

ESTABLISHING BALANCE BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL AND PRIVATE LIFE OF GENERATION Z

UDC: 005.32:331.101.32]:316.346.36

(Original scientific paper)

**Pulevska Ivanovska Lidija¹, Postolov Kiril¹, Aleksandra Janeska Iliev¹,
Marija Magdincheva Shopova²**

¹ Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Economics-Skopje

² University Goce Delcev in Stip, Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics-Gevgelija

Abstract

Achieving balance between life and work is an elusive ideal and considered to be a complete myth. But by making deliberate choices about which opportunities they will pursue and which they'll decline, rather than simply reacting to emergencies, leaders can and do engage meaningfully with work, family, and community. As the world population is aging, consequently this issue imposes implication on human resource management in organizations. Generation Z is preparing to enter the labor market and managers will be facing new challenges in coping with generational differences. In that light, the main goal of this paper is to understand the main aspects of work-life balance and stressing the practical aspects of future professionals in the struggle to face a satisfied professional and personal life, mainly focusing on the newest generation Z. The main method used for gathering data for the purpose of this research is a questionnaire distributed among a population of students which are part of the generation Z.

Key words: *WorkLife, Professional life, Generation Z, Human Resources*

Introducti

Making decisions and choices related to family and pursuing a professional career path has been particularly difficult due to the challenges related to professional orientation. Professionals have a complex path of commitment and sacrifices in order to achieve outstanding results. However, nowadays engaging and commitment is not enough. The fiercer the competitions is, the more specific career managing is needed. Therefore we will look into the characteristics and statements concerning career issues of first year students, taking into considerations all the aspect that could influence their present and future actions. The main aim in this paper is to present a relevant overview of the most important aspects influencing the actions towards achieving work-life balance, especially focusing on the upcoming generation to enter the labor market. Work-life aspects have always been of a great concern of authors interested in the quality of working life and its relation to broader quality of life (Guest, 2002). In general, the modern life imposes a certain misbalance related to professional and personal commitment, which deteriorates the society on one hand and influences the results of organizations on the other.

Different authors discovered the layers of defining the work life balance. The literature indicates different approaches for analyzing work life balance. According to certain authors (Zedeck, Mosier, 1990) typically five models could be used for explaining the relationship between work and personal life. The following models could be distinguished: segmentation model, spillover model, compensation model, instrumental model and conflict model. These models propose different relationships between work and personal life settings, with an emphasis on professional or personal aspect.

The unique social characteristics of Generation X, Y and Z are illustrated within literature. There are certain specifics which could be considered when discussing different generations and therefore the focus is set on the current generation facing professional life, i.e. the so called generation Z. The research included 180 students, who expressed their attitude towards some statements related to work and life balance. Now as generation Z is on the verge of becoming the major workforce, the influence of their presence can actually be studied.

Starting from generation Y, followed even more by generation Z, the focus is on technology. Generation X or so called millennials and generation Z are the most technologically savvy generational groups. It could be noticed that technology has changed their way of handling their work and life.

Literature review

Empirical and theoretical discussion has addressed the rewards and difficulties of balancing the demands of employment and family life (Barnett, 1994) (Bielby, Bielby, 1989)(Brennan, Rosenzweig, 1990),(Higgins, et al., 1992).The understanding of work-life balance brings certain results both for the individual and for the organization, at the same time enables managing the optimization between those most important aspects of life. Managing work-life balance should result in more loyal employee on one side and better performance results for the organization, where individuals are engaged on the other. There is certainly a strong implication that in order to understand work behavior in relation to work-life balance, we need to explore aspects of family life (Guest, 2002).

“Work-life balance is defined as a state of equilibrium in which the demands of both a person’s job and personal life are equal” (The Word Spy, 2002). Work-life balance is founded on the idea that every person should have a complete life in which a sufficient amount of time is spent on personal interests and family interest.

