

EFFECTS OF MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS, HYGIENE FACTORS AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON THE PERFORMANCE OF GENERATION Y EMPLOYEES IN A HIGH-TECH COMPANY: A CASE STUDY OF XIAOMI GROUP

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of motivational factors, hygiene factors and transformational leadership on the performance of Generation Y employees at the Xiaomi Group. The population consisted of Xiaomi Group employees with a total sample size of 360 participants. A questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. Hypothesis testing was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), with the statistical significance level set at .05.

The results showed that motivational factors, hygiene factors and transformational leadership have a statistically significant impact on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group, with a significance level of .001. The structural model showed a predictive power of 54.9%. Based on these results, it is recommended that Xiaomi Group improve promotion opportunities, autonomy, and recognition programs to increase employee motivation. In addition, improvements in organizational policies, compensation and managerial support are essential for maintaining job satisfaction. Strengthening strategic communication, encouraging innovation and fostering mentorship through effective leadership will further optimize employee performance and support the long-term success of the company.

Keywords: Motivation Factors, Hygiene Factors, Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance

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Introduction

In the digital age, the high-tech industry plays a decisive role as the engine of the global economy. Given the rapid pace of technological progress and the increasing complexity of innovation, companies in this sector must constantly adapt in order to remain competitive (Gupta & George, 2016). While technological investment is a key driver of success, developing a quality workforce is equally important to ensure long-term sustainability (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). However, managing human resources in the high-tech industry is a major challenge, especially when it comes to attracting, retaining and engaging highly skilled professionals.

A critical segment of the workforce in this industry is Generation Y employees, who currently make up the largest share of the global workforce and serve as an important link between leaders and newer generations of employees (Campbell et al., 2021). Generation Y, also referred to as Millennials, are characterized by their adaptability to technological change, their desire for meaningful work, and their emphasis on career advancement (Ng et al., 2018). Given their role as a bridge between leaders and new employees, organizations need to understand how to motivate this generation, meet their workplace expectations, and leverage their ability to drive innovation and collaboration.

High-tech companies, including Xiaomi Group, face ongoing challenges in employee retention as the industry often has higher turnover rates compared to other sectors (Hom et al., 2017). The main reasons for this include job dissatisfaction, lack of clear career progression and a mismatch between employee expectations and management approaches (Dechawatanapaisal, 2018). The loss of Generation Y employees is particularly concerning because it disrupts knowledge transfer, weakens organizational stability, and increases recruitment and training costs.

To overcome these challenges, organizations in the high-tech industry have increasingly adopted motivational theories and transformational leadership concepts to improve employee engagement and performance. Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory states that motivational factors such as career advancement, recognition and personal growth are the most important factors for employee satisfaction, while hygiene factors such as salary, job security and working conditions help to reduce dissatisfaction. For Generation Y employees, these factors are particularly important as they value career development, meaningful work and work-life balance (Aguenza & Som, 2018).

In addition, transformational leadership has emerged as a key leadership style for retaining and empowering Generation Y employees. Bass's (1985) model of transformational leadership highlights the importance of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation,

individual consideration, and idealizing influence, all of which contribute to higher employee engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization (Northouse, 2021). Research suggests that Generation Y employees respond particularly well to transformational leadership as they seek mentors who encourage collaboration, provide career guidance and stimulate creative thinking (Chou, 2018).

In the case of Xiaomi Group, the company has established itself as a global leader in the high-tech industry through the continuous development of cutting-edge technology and the implementation of strategic HR practices. Xiaomi's success is due not only to its technological innovations, but also to its efforts to engage and motivate its employees. The company places great emphasis on the development of its employees by offering skill enhancement programs, clear career paths and performance-based rewards (Xiaomi Annual Report, 2023). In addition, Xiaomi actively promotes transformational leadership and ensures that managers inspire employees, support individual career development and promote a corporate culture of innovation.

