



FACTORS AFFECTING GENERATION Z DIRECT LABOR ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT COMPANY - SCAVI HUE

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(Submitted: July 31, 2025; Accepted: August 23, 2025)

Abstract. This study investigates factors affecting direct labor engagement among Generation Z employees at SCAVI Hue Company, one of the foreign direct investment companies located in Hue City. Based on the survey data of 142 Gen Z direct laborers at SCAVI Hue, applying qualitative and quantitative methods, the study identified six statistically significant factors influencing labor engagement. The study also indicated that colleagues and leadership are the most significant influencing factors, followed by compensation and benefits, working environment, work nature, training and development, and finally corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: Generation Z, direct labor, labor engagement, foreign direct investment company

1 Introduction

The garment and textile industry is a vital sector contributing significantly to Vietnam's economic growth with ambitions to reach USD 48 billion in exports by 2025 [1, 2]. Employee engagement is a critical factor for creating operational stability and competitive advantage, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as garment manufacturing. Generation Z (Gen Z) is emerging as a significant part of the workforce; it makes up around 2.6 billion people of the world's population and accounts for 25% of the workforce in Vietnam in 2025 [3]. Gen Z is regarded as a key driver of innovation and development. Nevertheless, Gen Z workers are prone to job-hopping or working irresponsibly; 62% of young Generation Z (15 to 25 years old) in Vietnam change their jobs in the first year [4]. SCAVI Hue is a garment and textile foreign direct investment company in Hue City, which also operates in this dynamic environment, where labor engagement plays a critical role in improving productivity and competitiveness. The distinct characteristics, values, and expectations of Gen Z present a significant challenge for organizations aiming to foster employee engagement.

Employee engagement is a multifaceted concept, referring to the extent of emotional and intellectual dedication that an employee has towards their work, organization, and its objectives

[5]. A committed workforce is often associated with higher productivity, lower employee turnover rates, and improved organizational performance [6]. Understanding the unique drivers of engagement for Gen Z direct laborers in a specific organizational context like SCAVI Hue is vital for developing an effective human resource strategy. This study is aimed at studying factors that influence the engagement of Gen Z direct employees at SCAVI Hue Company.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of engagement

Engagement is the concept in organizational behavior that is used by many studies to represent employees' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Engagement is a psychological state where employees invest their full cognitive, physical, and emotional selves into their work [5]. This perspective highlights a positive relationship with the organization that makes employees consistently willing to exert effort to contribute to the organization's success and development. Therefore, engagement is not only from employees' beliefs and words but also from practical actions in their work. Engagement is a positive emotion, such as employee satisfaction, which leads to positive attitudes at work and makes employees more committed to the organization [7]. Also, engagement is the degree to which an employee identifies with the organization and is willing to put forth effort on its behalf [8]. Employees with high organizational engagement will stretch themselves to help the organization through difficult times. Employees with low organizational engagement are likely to leave at the first opportunity for a better job. Employee engagement can be explained based on typical theories like Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), Existence, Relatedness, Growth (ERG) of Clayton Alderfer, Acquired Needs Theory of David McClelland, and Herzberg's Theory [9–12]. [9] posits that human behavior is driven by a structured system of needs, progressing from lower to higher levels. Building on this framework, [10] further refines and extends Maslow's model by condensing the five levels of needs into three core categories: Existence, Relatedness, and Growth, thereby providing a more flexible explanation of work motivation. [11] emphasizes that motivation at work is shaped and developed through life experiences, cultural background, education, and social environment, rather than being innate. Complementing these perspectives, [12] distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators, arguing that employee motivation arises not solely from extrinsic conditions such as salary or work environment, but more fundamentally from intrinsic aspects, including meaningful work and opportunities for personal development. Based on these theories, labor engagement is influenced not only by extrinsic factors such as salary and working conditions, but also by intrinsic dimensions, including the quality of the work

environment and nature of work, particularly the extent to which the work is meaningful, aligned with individual needs, and conducive to personal development.

