
Job Hopping Intention among Generation Z Retail Employees: Emotional Exhaustion, Goal Congruence, and Affective Commitment

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Abstract

Objective – This study examines the effects of emotional exhaustion and goal congruence on job hopping intention among Generation Z employees in a modern retail company in Cirebon, Indonesia, with affective commitment serving as a mediating variable.

Design/Methodology/Approach – A quantitative approach was employed using questionnaire data collected from 119 Generation Z employees at a modern retail company in Cirebon, analyzed through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling with SmartPLS 4.

Findings – Emotional exhaustion positively and significantly affects job hopping intention, whereas affective commitment negatively and significantly affects it. Goal congruence shows no significant direct effect. Affective commitment does not mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job hopping intention but significantly mediates the relationship between goal congruence and job hopping intention.

Implications – The findings highlight the importance of strengthening affective commitment and aligning organizational goals with employees' personal aspirations to reduce job hopping intention among Generation Z employees in the retail industry.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Emotional Exhaustion, Generation Z, Goal Congruence, Job Hopping Intention.

INTRODUCTION

The retail industry is one of the leading contributors to Indonesia's economic growth while also absorbing a substantial share of the national workforce. In 2025, the retail trade sector contributed 13.17% to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed approximately 27.4 million workers (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025). The rapid expansion of modern retail has increased the demand for adaptive and service-oriented employees. Within this dynamic environment, Generation Z has emerged as the dominant workforce group in the retail sector.

Generation Z, defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2025), tends to prioritize flexibility, career development, work–life balance, and psychological well-being, making them more likely to seek alternative employment when organizational expectations are unmet (Mahmoud et al., 2020; Xueyun et al., 2023).

The retail sector is characterized by emotional labor, repetitive work routines, and shift-based schedules that increase employees' psychological strain (Widjaja et al., 2024). These conditions may contribute to emotional exhaustion and encourage Generation Z employees to seek alternative employment, creating challenges for organizational stability and service quality.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in the retail sector in Cirebon, Indonesia. Data from Badan Pusat Statistik Cirebon (2024) reported 108 modern markets and 92 minimarkets operating within the region, reflecting the rapid growth and competitiveness of the local retail industry. In one modern retail company in Cirebon, internal findings revealed relatively high workforce mobility among younger employees. Interviews conducted with the company's Human Resource Department (2026) indicated that several employees resigned shortly after recruitment, while others expressed interest in jobs offering more favorable working environments and career prospects. These findings suggest that Generation Z employees evaluate organizations not only through financial compensation, but also through emotional comfort, organizational compatibility, and long-term career expectations.

This study focuses specifically on job hopping intention, which differs from turnover intention. Turnover intention refers to employees' intention to leave their current organization, whereas job hopping intention reflects the tendency to change jobs repeatedly within a relatively short period. This distinction is particularly relevant for Generation Z employees, who tend to seek new work experiences, career advancement, and better person–organization fit through frequent job transitions. Previous research (Ranti et al., 2022) examined turnover intention through psychological antecedents, supporting the importance of investigating employees' intention to leave from a psychological perspective.

One factor presumed to influence job hopping intention is emotional exhaustion, the depletion of emotional energy caused by prolonged psychological pressure and work-related stress (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993). Previous studies demonstrated that emotional exhaustion positively influences turnover intention and job-hopping behavior (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Majeed et al., 2023; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). In retail settings characterized by intensive customer interaction and emotional labor, emotional exhaustion may become an important factor shaping employees' intention to change jobs.

Another factor examined in this study is goal congruence, defined as the compatibility between individual and organizational goals (Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Previous studies have shown that stronger goal congruence is associated with lower turnover-related behavior and stronger organizational attachment (Twenge et al., 2010; Ucar et al., 2021). This study also positions affective commitment, reflecting employees' emotional attachment, sense of belonging, and

identification with the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991), as a mediating variable that may explain how goal congruence and emotional exhaustion influence job hopping intention among Generation Z employees. Similar use of organizational commitment as a mediating mechanism has also been demonstrated (Setiapati & Soebagijo, 2023), supporting the role of organizational commitment in linking workplace conditions to employee outcomes.