Despite these efforts, Xiaomi continues to face the challenge of retaining its Generation Y employees, so it is crucial to develop strategies that improve job satisfaction and performance. Considering the pivotal role of Generation Y as a workforce facilitator, this study aims to analyze the influence of motivational factors, hygiene factors and transformational leadership on their performance. The results will enable Xiaomi Group to develop more effective HR strategies, enhance its talent retention efforts and gain insights that can be transferred to other high-tech companies facing similar HR challenges.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the impact of motivation factors on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group.
2. To investigate the effect of hygiene factors on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group.
3. To analyze the influence of transformational leadership on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group.

Research Hypothesis

1. Motivation factors have a statistically significant impact on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group.

2. Hygiene factors have a statistically significant effect on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group.

3. Transformational leadership has a statistically significant influence on the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group.

Conceptual Framework

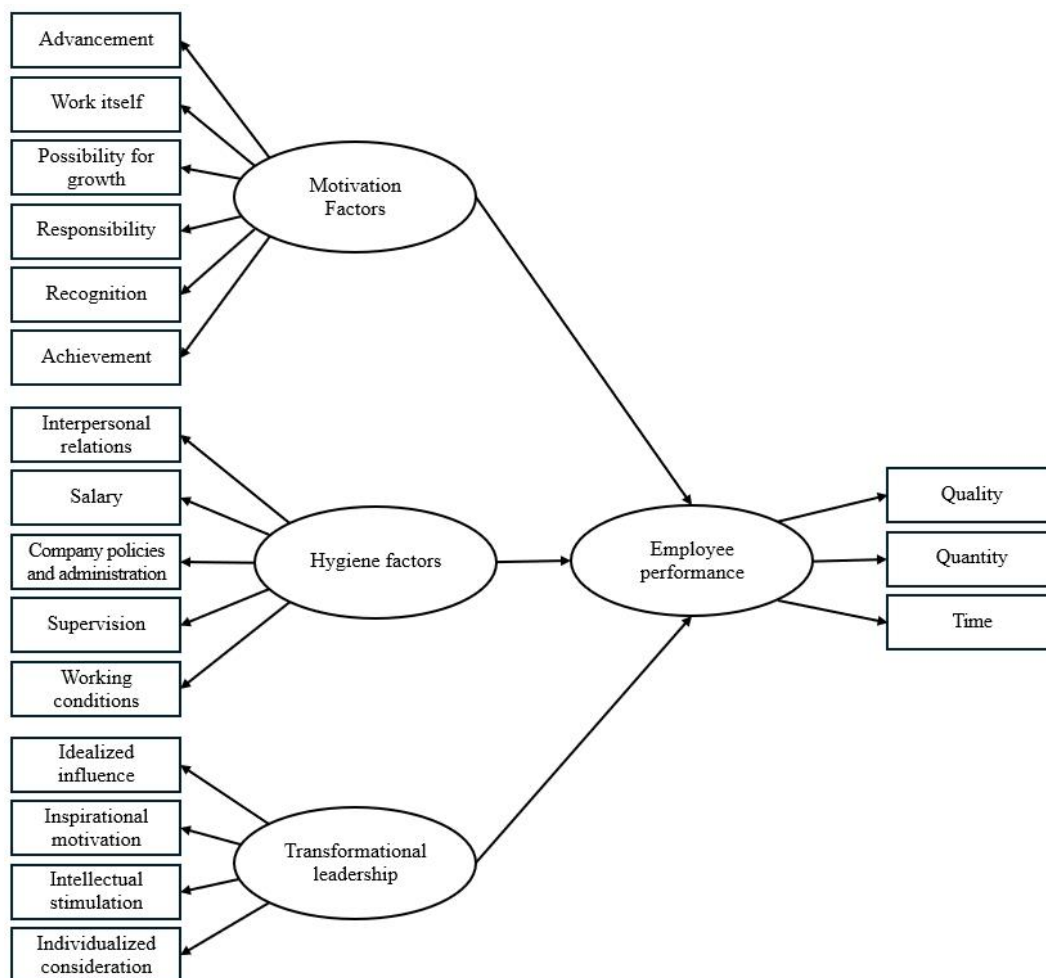


Figure 1 The Conceptual Framework

Literature Review

Concepts and Theories Related to Work Motivation

Motivational drivers directly and indirectly affect work efficiency and personal happiness. Motivation can be categorized into 2 main types: intrinsic motivation, which comes from enjoyment or natural interest in an activity, and extrinsic motivation, which focuses on rewards or avoiding negative consequences (Deci & Ryan, 2017). A study by Gagné and Deci (2018) found that employees encouraged by intrinsic motivation tend to perform better, while extrinsic motivation often drives short-term behavior changes. The Two-Factor Theory, also

known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, developed by Herzberg, is widely recognized as a key concept in workplace motivation. Herzberg began by studying factors that influence job satisfaction among employees to enhance performance and productivity. He focused on individuals' attitudes toward their work (Herzberg, 2015). This theory divides work-related factors into 2 main categories: motivators and hygiene factors. The key components of motivators are as follows: Advancement, Work Itself, Possibility for Growth, Responsibility, Recognition, and Achievement. The main hygiene factors are as follows: Interpersonal Relations, Salary, Company Policies and Administration, Supervision, and Working Conditions.

Concepts and Theories Related to Transformational Leadership

