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GEN Z AND WORK HABITS, LITERATURE RESEARCH AMONG CROATIAN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper will analyze the GEN Z and their work habits. How to motivate GEN Z to gain work habits, and how to manage the GEN Z to achieve the best work results. As a preparation for this topic, a literature review was made, and we will also have the opportunity to see if there is any difference between GEN Z and the Millennials work habits. This literature research will be a start point for future researches that are planned on this topic to be researched among Croatian student members of the GEN Z.

KEYWORDS

GEN Z, work, zoomers, work habits, generation differences

INTRODUCTION

GEN Z, the generation born between 1997 and 2011, also known as Zoomers. This generation is very connected to the new technologies and the digital type of work. In this paper we want to research how to work with this new generation that is now entering the working market. As Kirchmayer et al. (2020) explain in their paper, the GEN Z are seen as the digital generation, as they all are fluent with the digital technologies but also they are expected to become more educated than any of the before generation. Kirchmayer et al. (2020) found out that since today, the main topic of interest by the researches were mostly the next categories:

- i) the factors that make this generation different,
- ii) the digital fluency of this generation,
- iii) the purchasing preferences,
- iv) the connection of the educational system and the position of the teachers, and
- v) how GEN Z will affect the business aspects and the work of the HR. Taking in consideration all this, we can line up the importance of the research conducted since today and as the topic is still not explored very much, we find space for new researches with Croatian students. GEN Z is motivated by more money, advancement and meaningful work (Kirchmayer et al., 2020).

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As Ngoc et al. (2022) explain, for years the Millennials were in focus of the researches, but now a day, things are changing, because the GEN Z is entering the work space. Analyzing the literature, Ngoc et al. (2022) pointed out, that GEN Z came to the World during economic crises, high unemployment, and the rapid growth of the Internet, this is why, they are more connected to devices versus their parents, they are less brand loyal but also when talking about buying something, GEN Z are very influenced by others opinion on social networks. They as generation, when talking about work, highly appreciate work and life balance, frequent feedbacks but also the connection between human and technology. Beside this, Ngoc et al. (2022) found that GEN Z is motivated by their salary, bonuses and other benefits, which is useful to know when taking in consideration the employment of a GEN Z.

Chareewan et al. (2020) conducted a research between the Croatian Millennials and GEN Z, as they explain; both generations are fully digital, born during the digital world age. Millennials are present on the digital platforms, and start having families later that their parents. They expect to enjoy their work; they value equality, fair and tolerance. Millennials search for a work place that has a mission, but also are more loyal to managers and co-workers that to organizations. On the other hand, Chareewan et al. (2020) pointed out that the GEN Z is mostly based on the technologies and they have the fear to miss out something, this is why they are so present on social networks. They are the new addition to the labor market. On one hand, they like to work with co-workers, but on the other hand, they like to achieve results by them self (Chareewan et al., 2020). As explained by Chareewan et al. (2020), GEN Z work expectations in Croatia are not much higher that the Millennials ones, but as a preparation for the work atmosphere, they advice to create workshops to better understand the differences between the two generations, from their point of view, this will help the work climate to be better.

GEN Z is different from previous generations, this generation is surrounded by modern technologies and their way of talking is throughout pictures (Hilcenko, 2020). One other important thing that Hilcenko found out is that the attention of GEN Z is shorter than the previous generation; the 45 minute classes that were introduced 500 years ago, in this present time are not any more possible, because the attention of this generation cannot be so long and it has to be divided with more brakes. Modern students spent twice as much time with modern technologies that rather read some books (Hilcenko, 2020). Hilcenko quoted Benjamin Franklin, were only if we involve someone in the work he will understand, and this is also with the GEN Z, they must be involved in the work to better understand what is expected from them. Almost 80% of the young belong to a visual type, so if you want to explain something, you have to draw it (Hilcenko, 2020).

Because of the global period they were raised, the GEN Z is dubious about five year projects but also afraid of tomorrow things to do (Tulgan, 2013). Tulgan thinks that the GEN Z will have more knowledge about the far destinations but they will not be as adventurous as the Millennials. Something that will attract the GEN Z to work will be the continuous reeducation about the work. GEN Z is motivated by short term projects and the communication with them should be short, clear and open (Tulgan, 2013).