These relationships are explained through three theoretical perspectives. Conservation of Resources Theory argues that individuals strive to protect valuable psychological resources such as energy and emotional stability, and seek alternative jobs when these resources are continuously depleted through work pressure (Hobfoll, 1989). Person–Organization Fit Theory explains that compatibility between individual and organizational values encourages stronger attachment and positive work attitudes (Kristof, 1996). Meanwhile, Social Exchange Theory suggests that employees reciprocate organizational treatment through attitudes reflecting the quality of the exchange relationship, developing stronger affective commitment and lower intentions to leave when they perceive support and fair treatment (Blau, 1964).

Despite extensive prior research on these constructs, three specific gaps remain. First, emotional exhaustion and goal congruence have generally been examined separately rather than integrated within a single framework explaining job hopping intention through affective commitment. Second, most previous studies focused primarily on turnover intention rather than job hopping intention specifically a distinction that matters, since job hopping intention reflects repeated job-switching within short periods and is increasingly characteristic of Generation Z employees. Third, empirical findings on the emotional exhaustion–turnover link remain inconsistent: some studies report a positive effect (Majeed et al., 2023; Rahmania et al., 2025), while others find different results depending on organizational context (Purwanto et al., 2024). Studies involving Generation Z employees in Indonesia's retail sector remain scarce despite the growing dominance of this generation in the workforce.

Addressing these gaps, this study offers clear theoretical and contextual novelty. Theoretically, it is among the first to integrate emotional exhaustion and goal congruence within a single framework explaining job hopping intention through affective commitment as a mediating variable moving beyond the turnover-intention focus that dominates prior literature toward the more behaviorally specific construct of job hopping among Generation Z employees. Contextually, this study extends organizational behavior research to Generation Z employees in Indonesia's modern retail sector, particularly in Cirebon, a setting that remains largely underexplored despite its rapid retail growth and competitiveness.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effect of emotional exhaustion and goal congruence on job hopping intention, mediated by affective commitment, among Generation Z employees in the modern retail sector. The hypotheses proposed are as follows:

- H1: Emotional exhaustion positively affects job hopping intention.
- H2: Goal congruence negatively affects job hopping intention.
- H3: Affective commitment negatively affects job hopping intention.
- H4: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job hopping intention.
- H5: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between goal congruence and job hopping intention.

Based on the theoretical framework and hypotheses developed above, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model explaining the relationships among emotional exhaustion, goal congruence, affective commitment, and job hopping intention.

