



The Influence of a Supportive Work Environment on Innovative Work Behaviour of Generation Z Employees in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The rapid entry of Generation Z (Gen Z) into the post-pandemic workforce has prompted organisations to reconsider traditional workplace practices to sustain employee engagement and innovation. As digital natives, Gen Z employees place greater importance on meaningful work, flexibility, well-being, and supportive workplace relationships. However, these expectations often conflict with the hierarchical and less flexible work environments commonly found in Malaysia. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study investigates the influence of a supportive work environment, comprising positive organisational support (POS), coworker support, and workplace happiness, on innovative work behaviour (IWB) among Gen Z employees in Malaysia. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 207 Gen Z employees from various industries. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The findings indicate that all variables were reported at moderate-to-high levels, with coworker support recording the highest mean ($M = 3.86$), followed by POS ($M = 3.71$), IWB ($M = 3.66$), and workplace happiness ($M = 3.64$). Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between all supportive work environment variables and IWB, with POS showing the strongest association ($r = 0.568$, $p < 0.01$). Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that supportive work environment factors significantly predicted IWB and explained 21.9% of its variance ($R^2 = 0.219$, $p < 0.001$). POS emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.001$), followed by workplace happiness ($\beta = 0.264$, $p < 0.001$) and coworker support ($\beta = 0.210$, $p < 0.001$). The findings support SET by demonstrating that organisational and social support encourage Gen Z employees to reciprocate through innovative behaviour. The study contributes to understanding innovation drivers among young employees in Malaysia and provides practical insights for organisations seeking to enhance workforce innovation and retention.

Keywords: Organisational support, coworker support, job happiness, innovative work behaviour, Gen Z

INTRODUCTION

The post-pandemic transformation has changed the employment landscape, particularly with the arrival of Generation Z into the mainstream workforce. Generation Z, also known as Gen Z, is the cohort born between 1997 and 2012 and is known as the digital-native cohort, shaped by a lifetime of technological experience. They value well-being, flexibility, and deep work meaning. This norm, however, often conflicts with the traditional management model that is still dominant in many Southeast Asian economies, including Malaysia (Adnan, 2024 & Salem, 2025). According to Salem (2025) and Adnan (2024), this shift in value orientation is forcing organisations to reassess work structures and organisational cultures to maintain post-pandemic competitiveness.

Gen Z is identified as the fastest-growing workforce group in the period 2025–2026. The Technode Global study (2025) found that this generational group will account for approximately 30% of the total workforce by 2030, driven by high post-pandemic entry rates. Although this demographic shift offers significant potential for innovation, many organisations still fail to integrate Gen Z effectively due to traditional practices that are not aligned with the new generation's expectations (Zahra et al., 2025 & Surugiu et al., 2025). This phenomenon is further reflected in a high voluntary turnover rate (18.5%), with 81% of Gen Z employees planning to leave their jobs within 12 months and exhibiting lower job satisfaction (42%) than Gen X employees (54%), as well as increased symptoms of burnout (44%) and alienation (30%) (Willis Towers Watson, 2024; Employment Hero, 2024; Business Today Malaysia, 2025; Manpower Malaysia, 2025 & MetLife, 2025).

The Deloitte Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey (2025) shows that Gen Z no longer sees work solely as a source of income, but rather to realise personal value, achieve work-life balance, and create social impact. According to Salem (2025), Randstad Malaysia (2024), and Deloitte (2025), this aspiration often conflicts with the local work culture, which remains hierarchical, demands long working hours, and lacks flexibility. In fact, the findings of the Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey (2025) show that more than half of Gen Z reported low engagement with the organisation due to a lack of meaningful organisational support. Supporting this finding, Zahra et al. (2025) also found that the level of innovation behaviour among Gen Z remains moderate when the work environment is not conducive. This situation significantly affects organisational performance because, in the context of the digital economy and the transition to Industry 4.0 and 5.0, organisations' ability to realise the potential of their young workforce depends on innovative work behaviour.

Based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), positive reciprocal relationships between employees and organisations are expected to lead to pro-organisational behaviours, including innovation, when employees perceive meaningful support (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2017 & Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Musa et al., (2025) and Salem (2025) stated that although this theory has been extensively tested in Western contexts, evidence of its application in Southeast Asian work cultures, particularly Malaysia, which are characterised by power distance and collectivism, is still limited, especially among the more individualistic and digital-native Gen Z. This gap is increasingly critical as a lack of ongoing support has the potential to undermine the innovation contributions of Gen Z, who are expected to form the majority of the country's workforce.