Leadership is a topic widely studied in both social sciences and business fields due to its critical role in setting organizational direction and ensuring long-term success. The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by Burns (1978) in the context of the relationship between leaders and followers. It emphasized leaders' ability to inspire and drive organizational transformation. Bass (1985) further developed the theory by proposing a more comprehensive framework called the Full Range Leadership Theory. This theory highlights that transformational leaders play a crucial role in building trust, respect, and admiration from their followers. These actions involve leading by example, inspiring motivation, stimulating intellectual growth, and providing individualized support (Yukl, 2013). Transformational leaders can drive significant changes in organizations through 4 key components: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration.

Concepts and Theories Related to Employee Performance

Employee performance is a crucial factor in organizational behavior as it plays a significant role in the long-term success and productivity of organizations (Huang et al., 2019). Studies on employee performance cover aspects such as analyzing employee attributes, related theoretical foundations, and empirical evidence supporting human resource management strategies. Gallup (2020) found that only 20% of employees worldwide are fully engaged in their work. This highlights the need to enhance strategies to boost motivation and engagement in the workplace. These dimensions help reflect employees' performance in the following aspects: Quality of Work, Quantity of Work, and Time Management.

Research Methodology

1. The population for this research comprises employees of Xiaomi Group, totaling 33,627 individuals. The sample size for this study was determined based on the guidelines established by Hair et al. (2010) for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which recommend a

minimum of 20 respondents per observed variable to ensure sufficient statistical power and model estimation reliability. This research includes 18 observed variables; therefore, the appropriate sample size was calculated as 360 participants. The sampling method employed was convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling technique that allows for practical and efficient data collection.

2. The tool used for this research was a questionnaire developed based on a review of concepts and theories relevant to the research objectives. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on motivational factors, hygiene factors, transformational leadership, and employee performance. The questionnaire is divided into 5 parts as follows: General Information, Motivational Factors, Hygiene Factors, Transformational Leadership, and Employee Performance. The questionnaire has reliability with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient between .860-.890. The value of over 0.70 or 70% is considered acceptable.

3. Data analysis consists of descriptive statistics analysis with frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to describe basic information about the sample group. And inferential statistical analysis was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the hypotheses.

Results

The results of general respondent data indicates that the majority of respondents were female (50.83%), aged 33-36 years (43.61%), and had a married or living together status (73.89%). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (53.06%) and had an average monthly income between 6,001 – 8,000 CNY (41.67%). Additionally, the majority of respondents had more than 10 years of work experience (63.61%).

Table 1. shows mean and standard deviation all variables in model.

