turnover can interrupt project coordination, weaken continuity of technical knowledge, increase recruitment and onboarding costs, reduce productivity, and place additional pressure on the employees who remain (Bilau et al., 2015; Chagadama et al., 2022). These effects are particularly important in project-based organizations, where engineers, supervisors, safety personnel, and technical staff are directly involved in schedule control, quality assurance, safety implementation, and communication among project stakeholders (Phan et al., 2023).

The growing presence of Generation Z in the workforce adds a distinct dimension to this concern. In this study, Generation Z refers to the cohort born from 1995 to 2012, although the actual respondents were working-age employees aged 21 to 30 during data collection (Twenge, 2023). Younger employees commonly value work-life balance, professional

development, meaningful work, digital tools, transparent communication, and organizational support (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Hendriana et al., 2023). When these expectations are not addressed, construction firms may experience disengagement, mobility, and difficulty developing a stable pipeline of technical personnel (Ganguli & Padhy, 2023).

These expectations may be difficult to reconcile with conventional construction practices. Many construction positions require physical presence, extended hours during critical activities, compliance with strict deadlines, and immediate response to site concerns (Phan et al., 2023). Flexibility therefore cannot be applied uniformly. Office-based technical functions may allow hybrid or flexible arrangements, whereas site engineers, safety officers, and supervisors must usually remain available at the project site. Role-based flexibility, digital coordination, and workload management may be more appropriate than uniform remote-work policies in construction settings (Hendriana et al., 2023; Maurya et al., 2021). Retention strategies should consequently respond to employee expectations without weakening project delivery, manpower availability, safety, or operational control.

The Philippine context supports the need for focused investigation. The construction sector remains a major source of employment, and Philippine evidence from Category AAAA construction companies identifies retention, workload, health, and wellness as relevant workforce concerns (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2026; Sanchez, 2023). Although international and regional studies have examined Generation Z expectations and employee retention in general or construction settings, limited empirical evidence has tested how multiple retention factors relate to the intention to stay among Generation Z employees in private construction companies in Metro Manila (Hendriana et al., 2023; Phan et al., 2023; Zulkefli et al., 2023).

Research Problem. Existing research shows that Generation Z employees commonly value flexibility, professional development, rewards, organizational reputation, job stability, and workplace support, while construction studies show that employee turnover can disrupt project continuity and workforce performance. What remains uncertain is whether these factors retain independent predictive value when considered simultaneously among Generation Z employees in private construction companies in Metro Manila. This gap matters because the retention of young technical personnel is connected not only to human resource outcomes but also to continuity of project knowledge, site coordination, safety, quality, and manpower availability.

Objectives. The study aimed to examine the influence of six retention-related factors among Generation Z employees in private construction companies in Metro Manila, namely: work-life balance and flexibility, growth and career development, compensation and benefits, employer branding and purpose, job security and stability, and well-being and support. Specifically, the study described the workplace conditions and retention challenges experienced by Generation Z employees, determined the relationships between the identified retention factors and employees' intention to remain with their current employer, and identified the factors that significantly predict retention intent. The findings served as the basis for developing evidence-based retention strategies for Generation Z employees in private Metro Manila construction companies.

Hypotheses. H1: Work-life balance and flexibility is significantly related to Generation Z employee retention; H2: growth and career development is significantly related to retention; H3: compensation and benefits is significantly related to retention; H4: employer branding and purpose is significantly related to retention; H5: job security and stability is significantly related to retention; and H6: well-being and support is significantly related to retention. Pearson correlation was used to test these relational hypotheses, while multiple regression was used to examine the unique predictive contribution of the factors when considered together.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Z employees entered the labor market in an environment shaped by constant digital connectivity, rapid technological change, and heightened awareness of mental health, social responsibility, and personal development (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Studies commonly associate this workforce cohort with expectations for continuous feedback, accessible leadership, technology-enabled work, career mobility, and an organizational culture aligned with personal values (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Hendriana et al., 2023). These preferences do not imply that traditional factors such as compensation and job security are unimportant; rather, younger employees frequently evaluate employment through a combination of financial, developmental, cultural, and well-being considerations (Macaraig et al., 2024; Silinevica & Meirule, 2019).

