

Z-Type Employees and Tenure as Mediators Between Traditional Management Behaviour and Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study investigates the mediating roles of Generation Z employees and tenure in the relationship between traditional management behavior and job satisfaction within the hospitality industry. As Generation Z enters the workforce, particularly in the hotel sector, their expectations -such as participative leadership, work-life balance, and meaningful work - often clash with traditional managerial approaches characterized by hierarchical structures, limited employee involvement, and centralized decision-making. Drawing from a cross-sectional survey of 612 hotel employees from Generation Z in Türkiye, data were analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 6) for serial mediation. The results reveal that traditional management behavior negatively affects Generation Z employees and indirectly reduces their job satisfaction through shortened tenure. Furthermore, the serial mediation model confirms that Generation Z and tenure significantly mediate the impact of traditional management behavior on job satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of adapting management styles to generational needs and tenure dynamics to enhance employee well-being and organizational performance. The study contributes to organizational behavior literature by integrating generational theory and social exchange theory to explain job satisfaction in a generationally diverse workplace.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Traditional Management Behavior, Serial Mediation, Hospitality Industry, Organizational Behavior

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1. Introduction

Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009) represents a new cohort recently entering the workforce and gaining increasing prominence in the hospitality industry. The distinct characteristics of this generation necessitate a re-evaluation of human resource management practices and leadership approaches in hotel businesses. Born into the digital age, Generation Z is characterized by their active engagement with technology (Çoklar & Tatlı, 2024). Smartphones (Mason et al., 2022), social media platforms (Sharma et al., 2023), and the internet (Budiman & Franky, 2021) are integral components of their daily lives and work processes (Alruthaya et al., 2021). They are known for their ability to access information rapidly (Chan & Lee, 2023) and their adaptability to change (Chala et al., 2022).

Generation Z employees seek autonomy in their roles and expect flexible working conditions (Taibah & Ho, 2023), while also striving for meaningful and purpose-driven work experiences. Furthermore, they value regular feedback and recognition for their performance (Janssen & Carradini, 2021). Importantly, this generation is noted for its emphasis on inclusivity and desire to work in environments that embrace diversity and mutual respect (Naim, 2022).

The hospitality industry is characterized by fast-paced working conditions, rigid shift systems, and elevated employee turnover rates (Dillard et al., 2024). Promoting employee engagement and job satisfaction is essential not only for enhancing service quality but also for reinforcing sustainable human resource management (Papademetriou et al., 2023).

Employees from Generation Z place significant emphasis on democratic governance, work-life balance, and opportunities for personal development in the workplace (Schroth, 2019). However, traditional managerial behavior - still dominant in the hospitality sector (Alvarez et al., 2021) - is typically marked by centralized decision-making, rigid hierarchical structures, and limited employee participation (Shukla et al., 2023). This misalignment between the expectations of Generation Z employees and conventional management practices may result in decreased levels of job satisfaction.

This study investigates whether Generation Z hotel employees, along with their tenure, play a serial mediating role in the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction. The research aims to make significant contributions at both theoretical and practical levels. The growing presence of Generation Z in the hotel industry introduces a new perspective on human resource management and leadership practices. Given their distinct values, expectations, and work motivations, understanding how traditional management approaches affect Generation Z employees constitutes a critical area of inquiry. This study seeks to explore how intergenerational differences and varying levels of work experience

influence management practices and aims to contribute to the development of more effective human resource strategies in the hospitality sector.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Traditional managerial behavior typically refers to an authoritarian, controlling management style that limits employee participation (Xiao et al., 2024). Such managers often make decisions independently, disregard employees' input, and view subordinates merely as tools to achieve organizational goals (Koeswayo et al., 2024). Additionally, behaviors reflecting distrust (Ndone, 2023), unfairness (Küçük, 2022), and disrespect (Nauman et al., 2025) are also associated with traditional managerial practices.

