



Hotel Managers' Perceptions of the Soft Skills of Gen Z Employees: A Qualitative Case Study in Bacolod City

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examined how hotel managers described the soft skills, work-related capabilities, and developmental needs of Gen Z hotel employees in Bacolod City, Philippines. The bounded case comprised managerial accounts of the phenomenon across three selected accommodation establishments. Three female department managers—two from locally owned hotels and one from a Philippine hotel chain—were purposively selected as participants. Data came from semi-structured, recorded interviews conducted from February to April 2024 and were analyzed manually through Lichtman's 3Cs process of coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. The managers' accounts produced three overarching themes: relational and customer-service competence; work-related and digital capabilities; and emotional well-being and professional regulation. Participants perceived technological fluency, competitiveness, responsiveness to immediate feedback, and capacity to learn hotel systems as strengths. They also described developmental needs involving empathy, guest-facing confidence, sustained attention, initiative, time use, and emotional regulation. The findings suggest that participating and comparable hotels may benefit from structured onboarding, experiential customer-service practice, clear feedback, coaching, and mental-health-sensitive supervision. Because evidence came from three managerial perspectives and excluded employee, observational, and documentary data, the themes are contextually grounded and are not universal descriptions of Gen Z workers.

Keywords: Generation Z, soft skills, hotel employees, hotel managers, hospitality industry, qualitative case study, Bacolod City

Introduction

The hotel industry continues to change as tourism markets recover, technologies become embedded in service delivery, and a new generation enters the labor force. Hotels depend on human interaction even as reservations, payments, property-management systems, guest messaging, and service monitoring become increasingly digital. This combination makes the quality of the workforce central to guest experience: employees must operate technologies efficiently while communicating with sensitivity, exercising judgment, and responding to needs that cannot always be anticipated by standard procedures. The importance of these capabilities is intensified by the employment disruptions that followed the COVID-19 pandemic. Hotels that reopened after long shutdowns encountered recruitment and retention difficulties, particularly in entry-level and hourly positions, and were compelled to reconsider how hospitality work could attract and sustain a younger workforce (Leung et al., 2021).

Generation Z has consequently become an important source of employees for positions through which many guests encounter a hotel. Commonly described as those born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, members of this generation grew up amid rapid digitalization and are frequently characterized as digital natives (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Their familiarity with online information, mobile devices, and interactive technologies can support speed and flexibility in contemporary hotel operations. Yet technological familiarity alone does not ensure competence in a service environment. Hospitality work requires employees to read situations, communicate across age and status differences, regulate their responses, anticipate needs, recover from service failures, and sustain professional behavior even when guests are demanding. Employers therefore evaluate new workers not only by what they know, but also by how they relate, respond, and adapt.

Soft skills refer to the interpersonal, communicative, behavioral, and self-management capabilities that enable an employee to work constructively with others and perform appropriately across changing circumstances. In hospitality, these capacities cannot be separated neatly from technical work because service is simultaneously operational and relational. A front-office employee may know how to use a property-management system but still be unable to reassure an upset guest; a sales employee may know hotel products but struggle to listen, negotiate, or adjust an offer; and an employee may finish a task quickly while overlooking details that determine service quality. Studies of hospitality competencies repeatedly identify communication, customer focus, interpersonal ability, teamwork, problem-solving, professionalism, time management, and technology as essential employability attributes (Dhaliwal & Misra, 2020; Marneros et al., 2020).



Managers occupy a particularly useful vantage point for examining these capabilities. They observe employees across routine operations, guest complaints, time pressure, feedback sessions, and unexpected disruptions. Their judgments also influence recruitment, training, task assignment, promotion, and retention. At the same time, managerial perceptions must be treated analytically rather than accepted as universal truths about an entire generation. What is described as a generational trait may also reflect age, limited work experience, organizational culture, supervisory expectations, or the conditions under which employees entered the industry. A case study of managers' experiences can therefore illuminate recurrent patterns without claiming that all Gen Z employees are alike.

