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Poslovno okruženje i tiho odsutajanje – perspektiva generacije Z

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Apstrakt: Cilj ovog rada je da pruži bolji uvid u karakteristike radnog okruženja generacije Z, njihove stavove prema radu, kao i da pruži smernice poslodavcima u radu sa ovom mladom generacijom. Rad je sastavljen od međusobno povezanih delova u kojima se diskutuje o opštim uslovima savremenog poslovnog okruženja, pojavi novog fenomena pod nazivom tiho odustajanje kao i stavovima prema radu generacije Z. Fenomen tihog odustajanja, posebno karakterističan za generaciju Z, predstavlja put ka odbacivanju kulture napornog rada i rušenju stava da se posao mora raditi "udarnički". Autori smatraju da na ovaj način zaposleni jasno pokazuju da nisu srećni u uslovima gde se često osećaju "spaljeno", stresirano, anksiozno i nesrećno. Period koji je prethodio ovom nosio je moto živi da bi radio, dok je novi radi da bi živeo. Kao takav zavređuje posebnu pažnju autora. U radu su korišćeni raspoloživi izvori stručne literture i rezultati sekundarnih istraživanja.

Ključne reči: Generacija Z, poslovno okruženje, tiho odustajanje

Business environment and quiet quit - perspective of generation Z

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to provide a better insight into the characteristics of the working environment of generation Z, their attitudes towards work, as well as to provide guidelines to employers in working with this young generation. The work is composed of interconnected parts in which the general conditions of the modern business environment are discussed, the emergence of a new phenomenon called quiet quit attitudes towards the work of generation Z. The phenomenon of quiet quit, especially characteristic of generation Z, represents the path towards rejecting the culture of hard work and demolishing the attitude that work must be done "hard work". The authors believe that in this way employees clearly show that they are not happy in conditions where they often feel "burned out", stressed, anxious and unhappy. The period that preceded this one carried the motto live to work, while the new one is work to live. As such, it deserves the special attention of the author. Available sources of professional literature and results of secondary research were used in the work.

Keywords: Generation Z, business environment, quiet quit

1. Introduction - Basic characteristics of the modern work environment

The outlines of the future labor market are slowly emerging while the feelings of the general public oscillate from fear and uneasiness to enthusiasm and high expectations. Although the field of work has changed many times throughout history, it seems that today's mega trends intend to transform it in a radical sense.

Over the past few decades, there has been a collapse in wages and jobs among the middle class, leading to political unrest in many economies around the world. The demand for jobs has changed so routines have experienced a decline while non-routine and abstract jobs have become much more in demand and popular. The aforementioned fact caused polarization in incomes. Likewise, some companies have become so-called "superstars" in terms of profitability, productivity and market share, which further

strengthened the already mentioned polarization. Job security is no longer the same for all generations; contracts that bind the individual to the organization on the so-called the traditional way, today only members of the older generations (ending in the cohort of older Millennials) own it. On the other hand, young workers no longer have a great chance to negotiate benefit contracts with the organization that include full social security. A fact that must not be forgotten is the constant increase in the gap between urban and rural areas (at the expense of the former), and the trend will only continue to grow. Already, some large cities have a GDP that is three times higher than the same in medium-sized countries (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2017).

The change that has been "announcing" its arrival for a long time is related to erasing the clear boundary between business and private life. For example, in some professions (highly educated, specialized staff) employees can choose where they will work; location is not in question at all as long as the job is done on time. There are also the so-called "zero hour" contracts, which are present in the category of lower paid jobs, imply that the working hours constantly vary and that the individual works whenever the employer calls him. Between full employment and unemployment there is a whole spectrum of non-standard work schemes - temporary work, additional (part time) work, self-employment, etc. Although in previous periods a small number of workers worked in this category of jobs, since the 90s of the last century its scope has increased significantly, especially in developed economies (nearly 60% of workers are engaged in the aforementioned way). It can be concluded that the "climate" on the labor market may be more favorable to highly educated staff (possibility of flexibility and autonomy), since in poor households householders mostly work in the category of the above, "gray" work arrangements. Considering the fact that work has always brought people together, the question arises of what will happen to social cohesion caused by the increasing stratification in the workforce (International Labor Organization, 2018; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015).

Then, employees in developed countries, especially educated ones, already belong to the older population cluster. On the other hand, in underdeveloped parts of the world (population boom), the workforce is becoming younger and younger - e.g. the territory of India alone annually "incomes" 12 million young, able-bodied workers (Krishnan, 2020). It is known that the population from these areas was unemployed before, however, with the introduction of automation, the situation worsens further; it is assumed that 70-85% of jobs in the territory of Ethiopia and India are subject to robotization, which, on the other hand, can leave "armies" of people without work. Unfortunately, support and social assistance networks are not developing at a sufficient speed, so the problem of providing the necessary means of living also arises as a pressing issue (Oxford, 2016).

