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## Article

# Impact of individual and organizational antecedents on generation Z employees' engagement in selected Sri Lankan large apparel industry

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## ABSTRACT

Employee Engagement can be considered one of the fleeting sentiments for the development of an organization. The large apparel industry is one of the important sectors in Sri Lanka as it significantly contributes to the economy. However, their Z-generation employees' lower level of engagement is the biggest problem facing the industry. Hence, the primary purpose of this study is to identify the impact of individual and organizational antecedents on Generation Z employees' engagement in selected large Sri Lankan apparel industry. Accordingly, this study has used random sampling and self-structured questionnaires distributed among 364 Z-generation employees in the selected large apparel industry. To analyze the gathered data, SPSS version 25 was used by the researcher. Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted to test the developed hypotheses. It revealed that both individual and organizational antecedents significantly positively impact employee engagement. The study results will guide the corporate management to develop the relevant policies and procedures to properly focus on the most influencing antecedents to employee engagement of Z-generation employees in the large apparel industry.

## Introduction

Companies must concentrate on a series of strategies or actions for generating products and services connected to employee performance due to intense competition in the business sector. To achieve a competitive advantage, businesses strive to incorporate their utmost effort (Elegbe, 2020). To survive and compete successfully in today's tumultuous business atmosphere, commercial organizations demand that employees be proactive and resourceful in their work roles and commit to high-quality work and engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

Professionals in the human resource field are increasingly being challenged to assist in creating initiatives that encourage employee engagement in the workstation (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Employee engagement has been connected to critical organizational outcomes, such as productivity and profitability. The emphasis of this study is to investigate possible connections between good antecedents of engagement that are commonly thought to be related to engagement and have practical implications for human resource development scholars and practitioners worldwide. Using the existing study literature as a guide, several variables were identified that could go beyond prior studies in terms of antecedents of employee engagement. Employees who worked in jobs where the demands of the position aligned with their interests and values (Resick et al., 2007) felt emotionally connected to their workplace (Rhoades et al., 2017), and worked in a favourable psychological climate (Brown & Leigh, 2016), workplace flexibility, organizational support and self-efficacy were more likely

to be engaged, according to the previous researchers. This set of variables was deemed to reflect employees' most essential, context-sensitive cues when perceiving work-related occurrences.

In the Sri Lankan context, when considering the importance of studying employee engagement levels within the country, it can be identified that Sri Lanka is still developing, and a high level of employee engagement within the country is necessary to fast-track the development of the country. The apparel industry is the highest industrial employment generator in Sri Lanka, according to the Department of Census and Statistics (2020), and it was one of the leading industries that continuously carried out operations even during the COVID-19 pandemic situation and gave a significant contribution to hold the economic strength of the country during the pandemic period. Therefore, it can be identified that the engagement level of the employees in the apparel industry makes a significant contribution to the economic side of Sri Lanka and is vital to the country's economy. As a result, firms must be concerned with new working practices and approaches to compete with the rest of the globe (Jayasinghe & Thavakumar, 2020). According to the empirical evidence of the industry, 35% of Generation Z employees are working in the selected large apparel industries in Sri Lanka (Dheerasinghe, 2019). Therefore, Understanding Gen Z is essential for the business to satisfy employee needs, enhance engagement, and gain a competitive advantage. Employee engagement is a significant human resource management activity in the apparel industry today due to the industry's high employment growth (Pinto & Thalaspitiya,

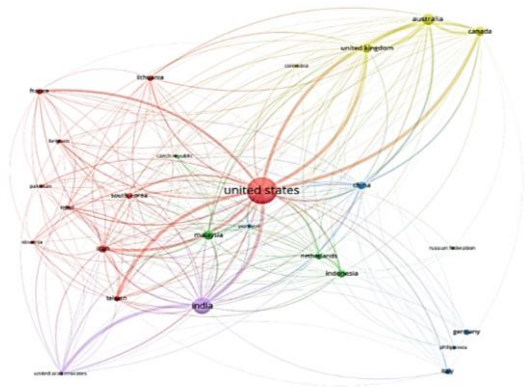
2017). As a result, sound antecedence will benefit the level of employee engagement amongst Z-generation employees.