The local setting makes this inquiry important. Gen Z employees are already part of the hotel workforce in Bacolod City, but Philippine hospitality research has given limited attention to how managers experience their strengths and developmental needs in day-to-day work. International findings may not fully account for local service norms, intergenerational communication, organizational structures, and expectations regarding authority and work commitment. Understanding managers' accounts can help hotels refine onboarding and supervision, help educators align learning experiences with industry realities, and help young employees recognize the professional behaviors expected of them without dismissing the values they bring to work.

This study therefore explored the soft skills of Gen Z employees from the standpoint of hotel managers in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. It focused on three managers who worked closely with employees in two locally owned hotels and one hotel belonging to a Philippine chain. The inquiry was bounded by the participants' experiences and by interviews conducted from February to April 2024. Its purpose was not to quantify the prevalence of particular behaviors or compare generations statistically, but to describe the meanings managers attached to their encounters with Gen Z employees and to identify implications for hospitality management, employee development, and hospitality education. It was guided by the central research question: How do hotel managers describe the soft skills, work-related capabilities, and developmental needs of Gen Z hotel employees?

The increasing presence of Gen Z in the workplace has generated interest because this cohort entered employment under conditions shaped by digital connectivity, economic uncertainty, pandemic disruption, and changing expectations about work. A bibliometric review by Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) shows that research on Gen Z at work often centers on technology, values, motivation, and human-resource practices. Human-resource professionals have likewise described the need to understand young employees' preferences and transform their distinctive values into organizational opportunities rather than treating difference as automatic deficiency (Racolța-Paina & Irini, 2021). This caution matters because broad generational labels can obscure substantial differences among individuals and can encourage managers to explain every workplace difficulty through age.

For hotels, the practical question is how the characteristics associated with Gen Z intersect with the requirements of service work. Leung et al. (2021) argue that the industry must strengthen the attractiveness of hotel careers to younger workers by attending to the social relationships and employment conditions surrounding hospitality jobs. Development opportunities are equally important. Bhushan (2023) emphasizes that organizations must rethink learning interventions for Gen Z employees, whose engagement may be influenced by how learning, support, and career growth are structured. These findings suggest that recruitment alone is insufficient; hotels must create a work environment in which younger employees can translate their knowledge and technological familiarity into reliable service behavior.

Communication is a foundational hospitality competency because guest service depends on accurate information, active listening, appropriate tone, and timely feedback. Shen et al. (2020) found that effective communication strategies contribute to sustainable hospitality practice, while Cuic Tankovic et al. (2023) underscore the importance of identifying the specific communication skills demanded in tourism. Communication is also shaped by audience and medium. Janssen and Carradini (2021) found that Gen Z workplace communication habits and expectations are closely connected with current technologies, making it necessary for organizations to update communication policies while avoiding negative stereotypes. In an intergenerational workplace, clarity of instruction and the ability to adjust messages to colleagues, superiors, and guests are especially significant.

Interpersonal competence extends beyond transmitting information. It includes empathy, cooperation, conflict management, receptiveness to feedback, and the ability to establish trust. Digital and soft skills have become jointly important as workplaces rely on technology without reducing the need for human relationships (Obermayer et al., 2023). In hospitality, interpersonal ability supports coordination among departments and helps employees recognize the emotional content of a guest concern. It also makes service recovery possible because an employee must determine not only what rule applies but how a guest experiences the situation. Employers therefore value communication and teamwork alongside technical knowledge (Thi Van Pham & Thi Thu Dao, 2020).

Customer service brings these relational competencies together. Contemporary service requires more than resolving a transaction; it involves understanding needs, personalizing assistance, and maintaining confidence in the organization. Riyanto (2022) associates customer-relationship management with a deeper understanding of customer needs, while Sheth et al. (2023) emphasize the increasing importance of customer-centric support in shaping



customer experience. Patti et al. (2020) further argue that service performance should be understood across the customer journey rather than through isolated encounters. In hotels, this means that employees must be capable of responding to both simple inquiries and emotionally charged complaints without allowing discomfort, delay, or uncertainty to undermine the guest's experience.

