



Talent Management dan Servant Leadership as Retention Strategies for Generation Z Employees in The Creative Industry : A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRAK

This study aims to conduct a systematic literature review on the functions of talent management and service-oriented leadership as strategies for retaining Generation Z employees in the creative sector. The significant turnover rate of Generation Z workers, reaching 65% within their first two years of employment, poses a significant challenge to the sustainability of the creative industry. The method applied is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), which was conducted by analyzing 45 articles from the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases published between 2015 and 2024. The article selection procedure followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al. 2021). The results of the analysis show that: (1) talent management, which includes aspects of talent identification, development, placement, and retention, has always been shown to have a positive relationship with employee retention; (2) servant leadership plays an important role in increasing satisfaction, commitment, and retention intentions of young employees; (3) employee engagement serves as the main mediating mechanism; and (4) organizational culture, especially adhocracy and clan types, influences the effectiveness of retention strategies. This article offers a comprehensive conceptual model and presents future research plans and managerial impacts for creative industry players in Indonesia.

Keywords: *talent management; servant leadership; employee retention; Generation Z; creative industries; systematic literature review*

INTRODUCTION

The creative industry is increasingly becoming a key element of the economy, both globally and nationally. In Indonesia, the creative economy sector plays a significant role in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with an average annual growth rate of approximately 6.3% (Fahmi et al., 2017). This sector encompasses various subsectors such as advertising, architecture, design, film and animation, game development, music, fashion, and publishing. However, the main challenges facing the creative industry today are not related to financial resources or technological advancements, but rather to human

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resources—particularly the ability of organizations to retain the most talented employees and prevent them from leaving for other companies.

The issue of employee retention has become increasingly complex with the arrival of Generation Z in the workforce. Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is gradually taking over the labor market and is expected to comprise approximately 30% of the global workforce by 2025 (Schroth, 2019). The current generation has very different characteristics compared to previous generations. Having grown up in a digital world, they tend to have high expectations for career development, value disappointment and freedom, and prioritize honest, transparent, and empowering leadership (Goh and Lee, 2018). Various surveys indicate that the employee turnover rate among Generation Z is quite high, with approximately 65% of them leaving their first job within less than two years (Schroth, 2019). This percentage is significantly higher than that of Millennials (33%) and Generation X (25%) during the same time period.

The high turnover rate among Generation Z employees poses a significant challenge for the creative sector. From a financial perspective, hiring a new employee can cost between 50% and 200% of the employee's annual salary, depending on their skills and position (Hom et al., 2017). Practically speaking, the loss of a complex employee can disrupt the continuity of creative projects, reduce service quality, and increase organizational competitiveness. In the context of knowledge management, employee turnover often results in the loss of tacit knowledge and professional networks built over time, both of which are difficult to quickly replace.

In this context, two strategic approaches to human resource management are crucial to explain: talent management and servant leadership. Talent management encompasses the identification, development, placement, and retention of talented individuals within an organization (Collings et al., 2019). Conversely, servant leadership is a leadership style that focuses on serving employees, empowering them, and supporting their personal growth (Eva et al., 2019). These approaches are considered aligned with Generation Z's values and expectations for a desirable work environment.

While research on talent management and servant leadership continues to grow, most studies still examine these two concepts separately. Research that combines both variables within a comprehensive framework to explain why Generation Z employees remain in the creative sector is still limited. Previous research has often focused on a single variable, using samples from older generations, or examining different industry contexts such as manufacturing, banking, and healthcare (Eva et al., 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Consequently, a systematic and comprehensive literature review is needed to map the current body of research, identify gaps in the existing research, and develop an integrative conceptual model.