Employee retention is especially consequential in construction. Turnover may result in repeated recruitment, loss of project-specific knowledge, disrupted coordination, lower productivity, and additional safety and quality risks when newly hired personnel require time to adjust to company procedures and site conditions (Bilau et al., 2015; Chagadama et al., 2022). Project-based employment, demanding schedules, physically intensive work, and limited promotion structures may further increase uncertainty and dissatisfaction among younger personnel (Phan et al., 2023). Studies in construction and manufacturing settings also show that the work environment remains a relevant retention consideration, although its statistical influence may vary by context (Zulkefli et al., 2023).

Work-life balance and flexibility are consistently identified as important preferences among younger workers and may affect engagement and retention (Hendriana et al., 2023; Maurya et al., 2021). However, their implementation in construction is constrained by site presence, safety oversight, inspections, manpower requirements, and project deadlines (Phan et al., 2023). Role-based alternatives, including rotating rest days, adjusted reporting schedules, hybrid arrangements for eligible office-based functions, digital coordination tools, and workload balancing, may therefore be more feasible than broad remote-work policies (Hendriana et al., 2023; Maurya et al., 2021).

Career development is another recurring retention factor. Generation Z employees tend to expect clear progression pathways, mentorship, training, project exposure, and opportunities to strengthen technical and leadership competencies (Arar & Öneren, 2018; Silinevica & Meirule, 2019). Construction firms that do not provide visible growth opportunities may lose early-career professionals to competitors or other employment opportunities (Phan et al., 2023). Compensation and recognition also influence retention because employees evaluate whether salary, benefits, allowances, incentives, and acknowledgment correspond with workload, project pressure, and responsibility (Ganguli & Padhy, 2023; Bussin & Mouton, 2019).

Employer branding and organizational purpose affect how employees interpret the reputation, values, culture, and social contribution of their organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Younger workers may develop stronger commitment when they perceive ethical leadership, meaningful work, inclusive practices, and a credible commitment to employee development (Bussin & Mouton, 2019; Hendriana et al., 2023). Well-being and support similarly influence the reciprocal employer-employee relationship. Support from supervisors and colleagues may help employees manage workload, site pressure, and adaptation to project requirements and has been associated with stronger employee retention (Alias et al., 2019; Phan et al., 2023).

The study was guided by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Employer Branding Theory. Herzberg distinguishes hygiene factors, such as compensation and job security, from motivators, such as recognition and growth (Bhatt et al., 2022). Social Exchange Theory explains retention as a reciprocal response to fair treatment and organizational

support (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employer Branding Theory emphasizes the role of organizational reputation and employee experience in attracting and retaining talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Bussin & Mouton, 2019). Together, these perspectives support the examination of both employment conditions and motivational factors as possible influences on Generation Z retention.

Despite the breadth of literature on Generation Z and employee retention, research remains fragmented across general workforce, non-Philippine, and non-construction contexts (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Hendriana et al., 2023; Ganguli & Padhy, 2023). Construction studies have examined employee retention in Vietnam, Malaysia, Egypt, and the Philippines, but have not specifically tested the combined influence of the six factors used in the present study among Generation Z employees in private Metro Manila construction companies (Mohamed et al., 2024; Phan et al., 2023; Sanchez, 2023; Zulkefli et al., 2023). The present study addressed this gap by measuring the strength of relationships between six workplace factors and retention intent and by identifying the factors that remained significant when considered simultaneously in a regression model.

METHODS

Research Design. The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design. The descriptive component summarized respondent characteristics, workplace conditions, retention factors, and retention challenges. The correlational component examined associations between the six identified retention factors and employee retention intent, while multiple regression identified the factors that significantly predicted retention intent when analyzed together.

Population and Sample. Eligible participants were Generation Z employees aged 21 to 30 who worked in private construction companies operating in Metro Manila. Employees outside the adopted age range, personnel from government or public-sector construction agencies, respondents from non-construction industries, incomplete submissions, and duplicate responses were excluded. The population was estimated at approximately 5,000 to 10,000 employees. Using Slovin's formula with a 6% margin of error produced a minimum sample of approximately 263 to 270 respondents. The study obtained 302 valid responses.

