

Comparative Analysis of the Workplace Expectations of Generations Y and Z

**Kamilla Baša, Renáta Machová, Patrik Baša,
Veronika Doležaliová**

J. Selye University, Bratislavská cesta 3322, 945 01 Komárno, Slovakia
e-mails: basa.kamilla@student.ujs.sk; machovar@ujs.sk;
basa.patrik@student.ujs.sk; 128776@student.ujs.sk

Abstract: It is important to know the job expectations of potential employees because nowadays there is fierce competition on the labor market not only for jobs, but also for employees. The two generations that can currently be found in the largest proportion on the labor market are Generations Y and Z, therefore the aim of our study is to examine the expectations of these two generations towards their workplace and to establish any differences and similarities between them. To conduct our research, we used a questionnaire survey, to which a total of 160 evaluable responses were received between February and April 2022. We examined the main workplace motivations of generations Y and Z, their preferred working hours, type of work, form of work and company size. When examining the two generations under investigation, we discovered many similarities in their attitude to work. We have confirmed that higher salaries, recognition and a good atmosphere in the workplace are highly motivating factors for both Generation Y and Generation Z. The representatives of the examined generations also showed similarity in that they would prefer to work in flexible working hours. In terms of company size, members of Generation Y and Z would also prefer to work in a private enterprise or a medium-sized company. Regarding the type of work, the majority of Y and Z generation individuals involved in our research would do a mix of physical and intellectual work. The willingness to work abroad is more characteristic of the representatives of Generation Z.

Keywords: generations; expectations; work; workplace

1 Introduction

According to the traditional (biological) definition, the term generation means the average time interval between the birth of parents and their children. That means about 20-25 years. However, due to the appearance of new technologies, changing values and career paths, as well as shifting social interests, this has already lost its validity. Nowadays, the concept of generation should be approached from a sociological point of view. In sociological terms, a generation means a group of

people who were born in the same era and who are connected by specific events, processes and trends [1]. According to Nemes [2], the individual generations are loosely connected to each other by their year of birth and shared experiences, since much more details than these influence the way of thinking, behavior and decision. Today, they have to face global challenges such as climate change, social and income inequality, or artificial intelligence. To deal with these challenges, it is necessary that each generation be able to learn from each other.

Based on Steigervald [3], the generations are divided into 6 groups, these groups are the following: the silent generation, the baby-boom generation, the X-generation, the Y-generation, the Z-generation and the Alpha generation. The main characteristics of each generation [3]:

Table 1
Characteristics of generations [3]

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|---|
| Silent generation | Before 1945 | the oldest and at the same time the most experienced generation can be characterized by inadequate living conditions, as a result of which a feeling of insecurity, lack and loss often arose, with them the values, way of life and the handing down of skills from parent to child were still strong |
| Baby boomers | 1946-1964 | the last generation, who still used formal communication with their predecessors, they were characterized by hard work, they did everything for their children, but they were not good at showing emotions, this generation appreciates the traditional values that are important to them, as well as the old customs |
| Generation X | 1965-1979 | the first technology-oriented generation, household appliances appeared in more and more places, representatives of the generation often strive for perfection, thus spending too much time at work, maximalism is also visible in child-rearing, as they want to give everything to their children and are constantly in a state of trouble-prevention |
| Generation Y | 1980-1994 | they were not yet born into the online world, the expectations of this age group regarding the media have changed, the Y's are experience-oriented, problematic employees, the reason for this is the lack of respect for their elders, this generation is active in the world of social media and this helps them to for change in the field of work |
| Generation Z | 1995-2009 | the parents of the young people in this group are maximalists, so they are constantly under surveillance, they have several negative qualities, but the main one is their relationship with money, the Zs do not really like to have conversations with different people, instead they prefer to send messages among themselves |

| | | |
|------------------|------------|---|
| Generation Alpha | After 2010 | they are the first generation who were born into the world of the Internet and their parents are also addicted to the world of the online space |
|------------------|------------|---|

After we have covered the main characteristics of each generation in general, we would like to pay special attention to the representatives of the Y and Z generations, who were the target group of our primary research that will be presented later.

The Y generation is also called the millennial generation, as well as simply millennials. They were born into the world of technology; their understanding of technology is in their veins. They are available in the world of the online space every day of the week with the help of various technical things, such as telephones, laptops, and tablets. Millennials grew up seeing their parents always working hard and living stressful lives. Generation Y has a different opinion on this that they would rather work less [4]. The computer is, therefore, an important tool in their work as well as in their private life [5] [6]. Success, career and money are very important to this generation because they think that they can only get ahead in society with the help of these. They are independent personalities, for them the workplace is just one of many, and if they don't like it, they often move on. Overtime is not characteristic of them, and they do not make various efforts for the sake of their boss or their workplace. Generation Y is classified as multitasking users, which means that they can look at several pages, listen to music, and send e-mails at the same time while talking to 4-5 people. This divided attention results in superficial focusing [7]. This generation quickly learns the possibilities offered by new technology, such as ways to pay with or without a card or by phone [3].

