



Veritatis Gaudium:
Multidisciplinary Journal of Postgraduate Studies

College of Postgraduate Studies,
Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria

ISSN: 3043 - 5285

Volume 1, Number 5, September, 2026

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.17243.12322

**EFFECT OF WORKPLACE CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE RETENTION
AMONG GENERATION Z HEALTHCARE WORKERS IN ABUJA**

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of selected dimensions of workplace culture on employee retention among Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed the effects of leadership style, workplace communication, workplace flexibility, and workplace innovation on retention. The study adopted a quantitative research design and a non-probability snowball sampling technique because the population of Generation Z healthcare workers in private healthcare facilities in Abuja was not publicly enumerated. Data were collected electronically through a structured questionnaire adapted from established measurement scales. Of 194 responses received, 188 valid responses were retained after screening. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 32 and SmartPLS 4. The study employed a two-stage PLS-SEM approach. First, each workplace-culture dimension was assessed separately against employee retention; second, all four predictors were entered simultaneously in a multivariate structural model. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability and convergent validity, while the HTMT results supported discriminant validity and the VIF values indicated acceptable collinearity. In the isolated models, leadership style, workplace communication, workplace flexibility, and workplace innovation were all positively and significantly associated with retention. However, in the combined model, workplace communication ($\beta = 0.288, p < .001$), workplace flexibility ($\beta = 0.132, p = .003$), and workplace innovation ($\beta = 0.446, p < .001$) retained significant positive effects, whereas leadership style was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.107, p = .128$). The integrated model explained 79.7% of the variance in employee retention ($R^2 = .797$; adjusted $R^2 = .793$). The findings indicate that retention among Generation Z healthcare workers is associated particularly with communication quality, flexibility, and an innovation-oriented workplace culture. The study recommends strengthening transparent two-way communication, improving flexible scheduling where

operationally feasible, investing in digital work systems and continuous learning, and embedding leadership practices within these broader cultural mechanisms.

Keywords: workplace culture; Generation Z; employee retention; healthcare workers; workplace communication; flexibility; innovation; PLS-SEM

Introduction

Workplace culture has moved from being treated largely as an informal feature of organizational life to being regarded as an important strategic resource for shaping employee attitudes and behaviour. Early scientific management placed strong emphasis on standardisation, efficiency and supervision (Taylor, 1911), whereas subsequent human-relations and organizational-culture perspectives recognised the importance of interpersonal relations, values, beliefs and shared assumptions in explaining employee behaviour. Schein (2010) describes organizational culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it addresses external adaptation and internal integration. In contemporary organizations, culture is therefore reflected not only in formal policies but also in everyday leadership behaviour, communication practices, flexibility, opportunities for innovation, and the ways employees experience belonging and support.

The changing composition of the labour market has made workplace culture increasingly important for employee retention. Generation Z, broadly defined in this study as persons born between 1995 and 2010, is entering employment with experiences and expectations shaped by rapid technological change, digital connectivity, economic uncertainty and changing views of work-life integration (McKinsey & Company, 2018; Schroth, 2019). The cohort is frequently characterised by preferences for transparent communication, learning opportunities, flexibility, inclusion, meaningful work and technology-enabled work processes. These characteristics do not imply that every Generation Z worker shares identical preferences; rather, they provide a useful cohort-level lens for examining how contemporary workplace practices are perceived.

Healthcare organizations present a particularly important setting for examining these issues. Healthcare work is highly people-dependent, time-sensitive and operationally demanding. Employees frequently work shifts, operate under professional standards and interact with patients and multidisciplinary teams. Consequently, workplace culture can affect not only employees' organizational experiences but also continuity of service, teamwork and organizational knowledge. Employee retention is strategically important because excessive turnover creates recruitment and training costs, disrupts institutional knowledge and can place additional pressure on remaining employees (Allen et al., 2010).

The Nigerian healthcare environment adds further relevance to the problem. The sector has experienced concerns relating to workforce migration, working conditions and retention, while private healthcare organizations must simultaneously respond to competition for skilled personnel. For organizations employing younger professionals, the issue is not simply attracting Generation Z workers but creating conditions under which they perceive sufficient value in remaining. Workplace culture therefore provides a useful organizational-level framework for understanding retention beyond compensation alone.

