

The Role of Learning Opportunities in Job-Hopping with Outcome Expectations and Career Aspirations as Mediators in Gen-Z

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Abstract. *This study aims to analyze the influence of learning opportunities on job-hopping by positioning outcome expectations and career aspirations as mediating variables among Generation Z. Utilizing a quantitative causality approach, data was collected via questionnaires from 100 Gen-Z respondents working as permanent or non-permanent employees. Data analysis was performed using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The results indicate that learning opportunities have a significant positive effect on outcome expectations, job-hopping, and career aspirations. However, outcome expectations and career aspirations empirically have a positive and significant effect on job-hopping, so they are rejected because the direction of the prediction is opposite. Furthermore, outcome expectations and career aspirations are proven to act as partial mediators between learning opportunities and job-hopping. Theoretically, these findings prove the existence of the Employability Paradox, where the availability of learning facilities acts as a catalyst for external mobility rather than a retention tool. Managerially, these findings require companies to align competency development policies with the implementation of fast-track promotion programs and progressive post-training remuneration adjustments to prevent the exodus of Gen-Z talent.*

Keywords: *Career Aspirations; Gen-Z; Job Hopping; Learning Opportunities; Outcome Expectations.*

1. Introduction

Job-hopping is the behavior of changing jobs within a relatively short period of time, indicating an individual's tendency to not stay with one organization for long. Job-hopping is generally defined as the behavior of employees who voluntarily change jobs within a relatively short period of time. According to Ghiselli (1974), this behavior is often associated with "hobo syndrome," where individuals have an instinctive desire to continue moving without a strong logical reason. Khatri et al. (2001) define job-hopping as repeated voluntary job changes due to the desire to obtain better job satisfaction. This phenomenon is increasingly relevant when associated with Generation Z, namely the cohort born between 1997 and 2012. Data from Deloitte (2022) shows that 40% of Gen Z plan to leave their jobs within two years, while a report from JobStreet (2023) reveals that 65% of employees under 25 years old want to change jobs in less than a year. This fact confirms that job-hopping is a crucial issue that requires further research, especially in the Gen-Z group.

Several studies have identified learning opportunities as a factor influencing job-hopping. Previous research has shown that learning opportunities actually encourage employees to change jobs. Fatih & Wulandari (2023) found that extensive learning opportunities make employees feel more competent, thus encouraging them to seek new opportunities outside the organization. Furthermore, other research found that workers who acquire skills and knowledge through learning opportunities are more proactive in changing jobs (Grant & Parker, 2009). Meanwhile, some research shows that learning opportunities do not always encourage job mobility or job-hopping and can even strengthen job retention. Siew et al. (2021) found that learning opportunities had no significant effect on job-hopping, suggesting that employees with adequate learning opportunities remained with the organization. Based on the discussion by Siew et al. (2021), this retention can be triggered by several possibilities, consistent with research by Lent et al. (1994) that learning opportunities, as part of the learning experience, indirectly influence career choices (job-hopping) through self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Therefore, a mediating role is needed to understand what the job-hopping cycle looks like in Gen-Z.

Researchers have explored outcome expectations as a mediator. Several studies have shown more consistent results. Brown & Lent (2023) explain that outcome expectations, which are individual expectations regarding the outcomes of career actions such as salary, self-development, and job satisfaction, can influence job-hopping intentions. Pham et al. (2019) also found that high outcome expectations encourage individuals to seek new jobs when these expectations are not met. Thus, outcome expectations can be positioned as a mediating variable explaining the relationship between learning opportunities and job-hopping. An individual's ability-mastery motivational orientation, which emphasizes the desire to learn and achieve proficiency, mediates the effect of job characteristics on employee mobility intentions (Hera et al., 2022). Employees who perceive their workplace as providing strong learning opportunities are more likely to have positive outcome expectations, which can lead them to remain in their current role to capitalize on these opportunities or to change jobs for better learning prospects elsewhere.

Another mediating factor highlighted in this study is career aspirations. Career aspirations are generally considered long-term individual decisions focused on career goals, evolving over time and influenced by varying individual circumstances and socio-environmental factors (Barhate et al., 2022). Career aspirations also represent an individual's goals and ambitions for their future professional path, which can significantly influence their behavior in the labor market. Research by El Baroudi et al. (2018) demonstrates that career aspirations can strengthen organizational capabilities and connectivity. This demonstrates that employees consciously desire to contribute to increasing the capacity of an organization. If employees are involved in an organizational cycle, their motivation to do job-hopping will decrease, especially advancement motives (Lake et al., 2017). When career aspirations are heard by a company or organization, individuals or workers often consider outcome expectations such as job expectations, salary/bonus expectations, and career advancement opportunities (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2008) in (Barhate et al., 2022).