Sampling Technique. A stratified recruitment approach was used to obtain coverage across different construction job-role groups and employer sizes. The achieved job-role distribution was grouped as follows: engineers, 217 (71.85%); project management/site supervision roles, 18 (5.96%); architects, 5 (1.66%); administrative, human resource, and accounting roles, 26 (8.61%); and construction support/field and other roles, 36 (11.92%). Recruitment also sought coverage across different private construction company sizes. Proportional allocation was not applied because a complete population frame showing the number of eligible Generation Z employees in each job-role and company-size stratum was not available. Accordingly, stratification was used as a coverage framework to broaden representation rather than as a proportionate allocation scheme.

Instrumentation. The study used a researcher-developed structured questionnaire rather than adopting a single published scale verbatim. Section A collected demographic and employment information. Section B contained 10 Likert-scale items on workplace conditions. Section C contained 14 Likert-scale items: work-life balance and flexibility (3 items), growth and career development (2), compensation and benefits (2), employer branding and purpose (2), job security and stability (2), well-being and support (2), and one retention-intent item. Section D contained 9 Likert-scale items on retention challenges, and Section E contained 5 open-ended questions on employee perspectives and recommended improvements. Item domains were informed by the study's theoretical framework and literature on work-

life balance and Generation Z retention (Hendriana et al., 2023; Maurya et al., 2021), career development (Arar & Öneren, 2018; Silinevica & Meirule, 2019), compensation and employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Bussin & Mouton, 2019), and supportive work environments in retention (Alias et al., 2019; Phan et al., 2023). Sample items included "I prefer companies with flexible work arrangements," "*I would leave a company if there are no growth opportunities*," "*I feel mentally healthy and supported at work.*" and the retention-intent item "*I see myself staying with my current company for the next 2 years.*" Three validators representing quantitative research, construction management with human resource experience, and private construction practice reviewed the instrument for clarity and relevance, after which a pilot test was conducted before full administration.

Reliability of the Instrument. The survey demonstrated good internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha was .846 for workplace conditions, .838 for retention factors, and .869 for retention challenges. All coefficients exceeded the commonly used .70 threshold, supporting the reliability of the scales for the succeeding analyses.

Table 5
Reliability of the Survey Scales

Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Interpretation
Workplace conditions	.846	Good reliability
Retention factors	.838	Good reliability
Retention challenges	.869	Good reliability

Data Gathering. The finalized questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms and printed copies. Participation requests described the study's purpose and confidentiality measures. Responses were reviewed for eligibility, completeness, consistency, and duplication, and only qualified and valid responses were retained. Open-ended responses were manually reviewed, grouped into recurring themes, and summarized descriptively to contextualize the quantitative findings; they were not treated as a separate qualitative study.

Statistical Analysis. Frequency and percentage were used to summarize demographic and employment characteristics. Weighted means described workplace conditions, retention factors, and retention challenges. Cronbach's alpha assessed the internal consistency of the survey scales. Pearson correlation measured the strength and direction of the relationship between each retention factor and retention intent, while multiple regression identified significant independent predictors of retention intent. For descriptive interpretation of correlation magnitude, absolute r values were treated as negligible (.00–.09), weak (.10–.39), moderate (.40–.69), strong (.70–.89), and very strong (.90–1.00), used as heuristic guidelines rather than rigid cutoffs (Schober et al., 2018). Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level.

Ethical Considerations. The study received ethical approval from the Polytechnic University of the Philippines University Research Ethics Committee under UREC Code 0226-0370. The protocol underwent expedited review and was approved on July 6, 2026. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and data privacy safeguards were observed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile. A total of 302 valid responses were analyzed. Respondents were predominantly male (57.95%), single (95.70%), and holders of bachelor's degrees in engineering or architecture (80.79%). Engineers accounted for 71.85% of the sample. Most respondents were full-time employees (67.88%), while 30.46% were contractual or project-based. The profile indicates that the findings largely represent early-career technical personnel directly involved in construction execution, coordination, safety, quality, and project continuity.