2.2 Generation Z Direct Labor in the workplace

Direct labor refers to employees who are directly engaged in the production process or in the delivery of a specific service [8]. Gen Z is the second - youngest generation, positioned between Millennials and Generation Alpha. This generation consists of individuals born between 1997 and 2012 [13]. Gen Z were born in the digital age; they are the first generation to grow up with the internet as a part of daily life. They live in a world surrounded by the web, the internet, smartphones, laptops, easily accessible networks, and digital media [13]. Therefore, this group has some alternative names, such as iGeneration, Gen Tech, Zoomers, Gen Wi-Fi, Digital Natives... Gen Z has great potential, showing creativity and adaptability in the face of digital transformation, they possess strong abilities to quickly absorb and process large amounts of information, enabling them to multitask effectively [14]. On the contrary, Gen Z is often described as impatient, highly focused on instant results, and valuing individuality and self-direction. They are also perceived as having high expectations, being resourceful, and placing significant emphasis on material success and personal fulfillment. "Job – hopping" is quite common and normal for this generation [15]. In this study, Gen Z direct labor refers to workers born between 1997 and 2012 who share the common characteristics of Gen Z and are directly involved in the production process or the provision of services.

2.3 Hypothesis and proposed research model

There are a number of studies related to labor engagement. The typical studies focusing on labor engagement in Vietnam include [16–21], and notable international studies related to employee engagement are those by [5, 6, 22–25]. The number of factors affecting labor engagement varies across different studies. However, the most frequently used factors in almost all studies can be listed as Leader/Manager, Colleague/Co-worker, Compensation/Benefits, Working Environment/Conditions, Training and Development/Promotion, Nature of Work/Job Characteristics, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the studies related to engagement of Gen Z. Based on previous research and theories related to employee engagement, the factors influencing the engagement of Gen Z direct laborers at SCAVI company have been identified as follows:

Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and Benefits include a blend of salary, bonuses, rewards, and other financial incentives, along with non-financial rewards [26]. Compensation and benefits are both a goal and a driving force for employees to work. It acts as a key factor in boosting productivity,

dedication, effort, and consequently, employee engagement. Compensation and benefits also demonstrate the organization's recognition of employees' efforts, hard work, and contributions. A business with an appropriate compensation system will motivate employees to perform and engage better. In addition, in a highly competitive human resources market, a well-designed and effective compensation and benefits system plays a vital role in attracting and retaining skilled and talented employees who can contribute to achieving the organization's mission and goals [27]. Compensation and benefits are one of the factors significantly influencing employee engagement [16–19, 28, 29] and thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H1: Compensation and Benefits positively affect direct labor engagement of Generation Z at SCAVI Hue Company.

Working Environment

Working environment encompasses various characteristics, components, or elements that may affect both physical and psychological well-being of employees [30]. Factors that can positively or negatively impact employee productivity include temperature, humidity, air flow, noise, lighting, personal characteristics of employees, and the presence of contaminants or hazards in the workplace [31]. How well employees engage with factors in their working environment influences to a great extent their error rate, level of innovation and collaboration with co-workers, absenteeism and ultimately, their job tenure [32]. Creating an effective workplace requires organizations to manage the environment by making it attractive, innovative, comfortable, noise reduction, spacious, and ensure occupational safety and health. Additionally, it should be designed to satisfy and motivate employees, fostering a sense of pride and purpose in their work. A positive work environment will enhance employee engagement. Therefore, we cannot measure the effectiveness of employee engagement without the knowledge of the working environment in which the employee is working.

Hypothesis H2: Working Environment positively affects direct labor engagement of Generation Z at SCAVI Hue Company.

Nature of Work

Nature of work includes tasks, responsibilities, or functions that a worker in organizations must undertake. When an employee is given a task that aligns with their qualifications, skills, and abilities, they are likely to perform more efficiently, leading to greater job satisfaction and increased engagement with the company. Nature of work is a significant determinant of employee behavior and attitudes [33]. Nature of work has been shown to positively impact both job satisfaction and employee engagement [34]. A well-designed job that provides a sense of purpose and allows employees to utilize their abilities will foster positive psychological states,

thereby increasing satisfaction, motivation, and ultimately, a higher level of engagement with both the job and the organization.