The members of Generation Z have already been born into the digital world [8]. This is the world's first global generation, they are called in different ways, such as: R (responsibility), D (digital). They are very different from previous generations. They grow up on the same music, food, movies and fashion trends. They were born into the smallest families, raised by the oldest mothers, and the parents spent most of their time in education [9]. The character of the Zs develops primarily through the Internet. They already live in the online world and for them the border between online and offline space is blurred. For them, success means recognition in the online world. They are very money conscious, they pay attention to what they spend money on. Generation Z finds personal relationships difficult, they don't like to be in a situation of immediate feedback. In a personal conversation, they don't have time to consider the answers and this creates fear in them. Instead, they prefer the message because they can respond when they get to it [3]. People born in Generation Z are more impatient in their private life and work [10]. Generation Z grew up using various technologies, such as cell phones, laptops, and video games. As we have already mentioned with the Y generation, the multitasking operation that is present in their everyday lives also applies to the Z generation. They can process information at the "speed of light," and thanks to this, they will have exemplary skills at the workplace and thus gain a greater advantage [8].

Nowadays, there is a mixed age group in the workplace: 4 generations can be found on the labor market, these are the baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. A multigenerational workplace has several advantages. Each generation has its own characteristics. However, let's not forget that when several age groups work together, various workplace conflicts can arise [11]. The employees must think about what they expect from a workplace. These conditions may apply to working conditions, colleagues, bosses, work atmosphere, salary, and free time [12].

Generation Y is goal-oriented in the workplace, and the balance between work and private life is important to them. They change jobs at any time if they are dissatisfied with their current job [13]. They do not stick to a company, they are ready to quit without compromise [14]. The representatives of this generation can converse in several languages, they like to travel and get to know the cultures of several countries, and if they plan something, they follow it until they reach their goal [15]. They feel motivated when they can do several tasks at the same time, but only as much as they can handle [14]. Generation Y employees require 3 basic conditions. This includes independence, it is important for them to get enough free time from their employer. They require continuous competitive professional sophistication, thus becoming better and better at work. The third is a sense of purpose [16]. This age group has several expectations regarding the ideal workplace [17] [18].

- It is important for them to have a room where they can relax from the overload caused by working.
- The company must see an advantage in teamwork and encourage employees to be creative.
- Work-life balance is essential, along with continuous training, workplace recognition and the acquisition of appropriate expertise.
- It is essential for them to receive adequate financial benefits in exchange for their work, and the most important thing is that the wages are fair.
- For them, the ideal job is that if something comes up in their private life, they can still take care of it.
- They like flexible working hours, when they don't have to be constantly on standby, and this can later be combined with plans to start a family.
- For young employees, it is important that their workplace is easily accessible.
- Y's require working with positive and exemplary personalities.
- Uninterrupted "feed back," i.e. receive feedback, they can strive for the better through these reactions.
- The "open-office" room can be significant.
- It is essential for them to have the appropriate technical equipment and various programs to fulfill their work tasks.

On the other hand, it is worth examining what employers expect of employees:

- The company expects Generation Y to always do work on time and thoroughly.
- In all circumstances, employees must be moral and fully responsible.
- This age group should be able to constantly adapt to the conditions required by their work.
- It may be an important expectation from the company to spend overtime and extra resources in order to complete the task.
- Nowadays, generation Y has also encountered a requirement where work experience is essential as a recent graduate [19] [20].

The members of the Z generation are the youngest on the labor market, and they are still only present in small numbers. As a result of the online world, they acquire a lot of knowledge, thereby becoming a great workforce. The usual motivational tools do not work for this generation, instead freedom and self-realization motivate them. They need their employer to constantly evaluate them at work. This generation has the highest expectations [21]. This generation considers business and financial knowledge and security-oriented behavior very important [22]. Generation Z is similar to Generation Y in many ways. The use of multitasking is also an advantage in their work life. Technology has been present in their everyday lives since childhood, and with its help they can perform almost any task at work [23]. The workplace behavior of Generation Z employees is significantly different from that of older generations, and for this reason company managers must consciously strive to promote good interpersonal relationships among colleagues [24]. Generation Z has several expectations on the labor market, these are:

- Maintain a very good relationship with colleagues, have lunch or coffee together in groups at work, and maintain a pleasant bond in private life as well. The employee also wants to develop a good relationship with his boss.
- With this generation, if any problems arise during tasks, it is good that their boss is there because they can ask for immediate help.
- They expect that they will be involved in the company's events that they can gain as much experience as possible and that there is always something interesting happening around them.
- They like workplaces where they can feel challenged during tasks and are allowed to develop, bosses are only interested in the end result.
- More and more people demand to have their own office, desk or to be able to decide where they want to do their work.
- They also represent flexibility, they want a certain working time or that there is no problem if they arrive later or go home if there is not enough work [25].

Employers have different requirements for Generation Z:

- In many cases, this age group also meets the requirement to have adequate work experience as a career starter.
- It is important for the employer that the employees can be trained easily, that they are interested in the position they have been hired for, and that they can perform the tasks independently.
- If the company has an important deadline task, then in this case the employee can be counted on to meet the deadlines.
- Employees must be determined and decisive, if they plan something, they must carry it out, and they must also be able to take responsibility and be enthusiastic about every task.

In many workplaces, the most basic condition is adequate language skills and the use of computer programs [26].

We conducted our research in Slovakia and Hungary. According to a study in Poland [27], which has a similar culture to these two countries, the digital world is a natural environment for Generation Z. From the point of view of employers, it is also favorable that this generation willingly undertakes business trips abroad. Generation Y expects to be paid above-average for work abroad [28].

High wages and flexibility are also very important factors for Generation Y in Slovakia [28]. Generation Z also considers this very important, but in their case, their expectations are often unrealistically high compared to their work experience [29]. Another important factor is that generation Z changes jobs more often than the older generation, they do not want to spend their whole lives in the same workplace [30].

In summary, it can be said that the two examined generations show similarities in many cases in terms of their attitude to work. The most important difference between the two generations can be identified as work experience, since generation Y has been present on the labor market for years, while generation Z who graduated from university are just starting their careers. Employees of this generation do not yet have many years of experience.

2 Methodology

The aim of our study is to examine the expectations of the Y and Z generations towards their workplace and to determine the possible differences and similarities between the two investigated generations. During our primary research, we assessed the different ways the employer could motivate employees. It may be important to know what non-salary benefits employees expect from their employer, knowing this also increases motivation for better performance. Through our research, employers can get an adequate idea of what they should change, for example, what working

hours the employees would like to work, what types of tasks they would like to perform, what kind of company they imagine themselves in, what wages they would accept for various jobs.

In our study, we examine the workplace expectations of Generation Y and Generation Z. In order to carry out our research, we considered a questionnaire to be the most suitable since these two generations are found in high proportion and are easily accessible online. Our questionnaire was filled out voluntarily and anonymously. A total of 160 evaluable responses to our online questionnaire were received during February and April 2022. Since the closure due to the coronavirus epidemic only made it possible to distribute the questionnaire online, we distributed the questionnaire on social media using the snowball method. We first sent the questionnaire to 50 of our friends, who were asked to forward it to 3-5 of their friends.

Among the questions, we have included several types of questions. Our questionnaire contained closed and open questions, as well as questions that the respondents had to rate on a five-point Likert scale. During our questionnaire, the primary and at the same time the most important thing was that only representatives of the Y and Z generations fill it out, therefore the first question of the questionnaire focuses on age. (As we wanted to avoid incorrect filling in, the respondents did not have to choose a generation, but gave their age, on the basis of which we classified them into Generation Y or Z based on the literature definition.)

The answers received were processed using Microsoft Excel and the SPSS statistical program. During our research, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: Among Generation Y and Generation Z, a significant difference can be shown regarding their preferred working hours.

H2: Among Generation Y and Generation Z, a significant difference can be shown regarding their preferred company size.

3 Results

In our questionnaire, we asked three questions about demographic data. Among them, our most important question was how old the respondent was, as we were able to classify them into the two generations on the basis of this. Since we wanted to avoid the respondents from wrongly classifying themselves in a certain generation, we did not indicate the name of the generation, but the age groups established on the basis of the literature: 13-27 years old or 28-42 years old. For respondents who did not belong to either group, the questionnaire ended at this point. The respondents then had to state their gender and their highest education (Table 2).