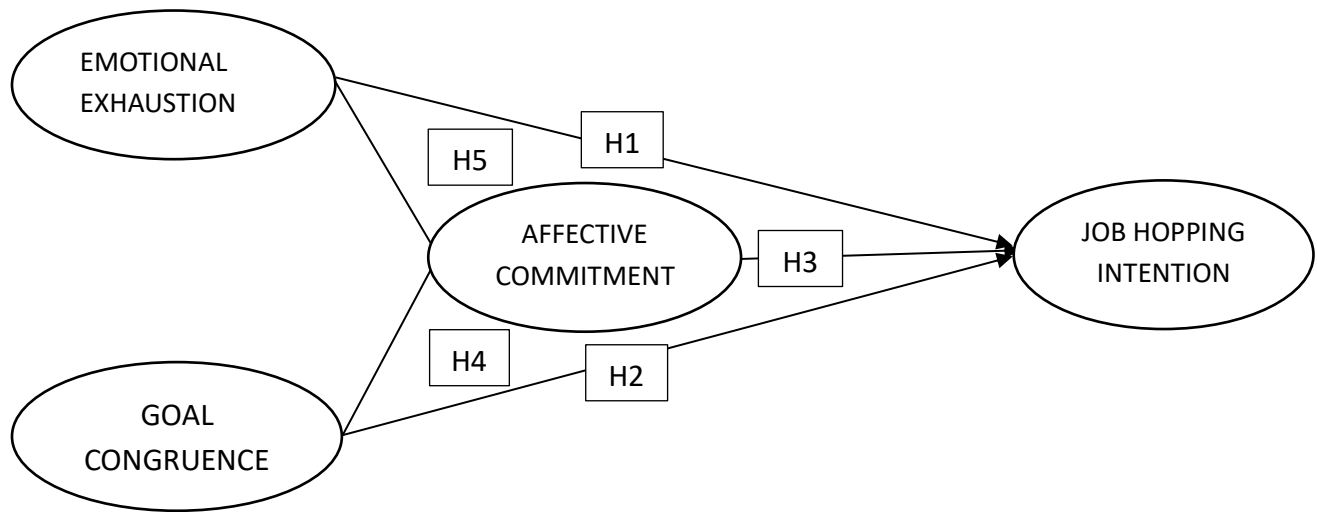


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a causal research design to examine the effect of emotional exhaustion and goal congruence on job hopping intention, with affective commitment serving as a mediating variable. The study was conducted at a modern retail company in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia, and focused on Generation Z employees working in the retail sector. The population consisted of 119 Generation Z employees, based on data obtained from the company's Human Resource Department (2026). A saturated sampling technique (*sensus*) was applied; therefore, all members of the population were included as respondents. The inclusion criterion required respondents to be classified as Generation Z and to have worked for the company for at least three months. Data were collected primarily through questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Interviews with the Human Resource Department were also conducted to provide supporting contextual information, offering a deeper understanding of the job hopping intention phenomenon among employees at the research site. Prior to data collection, respondents were informed of the study's purpose and assured that their participation was entirely voluntary.

Questionnaires were distributed directly in printed form at the research location, and respondents were asked to confirm their willingness to participate before completing them. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents' information were maintained throughout the research process, and all data collected were used solely for academic purposes. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software. The selection of PLS-SEM in this study is justified by several methodological considerations specific to the characteristics of the research data. First, with a total sample of 119 respondents, PLS-SEM is particularly well-suited for relatively small-to-moderate sample sizes, as it does not require the larger sample thresholds typically demanded by covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) to achieve stable parameter estimation (Hair et al., 2021). Second, this study is essentially predictive and exploratory in nature, aiming to explain variance in job hopping intention through both direct and mediating

pathways involving emotional exhaustion, goal congruence, and affective commitment; PLS-SEM is specifically designed to maximize explained variance in endogenous constructs, making it more appropriate than CB-SEM for theory-extending research of this kind (Hair et al., 2021).

Third, the structural model in this study involves simultaneous estimation of multiple latent variables and mediation effects a level of model complexity that PLS-SEM handles efficiently without imposing strict distributional assumptions, which is especially relevant given that questionnaire data in social and organizational research frequently deviate from normality (Hair et al., 2021). Taken together, these characteristics a moderate sample size, a predictive-exploratory research objective, and a structurally complex mediation model collectively justify the selection of PLS-SEM over alternative estimation techniques for this study. The analysis comprised outer model evaluation, encompassing convergent validity, discriminant validity, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha, followed by inner model evaluation using R-square, path coefficients, and bootstrapping procedures.

Table 1. Variable Measurement

Variable	Definition	Variable Indicators
Emotional Exhaustion (X1) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)	A condition in which employees experience emotional fatigue and loss of energy due to prolonged work pressure	1 Feeling emotionally exhausted 2 Energy drained after work 3 Feeling tired while working 4 Emotional pressure from work 5 prolonged work fatigue
Goal Congruence (X2) (Supeli & Creed, 2013)	The degree of compatibility between individual and organizational goals	1 Personal goals aligned with organizational goals 2 Organizational achievement reflects personal achievement 3 Consistency between personal and organizational goals 4 Similarity between organizational and work goals 5 Compatibility between personal and organizational goals 6 Opportunity to achieve personal goals
Affective Commitment (Z) (Allen & Meyer, 1990)	Employees' emotional attachment, involvement, and sense of belonging toward the organization	1 Desire to spend career in the organization 2 Pride in the organization 3 Concern for organizational problems 4 Emotional attachment 5 Organization has personal meaning 6 Feeling as part of organizational family 7 Sense of belonging