Four cultural dimensions are emphasized in this study: leadership style, workplace communication, workplace flexibility and workplace innovation. Leadership represents the behaviour through which supervisors and managers provide direction, support, recognition and participation. Communication concerns the openness, clarity, timeliness and accessibility of information and feedback. Flexibility refers to the extent to which work arrangements provide reasonable autonomy over when, where and how work is performed, subject to operational requirements. Innovation reflects a culture that

supports new ideas, technology adoption, creativity, experimentation and continuous improvement. These dimensions are conceptually related but analytically distinguishable.

The theoretical logic of the study is primarily anchored in Person–Organization Fit (P–O Fit) theory. P–O Fit proposes that employees are more likely to experience positive work outcomes when their values, needs and expectations are compatible with organizational characteristics (Kristof, 1996). This is relevant to Generation Z because perceptions of transparency, autonomy, innovation and developmental opportunity can influence whether the organization is experienced as compatible with employees' expectations. Social Exchange Theory also provides a complementary explanation: employees may reciprocate supportive and fair organizational practices through commitment and a willingness to remain (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Generational Cohort Theory further provides a contextual lens for understanding why members of a cohort exposed to similar formative conditions may display distinctive work expectations (Ryder, 1965; Strauss & Howe, 2000).

Against this background, the study investigates whether the four selected workplace-culture dimensions have statistically significant effects on employee retention among Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja. The study also contributes methodologically by comparing isolated bivariate relationships with a combined multivariate structural model. This distinction is important because a predictor can appear strongly related to retention when examined alone but contribute little unique explanatory power when correlated cultural dimensions are considered simultaneously.

Healthcare organizations depend on a stable and committed workforce for continuity, quality and efficient service delivery. At the same time, organizations face increasing difficulty retaining employees whose expectations concerning leadership, communication, flexibility and work processes differ from traditional workplace arrangements. Global workforce evidence indicates substantial openness to job mobility, while healthcare organizations in Nigeria face additional pressures associated with migration and working conditions. For Generation Z employees, these challenges may be intensified where workplace practices are perceived as rigid, hierarchical, poorly communicated or technologically outdated.

Although workplace culture and employee retention have received substantial scholarly attention, three related gaps remain relevant. First, many studies treat organizational culture as a broad construct, making it difficult to determine which specific cultural dimensions have the strongest independent relationship with retention. Second, evidence on Generation Z remains more concentrated in general organizational, educational, technology or hospitality settings than in the Nigerian healthcare context. Third, studies that examine the dimensions simultaneously can produce different conclusions from studies that consider each factor independently. Consequently, relying only on bivariate relationships may overstate the unique contribution of individual cultural dimensions.

The present study addresses these issues by examining leadership style, workplace communication, workplace flexibility and workplace innovation simultaneously among Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja. The central problem is therefore not whether workplace culture matters in a general sense, but which specific dimensions retain a significant independent relationship with retention when the dimensions are considered together. The broad objective is to determine the effect of workplace culture on employee retention among Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja.

The study is relevant to healthcare managers, human-resource practitioners and organizational decision-makers because it identifies workplace-culture practices associated with retention among an emerging workforce cohort. The findings can support evidence-based approaches to internal communication, scheduling, digitalization, employee voice, learning and supervisory practices. The

study also contributes to the academic literature by providing evidence from Abuja, Nigeria, and by distinguishing between isolated and simultaneous effects.

The study is limited to Generation Z healthcare workers aged 18–30 and employed in the private healthcare sector in Abuja. It focuses on leadership style, workplace communication, workplace flexibility and workplace innovation as predictors of employee retention. Compensation, job security, macroeconomic conditions and other potentially relevant determinants are outside the primary analytical scope.

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Workplace Culture

Workplace culture refers to the shared values, assumptions, norms, practices and behavioural expectations that shape how organizational members understand and perform their work (Schein, 2010). Culture is expressed through formal systems such as policies and procedures and through informal practices such as communication norms, leadership behaviour, recognition and social interaction. O'Reilly et al. (1991) connect culture to person–organization fit by showing that organizational values can be compared with individual preferences. Thus, workplace culture can operate as an important mechanism through which employees decide whether an organization is compatible with their expectations.

A strong workplace culture may create shared purpose, trust and cooperation, while a dysfunctional culture can increase dissatisfaction and withdrawal. Research on toxic culture suggests that discrimination, poor interpersonal treatment, weak recognition and ethical problems can be important drivers of voluntary exit (Sull et al., 2022). For younger employees, cultural fit may be especially relevant because early-career workers are simultaneously developing professional identities and assessing whether their employer offers opportunities for growth and belonging.