### Problem Identification

According to Gallup (2021), employee engagement in Sri Lanka is 27% and has shown a decreasing trend compared to previous years. Generation Z employees believe they won't be able to work for a single company till they retire. As a result, employees have a lower level of loyalty to their companies and have lower expectations of reciprocity (Eisenberger, Malone & Presson 2016). The physical and emotional health of the youngest workers is impacted by being born during a period of technological developments and frequent social media use. Gen Z had the worst mental health of all generations in 2018, with 27% ranking it as fair or poor (Bethune, 2019). Studies have provided practice on characteristics that promote engagement in different generations, especially in the Z generation. It has been reported that employee engagement is waning, and disengagement is rising in several countries (Gallup, 2018). According to their most recent worldwide workforce report, only 15 percent of employees worldwide are satisfied with their jobs. Eighty-five percent of employees are actively disengaged or not engaged at work. As a result of the seeming engagement gap, the topic of what motivates employees is raised. More research is needed to examine the effects of a wide range of engagement factors on Z-generation employees. Many researchers have discovered the general behavioral features of Generation Z. There are currently only a few studies of Gen Z and their work-related ideas and habits concerning employee engagement.

Organizational leaders will struggle to properly engage Gen Z employees if they do not understand them. This study examines how Gen Z displays engagement while filling a vacuum in the literature.

While organizations are focusing on employee engagement as a promising strategy for improving efficiency and output, there is a lack of empirical research on employee engagement that focuses on Generation Z in the Sri Lankan context (Macey & Schneider, 2018).



**Figure 1: Country-wise coupling**

Source: VosViewer (2022)

In the country-wise coupling visualization map (Figure 1), the node's size denotes the number of occurrences in each country. Further, the larger the node, the greater the number of occurrences. As a result of country-wise coupling visualization map analysis, the researcher discovered that "United States" and "India" denoted larger nodes in the map. It demonstrates that these are the most studies conducted in developed countries. Therefore, the researcher can identify a considerable gap in the Sri Lankan context.



emphasizing the psychological circumstances necessary to heighten employee involvement. He asserts that three psychological factors are essential for inspiring workers to become more engaged. These pertain to psychology. These are psychological availability, psychological safety, and psychological meaningfulness. The PCT's arguments are similar to those of those employees who are likely to perform better if firms can ensure these three psychological circumstances and degree of involvement in their work. Contrary to PCT, these three psychological states specifically described by PCT strengthen their use in explaining how HRM practices impact employee engagement.

#### *Individual Antecedents*

The individual antecedents that make up employee engagement are often referred to as their drivers. To promote high engagement, several individual characteristics must be present. Therefore, it is essential to pinpoint the primary individual factor(s) that can inspire employees to carry out their duties successfully and efficiently to encourage them to achieve high levels of participation and commitment to their jobs and organizational roles.

Individual antecedents of employee engagement are understood to generally contribute to the growth of employee engagement. There are certain connections described in the literature; this problem is not, however, without controversy and criticism.

Considering the existing literature on antecedents of individual antecedents, the researcher used three main antecedents given many researchers consider these

factors as antecedents (Borah & Barua, 2018; Rhoades et al., 2017; Shuck et al., 2011).

#### *Dimensions of Individual Antecedents*

##### *Psychological Climate*

Individual explanations of organizational performance and policies that relate to organizational inspirations on individual performance, gratification, and stimulation are referred to as the psychological climate (Baltes, 2001). Further, they at the individual level, the psychological environment is conceptualized and researched (Baltes, 2001). The perception or explanation of an organization's environment, which includes its structures, activities, and events, is known as its psychological climate (Brown & Leigh, 1996; Parker et al., 2003). It relates to how someone perceives if their surroundings are psychologically significant and/or secure enough to affect their motivation, affect, and attitude (Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990; Parker et al., 2003). According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), the PC is a crucially important antecedent that might affect employee engagement and other workplace attitudes and behaviors.

##### *Affective Commitment*

Employee identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization are all examples of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). A sense of belonging and emotional connection to one's employment, organization, or both were described as AC (Rhoades et al., 2017).

### *Self-Efficacy*

A person's sense of self-efficacy affects how they feel, think, motivate themselves, and act. These beliefs cause these various consequences through four main processes (Bandura, 1997). SE measures a broad and consistent perception of one's competence to handle various stressful circumstances (Schwarzer et al., 1997). Additionally, SE is the belief of an individual that they can effectively execute tasks required to make a professional decision (Taylor & Betz, 1983). Additionally, it refers to perceptions of abilities regarding the behaviours needed for a specific career-relevant domain (Maduwanthi & Priyashantha, 2018).

