

RESEARCH TRENDS IN WORK ADAPTABILITY AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS: A BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR GENERATION Z

Lidia CHIRICOI¹

¹ Ph.D. student, Doctoral School of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea
chiricoi.lidia@student.uoradea.ro

Abstract: *In the context of a work environment characterized by increased dynamism and unpredictability, adaptability has become an essential individual resource for the effective management of continuous organizational and technological changes. Workplace adaptability can be defined as the ability of the individual to respond adequately to new professional requirements, role changes, and various occupational contexts, thus contributing to improved performance and long-term career sustainability. In parallel, staff turnover intention remains a relevant indicator for organizations, given its consistent association with actual employee turnover, organizational costs, and the level of internal stability. Although the specialized literature has extensively analyzed both workplace adaptability and staff turnover intention, the relationship between these two constructs remains insufficiently explored from an integrative perspective. Moreover, existing studies are fragmented, focusing predominantly on certain organizational contexts or employee categories, without paying systematic attention to the particularities of Generation Z. In addition, there is a lack of bibliometric analyses that provide an overview of the evolution of research, the main thematic directions, and the existing gaps in this field. Against this background, the present study aims to carry out a bibliometric analysis of the scientific literature on the relationship between workplace adaptability and staff turnover intention, with a specific focus on Generation Z. In particular, the research aims to: (1) examine the evolution over time of scientific production, (2) identify Influential contributors, core journals, and countries with the highest research activity, (3) analyze the dominant research focuses and clusters, and (4) highlight existing gaps and future research directions. Through this approach, the paper contributes to strengthening the understanding of the relationship between adaptability and staff turnover intention in the context of a new generation of employees. The Scopus database was selected due to its extensive and relevant coverage of recent, interdisciplinary literature.*

Keywords: *individual adaptability to work; turnover intention; Generation Z; bibliometric study.*

JEL Classification: A23; M20

1. Introduction

Amid profound labor market transformations driven by technological innovation that fundamentally reshape the nature of work, adaptability has emerged as a central topic of discussion (Kundi, Lo Presti, and Khan, 2025). Compared to previous generations, Generation Z employees tend to value flexibility, personal development, and meaningful work experiences, and they demonstrate greater openness to career

mobility. This combination makes them both adaptable and, paradoxically, more likely to leave organizations when expectations are not met. Therefore, understanding the relationship between workplace adaptability and turnover intention among this generation is crucial. Work adaptability, broadly defined as the ability to adapt effectively to new tasks, roles, and working conditions, is increasingly recognized as a key competency in the modern workforce. At the same time, turnover intention, the conscious and deliberate desire to leave an organization, remains a persistent challenge for employers, particularly among younger employees. This generation is often characterized by a strong desire for flexibility, meaningful work, and rapid career development, which may influence both their adaptability and their propensity to change jobs. Therefore, understanding the relationship between work adaptability and turnover intention among this group is of increasing importance to both researchers and practitioners. Although both constructs have been extensively explored in the literature, research addressing their interconnection, especially in relation to Generation Z, remains relatively sparse. Moreover, the rapid growth of publications in this field requires a structured and comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge. In this context, bibliometric analysis serves as a valuable methodological approach, allowing the identification of publication trends, influential contributions, and the intellectual structure of the field. Bibliometric analysis provides a systematic and quantitative approach to mapping the intellectual structure of a research field, identifying key trends, influential authors, and emerging themes. By applying bibliometric methods, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive examination of the existing research on job adaptability and turnover intention, with a particular focus on Generation Z. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the evolution of scientific production, highlight the main research clusters, and identify potential gaps in the literature. Scopus was selected as the primary database due to its broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals and its suitability for bibliometric analyses. Therefore, bibliometric analysis is not only appropriate but also necessary for achieving the objectives of this study, as it allows for a systematic, transparent, and data-driven examination of the literature on work adaptability and turnover intention, with a specific focus on Generation Z.