Table 1
Demographic and Employment Profile of Respondents (N = 302)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	24-26 years	78	25.83
	27-28 years	126	41.72
	29-30 years	98	32.45
Gender	Male	175	57.95
	Female	127	42.05
Civil status	Single	289	95.70
	Married	13	4.30
Education	Engineering/Architecture Degree	244	80.79
	Other education	58	19.21
Employment status	Full-time	205	67.88
	Other arrangements	97	32.12

Note. *Categories were consolidated for journal presentation; complete category distributions are retained in the study records.*

The concentration of engineers and other technical personnel strengthens the construction-management relevance of the findings because these employees directly support project execution, site coordination, quality monitoring, safety implementation, and communication. This operational relevance is consistent with construction literature showing that turnover can disrupt productivity and continuity in project-based firms (Bilau et al., 2015; Chagadama et al., 2022). The substantial share of project-based personnel further provides context for the prominence of employment instability in the retention results.

Workplace Conditions. Workplace conditions received an overall mean of 3.60, interpreted as Agree. Adequate personal protective equipment and safety training received the highest rating (M = 4.30), followed by safety and compliance with site protocols (M = 4.22). Recognition and rewards received the lowest rating (M = 2.99), while structured training and development, work schedule management, and leadership communication were rated Neutral.

The strong safety ratings indicate that the participating firms generally performed well in visible, compliance-oriented workplace practices. This supports construction research emphasizing the importance of a supportive and safe work environment for retention (Alias et al., 2019; Phan et al., 2023). In contrast, recognition, structured training, leadership communication, and schedule management received lower ratings. These findings are also consistent with prior work linking development, supervisor support, recognition, and working conditions with retention. The difference between stronger safety scores and weaker developmental or communication scores may reflect the operational priority construction firms place on mandatory site controls, while longer-term employee-development practices may be less standardized across projects.

Table 2
Workplace Conditions of Generation Z Employees

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Adequate PPE and safety training	4.30	Strongly Agree
Safety and compliance with site protocols	4.22	Strongly Agree
Feel safe and supported at work	3.75	Agree
Tools and technology support efficient work	3.74	Agree
Positive and collaborative work environment	3.65	Agree
Clear career advancement opportunities	3.48	Agree
Leadership and communication satisfaction	3.33	Neutral
Schedule allows management of personal obligations	3.30	Neutral
Structured training and development	3.26	Neutral
Recognition and rewards for contributions	2.99	Neutral
Overall	3.60	Agree

Retention Factors and Challenges. Retention factors received an overall mean of 3.64, interpreted as Agree. The highest-rated preferences were flexible work arrangements (M = 4.54), willingness to leave when growth opportunities were unavailable (M = 4.50), and work-life balance (M = 4.27). Respondents were Neutral regarding their intention to remain with the current employer for the next two years (M = 3.20), satisfaction with compensation and benefits (M = 3.03), fairness of rewards (M = 3.10), and professional growth in the current company (M = 3.40).

These findings show a clear difference between what respondents highly value and what they report experiencing in their present employment. The high ratings for flexibility and work-life balance are consistent with studies describing these as important Generation Z preferences (Hendriana et al., 2023; Maurya et

al., 2021), while the emphasis on growth aligns with literature on mentoring, learning, and career progression among younger employees (Arar & Öneren, 2018; Silinevica & Meirule, 2019). However, the neutral ratings for current professional growth, compensation satisfaction, reward fairness, and two-year retention intent suggest that valued attributes are not always experienced at the same level. This value-experience gap is important because a workplace attribute can be highly preferred without necessarily emerging as the strongest independent predictor of retention when several factors are analyzed together.

Table 3
Retention Factors Affecting Generation Z Employees

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Prefer flexible work arrangements	4.54	Strongly Agree
Would leave if no growth opportunities	4.50	Strongly Agree
Value work-life balance when choosing to stay	4.27	Strongly Agree
Project stability influences decision to stay	3.87	Agree
Receive emotional/professional support from supervisors and peers	3.66	Agree
Job gives a sense of purpose	3.62	Agree
Employer branding affects loyalty	3.56	Agree
Feel secure about employment continuity	3.49	Agree
Feel mentally healthy and supported	3.46	Agree
See professional growth in current company	3.40	Neutral
Schedule balances professional and personal responsibilities	3.32	Neutral
See self-staying for next two years	3.20	Neutral
Rewards and benefits are fair	3.10	Neutral
Satisfied with compensation and benefits	3.03	Neutral
Overall	3.64	Agree

Retention challenges produced an overall mean of 3.02, interpreted as Neutral. Project-based work instability was the only item rated Agree (M = 3.51). Considering leaving in the past six months, compensation dissatisfaction, burnout, work schedule effects, limited learning opportunities, lack of motivation, and insufficient support were rated Neutral.