### *Organizational Antecedents*

Organizations are essentially complex, intricate puzzles that employees must navigate. However, when it comes to EE, the prime needs of the individual and the anthropological condition are the antecedents that drive the growth of engagement at the organizational level. The fact that fundamental requirements are being met demonstrates a lack of complexity but also emphasizes how challenging it is to set up the administrative surroundings for engagement truly. This may be familiar to anyone who has attempted to drive work teams of various personalities and organizational perspectives (Shuck & Wollard, 2011).

Considering the existing literature on antecedents of OA, the researcher used three main antecedents given many researchers considering these factors as an antecedent (Shuck et al., 2011).

### *Dimensions of Organizational Antecedents*

#### *Job Fit*

Job fit is "the compatibility between people and organizations that happens when: (a) at least one entity supplies what the other wants, (b) they share similar underlying qualities, or (c) both," according to Kristof *et al.*, (2005). The degree to which an employee's personality and values align with their current job was defined as their "JF" (Resick et al., 2007). According to those who study job fit, a good fit offers employees the chance to engage in personally fulfilling work that influences the formation of work-related attitudes. Additionally, a good match encourages significant professional congruence with organizational experiences. Based on these experiences, employees establish attitudes toward their jobs, which have an impact on their performance as a whole. Additionally, a good fit gives workers the cognitive stimulus they need to act in ways that benefit the firm.

#### *Workplace Flexibility*

Saks (2006) asserts in his pioneering article on the causes and effects of EE that traditional home responsibilities have experienced a kind of "role reversal", particularly among working couples with kids, where the parents alternately take care of the household as a whole and the kids in particular. These parents take priority work flexibility above all else. Along with freedom, Saks further contends that employees desire organizational assistance in the form of training opportunities and rewards that could boost engagement (Ugargol & Patrick, 2018).

### *Organizational Support*

Organizational support refers to the development of perceptions and attitudes on behalf of the employee when it is thought that the company has a genuine interest in the welfare of its workers (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Support from the organization enables social, emotional, and practical support (Kim *et al.*, 2007). The relationship between OS and several other factors has been studied, and the results are consistent with the idea that OS lowers employee stress and burnout (Bobbio *et al.*, 2012). According to Zaman (2020), OS increases employee productivity, raising staff members' commitment and performance levels. "Additionally, it has been demonstrated that when employees receive OS, their cognitive and emotional opinions of their company are strengthened (Zaman, 2020).

### *Employee Engagement*

Kahn's (1990) conceptualization is the first in the scholarly literature to discuss EE (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Currently, companies in a competitive marketplace are trying to achieve beyond the expected outcomes by changing the way of practices of managing employees in the workplace (Thavakumar & Evangeline, 2016). In the current occupational context, EE is discussed in a broader aspect on the employer side to achieve high performance in businesses (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, 2017). According to Bakker *et al.* (2006), employee engagement is the level of alignment between employee and organization. Moreover, Anitha (2014) suggested that EE is the degree of employee involvement and commitment to the company and its value. Therefore, engaged employees are an

important element for the smooth functioning of companies (Ariani, 2013)

According to Kahn (1990), an early initiator of the EE concept defined it as an individual who is satisfying the employment and expression favor themselves toward the task behavior and personal presence physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Othman *et al.*, 2019). The physical dimension of employees has defined engagement as the energy level of the individuals to attain their goals. The cognitive dimension has been considered as employees who believe in the organization, its leaders, and working conditions. The emotional dimension indicates that individuals feel about every two dimensions either negatively or positively toward the organization and its leader (Abraham, 2012).