A successful career habitually necessitates long nontraditional hours, which can make achieving a balance between work and family problematic. The organization is shaped by organizational, sociocultural, and individual-level factors (Dixon,Bruening, 2008). Mostly, the research is focused on the individual level factor. One of the main determinants influencing the attitudes towards certain behavior is strongly related to the person’s values. One of the areas strongly influencing work-life balance concerns the values and attitudes of people in work engagements. This issue has been stimulated by writers advocating the arrival of Generation X (Tulgan,1996), which has been specified by individuals, who put a greater accent and prioritize seeking balance between work and personal life. Much of the existing literature employs non empirical sources such as anecdotal accounts or extrapolations based on different generations’ life experience; at best, this literature relies on qualitative interviews. (Twenge et al.,2010). Considering all the characteristics of a person, as well as the values he/she carries as being part of a generation, brings certain expectations towards the future priorities and behaviors.

Researchers have been stressing that nowadays organizations experience new problems with all the different generation involved. Baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (millennials) have been discussed, but further the arrival of the new Generation Z rises the complexity.

Some authors (Blauth et al, 2011) found four universal needs among generations in the workplace. The top-rated need among all generations was the need to be respected, feeling valued as knowledgeable, skilled and experienced, collaboration with co-workers and the ability to exercise self-control within specified guidelines to achieve shared goals. There have been discussions mainly focusing on comparing generation Y and generation Z (Tulgan, 2013). However it is considered that Generation Y and Z are very similar and share some of the values, yet there are tremendous differences especially considering professional life. Discussion related to the new generation has diverse implications, for some authors the new generation is formed by those born in the nineties (Tulgan, 2013;Wood, 2013), whereas others consider the start of the new generation for those born after 2000 (Benneth, 2012; Howe,Strauss, 2007).

The Generation

A generation is defined as a “group of people born in the same general time span, who share some life experience—such as big historical events—pastimes, heroes and early work experiences” (Blauth et al.,2011). The characteristics acknowledged to an age-bound demographic are frequently reflections of events occurring in the world around them. While a consensus for a definition may be missing, through a combination of thoughts and ideas, researchers agree on certain aspects of each generation. Research indicates that different generations exhibit different value priorities (Bogdanowicz, Bailey, 2002). A generation can influence styles and trends in business, while learning from the mistakes and successes of the previous generations. One of the most accepted definitions refers to a generation as “a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together” (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

The examination of workplace characteristics is therefore an important area of research for diverse generational groups and results in different outcomes investigating differences between the generational

groups. The work style and belief systems of Generation Y (born between 1981-1995) is regarded as fundamentally different from any other group of young people in the last fifty years (O'Reilly, Vella-Zarb, 2000). A Price Waterhouse Coopers survey of 2500 University students in 11 countries found that 57% name "attaining a balance between personal life and career" as their primary career goal (O'Bannon, 2001).

Literature and academic research acknowledges that there are some differences in determining each generational group. In this context, there is still no clear consensus about each generational group, so there are a lot of differences when consulting different sources.

There are some authors (Hammil, 2005) that have divided generations into:

- Veterans -born between 1922-1945;
- Baby boomers 1946 and 1964 ;
- Generation X 1965-1980 ;
- Generation Y 1981-2000.

According to another classification (Martin, Tulgan, 2002), there are the following three groups (with their "synonyms"):

- Baby Boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964);
- Generation X (born between 1965 and 1977) ;
- Generation Y (born between 1978 and 2000) - the so-called millennium generation)

The American census bureau distinguishes the following generations:

- The silent generation (born 1928-1945);
- Baby boomer (born between 1946-1964);
- Generation X (born 1965-1980);
- Generation Y-Millennials (1981-2004);
- Generation Z- Homeland generation (2005-Present).

Generation Z

Many demographers argue that all those born between 1978 and 2000 belong in the same generation, one gigantic "Millennial Generation" (Tulgan, 2013). Nevertheless, this time frame is simply too general and the historical events, followed by technological advancement provide distinct differences which need to be discussed separately.