Job Hopping Intention (Y) (Lake et al., 2017)	Employees' tendency to voluntarily move from one job to another to obtain better opportunities	8	Difficulty leaving the organization
		1	Lack of interest in current work
		2	Discomfort with work environment
		3	Boredom in one organization
		4	Desire for varied work experience
		5	Desire for a better position
		6	Willingness to move for better work
		7	Desire for a more prestigious position
		8	Desire to improve quality of life

Source: Adapted from (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Lake et al., 2017; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Supeli & Creed, 2013)

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	21%
	Female	94	79%
Age	17–20 years	17	14%
	21–25 years	65	55%
	26–29 years	37	31%
Length of Employment	3–6 months	17	14%
	7–12 months	20	17%
	1–2 years	47	39%
	3–4 years	24	20%
	> 4 years	11	9%
Job Division	Cashier	13	11%
	SPG/SPB	84	71%
	Sales Assistant	15	13%
	Warehouse	2	2%
	Administrative Staff	5	4%

Source: Research data (2026).

The respondents consisted of 119 *Generation Z* employees working at a modern retail company in Cirebon, Indonesia. The majority of respondents were female (79%), aged between 21–25 years (55%), and had been employed for approximately 1–2 years (39%). Most respondents worked as *SPG/SPB* staff (71%), indicating that the sample was predominantly engaged in customer service and sales-related activities within the retail sector.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4 to evaluate both the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). The outer model evaluation included convergent validity, discriminant validity,

and reliability testing, whereas the inner model evaluation examined the explanatory power and hypothesis testing results.

Table 3. Outer Loading Results

Construct	Indicators	Outer Loading
Affective Commitment (AC)	AC2	0.748
	AC5	0.848
	AC6	0.803
	AC7	0.776
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	EE1	0.812
	EE2	0.739
	EE3	0.883
	EE4	0.727
	EE5	0.794
Goal Congruence (GC)	GC2	0.804
	GC3	0.820
	GC4	0.838
	GC6	0.706
Job Hopping Intention (JHI)	JHI1	0.783
	JHI2	0.847
	JHI3	0.882
	JHI4	0.783

Source: Research data (2026).

Table 3 presents the outer loading values for all indicators used in this study. All indicators demonstrated loading values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate indicator reliability and convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021). Several indicators with loading values below the recommended threshold were excluded from the model during the evaluation process to improve construct validity.

Table 4. Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	AVE
AC	0.805	0.807	0.872	0.632
EE	0.852	0.870	0.894	0.629
GC	0.802	0.804	0.871	0.629
JHI	0.845	0.873	0.895	0.681

Source: Research data (2026).

Table 4 shows the reliability and convergent validity results. All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, while all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50. These results indicate that all constructs satisfied the recommended reliability and convergent validity criteria (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	AC	EE	GC	JHI
AC	0.795			
EE	-0.179	0.793		
GC	0.695	-0.249	0.793	

JHI	-0.396	0.390	-0.316	0.825
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Source: Research data (2026).

The discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell-Larcker criterion is presented in Table 5. The square root of the AVE value for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs, indicating that all constructs possessed adequate discriminant validity (Larcker, 2016).

Table 6. R-Square Results

Construct	R-square	R-square Adjusted
AC	0.483	0.474
JHI	0.262	0.242

Source: Research data (2026).

Table 6 presents the R-square values of the endogenous constructs. The R-square value for affective commitment was 0.483, indicating that emotional exhaustion and goal congruence explained 48.3% of the variance in affective commitment. Meanwhile, the R-square value for job hopping intention was 0.262, indicating that emotional exhaustion, goal congruence, and affective commitment explained 26.2% of the variance in job hopping intention. These findings indicate moderate explanatory power for affective commitment and acceptable explanatory power for job hopping intention (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Results

Relationship	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values	Result
AC → JHI	-0.338	2.660	0.008	Supported
EE → JHI	0.329	3.246	0.001	Supported
GC → JHI	0.001	0.009	0.993	Not Supported
EE → AC → JHI	0.002	0.071	0.943	Not Supported
GC → AC → JHI	-0.234	2.664	0.008	Supported

Source: Research data (2026).