2.1.2 Leadership Style

Leadership style represents the pattern of behaviour through which supervisors and managers influence employees. Transformational, participative and situational approaches emphasise different combinations of inspiration, involvement, adaptability and support. For Generation Z employees, leadership practices involving openness, feedback, fairness, autonomy and development may be particularly relevant. Tian et al. (2020), for example, found a relationship between transformational leadership and retention, while Kwartawaty et al. (2024) emphasise leadership practices that support the expectations of Generation Z.

Leadership can also be understood as a cultural mechanism because leaders communicate organizational values through their daily decisions. When leaders provide psychological safety, respect and opportunities for employee voice, employees may perceive stronger organizational support. Conversely, highly controlling or inconsistent leadership may weaken employees' perception of fit. However, leadership does not operate in isolation; its effects can overlap with communication, flexibility and innovation. This provides a rationale for assessing leadership both independently and within an integrated model.

2.1.3 Workplace Communication

Workplace communication encompasses the processes through which information, expectations, feedback and employee views are exchanged. Effective communication is generally characterised by clarity, timeliness, transparency, accessibility and opportunities for two-way interaction. Communication is particularly relevant to employee retention because it shapes perceptions of fairness, organizational support and future opportunities. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) argue that

perceived organizational support influences employee attitudes and behavioural outcomes, while communication can be one channel through which support becomes visible.

For Generation Z employees, digital communication may be particularly important, but convenience does not necessarily substitute for quality. Excessive messaging, contradictory information and poor feedback can create uncertainty and communication overload. Effective internal communication therefore requires an appropriate balance among channel, frequency and content. In healthcare settings, communication also has an operational function because coordination among staff affects workflow and service delivery.

2.1.4 Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility concerns the extent to which employees have reasonable discretion over working time, location and task arrangements. Flexibility can include adjustable schedules, shift-swapping, compressed hours, hybrid arrangements where job characteristics permit, and autonomy over aspects of task execution. Kelliher (2024) and Tsen et al. (2022) indicate that flexible work arrangements can influence employee attitudes through work-life balance and perceived organizational support.

The applicability of flexibility in healthcare is necessarily constrained by clinical requirements. Not all healthcare roles can be performed remotely, and patient-facing services require physical presence. Nevertheless, flexibility can be operationalised through predictable rosters, fair shift allocation, shift exchanges, reasonable scheduling autonomy and supportive responses to legitimate personal needs. Such arrangements may improve employees' sense of autonomy without compromising service requirements.

2.1.5 Workplace Innovation

Workplace innovation refers to organizational support for new ideas, experimentation, technology adoption, creative problem solving and continuous improvement. Innovation becomes a cultural characteristic when employees experience repeated encouragement to identify better ways of performing tasks rather than encountering innovation only as occasional projects. Psychological safety is important because employees are more likely to propose ideas when they do not fear disproportionate negative consequences for mistakes or unsuccessful experiments (Edmondson, 1999; Thomas et al., 2020).

For Generation Z healthcare workers, technology and continuous learning can form part of the daily work experience. Digital systems that simplify documentation, scheduling and communication may reduce avoidable friction, while opportunities to participate in problem solving may strengthen ownership. However, innovation can also become stressful if organizations impose repeated technological or procedural changes without training and support. The retention effect of innovation therefore depends on implementation quality, resources and employee involvement.

2.1.6 Employee Retention

Employee retention is the organizational capacity to keep employees over time and reduce unwanted turnover. Retention has strategic implications because employee departures may result in recruitment costs, training costs, productivity losses and loss of institutional knowledge (Allen et al., 2010). In this study, retention is operationalised through employees' satisfaction, commitment, intention to remain, low thoughts of leaving and willingness to recommend the organization.

Retention should not be interpreted solely as an outcome of financial rewards. The literature indicates that supportive work environments, organizational commitment, person–organization fit, communication, leadership and opportunities for development can shape employees' decisions to

remain. In the context of Generation Z, these factors are examined within a cohort whose workplace expectations are influenced by digitalisation and changing views of work-life integration.

