

The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Turnover Intention Among Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

Background. Turnover intention among Generation Z employees presents a growing concern for modern organizations, especially in dynamic and competitive work environments. Transformational leadership has been shown to reduce turnover intention, yet the mechanisms behind this relationship remain underexplored.

Purpose. This quantitative study aimed to investigate the mediating role of organizational commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among Generation Z employees. Specifically, it examined whether organizational commitment could explain how transformational leadership impacts the desire of young employees to leave their organizations.

Method. The study involved 312 Generation Z employees from various business sectors in Indonesia. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires measuring transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and turnover intention, and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM).

Results. The findings revealed that transformational leadership has a significant negative relationship with turnover intention. Moreover, organizational commitment was found to partially mediate this relationship, indicating that transformational leadership enhances organizational commitment, which in turn reduces the likelihood of turnover intention among Generation Z employees.

Conclusion. This study underscores the importance of fostering transformational leadership and strengthening organizational commitment to retain Generation Z talent. Organizational leaders should adopt leadership practices that inspire, support, and engage young employees to build stronger affective ties with their organizations.

KEYWORDS

Turnover Intention, Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Organizational Commitment

Citation: Louw, S. A., Papilaya, J., & Rehatta, G. (2025). The Effect of Price on the Purchase Decision of Yamaha Motorcycle Parts at Ryan Motor Stores (a case study in Lateri Village, Baguala District, Ambon City). *International Journal of Research in Counseling*, 4(1), 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.70363/ijrc.v3i2.273>

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Received: June 12, 2025

Accepted: June 15, 2025

Published: June 31, 2025



INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is the first cohort to grow up in a fully digital environment, resulting in distinct characteristics compared to previous generations—both in terms of work style and expectations toward organizations (Adula, 2024; Kernot, 2022; Xie, 2023). They tend to value flexibility, have a strong desire for personal growth, and quickly become disengaged with monotonous or unchallenging work. One of the key challenges organizations face today is the high turnover intention among this generation, which

can disrupt operational stability and increase the costs associated with recruiting and training new employees. This generation exhibits a higher tendency to consider leaving their jobs compared to others. One of the main driving factors is their emphasis on work-life balance, which they often prioritize over salary or career advancement. Additionally (Arevuo, 2023; Carnegie, 2022; Narayan, 2024), they are inclined toward flexible working arrangements such as hybrid or remote setups. A workplace that does not accommodate mental health support and well-being also contributes significantly to the rising turnover intention among these employees.

Turnover intention itself is a critical indicator of organizational behavior, reflecting an employee's internal consideration or desire to leave their job (D'Errico, 2024; Tan, 2024; B. Wu, 2022). While not always resulting in actual resignation, this intention often signals dissatisfaction that can negatively affect morale, productivity, and overall organizational performance. Influential factors in turnover intention include leadership style and the level of employee engagement, particularly through organizational commitment. This is especially important for Generation Z, which tends to prefer flexible and dynamic work environments.

One leadership style that has proven effective in addressing turnover intention is transformational leadership (İpek, 2022; Pan, 2023; Schipper, 2023). This style promotes the alignment of individual goals with organizational objectives through inspiration, motivation, and personalized support. It fosters a positive climate that enhances job satisfaction and employee engagement, ultimately decreasing the desire to leave the organization (Marín-López, 2024; Usset, 2024; Yim, 2024). For Generation Z, who highly value personal growth and meaningful work, transformational leadership can create an environment where they feel appreciated and supported.

Another key factor in reducing turnover intention is organizational commitment. Generation Z employees are more likely to remain in organizations where they feel emotionally connected and psychologically attached (Chan, 2023; Liu, 2022; Syropoulos, 2024). Organizational commitment encompasses affective, continuance, and normative components, representing emotional bonds, perceived costs of leaving, and moral obligation. Transformational leadership is known to strengthen these dimensions—particularly affective commitment—by cultivating a positive and empowering work culture.

This research is important in the current workforce landscape, where Generation Z plays an increasingly dominant role. Their mobility, demand for personal development, and search for meaningful work require organizations to adapt their leadership strategies. By enhancing organizational commitment through transformational leadership, organizations can reduce turnover intention among Generation Z employees and foster greater loyalty and long-term retention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study involved 193 Generation Z employees working at PT. ABC Surabaya. The sampling technique employed was saturation sampling, as the relatively small population size allowed the inclusion of the entire workforce as respondents. This research applied a quantitative approach with an experimental design and utilized path analysis as the method for data analysis (Halewood, 2023; Liao, 2024; Pyatkin, 2023). Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of both favorable and unfavorable items, specifically designed to measure each of the research variables: turnover intention, transformational leadership, and organizational commitment. Prior to the use of the research instrument, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the measurement tools met the required standards for producing valid and consistent data.