Motivation Factors	\bar{X}	SD	Level of opinion
- Advancement	3.34	1.02	Moderate
- Work itself	3.37	1.00	Moderate
- Possibility for growth	3.42	1.03	High
- Responsibility	3.38	1.01	Moderate
- Recognition	3.34	1.05	Moderate
- Achievement	3.33	1.07	Moderate

Table 1. shows mean and standard deviation all variables in model. (Cont.)

Hygiene Factors	\bar{X}	SD	Level of opinion
- Interpersonal relations	3.28	1.07	Moderate
- Salary	3.29	1.04	Moderate
- Company policies and administration	3.37	1.00	Moderate
- Supervision	3.27	1.10	Moderate
- Working conditions	3.36	1.03	Moderate
Transformational leadership	\bar{X}	SD	Level of opinion
- Idealized influence	3.35	1.04	Moderate
- Inspirational motivation	3.37	1.04	Moderate
- Intellectual stimulation	3.37	1.04	Moderate
- Individualized consideration	3.32	1.03	Moderate
Employee Performance	\bar{X}	SD	Level of opinion
- Quality	3.33	1.00	Moderate
- Quantity	3.37	1.03	Moderate
- Time	3.35	1.01	Moderate

Table 2. Presents the results of structural validity analysis and factor loadings

Factors	Loading	AVE	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A)	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_C)	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Motivation Factors		.582	.857	.893	.856
- Advancement	.728				
- Work itself	.737				
- Possibility for growth	.769				
- Responsibility	.776				
- Recognition	.793				
- Achievement	.773				
Hygiene Factors		.590	.827	.878	.826
- Interpersonal relations	.783				
- Salary	.770				
- Company policies and administration	.777				
- Supervision	.741				
- Working conditions	.770				

Table 2. Presents the results of structural validity analysis and factor loadings (Cont.)

Factors	Loading	AVE	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A)	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_C)	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Transformational leadership		.642	.814	.878	.814
- Idealized influence	.791				
- Inspirational motivation	.802				
- Intellectual stimulation	.811				
- Individualized consideration	.801				
Employee Performance		.644	.724	.844	.723
- Quality	.793				
- Quantity	.815				
- Time	.799				

From Table 2, it was found that all observed variables in the model have factor loading values greater than 0.5, ranging from .728 to .815, indicating their reliability in measurement. Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A) values range from .724 to .857, Jöreskog's rho (ρ_C) ranges from .844 to .893, and Cronbach's alpha (α) falls within the range of .723 to .856. Importantly, all these values exceed the 0.7 threshold for reliability. Furthermore, the latent variables demonstrate discriminant validity with AVE values above 0.5, ranging from .590 to .644. This is in accordance with the established preliminary agreement (Henseler et al., 2016).

Table 3. Shows a comparison of discriminatory accuracy according to the Fornell-Larcker criterion

Factors	Motivation Factors	Hygiene Factors	Transformational leadership	Employee Performance
Motivation Factors	.763			
Hygiene Factors	.570	.768		
Transformational leadership	.493	.531	.801	
Employee Performance	.463	.439	.438	.802

* Note: The values in the diagonal represent the square root of AVE.

From Table 3, it was found that the model demonstrated discriminant validity, as indicated by the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), which was higher than the correlations (r) of each latent variable. This result aligns with the criteria established by Henseler, Hubona, and Ray (2016), which state that each latent variable should have inter-correlations that do not exceed the square root of its Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The interrelations among latent variables ranged between .438 and .570, confirming the discriminant validity of the model.