The effects of today's modern work have been confirmed to have negative effects on people's physical and mental health. Diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, addiction to opiates, anxiety and depression, feelings of loneliness, etc., are becoming more frequent and intense. In general, these negative phenomena, which are often called epidemics of modern life, are related to sedentary working conditions, especially those in which employees do not have the opportunity to "disconnect" from various forms of electronic communication.

Collaboration with artificial intelligence affects the way people are hired, fired, and go about their daily business. On the one hand, there are great advantages related to the possibility of choosing the location of work - employees and the organization can now collaborate with maximum efficiency, in real time, from any geographical point. However, many companies, precisely thanks to AI, can monitor the behavior of their employees through surveillance algorithms, and thus a situation arises where the content of business emails is monitored; parts of it that have a touch of any sentimentality are labeled as "risky for productivity". Therefore, any deviation from the norms, which is prescribed exclusively by the company, in an indirect (silent) way, is now prohibited (Camopllo et al., 2017).

Research conducted on the European market points to the fact that the attitude related to the introduction of robots is slowly changing - although the majority of respondents still think that they can help people, some firmly claim that work is slowly being stolen from people. The main challenge for all countries is to find ways to help make the transition to new jobs (and jobs) as painless as possible and to take a proactive approach regarding the impact of technology on people, social institutions and society as a whole.

2. The influence of environmental factors on the occurrence of quiet quit

"Quiet quit" is a type of organizational behavior, and according to all the aforementioned characteristics of the environment, it is not at all surprising that its intensity is increasing. The authors of this text believe that it should be taken seriously, especially when considering the characteristics of Generation Z as potential job candidates.

Additionally, the creator of the term is Mark Boldger, who in 2009 officially promoted and explained it at a symposium of economists in Texas. However, there will be a special interest in "quiet quit" in 2021/22 influenced by the Tang Ping movement in China and a TikTok clip recorded by Zaid Khan. Since that period, the professional public has been closely following this phenomenon, which is slowly but surely increasing over time (Formica, Sfodera, 2022).

The term can be defined as following - an individual decides to do the minimum of the described work, as much as is necessary to officially call the task finished. In this way, attempts to achieve the highest level of balance between business and private life are manipulated (Scheyett, 2022).

In this case, it is about rejecting the culture of hard work and demolishing the attitude that the work must be done "hard". The authors believe that in this way employees clearly show that they are not happy in conditions where they often feel "burned out", stressed, anxious and unhappy. The previous period of functioning carried the motto live to work, while the new one is work to live. Quiet quit manifests itself in different ways - arriving later and leaving work earlier, not participating in team projects, missing meetings, generally a drop in work enthusiasm (Hetler, 2022; Espada, 2022).

This organizational phenomenon is much more frequent among the young population, i.e. generations Y and Z, somewhat less in generation X and significantly less in the Baby Boom generation. Author Dawson points out that the economic crisis will have a strong impact on "quiet quit" and there are many reasons, starting with low salaries, career stagnation, lack of intrinsic motivation, business stress and exhaustion, insufficient promotion by management, etc. Generally, when people no longer see a future in their career, the above behavior comes as a logical consequence (Dawson, 2022).

Although quiet resignation may appear to be a temporary phenomenon, it is neither naive nor good for business practice; first of all, employees who fall into the category of "quiet quitters" at a job they are no longer interested in and about which they put little effort, stay only because of payment factors. The authors call them "active passive" workers. According to research by the Gallup Institute, more than 50% of the US population is in the cluster of quiet withdrawal. Of course, all these people will exhibit various undesirable business behaviors such as inflexibility, insufficient development of skills and knowledge, reluctance to adapt to team initiatives, etc. (Harter, 2022).

The background of the strengthening of this trend is definitely the pandemic; she made people aware of the importance of life and health. Numerous layoffs (at the beginning of the pandemic) contributed to the end of the "live to work" era, which for many employees proved to be a chance/possibility to find better working conditions. As reported on CNBC news, the quiet walkout is a direct result of the Covid 19 pandemic, during which employees realized that it is entirely possible to take control of the balance of the business/private hourly wage (Tong, 2022).

When talking about the behavior of the management, it is necessary to take into account a number of factors. First of all, there is the constant problem of employees who feel slighted because their work is not recognized and appreciated by the management. The feeling of the so-called organizational injustice grows in situations where, for adequate effort, promotions, bonuses, promotions, etc. are not received, which will further (if left uncorrected) lead to a drop in motivation, commitment, and psychological dislocation from work (Scheyett, 2022).

