



Research on the Self-Worth of Gen Z Employees in the Context of Digital Transformation: A Case Study of Shenzhen T Company

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Abstract. The rapid advancement of technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence has exerted a notable influence on the self-worth of employees within enterprises. This article uses Shenzhen T Company as a case study to analyze the self-worth levels of Gen Z employees amidst digital transformation. Employing the Self-Worth Scale developed by Pierce and Gardner in 1989, an online survey was administered to gauge the self-worth of T Company's Gen Z workforce. Based on the overall self-worth scores and the specific values of each metric, practical recommendations are offered to T Company. Data analysis indicates that T Company's Gen Z employees exhibit a relatively high overall self-worth, with a composite average of approximately 4.01 across ten metrics, although three metrics show lower average scores. Drawing from these three underperforming metrics and considering the basic demographic information of Gen Z employees, fundamental suggestions and measures are proposed for T Company's management and recruitment strategies.

Keywords: Enterprise management, Gen Z, Employees, Self-Worth.

1 Introduction

In the early 21st century, rapid advancements in technologies such as big data, information technology, and artificial intelligence have profoundly impacted individuals born during this era, commonly referred to as "Generation Z". Raised in an information-saturated environment, members of Gen Z exhibit a strong sense of self-awareness and a heightened sensitivity to social issues and the significant transformations taking place around them. Many Gen Z employees are increasingly concerned and no longer perceive their roles as indispensable within their organizations. They are beginning to question whether they might be supplanted by technological advancements in the foreseeable future. Drawing on prior psychological research on self-worth, this article provides an analysis of employee behavior from a psychological standpoint. Its objective is to offer practical strategies and recommendations for T Company in effectively managing its Gen Z workforce. Using Shenzhen T Company, an audio-visual integration systems firm, as a case study, this article gathers data and information through questionnaire surveys to assess the self-worth levels of its Gen Z employees.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Gen Z Employees

The academic community lacks a fully unified definition of Gen Z. In China, the majority of scholars categorize Gen Z as individuals born between 1995 and 2009. However, some scholars, such as Shen Jie, propose a broader interpretation, encompassing both the "post-90s" and "post-00s" generations within Gen Z. This broader definition stems from the fact that the "post-90s" cohort was born during China's comprehensive establishment of its socialist market economy system. Despite not being entirely immersed in digital information, children from this era still exhibit characteristics like rationality, independence, and individuality [1]. This article will adhere to this broader definition and conduct research on this specific demographic within T Company.

Li Hu delineated psychological capital across four classic dimensions—self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism—and empirically demonstrated a negative correlation between psychological capital and the turnover propensity among Gen Z employees [2]. Xu Ruochen's research reveals that the perception of underemployment can enhance the work thriving of Gen Z employees [3]. Work thriving refers to a psychological state characterized by active learning in the workplace [4]. Furthermore, Zhou Zhonglin and colleagues' study on the impact of intergenerational conflicts on the work engagement of Gen Z employees found that conflicts and contradictions are more likely to arise between employees of different generations in superior-subordinate relationships, particularly among Gen Z employees [5]. These conflicts often lead to self-reflection and emotional exhaustion, thereby negatively impacting their work engagement [6].

In addition to the empirical analyses conducted by the aforementioned scholars on the characteristics and behavioral tendencies of Generation Z employees, other scholars have undertaken qualitative studies. Jian Xiaoxu's research reveals that, in the context of digital intelligence, Gen Z employees confront numerous career challenges, such as experiencing career burnout, which diminishes their sense of career achievement and identity [7]. Li Xiaoqi, in her article, specifically highlights that the level of self-role cognition among Gen Z employees influences their work productivity, career planning, and job satisfaction [8]. Li Na and Zhao Bo employed case analysis methods to examine the factors affecting the job well-being of Gen Z employees in the logistics industry [9]. These studies offer multiple dimensions for this paper to explore effective management strategies for T Company's Gen Z employees.

2.2 Self-Worth

Self-worth is an evaluative variable in psychology, a concept that has been extensively studied since the 1970s. To date, scholars have not reached a consensus on its definition.