Therefore, this study will assess the influence of a supportive work environment that includes organisational support, coworker support, and workplace happiness on innovative work behaviour (IWB) among 207 Gen Z employees in Malaysia. Using current statistical data and regression analysis, this study not only confirms the existing relationship but also strengthens the contextual understanding of the effectiveness of work environment factors in driving innovation among young employees and refines the application of Social Exchange Theory in the context of Malaysian work culture and the digital-native generation.

Research Objective:

- i. To analyse the level of influence of work environment (organisational support, coworker support, workplace happiness) and innovative behaviour among Gen Z in Malaysia.
- ii. To test the relationship between a supportive work environment and innovative behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia.
- iii. To determine the significant influence of a supportive work environment on the innovative behaviour of Gen Z in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Innovative work behaviour (IWB) is commonly understood as a step-by-step process that involves generating, promoting, and implementing new ideas in real work contexts (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). It does not

simply refer to creativity, as IWB emphasises the practical value and impact of ideas on the organisation. In the post-pandemic work landscape, the ability of organisations to remain competitive increasingly depends on employees' innovative initiatives, especially in adapting to technological changes and new work models (Rusli & Zaman, 2024). However, studies by Zahra et al. (2025) and Salem (2025) show that although Gen Z is often labelled as digital-native and proactive, it does not directly show high levels of IWB. Instead, work environment factors are seen to play a more decisive role, particularly in terms of organisational support, colleague support, and happiness at work (Zahra et al., 2025 & Salem, 2025).

Perceived organisational support (POS) theory is often associated with employees' tendency to engage in innovative work behaviours (Eisenberger et al., 2019). POS refers to the extent to which employees feel that the organisation values their contributions and genuinely cares about their well-being. Based on Social Exchange Theory, Cropanzano, and Mitchell (2005) explained that when employees feel genuine support from the organisation, they tend to respond with positive attitudes and behaviours, including a willingness to contribute new ideas and improve existing ways of working. Eisenberger et al. (2019) found that employees who feel supported are more motivated to engage in behaviours beyond formal job demands, including workplace innovation.

However, most of these findings stem from studies in large Western organisations, which typically operate in more individualistic work environments (Kurtessis et al., 2017). In the Malaysian context, strong collectivist values and a more hierarchical work structure may shape how Gen Z employees interpret and give meaning to organisational support. According to Hofstede Insights (2020) and Falahat et al., (2019), this suggests that effective support approaches in Western contexts may not have the same impact when applied directly without accounting for local cultural norms and practices.

Coworker support also plays a key role in creating a truly supportive work environment. Positive relationships and mutual helpfulness between employees not only strengthen collaboration but also stimulate knowledge sharing and creativity, two key factors that drive innovation in the workplace (Lee, Byun & Kim, 2021). According to Margaretha (2025) and Zahra et al. (2025), post-pandemic work pressures and the shift to hybrid work norms have increased Gen Z's reliance on daily and meaningful interpersonal support. Meanwhile, Chiaburu and Harrison (2008) argue that coworker support serves not only as a stress buffer but also as a foundation for building a sense of psychological safety. This finding is supported by Wu and Lv's (2024) study, which shows that social exchange relationships in teams, including coworker support, are significantly associated with innovation, especially when trust and collaboration are high. In the Malaysian context, coworker support also influences Gen Z's intention to remain in the organisation, especially in small and medium enterprises that rely heavily on interpersonal relationships as the basis of daily operations (Salem, 2025).

For Gen Z, work interactions now largely occur through online collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack and Google Workspace, in addition to the increasing prevalence of virtual communication and hybrid working (Salem, 2025 and Zahra et al., 2025). This lack of consideration of the digital dimension has the potential to limit understanding of how peer support is experienced and expressed in the modern work environment, where face-to-face interaction is decreasing. Therefore, studies that consider the digital context of the workplace are important to produce a more realistic and relevant picture of the role of interpersonal support in fostering innovation (Soerjoatmodjo, 2025 and Deloitte, 2025).