Table 7 presents the hypothesis testing results based on the bootstrapping procedure. The findings indicate that emotional exhaustion positively and significantly affected job hopping intention, whereas affective commitment negatively and significantly affected job hopping intention. In contrast, goal congruence did not demonstrate a significant direct effect on job hopping intention. Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that affective commitment did not mediate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job hopping intention but significantly mediated the relationship between goal congruence and job hopping intention.

DISCUSSION

Emotional Exhaustion and Job Hopping Intention

The findings revealed that *emotional exhaustion* positively and significantly affected *job hopping intention* ($\beta = 0.329$; $p = 0.001$), thereby confirming H1. This result indicates that employees experiencing higher levels of *emotional exhaustion* demonstrate stronger intentions to leave the organization and seek alternative employment opportunities. Within the retail work context, employees are continuously exposed to emotional labor, customer interaction, sales pressure, repetitive operational tasks, and shift-based working systems that increase psychological strain and emotional fatigue (Widjaja et al., 2024). Under such conditions, employees are likely to perceive the

work environment as emotionally demanding, which in turn encourages withdrawal intention and job-search behavior.

This effect can be explained by why emotional exhaustion translates so directly into job-hopping behavior rather than remaining a purely internal psychological state. Unlike *turnover intention*, which typically develops after a prolonged evaluation of the employment relationship, *job hopping intention* reflects a more immediate and reactive coping response: when psychological resources are depleted, employees do not necessarily deliberate extensively before deciding to leave they simply seek the fastest available route to relief, often through repeated job changes rather than a single, carefully considered exit. This tendency becomes especially pronounced among *Generation Z* employees, who tend to prioritize *work-life balance*, psychological well-being, flexibility, and emotional comfort in the workplace (Mahmoud et al., 2020). *Emotional exhaustion* therefore reduces employees' psychological resilience and increases their tendency to seek work environments perceived as more supportive and less emotionally demanding.

This finding supports *Conservation of Resources Theory*, which explains that individuals attempt to preserve their psychological resources when facing prolonged stress and emotional depletion (Hobfoll, 1989). When employees perceive that their emotional energy is continuously depleted without adequate recovery, they become more inclined to avoid work environments considered psychologically burdensome. The result is consistent with prior studies reporting that *emotional exhaustion* increases turnover-related behavior and employees' intention to leave organizations (Majeed et al., 2023; Rahmania et al., 2025; Syahputra et al., 2025). Although these studies primarily examined *turnover intention* rather than *job hopping intention*, their findings conceptually align with the present study, since both constructs capture employees' underlying tendency to exit unfavorable work conditions in pursuit of alternatives.

Goal Congruence and Job Hopping Intention

The findings showed that *goal congruence* did not significantly affect *job hopping intention* ($\beta = 0.001$; $p = 0.993$), thereby leading to the rejection of H2. This result suggests that alignment between employees' personal goals and organizational goals is not sufficient on its own to directly reduce employees' intentions to change jobs within this sample. Why did this hypothesis fail to reach significance, despite theoretical expectations and prior empirical support? Several interrelated explanations can account for this nonsignificant result. First, *goal congruence* is primarily a cognitive-evaluative construct it reflects a perceived compatibility between personal and organizational objectives, but perception alone does not necessarily generate the emotional urgency required to alter behavioral intentions such as job hopping. Employees may intellectually recognize alignment between their goals and the organization's goals while still experiencing dissatisfaction rooted in day-to-day operational conditions, such as workload, compensation, or interpersonal dynamics, which are more proximal drivers of job-hopping behavior than abstract goal alignment.