2.1.7 Generation Z in the Workplace

Generation Z is the cohort following Millennials. The literature does not establish a universally agreed birth-year boundary, but this study adopts 1995–2010 in accordance with its original research design. Members of this cohort entered adulthood during a period of rapid technological change, global connectivity and economic uncertainty. Research commonly describes them as highly exposed to digital technology and interested in flexibility, development, inclusion, meaningful work and transparent communication (McKinsey & Company, 2018; Schroth, 2019).

These characteristics should be interpreted as tendencies rather than universal attributes. Individual differences remain substantial, and occupational context matters. In healthcare, professional obligations, shift requirements and patient-care demands can constrain the extent to which preferences for flexibility can be implemented. The value of a Generation Z perspective therefore lies in testing empirically whether selected cultural features are associated with retention within a specific occupational and geographical context.

Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Person–Organization Fit Theory

Person–Organization Fit theory is the principal theoretical foundation of the study. Kristof (1996) defines P–O Fit as the compatibility between individuals and organizations, including similarity in values and the extent to which organizations meet individual needs. Supplementary fit occurs when individuals and organizations possess similar characteristics, while complementary fit occurs when one supplies what the other needs. In both cases, compatibility can influence attitudes and behavioural outcomes.

The theory is directly relevant to workplace culture and retention. Culture communicates what an organization values and how employees are expected to behave. If Generation Z workers perceive openness, innovation, flexibility and development as important and perceive these qualities in their organization, the resulting value congruence may strengthen attachment and willingness to remain. Conversely, a perceived mismatch can increase dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. O'Reilly et al. (1991) and Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) provide empirical and conceptual support for the relationship between fit and work outcomes.

P–O Fit therefore provides the central logic linking the independent variables to retention. Leadership style communicates expectations and respect; communication indicates transparency and voice; flexibility provides autonomy and work-life support; and innovation signals learning and technological orientation. These characteristics collectively constitute important elements of the environment against which employees evaluate organizational compatibility.

2.2.2 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains workplace relationships as patterns of reciprocal exchange (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Employees contribute effort, time, loyalty and knowledge, while organizations provide compensation, recognition, support, development and favourable working conditions. When exchanges are perceived as fair and supportive, employees may reciprocate with positive attitudes and commitment.

The theory complements P–O Fit by explaining how specific cultural practices can generate reciprocal responses. Timely communication can signal respect; flexibility can signal concern for employee well-being; innovation can provide development and meaningful participation; and supportive leadership can demonstrate organizational investment. Employees may respond by

strengthening commitment and reducing intentions to leave. SET therefore helps explain the behavioural pathway through which workplace practices can become retention outcomes.

2.2.3 Generational Cohort Theory

Generational Cohort Theory proposes that individuals who experience significant historical, technological and social events during formative periods may develop shared orientations (Ryder, 1965; Strauss & Howe, 2000). Within this study, the theory is used cautiously as a contextual framework rather than as an assumption that all Generation Z workers behave identically. The rapid diffusion of digital technology and changing employment expectations provide a plausible basis for examining whether this cohort responds differently to workplace culture.

The three theories are complementary. P–O Fit explains compatibility, SET explains reciprocity, and Generational Cohort Theory provides a contextual explanation for why particular workplace features may be salient for Generation Z. Together, they provide a coherent basis for testing the proposed relationships.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Leadership Style and Employee Retention

Empirical evidence generally indicates that supportive leadership can improve employee attitudes and reduce turnover intentions. Ohunakin et al. (2019), in the Nigerian hospitality context, found that transformational leadership and job satisfaction were relevant to employee retention. Tian et al. (2020) also reported a relationship between transformational leadership and retention, highlighting communication and organizational citizenship mechanisms. Xuecheng et al. (2022) integrated situational leadership with Social Exchange Theory and found that leadership and exchange processes can help explain retention-related outcomes.

Evidence from Generation Z studies similarly suggests that younger employees value leadership that encourages participation, development and feedback. Kwartawaty et al. (2024) identify participative, transformational and related approaches as potentially compatible with Generation Z expectations. Nevertheless, leadership effects can overlap with other cultural features. A leader who communicates well, supports flexibility and promotes innovation may produce retention outcomes through these broader practices. The present study therefore tests leadership in both isolated and simultaneous models.

