# THE ROLE OF SELF-REWARD IN BOOSTING PERFORMANCE AND MENTAL WELL-BEING FOR REMOTE GENERATION Z WORKERS

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*Abstract*
*Generation Z, as digital natives, possess unique characteristics that make them susceptible to stress and burnout. This study aims to explore the impact of self-reward on the performance and mental well-being of Generation Z employees working remotely. Specifically, this research investigates how self-reward can serve as an effective coping mechanism for Generation Z in dealing with high job demands and social isolation associated with remote work. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this study analyzes the subjective experiences of Generation Z employees regarding their characteristics related to the implementation of self-reward. The findings indicate that self-reward not only enhances performance and motivation but also plays a significant role in maintaining emotional balance and reducing stress levels. Additionally, this study identifies the most effective types of self-reward for Generation Z and the factors influencing the success of its implementation. These findings have important implications for organizations in designing more effective employee development and well-being programs.*
*Keywords:* Generation Z, Self-Reward, Mental Wellbeing, Performance Management.

## INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital era, many companies have transitioned to remote work systems that allow employees to work from anywhere. This phenomenon became particularly prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which mandated that individuals isolate themselves in their homes. Such changes present new challenges and opportunities, especially for Generation Z employees—those born between 1997 and 2012—who are characterized by their unique traits. Generation Z has grown up in an information technology-rich environment, leading to different perspectives and approaches to work compared to previous generations (Twenge, 2019).

Employee performance is a key factor in organizational success. However, in the context of remote work, optimizing employee performance becomes a complex challenge. Factors such as social isolation, a lack of face-to-face interaction, and challenges in time management can significantly affect productivity (Choudhury,

Foroughi, & Larson, 2021). Therefore, there is a pressing need for effective strategies to enhance employee performance, particularly for Generation Z.

One strategy that has garnered attention is self-reward. Self-reward refers to the practice of giving oneself a reward for achieving specific goals, which can enhance motivation and mental well-being (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). In the context of remote work, self-reward can serve as an effective tool to encourage Generation Z employees to stay motivated, maintain focus, and optimize their performance outcomes. Self-reward can foster a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. When employees feel valued for their efforts, they are more likely to improve their performance and commitment to their work (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Thus, the application of self-reward in remote work environments can positively contribute to employees' mental well-being. Mental well-being is a crucial factor influencing employee performance that cannot be overlooked. Generation Z tends to be more open to discussing mental health issues and prioritizes work-life balance (Pew Research Center, 2020). It is essential to develop strategies that focus not only on performance but also on employee mental health. In this context, self-reward serves not only as a motivational tool but also as a mechanism to support mental well-being. Self-reward allows employees to recognize and appreciate their achievements, encouraging them to remain focused and motivated in less interactive work situations.

Through this approach, this study aims to explore how self-reward can be utilized as a strategy to maximize performance and support the mental well-being of Generation Z employees working remotely. By gaining a deeper understanding of the relationship between self-reward, performance, and mental well-being, it is hoped that useful solutions can be identified for organizations as they navigate the challenges of the modern era.

The findings of this research are expected to provide significant contributions to human resource managers and organizational leaders in designing more effective policies and practices to support Generation Z employees in the remote work era. This study focuses on the importance of creating a work environment that supports both performance and mental well-being, ultimately leading to overall organizational success.

The term Performance Management is a combination of the words management and performance. Management originates from the word "to manage," which means to organize. According to George R. Terry in his book *Principles of Management*, management is a process that utilizes both the science and art of applying planning, organizing, directing, and controlling functions to the activities of a group of individuals equipped with resources or production factors to achieve predetermined goals effectively and efficiently.

On the other hand, performance, as defined by several experts including Rivai & Basri, is described as: "The result or level of overall success of an individual during a

specific period in carrying out tasks, compared with various possibilities, such as established work standards, targets, objectives, or criteria that have been previously agreed upon."

When combining the two words, management and performance, we arrive at the new term Performance Management. Thus, performance management is a process aimed at effectively managing and developing individuals in ways that enhance the likelihood of achieving objectives within a specified timeframe, whether short-term or long-term.

The concept of performance is based on three key elements: (1) ability, (2) motivation, and (3) environment. Therefore, in order to achieve good performance, an individual must have a strong desire to perform their work and possess knowledge about their tasks. Without understanding these three factors, good performance cannot be attained. In other words, individual performance can be improved when there is alignment between the job requirements and the individual's abilities. Additionally, individual performance is influenced by job satisfaction, which is the individual's perception of their job. This perception reflects an evaluation of how well their overall work satisfies their needs.

Self-reward refers to the practice in which individuals provide themselves with rewards as recognition for their achievements, efforts, or positive behaviors. This concept is rooted in motivational theory, where individuals are motivated to achieve specific goals and subsequently provide rewards as a means to reinforce those behaviors. Self-reward can help enhance intrinsic motivation, increase satisfaction, and improve mental well-being.