Workplace happiness has also been identified as a significant psychological factor in influencing IWB. Workplace happiness typically encompasses job satisfaction, emotional engagement and psychological well-being, all of which provide positive emotional resources to employees (Fisher, 2010). Amabile et al. (2005) argue that positive emotional states enhance an individual's ability to think flexibly and creatively, thus encouraging innovative initiatives. This finding is supported by Katsaros (2024), Soerjoatmodjo (2025) and Viriyanto and Bashir (2025), who show that Gen Z has a higher level of innovation and adaptive capacity, although a global report (Deloitte, 2025) shows that almost 90% of Gen Z associate job happiness with a sense of purpose at work alone.

Theory

This study is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), originally formulated by Blau (1964) and later expanded by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005). SET assumes that social relationships include those between employees and organisations, formed through a process of reciprocal resource exchange. In this relationship, support, attention, and trust given by one party will create expectations of reciprocity in the form of positive behaviour from the recipient (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Reciprocity norms refer to the tendency of individuals to reciprocate support or kindness received in a social relationship.

In this study, SET provides a suitable conceptual framework for understanding how a supportive work environment influences innovative work behaviour (IWB) among Gen Z employees. Positive organisational support (POS) and co-worker support are interpreted as forms of “social resources” offered by the organisation and work environment. When Gen Z employees feel that the organisation values their contributions and that co-workers are willing to offer help and emotional support, they tend to reciprocate with pro-organisational behaviour. This reciprocation is not only manifested in additional work commitment or effort, but also through IWB, which includes generating new ideas, promoting innovation, and implementing workplace changes (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018).

Workplace happiness can also be understood as an internal response to positive social exchanges. When organisational and co-worker support is consistently felt, employees tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction, emotional engagement, and psychological well-being. This positive emotional state, in turn, acts as a catalyst for innovative behaviour, as happier employees have sufficient emotional and psychological resources to take risks, try new approaches, and actively engage in innovation (Katsaros, 2024). In other words, SET suggests that the exchange process in this study is likely to operate in a layered manner: external support (POS and co-worker support) gives rise to an internal response (happiness at work), which then translates into organisational outcomes in the form of IWB. This layered sequence is proposed at the conceptual level; the present study tests POS, coworker support, and workplace happiness as parallel predictors of IWB rather than as a formal mediation chain, and the sequential pathway itself is not statistically verified here.

Overall, SET provides a strong theoretical foundation to explain the mechanisms of how a supportive work environment, which includes positive organisational support, coworker support, and workplace happiness, can influence innovative work behaviour among Gen Z employees. By integrating SET into the research framework, this research not only tests the relationships between variables but also enriches the understanding of how social exchange dynamics operate in the context of a generation and post-pandemic work culture in Malaysia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a survey-based quantitative, cross-sectional design to examine the relationship between supportive work environments, namely positive organisational support (POS), coworker support, workplace happiness and innovative work behaviours (IWB) among Gen Z employees in Malaysia. The study sample consisted of 207 respondents aged 19 to 26, selected through convenience sampling from various occupational sectors across Malaysia. Data were collected online using Google Forms from June to September 2025. Eligibility was limited to Gen Z employees currently in paid work; however, the recruitment process did not formally screen respondents by employment arrangement (for example, full-time, part-time, internship, or student-worker status), a limitation discussed further below.

This study used a questionnaire as a research instrument. There were five sections in this questionnaire, namely (i) Respondent demographics, (ii) Positive organisational support, (iii) Coworker support, (iv) Workplace happiness, and (v) Innovative work behaviour. Items for positive organisational support were measured using eight items from the Eisenberger et al. (1986) scale, coworker support using six items from Ladd and Henry (2000), workplace happiness using five items from Fisher (2010), while innovative work behaviour was measured through six items from Scott and Bruce (1994). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The overall Cronbach's alpha value was above 0.80,

indicating good internal consistency at the composite level; construct-level reliability and a formal measurement model (for example, confirmatory factor analysis with convergent and discriminant validity checks) were not assessed in this study, a gap addressed in the Limitations section.