The earliest research on this topic can be traced back to Cooley, who regarded self-worth as an internal mirror within individuals. In his seminal work "Human Nature and

Social Order", he posited that the external environment and others' attitudes and perceptions towards an individual significantly influence that individual's sense of self-worth [10]. Essentially, self-worth can be viewed as a self-concept formed through interpersonal interactions [11]. Epstein contends that self-worth is an internal variable of the organism, predominantly shaped before adulthood and relatively resistant to change thereafter [12]. Cooper Smith emphasizes the individual's internal assessment of self-worth, defining it as the positive evaluation an individual makes and sustains about themselves, as well as the extent to which they perceive themselves as capable, important, successful, and valuable [13]. Pierce and Gardner highlight that in the realms of management and organization, there is no unified concept of self-worth. They propose that organizational-based self-worth refers to the degree to which an individual, as a member of an organization, fulfills their self-needs through role engagement [14].

Chinese scholars have further elaborated on the concept of self-worth. For instance, Wang Siwei, building on the research of Pierce and Gardner, posits that organizational-based self-worth is a type of self-evaluation wherein employees assess their own work capabilities and their value within the company [15]. Scholar Wang Jingwen offers a definition tailored to corporate employees, viewing self-worth as an individual's perception of their own importance and a subjective experience of their own value, which reflects how much they accept and respect themselves [16].

The dimensions of the self-worth variable encompass various models, including one-dimensional, two-dimensional, and multi-dimensional frameworks. The one-dimensional model features a single dimension, yet the relationships between individual variables are distinctly clear and straightforward. Pierce and Gardner, among other researchers, developed a scale based on employees within an organization, which aligns closely with the subjects of this study. This scale is one-dimension model, comprising a total of 10 items[14].

3 Research and Analysis

3.1 Research Subject and Methodology

The research subjects are all post-90s employees of Company T, whose primary product is audio-visual integration systems, with the majority being technology-oriented staff.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the variables' validity and reliability, this paper employs scales designed by previous scholars and extensively validated. Given the need to incorporate the organizational work environment of Gen Z employees, the scales developed by Pierce and Gardner are chosen to analyze the sense of self-worth among Gen Z employees at Company T [17]. This study utilizes the Likert five-point scale, which includes: completely disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, agree, and completely agree, with representative items such as "I hold a very important position in the company".

3.2 Data Collection and Selection

This article employs a questionnaire survey method for data collection. The questionnaire consists of two main sections: the first section primarily gathers respondents' basic information, while the second section features a self-worth scale. Initially, the questionnaire was distributed to a small group for refinement. Following revisions, it was released on the Questionnaire Star platform on April 2, 2025, and retrieved on April 4, 2025, yielding 47 valid responses. The basic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Statistical Features

Variable	Definitions	Ratios	Variable	Definitions	Ratios
Gender	Male	66%	Work Experience	<2 years	0%
	Female	34%		2-5 years	19.1%
	<4000 CNY	0%		>5 years	80.9%
Monthly salary before tax	4000-6000 CNY	6.4%	Degrees	Under bachelor	25.5%
	6001-8000 CNY	8.5%		bachelor	68.1%
	8001-10000 CNY	25.5%		master	4.3%
	>10000 CNY	59.6%		Doctor and above	2.1%

3.3 Data Analysis

This study employed SPSS 26.0 to perform a reliability analysis on the self-worth variable. As indicated in Table 2, the reliability (Cronbach's α coefficient) of T Company's Gen Z employees' self-worth is 0.929, exceeding the theoretical threshold of 0.7, thereby demonstrating that this variable possesses strong reliability.

Table 2. Self-worth Reliability Assessment Outcomes

Variable	Cronbach coefficient
Self-worth	0.929

An analysis of the various self-worth indicators yielded the results presented in Table 3. It is evident that for T Company's Gen Z employees, the highest scores across all ten indicators reached 5 (completely agree). In the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth indicators, the lowest score was 1 (completely disagree), indicating the presence of individual employees holding negative perceptions of these five aspects. Notably, the average scores for the fifth and sixth indicators also exceeded 4.00, while only the first, second, and third indicators had average scores below 4.00. This suggests that among

T Company's Gen Z workforce, the sense of self-worth related to "I occupy an important position in the company," "I am highly valued by the company," and "I am indispensable to the organization" is comparatively lower than that for the other seven indicators.