Table 2
Distribution of respondents by age, gender, highest education

| Age | | Gender | | Highest education | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|-------|-------------------|-----------|--------|
| 28-42 (Generation Y) | 13-27 (Generation Z) | Man | Woman | Primary | Secondary | Higher |
| 41,9% | 58,1% | 23,1% | 76,9% | 3,8% | 66,9% | 29,4% |

The first work-related question of the questionnaire (Figure 1) focused on what motivates the respondents during work. Respondents could tick several answer options. According to their own admission, the members of the Y and Z generations are mostly motivated by a higher salary, recognition and a good working atmosphere. For Generation Z, respect, freedom, and the modern design and beautiful furnishings of the workplace are more motivating than for Generation Y. On the other hand, generation Y finds independence at work more motivating than generation Z.

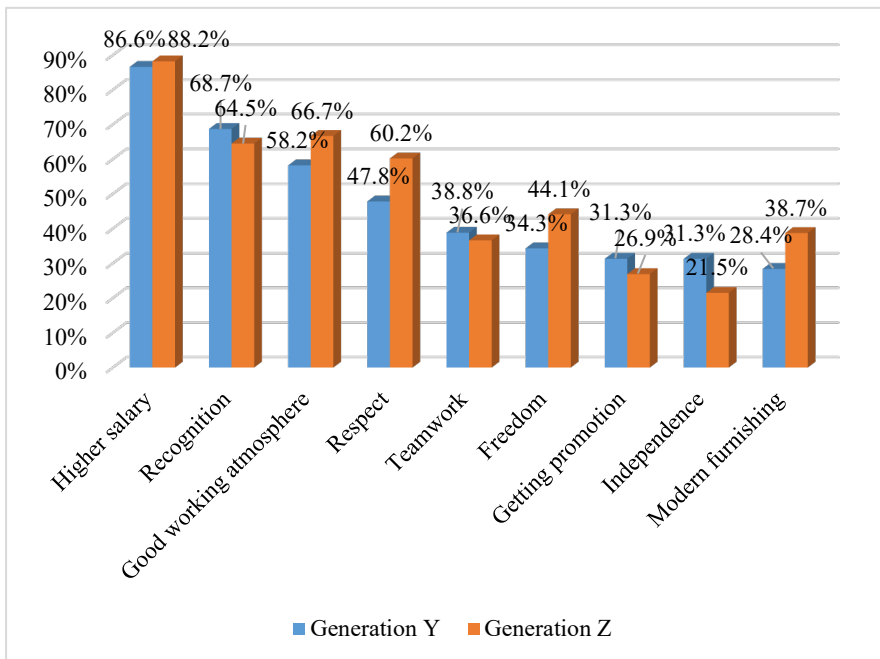


Figure 1
Motivational factors at work

Our second work-related question focused on what working hours the members of the two generations would most like to work (Figure 2).

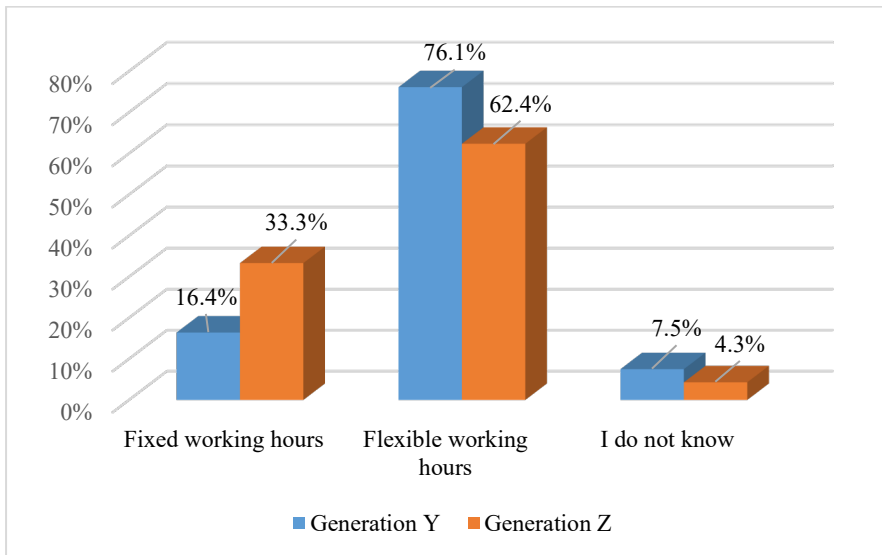


Figure 2
Preferred working hours

In the case of Generation Y and Generation Z, more people indicated flexible working hours, however, it can be concluded that Generation Y prefers to work in flexible working hours to a greater extent. We assume that this may be due to the fact that many of the representatives of the older generation already have families, so it is easier to create a work-life balance with flexible working hours.