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS software version 27. The analysis began with descriptive statistics to summarise demographic characteristics and provide mean and standard deviation values for each variable. This was followed by Pearson correlation analysis to identify the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the relative influence of POS, coworker support, and workplace happiness on IWB, with variance inflation factor (VIF) values examined to rule out multicollinearity. As all constructs were collected from a single respondent at a single point in time using self-report measures, the design carries an inherent risk of common method variance; this risk, along with the absence of a formal measurement model and mediation testing, is addressed directly in the Limitations section.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 207 respondents. The majority were between 20 and 22 years old, accounting for 69.7% of the sample. Gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 51.7% male and 48.3% female respondents. In terms of educational attainment, 63.8% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, followed by 23.2% with a diploma.

With respect to company type, 33.3% of respondents worked in private companies and 26.1% in individual companies or sole proprietorships. Those employed in government or public-sector organisations accounted for 19.8%, while 15.5% worked in state-owned companies or statutory bodies and 5.3% in limited liability companies or partnerships. In terms of work experience, the sample was predominantly composed of employees with one to five years of experience (91.8%), followed by five to ten years (7.2%) and more than ten years (1.0%).

Overall, the demographic profile indicates a sample of relatively young employees with early-career work experience and bachelor's-level education, which is appropriate for examining workplace experiences and innovative work behaviour among Gen Z employees in Malaysia. However, the concentration of respondents in the early-career group, together with the convenience sampling method and the lack of formal screening by employment arrangement, should be considered when interpreting the findings, as employees with longer tenure and other forms of work arrangement are likely underrepresented.

Table 1: Respondent Demographic Characteristics

Category	Category/Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	19 years old	20	9.7
	20 years old	50	24.2
	21 years old	62	30.0
	22 years old	32	15.5
	23 years old	13	6.3
	24–25 years old	15	7.2
	26 years old or above	15	7.2

Sex	Male	107	51.7
	Female	100	48.3
Highest level of education	Bachelor's Degree (S-1)	132	63.8
	Diploma (D1–D4)	48	23.2
	Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) / equivalent	18	8.7
	Other / Not specified	9	4.3
Company Type	Private Company	69	33.3
	Individual Company / Sole Proprietorship	54	26.1
	Government / Public Officials	41	19.8
	State Company / Statutory Body	32	15.5
	Limited Liability Company / Limited Partnership	11	5.3
Working Experience	1–5 years	190	91.8
	5–10 years	15	7.2
	More than 10 years	2	1.0

Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Objective I: To analyse the level of the work environment (organisational support, coworker support, and workplace happiness) and innovative work behaviour among Gen Z in Malaysia. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the four main study variables. Overall, the mean scores indicate medium-to-high levels across all constructs. Coworker support recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.86$), followed by positive organisational support ($M = 3.71$), innovative work behaviour ($M = 3.66$), and happiness at work ($M = 3.64$).

These findings indicate that respondents generally perceived their workplaces as moderately supportive and reported relatively positive levels of workplace happiness and innovative work behaviour. The relatively high mean for coworker support suggests that interpersonal support is an important part of respondents' everyday workplace experience, while the mean score for positive organisational support suggests that respondents generally perceived their organisations as providing a reasonable level of support.

Although the mean scores were generally favourable, none reached the highest point of the measurement scale. This suggests there remains room for organisations to strengthen supportive workplace practices, employee well-being, and the conditions that encourage innovative behaviour among Gen Z employees.

Table 2: Overall Mean and Level of Each Variable

Variable	Mean	Level (Classification)
Happiness at Work	3.64	Medium-High

Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)	3.66	Medium-High
Positive Organisational Support (POS)	3.71	Medium-High
Coworker Support	3.86	Medium-High

Correlation Analysis

Objective II: To test the relationship between a supportive work environment and innovative behaviour among Gen Z in Malaysia. Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among happiness at work, innovative work behaviour (IWB), positive organisational support (POS), and coworker support.

All three supportive-workplace variables were positively and significantly correlated with IWB at the $p < 0.01$ level. Happiness at work was positively correlated with IWB ($r = 0.482$, $p < 0.01$), POS showed the strongest correlation with IWB ($r = 0.568$, $p < 0.01$), and coworker support was also positively correlated with IWB ($r = 0.480$, $p < 0.01$).

The explanatory variables were also significantly correlated with one another. POS was positively correlated with happiness at work ($r = 0.508$, $p < 0.01$) and coworker support ($r = 0.514$, $p < 0.01$), while coworker support was positively correlated with happiness at work ($r = 0.399$, $p < 0.01$). These inter-correlations indicate that employees who perceive greater organisational and coworker support also tend to report higher levels of workplace happiness.