2. Research Methods

This quantitative study uses a causal approach to examine how independent variables influence dependent variables through mediating variables. In this case, the researchers sought to determine how learning opportunities influence the tendency to job-hop among Generation Z, with outcome expectations as the mediating variable. This method is based on the belief that there is a measurable cause-and-effect relationship between the variables studied.

A quantitative approach allows researchers to systematically analyze the relationships between variables using statistical tools, which in this study will be developed in the form of a mediation model. This model is adopted from the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) framework, which has proven its relevance in explaining career decision-making processes

and shaping work behavior through cognitive mechanisms such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and career goals.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Direct Influence

1) The Influence of Learning Opportunities on Outcome Expectation

This research demonstrates that providing learning opportunities has a direct, positive impact on employee outcome expectations. In the context of Generation Z, adequate learning facilities in the workplace are a significant driver of their rising expectations. The more opportunities organizations provide for competency development, the greater the confidence young employees have in their bright future compensation. The availability of learning opportunities has now transformed into a future investment instrument that must be transparently provided by organizational management.

These empirical findings align with and perfectly confirm the assertions of previous research. Studies by Betz & Voyten (1997) and Garriott et al. (2016) previously stated that the availability of learning opportunities is directly correlated with high outcome expectations. This similarity in results strengthens the foundation of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) regarding learning experiences as a stimulus for shaping cognitive career perceptions. When young employees are consistently involved in challenging assignments, they automatically begin to calculate the projected rewards they will receive. These Gen-Z workers can consciously project that mastering new skills will certainly pave the way for promotion. This proves that the theoretical foundation established in the initial chapter is fully relevant to the psychological conditions of the modern workforce. An organization's failure to facilitate this learning process will undoubtedly undermine employees' positive expectations of their workplace immediately.

2) The Influence of Outcome Expectation on Job-Hopping

Logically, an employee who already has outcome expectations that meet their individual or worker expectations should be more likely to stay and feel comfortable and loyal to the company. They no longer need to rethink their daily needs because their obligations are met by the company's payments. In fact, real data facts explain the phenomenon that the higher the employee's outcome expectations, the higher their urge to job-hop. This is a psychological paradox that is specifically and inherently tied to the pragmatic characteristics of the Generation Z workforce. Their high expectations for financial rewards and career recognition actually act as the main fuel that triggers external mobility.

These positive research findings are inconsistent with and contradict previous literature. Previous research by Ali & Menke (2014) found that low outcome expectations can cause individuals to withdraw or seek alternative employment, even if they are competent. Garriott et al. (2013) explained that these expectations are formed through observational learning and direct experience in educational or training environments. Navarro et al. (2007) added that perceptions of the job market significantly influence the realism of an individual's outcome expectations. Therefore, outcome expectations act as a cognitive filter that determines whether an individual will stay or move on.

Meanwhile, positive outcome expectations, such as higher income, prestige, skill development, and broader career opportunities, strongly predict consideration of moving outside the organization. Studies applying to accounting careers show that outcome expectations (e.g., high income, social prestige) motivate students and professionals to consider moving into career paths such as auditing, reflecting the motivational appeal of more favorable external outcome expectations (Tetteh et al., 2021). This striking difference occurs because Generation Z has a significantly lower level of patience than previous generations of workers. If their organization is perceived as moving slowly in realizing promises of promotion, Gen Z will quickly re-evaluate their loyalty. These high welfare expectations have always been used as a minimum standard of a business institution's worthiness. When a gap between high expectations and the reality of stagnant appreciation tends to be ignored, they will unhesitatingly seek a new organization. This modern phenomenon validly proves that outcome expectations are no longer a retention tool, but rather a catalyst for job turnover.

3) The Influence of Learning Opportunities on Job-Hopping

These findings underscore a stark reality for corporations that have historically focused only a portion of their resources on training programs. Companies hope that by improving the skills of their employees, they can help the organization grow more rapidly. The extensive learning opportunities provided by companies have directly and significantly contributed to triggering young workers' intentions to leave. The more skilled and knowledgeable an employee is, thanks to the office's facilities, the more likely they are to seek employment elsewhere, even with competitors.

This empirical fact is highly consistent with and closely matches previous research. These findings confirm Fatih & Wulandari's (2023) assertion that employees who feel competent tend to proactively seek alternative opportunities outside the organization. The academic logic behind this similarity is firmly rooted in the concept of increasing individual market value in the labor market. As young employees continue to be exposed to various advanced learning programs, their intellectual capital accumulates dramatically. This accumulation of robust work competencies immediately generates overconfidence in their high labor market value. Employees who already feel intelligent will scan the external job market for the highest bidder

for these new skills. Without a compensatory retention strategy, corporate training program investments will simply transform into a platform for job hoppers.

4) The influence of Learning Opportunities on Career Aspirations

Employees who are consistently well-equipped to explore knowledge will automatically aspire to occupy top management positions. Structured learning not only hones technical skills but also transforms workers' mindsets into potential leaders. This remarkable achievement demonstrates that career ambition isn't simply innate talent, but rather an instinct nurtured by company resources. Companies will also consider that filling certain positions requires strong qualifications. The role of these learning opportunities is crucial to ensure that employees' career paths align with the company's needs.