Ružić et al. (2022) said that companies are now fighting for new employees that are coming from the GEN Z. They also pointed out, that today researches have been made regarding the work environment and GEN Z, but there is still plenty of space, especially on the Croatian work market. According to Ružić et al. (2022) on the global market there will be around two billion members of the GEN Z. They conducted their research among students in Pula, Croatia. Companies with strong employer branding and with an own identity may attract the GEN Z (Ružić et al., 2022). When taking in consideration working in a domestic company, authors said that students preferred a company where there is a good work environment but also a salary above average. Ružić et al. (2022) also found out that today employees are not so loyal anymore and they are more ready to change jobs frequently.



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Pekica (2020) made a research about the work expectations of GEN Z in Croatia, on the other hand, Pekica pointed out that almost half of the employers are worried that they will not be able to retain the new generation on a long period in one single company. Bačelić (2023) conducted a research among the retail workers and found out that every generation is less loyal. When talking about commitment to work, Millennials have a higher commitment than GEN Z (Bačelić, 2023). Raguž (2023) made an interesting research about feedback and GEN Z, and as she defined, feedback does not influence the satisfaction with work, positive or negative feedback will not influence the opinion of the members of GEN Z. Nenadić (2022) on the other side, said that GEN Z preferred real-time feedback and in-person approach. Companies now a day invest a lot of time on boarding processes because they found out new generation like this way of approach, which was also tested and proved by Nenadić (2022).

Bejtrovsky (2016) conducted a large research among workers in the Czech Republic, and found out that the members of the GEN Z are not good listeners and have a lack of interpersonal skills. They have difficulties in communication in person with others because they are used to do it digitally. The GEN Z is also known as the "silent" generation because of the massive digitalization (Bejtrovsky, 2016). Bejtrovsky (2016) in his research pointed out the importance of heterogeneous generation working teams, finding that both Millennials and GEN Z are more productive working with colleagues from different generations. All generations must be ready to learn important topics before starting a new job: interpersonal skills (assertiveness, empathy, respect and tolerance), communication and presentation skills, teamwork, willingness to share, work ethics and problem solving thinking (Bejtrovsky, 2016). Bejtrovsky (2016) said that in the 21st century we will have the largest number of generations working together, almost four generation working together, because of our life period that has been longer in this century.

Martinović et al. (2023) made a research about the use of sharing economy (as example eBay, UPwork, UBER and similar) between generations. Younger generations are more used to online buying (Martinović et al., 2023). The GEN Z is willing to pay more for a sustainable and green product. When talking about sharing economy, both generations, Millennials and GEN Z, read the reviews and care about others opinion, also found by Martinović et al. (2023). Famous people and influencers can motivate both Millennials and GEN Z to think about a product, but in larger numbers it will more motivate GEN Z members (Martinović et al., 2023).

Taking in consideration the researches conducted both in Croatia but also in the World, we found out that the topic of GEN Z and work habits is still free to be researched because there is plenty of space in the topic to be explored and we decided to proceed with our research, this paper will be used as a preparation for the next researches we plan to conduct.

PREVIOUS RESEARCHES AS A BASIS FOR NEXT RESEARCHES IN CROATIA

As a starting point we decided to research the research made by Ozkan et al. (2015) and to enrich it in future with fresh Croatian data among Croatian students. As they explain, GEN Z character and mindset are different from previous generations. Their research was made among students in Turkey. The GEN Z is also known as the mobile generation, because they were raised on digital mobile devices (Ozkan et al., 2015). Also the authors pointed out, that the GEN Z's are self-confident, happy and likes social activities. The goal of their research was to find out the working perception of the GEN Z individuals. Ozkan et al. (2015) found out that the GEN Z is open to work in a group, social environment is important for a work place, they like to have a financial freedom and security for the future and they love freedom.



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Social environment is important for GEN Z to create a good work spirit. Traditional and cultural values are not any more so important to this generation. At this time, Millennials have more sense of leadership, and work is a way to make profit for them but also a way to improve in life (Ozkan et al., 2015). Both Millennials and GEN Z like to work with people who enable them to give the best. Ozkan et al. (2015) made a questionnaire of 6 questions to question the Turkish students on a scale 1 to 5, 1 lowest, 5 highest; the questions were the following:

- i) Social media in the workplace is very important to me,
- ii) Working means to fulfil a religious duty for me,
- iii) Happy to be where I tried to work is a priority for me. If I am not happy in work place, I will leave my job easily,
- iv) Working means that to secure the future, to ensure economic freedom, and livelihoods, to earn money to get what I want, to provide a better life for my children, (iiii) Working means that to realize my dreams, to satisfy my personal tastes and hobbies and sightseeing fun,
- v) Working means that to gain information, to learn new things and develop myself, to produce something good. Throughout this questions we want in future to make a Croatian version of the survey and enlarge it with topics close to the GEN Z in Croatia and regarding the work habits. As Ozkan et al. (2015) say, working with GEN Z will slightly change the way managers and the business work are now a day working, having them to adjust to the new generation and their way of thinking.