Job satisfaction refers to employees' overall emotional responses—positive or negative—toward their jobs (Judge et al., 2020; Wang & Panaccio, 2022). Employees who report high job satisfaction are more likely to demonstrate organizational commitment (Susanty et al., 2013), enhanced productivity (Saari & Judge, 2004), and lower turnover intentions.

Research has consistently shown that traditional managerial behavior negatively influences employees' job satisfaction (Moslehpoor et al., 2022; Fleischer & Wanckel, 2024). Authoritarian and controlling management styles can lead employees to feel undervalued (Teymoori et al., 2022), reduce their motivation (Ibrahim & Olaleye, 2025), and diminish their overall job satisfaction (Albashiti et al., 2021). In the hospitality industry, such managerial behaviors have been linked to increased stress (Baheer et al., 2023), burnout (Lambert et al., 2024), and turnover intentions (Govindaras et al., 2023). Recent studies in hospitality settings have confirmed the negative effects of traditional management behavior on job satisfaction (Wong et al., 2021; Farmaki et al., 2022).

H1: Traditional managerial behavior negatively affects Generation Z hotel employees.

Compared to previous generations, Generation Z employees seek greater meaning in their work, value participatory management, and tend to prefer authentic leadership styles (Salvadorinho et al., 2024). They derive job satisfaction primarily from factors such as work-life balance (Wulur & Mandagi, 2023), opportunities for career development (Barhate & Dirani, 2022), and a psychologically safe work environment (Leslie et al., 2021). The hospitality sector, however, is predominantly hierarchical (Arain et al., 2022) and largely shaped by traditional management approaches (Iannuzzi & Sacchetto, 2022).

H2: Generation Z hotel employees have a significant and positive impact on job satisfaction.

Traditional managerial behavior encompasses authoritarian leadership (Zhang et al., 2024), micromanagement, rigid hierarchical structures, limited two-

way communication, and restricted flow of ideas (Zaman et al., 2021), along with low employee engagement. This management style can have particularly negative consequences for Generation Z employees, diminishing their job satisfaction. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Traditional managerial behavior has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction.

The tenure of Generation Z employees in hotels (Zhou et al., 2025) is directly associated with their job satisfaction. Studies show that extended work experience contributes to increased perceptions of psychological safety (Chang et al., 2023) and stronger organizational commitment (Liu et al., 2023). However, the hospitality industry is marked by high turnover rates (Gabriel et al., 2022), and Generation Z employees are known to have relatively low retention rates in this sector (Sigaeva et al., 2022). Traditional management styles may further reduce the likelihood of long-term employment among Generation Z workers (Zahari & Puteh, 2023), as this generation tends to favor democratic (Dreyer & Stojanová, 2023), innovative (Erkut, 2021), and flexible (Yacine & Karjaluoto, 2022) leadership approaches.

In this context, it is proposed that the tenure of Generation Z employees may serve as a serial mediator in the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction (Molero et al., 2007). Shorter lengths of employment among those exposed to traditional management styles may further undermine their job satisfaction. Based on this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Length of employment in the hotel has a significant effect on job satisfaction.

According to Job Satisfaction Theory, employees' satisfaction at work is shaped by both intrinsic factors (e.g., responsibility, achievement, personal growth) and extrinsic factors (e.g., salary, working conditions, management style). Traditional managerial approaches may fail to provide the intrinsic motivators that are highly valued by Generation Z employees, thereby reducing their job satisfaction (Bisht & Mahajan, 2021).

Social Exchange Theory posits that employees form reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships in the workplace (Blau, 1964). When employees encounter a traditional, hierarchical management style rather than a supportive and fair one (Maslach & Leiter, 2022), they may perceive this relationship negatively (Kwon & Jang, 2022), which can lead to shorter tenure within the organization (Kim et al., 2021). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Traditional managerial behavior has a significant effect on employees' length of stay at the hotel.