2.3.2 Workplace Communication and Employee Retention

Communication has been associated with employee engagement, organizational support and retention-related outcomes. Kang and Sung (2017) found that symmetrical employee communication can strengthen employee–organization relationships and engagement. Pérez-Pérez et al. (2022) emphasise the role of internal communication and employee empowerment, while Salau et al. (2022) highlight communication within multigenerational workplaces. Recent work focused on Generation Z also points to the importance of internal communication for work satisfaction (Ly-Le & Le, 2024). The relevance of communication is particularly strong in healthcare because employees require timely information for coordination and service delivery. The current study extends this literature by testing whether communication retains an independent positive association with retention after controlling for leadership, flexibility and innovation.

2.3.3 Workplace Flexibility and Employee Retention

Research on flexible work arrangements provides evidence that autonomy over work conditions can influence work-life balance, satisfaction and turnover intentions. Tsen et al. (2022) demonstrate that flexible arrangements can be understood through both Social Exchange Theory and boundary-related perspectives. Jung and Yoon (2021) also report generational differences in how workplace flexibility relates to engagement, satisfaction and commitment. More recent studies on Generation Z suggest

that hybrid or flexible arrangements can be valued when they preserve opportunities for learning and social connection.

The healthcare setting requires a contextual interpretation. Flexibility may not mean unrestricted remote work; rather, it can involve fair and predictable scheduling, shift exchanges, employee input into rosters and accommodation of legitimate needs. This study tests whether employees' perceptions of such flexibility are positively related to retention.

2.3.4 Workplace Innovation and Employee Retention

Innovation-oriented cultures can improve employee experience when they provide opportunities for creativity, learning and participation. Mutonyi et al. (2022), examining hospital employees, connect organizational culture and leadership climate with organizational attractiveness and innovative behaviour. Julius et al. (2021) examined innovation orientation culture and employee turnover in Kenyan organizations, indicating the relevance of innovation culture to retention-related outcomes. Liu et al. (2020) further demonstrate the importance of psychological safety in enabling creativity.

For Generation Z workers, innovation may also signal that the organization is willing to invest in modern systems and employee development. However, innovation without resources or support can generate fatigue. The current study therefore examines innovation as a workplace-culture dimension that includes technology adoption, creativity, employee voice, problem solving and continuous learning.

2.4 Gap in the Literature

The review reveals a contextual, conceptual and methodological gap. Contextually, relatively limited evidence examines the retention of Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja, Nigeria. Conceptually, studies often discuss organizational culture broadly rather than isolating communication, flexibility and innovation alongside leadership in one model. Methodologically, isolated relationships may overstate the unique contribution of correlated cultural dimensions. This study addresses the gap by testing four workplace-culture dimensions in a common PLS-SEM framework and explicitly comparing isolated bivariate paths with the integrated multivariate model.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research design. Quantitative design is appropriate where the objective is to measure constructs numerically and estimate the strength and significance of relationships among variables. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered electronically to Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised Generation Z healthcare workers born between 1995 and 2010 and employed in the private healthcare sector in Abuja. The population was treated as a hidden population because no centralized publicly accessible register provided the number of Generation Z healthcare workers across private facilities. A non-probability snowball sampling technique was therefore used. Data collection proceeded in two waves: initial participants were recruited through 20 selected private healthcare facilities and were then encouraged to share the survey with eligible professional peers.

A priori power analysis using G*Power version 3.1.9.7 was based on a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$), $\alpha = .05$, statistical power of .80 and four predictors. The minimum required sample size was 85 respondents. A total of 194 responses were received; after screening for incomplete, duplicate or ineligible responses, 188 valid observations remained for analysis.

3.3 Instrumentation and Measurement

The questionnaire contained 30 substantive measurement items and demographic questions. Items were adapted from established scales and contextualised to the healthcare setting. Leadership style was measured with six items; workplace communication with six items; workplace flexibility with six items; workplace innovation with six items; and employee retention with six items. All items used a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The measurement model was evaluated using standardized outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was examined using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT). These procedures are consistent with PLS-SEM measurement assessment guidance.

3.4 Data Collection and Ethics

Data were collected online using Google Forms over four weeks. Participants were provided with information about the study and were required to indicate consent before accessing the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary and respondents could withdraw without penalty. The online format was appropriate for the target cohort and accommodated the work schedules of healthcare employees.

3.5 Model Specification and Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were generated using SPSS Statistics version 32.0. Reliability, validity and structural modelling were performed in SmartPLS 4. The study employed PLS-SEM because the objective was to estimate relationships among latent constructs and assess the predictive capacity of the integrated model.