Generation Z represents the greatest generational shift the workplace has ever seen. Generation Z will present profound challenges to leaders, managers, supervisors, HR leaders, and educators in every sector of the workforce (Tulgan, 2013). Generation Z, who in most cases are the offspring of Generation X, are born after 1996 although different authors present some discrepancy in relation to the time frame. Hence some researchers provide a general definition that Generation Z is born in the 1990's and raised in the 2000s during an era of changes caused by the internet, smart phones, laptops, freely available networks and digital media are considered as the Generation Z (Tulgan, 2013). In this context generations Z is raised with the social media, they are digital centric and technology is their DNA. They are also referred as Generation I, Gen Tech, Digital natives, Gen Wii etc. (Singh, Dangmei, 2016). They are born and raised in the digital world and what distinguishes them from other generation is that their existence is more connected to electronics and the digital world. If generation Y was the most technologically advanced generation, naturally the new generation which is a successor, is even more technological dependent and up-to-date. In addition, this generation seeks for choice in all processes and/or the perception of choice and desires structure and customization within all they do. (Strauss, Howe, 2000). Generation X experienced a different family life with the high divorcing rates, so as parents they need to be independent because their family life was unpredictable, therefore they encourage independent thinking in their Generation Z offspring (Tapscott, 2008). In this line, Generation Z members are learning to value connections with family, order, structure, a work ethic, and a sense of predictability in their lives.

The Institute for Emerging Issues (2012) refers to Generation Z as the most ethnically diverse and technologically sophisticated generation. Hence Generation Z has a informal, individual and direct way of social networking as a part of their everyday lives. In the study conducted by Dan Schawbel (2014), Generation Z tends to be more entrepreneurial, trustworthy, tolerant and less motivated by money than Generation Y. They are more realistic about their work expectation and optimistic about the future. Based on the findings of Generational White Paper (2011), Generation Z tends to be impatient, instant minded, lacking the ambitions of previous generations, have acquired attention deficit disorder with a high

dependency on the technology and a low attention span, individualistic, self-directed, most demanding, acquisitive, materialistic and entitled generation so far. Tulgan even points out that despite their strong involvement in technology, this generation might face a soft skill gap (Tulgan, 2015). Technology is a part of their identity and they are tech savvy, but they lack problem-solving skills and they have not demonstrated the ability to look at a situation, put in context, analyze it and make a decision (Coombs, 2013). Considering the use of technology, both Generations Y and Z share personal information online, still Generation Z has placed social media technologies at the center of their social world, substituting direct face-to-face relationships. The reduced live socialization of Generation Z children due to heavy online social interaction could cause problems with social interactions and conflict resolution at work.

In their lifetime, the generation Z has expectations to change their employer up to four times. These are a generation that finds that building the necessary skill portfolio could be only done by experiencing the organizational environment of different companies. Employers in this respect need to show them the opportunity for growth and new experiences otherwise this worker will seek their future in other companies. According to a survey performed by Robert Half the top three priorities of the members of generation Z, when seeking a full time job are with 64% opportunities for career growth, 44% generous pay and with 40% making a difference or having a positive impact on society. Considering an innovative approach to generational research, Twenge (2006) presented convincing evidence that most of today's American young people (which she labels Generation Me or GenMe) have been raised to think that they will be highly successful, even stars, although the reality is that they will find it more difficult than ever to get into and afford the best colleges, find a high-paying and personally rewarding job, and buy a decent home.

Establishing balance between professional and private life

Juggling competing demands is tiring if not stressful and brings lower productivity, sickness, and absenteeism, so work/life balance is an issue for all employees and all organizations (Swift, 2002). Work-life balance from the employee viewpoint concerns the dilemma of managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities (Lockwood, 2003). Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) in their pioneering study included 800 business professionals indicating that work and family, are the dominant life roles for most employed women and men in contemporary society and at the same time they can either help or hurt each other (Friedman, Greenhaus 2000). In real life, there is a high degree of duality. There is a number of different dimensions in which man's life is confronted with the problem of duality.