Nowadays companies have to be open to new opportunities. The possibility of a home office, part-time work and helping parents with small children are all factors that can give companies a competitive advantage in the labor market [31].

In this question, we examined whether the difference between the two generations is statistically significant. To do this, we performed a cross-tabulation analysis (Table 3) in the SPSS statistical program since both of our investigated variables were measured on a nominal scale.

The value of Chi-Square is 5.315, the degree of freedom is 1, while the asymptotic significance (2-sided) is $p=0.021$. That is lower than the generally accepted level of significance $\alpha=0.05$.

Based on the result of the Chi-square test, we were able to show a significant difference. Because of this, our first hypothesis was confirmed, so a significant difference can be shown among the Y and Z generations regarding their preferred working hours.

Table 3
Testing hypothesis H1

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5,315 ^a | 1 | ,021 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | 4,498 | 1 | ,034 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 5,517 | 1 | ,019 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | ,027 | ,016 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 5,280 | 1 | ,022 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 151 | | | | |
| a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 17,25. | | | | | |
| b. Computed only for a 2x2 table | | | | | |

Since we were able to demonstrate a significant relationship between the two variables, we also had to examine the value of Cramer's V coefficient (Table 4) in order to determine how strong the relationship is.

The value of the indicator is 0.188, which, despite the fact that the result is significant, only indicates a weak relationship.

Table 4
Testing hypothesis H1 – Cramer's V

| Symmetric Measures | | | |
|--------------------|------------|-------|--------------------------|
| | | Value | Approximate Significance |
| Nominal by Nominal | Phi | -,188 | ,021 |
| | Cramer's V | ,188 | ,021 |
| N of Valid Cases | | 151 | |

In the next question (Figure 3), we asked what size company the respondent would like to work for. Members of the Y and Z generations would also prefer to work in a private enterprise or a medium-sized company. In the case of Generation Z, small companies were not far behind. Large companies are more popular among Generation Y, for whom the rate is almost 10% higher than that of Generation Z.

It was this question that was related to our second hypothesis. In this case too, the examined variables are not metric, variables measured on a nominal scale.

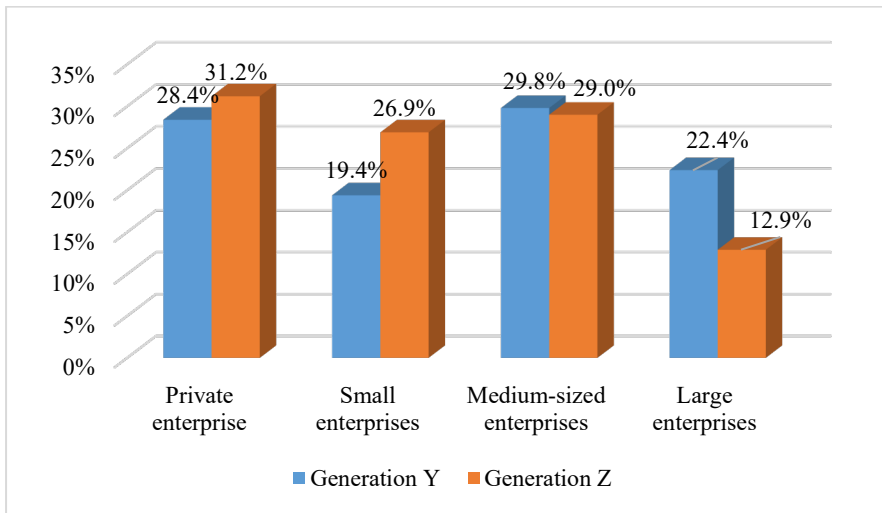


Figure 3
Preferred company size

The result of the Chi-square test is not significant in this case (Table 5) ($p=0.376$; $\alpha=0.05$; $p>\alpha$), therefore, no further analysis was carried out. Hypothesis H2 was rejected.

Table 5
Testing hypothesis H2

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 3,106 ^a | 3 | ,376 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 3,090 | 3 | ,378 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 1,707 | 1 | ,191 |
| N of Valid Cases | 160 | | |
| a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11,31. | | | |

In our research, we also addressed what type of work (Figure 4) members of the two examined generations would prefer to do: physical or mental. Looking at the generations, we did not identify a big difference since the proportions developed similarly. Both generations would mix physical and mental work. Of the two types of work, mental work was more popular.