The primary focus of this study is to analyze the influence of transformational leadership on turnover intention among Generation Z, with organizational commitment serving as a mediating

variable (Amos, 2024; Gidage, 2025; Overton, 2022). Data processing was conducted using SPSS software versions 22 and 25 for Windows, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the dynamics among these variables within the context of PT. ABC Surabaya. Before conducting path analysis, classical assumption tests were carried out to ensure that the data met the necessary conditions for further statistical analysis. These tests included assessments of normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, in order to verify that the fundamental assumptions of regression analysis were not violated.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study employed validity testing using the corrected item-total correlation method, with a commonly accepted threshold of ≥ 0.30 . The technique used to evaluate item validity was the item-total correlation coefficient, also known as the item discrimination index. Although a minimum value of 0.30 is typically considered acceptable, a slightly lower threshold such as 0.25 may be used in situations where many items do not meet the criterion and additional items are still required to meet measurement needs. Reliability testing was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha formula to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) for Windows version 22.00. In general, a Cronbach's Alpha value below 0.6 indicates low reliability, whereas values between 0.6 and 1.0 are interpreted as demonstrating acceptable to high reliability. The results of the validity and reliability tests are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Results of Validity and Reliability Tests

Variable	Initial Item Count	Analysis Round	Item Numbers Removed	Remaining Item Count	Corrected Item-Total Correlation Range	Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha)	Reliability Status
Turnover Intention	12	1	6, 11	10	Index corrected item total correlation (-0.378) to 0.861	0.804	Reliable
	10	2	-	10	Index corrected item total correlation 0.555 to 0.872	0.914	Reliable
Organizational Commitment	24	1	5	23	Index corrected item total correlation (-0.706) to 0.766	0.928	Reliable
	23	2	-	23	Index corrected item total correlation	0.946	Reliable

					0.487 to 0.787		
Transformational Leadership	20	1	-	20	Index corrected item total correlation 0.566 to 0.874	0.961	Reliability

Hypothesis testing in this study primarily uses two basic techniques: multiple regression analysis and path analysis, which is an extension of multiple regression analysis. The criteria for hypothesis acceptance or significance are if the significance value or $p < 0.05$. The first hypothesis tests the effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention in Generation Z. The hypothesis testing results show a t-value of -0.549 with a significance value of 0.584. Since the significance value of 0.584 is greater than 0.05, the first hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that although the relationship is negative, the effect is not significant.

The second hypothesis tests the effect of organizational commitment on turnover intention in Generation Z. The hypothesis testing results show a t-value of -11.221 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the second hypothesis is accepted. This indicates a significant negative effect between organizational commitment and turnover intention. The third hypothesis tests the effect of transformational leadership on organizational commitment in Generation Z. The hypothesis testing results show a t-value of 8.007 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the third hypothesis is accepted, indicating a significant positive effect between transformational leadership and organizational commitment.

The fourth hypothesis tests the indirect effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention in Generation Z through organizational commitment. Path analysis results show that transformational leadership has an indirect effect on turnover intention through organizational commitment. The calculation of the indirect effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention is $PZX1PYZ = (0.361)(-0.375) = -0.135375$, or -0.135. This indirect effect is larger than the direct effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention. The Sobel test shows a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, so the fourth hypothesis is accepted and the relationship is negative. Overall, the results of this study show that although transformational leadership does not have a significant direct effect on turnover intention in Generation Z, it still has a significant indirect effect through increasing organizational commitment.

Table 2. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Model	t / F	p	Significance
Transformational Leadership on Turnover Intention	-0.549	0.584	Not Significant ($p > 0.05$) - Hypothesis Rejected
Organizational Commitment on Turnover Intention	-11.221	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$) - Hypothesis Accepted
Transformational Leadership on Organizational Commitment	8.007	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$) - Hypothesis Accepted

Transformational Leadership on Turnover Intention through Organizational Commitment	-0.135	0.000	Significant (p < 0.05) - Hypothesis Accepted
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This study is motivated by the increasing turnover intention among Generation Z, which presents a major challenge for organizations in retaining employees. The research focuses on the influence of transformational leadership and organizational commitment on turnover intention, with organizational commitment serving as a mediating variable. Generation Z, with its unique characteristics such as the need for flexibility, recognition, and personal development, tends to exhibit different work patterns compared to previous generations. Therefore, understanding the relationships among these variables is crucial for designing effective and targeted retention strategies.

The findings reveal that transformational leadership does not have a statistically significant direct effect on turnover intention, although the direction of influence is negative. This can be explained by Generation Z’s strong preference for flexible work arrangements, supportive environments, and work-life balance. The transformational leadership style which emphasizes motivation, inspiration, and individual consideration is not sufficient on its own to retain employees when their core needs remain unmet. Bass (1990) stated that transformational leadership can inspire employees through a compelling vision and personal support. However, if fundamental needs such as emotional well-being and opportunities for growth are lacking, the direct impact on employees’ intention to stay becomes weak. Generation Z is known for its adaptability, but also for seeking new opportunities when expectations are not fulfilled.