According to Keller and Bless (2008), self-reward can be defined as "a process through which individuals acknowledge and positively appreciate their own achievements, which can enhance motivation and performance in the future."

Types of rewards:

1. Physical Rewards: These include tangible gifts that can be seen and felt, such as buying new items, enjoying favorite foods, or engaging in pleasurable activities after reaching specific targets.

2. Emotional Rewards: These involve rewards that provide emotional satisfaction, such as allowing oneself to relax, enjoying personal time, or celebrating achievements with friends.

3. Social Rewards: These are rewards that involve interaction with others, such as sharing accomplishments with friends or family, or receiving recognition from colleagues.

4. Mental Rewards: This includes reflective rewards, such as giving oneself time to think and plan next steps, or acknowledging progress made in the learning process.

5. Spiritual Rewards: These involve practices that enhance spiritual well-being, such as meditation, gratitude, or engaging in soul-soothing activities.

The motivational theories related to self-reward are often classified into two main categories: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Both play significant roles in understanding how individuals are motivated to achieve their goals and how self-reward can influence their behavior.

Intrinsic motivation is the drive to engage in an activity because the individual finds satisfaction, interest, or enjoyment in the activity itself. In the context of self-reward, intrinsically motivated individuals may undertake specific tasks not for external rewards but because they enjoy the process and feel content with their accomplishments. Here, self-reward serves as recognition of their efforts and achievements, enhancing their sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction.

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is the drive to engage in an activity to obtain rewards or avoid punishments that originate from outside the individual. In this case, self-reward can be viewed as a form of external reward given to oneself after achieving specific goals. Individuals who are extrinsically motivated may focus more on the end results, such as rewards, recognition, or financial outcomes, with self-reward acting as a reinforcement to achieve those outcomes.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as "a state of well-being in which individuals realize their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to contribute to their communities." Ryff and Keyes (1995) developed a model of psychological well-being that encompasses six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

In the context of positive psychology, Martin Seligman (2011) introduced the PERMA model, which includes five components: P (Positive Emotion), E (Engagement), R (Relationships), M (Meaning), and A (Accomplishment). According to Seligman, mental well-being involves the experience of positive emotions, engagement in activities, good relationships with others, meaning in life, and achievements. This model suggests that mental well-being is the result of various interconnected positive experiences.

From the various definitions presented, it can be concluded that mental well-being is a multidimensional concept encompassing emotional, psychological, and social aspects. It relates to an individual's ability to function effectively in daily life and to interact positively with their social environment. A deeper understanding of mental well-being can aid in the development of strategies to enhance the quality of life for individuals and communities as a whole.

Generation Z, encompassing individuals born between 1996 and 2012, represents a cohort that has grown up in the digital era, possessing unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. Research on Generation Z indicates that they are "digital natives," meaning they have had access to technology and the internet

from an early age, which has influenced their methods of interaction, learning, and communication.

Gen Z faces adaptive challenges as they integrate into the established workforce, characterized by cultures and values that may differ from their expectations. This generation is often perceived as impatient, desiring instant results, which can conflict with the more traditional corporate cultures that emphasize patience and loyalty in career-building. Furthermore, Generation Z demands greater flexibility regarding working hours, locations, and adaptive work patterns. This demand may stem from their educational experiences in the digital age, where remote learning and information accessibility are commonplace. Such needs for flexibility can pose challenges for organizations tied to more traditional work models.

Additionally, Generation Z places a strong emphasis on maintaining a work-life balance. They tend to seek jobs that allow for this balance, offering added value through flexible schedules and support for mental well-being. With collaborative skills honed through social media and collaborative technologies, Gen Z is inclined to seek work environments that promote team collaboration and open communication. They value clear and constructive feedback, as well as opportunities to contribute in inclusive work settings.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how self-reward practices can influence the performance and mental well-being of Generation Z employees in the context of remote work. The research is designed to gain an understanding and provide a detailed description of phenomena related to self-reward within this demographic. This approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to delve into the meanings and subjective experiences of individuals, as well as to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the collected data (Creswell, 2014).

By utilizing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the study aims to capture the nuances of self-reward practices and their implications for Generation Z employees, thereby offering insights that can contribute to both academic discourse and practical applications within organizational settings.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study are derived from an analysis of relevant literature on self-reward, performance, and the mental well-being of Generation Z employees working remotely. Based on this review of the sources, the unique characteristics of Generation Z are found to significantly influence their perspectives on work and rewards.

**Characteristics of Generation Z Influencing Perspectives on Work**

Generation Z, as individuals, tends to seek employment that holds greater meaning and purpose. They aspire to contribute to something beyond merely earning a salary. Flexibility is a highly valued attribute, with the concepts of remote work and adaptable hours being particularly appealing to this generation. Growing up in the digital era, each member of Generation Z is highly skilled in leveraging technology. They expect technology to be an integral tool in their work, enhancing efficiency and productivity.