Project-based instability was the most prominent retention challenge, reinforcing the construction-specific importance of project duration, contract renewal, reassignment, and the availability of succeeding projects (Phan et al., 2023; Zulkefli et al., 2023). By comparison, misalignment between company and personal values received the lowest challenge rating, even though employer branding and purpose later showed a meaningful relationship with retention. This difference suggests that respondents may distinguish between direct dissatisfaction with personal-value alignment and a broader assessment of organizational reputation, purpose, and employment experience. Neutral responses on burnout, compensation, and scheduling should therefore be interpreted as areas of uncertainty or emerging concern rather than evidence that these issues are absent.

Table 4
Retention Challenges Experienced by Generation Z Employees

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Project-based work is unstable or uncertain	3.51	Agree
Considered leaving in past six months	3.27	Neutral
Dissatisfied with compensation and benefits	3.25	Neutral
Burned out due to workload or stress	3.09	Neutral
Schedule negatively affects personal life/well-being	3.05	Neutral
Limited learning opportunities	2.94	Neutral
Disconnected or unmotivated	2.87	Neutral
Unsupported by supervisor/management	2.64	Neutral
Company does not align with personal values	2.57	Disagree
Overall	3.02	Neutral
Indicator	**Mean**	**Interpretation**

Relationship Between Retention Factors, Retention Challenges, and Retention Intent. All six retention factors were significantly and positively related to retention intent. Well-being and support had the strongest observed relationship ($r = .623$, $p < .001$) and was moderate in magnitude under the guideline used in this study. Employer branding and purpose ($r = .522$, $p < .001$), compensation and rewards ($r = .486$, $p < .001$), and career development ($r = .456$, $p < .001$) also showed moderate positive relationships. Job security and project stability showed a weak positive relationship ($r = .369$, $p < .001$), while work-life balance and flexibility showed a weak

positive relationship (r = .160, p < .001). Retention challenges were moderately and negatively associated with intention to stay (r = -.511, p < .001).

Because each of the six retention factors had a statistically significant bivariate relationship with retention intent at α = .05, H1 through H6 were supported at the correlation level. The regression analysis was interpreted separately to identify which factors contributed unique predictive value when all six predictors were considered simultaneously.

Well-being and support produced the largest observed correlation and, under the adopted guideline, a moderate positive association with retention intent.

Table 6
Correlations Between Study Variables and Retention Intent

Variable	r	p	Interpretation
Work-life balance and flexibility	.160	< .001	Weak positive
Career development	.456	< .001	Moderate positive
Compensation and rewards	.486	< .001	Moderate positive
Employer branding and purpose	.522	< .001	Moderate positive
Job security and project stability	.369	< .001	Weak positive
Well-being and support	.623	< .001	Moderate positive
Retention challenges	-.511	< .001	Moderate negative

Note. *Correlation strength was interpreted using Schober et al. (2018): |r| = .00–.09 negligible, .10–.39 weak, .40–.69 moderate, .70–.89 strong, and .90–1.00 very strong. All listed correlations were statistically significant at p < .001. Values reported as .000 in the thesis are presented as p < .001.*

This pattern supports prior research connecting supportive work environments, supervisor support, and employee well-being with retention (Alias et al., 2019; Phan et al., 2023) and is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which predicts stronger commitment when employees perceive organizational support. Employer branding and purpose, compensation and rewards, and career development also showed moderate relationships, broadly supporting studies that connect credible employer identity, fair rewards, and visible development opportunities with retention (Bussin & Mouton, 2019; Hendriana et al., 2023; Arar & Öneren, 2018). The weaker bivariate relationships for work-life balance and job security indicate that these factors were relevant but less closely associated with retention intent than support, organizational identity, rewards, and development in this sample.