Table 3. The Extreme and Average Values of Self-Worth

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean Value
I occupy a key position in the company	47	1	5	3.57
I am highly regarded in the company	47	1	5	3.60
I am essential to the organization	47	1	5	3.47
I deem myself reliable	47	3	5	4.30
The organization places great trust in me	47	1	5	4.13
I can contribute significantly to the company	47	1	5	4.06
I believe I am a valuable asset	47	3	5	4.19
I can assist my fellow colleagues	47	3	5	4.15
My efficiency is quite commendable	47	3	5	4.30
I have a propensity for collaboration	47	2	5	4.34
Mean Value of ten items				4.01

4 Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 Research Result

Based on the analysis of the scale data, it was found that the overall sense of self-worth among T Company's Gen Z employees is relatively high, with an average score of 4.011, corresponding to "agree" on the Likert five-point scale. The descriptive analysis reveals that the minimum values for the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth measurement items are 1, which aligns with "strongly disagree" on the Likert scale. These five items: "I hold a significant position in the company," "I am highly valued in the company," "I am indispensable in the organization," "The organization trusts me," and "I can make a meaningful contribution in the company," all pertain to the relationship between the individual and the organization or the individual and the company. Although these minimum values represent individual cases, they indicate issues in how T Company manages the relationships between Gen Z employees and the organization or the enterprise.

Further data interpretation shows that only the average scores for the first, second, and third items are below 4.00. According to the Likert scale, this suggests that the sample's attitudes toward these items range from "somewhat disagree" to "agree." This implies that T Company's Gen Z employees do not perceive their roles in the company as crucial; they do not feel adequately valued within the company; and they believe they are essentially expendable in the organization. This also highlights that T Company does not prioritize personal value, has not made Gen Z employees feel cherished and appreciated by the company, and has not effectively strengthened the connection between the organization and the individual from the company's standpoint.

4.2 Management Suggestion

From the statistical analysis of self-worth, T Company's Gen Z employees' sense of self-worth should be enhanced to foster organizational cohesion and unity among staff, making them feel more integrated within the company and valued by their colleagues. Specific measures are as follows:

Endow employees with a sense of purpose in their work, linking personal value to the corporate mission. T Company should regularly communicate to employees the significant impact their roles have on the company's strategic objectives, preventing them from feeling like mere "cogs in the machine." T Company must ensure that employees' achievements and contributions are visibly recognized, whether in meetings or on display boards. Additionally, T Company should facilitate direct customer interactions for employees across all departments, rather than restricting this to a select few. Direct engagement with customers helps employees appreciate the company's social value and mission, thereby aligning their personal self-worth with the corporate mission.

Implement a high-frequency, genuine, and personalized reward system. In line with behaviorist theory, T Company should provide timely and frequent positive feedback to employees, along with intermittent reinforcement. For personalized rewards, T Company should offer one-on-one, scheduled feedback for introverted employees and public recognition for extroverted employees. These actions will help employees perceive the company's sincerity.

Develop a tangible career advancement pathway to mitigate employees' perceptions of underemployment. T Company should introduce an internal mentorship program, organize regular external training sessions, and provide targeted skill development to alleviate feelings of underemployment. Besides vertical career progression, horizontal growth opportunities should also be highlighted, breaking down barriers between departments and fostering inter-departmental collaboration.

Foster employee involvement in decision-making to cultivate their "sense of ownership." In specific projects, T Company should empower employees with certain authority, enabling grassroots staff to serve as decision-makers. Leaders should transparentize some of the company's strategic goals and promote information sharing, inviting employees to offer improvement suggestions. When employees make unsuccessful decisions, adopt inclusive attitude. After evaluation and review, continue to provide them with resource support, thereby enriching their pathways to innovative behavior.

Enhance the sense of belonging to forge a distinctive corporate culture. T Company should familiarize employees with the company's history of establishment and growth. Demonstrate appropriate concern for aspects beyond their work, such as family circumstances and personal interests, and regularly leverage these insights to organize corporate team-building activities. Actively engage in value co-creation and establish an effective story dissemination mechanism.

5 Conclusion

This article, by measuring the self-worth of Gen Z employees at Company T, identified management areas requiring improvement and proposed targeted solutions. Utilizing quantitative analysis and case studies, it highlights the theoretical significance of self-worth theory. The solutions and recommendations derived from the analysis also enhance the practical value of this paper. However, the study has some limitations: the sample size is relatively small, constrained by the company's limited employee base. In data analysis, there is an overreliance on descriptive statistics and a lack of regression analysis. While Gen Z and self-worth are currently trending topics, the limited scope and data availability have prevented a thorough integration and analysis of the two. It is hoped that future scholars will undertake related research to enrich the theories of Gen Z and self-worth, aiming to propose more innovative and effective management strategies for the new generation of employees in corporate settings.

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