Social Exchange Theory further suggests that employees are more likely to develop organizational commitment when they perceive fairness, career advancement opportunities, and support for work-life balance. Similarly, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1968) argues that job satisfaction is influenced by both motivators (intrinsic factors) and hygiene factors (extrinsic conditions). When hotel organizations fail to provide a meaningful and development-oriented work environment (Prund, 2021; Katsaros, 2025), the motivation of Generation Z employees for long-term employment may decrease.

H6: Generation Z employees have a significant influence on their own length of service in the hotel industry.

Generation Z expects work environments that support work-life balance (Bulut & Maraba, 2021), flexible working hours (Kgarimetsa & Naidoo, 2024), and a sense of meaningful contribution (Waworuntu et al., 2022). However, the fast-paced nature of hospitality work (Valk & Yousif, 2023) and rigid scheduling systems (Budhiraja et al., 2022) often conflict with these expectations, potentially contributing to shorter tenures. Additionally, this generation seeks rapid career progression (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021), yet hotel promotion processes are generally tied to traditional hierarchical structures (Senbeto et al., 2022), which may further reduce their long-term motivation (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021). Job satisfaction has been identified as a key predictor of retention (McNaughtan et al., 2021; Baqi & Indradewa, 2021). If Generation Z employees do not feel valued by their organizations, their likelihood of remaining in the position over the long term may decrease (Achmad et al., 2023). This gives rise to the following hypothesis:

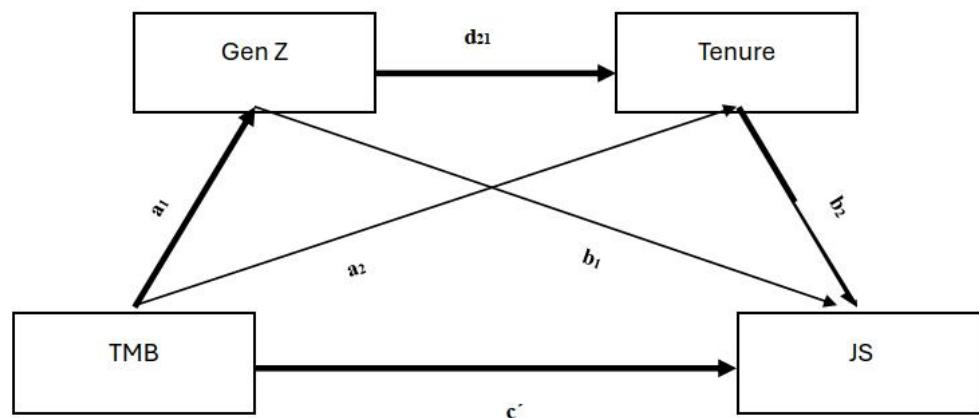


Figure 1. Conceptual Model 6 (2 Mediators) from Hayes' (2024) PROCESS. The moderation of Gen Z and Tenure on the relationship between Traditional Manager Behavior and Job Satisfaction. TBM: Traditional Manager Behavior; JS: Job Satisfaction

H7: Generation Z and tenure jointly mediate the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction in a serial manner.

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized serial mediation model, developed based on the theoretical framework and stated hypotheses.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a cross-sectional and quantitative research design to examine the impact of traditional managerial behavior on job satisfaction among Generation Z hotel employees, including tenure as a mediating factor. A descriptive approach was employed to identify and analyze the relationships between variables. The target population consisted of Generation Z employees working in five-star hotels across Türkiye. A voluntary sampling method was used to reach a total of 612 participants. Data collection was carried out in December 2024 through a face-to-face survey administration.

Measures

All measurement tools used in this study were adapted from previously validated scales in the literature.

Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction among Generation Z hotel employees was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss et al. (1967), which consists of 20 items. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Independent Variable: Traditional managerial behavior was assessed using a 7-item scale developed through a comprehensive literature review (Luthans, 1988; Kotter, 2010; Mintzberg, 2013; Hales, 2019; Turner, 2021). The items reflect characteristics commonly associated with traditional, authoritarian management styles.