The analysis used two stages. Stage 1 estimated four separate bivariate models: (1) leadership style predicting retention, (2) workplace communication predicting retention, (3) workplace flexibility predicting retention, and (4) workplace innovation predicting retention. Stage 2 entered all four predictors simultaneously. Bootstrapping was conducted using 10,000 resamples and a two-tailed significance criterion of .05. A t-statistic above 1.96 was treated as statistically significant at the 5% level.

The integrated structural equation can be represented as:

$$ER = \beta_0 + \beta_1 LS + \beta_2 WC + \beta_3 WF + \beta_4 WI + \varepsilon$$

where ER represents employee retention, LS represents leadership style, WC represents workplace communication, WF represents workplace flexibility, WI represents workplace innovation, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 – β_4 are structural coefficients, and ε is the residual term.

Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate and Respondent Profile

Measure	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	112	59.6
	Male	72	38.3
	Prefer not to say	4	2.1
Education	Diploma	84	44.7
	Bachelor's degree	90	47.9
	Master's degree	6	3.2
	Other	8	4.3
Employment	Full-time	182	96.8
	Part-time	2	2.1
	Intern	4	1.1
Tenure	< 1 year	56	29.8
	1–2 years	62	33.0

	3–4 years	34	18.1
	More than 4 years	36	19.1

The final analytical sample comprised 188 respondents. Females represented 59.6% and males 38.3%, while 2.1% did not disclose gender. Bachelor's degree holders constituted 47.9%, diploma holders 44.7%, master's degree holders 3.2%, and respondents with other qualifications 4.3%. The majority were full-time employees (96.8%). Regarding tenure, 62.8% had worked in their current organizations for two years or less, consistent with the early-career focus of the study.

4.2 Measurement Model Results

Construct	Loading range	Cronbach α	CR	AVE
Leadership Style	.847–.914	.942	.954	.776
Workplace Communication	.834–.903	.938	.951	.763
Workplace Flexibility	.712–.847	.882	.907	.621
Workplace Innovation	.839–.908	.940	.953	.770
Employee Retention	.792–.892	.931	.945	.742

All standardized loadings were at or above .712. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .882 to .942, while composite reliability ranged from .907 to .954. All values exceed the conventional .70 threshold, indicating strong internal consistency. AVE values ranged from .621 to .776, exceeding .50 and indicating adequate convergent validity. The measurement results therefore support the use of the constructs in the structural model.

Construct Pair	HTMT
Leadership–Communication	.813
Leadership–Flexibility	.626
Leadership–Innovation	.808
Leadership–Retention	.794
Communication–Flexibility	.716
Communication–Innovation	.838
Communication–Retention	.817
Flexibility–Innovation	.659
Flexibility–Retention	.712
Innovation–Retention	.831

The HTMT ratios were below .85, supporting discriminant validity among the constructs. Although the values for innovation–communication (.838) and innovation–retention (.831) were comparatively high, they remained below the adopted threshold. The evidence therefore indicates that the constructs are related but sufficiently distinguishable for structural estimation.

Predictor	VIF
Leadership Style	2.984
Workplace Communication	4.019
Workplace Flexibility	1.789
Workplace Innovation	3.748

The VIF values ranged from 1.789 to 4.019. All were below 5.0, the conservative threshold adopted for the study, indicating that severe multicollinearity was not evident. Workplace communication had the highest VIF (4.019), followed by workplace innovation (3.748), but both remained within acceptable limits.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Perceived level
Leadership Style	3.885	1.035	High
Workplace Communication	3.644	1.010	Moderate
Workplace Flexibility	3.038	.994	Moderate
Workplace Innovation	3.933	1.001	High
Employee Retention	3.583	1.004	Moderate

Workplace innovation recorded the highest mean (3.933), followed by leadership style (3.885). These values indicate generally favourable perceptions of innovation and leadership. Workplace communication recorded a moderate mean of 3.644, while workplace flexibility had the lowest mean among the independent variables (3.038). Employee retention had a moderate mean of 3.583. The relatively lower flexibility score is noteworthy because healthcare operations impose scheduling and presence requirements, potentially limiting the practical scope of flexible work arrangements.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing: Stage 1 Bivariate Models