Organizations that the authors call toxic, characterized by a high level of conflict at all organizational levels, represent a special problem. In this case, the skills and knowledge of employees are not valued, the opportunities for advancement are weak, and everything is done in a tight circle of connections and acquaintances (Özbilgin et al., 2019).

In the context of a "positive" scenario, employees should accept organizational goals and values as their own, and managers should, according to the unwritten conditions of the psychological contract, respect

employees in every respect. This relationship leads to increased commitment to the organization and work, increased work performance, and of course not thinking about leaving the job (Allen, Meyer, 1990).

It is certain that certain characteristics of managers, such as emotional intelligence, credibility, empathy, broader conceptual knowledge, etc., contribute to building a quality relationship for employees. When the mentioned traits are opposite, the productivity and initiative of the employees will be in decline. Factors that also influence the growth of silent resignation are mobbing, excessive/unrealistic amounts of work, toxic relationships in the organization, bad organizational cultur, and climate (Uçkun et al., 2022).

If the problem of silent resignation is approached from the perspective of employees, they resort to it in order to get rid of all kinds of business stress; it is completely irrational for them to fight with accumulated problems (lack of motivation, bad management policy, etc.), which in most cases they cannot solve by themselves.

By looking at the professional literature, it can be concluded that employees highly value work in organizations where support and participation are emphasized. Likewise, those whose personality possesses the characteristics of extroversion are much less likely to resort to silent withdrawal, unlike their colleagues with high neuroticism and/or introversion. In this case, the "happy" and "unhappy" working climates are emphasized again, so in the former, employees have the will to perform even additional work tasks, help colleagues, etc. Another very important factor is the feeling of job security, that is, the belief that the manager will not terminate the employment relationship for subjective reasons and without any legal basis. Employees who at work feel like an important part of the business chain, have a work role that matches their qualifications, will feel harmonious and good and will not think of quitting (Hetller, 2022; Johari et al., 2022).

3. Generation Z and attitudes towards work (secondary research)

Members of Generation Z are very ambitious, self-confident and realistic, which in turn makes them very entrepreneurial. As can be read in most literature sources, it motivates them to find their "dream" job and it is believed that they will change it very often, considering that they do not tolerate unfair employers, nor do they "suffer" from those whose values they do not agree with (Pataki-Bittó and Kapusy, 2021).

It is important to point out that they are much more aware of the state of the world than all their predecessors, which also applies to financial well-being. Their great advantage is openness, which is reflected in the acceptance of human diversity without any judgment. The above is perhaps not surprising considering that they have grown and developed in the face of numerous financial crises, political unrest, global terrorism and unfavorable climate changes. All these situational factors, with a strong negative sign, made them very adaptable to the global world and its dynamics.

Given that some members of this generation are already working, it must be emphasized that the beginning of their working career takes place in very complex conditions, including pandemics, economic decline, social unrest and wars. The environment, which constantly signals uncertainty to them, has influenced that their job-related expectations are very low from the very start, as well as that they do not have a detailed career development plan (Snieska et al., 2020).

Young people are more specific than their predecessors, since they are the first who do not know life without the Internet. For the reason above, they are constantly in contact with friends, of whom they have more in online spaces than in real life. They are extremely prone to multitasking and find it difficult to concentrate on just one activity for a long period of time. Their abilities, preferences towards multitasking play an important role in their work as well. It is certain that multitasking has become a reality in business organizations, academic institutions, and even in family life (Krasulja et al., 2019).

In the continuation of the work, the results of three quantitative researches taken from the available professional literature will be presented. The authors of this text believe that in this way they will be able to better describe the characteristics of members of generation Z, as well as their attitudes towards life and work. Also, research should indicate the values of the new generation of the workforce that are significantly different from the previous ones, especially from the Baby Boom and X, and to a smaller extent from the Y generation.

The environment in which the research was conducted has the following characteristics: 1. High degree of complexity, 2. Difficulties in predicting and planning future outcomes, 3. Abandoning old business practices under the pressure of external variables, 4. Radical development of AI, 5. Problems in social, climate, financial, health and psychological segments. Members of generation Z were born in this environment, which directly affects the formation of their values, attitudes, behavior at work and in their private life.