Overall, the correlation results provide preliminary support for the hypothesised positive associations between supportive workplace conditions, workplace happiness, and IWB. Correlation analysis alone, however, does not establish causal relationships or confirm whether workplace happiness mediates the relationship between organisational or coworker support and IWB, nor does it rule out overlap between conceptually related constructs; this is addressed further in the Limitations section.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	Happiness at Work	IWB	POS	Coworker Support
Happiness at Work	1.000	0.482**	0.508**	0.399**
Innovative Work Behaviour (IWB)	0.482**	1.000	0.568**	0.480**
Positive Organisational Support (POS)	0.508**	0.568**	1.000	0.514**
Coworker Support	0.399**	0.480**	0.514**	1.000

*Note: ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed). Correlations were calculated using SPSS; variance inflation factor (VIF) values, reported in Table 4, indicated no substantial multicollinearity among the predictors.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Objective III: To determine the significant influence of a supportive work environment on innovative work behaviour among Gen Z in Malaysia. Table 4 presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis examining whether positive organisational support, coworker support, and happiness at work significantly predict innovative work behaviour among Gen Z employees in Malaysia.

The overall regression model was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and explained 21.9% of the variance in IWB ($R^2 = 0.219$). All three predictors showed statistically significant positive relationships with IWB when considered simultaneously.

Positive organisational support was the strongest predictor of IWB ($\beta = 0.274$, $t = 5.459$, $p < 0.001$). Happiness at work also showed a significant positive association with IWB ($\beta = 0.264$, $t = 3.570$, $p < 0.001$), while coworker support was positively associated with IWB ($\beta = 0.210$, $t = 3.615$, $p < 0.001$).

These findings indicate that employees who perceive greater organisational support, stronger coworker support, and higher levels of workplace happiness tend to report higher levels of innovative work behaviour. VIF values ranged from 1.41 to 1.65, indicating that multicollinearity was not a substantial concern among the predictors in the regression model.

The model's R^2 of 0.219 indicates that the three predictors jointly account for about a fifth of the variance in IWB. Although supportive workplace conditions and workplace happiness are significant predictors, a substantial proportion of the variance in IWB remains unexplained and may be associated with other individual, leadership, organisational, or contextual factors not measured in this study.

Importantly, these regression results demonstrate significant associations between the predictors and IWB but do not, by themselves, establish causal effects, and standard diagnostic checks for the assumptions underlying multiple regression (normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and influential observations) were not reported beyond the VIF-based collinearity check. In addition, because workplace happiness is theoretically positioned as a potential mechanism linking workplace support to IWB, the direct-effects model tested here cannot establish whether the effects of POS and coworker support on IWB operate, in part, indirectly through workplace happiness; a formal mediation test (for example, bootstrapped indirect effects following Preacher & Hayes, 2008) is required to examine this pathway and is proposed as a priority for future analysis.

Table 4: Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Variables	β (Standard Coefficient)	t Value	p Value	Result	VIF
Positive Organisational Support (POS)	0.274	5.459	< 0.001	Significant	1.65
Coworker Support	0.210	3.615	< 0.001	Significant	1.43
Happiness at Work	0.264	3.570	< 0.001	Significant	1.41
Overall Model	$R^2 = 0.219$		< 0.001	Significant	