Predictor	β	t	p	R ²	Decision
Leadership Style	.764	21.687	.000	.583	Reject H01
Workplace Communication	.847	35.299	.000	.718	Reject H02
Workplace Flexibility	.657	17.614	.000	.432	Reject H03
Workplace Innovation	.862	39.433	.000	.744	Reject H04

When each predictor was examined separately, all four workplace-culture dimensions showed statistically significant positive relationships with employee retention ($p < .001$). Leadership style explained 58.3% of the variance in retention in its isolated model. Workplace communication explained 71.8%, workplace flexibility 43.2%, and workplace innovation 74.4%. These results initially suggest that each cultural dimension is relevant to retention when considered independently.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing: Stage 2 Multivariate Model

Predictor	β	t	p	f ²	Decision
Leadership Style	.107	1.523	.128	.019	Fail to reject H01
Workplace Communication	.288	4.000	.000	.082	Reject H02
Workplace Flexibility	.132	2.998	.003	.048	Reject H03
Workplace Innovation	.446	5.448	.000	.207	Reject H04

The combined structural model produces a more discriminating result. Leadership style has a positive coefficient but is not statistically significant when communication, flexibility and innovation are simultaneously controlled ($\beta = .107$, $t = 1.523$, $p = .128$). Workplace communication remains significant and positive ($\beta = .288$, $t = 4.000$, $p < .001$). Workplace flexibility also remains significant and positive ($\beta = .132$, $t = 2.998$, $p = .003$). Workplace innovation records the largest independent coefficient ($\beta = .446$, $t = 5.448$, $p < .001$) and the largest f^2 effect among the four predictors (.207). The integrated model explains 79.7% of the variance in employee retention ($R^2 = .797$), with an adjusted R^2 of .793. This indicates substantial explanatory power within the observed sample,

although the non-probability sampling design limits statistical generalisation beyond the study context.

Discussion of Findings

4.6.1 Leadership Style and Retention

Leadership style was positively and significantly related to retention in isolation but did not retain statistical significance in the integrated model. The isolated coefficient ($\beta = .764$) indicates a strong bivariate association, whereas the multivariate coefficient fell to .107 and became non-significant. This change suggests that the apparent leadership–retention relationship overlaps considerably with other cultural features. In practical terms, employees may experience leadership through the quality of communication, flexibility and innovation that supervisors facilitate rather than through leadership style as a distinct independent mechanism.

The finding is consistent with the broader argument that leadership is a carrier of organizational culture. It does not mean that leadership is irrelevant to retention. Rather, within the present model and sample, leadership does not explain unique variance after the other cultural dimensions are controlled. This result provides a useful methodological caution: a bivariate relationship should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of an independent effect.

4.6.2 Workplace Communication and Retention

Workplace communication had a significant positive independent effect on retention ($\beta = .288$, $p < .001$). This result supports the view that employees' willingness to remain is partly shaped by whether organizational information is clear, timely, accessible and open to employee voice. The result is consistent with research linking symmetrical employee communication with engagement and employee–organization relationships (Kang & Sung, 2017) and with recent work on communication among Generation Z employees (Ly-Le & Le, 2024).

In healthcare organizations, communication is also embedded in operational coordination. Employees require reliable information about shifts, responsibilities, policies and changes. A culture that encourages bottom-up communication can reduce uncertainty and strengthen perceived organizational support. The finding therefore provides a direct managerial implication: communication should be treated as a retention practice rather than merely an administrative function.

4.6.3 Workplace Flexibility and Retention

Workplace flexibility had a significant positive effect on retention ($\beta = .132$, $p = .003$). The result is consistent with research suggesting that flexible arrangements can improve work-life balance and influence commitment and turnover-related outcomes (Tsen et al., 2022; Jung & Yoon, 2021). The effect is smaller than that of communication and innovation, but it remains statistically significant after controlling for the other variables.

The healthcare context is important when interpreting this result. Flexibility cannot necessarily mean remote work for patient-facing roles. Instead, organizations can provide flexibility through fair scheduling, predictable rosters, shift-swapping systems, reasonable notice and accommodation of legitimate personal needs. Such practices may increase autonomy without undermining clinical coverage.

4.6.4 Workplace Innovation and Retention

Workplace innovation is the strongest independent predictor in the integrated model ($\beta = .446$, $p < .001$; $f^2 = .207$). This result suggests that Generation Z healthcare workers may attach substantial retention value to workplaces that support new ideas, technology adoption, problem solving and continuous learning. The finding is compatible with literature linking innovation-oriented culture and

employee outcomes, particularly where psychological safety and supportive leadership allow employees to experiment and contribute ideas.