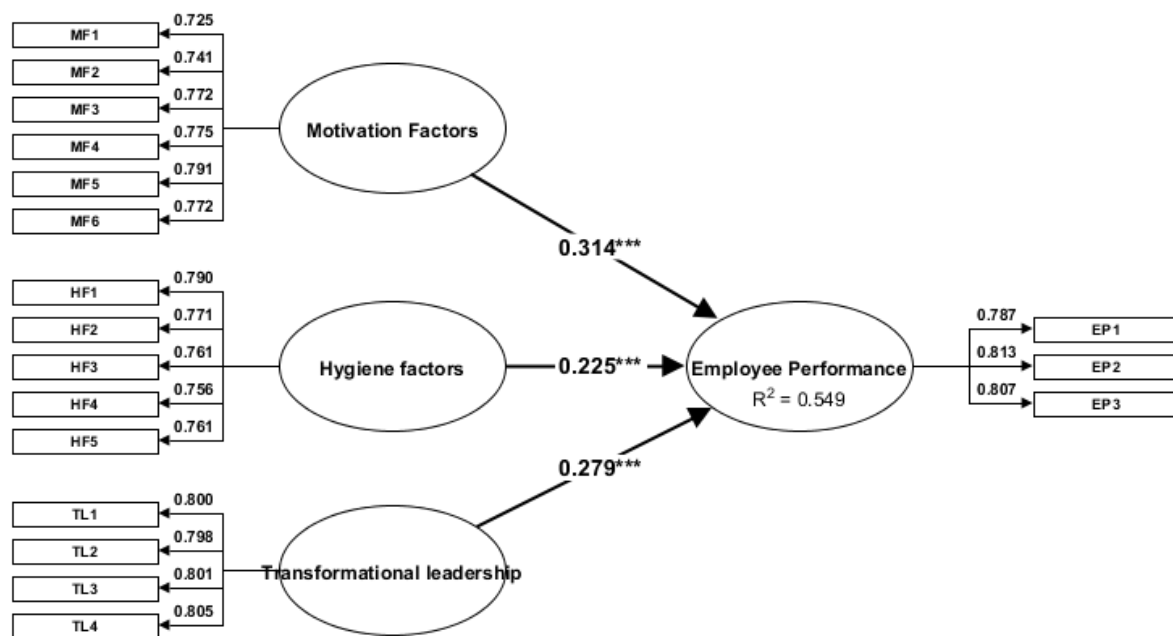


Figure 2. Shows the results of hypothesis testing

Table 4. Presents the results of the Impact of work motivation and transformational leadership on Generation Y employee performance in Xiaomi Group

Factors	Employee performance			
	Beta	t-test	p-value	Cohen's F2
- Motivation Factors	.314	4.881	.000***	.083
- Hygiene Factors	.225	3.403	.000***	.039
- Transformational leadership	.279	4.778	.000***	.072

*** Statistical significance at .001 level

** Statistical significance at .01 level

* Statistical significance at .05 level

From Table 4, it was found that Motivation Factors, Hygiene Factors, and Transformational Leadership significantly influenced Generation Y employee performance in Xiaomi Group at the .001 significance level. The model demonstrated a predictive power of 54.9% ($R^2 = 0.549$). The ranking of influence is as follows:

1. Motivation Factors had the strongest influence on Generation Y employee performance in Xiaomi Group, with a β value of 0.314 and a Cohen's F^2 value of 0.083, indicating a moderate effect size.

2. Transformational Leadership had the second-highest influence, with a β value of 0.279 and a Cohen's F^2 value of 0.072, also indicating a moderate effect size.

3. Hygiene Factors had the lowest but still significant influence, with a β value of 0.225 and a Cohen's F^2 value of 0.039, indicating a small effect size.

These results suggest that Motivation Factors play the most critical role in enhancing Generation Y employee performance in Xiaomi Group, followed by Transformational Leadership, while Hygiene Factors contribute to performance improvement but with a relatively smaller effect.