Predictors of Retention Intent. The regression model was statistically significant and explained 45.5% of the variance in retention intent (R^2 = .455). Well-being and support were the strongest significant predictor (β = .556, p < .001), followed by career development (β = .270, p = .006), employer branding and purpose (β = .219, p = .018), and compensation and rewards (β = .146, p = .021). Work-life balance and flexibility and job security and project stability were not significant when the predictors were considered together.

Table 7
Multiple Regression Predictors of Retention Intent

Predictor	β	p	Decision
Work-life balance and flexibility	-.109	.270	Not significant
Career development	.270	.006	Significant
Compensation and rewards	.146	.021	Significant
Employer branding and purpose	.219	.018	Significant
Job security and project stability	.128	.107	Not significant
Well-being and support	.556	< .001	Significant

Note. R^2 = .455. β = standardized regression coefficient.

The regression results refine the descriptive and correlational findings. The most notable result concerns work-life balance and flexibility: respondents strongly valued flexible work arrangements (M = 4.54) and work-life balance (M = 4.27), yet the factor had only a weak bivariate relationship with retention intent (r = .160, p < .001) and did not independently predict retention when the other factors were included in the model (β = -.109, p = .270). This differs from broader-sector studies that position work-life balance as a more direct retention mechanism among Generation Z employees (Hendriana et al., 2023; Maurya et al., 2021). A possible

explanation is the distinction between stated preference and unique predictive effect: employees may strongly prefer flexibility, but site-based construction roles limit how uniformly it can be implemented, and part of its association with staying may share explanatory variance with well-being, supervisor support, and organizational culture. Accordingly, the nonsignificant regression coefficient should not be interpreted as evidence that work-life balance is unimportant; rather, it appears to function as a supporting condition rather than a dominant standalone predictor in this construction sample. Job security and project stability showed a similar pattern: the factor was significantly related to retention at the bivariate level ($r = .369$, $p < .001$) but was not significant in the multivariable model ($\beta = .128$, $p = .107$). In contrast, well-being and support, career development, employer branding and purpose, and compensation and rewards retained significant unique effects, supporting a priority hierarchy for retention interventions.

Open-Ended Employee Perspectives. The manual thematic review of open-ended responses identified recurring positive experiences that included flexible schedules, supportive colleagues and supervisors, healthy work environments, work-life balance, learning opportunities, salary and bonuses, professional development, collaboration, and meaningful participation in construction projects. When asked what would encourage longer tenure, respondents repeatedly mentioned higher salary or improved benefits, flexible work arrangements, better management practices, career advancement, training and seminars, employee recognition, permanent employment status, additional leave, health-maintenance benefits, and mental health support.

Recurring reasons for staying or leaving included compensation, career prospects, work-life balance, organizational culture, management approach, job security, and opportunities for overseas employment. Toxic work culture, heavy workloads, insufficient recognition, and limited professional growth were recurring reasons for considering departure. Construction-specific comments also highlighted project completion, site safety, collaboration, project progress, communication, and successful project turnover. These themes reinforce the quantitative pattern by showing that financial and non-financial factors operate together and that retention is closely connected with the day-to-day project environment.

Limitations of the study. The study was limited to Generation Z employees in private construction companies in Metro Manila; therefore, the findings may not represent construction employees in other regions, public-sector organizations, or other industries. The survey relied on self-reported perceptions and may have been affected by recall, social desirability, or response bias.

The sample was dominated by engineers and technical personnel, and some construction-related positions were represented by relatively few respondents. The cross-sectional design measured retention intent at one point in time and did not track actual employee turnover or long-term changes in workplace perceptions.

The study did not separately compare site-based and office-based employees or conduct subgroup analyses by gender, age, employment status, and job role. Socioeconomic and family-related factors, including breadwinner status, number of dependents, and family health-benefit needs, were also not directly measured.