The result also aligns with the characteristics of contemporary healthcare work, where digital systems can affect documentation, communication, scheduling and service processes. However, innovation should be accompanied by training and participation. Technology adoption without adequate support can increase workload rather than improve employee experience. The positive association observed here should therefore be interpreted as evidence concerning an innovation-supportive culture, not a claim that every technological intervention automatically improves retention.

4.6.5 Integrated Interpretation

The combined findings indicate that the four cultural dimensions should not be treated as independent silos. Communication, flexibility and innovation retain unique explanatory power, while leadership does not. The difference between the two stages is itself an important contribution of the study. The result suggests that managers seeking to improve retention may obtain greater practical value from an integrated cultural strategy in which leaders create the conditions for communication, flexibility and innovation rather than treating leadership style as a standalone retention intervention.

The findings are broadly consistent with P–O Fit Theory because communication, flexibility and innovation can represent observable characteristics through which employees judge whether the organization fits their expectations. They are also compatible with Social Exchange Theory because these practices provide resources and support that employees may reciprocate through stronger commitment. Generational Cohort Theory provides the contextual rationale for examining these dimensions among Generation Z, although the present cross-sectional evidence cannot establish that generational membership itself causes the observed relationships.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of workplace culture on employee retention among Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja, focusing on leadership style, workplace communication, workplace flexibility and workplace innovation. Using 188 valid responses and PLS-SEM, the study demonstrated that all four dimensions were positively related to retention when examined separately. However, the integrated model produced a more specific conclusion: workplace communication, workplace flexibility and workplace innovation had significant independent positive effects, whereas leadership style did not have a statistically significant unique effect after the other dimensions were controlled.

Workplace innovation emerged as the strongest independent predictor, followed by communication and flexibility. The result suggests that retention strategies for Generation Z healthcare workers should focus on the everyday organizational experience created by communication systems, work arrangements, technology, employee voice and opportunities for learning. Leadership remains important as an enabling mechanism, but its independent effect was not supported in the multivariate model.

The study therefore concludes that a retention-oriented workplace culture is best understood as an integrated system rather than a single leadership intervention. For healthcare organizations in Abuja, creating channels for transparent communication, practical flexibility and supported innovation may be particularly relevant to retaining Generation Z employees.

Recommendations

- i. Healthcare managers should establish clear, timely and accessible communication channels, including structured feedback mechanisms and opportunities for employees to communicate upward without fear of negative consequences.

- ii. Healthcare organizations should improve scheduling flexibility within clinical constraints. Digital rostering, transparent shift allocation, reasonable advance notice and structured shift-swapping procedures can increase employees' sense of control over work arrangements.
- iii. Healthcare facilities should invest in digital systems that simplify routine work processes and reduce avoidable administrative burdens. Technology adoption should be accompanied by training, user support and employee participation.
- iv. Organizations should create structured opportunities for Generation Z employees to contribute ideas, participate in problem solving and engage in continuous professional learning. Recognition of useful ideas can reinforce psychological ownership.
- v. Managers should treat leadership as an enabling mechanism for communication, flexibility and innovation. Supervisors should encourage collaboration, fairness, employee voice and development rather than relying primarily on directive control.
- vi. Retention initiatives should be evaluated using employee feedback and retention indicators over time. This will allow healthcare organizations to determine whether changes in communication, scheduling and innovation practices are associated with improved employee outcomes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The study has limitations that should guide interpretation. First, the population was hidden and snowball sampling was used; therefore, the sample cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of all Generation Z healthcare workers in Abuja. Second, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at one point in time and cannot establish temporal causality. Third, the dependent variable was measured through self-reported retention-related perceptions rather than longitudinal records of actual turnover. Fourth, the study focused on private healthcare facilities and therefore may not transfer directly to public healthcare institutions.

Future research could employ probability sampling where a reliable sampling frame becomes available, compare public and private healthcare institutions, and use longitudinal designs to examine actual retention over three to five years. Mixed-methods studies could also investigate why communication, flexibility and innovation matter to Generation Z healthcare workers and how leadership operates through these cultural mechanisms. Comparative studies between Abuja and other Nigerian cities could further establish whether local labour-market and organizational conditions alter the observed relationships.

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