Adaptability and professionalism are equally important in a volatile service environment. Career adaptability allows employees to respond to changing conditions and influences their intentions to remain in hospitality work (Rasheed et al., 2020). Organizational resilience similarly depends on openness to change, learning, and the capacity to recover from setbacks (Vakilzadeh & Haase, 2021). Professionalism gives adaptability an ethical and service-oriented direction: employees are expected to understand the objectives of their work, follow appropriate procedures, and place legitimate organizational and guest needs above momentary personal preference. Hospitality professionals identify these competencies as important because guest demand fluctuates and unexpected concerns often require employees to operate beyond a narrowly defined task.

Problem-solving illustrates the integration of cognitive, interpersonal, and emotional skill. Effective problem-solving requires employees to identify the real concern, gather relevant information, consider consequences, and communicate a workable response. Mahanal et al. (2022) describe problem-solving as a higher-order capability that can be developed through intentional learning experiences. Within hospitality education, Maniram (2022) similarly notes the importance of strengthening critical-thinking dispositions. The need has become more urgent as automation changes service roles and increases the demand for employees who can handle nonroutine situations rather than merely perform repetitive procedures (Voipio et al., 2023).

Technology is one domain in which Gen Z is often expected to excel. Online information and digital tools have shaped how young people learn and seek answers (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Hotels now require employees to use property-management and point-of-sale systems, online booking platforms, communication applications, and cashless payment technologies. Neves et al. (2021), however, argue that the digital era increases rather than eliminates the value of personal and interpersonal competencies, since human capabilities enable establishments to differentiate themselves even when competitors use similar systems. Digital skill is therefore most valuable when paired with judgment, accuracy, data responsibility, and customer sensitivity.

Time management is another form of self-regulation. Employees must set priorities, coordinate shifts, complete documentation, prepare endorsements, and respond to interruptions without sacrificing quality. Trentepohl et al. (2022) link time-management knowledge and practice with stronger performance, while Ötken et al. (2023) draw attention to distractions and nonwork internet use during working hours. In hotels, poor time use affects not only individual output but also the next shift, other departments, and guests waiting for assistance. At the same time, younger employees' concern for work-life balance should not automatically be equated with weak commitment. The managerial challenge is to distinguish legitimate boundaries from behavior that transfers unfinished responsibilities to others.

Training and development provide the organizational mechanism for converting potential into consistent performance. Fraser (2020) argues that hospitality education must remain aligned with workplace requirements, while Assen et al. (2023) recommend integrative and experiential approaches that develop higher-order skills. The post-pandemic sector also needs continued investment in human capital, digital capability, and organizational resilience (Baloch et al., 2022). Product knowledge, simulations, coached guest interaction, mentoring, and reflective feedback can connect classroom learning with the judgment required in actual service encounters.

Emotional well-being completes the competence profile because hospitality work includes emotional labor, conflict, irregular schedules, and repeated public interaction. Kalargyrou et al. (2023) show that managerial attitudes toward employees experiencing depression have implications for organizational behavior in hospitality. Emotional support should therefore be understood as a workplace concern rather than a private matter alone. Nevertheless, support does not remove the need for professional regulation. Employees must learn to recognize emotions, seek assistance appropriately, and prevent momentary distress from determining service decisions. A psychologically safer workplace and clear performance expectations are complementary: together they allow employees to ask for help, learn from errors, and become more independent over time.

Methodology

The unit of analysis consisted of the managers' accounts of Gen Z employee soft skills within the bounded Bacolod hotel context. The hotels served as settings contributing to the case rather than as separate organizational cases. The bounded case was the phenomenon of Gen Z soft skills as encountered and interpreted by managers across three selected Bacolod accommodation establishments during February to April 2024. The establishments were treated collectively because each provided a managerial instance of the same locally bounded phenomenon rather than serving as a separate case for comparison. This boundary allowed detailed examination of a contemporary workplace phenomenon in its real-life context while limiting claims to the participating managers and establishments (Creswell, 2003, 2013).



Purposive sampling selected three female department managers: two from locally owned hotels and one from a hotel belonging to a Philippine chain. Each had at least one year of managerial experience, regularly supervised or interacted with Gen Z employees, and could provide information directly relevant to the research question. The participants were assigned the pseudonyms Alexa, Betty, and Cathy, and their establishments were identified as Hotel Alpha, Hotel Bravo, and Hotel Charlie. Alexa was a 30-year-old duty manager with nearly 11 years of industry experience; Betty was a 28-year-old sales manager with almost five years of experience; and Cathy was a 47-year-old senior sales manager with more than 25 years of experience across several areas of hotel work.

