

A Study on Career Preferences of Generation Z (Special reference to HNDA undergraduates of Advanced Technological Institute-Kegalle)

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Abstract

Currently, Generation Z is beginning to enter the workforce. This study presents the preliminary findings of a study that intends to investigate the job interests of Generation Z, focusing on students pursuing the Higher National Diploma in Accountancy (HNDA) at the Advanced Technological Institute, Kegalle. The main objective of this study is to add to the existing theoretical and empirical work by looking at the factors related to work-related expectations and behaviors known to affect Generation Z in other countries also affect Generation Z in Sri Lanka. The researchers have adopted a quantitative methodology. Based on the sample of 205 HNDA students, the results indicate a few highlighting facts which will be considered by generation z in their decision-making related to their careers. The findings of this study decrease the existing knowledge gap to an extent and as a preliminary study in the Sri Lankan context, this study set the foundation for future researchers.

Keywords: Generation Z, Career Expectations, Generational Studies

INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have long noted the value of generational studies, and for many years, researchers have looked for the unique characteristics of different generations. Some scholars like Giancola (2006) suggest that "the generational approach may be more popular culture than social science". It is an "identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages" (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The generations' backgrounds impact their sentiments toward power and associations, what they want from work, and how they plan to fulfill those wishes (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

According to MacKenzie & McGuire (2016) and Wiedmer (2015) dominant characteristics of different generations have been presented in below table.

Table 01: Characteristics of different generations

Generation	Born Year	Dominant Behavioral Characteristics
Traditional	1900-1945	Loyal and discipline
Baby boomers	1946-1964	Responsible, strong work ethics
Generation X	1965-1980	Independent thinkers, efficient
Generation Y	1981-1994	More social, confident, less independent
Generation Z	1995-2012	Poor communication skills, extensively engaged to technology

Many studies have been conducted on the various generational groups in the workforces in different countries, which are claimed to differ in ways that managers should be aware. (Macky et al.2008). Based on the literature, five discussions on generations can be identified in the workforces, namely, Silent Generation, Baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y & Generation Z. Generation Y was the primary focus of researchers from all over the world (Ex: Alch, 2000; Bennett et al., 2008; Eisner, 2005; Wesner & Miller, 2008; Berry et al., 2010; King et al., 2011; Chung, 2012, Arora et al.,2019) throughout the past two decades, since it represented the youngest talent pool entering the workforce. Today, the newest generation- "Generation Z" has already started their higher studies and working in their first employment. Therefore, it's researchable to study the values, motives, attitudes to work, and career expectations of generation z. From all around the world, researchers have started to explore facts related to generation z. But in Sri Lankan context, no study has been conducted. So, it is essential to conduct a preliminary

study to identify the crucial factors related to generation in Sri Lanka. Researchers from all over the world have already set the foundations for those studies.

The main objective of this study is to add to the existing theoretical and empirical work by looking at the factors related to work-related expectations and behaviors known to affect Generation Z in other countries also affect Generation Z in Sri Lanka. Students following the HNDA course at the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education is a segment representing generation z. Therefore, it is rational to investigate their characteristics to set a basic foundation for further studies related to generation z in the Sri Lankan context.

The findings of this study decrease the existing knowledge gap to an extent and as a preliminary study in the Sri Lankan context, this study set the foundation for future researchers. "Decent Work and Economic Growth" is a United Nations Sustainable Development goal. To achieve that goal as a country, it is vital to have a clear picture of the country's potential and emerging workforce. The findings of this study will be helpful in that case too. And as a country which is taking a new beginning against the economic Crisis, to use the workforce efficiently, having an idea about the career expectations of potential workforces will be helpful to policymakers.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted a quantitative methodology. To achieve the objectives of the study, researchers have adopted a survey-type study, following prior researchers who have conducted the same type of study (Ex: Kirchmayer, 2017)

This study is on Generation z. Researchers have selected students following the Higher National Diploma in Accountancy at advanced Technological Institute, Kegalle, as the referring segment of generation z for this study. Therefore, this population comprises students currently following Higher National Diploma in Accountancy (HNDA) at the Advanced Technological Institute, Kegalle (Sri Lanka). According to the institutional records there are 298 registered students under HNDA program (Full time and Part time) at ATI Kegalle. According to the suggested sample sizes for given population in the book of Sekaran & Bougie 2010 (as cited from Krejcie & Morgan, 1990), a sample of 165 responses is a reasonably representative sample of a population of 298. The sample for this study consisted of 205 students currently studying toward their HNDA. Researchers have used a random sampling technique to select the sample. Based on the previous literature review, the target respondents for the sample were defined as HNDA students born in 1995 or later, with no limitations regarding the mode of study (full-time versus part-time).

In exploring the career expectations of HNDA students, the respondents were asked to assess the importance of a set of factors in four phases of the employee-employer relationship: 1) decision-making in the process of searching for potential employers, 2) career expectations, 3) retention, and 4) work satisfaction. The same set of factors was considered by Kirchmayer (2017) in a study which explored the career expectations of university students (generation z). Following Kirchmayer (2017), Researchers assessed all the factors on a 5-point scale. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to assess to the importance of each factor on a scale ranging from 1, meaning "this factor is not important at all," to 5 meaning "this factor is of crucial importance". Collected data have been transferred to MS Excel spreadsheet to obtain descriptive statistics. The importance of individual factors in the four phases of the employer-employee relationship was based on calculating mean values for all answers within each factor. Since this is a preliminary study, researchers have not performed any further statistical analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers issued 250 questionnaires and received 220 responses. 15 responses were rejected as those are incomplete. There are full-time and part-time students following HNDA at the advanced Technological Institute, Kegalle (Sri Lanka). 95% of the respondents are full-time students and 5% of the respondents are part-time students. And 80% of respondents do not have any working experience. 15% of respondents have working experience of less than one year and the balance 5% have working experience between 2-5 years. Here, in calculating working experience, not only full-time assignments but also part-time assignments were also considered.