Discussion

The study confirms that motivational factors significantly influence the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group, with the opportunity to grow proving to be the most impactful element. This finding highlights the importance of career development opportunities, as employees highly value continuous learning and career advancement (Ertas, 2015; O'Bannon, 2021). Research also highlights responsibility as an important motivator and emphasizes the role of autonomy in increasing work engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). While the work itself contributes to job satisfaction, its lower rating suggests that job enrichment strategies could be improved to better meet employee expectations (Herzberg, 1966). Similarly, Advancement is appreciated, but concerns about limited opportunities for advancement suggest that employees would like to see more structured career development (Gursoy et al., 2008). Recognition received moderate ratings, suggesting that informal appreciation is present but formal reward systems need improvement (Gilley et al., 2015). Finally, performance was the least influential factor, suggesting that more tangible rewards are needed to reinforce employee performance (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Overall, these findings are consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory and confirm that intrinsic motivators influence employee performance (Herzberg, 1966).

Although the hygiene factors had a lesser effect on employee performance, their presence is still important to maintain basic satisfaction and prevent dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). Among these factors, company policies and administration were rated highest, highlighting the importance of transparency and clear company policies in promoting trust and stability (Gursoy et al., 2013). Working conditions were rated moderately, with high satisfaction with the availability of resources, but concerns about comfort and safety in the workplace, suggesting room for improvement. Salary was appreciated for its benefits and incentives, but dissatisfaction with pay equity suggests that Xiaomi needs to refine its compensation strategies to align with employee contributions (Ng et al., 2010; Kossivi et al., 2016). Interpersonal relations and supervision received the lowest ratings, indicating potential challenges in workplace integration and supervisor support. The lower perception of supervision underscores the need for leadership development programs that focus on mentorship and participative management (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). These findings suggest that while hygiene factors do not directly increase motivation, optimizing them can serve as a foundation for better engagement and retention (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016).

The study shows that transformational leadership has a moderate impact on employee performance, with Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation being the most positively received dimensions. Employees respond well to leaders who inspire enthusiasm and encourage innovation, highlighting the importance of vision-driven leadership in the high-tech industry (Mansor et al., 2017). However, gaps in the communication of strategic goals suggest that while leaders are successful in communicating motivation, they may need to improve the clarity of organizational direction. Idealized influence was rated moderately, suggesting that while supervisors are seen as trustworthy role models, stronger group cohesion and shared goals need to be encouraged (Chan & Mak, 2019). Individual attention received the lowest rating, suggesting that employees perceive limited personal attention from managers, which may impact their sense of recognition and development. Considering that Generation Y employees seek personalized leadership approaches, Xiaomi's leadership could benefit from increasing their mentorship efforts and providing individualized support (Charoensukmongkol & Puyod, 2021). These findings are consistent with previous studies confirming that transformational leadership increases engagement and performance, but its effectiveness depends on leaders' ability to implement all dimensions holistically (Mansor et al., 2017).

The results show that the opportunity to grow is the strongest motivational factor driving the performance of Generation Y employees at Xiaomi Group, while hygiene factors such as salary satisfaction and supervision need improvement. Transformational leadership also plays an important role, especially through inspiring and intellectually stimulating leadership practices. However, deficits in communication and individual mentoring suggest that Xiaomi could improve its leadership development strategies. These findings are consistent with existing motivation theories, particularly Herzberg's two-factor theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation while recognizing that hygiene factors contribute to workplace stability. Addressing the identified weaknesses, such as promotion opportunities, recognition systems and management support, will be critical for Xiaomi to improve employee satisfaction, engagement and long-term retention in a highly competitive industry.

Suggestions

1. Enhancing Motivation Factors: To improve the motivation of Generation Y employees, Xiaomi Group should focus on career growth and professional development by introducing structured mentoring programs, training initiatives and clear career paths. Continuous learning opportunities, leadership training and cross-functional rotations promote long-term engagement. In addition, a coaching-based leadership approach and flexible working structures allow employees to take more autonomy and responsibility for their tasks, which increases productivity and engagement. To satisfy the need for recognition and reward, Xiaomi should develop a transparent and structured incentive system that includes peer-nominated awards and non-monetary benefits such as promotion opportunities. In addition, work-life balance should be strengthened by introducing remote work options, hybrid work models and wellness programs to prevent burnout. Finally, fostering a feedback-oriented culture through real-time feedback platforms and 360-degree assessments will ensure that employees receive constructive advice, further boosting engagement and motivation.