Moreover, individuals in Generation Z are known for their collaborative nature. They thrive in work environments that foster creativity and innovation and enjoy working within diverse teams. Maintaining a balance between personal life and work is also a top priority for each individual in this generation. They are unwilling to sacrifice leisure time and personal interests in pursuit of their careers. Finally, while they value remuneration, recognition of their achievements is extremely important to Generation Z individuals. They seek to feel appreciated and acknowledged for their contributions to the organization.

**Generation Z's Perspective on Mental Well-Being and Self-Reward**

In the context of Generation Z employees, self-reward can take various forms, such as personal recognition, small gifts, or additional break time. Research indicates that self-reward can enhance motivation and job satisfaction, which in turn can contribute to improved performance.

A review of the literature shows that the implementation of self-reward can positively affect employee performance. Employees who feel appreciated, both by themselves and their organizations, are likely to demonstrate higher levels of productivity. This aligns with motivational theories suggesting that recognition and rewards can enhance employee engagement. Generation Z employees, known for their values of independence and the pursuit of meaning in their work, are more inclined to utilize self-reward as a strategy for achieving their personal and professional goals.

The mental well-being of Generation Z employees working in remote settings is a primary focus of this research. Self-reward can act as a mechanism to alleviate stress and enhance mental well-being. Studies indicate that self-reward practices can help employees feel more connected to themselves and reduce feelings of isolation commonly experienced by remote workers (Bailey et al., 2017). By rewarding themselves, employees can boost their sense of accomplishment and satisfaction, which is crucial for their mental well-being.

Self-reward plays a vital role in enhancing the mental well-being of employees. The following are several ways in which self-reward contributes to employees' mental health:

1. Enhancing Satisfaction and Happiness: By rewarding themselves, employees can elevate their feelings of satisfaction and happiness. Simple activities such as taking a vacation or watching a movie can help divert attention from work-related stress.
2. Fostering Motivation: Self-reward can serve as a motivator. When employees set goals and provide rewards upon achieving them, they become more motivated to work hard and meet their established targets.
3. Maintaining Life Balance: Self-reward helps employees maintain a balance between work and personal life. By allocating time for themselves, employees can reduce stress and enhance their overall quality of life.
4. Improving Performance: Employees who feel appreciated tend to perform better. Self-reward can boost work morale and productivity, as employees feel valued and motivated to give their best.
5. Building Positive Habits: By consistently implementing self-reward, employees can cultivate positive habits that support their mental well-being. Evaluating the impact of the rewards given is also essential to ensure their effectiveness.

**Implications for the Workplace: Supporting Generation Z Employees in Remote Work**

Understanding the characteristics of Generation Z and their perspectives on work and rewards is crucial for organizations. Based on the findings and discussions presented, several practical implications can be considered by companies to support Generation Z employees working remotely:

1. Training and Workshops: Organizations can conduct training sessions or workshops focused on the importance of self-reward and strategies for incorporating it into daily life. This can assist employees in recognizing the value of self-recognition and how it can enhance their performance and mental well-being.
2. Flexible Policies: Encouraging flexible work policies that allow employees to manage their own work schedules can provide opportunities for self-reward, such as extended breaks or more relaxed work arrangements.
3. Recognition and Support: While emphasizing self-reward, organizations should also continue to provide recognition and support to their employees. Creating a culture where employee achievements are acknowledged, both formally and informally, can reinforce the self-reward practices they engage in.
4. Mental Health Resources: Providing access to mental health resources, such as counseling services or wellness programs, can help Generation Z employees navigate the challenges they face in remote work environments while utilizing self-reward as a tool to enhance their well-being.

**CONCLUSION**

Generation Z, with its unique characteristics, has transformed the landscape of the workforce. Their orientation towards greater purpose, flexibility, and technological proficiency has shaped new expectations for the work environment. They seek employment that not only provides financial compensation but also offers meaning and a positive impact. Additionally, Generation Z places a high premium on mental well-being, desiring a workplace that supports their mental health, including a balance between professional and personal life, as well as opportunities for social interaction with colleagues. Therefore, it is essential for companies to understand and accommodate the needs of Generation Z to attract, retain, and develop this young talent.

To effectively attract and retain Generation Z employees, organizations need to make several adjustments. First, companies must foster a positive and inclusive work culture where employees feel valued and have opportunities for personal and professional growth. Second, organizations should prioritize the mental well-being of employees by providing programs that support mental health, such as counseling sessions, yoga classes, or meditation workshops. Third, companies need to offer flexibility in work arrangements, such as options for remote work or flexible hours, to help Generation Z employees achieve a work-life balance.

Fourth, organizations should provide opportunities for Generation Z to participate in decision-making processes and offer input on company policies. By involving Generation Z in decision-making, companies can demonstrate that they value diverse ideas and perspectives. Lastly, it is crucial for organizations to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their implemented programs and make adjustments as necessary. By doing so, companies can ensure they remain relevant and attractive to Generation Z.

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