Second, *Generation Z* employees tend to prioritize flexibility, psychological well-being, meaningful work experiences, and supportive work environments over long-term organizational attachment (Mahmoud et al., 2020; Xueyun et al., 2023); consequently, even when they perceive congruence with organizational goals, this alignment competes with and is often outweighed by more immediate lifestyle and career-mobility preferences characteristic of this generation. Third, the retail work environment itself is highly dynamic and operationally demanding, meaning employees may prioritize immediate work experiences, emotional comfort, and workload conditions over long-term goal alignment when deciding whether to remain with the organization. Fourth, it is plausible

that *goal congruence* operates indirectly rather than directly on behavioral outcomes a possibility directly supported by the significant mediation result under H5, discussed below meaning its effect requires an emotional conduit, namely *affective commitment*, to translate into reduced *job hopping intention*.

In other words, why goal congruence failed as a direct predictor is best explained by why it succeeded as an indirect one: this pattern is consistent with *Person–Organization Fit Theory*, which suggests that compatibility between individuals and organizations primarily shapes attitudes and emotional attachment before it affects behavioral outcomes (Kristof, 1996). *Goal congruence*, therefore, appears to become behaviorally meaningful only when it first strengthens employees' emotional attachment to the organization, rather than functioning as an independent, direct deterrent to job-hopping behavior. This finding is only partially consistent with prior studies on *person–organization fit* and retention behavior, which reported that *goal congruence* contributes to lower *turnover intention* and stronger organizational retention (Ucar et al., 2021; Yasin et al., 2022); however, those studies focused primarily on organizational commitment and *turnover intention* rather than *job hopping intention* specifically, which may explain the divergence in direct-effect findings between this study and earlier research.

Affective Commitment and Job Hopping Intention

The findings demonstrated that *affective commitment* negatively and significantly affected *job hopping intention* ($\beta = -0.338$; $p = 0.008$), thereby confirming H3. This result indicates that employees with stronger emotional attachment, organizational identification, and sense of belonging exhibit markedly lower intentions to leave the organization. Employees who feel emotionally connected to the organization are more likely to remain because they genuinely want to stay, rather than because they feel obligated to do so. Why does affective commitment exert such a strong protective effect? The explanation lies in the fundamentally voluntary nature of affective attachment: unlike continuance commitment, which binds employees through perceived costs of leaving, *affective commitment* operates through genuine emotional identification, making it a more resilient and intrinsically motivated deterrent against job-hopping behavior one that is less easily overridden by external job offers or situational dissatisfaction. This finding supports the organizational commitment theory proposed by Allen & Meyer (1990), particularly the affective-commitment dimension, which emphasizes emotional attachment as a key determinant of employee retention. The finding is also consistent with *Social Exchange Theory*, which explains that employees reciprocate positive organizational treatment through stronger emotional attachment and a greater willingness to maintain organizational membership (Blau, 1964).

Several prior studies similarly reported that *affective commitment* significantly reduces *turnover intention* and related withdrawal behavior (Gunawan & Hardiyanto, 2019; Moreira et al., 2024; Söyük & Özsari, 2021; Tran et al., 2025a). Although these studies primarily examined *turnover intention* and organizational retention, their findings conceptually reinforce the present study, since *job hopping intention* similarly reflects employees' underlying withdrawal tendency. Within the context of *Generation Z* employees, strengthening *affective commitment* becomes increasingly critical, given that younger employees generally demonstrate higher career mobility and lower organizational loyalty compared to previous generations (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment in the Relationship Between Emotional Exhaustion and Job Hopping Intention

The mediation analysis revealed that *affective commitment* did not mediate the relationship between *emotional exhaustion* and *job hopping intention* ($\beta = 0.002$; $p = 0.943$), leading to the rejection of H4. This finding suggests that *emotional exhaustion* operates as a direct psychological stressor, rather than exerting its influence indirectly through *affective commitment*, within this sample. Why does this mediation pathway fail to materialize, even though both emotional exhaustion and affective commitment independently and significantly predict job hopping intention? The absence of a mediating effect suggests that employees experiencing severe emotional fatigue tend to prioritize immediate psychological recovery and self-protection over the slower, relationally embedded process of reassessing their emotional attachment to the organization. According to *Conservation of Resources Theory*, individuals facing continuous resource depletion focus on preventing further emotional loss rather than reinvesting depleted resources into maintaining organizational bonds (Hobfoll, 1989). Consequently, *emotional exhaustion* appears to directly stimulate *job hopping intention* regardless of employees' existing level of *affective commitment* even emotionally committed employees may still seek to leave once exhaustion reaches a critical threshold, because the underlying stressor is physiological and energetic rather than relational.