With this background in mind, this article aims to: (1) review and map existing research on talent management and servant leadership in relation to employee retention; (2) analyze how these variables influence the retention of Generation Z employees; (3) consider the role of employee engagement as a mediating factor and organizational culture as a moderating variable; and (4) propose an integrative context model along with suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This literature review is grounded in two primary theoretical perspectives: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Resource-Based View (RBV). Cropanzano et al. (2017), in their in-depth analysis of Social Exchange Theory, emphasize that SET remains one of the most frequently used frameworks to explain the reciprocal relationship between employees and organizations. The core tenets of SET indicate that when organizations make significant investments in their employees through talent development programs, supportive leadership, and empowering work environments employees generally respond by demonstrating loyalty, commitment, and improved performance. Therefore, SET provides a suitable foundation for understanding how sound talent management and leadership practices can improve employee retention rates through positive social interactions.

Meanwhile, the Resource-Based Perspective (RBV), reanalyzed by Delery and Roumpi (2017) in the context of strategic human resource management, emphasizes that sustainable competitive advantage is derived from resources that meet the VRIO criteria: valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and well-structured. In the creative sector, Generation Z workers who possess strong digital skills, creativity, and the ability to adapt to the latest technology are critical assets that meet these standards. Therefore, an organization's ability to effectively manage and retain this talent through a robust talent management system and appropriate leadership practices is crucial for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage.

Talent Management: Concept, Dimensions, and Development

Over the past twenty years, talent management has become a major theme in human resource management literature. Collings et al. (2019) define talent management as a set of activities and processes that systematically identify key positions, develop a pool of high-performing and high-potential employees, and establish a differentiated human resource structure to ensure that key positions are filled by individuals with the appropriate competencies. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020) also state that the success of talent management practices is highly dependent on organizational conditions, indicating that no single approach can be applied universally to all situations.

The field of talent management has also undergone rapid development over time. According to summaries of recent literature (Collings et al., 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020; Meyers et al., 2020), four key elements are typically addressed. The first is talent identification, which refers to the process of identifying individuals with high ability and performance. Second is talent development, which includes investing in planned learning opportunities, training, mentoring, and career development programs. Third is talent placement, which emphasizes assigning talented individuals to appropriate positions or projects where their contributions can be maximized. Finally, talent retention requires measures such as competitive salaries, rewards, and creating a conducive work environment.

Specifically, for Generation Z, recent research indicates that talent development and retention are the most influential factors in their decision to remain with an organization (Panday and Kaur, 2023). Generation Z members typically expect rapid career

advancement, continuous feedback, and opportunities to participate in significant and challenging projects. Research by Chillakuri (2020) revealed that the lack of a clear career development path is one of the main factors causing Generation Z employees to leave an organization within their first year.

Servant Leadership: Concept and Relevance to Generation Z

Eva and colleagues (2019), in one of the most in-depth systematic reviews of 285 studies on servant leadership, describe it as an other-focused leadership philosophy characterized by prioritizing the needs of followers, demonstrating concern for the community and broader stakeholders, and emphasizing service-oriented leadership. In practice, the literature outlines seven key dimensions of servant leadership: emotional healing, creating community benefits, conceptual competence, empowerment, supporting subordinate development and success, prioritizing subordinate needs, and acting ethically.

The review by Eva and colleagues (2019) states that this type of leadership consistently produces positive outcomes at the individual, team, and organizational levels. At the individual level, servant leadership has been shown to increase job satisfaction, strengthen commitment to the organization, enhance organizational citizenship behavior, and reduce employee turnover intentions. Lemoine and colleagues (2019) also explain that from a moral leadership perspective, servant leadership is distinct because it clearly positions follower well-being as the primary goal, rather than merely a means to achieving organizational performance.

Servant leadership is closely associated with Generation Z for several significant reasons. First, this generation tends to reject rigid hierarchical and authoritarian leadership, preferring leaders who act as coaches and mentors (Goh and Lee, 2018). Second, the empowerment aspect aligns well with Generation Z's desire for freedom and autonomy in their work. Third, the ethical behavior dimension is highly relevant to Generation Z, who are known for their concern for social issues, environmental sustainability, and ethical business practices (Schroth, 2019).