2. Theoretical Background

Against the backdrop of a work environment characterized by increased dynamism and unpredictability, adaptability has become an essential individual resource for the effective management of continuous organizational and technological changes. In its simplest form, work adaptability is understood as a person's ability to adapt to new work conditions. Individual work adaptability (IAW) is defined as "an individual's ability to adapt to new and changing environments, conditions, and situations at work" (Ployhart and Bliese, 2006). Why are we interested in individual adaptability to work (AIM) among young people? First of all, young people represent the future and tend to change more quickly when certain external conditions change. At the same time, it is important to know how cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally capable young people are today in order to anticipate something about their career path and, by extension, the future of society. In the European Union's understanding, young people are those aged between 15 and 29 (Eurostat, 2026), and as a result belong to Generation Z (Seemiller and Grace, 2016). Generation Z is familiar with digitalization, as a result of using digital technology from an early age (Levit, 2018), and companies tend to automate business processes more and more; it can be

assumed that Gen Z adaptability can bring various benefits to a company. Generation Z wants to feel that their work has meaning and a positive impact on society (Dobrowolski, Drozdowski, Panait, 2022). Therefore, from an organizational management perspective, investigating the values, priorities, and adaptability at work of different generations takes on particular importance, given that the optimal use of human resources is a determining factor of organizational efficiency and achieving the desired performance. Turnover intention is defined as an "individual's conscious and deliberate desire to leave their current job or organization within a specific timeframe" (Lazzari, Alvarez, and Ruggieri, 2022). This intention is defined as the autonomous "behavior of withdrawal from the current position, associated with the individual's lack of identification with the work performed" (Bothma and Roodth, 2012). In this context, employee retention and strengthening the attachment to the organization represent major strategic objectives for decision-makers in the field of human resources. The in-depth study of the intention to leave the workplace responds to a real need of organizational management, that of developing effective policies for maintaining staff and reducing their fluctuation. "Turnover intention is a precursor to turnover" (Apriani and Siregar, 2023). In conclusion, the theoretical framework presented highlights the importance of individual work adaptability and turnover intention, providing a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between these constructs and their implications for organizational outcomes.

3. Research Methodology

Bibliometric analysis was used in this study because it provides an overview of existing research, facilitating the identification of trends, significant contributions, and underexplored directions. Thus, this method supports a better-founded understanding of the analyzed field. Therefore, bibliometric analysis is not only appropriate but also necessary for achieving the objectives of this study, as it allows for a systematic, transparent, and data-driven examination of the literature on work adaptability and turnover intention, with a specific focus on Generation Z. The Scopus database was selected for its broader journal coverage and strong representation of recent publications in management and organizational behavior. To answer our research questions, we selected 166 Scopus articles.

Data collection: The research process followed the following steps according to the PRISMA approach. A search was performed in Scopus by Topic in March 2026, using the following keywords: ("career adaptability" OR "employee adaptability" OR "work adaptability" OR "individual adaptability") AND ("turnover intention" OR "intention to leave" OR "quitting intention" OR "employee turnover") AND ("Generation Z" OR "Gen Z" OR "young employees" OR "young workers" OR "early career employees"). The initial data set included 246 documents identified in the Scopus database. Applying the temporal criterion (2020–2025) led to a reduction of the sample to 203 documents. In the next stage, only "article" and "review" publications were included, resulting in 178 papers. Subsequently, a thematic filter was applied, selecting exclusively documents falling within the areas of Business, Management and Accounting; Social Sciences; Psychology; and Economics, Econometrics and Finance, which led to a final sample of 166 documents used in the analysis. After data collection, the search results were imported into the R package bibliometrix. This tool allows for complex and integrated bibliometric analyses, being considered superior to other similar software solutions in this field (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). For the analysis of the data extracted from Scopus, the

Biblioshiny graphical interface was used, corresponding to the R package bibliometrix, which facilitates the performance of bibliometric analyses in an interactive and accessible way. Before starting the analysis, several scientific databases were evaluated to identify the most appropriate source for data collection. In the end, the Scopus database (Mongeon and Paul-Hus, 2016) was selected exclusively, due to its extensive coverage of literature from diverse fields, including social sciences, exact sciences, and humanities. The choice was also justified by the high-quality standards of the indexed publications, which ensure the credibility and validity of the sources included in the analysis, as well as the advanced search and filtering functions (document type, language, time range), which allow for a precise selection of relevant literature.