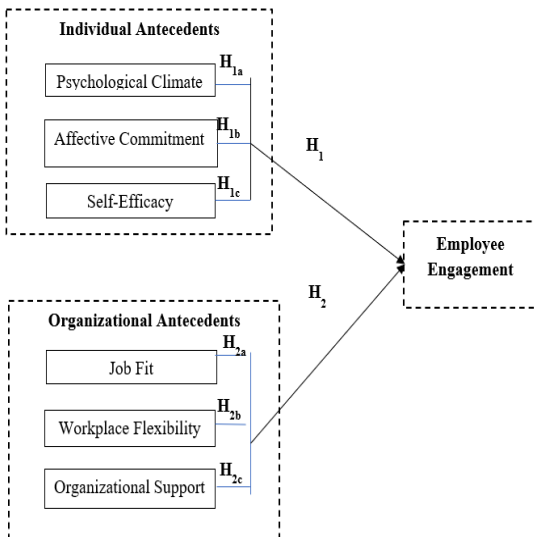
### *Generation Z*

This generation was born after 1996 and represented the current labour market. Generation Z is familiar with technology because the internet has covered them since birth. As the rising generation to the new market, it should understand their needs, wants and expectations (Goh & Lee, 2018). Suslova and Holopainen (2019) have called them 'digital human' and 'online generation'. Further, they identify as the silent generation, post-millennials, and homelands. 'Generation I, Gen Tech, Digital natives, Gen Wii, Do-It-Yourself generation' (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). They are also active and tend to adapt quickly to changing environments. Those researchers have stated the standards that describe these generations' behaviours and attitudes. They are customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, innovation, and freedom.

### Research Methodology

The research philosophy is based on positivism and the deductive approach. It is the base of gathering data from observed reality and uncovering commonalities in the data.

### Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses



**Figure 03: Conceptual Framework**

Source: Author's Construct (2023)

Employee engagement is an individual factor that is frequently assessed at the organizational level (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). A person's personality and other characteristics significantly affect their life inside and outside the job.

According to Macey and Schneider (2018), self-efficacy, psychological climate, proactive personality, AC and trait positive affect served as the antecedents for the emergence of EE at the individual level. According to this paradigm, which was founded on Maslach (2011)'s theory that employee perceptions of their work environment would affect organizational

outcomes (Maslach, 2011), SE and AC cues may play a role in the growth of EE. Others have concurred, arguing that stress, PC, attitude, family and job status, emotional connection, SE and a willingness to focus personal energies are all connected to EE growth. Based on the extant literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis;

*H<sub>1</sub>*: Individual antecedents positively impact the engagement of Generation Z employees.

Currently, a significant challenge for HR professionals is how to effectively maintain a good psychological climate to recruit and retain acceptable and skilled people in an organization. Therefore, psychological climate cannot be viewed as merely an impersonal arrangement between employers and employees but rather as a tool for gauging the caliber of a specific organization's workforce. Numerous scholars have discussed the psychological climate's essential function. Following this ongoing study on a psychological climate is inevitable, according to the majority of the researchers, because it plays a crucial function in an organization. Additionally, (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000) mostly concur with the idea that engagement and retention can be attained by sustaining a favorable PC. Further, Social exchange theory and psychological climate theory also suggest that this antecedent has positive impact on engagement.

Similarly, a climate at work that encourages customer-focused behaviors is likely to help people become more invested in their work, especially when interacting with clients. Peccei and Rosenthal (2001) mentioned employee job satisfaction and organizational performance may be



impacted by service orientation at the organizational level. Hence, the following hypothesis is advanced:

*H<sub>1a</sub>: Psychological climate* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

This study considers affective commitment as an individual antecedent of employee engagement. The core premise is that AC has to do with the genuine affection and bond employees feel for their work and the company, which motivates them to stick with it through good times and bad. As a result, emotionally dedicated employees are typically terrific assets for the company (Mercurio, 2015).

Saks (2006) suggested two essential aspects to consider in determining the relationship between engagement and AC. Employees can first decide whether to get involved with the organization or not. Second, employee engagement is a personal construct that must contribute to personal outcomes before it can result in commercial benefits. The expectation is that human attitudes, intentions, and behaviours, such as organizational commitment, will be associated with employee engagement (Saks, 2006). Researchers predict that their AC to the organization would rise due to this line of thinking. The literature has demonstrated that employee engagement and affective commitment are positively correlated (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006; Saks, 2006; Richardsen et al., 2006). This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>1b</sub>: Affective commitment* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