Employee Engagement as a Mediating Mechanism

Bakker and Albrecht (2018) explain that employee engagement is a positive psychological state characterized by vigor (high levels of energy and endurance), dedication (feelings of importance and enthusiasm), and absorption (deep concentration and participation in work). This idea has become a key factor in contemporary human resource management studies. Several meta-analyses have shown that employee engagement is a crucial indicator of employee retention (Bailey et al., 2017; Saks, 2019).

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employee engagement serves as a bridge linking organizational practices such as talent management and servant leadership with employees' choice to remain with the organization. Saks (2019), in his updated engagement model, explains that engagement consists of two mutually reinforcing dimensions: job involvement and organizational involvement, both of which contribute to employee retention in different ways. In the context of Generation Z, various studies indicate that their engagement levels are typically lower than those of other generations, suggesting the need for more focused and strategic initiatives to increase this engagement (Knight et al., 2017).

Organizational Culture as a Contextual Variable

Organizational culture is a crucial contextual element that can enhance or diminish the effectiveness of employee retention strategies. Hartnell and colleagues (2019), through their meta-analysis using the Competing Values Framework, identified four types of organizational culture. These include clan culture, which emphasizes cooperation, participation, and strong interpersonal relationships; adhocracy culture, which focuses on innovation, creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking; market culture, which prioritizes competition and goal achievement; and hierarchical culture, which emphasizes stability, formal arrangements, and oversight.

In the creative sector, organizations that implement adhocracy and clan-focused cultures are typically more successful in retaining Generation Z employees. Adhocracy cultures encourage innovation and experimentation, which are highly valued by creative professionals, while clan cultures create a sense of belonging and social support that meet the emotional demands of Generation Z workers (Naim and Lenka, 2018). Conversely, organizations with strict hierarchical and bureaucratic cultures may struggle to retain Generation Z employees, who seek greater flexibility and freedom in their workplaces.

Generation Z Employee Retention: Challenges and Opportunities

Employee retention refers to a company's ability to retain qualified and valued employees over a period of time (Hom et al., 2017). Based on information gathered from various sources, six key factors influence Generation Z's ability to retain employees:

1. Opportunities for targeted and progressive career development.
2. A leadership style that encourages and supports employees.
3. An inclusive, creative, and collaborative work culture.
4. Competitive salaries and benefits.
5. Work-life balance and flexible work arrangements.
6. Alignment between organizational values and individual employee values (Kossivi et al., 2016; Goh and Lee, 2018; Panday and Kaur, 2023).

Many studies have shown that non-financial factors often have a greater influence on retaining Generation Z than financial incentives alone. Chillakuri (2020) revealed that Generation Z prioritizes learning opportunities, relevant feedback, and meaningful work over solely focusing on salary. This finding suggests that a holistic talent management approach, coupled with genuine servant leadership, may be more effective than retention strategies focused solely on financial incentives.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 protocol (Preferences for Reporting for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) as defined by Page et al. The text you provided only mentions "2021" and no other text can be changed. Please provide more complete text or other instructions so I can better assist you. The SLR method was chosen because it provides researchers with the opportunity to regularly collect, assess, and synthesize research evidence in a clear and reproducible manner.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using three major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The search keywords consisted of combinations of the following terms: ("talent management") AND ("servant leadership") AND ("employee retention" OR "turnover intention") AND ("Generation Z" OR "Gen Z") AND ("creative industry"). The search was limited to publications from 2015 to 2024 to ensure that all references fall within the most recent ten-year period.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Table 1. Article Selection Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. Peer-reviewed journal articles	1. Textbooks, proceedings, theses, or dissertations
2. Speak English or Indonesian	2. Editorial articles, opinions, or short reviews
3. Publication period 2015–2024	3. Publication before 2015
4. Discuss at least one of the main variables	4. Not accessible via Google Scholar
5. Available on Google Scholar	5. Methodology is unclear or unverifiable