In addition, Scopus is compatible with Biblioshiny, the tool used for bibliometric analysis and data visualization, facilitating the identification of trends and the synthesis of results in a clear and easy-to-interpret format.

3. Results and Discussion

During the period analyzed (2020–2025), a clear upward trend in the number of articles published annually is highlighted. Thus, if in 2020 only 4 articles were recorded, in 2021 their number doubled (8 articles), followed by a significant increase in 2022 (19 articles) and 2023 (26 articles). The upward trend is maintained in the following years, with 39 articles in 2024, reaching a maximum of 70 articles in 2025. This evolution suggests a constant intensification of interest in the analyzed field, as well as a progressive development of research activity during the studied period.

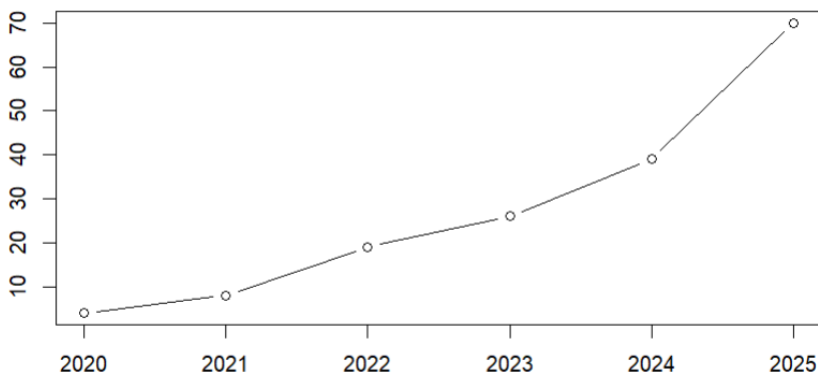


Figure 1: Evolution of publications (2020-2025)

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

The upward trend in publications suggests increasing scholarly attention to the topic. Nevertheless, the specific relationship between individual work adaptability and Generation Z employees' turnover intention remains insufficiently investigated in the current literature. The analysis of the 166 papers included in the sample highlights that the most frequently used keywords are career adaptability, turnover intention, and job satisfaction, followed by concepts such as perceived organizational support, proactive personality, and career commitment, indicating the main thematic directions of research in this field.

The keyword co-occurrence network (Figure.2) reveals several distinct color-coded clusters: the green cluster centers on career development, job satisfaction, and

adaptive performance, while the red cluster highlights job performance, career adaptability, emotional intelligence, and employee engagement. The purple cluster is associated with work engagement, job burnout, career commitment, and organizational career management. In contrast, the blue cluster reflects proactive personality, person–environment fit, perceived organizational support, and training. The blue cluster highlights predominantly positive aspects but also includes turnover intention. Overall, the structure suggests that individual and organizational resources are closely interconnected with well-being and turnover-related outcomes.