The adequacy of the three-participant sample may be considered retrospectively using the information-power framework of Malterud et al. (2016), rather than as a claim of statistical representativeness. The inquiry had a narrow aim, a highly specific participant group with direct managerial experience of the phenomenon, and intensive semi-structured interviews followed by clarification and member checking. Recurrence was evident when the three accounts converged on the principal domains of relational service, work-related and digital capability, and emotional regulation, while their differences supplied useful contextual nuance. The three accounts provided material for an exploratory analysis of the narrowly bounded case, but they cannot be taken as representing the range of hotel-manager perspectives in Bacolod City.

The researcher first obtained endorsement from the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Negros Occidental and submitted proposal letters to the identified hotels. A semi-structured interview guide focused on interpersonal relations, communication and customer service, adaptability, problem-solving, technology use, time management, training needs, and emotional well-being. These domains reflected the central research question and the competency areas established in the literature. The interview guide was reviewed before data collection, and the comments received were used to improve the clarity, relevance, and alignment of the questions with the inquiry.

Available documentation indicates that the interview guide was reviewed and refined before data collection. However, it does not identify the reviewers' qualifications, the review criteria, or the specific revisions made. Instrument review is therefore reported only as a procedural step and not as evidence of formally established validity or reliability. Open follow-up questions allowed participants to elaborate workplace incidents. Two initial interviews were conducted through Google Meet and one in person. All were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed. Follow-up clarificatory conversations were conducted in person, and participants reviewed the final statements derived from their accounts. The clarificatory responses were treated as part of the interview record.

The researcher manually analyzed the data using Lichtman's (2023) 3Cs procedure of coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. Coding was primarily inductive: the researcher repeatedly read the transcripts, identified significant statements, and assigned initial labels grounded in participants' accounts. Codes were compared within and across interviews, consolidated into categories or central ideas, and then developed into concepts and overarching themes. Candidate themes were reviewed against the complete transcript set for internal coherence and correspondence with divergent statements. The researcher conducted the initial analysis, while the adviser and co-adviser reviewed the developing categories and interpretations. Alternative interpretations were examined through comparison across participants, recoding after an interval, and adviser review rather than through a formal inter-coder reliability coefficient.

Statements originally expressed in Hiligaynon or Filipino were retained with English translations. The researcher translated them for analysis and reporting, and member checking was used to verify the intended meaning of interpreted statements. Because the source thesis does not report an independent bilingual translator or formal back-translation, this is acknowledged as a limitation. Quotations in the Results present the original wording followed by an English translation in brackets when needed.

Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was supported through member checking and source triangulation across three managers and establishments (Anney, 2014; Candela, 2019). This was source triangulation only: the study did not triangulate interviews with employee accounts, observations, documents, or performance records. Transferability was supported through description of the participants and setting; dependability through check-recheck and an audit trail; and confirmability through code-recode, adviser review, and reflexive attention to the researcher's hospitality experience. These procedures strengthened transparency without eliminating the interpretive character of the analysis.

The study received academic approval from the Graduate School panel before implementation as part of the institution's thesis authorization process. This approval should not be interpreted as separate clearance from an institutional research ethics committee. The researcher observed ethical safeguards throughout the study, including voluntary participation, written informed consent, the participants' right to refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study, and the protection of their privacy and confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used, while all recordings and transcripts were securely handled in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173, 2012). The researcher declared no conflict of interest and ensured that neither the participants nor their establishments were identifiable in the reporting of the findings.



Results

The analysis generated three overarching themes: relational and customer-service competence; work-related and digital capabilities; and emotional well-being and professional regulation. The first comprised interpersonal relations, communication, customer service, and adaptability. The second comprised problem-solving, technology use, time management, and training and development. The third captured managers' accounts of emotion, judgment, guest handling, help-seeking, and retention. The thematic structure and representative evidence are summarized in Table 1.