RESEARCH AMONG WORLDWIDE AND CROATIAN STUDENTS

Some other really useful researches were made among students in the World. We would like to point out the research made by Kirchmayer et al. (2020) where a research was made among 235 students in Slovakia. They based their research on a work made by Kultalahti and Viitala, who used to research the perceptions of GEN Y, and Kirchmayer et al. (2020) modified the research to obtain the data for GEN Z. They wanted to line up the factors that motivate GEN Z in their work habits, and their started from the research question: "What are the factors that motivate GEN Z?". Even if they new GEN Z is a fully digital generation, Kirchmayer et al. (2020) insisted in conducting the research on a paper pencil bases.

They used a story telling method where they presented a story about a fictive character that is motivated at work and is happy about his work and they asked the students what makes that character motivated and enthusiastic at work. The students pointed out different factors that made the fictive character motivated about work.

At the first place was that he was really enjoying his work and what he was doing.

At the second place the answers were toward the intention that the character was happy with his work colleagues.

On the third place was reward, so that he was adequately rewarded for his work. Achievement and career advancement were the next ones. A good work place, a good leader, interesting work, a good day and private happiness were also pointed out by the students as motivators for a positive attitude toward a quality working place (Table 1).



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Table 1. Demonstrating what motivates students in work

Factors	Nominal item prevalence	% of items (N=665)	% of respondents (N=235)
Enjoys work	152	22.9%	64.7%
Co-workers	86	12.9%	36.6%
Reward	81	12.2%	34.5%
Achievement	79	11.9%	33.6%
Career advancement	28	4.2%	11.9%
Personal development	27	4.1%	11.5%
Recognition	27	4.1%	11.5%
Workplace	24	3.6%	10.2%
Leadership	22	3.3%	9.4%
Work of interest	20	3.0%	8.5%
Good day	17	2.6%	7.2%
Private happiness	16	2.4%	6.8%
Impact	14	2.1%	6.0%
Remaining factors total (including freedom at work, work load, work-life balance, flexible working time, etc.)	72	<1.5% each item	<4.3% each item

Source: Kirchmayer et al. (2020)

Ngoc et al. (2020) also conducted a literature review as a preparation for their work and after conducted a research among Vietnamese students. They found out twenty-three published papers talking about GEN Z and their work habits and conducted researches, and only three of them adopted a method face to face interview. They performed an interview with final year students in Vietnam about their work habit. Using a questionnaire and focus groups they questioned the students. The students were divided in two groups, group A students with no work experience and group B students with work experience. What we found out, Ngoc et al. (2020) used also the method and questions created by Ozkan et al. (2015), the same method we would like to perform after this literature review paper among Croatian students. Ngoc et al. (2020) in their research among Vietnamese students found out some important motivating factor, first of all, for GEN Z is important to have a friendly work atmosphere, also sincerity is important to them.

The next important factors are a clean, open and nice working place. There must be a balance between work and life, GEN Z is motivated with work when they have a balance, if possible they prefer flexible working time and part-time work. Also GEN Z, if possible, supports the idea of working some days of the week from home, not all the time from office. Ngoc et al. (2020) during their research pointed out that individuals of the GEN Z are concerned about the irresponsible activities that some companies are conducting and this could motivate them not to choose this kind of company during their work selection. Something interesting they found out is that GEN Z sees themself as really important members of the company that are irreplaceable and Ngoc et al. (2020) defined it as an unrealistic expectation. Something we can expect from GEN Z as found from the research from Ngoc et al. (2020) is that GEN Z members will easily change their job before they decide to stay in one place. A well known company is a motivation for GEN Z to apply for their job. The study conducted by Ngoc et al. (2020) shows that GEN Z is motivated by a positive work atmosphere, strong ethics and sincerity. In conclusion they pointed out that GEN Z, comparing to previous generations, have higher expectations from work, work habits,



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salary, bonuses and other motivators that at the very beginning are set much higher than expected and this must be understood by the managers when employing a GEN Z member.