Data Collection and Sampling

Data were collected from Generation Z employees working across various departments of a major chain hotel in Türkiye. This hotel was selected because of its ability to reflect the general working conditions of the industry, offering diversity in job roles, experience levels, and business processes.

Permission was obtained from the hotel's Human Resources Department to administer the survey to relevant personnel. Face-to-face data collection was preferred to ensure sample diversity, reach participants aligned with the study's objective, maintain confidentiality, and reduce bias. Respondents were asked to return the completed questionnaires in sealed envelopes. As 612 participants volunteered to take part in the study, the dataset included no missing responses.

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire items. The scale was pre-tested on 30 hotel employees to identify any ambiguous statements. Based on feedback, revisions were made in collaboration with the Human Resources Manager and academic experts. Final approval of the revised items was obtained from the pilot study participants to ensure clarity and appropriateness.

Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile of the participants is summarized in Table 1. In terms of gender, 51.8% of respondents were female and 48.2% were male. Regarding marital status, 57.8% were single, 36.3% were married with children, and 5.9% were married without children. In terms of educational attainment, the majority were high school graduates (40.7%). Regarding tenure, most participants had been employed for less than one year (36.1%), followed by those working for 1 to 3 years (32.2%). All participants were classified as Generation Z employees, based on the Pew Research Center's (2018) generational criteria.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics (n=612)

Category		n	%
Gender	Female	317	51.8
	Male	295	48.2
Marital status	Single	222	36.3
	Married with children	36	5.9
Educational level	Married without children	354	57.8
	Primary school	134	21.9
Tenure	Secondary school	74	12.1
	High school	249	40.7
	2-year college	87	14.2
	4- year university	58	9.5
	Graduate school	10	1.6
	Less than 1 year	221	36.1
	1–3 years	197	32.2
	4–6 years	101	16.5
	7–9 years	56	9.2
	10 years and more	37	6.0

The hypothesized serial mediation model, along with exploration models examining the effect of traditional managerial behavior on job satisfaction through Generation Z and tenure, was tested using Hayes' (2024) PROCESS Macro v4.2 for SPSS. Model 6 was employed to assess serial mediation, utilizing the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) to estimate the indirect effects.

The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, causal relationships between variables were evaluated. In the second stage, mediation and moderation

analyses were carried out to test the proposed model structure. During model testing, demographic variables such as gender were excluded from the analysis, as no significant effect was observed on the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis results are presented in Table 2. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between tenure and job satisfaction ($r = -.128$, $p < 0.01$), and a significant positive correlation between tenure and Generation Z ($r = .196$, $p < 0.01$). Traditional Managerial Behavior (TMB) was found to be significantly and positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .164$, $p < 0.01$), while also showing a significant negative correlation with Generation Z ($r = -.105$, $p < 0.01$). However, no statistically significant correlation was observed between job satisfaction and Generation Z ($r = -.009$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 2. Correlation matrix

	JS	Gen Z	Tenure	TMB	Mean	SD
JS	1				4.20	.642
Gen Z	-.009	1			2.78	1.172
Tenure	-.128**	.196**	1		2.16	1.187
TMB	.164**	-.105**	-.056	1	.26	.230

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). JS= Job Satisfaction; Gen Z= Gen Z hotel employees; Tenure: Working time at the hotel; TMB= Traditional manager behavior

Table 2 also includes the results of the partial correlation analysis, controlling Generation Z and tenure. The findings indicate patterns consistent with the zero-order correlations.

Specifically, tenure remains significantly and negatively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = -.128$, $p < 0.01$) and positively correlated with Generation Z ($r = .196$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, Traditional Managerial Behavior (TMB) continues to show a significant positive correlation with job satisfaction ($r = .164$, $p < 0.01$), and a significant negative correlation with Generation Z ($r = -.105$, $p < 0.01$).

Figure 2 presents the hypothesis testing results of the proposed model. A serial mediation analysis with two mediators—Generation Z and tenure—was conducted using PROCESS Macro (Model 6), developed by Hayes (2024). The bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals was employed to test the significance of indirect and total effects.