According to Mangkuprawira and Hubeis (2007), both intrinsic and extrinsic factors have an impact on employee performance. Self-efficacy and employee engagement are intrinsic variables that influence employee performance. Someone will be highly motivated to work so that the final performance will be optimal if they are encouraged or motivated to be more confident in their own abilities and feel actively connected in the organization. Employees that are very self-effective and engaged in their work will perform well. On the other hand, performance declines when EE and SE rise. Therefore, it can be claimed that SE positively impacts EE. This argument is confirmed by numerous prior studies that detail the impact of SE on employee engagement, such as the study conducted regarding SE, EE the findings by Sklett et al. (2018); on EE. Based on the extant literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis;

*H<sub>1c</sub>: Self-efficacy* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

Organizations are frequently complex mazes that employees must navigate. However, when it comes to employee engagement, the fundamental employee/human relations issues are the antecedents that drive the development of engagement at the organizational level needs. Meeting fundamental requirements is highlighted despite the lack of complexity and the challenges of establishing organizational frameworks that encourage engagement occur.

Some authors contend that employee and organizational development programs that entail talent management systems and learning opportunities (Hughes & Rog,

2008) are precursors to engagement. Although it is a strongly indicated antecedent, no “empirical research could be found that specifically focused on the role of human resource development, organizational development, and human resource management techniques as antecedents to the development of employee” engagement. The role of organizational support has been empirically studied before, most notably through research employing the satisfaction-engagement approach (Shuck, 2011). According to research; nondefense organizational factors favorably influence the growth of engagement (Shuck et al., 2011). Based on the extant literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis;

*H<sub>2</sub>: Organizational antecedents* positively impact the engagement of Generation Z employees.

According to May et al. (2004), organizational antecedents are significant for employee engagement. A strong fit between people and their job roles is one of the requirements (Juhdi et al., 2013). In other words, good hiring practices result in high engagement since employees' abilities and skills match job requirements. The Scroggins (2008) idea of the job fit towards meaningful labor can be used to explain the relationship between job fit and engagement. The idea is comparable to notion of job fit, which included meaningful work as one of its origins. Employees are more likely to adapt to their jobs and those of their employers fit well (Scroggins, 2008).

In addition, Leiter and Maslach (2018) emphasized that "the greater the perceived congruity, the greater the possibility of

engagement with work" from a similar perspective. On the other hand, it is anticipated that low engagement will be associated with a low degree of job fit (Warr & Inceoglu, 2019). Based on the extant literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis;

*H<sub>2a</sub>: Job fit* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

A study by Okemwa (2016) that aimed to determine the influence of flexible work arrangements among nurses in public hospitals in Kenya explored that there was strong commitment and engagement among nurses as they had the flexibility to attend to other personal engagements, there was a strong sense of responsibility and engagement among nurses. Similarly to this, a study by Hill et al., (2010) found a high correlation between workplace flexibility and employees' ability to combine work and home obligations, which in turn increased their motivation, commitment, and engagement. Based on the extant literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis;

*H<sub>2b</sub>: Workplace flexibility* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

The relationship between organizational support and employee engagement has been the subject of numerous researches. Studies by Kamanja et al. (2019) revealed a high correlation between organizational support on employee engagement. According to this study, the organizational support is the main factor connecting employees' occupations to their motivation, job satisfaction, and higher employee performance when improved.

According to Zaman (2020), organizational support increases employee productivity, raising staff members' commitment and performance levels. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that when employees receive organizational support, their cognitive and emotional opinions of their company are strengthened (Zaman,2020). According to this interpretation of the relationship between employees and their organization as a dyad, it may be assumed that employees who get high levels of organizational support will be more engaged, even if adverse workplace features lowers engagement levels. Based on the extant literature, this study proposes the following hypothesis;

*H<sub>2c</sub>: Organizational support positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.*

### **Population**

The population of this research study is all the Z generation working in the selected large apparel companies of Sri Lanka. The total number of populations is 7002 in the selected three companies.

### **Sample**

The sample size of this study is 364 Z-generation employees comprised both managerial and non-managerial employees, according to Krejcie and Morgan table and Raosoft Sample Size Calculator. The sampling method of the study is considered random sampling under probability sampling. The sampling framework was derived through the respective companies' Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS).

### **Primary data**

Researcher collected primary data through a leading source, a questionnaire. Data about the Generation Z employees' IA, OA and EE were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire representing this study's quantitative aspect. Further, the questionnaire has been translated into the Sinhalese language to enhance the understandability of the respondents.