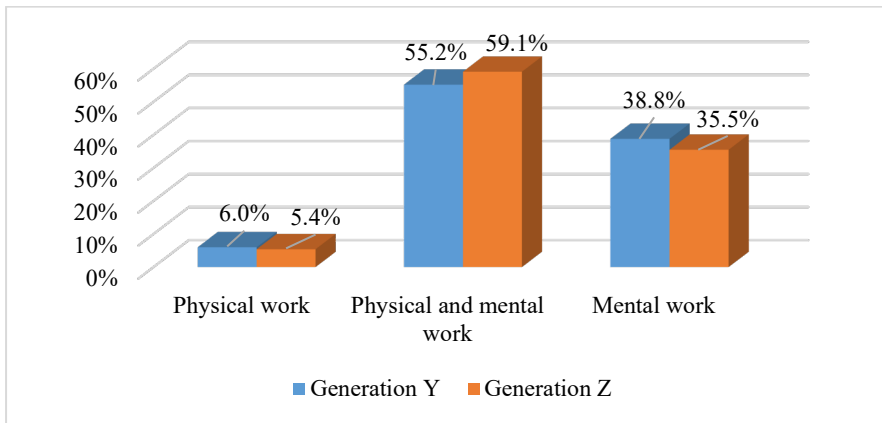


Figure 4
Preferred type of work

The next question (Figure 5) focused on what type of task the members of the two generations would prefer to perform. Despite the fact that representatives of the Y generation are older, more than 40% of them would like to do a task that allows them to learn and train themselves. The same was indicated by a quarter of members of Generation Z. Generation Z prefers tasks where they can express their creativity. 10% more people of Generation Z than Generation Y indicated that they would prefer tasks that can be solved with minimal effort.

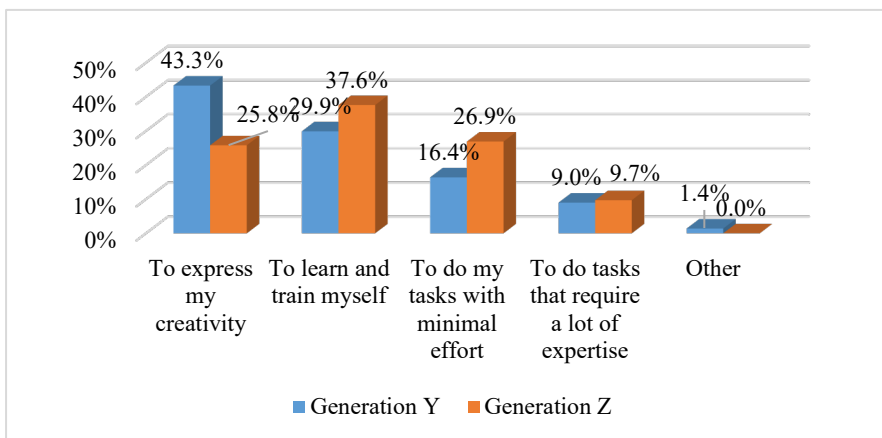


Figure 5
Expectations about the work

We also asked whether the respondents would work abroad (Figure 6). Among the representatives of the two generations, the Z generation answered the question with a higher proportion of yes.

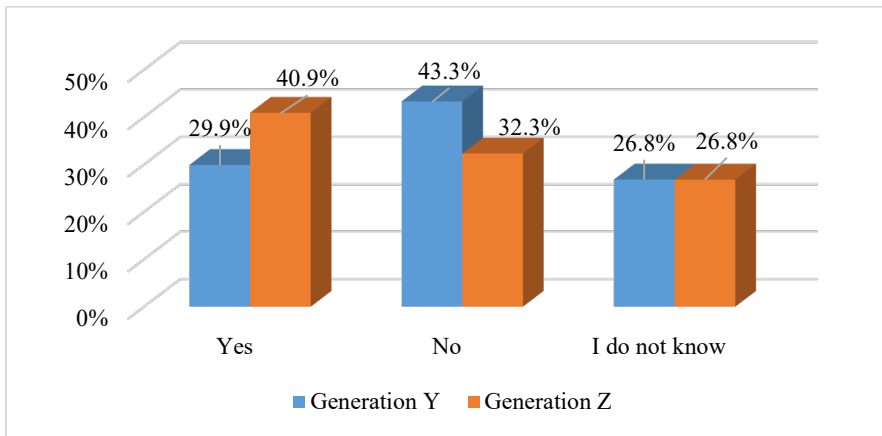


Figure 6
Willingness to work abroad

Similar to a previous question, we assume that the fact that members of the Y generation are older and have families plays a role in this, so it would be more difficult for them to work abroad. The proportion of those who could not form an opinion on this question was quite high for both generations.