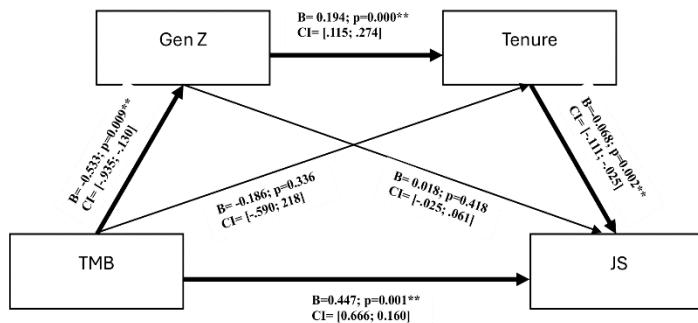


Figure 2. Partial serial mediation model 6 (2 Mediators) from Hayes' (2024) PROCESS. B = non-standardized coefficients; ** = highly significant ($p < 0.01$); direct effect c': B = 0.447; p = 0.001, CI = [0.666; 0.160]; total effect c: B = 0.457; p = 0.000, CI = [0.239; 0.676]

As illustrated in Figure 2, the analysis provided empirical support for several hypothesized paths.

- H1: Traditional Managerial Behavior (TMB) significantly predicted Generation Z ($B = -0.533$, $SE = 0.204$, $t = -2.601$, $p < 0.01$).
- H3: TMB had a significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction ($B = 0.447$, $SE = 0.111$, $t = 4.023$, $p < 0.01$).
- H4: Generation Z significantly predicted Job Satisfaction ($B = -0.068$, $SE = 0.021$, $t = -3.104$, $p < 0.01$).
- H6: Generation Z had a significant effect on Tenure ($B = 0.194$, $SE = 0.040$, $t = 4.816$, $p < 0.001$).

These findings indicate that Traditional Managerial Behavior significantly influences Generation Z hotel employees (path a_1 , see Figure 1) and Job Satisfaction (direct effect, path c , see Figure 1). In addition, tenure plays a mediating role by significantly affecting both Job Satisfaction (path b_2) and Generation Z (path d_{21}), suggesting a meaningful serial mediation process.

The results indicate that Generation Z and tenure jointly exhibit a serial mediation effect in the relationship between Traditional Managerial Behavior (TMB) and Job Satisfaction (JS). Specifically, TMB was found to have a statistically significant indirect effect on JS via Gen Z and tenure (H7: TMB → Gen Z → Tenure → JS; $b = 0.007$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 7. In addition, the

direct effect of TMB on JS remained significant even in the presence of the mediators ($b = 0.447$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a partial mediation. These findings confirm that the influence of traditional managerial behavior on job satisfaction is partially mediated by the sequential pathway involving Generation Z characteristics and length of service at the hotel.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the impact of traditional managerial behavior on job satisfaction among Generation Z hotel employees, considering the length of their employment as a mediating factor. The increasing presence of Generation Z in the hospitality workforce has raised concerns regarding their compatibility with conventional management styles. Understanding how prolonged exposure to traditional managerial behavior influences job satisfaction further highlights the importance of this research.

Building on prior research that suggests traditional managerial behavior negatively affects job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2022; Ampofo & Karatepe, 2024), this study proposes Generation Z orientation and tenure as potential mechanisms explaining this relationship. The findings confirmed that traditional managerial behavior has a negative impact on Generation Z hotel employees, supporting previous literature (e.g., Diz, 2021). Given the critical role of service quality in the hospitality sector, improving managerial practices that foster employee development is essential for enhancing job satisfaction (Belias et al., 2021; Tumati & Yousfi, 2023; Zerva et al., 2024).

The results supported hypotheses H1, H3, H4, H6, and H7, indicating that Generation Z and tenure partially mediate the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction (Areola et al., 2023). Interestingly, although Generation Z was significantly influenced by traditional managerial behavior, it did not directly predict job satisfaction. This suggests that other variables such as work-life balance, turnover intention (Lim & Fajar Dini, 2023), job stress (Lestari & Setyaningrum, 2024), and emotional commitment (Anh Do et al., 2023) may serve as mediators or moderators in this relationship.