Previous studies similarly emphasized that *emotional exhaustion* is closely associated with turnover-related behavior, reduced commitment, and employees' withdrawal intention (Do et al., 2023; Majeed et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2025b). Although these studies mainly examined *turnover intention* and organizational withdrawal behavior, their findings remain conceptually relevant, since *job hopping intention* similarly reflects employees' tendency to leave unfavorable work environments. Within the retail work environment, *emotional exhaustion* may function as an immediate behavioral trigger rather than an attitude-mediated one, because *Generation Z* employees tend to react more quickly to psychologically unfavorable conditions and prioritize emotional well-being in their career decisions.

The Mediating Role of Affective Commitment in the Relationship Between Goal Congruence and Job Hopping Intention

In contrast, *affective commitment* significantly mediated the relationship between *goal congruence* and *job hopping intention* ($\beta = -0.234$; $p = 0.008$), thereby confirming H5. This finding indicates that *goal congruence* does not directly reduce employees' intention to leave the organization but instead operates indirectly, through the development of *affective commitment*. Employees perceiving stronger alignment between personal and organizational goals tend to develop stronger emotional attachment, organizational identification, and sense of belonging, which subsequently reduces their intention to change jobs. Why does this indirect pathway succeed where the direct effect (H2) failed? The answer lies in the sequential nature of the underlying psychological process: *goal congruence* first shapes employees' cognitive appraisal of person organization fit, and it is only once this appraisal is internalized emotionally manifesting as *affective commitment* that it becomes behaviorally consequential enough to influence job-hopping behavior. This finding reinforces *Person Organization Fit Theory*, which emphasizes that compatibility between individual and organizational values contributes to positive employee attitudes and stronger organizational attachment (Kristof, 1996).

The finding is also consistent with *Social Exchange Theory*, suggesting that employees who perceive compatibility with organizational goals feel more psychologically connected to the organization, thereby strengthening *affective commitment* and reducing withdrawal intention (Blau,

1964). Previous studies similarly reported that *goal congruence* contributes to stronger organizational commitment and lower turnover-related behavior (Ucar et al., 2021; Yasin et al., 2022; Zuky et al., 2025). Although these studies primarily focused on *turnover intention* and organizational retention, their findings conceptually support the present study, since *job hopping intention* similarly reflects employees' intention to leave the organization. The present study extends this line of research by demonstrating that *affective commitment* functions as an essential psychological conduit linking *goal congruence* and *job hopping intention* specifically among *Generation Z* employees within the retail sector. Overall, the findings suggest that *job hopping intention* among *Generation Z* employees in the retail sector is influenced more strongly by *emotional exhaustion* and *affective commitment* than by *goal congruence* directly. Although goal alignment remains important, its effectiveness in reducing *job hopping intention* depends largely on its capacity to strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the organization within this research context.

Theoretical Implications

This study offers several theoretical contributions that refine and extend the three theoretical perspectives underlying the proposed model. First, with respect to *Conservation of Resources Theory*, the findings extend rather than merely confirm the theory by demonstrating that resource depletion can produce direct behavioral consequences in this case, *job hopping intention* without requiring mediation through relational or attitudinal variables such as *affective commitment* (Hobfoll, 1989). This suggests a boundary condition for COR-based models of withdrawal behavior: when the depleted resource is primarily energetic and physiological, its behavioral effects may bypass commitment-based mechanisms altogether. Second, the study enriches *Person–Organization Fit Theory* by empirically demonstrating that fit-related constructs, such as *goal congruence*, do not always exert direct behavioral influence; rather, their effect is contingent on successfully translating cognitive fit perceptions into emotional attachment (Kristof, 1996). This refines the theory's applied scope by clarifying when P-O fit matters behaviorally namely, only after it has been emotionally internalized rather than assuming a uniform direct effect across all outcome variables.