Table

1

Thematic Structure and Representative Evidence

Theme	Categories	Central meaning	Representative statement
Relational and customer-service competence	Interpersonal relations; communication; customer service; adaptability	Peer rapport and feedback responsiveness coexisted with hesitation, uneven empathy, and reduced confidence during difficult guest encounters.	Cathy: "There are hesitations at times, but once they are told not to do it again, they respond in a positive way."
Work-related and digital capabilities	Problem-solving; technology; time management; training and development	Digital fluency and rapid learning were strengths; patient investigation, checking, initiative, and consistent pacing required development.	Alexa: "They are very tech savvy...using Opera...this generation, they easily grasp it."
Emotional well-being and professional regulation	Emotional response; help-seeking; judgment; retention	Managers recognized mental-health awareness but described distress affecting guest handling, independence, and adherence to procedure.	Alexa: "When handling complaining guests, they tend to panic...[and] ask help more often."

Note. Statements are managers' perceptions within the participating establishments; translated excerpts are identified in the narrative.

Within relational and customer-service competence, managers reported that participating Gen Z employees formed close peer relationships, responded positively to recognition, and were competitive and willing to learn. Cathy described their response to correction: "There are hesitations at times, but once they are told not to do it again, they respond in a positive way." Participants also reported uneven communication across age and status differences. Betty said, "May mga times man nga ga-hold back sila sa amon.... Wala man language barrier. Kis-a kon may kinahanglan himuon, indi kami nila maintindihan" [There are times when they hold back from us. There is no language barrier, but sometimes when something needs to be done, they do not understand us].

Guest-facing situations produced the clearest concerns about relational competence. Managers described hesitation, reduced confidence, difficulty empathizing, and loss of procedural recall when complaints intensified. Cathy explained, "I believe that we have taught them everything that they need to know.... We can really see nga indi gid sila confident.... 'Gaka-blankohan sila'...'daw wala na sila dayon kabalo kon ano himuon'" [They are not confident; they seem to go blank and no longer know what to do]. Betty likewise described some younger employees as allowing their emotional reaction to a guest to affect whether a request or procedure was handled consistently. Participants also noted that some employees needed explicit guidance before acting outside narrowly assigned responsibilities and that schedule or duty adjustments could create tension with expectations about work-life boundaries.

Within work-related and digital capabilities, technology was the most consistently identified strength. Alexa said, "They are very tech savvy. They can catch up fast when using the system. We are using Opera.... This generation, they easily grasp it." Betty described employees using online searches, Grammarly, and artificial-intelligence tools to improve email writing and locate information, while Cathy associated their desire for immediate answers with long exposure to a fast-paced digital environment.

Problem-solving and time management were more uneven. Managers reported that participating employees often wanted concerns resolved quickly but sometimes sought the person officially responsible before stabilizing the guest encounter. Cathy stated, "Yun yung ini-instill ko sa team, na to really work on their patience in terms of problem-solving" [That is what I instill in the team: to work on patience in problem-solving]. Managers also reported quick task completion accompanied at times by missed details, lateness, weak shift preparation, and last-minute rushing. Cathy observed, "May mga times...may ma-miss out nga mga details or indi na ma-double-check.... The work is done



faster, but it affects the quality sometimes" [Sometimes details are missed or work is not double-checked; it is done faster, but quality is affected].

The managers identified training needs in communication, negotiation, professionalism, product knowledge, empathy, initiative, and handling unexpected guest concerns. Alexa linked product knowledge to guest-facing confidence, explaining that employees who understood the hotel and its products would know what to say and would be less afraid of customers. Betty emphasized problem-solving, cross-department communication, and distinguishing personal feelings from professional obligations. Cathy wanted programs that would help employees engage and empathize with others.

Emotional well-being and professional regulation formed the third theme. Participants acknowledged younger employees' greater openness to mental-health concerns while reporting panic during complaints, dependence on supervisors, distraction by phones or social media, and unexpressed distress followed by resignation. Alexa stated, "Sometimes when handling complaining guests, they tend to panic and not do what they're supposed to do. They are more dependent on their superiors and tend to ask for help more often." Betty described instances in which emotional reactions affected adherence to standard procedures and in which front-office employees cried or required comfort after difficult guest encounters.