Conclusion. This study addressed the limited construction-specific quantitative evidence on how multiple Generation Z retention factors operate simultaneously in private construction companies in Metro Manila. The regression model explained 45.5% of the variance in retention intent ($R^2 = .455$), demonstrating that the six-factor framework captured a substantial portion of respondents' intention to remain while also leaving room for other personal, organizational, and labor-market influences. Well-being and support emerged as the strongest independent predictor, followed by career development, employer branding and purpose, and compensation and rewards. A key

contribution of the study is the distinction between highly valued employment attributes and factors with unique predictive effects: work-life balance and flexibility was strongly valued and significantly related to retention, but it did not independently predict retention when the other factors were considered. Project-based employment instability was also the most prominent construction-specific challenge.

These findings move beyond a general list of Generation Z preferences by offering a construction-specific priority model that links employee support, development, rewards, organizational identity, realistic flexibility, and workforce continuity with retention intent and project operations.

Recommendations. Based on the identified workplace conditions, retention challenges, and significant predictors of retention intent, the following recommendations are proposed to assist construction firms in strengthening employee retention and developing a more stable and committed Generation Z workforce.

Human resource practices. Private construction firms should establish structured career pathways, role-specific technical training, mentoring, individual development plans, employee feedback mechanisms, and accessible well-being support. Employer branding should also be strengthened internally by communicating company values, project impact, career opportunities, and the employee value proposition.

Leadership development. Supervisors and project leaders should receive development in coaching, communication, recognition, workload monitoring, conflict management, and regular employee check-ins. Leadership practices should make support visible at both project-site and office levels, particularly during high-pressure project periods.

Compensation strategies. Companies should periodically review base pay, project allowances, overtime practices, incentives, health benefits, and recognition systems against workload, responsibility, market conditions, and project contributions. Reward criteria should be transparent so employees can understand how performance and project demands are recognized.

Workforce planning. Project-based employment uncertainty should be reduced through earlier communication of project duration, contract renewal conditions, reassignment opportunities, and project-to-project deployment plans. Flexibility should be role-specific: rotating rest days, adjusted reporting schedules, workload balancing, and hybrid arrangements may be considered where operationally feasible without weakening site coverage, or project continuity.

Future research directions. Future studies should use longitudinal designs to compare retention intent with actual turnover, include construction firms outside Metro Manila, and examine public-private differences. Comparative analyses of site-based and office-based personnel, full-time and project-based employees, and different technical roles are recommended, together with qualitative interviews or focus groups on workload, supervisor behavior, family responsibilities, compensation, and project assignment.

Theoretical Implications. The findings extend Social Exchange Theory in a project-based construction context by showing that well-being and support was not merely associated with retention but was the strongest independent predictor when the competing retention factors were considered together. This suggests that perceived support may function as a central exchange mechanism in demanding construction environments, where supervisor behavior, peer relationships, workload pressure, and day-to-day organizational care are highly visible to employees.

The results also refine a simple application of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Career development, a motivational factor, retained a significant predictive effect, while compensation and rewards, commonly treated as hygiene-related conditions, also remained significant. In

contrast, job security and project stability was significant at the bivariate level but not in the multivariable model. This pattern indicates that motivational and hygiene-related influences are not equally powerful and may operate differently when Generation Z employees evaluate continued membership in project-based firms.

Employer Branding Theory is extended from attraction toward continued membership because employer branding and purpose independently predicted retention intent among existing employees. Organizational reputation and purpose therefore appear to influence not only whether Generation Z workers are attracted to a firm but also whether they envision remaining in it.

Finally, the work-life balance result refines common assumptions about Generation Z preferences. Strong stated preference did not translate into an independent regression effect once other organizational factors were considered. The finding suggests that researchers should distinguish between attributes employees value and factors that explain unique variance in retention behavior or intent, especially in occupations with substantial operational constraints.

Practical implications. The findings provide a priority framework for private construction firms. Low-cost actions, including supervisor check-ins, mentoring, employee feedback sessions, workload reviews, and internal recognition, may be implemented immediately. Moderate- and high-cost measures, such as technical training, certification support, compensation adjustments, improved health benefits, and project incentives, may be phased according to company size and financial capacity. Retention programs should remain role-specific because site-based and office-based employees experience different operational constraints.

DISCLOSURES

Author contributions. The authors contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, supervision, validation, visualization, project administration, and writing–original draft and writing–review and editing. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript and accept res4ponsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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Data availability statement. The data supporting the findings may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and confidentiality restrictions.

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