### **Data analysis tool and methods**

Statistical analysis was executed to test the hypotheses and objectives of the study. Therefore, descriptive, correlation and regression techniques were used to analyze the data. The Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS 25) was used to analyze the data and produce helpful findings.

### **Data collection**

In line with the research questions and objectives, the survey method is selected as a data collection method.

### **Findings and & Discussion**

#### **Results of the Pilot Study**

The pilot study was conducted for 30 respondents from the sample. Cronbach's alpha was determined for each construct and the dimensions to ensure the adequate reliability of the scale. The range of reliability is listed from 0.799 to 0.862, which is well within the satisfactory level according to Kline (1999).

#### **Response Rate of the Study**

Questionnaires were distributed among 364 Z-generation employees according to the

sample size. 19% valid responses were not received, yielding a response rate of 81%.

**Reliability statistics**

**Table 01: Reliability Statistics**

Variable	Items	Cronbach Alpha	>.7
<b>Individual Antecedents</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.828</b>	
PC	10	0.812	
AC	09	0.839	
SE	09	0.834	
<b>OA</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0.840</b>	
JF	06	0.846	
OS	09	0.841	
WF	09	0.834	
<b>EE</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0.864</b>	

Source: Survey data (2023)

All Cronbach Alpha values are above 0.80 in table 5.8; hence the reliability of the variables was ensured.

**Sample Profile**

According to the data, most respondents (76 %) of the sample are females. This may be because Sri Lanka has one of the most significant female labor force participation rates in the apparel industry. In terms of age, 69% of the population fell into the 1997 to 2000 age range. According to marital status, 70% of people were not married. Further, the sample comprised both managerial and non-managerial employees in the Z generation. Non-managerial employees represented 85% of the sample.

**Hypotheses Testing**

Table 02 disclosed the summary statistics of hypotheses 1, 1a, 1b, and 1c, as follows.

**Table 02: Summary Statistics of H1 and Sub Hypothesis of H1**

	H1	H1a	H1b	H1c
Pearson Correlation	0.896**	0.884**	0.799**	0.864**
R Square	0.803	0.781	0.638	0.746
Coefficient Beta	0.883**	0.792**	0.838**	0.871**
P-value at ANOVA	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Survey data (2023)

*H1:* Individual antecedents positively impact the engagement of Generation Z employees

According to Table 2, H1 the observed Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.896, indicating a strong positive relationship between the individual antecedents and the employee engagement. In order to achieve the research objective and to test hypothesis 1, multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the impact between the independent variable and dependent variable.

The findings indicate (Table 2,H1) that the R2 of the independent variables associated with individual antecedents and employee engagement was 0.803. It suggests that individual antecedents explain around 80% of the employee engagement variance.

According to the projected coefficient, the P-value is 0.000, less than 0.05(P- P-value; 0.000<0.05). This indicates that the individual antecedents significantly contribute to the model.

As a result, IV of Z generation employees' regression equation is  $EE=0.385+0.883(IA)$ . This explains that employee engagement will increase by 0.883 for every increase of individual antecedents by

one unit. The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures individual antecedents significantly impacts employee engagement in this study (refer to Table 2). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis one (H1) is accepted.

*H<sub>1a</sub>: Psychological climate* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

The Pearson movement correlation between the two variables is 0.884\*\*, as shown in Table 2(H1a). It was found that there is an association between psychological climate and employee engagement among Z-generation employees in Sri Lankan large apparel industry. Therefore, it is statistically possible to assert that psychological climate and employee engagement have a positive relationship.

Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the impact of psychological climate on employee engagement. In the model summary, the value of R square is 0.781, showing that variation in psychological climate accounts for 78% of the employee engagement. According to statistical findings, Hypothesis 1a is accepted.

By demonstrating empirically, the existence and directionality of psychological climate's impact on employee engagement, researchers contend that psychological climate's long-standing position as a foundation for employee engagement, corporate success and sustainable competitive advantage is accurate. Researchers discovered that work outcomes, such as employee engagement, are not only affected by psychological climate but also can be instrumental in its accumulation,

with the relationship potentially functioning as a virtuous cycle. The researcher did this by using cross-sectional data and exploring the impact of psychological climate on employee engagement in the Z generation. Therefore, employee engagement results support sub-hypothesis H1a.