2. Strengthening Transformational Leadership: To increase the effectiveness of transformational leadership, Xiaomi Group should improve strategic communication by introducing structured internal communication channels, interactive workshops and open discussions to align employees with corporate goals. In addition, creativity and critical thinking should be encouraged through capacity building programs, agile management strategies and cross-functional innovation projects to enable employees to participate in problem-solving initiatives. To address gaps in individual mentoring, Xiaomi should promote mentoring

leadership practices by supporting personalized career development conversations, tailored feedback and AI-driven HR analytics to better understand employee preferences. In addition, corporate culture and collaboration should be strengthened through cross-departmental teamwork programs, team-building workshops and participatory decision-making mechanisms to ensure a stronger sense of belonging and commitment to the company's success.

3. Optimizing Hygiene Factors: Although hygiene factors have less direct influence on motivation, they play a decisive role in employee satisfaction and retention. Xiaomi should improve corporate policies by ensuring transparency, accessibility and fairness while encouraging employee participation in policy making. The work environment should be improved by optimizing office ergonomics, investing in remote work infrastructure and creating spaces that encourage innovation and collaboration. As satisfaction with salary was moderate, Xiaomi should refine its compensation structures by offering flexible benefits, stock options and performance-based incentives tailored to Generation Y expectations. Since leadership and supervision were among the lowest rated hygiene factors, Xiaomi should invest in leadership training programs that focus on mentorship, participative management and employee empowerment to strengthen leadership effectiveness. Finally, social dynamics in the workplace should be improved through initiatives that promote teamwork, social support networks and corporate social responsibility activities to create a more engaging and inclusive work environment.

The new body of Knowledge found in this study

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence of the motivational dynamics, leadership influence, and hygiene factors that influence Generation Y employees in a high-tech corporate environment. The findings confirm that the opportunity to grow is the most influential motivating factor, highlighting the increasing importance of structured career development programs, continuous learning opportunities and skills enhancement initiatives to retain and engage young professionals. The study also shows that while autonomy and responsibility significantly increase motivation, traditional recognition and performance-related rewards may need to be redefined to meet the expectations of Generation Y. Furthermore, the study substantiates Herzberg's two-factor theory in the modern work context by demonstrating that hygiene factors, although secondary to motivation, play an essential role in preventing dissatisfaction, particularly in areas such as transparent policies, fair compensation and managerial support.

In addition, this study expands the understanding of transformational leadership by identifying specific leadership dimensions that resonate most with Generation Y employees in a high-tech environment. While Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation are the most important leadership traits, the gaps in individual consideration suggest that modern leadership needs to move towards a more personalized and employee-centric management style. The study also highlights the need for companies to integrate structured strategic communication mechanisms, participative leadership practices and innovation-oriented work cultures to maximize employee engagement. These findings provide valuable implications for organizations operating in dynamic and innovation-driven industries and offer a refined perspective on how to effectively motivate, manage and retain Generation Y employees in a competitive business environment.

Future Research

1. Future research should examine additional factors such as organizational culture, work-life balance and intrinsic motivation that could further explain the differences in performance of Generation Y employees. Examining these factors may provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee motivation and improve organizational strategies to improve employee productivity in the technology sector.

2. Future research should examine the differences between generations by comparing the effects of these factors on Generation X and Generation Z employees. Such comparisons would provide valuable insights into how leadership styles and motivational strategies should be tailored to different workforce demographics and industry contexts.

3. Future research should use longitudinal studies to examine how these factors influence employee performance over time. Examining the sustainability of motivational strategies and leadership approaches can help organizations refine their people management practices and develop interventions that promote long-term employee engagement and performance. In addition, longitudinal studies could reveal whether generational changes or evolving workplace dynamics alter the importance of these factors over time.

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