This phenomenon is confirmed and aligned with previous literature. As Gray & O'Brien (2007) noted, progressive learning experiences consistently lead to significantly higher career aspirations. A rational explanation for this causal relationship lies in the mechanism of self-confidence generated through highly challenging assignments from superiors. When a staff member is involved in a new strategic project, their work capabilities are significantly expanded. Successful experiences in navigating work obstacles can increase their cognitive confidence that they are worthy of taking on massive responsibilities. Generation Z workers view a range of self-development opportunities as a signal that the company values their future leadership potential.

5) The Influence of Career Aspirations on Job-Hopping

An employee's managerial career ambitions can foster a more persistent attitude due to their focus on achieving their predetermined career plans. Employees will implement and create detailed plans to achieve their desired careers. However, empirical findings confirm the reality that the more ambitious a Generation Z worker is, the greater their likelihood of job turnover. This burning managerial ambition apparently does not make them willing to stay long-term with the same company entity. This rejection of predictions demonstrates that the psychological reality of Generation Z is completely different from past literature. Previous research suggests that organizations need to recognize how aligning career development programs with employee aspirations can reduce job turnover (Yusuf et al., 2021; Sugiantari & Rahyuda, 2025).

This anomaly can be perfectly explained by the shift in career orientation from the conventional linear model to the protean or boundaryless career concept widely embraced by the younger workforce. As emphasized by Vieira et al. (2024) and Crowley-Henry et al. (2018), Generation Z prioritizes career development based on a portfolio of cross-border experiences over simply climbing a rigid hierarchical ladder within a single organization. Therefore, their high managerial aspirations foster their mental readiness to actively explore

external options to accelerate their careers. Moving to a competing business entity is no longer viewed as a form of disloyalty, but rather as a purely boundaryless mobility strategy to fulfill their professional aspirations. This empirical reality serves as a stark warning to executives that ambitious talent is a highly vulnerable asset if companies fail to align internal career paths with their protean expectations.

3.2. Indirect Influence (Mediating Role)

1) The Mediating Role of Outcome Expectation (Z1) between Learning Opportunities (X1) and Job-Hopping (Y1)

In the mediation test results, the outcome expectation variable can be referred to as a partial mediator. Partial mediation itself means that this variable can mediate both learning opportunities and job-hopping variables, but not completely. The mediation test in this study shows a difference in the direction of influence when compared to traditional human resource literature. Several previous studies have stated that positive outcome expectations from a learning program will be able to reduce job-hopping intentions (Hutami & Ramaditya, 2025; Nikolova et al., 2019; Proost et al., 2010). However, the findings of this research indicate the existence of an employability paradox phenomenon in the specific characteristics of the Generation Z workforce. The availability of adequate learning does provide positive resources for companies, but it also increases welfare expectations and perceptions of workers' external marketability (Powell et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2025). They ultimately use these new competencies as capital to seek external opportunities that are deemed more capable of meeting their new expectations. Therefore, learning investments by companies need to be accompanied by compensation adjustments and an adaptive organizational climate to maintain employee retention rates (Anute et al., 2024; Khamar & Kanchan, 2025).

2) The Mediating Role of Career Aspirations (Z2) between Learning Opportunities (X1) and Job-Hopping (Y1)

The role of career aspirations in this study can be considered a partial mediator. This model design has proven successful in describing the mental metamorphosis of employees from mere learners to highly aggressive career pursuers. The mediation pathway demonstrates that competency development programs effectively serve as a catalyst for employee managerial ambition, which, if not recognized, can lead to job-hopping to competing companies.

This partial mediation role aligns closely with recent research findings examining cross-sectional career orientations among Generation Z workers. As explained by Vieira et al. (2024) and Crowley-Henry et al. (2018), relevant learning facilities consistently foster protean career aspirations in the minds of young employees. When knowledge accumulation and competency enhancement fail to be accommodated by a company's rapid internal promotion

pathways, these high career aspirations automatically mutate into job-hopping intentions. This fact is reinforced by Hu et al. (2020) and Zupan et al. (2018), who assert that internal learning directly enhances workers' perceived external marketability. Therefore, training investments without a dynamic internal position mobility design actually promote workforce migration to competitors seeking competent workers.

4. Conclusion

This research began with the phenomenon of high employee turnover (job-hopping) among the Generation Z workforce. This raises new concerns for companies about how to retain employees so they don't easily change jobs. For companies, this creates anxiety due to the high costs of selecting potential employees. A research gap was then discovered, with some stating that learning opportunities have a positive effect, while others state that they have a negative effect on job-hopping. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the latter should be examined using the mediating role of outcome expectations and career aspirations.

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