Hypothesis H3: Nature of work positively affects direct labor engagement of Generation Z at SCAVI Hue Company.

Colleague and Leader

Relationships with colleagues refer to the interactions among employees within an organization, where they collaborate, support each other, and share responsibilities through cooperation, mutual care, and assistance. It has been found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships promote employee engagement [5]. Relationships within the organization have a significant influence on meaningfulness, which is one of the factors driving employee commitment. Individuals who have positive interpersonal interactions with their colleagues also should experience greater meaning in their work [35]. Thus, if an employee has strong relationships with co-workers, their engagement is likely to be high.

Engagement arises when leaders are inspiring, supporting, and motivating employees in the organization. Leaders play a crucial role in communicating how employees' efforts contribute significantly to the success of the company. When employees perceive their work as important and meaningful, it naturally enhances their interest and engagement. Authentic and supportive leadership is theorized to positively influence employee engagement by increasing their involvement, satisfaction, and enthusiasm for their work [36].

Hypothesis H4: Colleague and Leader positively affect direct labor engagement of Generation Z at SCAVI Hue Company.

Training and Development

Training is the process of equipping employees with knowledge and skills to improve their professional qualifications, skills, and overcome shortcomings to perform their work more effectively and efficiently. Training enhances employees' engagement, which can help reduce the direct and indirect costs associated with employee turnover. Training also motivates employees to put in greater effort, become more productive, and develop a sense of obligation toward the organization that leads to greater engagement and dedication to the company [37].

Development is a series of activities to help employees acquire knowledge and skills beyond the requirements of their job position to adapt and keep up with changes and developments in the organization in the future. While training equips employees to adapt immediately to their current work, especially for new employees, development mainly focuses on the future. Development creates promotion opportunities that motivate employees and

enhance their engagement with the organization. Both training and development have a positive effect on employee engagement in the workplace.

Hypothesis H5: Training and Development positively affect direct labor engagement of Generation Z at SCAVI Hue Company.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the concept that businesses should operate in compliance with principles and policies that make a positive impact on society and the environment. CSR reaches beyond legal requirements and is traditionally divided into four categories: environmental, philanthropic, ethical, and economic responsibility. CSR not only positively influences organizational performance but also builds positive reputations with various stakeholders and non-stakeholders. There are studies indicating a positive relationship between CSR and employee engagement in organizations [38, 39]. CSR is contributing to attracting motivated potential employees and improving engagement of existing employees [40]. CSR increases positive employee attitudes, employee pride, and employee satisfaction, which eventually leads to high organizational identification and commitment [41]. Employee well-being, environmental responsibility, consumer responsibility, and ethical business practices are not only essential values but also important factors that affect employees' engagement intentions.

Hypothesis H6: Corporate Social Responsibility positively affects direct labor engagement of Generation Z at SCAVI Hue Company.