Source: Prepared author (2025)

Article Selection Process

The article selection process followed four steps according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). In the identification phase, the initial search yielded 412 articles. After removing duplicates, a total of 287 articles remained. In the screening phase, the titles and summaries of these articles were examined, resulting in 128 articles deemed relevant. In the evaluation phase, the full texts of these 128 articles were thoroughly reviewed, ultimately narrowing the selection to 45 articles. Finally, in the inclusion phase, these 45 articles were selected for further analysis and synthesis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which consists of three main steps. First, coding was performed by assigning codes to the main findings found in each article. Next, these codes were grouped into more general themes based on conceptual similarities. Third, synthesis between themes was conducted to identify patterns, areas of agreement, differences, and gaps in existing research. Additionally, a simple bibliometric analysis was conducted to review the distribution of articles by year of publication, journal source, research method, and research context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Reviewed Articles

Of the 45 articles analyzed, the breakdown by publication year shows a clear increase in research on this topic. The period between 2015 and 2018 yielded 13 articles (28.9%), while the period from 2019 to 2024 yielded 32 articles (71.1%), indicating a growing academic interest in this area. In terms of research methodology, the majority of studies used a quantitative approach (28 articles, 62.2%), followed by a qualitative approach (10 articles, 22.2%), and research combining both methods (7 articles, 15.6%).

Table 2. Distribution of Articles by Key Variables

Focus Variable	Quantity	%	Sample Study
Talent management & retention	15	33,3	Collings et al. (2019); Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020)
Servant leadership & retention	12	26,7	Eva et al. (2019); Lemoine et al. (2019)
Employee engagement & retention	8	17,8	Bailey et al. (2017); Saks (2019)
Generation Z at work	6	13,3	Goh & Lee (2018); Chillakuri (2020)
Organizational culture & retention	4	8,9	Hartnell dkk. (2019); Naim & Lenka (2018)

Source: Prepared author (2025)

Finding 1: Talent Management as a Predictor of Employee Retention

Of the 15 articles that specifically examined the relationship between talent management and employee retention, all reported a significant positive relationship. Collings et al. (2019) stated that implementing efficient talent management can help create more value for employees, ultimately increasing employee commitment and reducing turnover intentions. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020) also noted that the effectiveness of talent management is strongly influenced by the organizational context, including company size, industry type, and country culture.

In the context of Generation Z, studies indicate that talent development aspects play the most significant role in determining retention rates. Panday and Kaur (2023) revealed that development efforts—including training, mentoring, job rotation, and cross-functional project assignments—substantially improved Generation Z employees' perceptions of organizational support and investment, which in turn strengthened their desire to stay with the organization. Additionally, Chillakuri (2020) emphasized that the lack of a clear career path is a major factor leading to early turnover. Meyers et al. (2020) also recommend that inclusive methods of talent management, where all employees can access development opportunities, tend to be more successful in retaining Generation Z, who place a high value on fairness and inclusivity.

Finding 2: Servant Leadership as a Driver of Retention

Of the 12 articles examining servant leadership in relation to employee retention, the majority (10 out of 12) reported a significant positive effect. Eva and colleagues (2019) stated that servant leadership was negatively related to intention to leave and positively related to organizational commitment. Specifically, aspects of empowerment and support for subordinates in developing themselves and achieving success were shown to have the most significant influence on employee retention. Lemoine and colleagues (2019) further explained that what distinguishes servant leadership from other moral

leadership approaches is its direct emphasis on placing follower well-being as the primary goal.

Regarding Generation Z, a study by Goh and Lee (2018) revealed that this generation highly respects leaders who demonstrate empathy, openness, and a willingness to listen. Two studies that presented insignificant results were conducted in the context of collectivist cultures in East Asia, suggesting that the success of servant leadership may be influenced by national cultural elements. These findings offer opportunities for further research on the moderating effects of culture.

