Work Values, Expectations and Motivation of Students as Future Employees

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Young people born within the Internet era are entering the higher education system, streaming to the transition phase for their future workplace. This generation demonstrated a unique set of work values, expectations, and motivation, which will have implications at their workplace and must be better understood to develop effective human resource management strategies. The main purpose of this conceptual paper is to emphasize the need to examine the work values, expectations, and motivation of Generation Z, which represents future employees. Due to the gap between what organizations offer and what newcomers from Generation Z want or expect, there is a need to examine the work values, expectations, and motivation of Generation Z. Knowing what Generation Z wants will enable organizations to better manage the integration of newcomers in organizational settings, as well as enable organizations to attract the best students, facilitate their integration and promote their working development.

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1   Introduction

In recent years, discussions about the entry of Generation Z into the working environment have been at the forefront of interest among academics and practitioners. The need to examine Generation Z in an organizational context is especially heightened and essential due to their differences in work-related preferences compared to previous generations (Pichler et al., 2021; Schenarts, 2020; Tang, 2021). Members of Generation Z are put at the forefront, for instance, career advancement, financial stability, and work-life balance (Gomez et al., 2020; Nedelko et al., 2022).

Literature about Generation Z offers us an insight into the characteristics of members of Generation Z (Pichler et al., 2021), their values (Nedelko et al., 2022; Tolstikova et al., 2021), work values (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Hampton & Welsh, 2019; Maloni et al., 2019), expectations and motivation (Fratrieova & Kirchmayer, 2018; Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). Despite the growing body of literature, there is still less attention dedicated to the work values of Generation Z in organizational settings. The lack of studies in this area does not allow us to fully understand the work values, expectations, and motivation of (future) employees belonging to Generation Z.

We are now in a situation where we have an influx of young people into organizational environments who have significantly different characteristics from those currently employed and those who set the tone for the operation and behavior of organizations, which mostly come from previous generations – i.e., Baby boomers, X and Y.

Therefore, in order to maintain the continuity of the organization's operation on the one hand and, on the other hand, to successfully integrate young employees into organizations so that they are satisfied at work and well-motivated, it is crucial to learn more about the work values, expectations and motivation of young employees from Generation Z. The different importance that members of generations assign to work and personal values, raises the question of the level of alignment between prevailing work values in organizations and work values' expectations of newcomers from Generation Z, which has received little attention in the literature so far.

In-depth knowledge will reduce the gap between what "organizations offer" and what "young employees expect or want from the organization." Knowledge of the gap will enable organizations to design actions that will reduce perceived differences, the continuity of the organization's operation will be ensured, and, last but not least, it will also prevent the creation or elimination of workplace conflicts resulting from inter-generational differences.

Based on the above, the central question of this paper is how members of Generation Z will fit into the organizational settings. In the context of this central research question, the contribution aims to highlight the necessity and importance of researching the work values of members of Generation Z, especially in connection with the needs of organizations, which are expressed through the declared work values of organizations.

2   Literature review

Generation Z members are born between 1996 and 2012 (Dimock, 2023). They have unique characteristics in that they have different attitudes, expectations, and behaviors and place significantly different importance on personal values than previous generations (i.e., Generation X and Y) (Mahmoud et al., 2021). We can characterize members of Generation Z as "digital natives who truly live and breathe life based on virtual connection." They favor digital media over traditional media; have a reduced capacity for sustained attention; want to get things as quickly as possible or reach their goal; have a very low tolerance for being without digital resources and technology; they have an increasing ability to "multi-task"; they are individualists and reluctant to join teamwork; they are aware of the importance of money; and are incredibly confident (Nedelko et al., 2022).

Members of Generation Z have unique characteristics that make them different from their predecessors and each generational cohort before them, as they demonstrate a unique set of values that has implications in their workplace (Bierbrier, 2022). Their different work values can influence their motivation, employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Bierbrier, 2022). Generation Z appreciates social values, potentially configuring their working profile and partially explaining work preferences such as employer size and salary expectations (Yusvin, 2020). Furthermore, literature has found that work values vary

across generations and national cultures, justifying localized examination (Silva & Carvalho, 2021).

Generation Z's character, mindsets, and expectations are known to be different from previous generations. Generation Z expectations differ from those of other employees (Mahmoud et al., 2021; Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015), as they value workplace flexibility, work-life balance, and career orientation differently. Generation Z workplace expectations are, therefore, different as they are defined as highly ambitious and self-confident (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021) but still enticed by the work flexibility and a balance with their life outside the workplace (Scholtz & Rennig, 2019).

Large generational differences exist in employee motivation and behavior concerning working goals (Bińczycki et al., 2023), as motivation determines an employee's work effort (Colquitt et al., 2011). McCrindle (2014) characterizes Generation Z as the most materially endowed, technologically saturated, globally-connected, and formally educated generation than before – and the question is what motivates Generation Z at work (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). Motivation and satisfaction in work are presumed to have a significant impact on the organizational commitment of Generation Z (Nabahani & Riyanto, 2020), and still, Generation Z seems to be more motivated by finding their dream job and opportunities to expand their skills (Magano et al., 2020).

3   Generation z in organizational settings – work values viewpoint

It is undoubtedly evident that members of Generation Z bring a "breath of fresh air to organizations." Generation Z is expected to decisively reshape and lead society and organizations in the 21ˢᵗ century (Schroth, 2019). This opens the question of the alignment of work values of newcomers with organizational work values, considered through the relative desirability of various aspects of work and work-related outcomes for their future jobs and careers (Arieli et al., 2020; Maloni et al., 2019; Pichler et al., 2021). Outlined calls for research into how Generation Z's work values align with currently demanded work values in organizations, developed by the significant influence of previous generations that are substantially different from Generation Z (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Mahmoud et al., 2021).