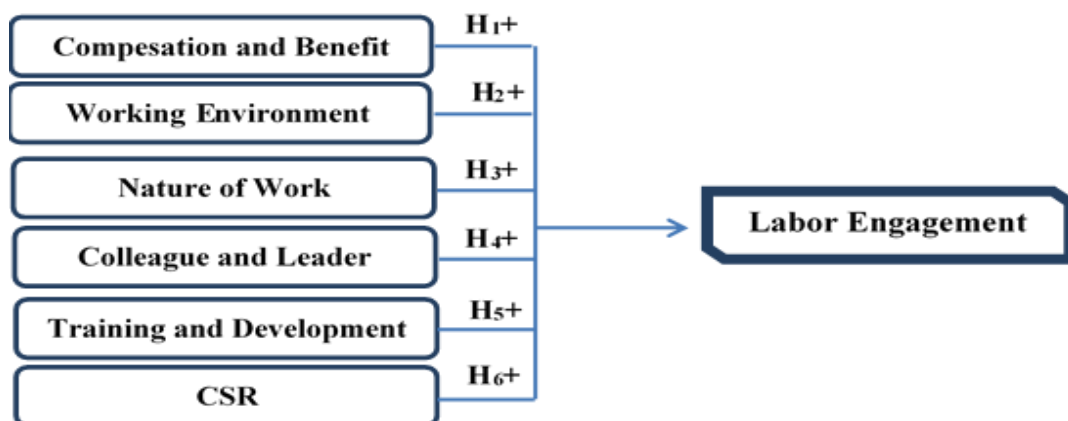


Figure 1. The Proposed Research Model

Source: Proposed by authors

3 Research Methodology

The preliminary scale, developed during the literature review, was used to discuss with 02 lecturers and 03 staff of the Human Resource Department of SCAVI Hue. Respondents agreed with most of the proposed factors and observation variables. However, regarding the CSR factor, staff from Human Resource Department of SCAVI Hue suggested adding the variable "SCAVI Hue creates many jobs for the local area". In addition, based on discussions, several linguistic adjustments to the observed variables were made to better suit the characteristics of a foreign direct investment company in the field of the textile and garment industry. The adjusted measurement scale from the results of the qualitative research is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Scale

No.	Observed variables	Codes	Sources
Compensation and Benefits			
1	The salary here is higher than nearby companies.	CB1	[43, 44]
2	I can live solely on my income.	CB2	
3	SCAVI Hue pays salaries fairly, fully, and punctually.	CB3	
4	The compensation is appropriate with my ability.	CB4	
5	SCAVI Hue provides a wide range of comprehensive and diverse compensation and benefits.	CB5	
Working Environment			
1	The workplace is airy, clean and ensures occupational safety and health.	WE1	[43, 44]
2	I have not experienced bullying or harassment.	WE2	
3	I am provided with adequate personal protective equipment and information for work.	WE3	
4	The work environment is professional, with well-structured and disciplined working hours.	WE4	
Nature of Work			
1	The current pressure at work is acceptable.	NW1	[43, 44]
2	Work is divided reasonably and described clearly.	NW2	
3	The work aligns well with my ability and expertise.	NW3	

Colleague and Leader			
1	Leaders are very close and friendly to me.	CD1	
2	My leaders often encouraged and treated me fairly in the workplace.	CD2	
3	I get the support I needed from my colleagues.	CD3	[24, 45–47]
4	I like to associate with my colleagues.	CD4	
5	I feel a sense of belongingness between my colleagues and leaders.	CD5	
Training and Development			
1	SCAVI Hue provides training and development programs that are suitable for me.	TD1	
2	My professional skills and knowledge improved after the training.	TD2	[43, 44]
3	SCAVI Hue has a clear career advancement for laborers.	TD3	
Corporate Social Responsibility			
1	SCAVI Hue takes part in activities related to the protection of the environment.	CSR1	
2	SCAVI Hue takes part in social project aimed at the community.	CSR2	[48]
3	There are levels of labor health and safety in the company beyond the legal minimums.	CSR3	
4	SCAVI Hue creates many jobs for the local area.	CSR4	Qualitative discussion
Labor Engagement			
1	I do feel like ‘part of family’ of this SCAVI Hue.	CM1	
2	I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with SCAVI Hue.	CM2	[6, 24]
3	If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere, I would not feel it was right to leave the SCAVI Hue.	CM3	

Source: Synthesized by authors

The total number of Gen Z employees working at SCAVI Hue is 1416, accounting for 27.13% of the company's total workforce. Using Yamane Taro's sample size formula [42], with an 8% margin of error, the survey sample size is 140. Gen Z employees work in almost all departments of SCAVI Hue, in which the Sewing department has the highest concentration, accounting for 81.5%; following is the Cutting department (7.2%), QA department (4.8%),

Finishing department (3.11%), Warehouse (2.12%), and finally the Inspection department (1.27%). To ensure the representativeness of the sample, the stratified sampling was used. The distribution of questionnaires to departments was proportionally aligned with the relative proportion of direct labor in that department. The survey questionnaire was directly sent to the Heads of Department or Line Managers, with an instruction and requirement that it should be completed by workers under 27 years old. Additionally, the questionnaire was directly sent to workers in the case of convenience such as meeting in the canteen of company. A total of 145 questionnaires were distributed and collected, of which 142 were filled completely.