Finding 3: Employee Engagement as a Mediating Mechanism

Eight articles explicitly investigated the mediating role of employee engagement, and all confirmed a significant mediating effect. Sorry, but you haven't provided the full text for paraphrasing. Please provide the sentence or paragraph you want changed, and I'll help you. Employee engagement acts as a mediating variable linking organizational factors to individual outcomes, including retention. Saks (2019) explains that engagement has two complementary components: job engagement and organizational engagement. Both play distinct roles in supporting retention.

In the context of talent management and employee retention, employee engagement serves as a means of transforming a company's investment in talent development into an emotional commitment to the company. Meanwhile, in the context of the relationship between servant leadership and retention, engagement serves as a positive psychological response to empowering and supportive leadership, which in turn triggers employees to respond with greater levels of loyalty and commitment (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Finding 4: The Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

Four articles examining organizational culture reported consistent findings. Naim and Lenka (2018) found that organizations characterized by a dominant adhocracy culture tend to show higher retention rates among younger employees. Hartnell et al. (2019), through their meta-analysis, confirmed that alignment between organizational culture and employee characteristics is a strong predictor of long-term satisfaction and retention. In organizations dominated by rigid hierarchy cultures, talent management initiatives and servant leadership practices may become less effective due to unsupportive work environments.

Integrative Conceptual Model

Based on a synthesis of 45 reviewed articles, this study proposes an integrated conceptual model, grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017) and the Resource-Based View (Delery and Roumpi, 2017). In this model, talent management and servant leadership are considered independent variables that directly and indirectly influence Generation Z employee retention, while employee engagement serves as a mediating variable. Organizational culture acts as a factor that can strengthen or weaken this relationship.

More specifically, this model explains four pathways of influence. First, the direct impact of talent management on employee retention through strengthening a strong employee value proposition. Second, the direct impact of servant leadership on employee retention is through meeting their psychological needs. Third, the indirect impact through employee participation as an intermediary process. Fourth, the relationship with

organizational culture, where adhocracy and clan cultures strengthen retention strategies, while hierarchical cultures tend to diminish them.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this paper provides insights into three main aspects. First, it expands the understanding of Social Exchange Theory by indicating that non-financial resources may have higher exchange value for Generation Z employees. Second, it develops the Resource-Based View by recognizing talent management and servant leadership as organizational capabilities that meet the VRIO standard for managing Generation Z talent. Third, the proposed integrative conceptual model serves to bridge the gap between research on talent management and leadership.

From a practical perspective, organizations need to design comprehensive and inclusive talent management systems. They should invest in developing servant leadership competencies among managers and build organizational cultures that support innovation and collaboration, particularly adhocracy and clan cultures. Furthermore, organizations should actively interrogate and manage employee engagement through regular monitoring and prompt follow-up actions.

CONCLUSION

A systematic literature review of 45 publications published between 2015 and 2024 yielded several key points. Talent management and service-oriented leadership have consistently proven to be two effective strategies for enhancing the retention of Generation Z employees. Talent management primarily impacts retention through talent development, which plays a role in creating a strong value proposition for employees. Meanwhile, servant leadership plays a role in meeting employees' psychological needs related to empowerment, self-development, and ethical leadership.

Employee participation plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between talent management and servant leadership and employee retention. Furthermore, organizational culture—particularly adhocracy and clan cultures—serves as a contextual element that enhances the effectiveness of these strategies.

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, although the literature search covered three major databases, it is possible that some relevant articles were not included. Second, the majority of the studies analyzed were from developed countries, so applying the results to the Indonesian context should be approached with caution. Third, this study focused on qualitative thematic analysis and did not include statistical meta-analysis. Future research plans might include: (1) empirical research testing the proposed conceptual model in Indonesia's creative sector; (2) longitudinal research to analyze the dynamic relationships between variables; (3) cross-cultural comparative studies; and (4) quantitative meta-analysis to evaluate the strength of the relationships more thoroughly.

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