Table 2 displays the results for each factor within each of the four phases. It includes the calculated mean values, standard deviations and ranks of each factor according to calculated mean values.

Table 02: Summary of data analysis

Search for a Future Potential Employer							
Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank	Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank
Opportunity for fast career growth	4.0	0.65	4	Benefits	4.0	0.61	4
Training & development opportunities	4.8	0.54	2	Work flexibility	4.9	0.56	1
Job security	4.8	0.58	2	Possibility to travel abroad	4.9	0.81	1
Work-life balance	4.7	0.56	3	Organizational values and CSR	3.4	0.78	6
Nature of job	3.2	0.56	7	Image of the organization	3.5	0.80	5
Career Expectations							
Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank	Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank
A job that yields internal satisfaction	4.7	0.78	1	Autonomy in what I do	4.6	0.80	2
A secure job	4.7	0.76	1	Good social life related to work	4.6	0.76	2
Good reward and wealth	4.6	0.76	2	Good relationship with boss	1.6	0.80	3
Development of skills and proficiency	4.7	0.74	1	Work-life balance	4.7	0.79	1
Job Retention							
Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank	Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank
Image of the organization	4.2	0.76	4	Autonomy	4.1	0.81	5
Job security	4.2	0.65	4	Organizational culture and values	4.1	0.76	5
Work-life balance	4.8	0.65	1	Flexible working time	4.5	0.60	3
Reward	4.8	0.79	1	Good relationship with the boss	1.5	0.78	6
Possibility to work on interesting assignments	4.7	0.80	2	Friendly work environment	4.5	0.61	3
				Social life related to work	4.1	0.67	5
Job Satisfaction							
Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank	Factors	Mean	Std. Div	Rank
The feeling that I have impact	4.7	0.86	3	Financial reward	4.7	0.66	3
Possibility to help others	4.7	0.70	2	Training and development	4.9	0.57	1
Interesting and diverse job	4.7	0.63	2	Problem-solving	4.7	0.76	3
Success	4.9	0.56	1	Being a member of a motivated team	4.7	0.69	3
Recognition	4.7	0.64	3	The feeling of contributing to something meaningful	4.7	0.79	3

Respondents imagine that the possibility to travel abroad (4.9) along with work flexibility (4.9) is going to be the most substantial factor when they select their future employers, followed by job security (4.8), training and development (4.8) and work-life balance (4.7). And it seems that organizational culture-related factors like the nature of the job (3.2), Organizational values and CSR (3.4), and the image of the organization (3.5) play a leading role in terms of Generation Z's search for future employers.

And in the case of career expectations, it's look like all the identified factors other than "good relationship with the boss" (1.6) will be considered highly by respondents in making their decisions. In such cases, A job that yields internal satisfaction, A secure job, development of skills and proficiency and Work-life balance are the most considering factors.

With very little experience / without any experience majority of respondents have imagined work life balance (4.8), Reward (4.8) and the Possibility of working on interesting assignments followed by flexible work time (4.5) and friendly work environment (4.5) are most important factors in taking decisions related to the job retention. Surprisingly, most respondents believe that having a good relationship with the boss (1.6) is not important when making job retention decisions.

Finally, most respondents believe that all these considered factors (Financial reward, Training and development, Problem-solving, Being a member of a motivated team, The feeling of contributing to something meaningful) will be the deciding factors of their job satisfaction because the mean value of each factor is greater than 4.7.

CONCLUSION

When a new generation joins the workforce, supervisors frequently have trouble comprehending the new group (Gelbart and Komminos 2012) Nowadays, a new generation is entering the world of work and thus attracts its attention. Therefore, researchers are trying to fulfil that existing research gap through this study.

The results of this study indicate some critical aspects of generation Z. It Looks like respondents are not considering more about organizational cultural factors like Organizational values and CSR, image of the organization, etc in their decision makings related to career life. This finding is consistent with Kirchmayer,(2017). Kirchmayer,(2017) conducted that study using a sample of university students from generation z. And in this study, most respondents have marked the "Possibility to travel abroad" as a high considering factor. But in the study of Kirchmayer,(2017) that has not been indicated. The Crisis of the country may be the reason for this significant indication. And that also becomes another researchable area as going for a foreign job may create many economic and social impacts within households and society. Further, according to these respondents, Generation Z mainly considered personal skills development opportunities, social life and work-life balance in making decisions related to their careers. On the other hand, according to the results, in job retention and career expectations the respondents are not considering the fact "having a good relationship with the boss". That will be a red notice to the supervisors of Generation Z and the supervisors have to be adopted with these facts to manage this workforce well.

The preliminary findings in this research provide an early glimpse of how Generation Z will perceive many aspects of the workplace in the future. Anyway, the research sample was not diverse to have a broad picture of generation z because all of the respondents included in this part of our study are currently enrolled at the same institute. Therefore, additional research using various samples must strengthen and confirm the findings. These findings will provide the foundation for future studies related to generation Z.

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