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study found that supportive work environments, namely positive organisational support (POS), coworker support, and workplace happiness, were present at moderate-to-high levels among Gen Z employees in Malaysia. Supportive work environments were also found to have a significant positive relationship with innovative work behaviour (IWB), accounting for 21.9% of the variance in Gen Z's innovation behaviour, with positive organisational support the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.001$). This study contributes to the literature on Gen Z employment and innovation by extending SET to the Malaysian and broader Southeast Asian context, providing empirical evidence that supportive workplace relationships are associated with reciprocal innovative actions (Cropanzano et al., 2017 & Wu and Lv, 2024). At the same time, the relatively modest explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.219$) suggests that SET alone may not fully explain innovation behaviour among Gen Z in high power-distance and collectivist cultures, and that the measurement, sampling, and analytical limitations discussed below should be addressed before the findings are generalised.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to a broader understanding of Social Exchange Theory (SET) in the context of Gen Z workers in Malaysia. The findings show that positive organisational support, coworker support, and workplace happiness are each directly and significantly associated with innovative work behaviour when tested as parallel predictors. Although SET, as applied in this study, proposes a layered exchange process in which external support translates into IWB partly through workplace happiness, the present analysis tested direct effects only; whether workplace happiness actually mediates the relationship between organisational or coworker support and IWB remains an open empirical question that this study did not resolve. The modest overall explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.219$) further suggests that SET, on its own, does not operate with the same strength as often portrayed in Western literature. In Malaysia, cultural values such as high power distance and continuing collectivism may alter social exchange patterns, such that reciprocity does not occur automatically or as strongly as SET would predict in more individualistic settings (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu, 2018 & Hofstede Insights, 2020). This suggests that SET needs to be adapted, and empirically tested with mediation and measurement-model analyses, to more fully explain the work behaviour of younger generations in the region.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, organisations in Malaysia need to take serious steps to retain Gen Z employees by focusing on the factors shown to influence their innovation. Effective retention strategies should prioritise meaningful work purpose, rapid and transparent learning opportunities, trust-based work flexibility, and concrete mental health support (Deloitte, 2025 and Salem, 2025). Specifically, organisations can start by linking daily tasks to a clear impact on the organisation or society, providing open short-term career paths with ongoing upskilling programmes, providing autonomy and flexibility based on work performance, and implementing proactive mental health policies to reduce the high voluntary turnover and burnout symptoms in this cohort (MetLife, 2025 and Randstad, 2025). This approach can not only retain young talent, which is increasingly difficult to replace, but also indirectly increase innovative work behaviours through greater happiness and commitment to the organisation.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and that point to specific directions for strengthening this line of research. First, measurement validity was not fully established: reliability was assessed only through an overall Cronbach's alpha, without confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), per-construct reliability, or discriminant validity checks such as average variance extracted (AVE) or the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). Given the conceptual overlap between POS, coworker support, and workplace happiness, construct redundancy cannot be ruled out without a formal measurement model. Second, because all constructs were collected from a single respondent, at a single point in time, using self-report measures, the design carries an unaddressed risk of common method variance (CMV); no procedural remedy (such as proximal separation of predictor and outcome items or varied scale formats) or statistical remedy (such as a marker-variable test, Harman's single-factor test, or the unmeasured latent method construct approach) was applied (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Third, although the theoretical model proposes a layered mechanism in which support translates into IWB partly through workplace happiness, the analysis tested only direct, parallel effects; mediation was not examined, so the indirect pathway implied by SET remains theoretically plausible but empirically unconfirmed. Fourth, the convenience sample, recruited through an online survey, limits generalisability, and employment arrangement (for example, full-time, part-time, internship, or student-worker status) was not formally screened at the point of recruitment. Fifth, the regression model did not include control variables such as tenure, sector, job level, firm size, or work mode (remote, hybrid, or in-office), so confounding by these factors cannot be excluded. Sixth, diagnostic checks for the assumptions underlying multiple linear regression, including normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and influential observations, were not reported; only variance inflation factor (VIF) values were examined, and these indicated no substantial multicollinearity (VIF = 1.41 to 1.65).

Future Research Direction

Building on these limitations, future studies should strengthen the measurement model by conducting confirmatory factor analysis alongside convergent and discriminant validity checks (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015), and should apply procedural and statistical safeguards against common method variance, such as Harman's single-factor test or a marker-variable design (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Formal mediation analysis, for example bootstrapped indirect effects testing whether workplace happiness mediates the relationship between POS or coworker support and IWB (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), is needed to evaluate the layered mechanism proposed by SET. A more representative or stratified sampling strategy, with explicit screening for employment arrangement, would improve generalisability, and regression models that incorporate theoretically justified control variables (tenure, sector, job level, firm size, and work mode) would help rule out confounding. Full regression diagnostics, including tests of normality, homoscedasticity, and influential cases, should also be reported alongside collinearity statistics. Beyond these methodological refinements, a longitudinal design would help clarify the direction of the relationships identified here, and incorporating additional variables such as leadership style, an innovation-supportive organisational climate, and digital-technology factors, together with mixed-methods approaches for deeper qualitative insight, would help explain more of the variance in innovative work behaviour that the current model leaves unaccounted for. Addressing these gaps would give organisations in Malaysia a more comprehensive and dependable basis for retaining and engaging their Gen Z workforce.

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