*H<sub>1b</sub>: Affective commitment* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees

The Pearson movement correlation between the two variables is 0.799\*\*, as shown in Table 2. It was found that there is an association between affective commitment and EE among Z-generation employees in the Sri Lankan large apparel industry. Therefore, it is statistically possible to assert that affective commitment and employee engagement have a positive relationship.

Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the impact of affective commitment on employee engagement. In the model summary, the value of R square is 0.638, showing that variation in affective commitment accounts for 64% of the employee engagement. The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures affective commitment significantly impacts this study's employee engagement model (refer to Table 2). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis 1b is accepted.

The regression analysis results show that affective commitment can predict employee engagement. The results of this study are consistent with earlier research that revealed an affective commitment to be a key driver of employee engagement (Hakanen et al., 2012; Saks, 2006; Llorens et al., 2022). This finding implies that a greater level of affective commitment will

translate into greater employee engagement. The employee who experiences a happy and rewarding work-related state of mind (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004) is likely to reflect positive views regarding working in the apparel industry and have more affective commitment, which is a feasible explanation for this result. The findings of this study also suggest that affective commitment significantly impacts employee engagement in Z-generation employees.

*H<sub>1c</sub>*: *Self-efficacy* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

The observed relationship is statistically significant as a positive association at the 99% confidence level. Therefore, it is statistically possible to assert that self-efficacy and employee engagement have a positive relationship (refer Table 2 (H<sub>1c</sub>)).

Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the impact of self-efficacy on employee engagement. In the model summary, the value of R square is 0.746, showing that variation in self-efficacy accounts for 75% of the employee engagement. The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures self-efficacy significantly impacts this study's employee engagement model (refer to Table 2). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis 1c is accepted.

According to the study results, the commonly acknowledged psychological state of self-efficacy can help individuals understand them better and increase employee engagement, which adds value to workplace outcomes. This field-based research study also discovered an independent influence of self-efficacy above and beyond the effects on employee

engagement. It identified a strong relationship that is directly derived from self-efficacy and employee engagement. It's interesting to note that depending on the nature of the work at hand and the particular performance metric being employed, self-efficacy and employee engagement had positive effects.

**Table 03: Summary Statistics of Sub Hypothesis of H2**

	H2	H2a	H2b	H2c
Pearson Correlation	0.857**	0.799**	0.829**	0.849**
R Square	0.734	0.638	0.687	0.721
Coefficient Beta	0.883**	0.643**	0.681**	0.700**
P-value at ANOVA	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

\*\* . Confidence is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Survey data (2023)

*H<sub>2</sub>*: *Organizational antecedents* positively impact the engagement of Generation Z employees.

According to Table 3, the observed Pearson Correlation Coefficient is 0.857, indicating a strong positive relationship between the organizational antecedents and the employee engagement. In order to achieve research objective 02 and to test hypothesis 2, multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the impact between the independent variable and dependent variable.

The findings indicate (Table 2) that the R<sup>2</sup> of the independent variables associated with organizational antecedents and employee engagement was 0.734. It suggests that OA explains around 82.5% of the employee engagement variance.

The organizational antecedents of Z generation employees' regression equation

is  $EE=0.789+0.795$  (OA). This explains that employee engagement will increase by 0.795 for every increase of organizational antecedents by one unit.

The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures organizational antecedents significantly impact employee engagement in this study (refer to Table 03, H1). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis two (H2) is accepted.

*H<sub>2a</sub>: Job fit* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

The Pearson movement correlation between the two variables is 0.799\*\*, as shown in Table 3. It was found that there is an association between job fit and employee engagement among Z-generation employees in Sri Lankan large apparel industry.

Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the impact of job fit on employee engagement. In the model summary, the value of R square is 0.638, showing that variation in job fit accounts for 64% of the employee engagement. The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures JF has a significant positive impact on this study's employee engagement model (refer to Table 3). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis 2a is accepted.

This result is consistent with earlier studies (Chi & Pan, 2012), which positively impacted job fit and work-related outcomes, including employee engagement. According to the comprehensive job-demands resources (JD-R) model (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), personal resources like job fit are likely to promote work engagement and a calm motivational-affective state because of their motivating potential.