The first research was conducted by the consulting company Ernst and Young, on a sample of 1553 members of the Z cluster, in the USA in the period from February 3 to 6, 2023 (How can understanding the influence of Gen Z today empower your tomorrow? 2023 EY Gen Z Segmentation Study)

The results are as follows:

- 1. More than half of the respondents (52%) feel a high degree of concern about the situation with the acquisition of money, which becomes increasingly critical from 2021. Also, constant contact with technology allows them to be informed in a timely manner, so they are aware that the situation will not improve significantly (in the near future). Issues such as buying a house, housing costs, pension fund, buying a car, etc., have become a real problem. Likewise, these young people, unlike their predecessors, do not treat money-related issues as taboo, they conduct a public dialogue about it, with less and less faith that they will become rich in the future.
- 2. Financial realism has become their general attitude and they educate themselves daily on how to earn enough money to live. Given that they declare themselves to be very concerned about earnings (the ways and conditions of its acquisition), they have become very active in self-taught research related to the opportunities that the market offers them. Reality indicates that slowly but surely a generation of thrifty people is forming who strive to optimize their earnings. They are always willing to save, invest or even donate excess money (if there is a possibility to monitor the further movement of the donation).
- 3. They do not see advancement up the hierarchical ladder as a career imperative everyone is different and this is not condemned in this cohort. When it comes to choosing a job, they rarely choose to do a job they don't like just for the money.
- 4. Members of Generation Z are not afraid of work and try to earn money in different ways. Most of them already work permanently or under contract (so-called part time), and/or are additionally financed by freelance arrangements. It seems that it is not necessary to train them how to earn and function beyond traditional jobs for young people (babysitting, delivering newspapers, etc.). The explanation lies in the fact that a lot of new jobs appeared during their time, so they declare that they have no fear of starting their own business in their early years.
- 5. Almost all cohort members declare that authenticity is very important to them, which is most likely a response to the pursuit of perfectionism that was the main value of their predecessors. They also believe that everyone should be true to themselves and be accepted and respected as such.
- 6. Trust is an important item for them and they are very skeptical; they distrust governments and large corporations, believing that these institutions have lost their humanity.

The second study was conducted by the authors Graczyk-Kucharska and Erickson, and the results, among other things, were presented in a professional article entitled "A person-organization fit model of Generation Z: Preliminary studies". The results were collected in the period from April 2017 to March 2019, on a sample of 3393 respondents (16-18 years old), under the name "Time for Professionals BIS - Professional Wielkopolska". The questions in the interview were related to the psycho-social side of work, its innovation/traditionality, flexibility, salary and other benefits. In other words, the authors tried to figure out what young people expect from their employers and what today's, modern, psychological contract looks like (Graczyk, Erickson, 2020).

The research included the following parameters - environmental factors, the potential occupation of the respondents (IT, logistics, economics and mechanics), as well as their correlative relationship. The main goal was to prove the accuracy of the hypothesis that a complete alignment between man and organization has a large number of advantages for both employers and employees.

The main conclusions (with possible deviations) would be the following:

- 1. The female part of the sample prefers to have a good atmosphere at work and considers it more convenient to work in the office than from home. The male part of the sample leans more towards earnings, status and achievements, as well as non-territorial work. The above can be interpreted as a reflection of male and female values in society.
- 2. Members of both sexes highly value working in innovative companies and believe that passion for work is extremely important.
- 3. By all characteristics, members of generation Z are different compared to members of generations Z, X and Baby boom.
- 4. Salary is the first motivating factor, while passion for work is right behind.
- 5. The respondents do not shy away from working in a team, but they do not mind online business, where they work outside the group.
- 6. The instability of the environment became a phenomenon that the respondents "got used to".
- 7. A decreasing number opts for the traditional work scheme, which implies that a long-term career is built under the roof of only one organization.
- 8. They expect companies to be true to their missions, ethically correct, to communicate clearly and transparently.
- 9. They highly value a good atmosphere at work, while organizational rigidity is seen as a thing of the past. Possible compensation for a bad climate at work can only be the amount of income and that in the short term.
- 10. For Generation Z, money is a tool for realizing "dreams" and not something that is kept in an account.
- 11. Young people are inclined to personal growth and development, so they expect to get the opportunity to express their personal support in the organization as well.

The third survey was conducted in the USA by the InsideOutDevelopment team, and the results are presented in the Coaching That Works report. There were 1125 respondents in the sample, in the age range of 18-23. The data was collected with the help of the SurveyMonkey platform.

The following part of the text can be useful to all employers who will potentially cooperate with them (or are already cooperating).