Primary data was analyzed using SPSS 22.0 and Excel. The methods analyzed were applied, including descriptive statistics, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Cronbach's Alpha, and linear regression.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Sample Description

The survey comprised 142 direct laborers of Gen Z, with a notable gender distribution of 107 females, accounting for 73.4%. The majority of the respondents were single, accounting for 73.2%, while 26.8% were married. This is a typical characteristic of Gen Z direct employees in the textile and garment industry. Regarding departmental distribution, the largest group included 116 respondents (81.7%) working in the Sewing Department, and the remaining respondents were distributed across other departments. In terms of work experience, a significant portion of the Gen Z direct labors had less than one year of experience, totaling 38 employees. The largest group, comprising 59 direct laborers of Gen Z employees, had been working from 1 to 3 years. Meanwhile, 27 employees had 3 to 5 years of experience, forming a moderate share of the workforce. The most experienced group, with over 5 years of tenure, consists of 18 employees.

4.2 Analysis of Measurement Scale

Table 2 indicated that independent factors have a relatively high Cronbach's Alpha value. The Cronbach's Alpha for all factors is greater than 0.7, and within each group of variables, the correlation coefficient for all observed variables is greater than 0.3. This affirms the suitability and reliability of measurement scales for the constructions derived from the observed variables [49].

Table 2. Cronbach’s Alpha of Variables

Factors	Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of Variables
Compensation and Benefits (CB)	0.941	5
Working Environment (WE)	0.807	4
Nature of Work (NW)	0.934	3
Colleague and Leader (CD)	0.921	5
Training and Development (TD)	0.765	3
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	0.814	4

Source: Survey in 2025

In the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the principal components method with Promax rotation was used. The obtained KMO is 0.870 (> 0.5), and the significance level of Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity is 0.000 (< 0.05). The eigenvalue values of 6 extracted factors ranged from 1.037 to 9.216. The total variance extracted is 75.598% (> 50%). The EFA results help the study by extracting 6 factors, with 24 observed variables. The obtained results of Cronbach’s Alpha and EFA indicated that the measurement scales of factors meet the requirements of validity and reliability for further analysis [49].

4.3 Results of Regression Analysis

The adjusted R-squared is 0.766, meaning that 76.6% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by 6 independent variables. The result of the F-test is Sig. = 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that the constructed linear regression model is a good fit for the overall population. The Durbin-Watson coefficient is 1.986, which falls within the acceptable range (1.6–2.6). All VIF values are less than 2, so there’s no multicollinearity in the regression model [49].

Table 3 shows that all coefficients of independent factors are positive, meaning that there are positive relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In other words, all six proposed hypotheses (H1–H6) are accepted. This result is relatively consistent with the research results of other studies. However, the influence of factors on employee engagement varies across different generations and industry contexts. Research by [19, 20, 50, 51] suggested that Compensation and Benefits is the most influential factor on employee engagement. In contrast, [52, 53] identified Working Environment as the most significant determinant of employee engagement, while [54] found that Job Characteristics or Nature of Work had the greatest impact on work engagement.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis

Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Const.	-3.084	.371		-8.317	.000		
CB	.379	.078	.265	4.849	.000	.555	1.801
WE	.221	.082	.124	2.713	.008	.798	1.253
NW	.290	.058	.253	4.984	.000	.646	1.548
CD	.369	.066	.299	5.625	.000	.588	1.700
TD	.228	.078	.156	2.912	.004	.578	1.730
CSR	.221	.088	.118	2.519	.013	.750	1.333