Nevertheless, transformational leadership was found to have a significant positive impact on organizational commitment (Castellanos, 2024; Flynn, 2022; Gorski, 2022). Leaders who are able to inspire, provide personal attention, and communicate a clear vision can foster emotional attachment among employees. This approach aligns well with Generation Z’s preference for personal workplace relationships and clear career progression. Organizational commitment, in turn, was found to have a significant negative impact on turnover intention. Employees who are emotionally attached to their organizations tend to remain longer. Affective commitment emerged as the key factor where employees feel comfortable and satisfied with their work. Normative commitment also played a role, as a sense of moral obligation drives loyalty toward the organization.

Furthermore, this study found that the effect of transformational leadership on turnover intention is indirect, operating through the mediating role of organizational commitment. Leaders who pay attention to individual needs and motivate their employees help cultivate emotional attachment that strengthens employee loyalty. Thus, while transformational leadership does not directly reduce turnover intention, it still has an important impact by enhancing commitment. Organizational commitment which includes affective, continuance, and normative dimensions (Carnegie, 2023; Luan, 2022; Pozsgai-Alvarez, 2022) plays a critical role in strengthening the link between transformational leadership and turnover intention. Employees who feel valued and emotionally involved are more likely to remain loyal, even in the face of job stress or workplace uncertainty. Effective leadership can shape a positive organizational climate, create a sense of belonging, and reinforce shared goals, ultimately reducing overall turnover intention.

The data distribution indicates that most respondents fall into the moderate category for turnover intention, with only a few in the very low category. For organizational commitment, the majority also scored in the moderate range (Abiddin, 2024; Ringsager, 2022; Y. Wu, 2023), with

only a few showing low commitment. Meanwhile, perceptions of transformational leadership tended to be high, although some respondents rated it very low. This indicates a strong potential for organizations to leverage transformational leadership as a strategy to build emotional attachment and employee loyalty especially among Generation Z, who tend to be dynamic and prone to job-hopping.

This study is limited by its scope, which focuses solely on Generation Z respondents; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other age groups. In addition, the quantitative approach used may not fully capture subjective dimensions such as individual perceptions and personal experiences. Future research is encouraged to adopt a mixed-method approach for more comprehensive insights, including qualitative methods such as interviews to explore employees' deeper perceptions and motivations.

Theoretically, this study enriches the understanding of the relationship between transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and turnover intention among Generation Z. The insights gained regarding the interrelation of these variables contribute to the development of human resource management theories, particularly within the context of the younger workforce. Practically, the findings can be utilized by organizations to design more suitable retention strategies, such as personalized leadership training and strengthening employee commitment through approaches aligned with Generation Z's values (Hamerton, 2022; Smetana, 2022; Yang, 2023). Organizations are advised to develop career development programs through training, workshops, and mentoring, which can enhance emotional commitment and loyalty to the company. Moreover, providing a healthy and flexible work environment, along with well-being programs such as counseling, flexible leave, and psychological support, can help meet Generation Z's expectations for work-life balance. These strategies should also include recognition and appreciation of individual contributions, creating space for innovation and active participation, and fostering transparent communication between management and employees.

Management should also craft retention strategies tailored to the characteristics of this generation, including acknowledging their contributions and creating clear, transparent career pathways. Leaders who are responsive, inclusive, and supportive of individual growth will be key in fostering loyalty. Thus, enhancing organizational commitment through transformational leadership becomes a strategic step in addressing the high turnover intention among Generation Z. This study is expected to serve as a reference for both practitioners and academics in developing human resource policies that are adaptive to demographic shifts and the evolving expectations of the younger workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand the influence of transformational leadership on turnover intention among Generation Z, with organizational commitment as a mediating variable. The findings indicate that transformational leadership does not have a significant direct effect on turnover intention. This suggests that although transformational leaders may foster a supportive and inspirational work environment, such conditions alone are not sufficient to directly reduce Generation Z's intention to leave the organization. However, transformational leadership was found to significantly enhance organizational commitment, which in turn indirectly contributes to reducing turnover intention. Affective commitment, or emotional attachment to the organization, plays a crucial role in retaining employees. Thus, organizational commitment acts as a mediator that strengthens the impact of transformational leadership on employee loyalty, particularly among

Generation Z, who have high expectations for flexibility, personal development, and meaningful work.

Based on these findings, organizations are encouraged to strengthen employee commitment through various human resource development strategies. Initiatives such as training programs, workshops, and mentoring can enhance employees' sense of connection and career growth elements highly valued by Generation Z. Furthermore, creating a healthy and flexible work environment, along with supporting employee well-being through counseling services or psychological support, is essential in fostering long-term loyalty. Company management is expected to design retention strategies tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z, including recognizing their contributions and offering clear career advancement opportunities.

To enrich future research, it is recommended to involve a broader age group and consider additional variables such as education level, employment status, or income. Incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews may also provide a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics and employee perceptions.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

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