- 1. First of all, they insist that the business-private balance policy must be fully regulated and consistently implemented. In addition, the payment and reward system is extremely important to them. In the largest percentage, they choose a job that will provide them with income stability.
- 2. Young people are afraid of the idea of stagnating in the workplace, doing unimportant tasks and wasting hours performing repetitive administrative tasks. In view of the above, employers are advised to explain each task well; this generation doesn't lack ambition, but their engagement drops every time they can't connect the work they do with organizational goals. They accept business challenges and do not like monotony.
- 3. Two-thirds of the sample declares that they want to reach the maximum in their work and, accordingly, to have a high income. In fact, researchers believe that this generation is the most ambitious of all the previous ones. In particular, they expect to be promoted already after the first year of work, for which they are ready to work hard progress and innovation are their imperative.
- 4. In order for the boss/manager to be considered good, he must give them constant feedback. Growing up with applications, they are not used to situations where they have to guess what is happening. High technology has taught them to get instant answers, so they expect the same at work.
- 5. According to the results of this research, half of the respondents who left their jobs did so because of a bad relationship with their boss. Young people want managers to recognize their work and reward and promote them accordingly. Also, they don't like to work with bosses who have very unrealistic expectations, so they keep staff under constant pressure, ruling the organization by establishing their own reign of terror.
- 6. 6. The organizational culture they prefer is one that allows them to make mistakes and learn from them. They don't shy away from asking questions when they don't know something and believe that this way of functioning will ensure further progress in their studies and career.
- 7. Most of the members have problems with stress, anxiety or lack of motivation. Technology, which was their companion throughout their upbringing, taught them that there is always the possibility of consulting a smart machine, which resulted in them having a problem with making difficult decisions independently in everyday life. Therefore, their managers should be ready to

be their constant support.

- 8. The best way to gain trust among members of this generation is to establish frequent and elaborate feedback, both positive and negative. Their common attitude is that a lot can be learned from criticism, and they are very constructive in that regard. According to the survey, the majority of respondents stated that contact with superiors is necessary at least once a week. Likewise, they highly value organizational cultures where the manager is always ready to answer various questions and dilemmas.
- 9. Generation Z is very competitive, so managers should constantly set new goals, by no means easy, but realistic. Also, as a tool for maintaining motivation and advancement, it is recommended to create an organizational culture in which there is "smoldering" competition among staff. In addition to the above, the creation of good payment and reward policies goes hand in hand.
- 10. Managers should forget about the old system of "bossing" and leave the management of the project to the ideas of young people, since they are very loyal to the work they dedicate themselves to.
- 11. The system of leadership through fear and punishment should be completely abandoned. Giving direction to carry out daily work, constant supervision and micro-management of everything that employees do should be avoided as much as possible.
- 12. Generation Z has high technical knowledge about work, which is not the case with soft skills. In general, they do not have enough confidence to act in areas that are not in their comfort zone, so they need to be encouraged, taught communication and emotional intelligence (all of which leads to raising the level of soft skills). In this way, they will be able to make better strategic decisions.
- 13. A large number of respondents declare that the role of a mentor and/or coach in their career would be invaluable.
- 14. When it comes to organizational hierarchy, they completely deny the traditional one and believe that there should be collaboration at all organizational levels.
- 15. They cooperate best with members of generation Y, while the highest percentage of information about the company comes from company websites

4. Conclusion

Companies that want to gain a competitive advantage must understand the ways in which today's young workforce chooses their jobs. Workforce has always been the "key" to achieving productivity and business excellence, so it is considered that all the recommendations given are important to take into consideration.

What should be emphasized is that some organizations will have four different generations under their roof, which is an "ideal" situation for the emergence of misunderstandings, stereotyping and different perceptions of things and circumstances. In order to reconcile differences in the best possible way, the organizational dynamics need to be changed in terms of leading multigenerational teams as well as possible.

Traditionally, the employment of new generations has always led to a divergence in expectations between the employee and the organization. Getting to know the needs of the youngest staff cannot be treated lightly, given the numerous diversities in almost all aspects - the way of communication, the hierarchy of goals, the way of working, the achievement of goals, etc. Likewise, creating a climate that enhances motivation, innovation and good communication among employees from all generational cohorts seems like an excellent idea, although it is often a long and difficult road.

As the authors stated, members of generation Z are entering the labor market in a big way, so employers will be forced to adapt to their specificities. More advanced technological knowledge is their advantage; however, the question arises whether they are so good in the field of interpersonal communication, interpersonal relations and other "soft skills". According to dominant values and beliefs, where salary is not the first and only motive for work, they need to be offered a whole range of benefits in order to make the workplace as attractive as possible.

Given that a large number of members of this cohort are still studying and are not permanently employed, there is still no clear position in the professional literature on how to negotiate with them and achieve a win-win situation. The authors believe that this is a broad field for some further research on Generation

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