Source: Survey in 2025

This study indicated that the most influence on employee engagement at SCAVI Hue is Colleague and Leader (CD), followed by Compensation and Benefits (CB), Nature of Work (NW), Training and Development (TD), Working Environment (WE), and finally Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In reality, respondents agree (mean = 4.014) with the first item, “The salary here is higher than nearby companies”, of factor Compensation and Benefits. Also, the majority of respondents (73.2%) in the total sample of 142 Gen Z direct labor are unmarried, so they tend to have fewer financial burdens related to family or childcare expenses. In addition, Gen Z values a positive, friendly, harmonious, and supportive working environment with mutual sharing, connection, and assistance among each other. This reality is supported by [55], which states that Gen Z would be willing to accept a lower salary in exchange for a better work-life balance. Additionally, Gen Z looks for leaders who motivate and inspire others. Gen Z employees also view the workplace not merely as a site of employment but as a space for building community, fostering social connections, and cultivating a sense of belonging [55]. Training and development also have a significant influence on Gen Z direct labor engagement. Actually, providing Gen Z employees with training and development opportunities not only enhances their skills but also boosts their confidence in the workplace. When Gen Z workers feel that the company is investing in their future, their motivation and engagement naturally improve [56, 57]. Gen Z – a digital native generation - is growing up in an era of environmental and social concerns; thus, Gen Z tends to care more about a company’s ethical practices, sustainability efforts, and community engagement. SCAVI Hue is actively participating in various social activities, contributing to the well-being of the community and employees, such as the company constructing dormitories for workers, and kindergartens for their children, building houses of compassion for poor workers and providing shuttle bus services for workers [58]. These activities of SCAVI Hue certainly affect Gen Z direct labor engagement as it aligns with their core values and expectations, particularly their desire for purpose, authenticity, and

making a positive difference. Although CSR is not the primary driver of engagement, its influence suggests that SCAVI Hue should continue to integrate social and community-oriented practices to strengthen its employer brand among younger generations.

5 Concluding remarks

SCAVI Hue is a garment and textile company featuring labor-intensive use. Therefore, strengthening the engagement of young, dynamic, and highly enthusiastic Gen Z employees is of vital importance in maintaining the stability of production. Studying factors affecting engagement of direct labor Gen Z in a foreign direct investment company in the field of garment manufacturing indicated that there are six factors positively affecting Gen Z direct labor engagement, in which the most influence on employee engagement at SCAVI Hue is Colleague and Leader, followed by Compensation and Benefits, Nature of Work, Training and Development, Working Environment, and finally Corporate Social Responsibility. Additionally, the regression results also indicated that if SCAVI Hue does not apply appropriate solutions related to Colleague and Leader, Compensation and Benefits, Nature of Work, Training and Development, Working Environment, and Corporate Social Responsibility, the engagement of Gen Z direct laborers with SCAVI Hue will generally be nonexistent (constant = -3.084).

To improve and strengthen employee engagement, SCAVI Hue should gain insight into the characteristics and behavior of Gen Z. Hue SCAVI leaders should periodically organize discussions, listen to employees' needs, and arrange activities that enhance relationships, cooperation, promote solidarity, and encourage mutual support among employees. This will create a friendly and comfortable work environment, fostering engagement among Gen Z direct laborers. While SCAVI Hue Company is already providing a diverse range of compensation and benefits, including shuttle bus services, free housing, meals, fuel fees, health check-ups, child support, and bonuses for diligence, performance, and efficiency, the company also should promote more social activities and regularly gather employee feedback on the implementation of salary and bonus policies to make necessary adjustments. Training and development should also be expanded to incorporate both technical and interpersonal competencies, thereby providing Gen Z employees with long-term growth. At the same time, continuous improvement of the physical and psychological work environment remains necessary to enhance comfort and inclusiveness. Finally, CSR activities that are provided by SCAVI Hue, such as building collective housing, providing childcare facilities, or supporting disadvantaged workers, should be further strengthened and communicated transparently. These activities allow Gen Z employees to take pride in being part of a socially responsible organization. In doing so, SCAVI Hue can create a holistic strategy that not only addresses financial incentives

but also integrates relational, developmental, and social dimensions of work, thereby strengthening engagement of the Gen Z direct labor force.

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