Chareewan et al. (2020) conducted a study about the work expectations in Croatia between Millennials and GEN Z. They made the research among students in Croatia. As they wanted to understand how to find the right persons for the right job; and how to motivate them to stay at this job. Reviewing the literature, they pointed out there is a difference in approaching and also managing the two generations, because the communication techniques generations understand are different.

Chareewan et al. (2020) set different hypothesis:

- first that GEN Z has higher daily work expectations than Millennials,
- second that GEN Z has higher career goals than Millennials,
- third that gender is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and daily work expectations, with females enhancing the effect to a greater extent than males and,
- fourth that gender is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and career goals, with females enhancing the effect to a greater extent than males,
- fifth that desired occupation is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and daily work expectations, with desired private industry jobs enhancing the effect to a greater extent than government jobs,
- sixth that desired occupation is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and career goals, with desired private industry jobs enhancing the effect to a greater extent than government jobs,
- seventh that family financial satisfaction is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and daily work expectations, with greater financial dissatisfaction enhancing the effect to a greater extent than financial satisfaction and
- eighth that family financial satisfaction is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and career goals, with greater financial dissatisfaction enhancing the effect to a greater extent than financial satisfaction.

After setting this hypothesis, Chareewan et al. (2020) conducted the survey also on a paper and pencil basis. A total of 333 surveys were received back and analyzed. First they analyzed the origin of the students, and 4/5 of the students were Croatian nationality. In their results H1 and H2 were not supported, also H3 was rejected, H4 was supported, H5 was rejected, and H6, H7 and H8 were rejected also. So they conclude, only the hypothesis fourth that gender is a significant moderator of the relationship between Millennials and GEN Z and career goals, with females enhancing the effect to a greater extent than males has been confirmed by the research. As explained by Chareewan et al. (2020) the study conducted among Croatian students, at that time showed not much difference between the two generations, but from managers it is expected to understand both generations and motivate them to work together and solve the problems in a team way. Also Chareewan et al. (2020) pointed out that in Croatia non many studies have been conducted so there is still free place for new studies.

Ružić et al. (2022) conducted a digital research among Croatian students; they received a total of 220 fully completed questionnaires by members of the GEN Z. The authors prepared a 25 item questionnaire, based on two main research questions. The first questions took in consideration what is important to attract members of the GEN Z to work and the second question took in consideration the gender; to research if there are any differences between genders in attracting them to work. They used a scale from one to seven in the questionnaire. What the



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authors pointed out, the next things are important for the members of the GEN Z: to receive a good career experience, to be in a happy work environment, to have good promotion opportunities, to work in a secure place, also for GEN Z is important to have a good relationship with colleagues. The authors defined that attractiveness factors are more important to female GEN Z members. Also something Ružić et al. (2022) pointed as a fact, the students who had grades below the average preferred a working place with more fun respectfully to students who had grades above the average.

Ho et al. (2020) made a research about how to attract GEN Z members to small and medium enterprises because as they pointed out, GEN Z members prefer to work for global multinational companies. Ho et al. (2020) used the Job Characteristic Model developed to find out five most important areas in a job. The first is the Task Variety, and refers to the different activities and skills that are used in a job. The second is the Task Significance, or how important a job is for the life of other people. The third is Autonomy, taking in consideration the freedom an individual has in completing the job. The last is Feedback, this is important for the employee to understand how the job was carried and understand the results of someone work. In their study Ho et al. (2020) found out that those tasks are important to GEN Z members in Malaysia. As Ružić et al. (2022) also Ho et al. (2020) conducted a digital research among GEN Z members to better understand the characteristics of GEN Z in Malaysia.

Rampen et al. (2023) conducted a recent research about the most important factors how to employ a GEN Z. They also conducted a literature review to better understand the topic as we in this paper. The review was made out of twenty articles they took in consideration. As Rampen et al. (2023) explained, we are today facing the Fourth industrial revolution, and thanks to the digital knowledge of the Millennials and GEN Z, those two generations easily adapt to this revolution. GEN Z members expect to work in an atmosphere where they can personally and professionally grow. There must be a clear compensation system, so that GEN Z members understand how their financial compensation will grow.

As Rampen et al. (2023) explained, there are four major areas of interest to better understand the better performance (Figure 1):

- i) job satisfaction,
- ii) work motivation,
- iii) leadership team and
- iv) organizational culture.