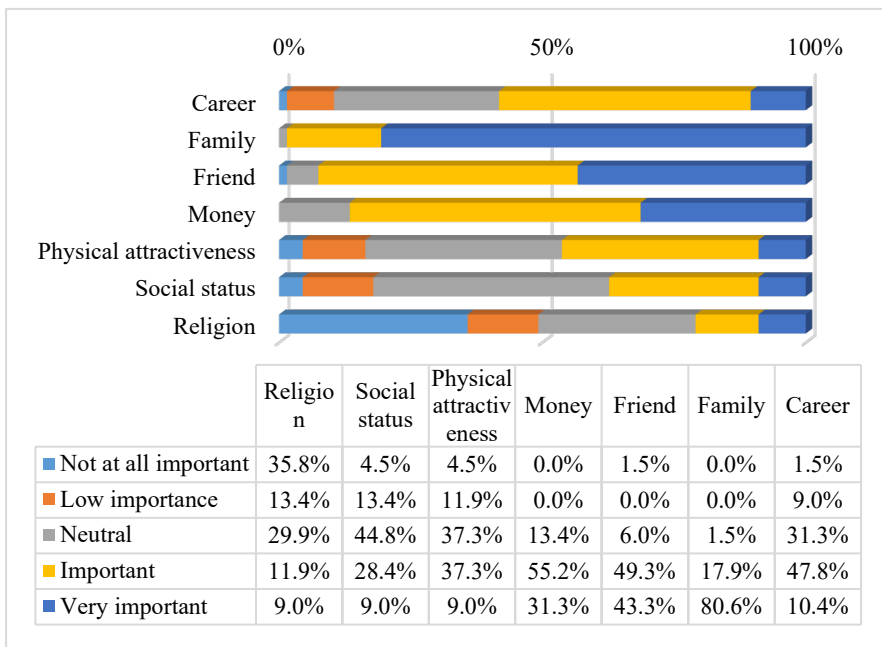


Figure 7
The importance of factors for the Y generation

In our last question, the respondents had to decide how important it was to them in relation to various factors.

For Generation Y (Figure 7), family is the most important of all factors. This is followed by friends, money, and then career. In the case of Generation Z (Figure 8), the order is almost the same: family, money, friends, career. The least important concept for both generations is religion.

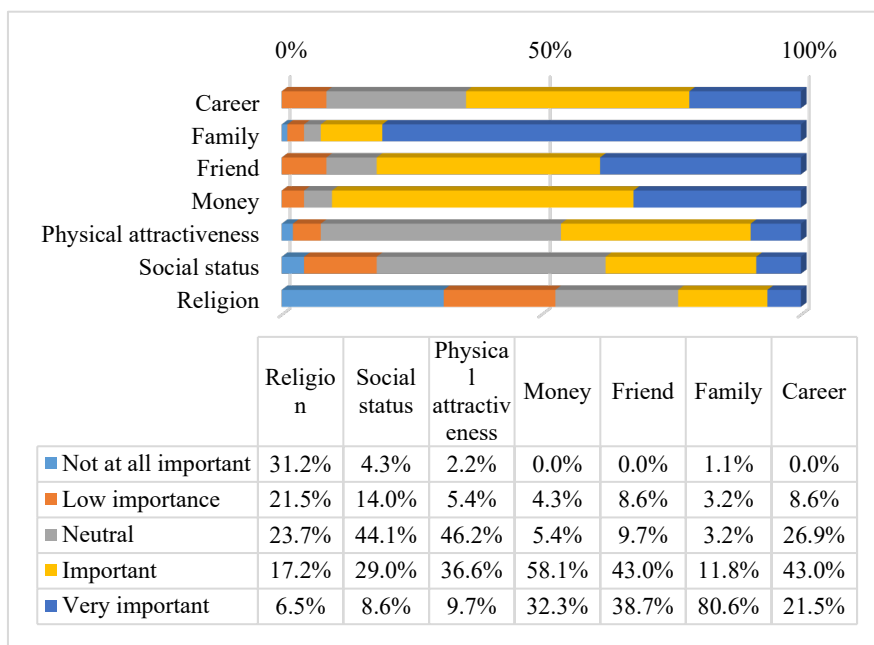


Figure 8

The importance of factors for the Z generation

In order to make the results easier to interpret, averages, standard deviations and medians were calculated (Table 6). Based on these, career, physical attractiveness and religion are more important for Generation Z, and family and friends are more important for Generation Y. Money and social status are equally important to both generations.