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The study of persons-in-organization has a long history, as the literature has emphasized the importance of the fit of work values between individuals and their work environment (De Clercq et al., 2008; Posner, 1992; Vigoda-Gadot & Meiri, 2008). The importance of this stream of research is coming to the fore again, as today, in organizational environments, there is a daily debate about the specifics of Generation Z members, which deviate from the expected "stereotypical" profiles of employees, which are formed based on the dominant characteristics of employees who belong to previous generations. This perception of the gap between newcomers and existing organizational settings has been further deepened by digitalization, which changes the working environment into a more desirable one for Generation Z compared to current employees. We are currently at a point where we will also be able to learn about the development of work values of Generation Z, especially through the prism of their work experience, because the members of Generation Z are still in the education process, without significant work experience. At the same time, the oldest also have up to 10 years of work experience. All this reinforces the need for a deeper examination of the work values of Generation Z.

Various classifications of values have been formed for the systematic study of work values in organizations. More recent empirical studies have established four fundamental dimensions of work values, namely cognitive (intrinsic), instrumental (extrinsic), social/altruistic, and prestige, which is based on analyzing 25 work values (Arieli et al., 2020; Lyons, 2003; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Ros et al., 1999). Scholars have developed a set of methodologies and conceptual models that enable a broader analysis of these fundamental work value dimensions at individual, group, and organizational levels. For instance, a comprehensive picture can be obtained by relying on Ros et al.'s (1999) findings and Lyons' (2003) three-dimensional models that were used and confirmed on Generation Z work values, as well as on previous generations (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

4   Discussion

Starting from the central research question of the paper - how members of the Z Generation match the organizational environment - through the prism of work values, we can conclude that there are some important differences based on the analysis of secondary sources and authors' research findings. We can highlight the

following possible differences by comparing the selected characteristics of Generation Z and the demands of the current organizational environment.

The possibility of career advancement for individuals in organizations (Magano et al., 2020; Nedelko et al., 2022) is often limited due to the pyramid or classical organizational structures, which prevents the promotion of many employees. This can lead to frustration among Generation Z members due to their inability to advance. This could then also result in higher employee turnover.

Work-life balance is very important to members of Generation Z (Gomez et al., 2020), which, in a way, requires organizations to enable them to demarcate their private and business lives properly. This can represent a significant challenge for organizations, as it is often the practice of organizations that employees are "always available," which does not meet with much approval among members of Generation Z

Members of Generation Z want to do most things with the help of information technology and have a very low threshold of tolerance when it comes to work without the use of information technology (Tolstikova et al., 2021). This can lead to disappointment or lack of interest in performing work, as organizations cannot always ensure the use of digital technology at work since the nature of work does not allow this, or the organization has not yet implemented possible digital technology to support the organizational processes.

The problem can also arise when providing flexible work, which members of Generation Z highly appreciate. For example, when the organization has specific office hours for working with customers, the possibilities for more flexible forms of work are limited.

A challenge can also be the reluctance of members of Generation Z to work as a team, especially in the case of organizations with a strong team organizational culture or the nature of the work that requires teamwork, as Generation Z sometimes may be more individualistic-oriented (Nedelko et al., 2022).

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5   Conclusions

The central starting point for further researching and discussing the work values of Generation Z in the organizational context is undoubtedly the perceived difference in the perception of work values and the expectation of work-related preferences of Generation Z members compared to previous generations.

The existence of differences between what organizations offer and what members of Generation Z want or expect from the organization stems from the fact that the characteristics of the organization and its operation were formed based on the values, attitudes, and behavior of the previous generation – mainly generation X and Y. Special attention needs to be dedicated to the motivation, as Generation Z is much more sensitive to "amotivation" than Generation X and Y (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

Another dimension to the examination of the fit between "work values of Generation Z and the prevailing working values of organizations emerges from differences in work-related preferences across different countries (Nedelko et al., 2022), and that work values vary across not only among generations, yet also national cultures (Silva & Carvalho, 2021), calling for a more localized examination of working values on Generation Z.

The examination of values, expectations, and motivation of students from Generation Z will create a knowledge base that can be used by young adults (students, members of Generation Z) to overcome various obstacles in first employment and building a career; better cooperation with colleagues from a different cultural context, age and education structures and the like; recognition of the difference in behavior, values, motivation and expectations of future colleagues in the workplace who belong to other generations (Y, X); and breaking stereotypes about others.

The cognitions will be useful also for human resource management experts in creating a strategy for attracting potential colleagues who belong to Generation Z; developing a retention model for young, highly educated people in the organization, better diversity management, understanding the expectations of employees who come from a different cultural context (e.g., due to the characteristics of the national

culture and its influence on the behavior, expectations, and motivation of individuals/employees).

Further, the findings will be useful for policymakers for: policy formulation for faster employment of young people and acquisition of first work experience; creating strategies for young people to build a career in the country; finding the answer to how to reduce the leaving of young people ("brain drain"); assistance to the economy and employers to make it easier to fill vacant positions, as the problem of a lack of qualified labor and the long-term search for employees is noticeable in almost all industries.

The findings can also be used by educational institutions, as the preferences of Generation Z, which are different from the previous generations, also call for changes in the education system. The change should take place primarily in the direction that selection will be more adapted to the needs of members of Generation Z – e.g., more inclusion of digital content, interactive work, use of virtual reality, etc.

Finally, an important area in the framework of the research on the work values of Generation Z is also the area of sustainable development. At this moment, the question can be raised whether organizations will be the bearer of sustainable development or whether this will be members of Generation Z, which is highlighted by the European Green Deal (Filipović et al., 2022; Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020). This question arises mainly because concern for sustainable operation is often not at the forefront of interest among members of Generation Z (Nedelko et al., 2022).

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