What Rampen et al. (2023) pointed out, is that GEN Z are different from previous generations, they bring their unique perspective and they seek jobs that are aligned with their values. A good workplace satisfaction is really important for GEN Z members. As explained by Rampen et al. (2023) there must be a clear compensation plan, GEN Z members want to know the financial benefits of working in a company. Training and job promotions motivate GEN Z. Members of GEN Z fully understand the importance of training and want to know how training will result in their career promotion. GEN Z members want to have the possibility to have power so that they can influence, be the decision making person and have the autonomy in work.

When taking in consideration management, managers managing GEN Z members must be transparent and open, managers that are sincere and genuine gain the preference of GEN Z members. Managers must be collaborative and must create a work inclusive atmosphere, this is respected by the GEN Z. Also managers that inspire cooperation; different point of views and give the opportunity everyone to be heard, get the respect of GEN Z members. As a conclusion Rampen et al. (2023) defined that GEN Z members can adapt to new teams, they are ambitious and can make an excellent asset in companies today.

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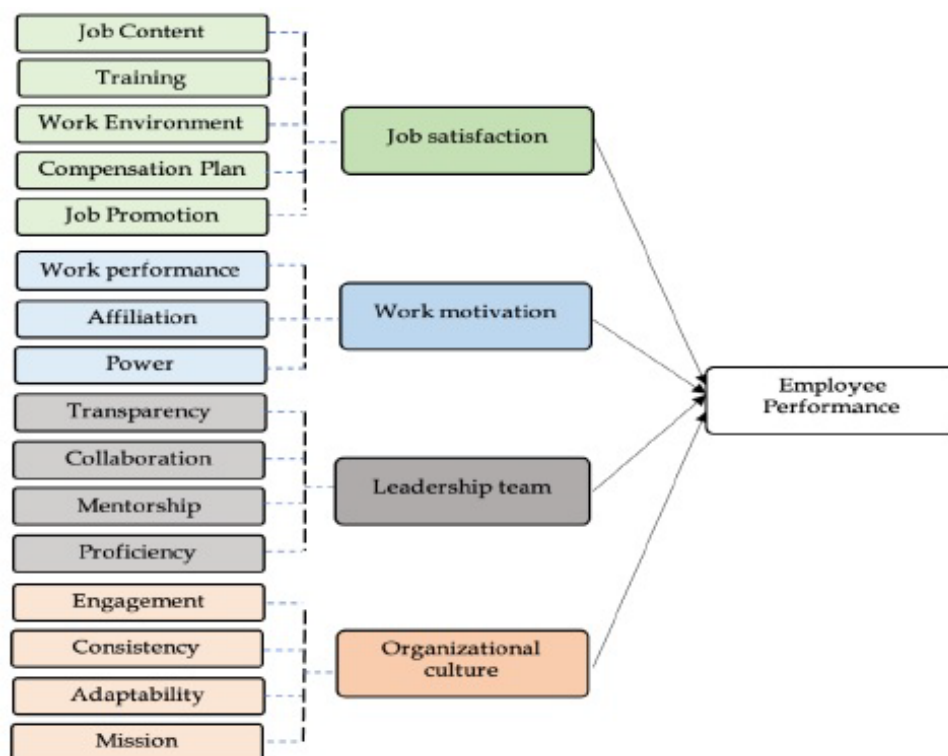


Figure 1: GEN Z Employee Performance

Source: Rampen et al. (2023)

CONCLUSION FOR NEXT RESEARCHES

After analyzing 15 papers we can confirm that the topic GEN Z and work habits has still plenty of space to be explored in Croatia among young ones. GEN Z members, as different authors pointed out, are motivated by a positive working place, good atmosphere, good relations between colleagues, but also are motivated by working in companies that invest in trainings and also that have a clear pay scale and a possibility of advancement in career. Taking in consideration the recent researches made in Croatia among the GEN Z (Chareewan et al. 2020, Ružić et al. 2022) our planed research will be a continuation of the researches made and will enrich the knowledge about the GEN Z and work habits in Croatia. The next step of this paper is the conduction of a research among Croatian students based on the research made by Ozkan et al. (2015), the research will upgrade their model with fresh Croatian data.

Also other authors are invited to continue researching the topic of GEN Z and work habits, as today we witness more and more GEN Z members entering the labor market and managers in Croatia not dealing well with the expectations of GEN Z members. For a better collaboration between colleagues, especially members of different generations like Millennials and GEN Z, there must be a good understanding of the motivation of GEN Z members and their way of understanding the job. As found from the literature, different motivations motivate Millennials and GEN Z members. Millennial managers are invited to read our paper to get an overview of the current situation in Croatia and in the World on the topic of GEN Z members and their work habits.



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