Table 6

Important factors – mean, standard deviation

| Generation | | Career | Family | Friends | Money | Physical attractiveness | Social status | Religion |
|--------------|------|--------|--------|---------|-------|-------------------------|---------------|----------|
| Generation Y | Mean | 3,57 | 4,79 | 4,33 | 4,18 | 3,34 | 3,24 | 2,45 |
| | N | 67 | 67 | 67 | 67 | 67 | 67 | 67 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| | Std. Deviation | ,857 | ,445 | ,726 | ,650 | ,962 | ,955 | 1,329 |
| | Median | 4,00 | 5,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 | 3,00 | 3,00 | 3,00 |
| Generation Z | Mean | 3,77 | 4,68 | 4,12 | 4,18 | 3,46 | 3,24 | 2,46 |
| | N | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 | 93 |
| | Std. Deviation | ,886 | ,782 | ,907 | ,722 | ,828 | ,949 | 1,273 |
| | Median | 4,00 | 5,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 | 3,00 | 3,00 | 2,00 |
| Total | Mean | 3,69 | 4,73 | 4,21 | 4,18 | 3,41 | 3,24 | 2,46 |
| | N | 160 | 160 | 160 | 160 | 160 | 160 | 160 |
| | Std. Deviation | ,877 | ,663 | ,840 | ,690 | ,886 | ,948 | 1,293 |
| | Median | 4,00 | 5,00 | 4,00 | 4,00 | 3,00 | 3,00 | 2,00 |

Conclusions

Our research results somewhat expand and strengthen the Y and Z generation characteristics that can be read in our summary of the literature. We have confirmed that higher salaries, recognition and a good atmosphere in the workplace are highly motivating factors for both Generation Y and Generation Z [14]. We agree with Vlacseková and Mura's [32] statement that managers of companies must know and understand the motivational theories in order to improve not only individual performance, but also the performance of the company as a whole. And this can be achieved if the employees are happy and satisfied with the working conditions. It should also be taken into account that motivation changes over the years [33], so it is important to continuously monitor and promote employee motivation.

The representatives of the examined generations also showed similarity in that they would prefer to work in flexible working hours [17] [18] [25]. The importance of flexibility is also of great importance in the lives of Generation X, and this is even more typical of the two generations we were examining [34]. One of the biggest advantages of flexible working hours is that it helps create work-life balance [35]. Fixed working hours would be preferred by 16% of Generation Y respondents and one third of Generation Z respondents. In terms of company size, members of Generation Y and Z would also prefer to work in a private enterprise or a medium-sized company. In the case of generation Z, small companies also represent a high proportion. Large companies are more popular among Generation Y, only 12.9% of Generation Z selected this option. This contradicts the research results of Csehné Papp [12], on the basis of which Generation Z people want to be employed by a large company.

Regarding the type of work, the majority of Y and Z generation individuals involved in our research would do a mix of physical and intellectual work. For Generation Y, the most important thing from a workplace perspective is that they can learn and train themselves, as well as - secondly - exercise their creativity. From the point of view of Generation Z, the most important thing is to express creativity, and the answer option to do the job with minimal effort received a higher rate than the possibility of learning and self-training. In her research, Dolot [27] found that representatives of Generation Z like to get to know new technologies in their work to a greater extent than Generation Y. On the other hand, generation Y indicated a higher percentage that they like to receive feedback from those who assign tasks to them.

The willingness to work abroad is more characteristic of the representatives of Generation Z. This confirms the research results of Dolot [27]. For both generations, more than a quarter of the respondents could not take a position on the question of whether they would work in another country. Among the concepts mentioned in our last question, Generation Y considers family, friends and money to be the most important, followed only by career. Despite the fact that money and career came in third and fourth place, they represent a high value in terms of averages, so we can confirm Tari's [7] conclusion, which can also be read in our literature summary that career and money are very important to this generation. In the case of Generation Z, career is also only in fourth place, but material things are more important to them than friendships, and this is also a concept connected to the workplace. Several authors have pointed out that work-life balance is very important for the youngest generations entering the labor market [36] [37] [38] [39] and they put money and reputation before intrinsic values [37] [38].

We consider it important that not only companies understand the needs of generation Y and Z employees, but that this also happens in reverse, i.e. that the employees are also aware of what the labor market expects of them. We can agree with the statement of Csehné Papp [12], according to which: already in secondary school, space should be reserved for informing young people about the state of the labor market. Young people must be led to find out about the shortage professions, the extent of overtraining, outdated professions, and new programs. In this way, they can obtain useful and necessary information for their future employment.

The limitation of the research was due to the coronavirus pandemic, as we could only distribute the questionnaires online. This led to another limitation, the low sample size. In the future, we would like to expand this and, as a continuation of the research, we would like to make a comparison based not only on generations, but also on the basis of other grouping factors.

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