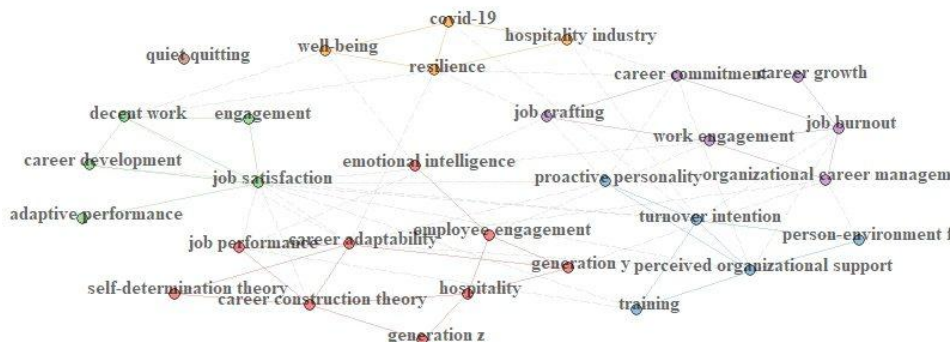


Figure 2. Keyword co-occurrence network (Scopus)

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

The thematic map shows that research on work adaptability and turnover intentions is mainly focused on themes such as “turnover intention,” “work engagement,” and “COVID-19,” which appear as central and well-developed topics in the literature. At the same time, “career adaptability” is identified as an important basic theme, highlighting its strong connection with employee well-being, engagement, and retention, especially in the context of Generation Z and the changing labor market.

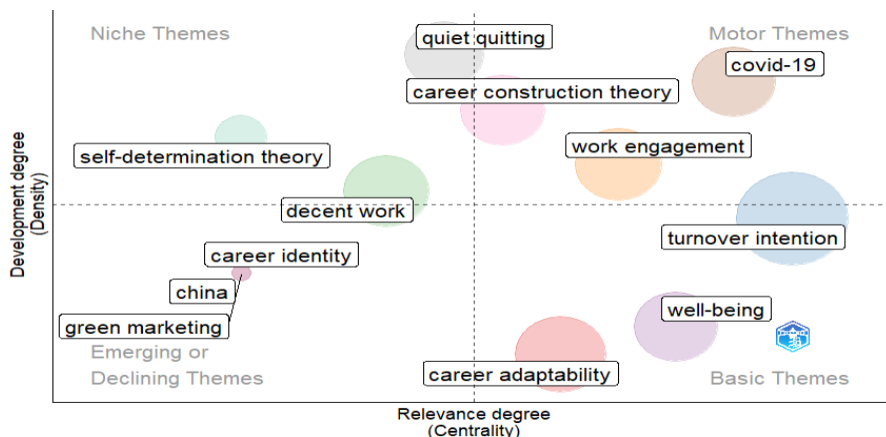


Figure 3. Thematic map (Scopus)

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

Furthermore, “self-determination theory” is positioned as a niche theme, indicating that although it is conceptually well developed, it remains relatively specialized and less connected to the central research stream. Overall, the thematic structure suggests that future studies on Generation Z should increasingly explore the relationship between career adaptability, employee well-being, work engagement, and turnover intentions in order to better understand how organizations can retain young employees in dynamic work environments.

The analysis of authors’ productivity reveals a relatively dispersed distribution of publications, with a small number of authors contributing a limited but noticeable share of the total output. The most productive author is Li Y. (n = 5), followed by Zhang J. (n = 4). A group of authors, including Kushwaha B.P., Su X., Wang D., and Zhang Y. (n = 3 each), also show moderate productivity within the dataset. The remaining authors, such as Akkermans J., Akosa F., Akram U., and Ali Abadi H. (n = 2 each), contribute a smaller but still relevant number of publications. Overall, the results suggest the absence of a single dominant author, pointing instead to a relatively fragmented research landscape. At the same time, this distribution may reflect a growing and evolving field, where contributions come from multiple research groups rather than being concentrated around a few leading scholars.

Table 1: Top authors by publication output

Nr. crt.	Authors	Frequency
1.	LI Y.	5
2.	ZHANG J.	4
3.	KUSHWAHA BP.	3
4.	SU X.	3
5.	WANG D.	3
6.	ZHANG Y.	3
7.	AKKERMANS J.	2
8.	AKOSA F	2
9.	AKRAM U	2
10.	ALI ABADI H	2

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

The analysis of the most relevant sources indicates a clear concentration of publications within a small number of high-impact journals. The *Frontiers in Psychology* (n = 10) represents the leading source in the dataset, followed by the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (n = 8) and the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* (n = 7). These results suggest that research on the topic is primarily disseminated through journals in psychology, management, and organizational behavior, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the field. The prominence of these journals also indicates their strong focus on workplace behavior, employee attitudes, and occupational outcomes.