*H<sub>2b</sub>: Workplace flexibility* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

The Pearson movement correlation between the two variables is 0.829\*\*, as shown in Table 3. It was found that there is an association between workplace flexibility and employee engagement among Z-generation employees in Sri Lankan large apparel industry.

Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the impact of workplace flexibility on employee engagement. In the model summary, the value of R square is 0.687, showing that variation in workplace flexibility accounts for 69% of the employee engagement. The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures workplace flexibility significantly impacts this study's employee engagement model (refer to Table 3). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis 2b is accepted.

*H<sub>2c</sub>: Organizational support* positively impacts the engagement of Generation Z employees.

The Pearson movement correlation between the two variables is 0.849\*\*, as shown in Table 3. It was found that there is an association between organizational support and employee engagement among Z-generation employees in Sri Lankan large apparel industry.

Regression analysis was performed to evaluate the impact of organizational support  $\Theta S$  on employee engagement. In the model summary, the value of R square is 0.721, showing that variation in organizational support accounts for 72% of the employee engagement. The p-value is below 0.05. This ensures organizational

support significantly impacts this study's employee engagement model (refer to Table 3). According to statistical findings, Hypothesis 2c is accepted. According to Ahmed and Jaaffar (2017), organizational support is necessary for employee engagement in the large apparel industry.

## Conclusions

A particular organization's level of employee engagement plays a huge role in enhancing its competitive advantages. Therefore, knowing the antecedents that affect employee engagement in a specific organization is critical. As mentioned before, employee engagement can be a significant factor in driving an organization to success. Therefore, it is essential to understand the antecedents that impact employee engagement within an organization. According to past research, several antecedents affect employee engagement within the organization (Anitha, 2014; Iddagoda & Opatha, 2017). However, in order to arrive at a better insight into this phenomenon, the researcher identified two significant antecedents affecting employee engagement: individual antecedents (psychological climate, affective commitment, and self-efficacy) and organizational antecedents (job fit, workplace flexibility, and organizational support) were taken into consideration. Primary data was collected from 295 Z-generation employees in the large apparel industry in Sri Lanka and data were collected through self-administrated questionnaires in order to address the purpose of the study.

The primary goal of the current study was to determine the impact of individual and organizational antecedents on employee

engagement in the Z-generation employees in the large Sri Lankan apparel industry. This analytical research was mainly conducted utilizing correlation, multiple regression and with SPSS to provide more meaning and clarify the context to mitigate the research gap.

This study supports the claim that IA and OA improve employee engagement at work. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that such an effect promotes workers to feel better about their jobs, which can be gauged by how content they are with their colleagues, jobs, flexible organizational environment, and support of the organization. Findings suggest that IA and OA could aid young, brilliant Z-generation employees in understanding their employment relationship and applying their superior performance to organizational goals in the context of the significant apparel industry. The current study bridged the gaps in the body of knowledge about the circumstances of employee engagement and its antecedents. It offered an empirical contribution of respondents to help fill the gap in empirical research on the impact of IA and OA on EE in Z-generation employees. In particular, it contributed a newly developing perspective to the large apparel industry and the Sri Lankan setting. The present study results have significant implications for managers and manufacturing organizations that are employing Z-generation employees, which can be inferred from the context mentioned above. The study's conclusions support the idea that investing in human capital will improve performance if organizations adopt Employee Engagement techniques. Since this study is limited to a sample from the large apparel industry (three prominent companies), future research can be



conducted on another industry operating in Sri Lanka. Further, future studies can use a qualitative approach to obtain more accurate data from the respondents; apart from relying only on one methodology to conduct the study, future researchers can focus on a mixed method to arrive at more diverse findings in this context. As stated in the study's limitations, a longitudinal study could be recommended to evaluate employee engagement before and after adopting individual and organizational factors to determine the actual effects. Using a variety of methodologies for evaluating responses, any variances can be seen in the subjective data.

### **Competing Interests**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest for the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

### **Authors' Contributions**

Maduwanthi M.N conducted the experiments, collected and analyzed the data, and drafted the initial version of the manuscript, including the methods and results sections.

Perera G.D.N. Conceptualized and designed the study, provided critical guidance and supervision throughout the research process, and revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content.

Both authors contributed to the interpretation of the data, reviewed the manuscript, and approved the final version for publication.

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