Traditional managerial approaches may not align well with Generation Z's workplace expectations. In contrast, leadership styles that account for employee motives, such as servant leadership, have shown more favorable effects on job satisfaction and engagement (Donia et al., 2016).

Traditional managerial behavior was found to significantly affect job satisfaction, reinforcing the importance of revisiting hierarchical and authoritarian management styles in today's workforce (Minz, 2024). Developing participative work environments that encourage employee input and growth—in essence, transforming traditional managerial behavior into a more developmental approach—may enhance employee satisfaction and engagement (Fischer & Charef, 2021).

Although tenure had a significant effect on job satisfaction, the study found that traditional managerial behavior did not significantly influence tenure among Generation Z hotel employees. This aligns with findings by Soeprapto et al. (2024), who highlighted the interactive effects of tenure and job satisfaction on turnover intention. However, the analysis revealed that Generation Z employees significantly influence tenure, suggesting a generational pattern in how long employees remain in organizations.

Finally, the results confirm that Generation Z and tenure jointly mediate the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction. While prior studies have explored the moderating roles of various factors—such as work-life balance (Aruldoss et al., 2022), employee creativity (Wang et al., 2021), and job stress (Cheng & Kao, 2022)—this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the serial mediation roles of Generation Z orientation and tenure in explaining how traditional management styles impact job satisfaction.

6. Conclusions

In today's hospitality industry, generational differences between employees and managers have become increasingly pronounced. These differences significantly influence employees' job satisfaction, which in turn directly affects customer satisfaction. Understanding the factors that contribute to employee satisfaction is therefore essential for maintaining service quality and organizational sustainability. This study introduces a novel perspective by examining how Generation Z orientation and tenure jointly mediate the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction. In doing so, it addresses a key gap in generational dynamics within hotel management.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Although prior literature has explored the relationship between traditional managerial behavior and job satisfaction, few studies have addressed the generational dimension—particularly involving Generation Z hotel employees and their length of employment. This research adds theoretical value by revealing the indirect pathways through which traditional managerial styles impact job satisfaction among younger employees in the hospitality sector.

Moreover, unlike many existing studies focused on hotel employees in developed countries (e.g., Abu Orabi et al., 2024), this study provides empirical evidence from a developing country context (Türkiye), thereby enhancing the cross-cultural relevance of existing theories.

From a practical standpoint, the study underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of job satisfaction for Generation Z employees as a function of both managerial style and tenure. Hotel managers, human resource professionals, and policymakers can benefit from these findings by:

- Implementing intergenerational training programs for managerial staff,
- Creating career development plans that promote long-term engagement,
- Establishing mentoring systems to facilitate knowledge transfer,
- Offering flexible work schedules, hybrid work models, and
- Regularly conducting employee satisfaction surveys to monitor changing expectations.

These strategies may help organizations align traditional managerial structures with the needs of younger, dynamic workforce segments.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. First, data were collected from a single geographic region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research conducted in different countries or cultural settings may uncover context-specific patterns in how managerial styles affect Generation Z employees.

Second, the cross-sectional design of the study restricts causal interpretation and fails to capture how job satisfaction evolves over time. Longitudinal studies could offer more nuanced insights into how exposure to traditional managerial behavior influences employee attitudes across different stages of their careers.

Third, the study is based on self-reported perceptions of managerial behavior, which may be subject to individual biases or misinterpretations. Future research should consider using observational methods or multi-source data to validate perceptions of managerial conduct.

Finally, while this study examined tenure as a mediating variable, it did not explore how job satisfaction might vary across different career stages (e.g., newcomers vs. mid-level vs. senior staff). Comparative research examining these tenure levels could further enrich our understanding of generational dynamics in employee satisfaction.

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