Table 2: Top-most relevant sources

Nr. crt.	Sources	Frequency
1.	Frontiers in Psychology	10
2.	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	8
3.	Journal of Vocational Behavior	7
4.	Acta Psychologica	6
5.	European Journal of Training and Development	6
6.	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights	4
7.	Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education	4
8.	Career Development International	3
9.	Current Psychology	3
10.	Journal of Career Assessment	3

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

The assessment of the most influential authors in terms of citations shows that Hirschi A. (n = 273) has the highest citation impact in the dataset, followed by Koen J. (n = 221) and Zada M. (n = 171). This indicates that these authors are the most influential contributors in the field, with their work being extensively referenced in the literature. Their high citation counts suggest that their research plays a key role in shaping theoretical frameworks and empirical approaches related to career development, adaptability, and work-related behavioral outcomes. Although Araya-Castillo L. (n = 127) and Ariza-Montes A. (n = 127) rank at the lower end of the top 10 most cited authors, their citation levels still indicate a significant scholarly contribution. Their presence in this ranking suggests that their work remains widely recognized and integrated into the literature, despite having fewer citations than the leading authors in the dataset.

Table 3: Top cited authors

Nr. crt.	Authors	Citations
1.	HIRSCHI A.	273
2.	KOEN J.	221
3.	ZADA M.	171
4.	FORRIER A.	157
5.	DE CUYPER N.	133
6.	DE VOS A.	133
7.	FUGATE M.	133
8.	VAN DER HEIJDEN B.	133
9.	ARAYA-CASTILLO L.	127
10.	ARIZA-MONTES A.	127

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

The most cited publications in the dataset highlight a strong emphasis on topics such as career development, employability, employee retention, and turnover-related outcomes. The leading article by Hirschi and Koen (2021) records the highest number of citations ($n = 221$), as well as the highest average citations per year (44.20), indicating a sustained and significant impact on the field. Similarly, studies by Fugate et al. (2021) and Ghani et al. (2022) show high annual citation rates (26.60 and 31.75, respectively), suggesting that research on employability and employee retention continues to attract considerable scholarly attention. Interestingly, more recent publications, such as Vleugels et al. (2023) and Akkermans et al. (2024), also display relatively high citations per year (24.00 and 26.00), despite having had less time to accumulate total citations. This pattern may indicate emerging research directions and a growing interest in topics like person–environment fit and career transitions.

Table 4: Top cited publications

Nr. crt.	Publications	Citations	Citations per year
1.	Hirschi, A., Koen, J., (2021)	221	44,20
2.	Fugate, M., et al., (2021)	133	26,60
3.	Ghani, B., et al., (2022)	127	31,75
4.	Ampofo, E., T., Karatepe, O., M., (2022)	82	20,50
5.	Bozionelos, N., Lin, C., Lee, K., (2020)	82	13,67
6.	Vleugels, W., et al., (2023)	72	24,00
7.	Vaziri, H., et al., (2022)	59	14,75
8.	Pelit, E., Katircioglu, E., (2022)	54	13,50
9.	Akkermans, J., et al., (2024)	52	26,00
10.	Zhu, D., et al., (2021)	49	9,80