The three accounts varied in emphasis. Alexa focused on systems, instruction, dependence, and operational consequences; Betty emphasized empathy, emotion, negotiation, and professional obligation; and Cathy stressed quality, feedback, engagement, and long-established service standards. Despite these differences, all three participants associated employee development with purposeful training and managerial guidance. These findings report the managers' perceptions within the participating establishments and do not establish that the described behaviors characterize Gen Z employees generally.

Discussion and Analysis

The participating managers portrayed Gen Z capability as strong digital readiness accompanied by developmental needs in relational service. Technological fluency, rapid information access, competitiveness, and responsiveness to immediate feedback can benefit increasingly digital hotel operations (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Yet the accounts also show that digital readiness is not equivalent to hospitality readiness. Guest service requires empathy, judgment, communication, emotional regulation, and context-sensitive action in addition to system proficiency.

The first theme indicates that communication gaps were relational and organizational rather than simply individual deficits. Participants associated hesitation with the age or style of the supervisor, unclear understanding, and reluctance to ask for clarification. Hotels should therefore examine how instructions are framed and whether novice employees can safely confirm what they understood. The contrast between social and professional confidence is relevant here: ease with peers does not automatically transfer to an unequal, emotionally charged guest encounter requiring product accuracy and role awareness. This interpretation is consistent with the need to update workplace communication practices without stereotyping young employees (Janssen & Carradini, 2021).

Customer-service concerns were most consequential during complaints. The reported loss of confidence, reduced empathy, and procedural blanking can weaken service recovery precisely when the employee most visibly represents the hotel. Customer-centric support shapes experience across the customer journey (Patti et al., 2020; Sheth et al., 2023). The findings therefore support progressive practice that begins with routine inquiries and product explanation, advances to complaints and negotiation, and uses coached reflection to develop professional confidence. Product knowledge is necessary, but it must be combined with listening, de-escalation, perspective-taking, and judgment under pressure.

The accounts of feedback link interpersonal competence with adaptability. Immediate recognition appeared motivating, while corrective feedback sometimes produced initial hesitation followed by constructive response. Rather than interpreting this pattern as entitlement, managers can distinguish acknowledgment, developmental feedback, and formal reward. Feedback should state the observed behavior, its consequence, and the expected response. Such clarity maintains accountability while using a motivational pattern that participants repeatedly observed.

The second theme shows that speed can function as both an asset and a risk. Digital tools helped employees learn systems, search for answers, and prepare written communication, but participants also associated immediacy with premature solutions, missed checking, or tasks postponed until the end of a shift. Hotels should establish standards for accuracy, confidentiality, verification, and appropriate artificial-intelligence use. Visible work systems—shift plans, checklists, progress points, and endorsement protocols—can also support consistent pacing without treating long hours as evidence of commitment (Neves et al., 2021; Trentepohl et al., 2022).

Problem-solving additionally exposed uncertainty over role ownership. A new employee may understand departmental boundaries more clearly than the informal hospitality expectation that every employee temporarily



owns the guest experience. Managers should define initiative rather than invoke “common sense”: acknowledge the concern, obtain essential information, act within authorized limits, make a warm referral, and confirm acceptance by the responsible person. This protocol combines product knowledge, cross-functional coordination, and judgment and is consistent with experiential approaches to higher-order hospitality learning (Assen et al., 2023; Maniram, 2022).

Participants’ discussion of adaptability and sacrifice requires moderation. Hotel operations sometimes demand schedule or role adjustment, but unlimited extension of work should not define professionalism. Some intergenerational comparisons may reflect accumulated experience, tacit service scripts, or different labor expectations rather than generation itself. Longer-serving workers can transfer contextual knowledge through mentoring, while younger employees contribute digital methods and newer expectations about sustainable work. The findings are therefore more useful for identifying teachable competencies than for ranking generations.

