

RESEARCH PAPER

Life goals of Generation Z workforce: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Background: The purpose of this paper is to empirically understand the life aspirations of generation Z workforce.

Methods/Methodology: Exploratory factor analysis of data obtained from 289 respondents was conducted. Snowball sampling method was used to reach out to the survey respondents.

Results: A three-factor structure- intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic life goals were extracted from the 8 items of the questionnaire.

Discussion/Conclusions: The current research extends the concepts of life aspirations hitherto studied in case of older generational cohorts such as millennials and generation X to generation Z.

Key words: life goals, life aspirations, generation Z, empirical analysis

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z or Gen Z is the demographic cohort after the generation Y, also known as the millennial. As the generation Z prepares to establish itself in the current labor market, there is a need to understand how workplace perceptions have changed for generation Z. From the academic point of view, research on generation Z at workplace is increasing, although sporadic. There have been studies on the characteristics of generation Z work force, their work values, and expectations from their work environment. Some research has also been conducted on how generation Z workforce learns in the organization and on the job. An understanding of generation Z's life goals is pertinent to

an understanding of how best workplace practices (such as rewards, promotions, development opportunities, engaging work) be tailored to meet their needs. Therefore, the objective of my study is to: *Determine what are the most important life goals for generation Z.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on life goals is extensively investigated from the employee motivation perspective (Martela, Bradshaw, & Ryan, 2019). An important research direction is towards the 'classification' or an understanding of life goals. In this, Kasser (2002), propose a two factor structure : intrinsic goals (which are directed towards satisfying needs such as personal growth,

meaningful relationships, and community service), and extrinsic goals (which satisfy one's needs of wealth, image, and fame; as cited in Marschalko, & Kalacza-Janosi, 2019). Ewa Górnik-Durose, Jach, and Langer (2018) propose a three factor model to explain lifegoals- intrinsic life goals (comprising of personal growth, and meaningful relationship), extrinsic life goals (related to wealth, image, and fame), and transcendent life goals (directed towards community service).

In the current research study, I will build on this existing knowledge to determine a broad classification of lifegoals for generation Z employees.

METHODOLOGY

In line with the research objective, I adopt a quantitative research approach. A structured questionnaire with seven questions describing the life goals was circulated among 500 respondents electronically. The survey instrument was vetted by the author's University Research Ethics Committee. An accompanying instruction form with the details of the data management plan, procedure to withdraw the response, and maintenance of data confidentiality was clearly communicated to the potential respondents. The respondents then had to provide a explicit consent before answering the questionnaire. A snowball sampling technique was used to reach out to potential respondents. Demographic information such as Age was used to identify the generation Z respondents. The respondents self-reported on the status of their employment and identified their status as a full

time or part time employee, self-employed or not employed based on their country of work. A total of 289 usable responses were returned.

Taken within the larger context of research design adopted in the more recent studies on generation Z, I believe this to be an adequate sample size (*c.f.* Shen et.al, 2020: $n=100$; Kemp, Cowart, & Bui, 2020: $n=34$; Murillo-Zamorano, 2019: $n=160$; Fratrièová, & Kirchmayer, 2018: $n=235$). Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure for sampling adequacy is 0.65 which is about the recommended level of 0.60 (Pallant, 2013).

The seven items with the corresponding with the mean scores and standard deviation is summarized in table 1 below. The instrument considered the dimensions presented in Aspiration Index Scale (Kasser, 2019). The items presented were preceded

Table 1: Summary of items: Mean and Standard deviations (n= 289)

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
Wealth	4.9	1.5
Fame	3.1	1.9
Image	3.9	1.7
Personal growth	6.0	1.2
Relationships	5.8	1.3
Community	5.1	1.5
Health	5.3	1.6

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Variance explained

Component	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.256	32.230	32.230	2.256	32.230	32.230	1.964	28.052	28.052
2	1.722	24.607	56.837	1.722	24.607	56.837	1.887	26.961	55.013
3	.889	12.699	69.536	.889	12.699	69.536	1.017	14.523	69.536
4	.672	9.606	79.142						
5	.587	8.385	87.527						
6	.468	6.690	94.217						
7	.405	5.783	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

by the question- What are the life goals that are most important to you? Please rate the goals on a scale of 1 to 7, 1 being the goal least important to you and 7 being the goal most important to you. Each of these items were explained in brief for the respondents. For example, Wealth (Wealth (example: to be rich, to buy everything you want, financial success, own expensive items)).

SAMPLE

A geographically diverse sample with a mean work experience of 2.5 years (*S.D.*2.4), and the average age was 22.3 years (*S.D.*1.9). 50% of the respondents were from Europe, 18% from Asia, 10% from North America, and the rest from other regions of the world.

ANALYSIS

The objective of the study was to identify the latent constructs that explain the preference for life goals among generation Z employees. There is very little research, and no a priori hypotheses about the life goals of this work force. Hence, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using SPSS version 26. A three factor structure that explains 69.5 % of the variance (KMO. 0.65) was extracted. They are:

Factor 1: Intrinsic goals (comprising of three items: relationship, personal growth, and health)

Factor 2: Extrinsic goals (comprising of three items: fame, image, and wealth)

Factor 3: Altruistic goal (comprising of one item: community).

DISCUSSION

Kasser and Ryan (1993) first distinguished intrinsic and extrinsic life goals. They identified personal growth, affiliation, community involvement, and physical fitness to be intrinsic goals. Wealth, fame, and image constitute extrinsic goals. This study partially supports this perspective. Relationship (akin to affiliation), personal growth, and health (akin to physical fitness) are intrinsically important to generation Z. A clear distinction of this factor indicates that generation Z value satisfaction of their innate psychological needs for growth and autonomy. The results of the study extend the ongoing debate on whether extrinsic goals are important in one's life to an emerging workforce- generation Z. There is some

**Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis:
Rotated Component Matrix**

Rotated Component Matrix^a			
	Component		
	1	2	3
relationship	.799	-.073	.068
personal growth	.790	.016	.040
health	.672	.123	.212
fame	-.239	.804	.205
image	.099	.804	.215
wealth	.294	.732	-.426
community	.311	.200	.834
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.			

evidence to suggest that extrinsic goals such as wealth are positively related to subjective well-being and mental health of an individual (Gardarsdóttir et al, 2009). A possible explanation for the factor to be distinctly identified stems from the motives of the individual. As with anyone who is at the early stages of life and career, it is reasonable for them to expect rewards to support one's family or to have financial resources for emergencies). It is also rationale to expect that these young individuals would want to be recognized for making important decisions in life. Altruistic goals are usually associated with one's motivation to help others, contributing to welfare of the society, but most importantly to find real purpose of life. The emergence of Altruistic goals as an independent factor indicates that generation Z is responsive to societal concerns, and are likely to demonstrate prosocial behavior such as empathy to those who are in need of help (Brethel-Haurwitz, Stoianova, & Marsh, 2020).

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

From the academic perspective, this study answers the call to better understand employee motivation and an understanding of dispositional factors such as life goals on how they affect one's motivation and behavior (Kanfer, & Chen, 2016). From the managerial standpoint, the results of the study have implications

for employee wellness (Kuvaas, Buch, & Dysvik, 2020) and thus provide important inputs to shape the human resource practices, systems, and policies in the organization.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the empirical analysis of 289 generation Z employees reveals their life aspirations. Intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic goals are delineated and play an important role in shaping the expectations of an emergent workforce in organizations today. I expect this work to initiate a dialogue among the academic community for a more rigorous investigation of life aspirations of generation Z, and among practitioners for formulating appropriate human resource practices. ■

Citation

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