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

Table 5 presents an overview of the top 10 most cited articles retrieved from Scopus, summarizing their main contributions in order to capture the essence of the most influential studies in a concise manner. To provide a deeper perspective, these articles were further analysed in terms of their research focus, methodological approaches, and overall relevance to work adaptability and turnover intentions. Overall, it provides a clearer understanding of the key contributions that have shaped the field. This study holds particular importance as it addresses a relatively underexplored relationship in the literature, namely the impact of individual work adaptability on turnover intention. While prior research has extensively examined factors such as job satisfaction, leadership, and employee engagement, limited attention has been given to how adaptability shapes employees' intentions to leave, especially in the context of the emerging workforce. This gap becomes even more relevant when considering Generation Z, whose expectations, values, and career dynamics differ significantly from previous cohorts. By focusing on this relationship, the present study contributes to a deeper understanding of contemporary workforce behavior. It offers valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners seeking to improve employee retention strategies in a rapidly changing work environment. The following section outlines the main conclusions derived from the bibliometric analysis. **Table 5:** Summary of the top 10 articles retrieved from Scopus

Articles	Type of study	Key Focus	Relevance to Work Adaptability & Turnover Intentions	Main contributions
Hirschi, A., Koen, J., (2021)	Systematic review (33 articles)	Career self-management	Indirect relevance to work adaptability through proactive career behaviors and self-management; no direct focus on turnover intentions	Highlights the role of proactive behaviors in career self-management
Fugate, M., et al., (2021)	Literature review (641 articles)	Employability	Strong conceptual link to work adaptability (employability as a core component); indirect relation to turnover intentions via job mobility and perceived opportunities	Develops an employability framework
Ghani, B., et al., (2022)	Literature review (48 articles)	Employee retention	Direct relevance to turnover intentions (retention perspective); indirect link to adaptability through organizational strategies	Identifies retention strategies
Ampofo, E., T., Karatepe, O., M., (2022)	Empirical - quantitative (27 selected small-sized hotels in Greater Accra, the regional capital of Ghana.	Job embeddedness	Direct relevance to turnover intentions; indirect connection to adaptability via engagement and embeddedness mechanisms	Shows the impact of job embeddedness on turnover intentions
Bozionelos, N., Lin, C., Lee, K., (2020)	Empirical - quantitative ((334 salespersons working for a large retail organization in Hong Kong)	Career sustainability	Indirect relevance to work adaptability through skill development and learning; no direct focus on turnover intentions	Emphasizes training and support
Vleugels, W., et al., (2023)	Systematic review (40 papers)	Person–environment fit	Indirect relevance to adaptability (adjustment to environment) and turnover intentions (misfit leading to exit)	Explores fit dynamics over time at work
Vaziri, H., et al., (2022)	Meta-analysis (113 articles)	Work–family balance	Indirect relevance to turnover intentions (imbalance as predictor);	Identifies key antecedents of

Articles	Type of study	Key Focus	Relevance to Work Adaptability & Turnover Intentions	Main contributions
			weak/indirect link to adaptability	work–family balance
Pelit, E., Katircioglu, E., (2022)	Bibliometric analysis (156 papers)	HRM research trends	Indirect relevance to turnover intentions via HRM practices; no direct link to adaptability	It provides an overview of the main trends and themes in HRM research in tourism.
Akkermans, J., et al., (2024)	Literature review (93 quantitative studies)	Career transitions	Strong relevance to work adaptability; indirect link to turnover intentions through career mobility and transitions	Proposes a career transition framework
Zhu, D., et al., (2021)	Meta-analysis (1.404 articles)	Career commitment	Indirect relevance to turnover intentions (commitment reduces intention to leave); indirect link to adaptability	Explains drivers of career commitment