The third theme suggests that compassion and performance standards should operate together. Panic, crying, dependence, and abrupt resignation were managerial observations of distress, not evidence that emotion is inherently incompatible with hospitality work. Managers’ attitudes toward mental-health concerns affect workplace inclusion (Kalargyrou et al., 2023). Supportive debriefing should help an employee identify what occurred, review procedure, practice an effective response, and return to progressively more difficult work. Psychological safety is most constructive when it develops capability rather than either stigmatizing distress or permanently removing challenge.

Across the three themes, the central contribution is their interdependence. A guest complaint simultaneously requires communication, empathy, product knowledge, problem-solving, emotional control, role ownership, and timely action. Training will remain incomplete if it isolates digital skills from relational practice or treats emotional well-being as unrelated to performance. For hospitality education, these skills should be explicitly taught, practiced, and assessed through authentic simulations and supervised industry exposure rather than left as incidental outcomes (Fraser, 2020).

Limitations

The findings are bounded by a small purposive sample of three female department managers and capture managerial perceptions only. The study excluded Gen Z employees’ accounts and did not use observations, organizational documents, or performance records; its corroboration was therefore limited to source triangulation across managers and establishments. Recollections may be affected by recall, attribution, and salience biases, including greater attention to difficult incidents than to routine competent performance. Differences in hotel ownership, department, participant role, and length of experience may also shape the accounts. Translation from Hiligaynon or Filipino into English involved interpretive choices and was not independently back-translated. These constraints limit transferability beyond the participating establishments. The themes should be read as contextually grounded propositions for comparable settings and further inquiry, not as universal attributes of Gen Z employees.

Conclusion

The study concludes that hotel managers viewed Gen Z employees as possessing a valuable but uneven combination of capabilities. They were seen as technologically fluent, quick to locate information, capable of learning hotel systems, competitive, and responsive to timely recognition and feedback. These attributes give them clear potential in a hospitality industry that is becoming more digital and fast-moving. Their developmental needs were concentrated in interpersonal communication, empathy, confidence in guest-facing situations, patient and investigative problem-solving, consistent time use, initiative, and emotional regulation.

The three overarching themes—relational and customer-service competence, work-related and digital capabilities, and emotional well-being and professional regulation—were inseparable in actual service situations. A complaint could not be managed through product knowledge or technology alone; it required the employee to understand the guest, regulate emotion, communicate clearly, decide within appropriate limits, and act promptly. The findings therefore support a holistic view of competence in which technical and digital capabilities are strengthened through human, professional, and self-management skills.

The managers’ standpoint also shows that effective development is a shared organizational responsibility. Young employees must accept feedback, learn standards, and build independence, but hotels must provide clear expectations, structured practice, supportive supervision, and psychologically safe opportunities to learn from error. Hospitality education institutions must likewise make soft-skill development explicit and authentic. Because the findings arose from three managers in a bounded local case, they should be treated as contextually grounded insights rather than universal descriptions of a generation.

Recommendations

The findings suggest that participating and comparable hotels may benefit from structured onboarding that integrates product knowledge, communication, customer service, problem-solving, time management, technology use, and emotional regulation. Realistic guest scenarios, role-playing, shadowing, coached service recovery, and post-incident reflection may be more useful than reliance on lectures or written procedures alone. Clear decision boundaries can



show employees what they may resolve independently, when coordination is required, and when escalation is necessary.

Managers in participating and comparable establishments may provide frequent, specific, and balanced feedback, clarify instructions, and invite employees to restate assignments to confirm understanding. Mentoring can build independence gradually while recognizing that the present evidence does not prescribe a single supervisory approach for all young hotel employees.

The participating hotels may also formalize shift planning, endorsement, punctuality, task completion, and responsible use of mobile phones, online writing tools, and artificial intelligence. Mental-health-sensitive supervision can include confidential support routes, debriefing after difficult encounters, coaching in de-escalation and emotional regulation, and referral when necessary, while preserving fair performance standards.

Hospitality programs and partner hotels may jointly embed assessable practice in complaint handling, empathy, negotiation, teamwork, product presentation, decision-making, and professional conduct. Future studies should include Gen Z employees, observational or documentary evidence, other departments and accommodation types, and a larger and more diverse group of managers. Comparative work should test whether organizational culture, role design, training quality, employment conditions, or supervisory style explain behaviors currently attributed to generation.

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