Third, the significant mediating role of *affective commitment* between *goal congruence* and *job hopping intention* reinforces *Social Exchange Theory's* core proposition that positive organizational treatment is reciprocated through emotional attachment and reduced withdrawal intention (Blau, 1964), while simultaneously showing that this reciprocity mechanism does not uniformly apply to stressor-based antecedents such as *emotional exhaustion*. Collectively, these findings support a more nuanced, antecedent-specific application of commitment-based mediation theory, in which the mediating relevance of *affective commitment* depends on the nature of the antecedent cognitive-evaluative factors such as *goal congruence* require emotional mediation, whereas resource-depleting stressors such as *emotional exhaustion* do not.

Managerial Implications

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study offers concrete, actionable recommendations for retail managers seeking to reduce job hopping intention among *Generation Z* employees. First, because *emotional exhaustion* emerged as the strongest and most direct predictor of *job hopping intention*, retail managers should prioritize interventions that directly alleviate workplace stress, such as structured rest breaks during shift-based schedules, realistic sales-target setting, adequate staffing levels during peak operational hours, and accessible psychological support programs (e.g., counseling services or peer-support systems) to help employees recover emotional resources before

exhaustion accumulates to a critical level. Second, given that *goal congruence* only reduces job-hopping behavior indirectly, through *affective commitment*, managers should not rely on goal-alignment communication alone such as mission statements or onboarding materials as a standalone retention strategy. Instead, organizations should actively translate goal alignment into emotional experience through mentorship programs, recognition initiatives, and participatory decision-making that allow *Generation Z* employees to feel, not merely understand intellectually, that their personal aspirations are genuinely valued within the organization.

Third, because *affective commitment* was shown to be the most consistent protective factor against job hopping across both its direct effect and its mediating role, retail managers should invest in long-term relationship-building strategies, including transparent internal communication, career development pathways tailored to *Generation Z* preferences for growth and flexibility, and regular recognition of individual contributions to foster a genuine sense of belonging. Fourth, given that emotional exhaustion operates independently of affective commitment in driving job hopping intention, organizations should treat stress-reduction and commitment-building initiatives as parallel, not substitutable, retention strategies strengthening emotional bonds alone will not compensate for unresolved operational stressors that continue to drain employees' psychological resources. Taken together, these managerial strategies suggest that reducing *job hopping intention* among *Generation Z* retail employees requires a dual approach: simultaneously minimizing sources of emotional strain while actively cultivating emotional attachment to the organization, rather than relying on either strategy in isolation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of *emotional exhaustion* and *goal congruence* on *job hopping intention* among *Generation Z* employees in the retail sector, with *affective commitment* as a mediating variable. The results confirm that *emotional exhaustion* significantly increases *job hopping intention*, while *affective commitment* significantly reduces it, whereas *goal congruence* exerts no meaningful direct effect. The mediation analysis further reveals that *affective commitment* does not translate *emotional exhaustion* into *job hopping intention*, yet it fully channels the influence of *goal congruence*, indicating that cognitive fit perceptions require emotional internalization before shaping withdrawal behavior, whereas resource-based stressors act independently of relational bonds. Taken together, these outcomes position emotional attachment as the pivotal mechanism connecting organizational compatibility to employee retention, while underscoring stress-related antecedents as a distinct, equally consequential pathway. This study nonetheless remains bounded by its single-organization setting, modest respondent pool, and cross-sectional self-report design, which restrict generalizability and preclude causal inference over time. Future inquiry would benefit from broader industry coverage, longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and complementary constructs such as perceived organizational support, compensation equity, and leadership style. From a policy standpoint, retail associations and human resource authorities are encouraged to formulate retention guidelines that jointly target psychological well-being and emotional attachment, rather than treating them as interchangeable levers for reducing workforce mobility among younger employees.

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