Source: created by the author, based on data extracted from Scopus

The results show that the most influential publications are mainly centred around themes such as career sustainability (Bozionelos, N., Lin, C., Lee, K., 2020), employability (Fugate, M., et al., 2021), and employee retention (Ghani, B., et al., 2022). Methodologically, the field is dominated by literature reviews (Hirschi, A., Koen, J., (2021); Akkermans, J., et al., (2024)), meta-analyses (Vaziri, H., et al., (2022)), and quantitative studies (Bozionelos, N., Lin, C., Lee, K., 2020); Ampofo, E., T., Karatepe, O., M., 2022), suggesting a strong emphasis on both theoretical development and empirical validation. At the same time, the analysis highlights an important pattern in the literature. Although work adaptability and turnover intentions are highly relevant in today's work context, they are rarely examined together within the same studies. Instead, they tend to be approached indirectly through related constructs. For example, work adaptability is often reflected in concepts such as employability, career self-management, or career transitions, which capture how individuals respond to change and manage their professional paths. In parallel, turnover intentions are frequently linked to variables such as job embeddedness (Ampofo, E., T., Karatepe, O., M., 2022), career commitment (Zhu, D., et al., 2021), or work–family balance (Vaziri, H., et al., 2022), even when they are not explicitly addressed. This suggests that the literature remains somewhat fragmented, with limited integration between these two important constructs. However, the presence of these adjacent concepts also provides valuable insights and creates a foundation for connecting different research streams.

Overall, the findings highlight a clear gap in the literature and underline the need for more integrative research that brings together work adaptability and turnover intentions, particularly in the context of Generation Z, where career dynamics and mobility patterns are rapidly evolving. From this perspective, examining work adaptability and turnover intentions is particularly relevant in the context of an increasingly dynamic and uncertain work environment. This is especially important for Generation Z, as they are gradually becoming a dominant force in the labor market and will play a key role in shaping future organizations and societies. At the same time, the motivation for addressing these topics is not only academic, but also practical. A clear understanding of what drives employees to stay or exit is fundamental for organizations seeking to retain their workforce. The results of the bibliometric and thematic analysis indicate that the recent literature is in a process of transition from general approaches to employment to the investigation of psychological and behavioral factors that influence employee retention. In this context, the study of individual adaptability as a predictor of turnover intention becomes particularly relevant for understanding the professional dynamics specific to Generation Z.

5. Conclusions

In the context of today's rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain work environment, understanding how individuals adapt to their professional roles and why they decide to remain in or leave an organization has become more relevant than ever. This study contributes to the existing literature by bringing together two closely related, yet often separately examined constructs, namely work adaptability and turnover intentions, and by emphasizing the importance of a more integrated perspective on the behavior and expectations of Generation Z employees. The use of bibliometric analysis as the primary methodological approach was driven by the need to explore and synthesize the literature in this field. This approach not only allows for a structured overview of the field but also helps to identify the main research directions and gaps that are not always visible in traditional literature reviews. The results indicate that research on work adaptability and turnover intentions remains relatively fragmented, with most studies focusing on related constructs such as employability, career development, job embeddedness, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Understanding how employees adapt to their roles and what influences their job satisfaction and decisions to stay or leave is essential not only for organizations but also for creating more stable and meaningful professional experiences. The literature review from 2020 to 2025 highlights that the relationship between individual adaptability at work and intention to leave has not been directly investigated in existing studies. The identified research mainly addresses related concepts, such as career adaptability, professional flexibility, or intention to leave the workplace, without a clear focus on Generation Z. At the same time, recent literature pays increased attention to young adults and organizational behaviors specific to new generations, but the psychological mechanisms that influence Gen Z employee retention remain insufficiently explored. This aspect is relevant in the context in which Generation Z is characterized by an orientation towards flexibility, rapid adaptation to change, and high professional mobility. Trends indicate a growing research interest in the relationship between work adaptability and turnover intentions, highlighting emerging directions for future studies focused on understanding Generation Z behavior in the contemporary

organizational environment. Finally, future research should continue to explore the intersection between work adaptability and turnover intentions, while also taking into account emerging trends in the literature, such as dynamic career paths, generational differences, and evolving employment expectations. Overall, the findings reinforce the idea that the relationship between work adaptability and turnover intentions remains underexplored, highlighting an important gap in the literature and supporting the need for more integrative research, particularly in the context of Generation Z.

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