This duality is especially emphasized in ensuring a balance between professional and private life. It is expressed in the existence of so-called "Parallel worlds", i.e. the division of existence into two independent parts. This approach requires, first, sorting people into categories. People who belong to our inner circle (family, friends, relatives) and people who belong to our outer circle (associates, customers, etc.).

Companies should be aware of the attitude and values of their employees, in order to treat them appropriately. Table 1.1 presented below provides a certain overview of the general characteristics of each generational group. In the research more focus is set on generation X, Y and Z since these are the dominant ones active in professional life.

It is evident that the majority of the workforce at this point is part mainly in generation Y, but will soon be supported by generation Z. Whereas Generation Y is among the first generation which has strongly set an emphasis on achieving work and life balance, generation Z is even more driven toward their self. Furthermore generation Z is also called the "me" generation. Changing the whole picture instead of asking themselves where they see themselves in the company, the focus for Generation Z is what the company could offer for them, meaning what growth opportunities, experiences etc.

Research methodology

A questionnaire was distributed in the beginning of 2016, where students anonymously provided answers to 36 questions. The structure of the questions is based on statements with a Likert scale indicating the level of compliance. In this line the highest number presents the highest level of compliance, or by choosing 5 the respondent "fully agrees with the given statement", on the other hand 1 indicates "full disagreement" with the presented statement. After distributing the questionnaire among students, relevant data was gathered. The data was transferred in SPSS. Regular descriptive statistics were performed used as an indication and providing an overview of the sample. Furthermore a chi square test was used in order to determine the goodness of fit, i.e. used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the

expected frequencies and the observed frequencies. In this context, a frequency analysis was performed as well.

Table. 1.1 Comparing the main aspects of each generation

	Generation X	Generation Y	Generation Z
Born	1965 –1978	1979 – 1997	1998 – ongoing
Broad traits	Self-reliance Skepticism Work/life balance Motivated by money Crave security	Immediacy Confidence Tolerance Value social connection Desire to rebuild institutions	Appreciation for order, structure Strong work ethic Value sense of predictability in their lives
Family	“Latch-key kids,” witnessed mass layoffs and divorce of parents Value independence in their own children	Very close to parents Can “boomerang” back to parents’ house if needed	High home-schooling rates and proportion of one “stay at home parent” families Family as a secure base
Defining technology	Mobile phone and e-mail	Online search engines and social media	Tablet, smartphone, visual social media May value practical career choices
Work behaviors	Motivated by compensation and career potential Less concerned with social causes	Enjoy seamless mash up of work and personal life Feel job should contribute to greater good	Less developed face-to-face social and conflict resolution skills Leaders in online collaboration Susceptible to distractions Will favor a “legible” planning layout with clear circulation, visual access, and obvious intent of spaces
Planning/workspace preferences	Comfortable with traditional workplace planning models Accepts and uses new workspace ideas with practical application	At ease with the ambiguity of an open, unstructured, workspace with high degree of choice, flexibility	Need spaces for mentoring, heads down focus work, and blended online/face-to-face collaboration

Source: Knoll. (2014). What comes after Y? Generation Z: Arriving to the office soon. Retrieved from https://www.knoll.com/media/340/742/Infographic_Generation_Z_3pgs.pdf.

Research sample

The gathered data contains 180 respondents both male and female, at the age between 18-20 years. The analysis is based upon a survey performed on first year University students, which have still not entered professional life. Most of the students involved in the research are considered to be representatives of the Z generation and therefore represent an indication of the set of characteristic of this group. Since data was gathered among students in Macedonia, this social context is taken into consideration. The research was conducted in the period January to May 2016, so most of the surveyed subject are born in the 90’s and hence are clearly members of generation Z.

Results

The calculations are made with SPSS and the p value of the Chi- square test indicates that all statements are significant. In this line it could be proposed that the zero hypothesis concerning the equality of the choice of the respondents is rejected. This means that all the respondents have a tendency to choose some of the provided possibilities from 1 to 5. If we look more closely into the results of the frequency of response in each category it could be concluded that predominantly the choice is in the higher scale of number, i.e. between 3 and 5. This could be related to most respondents complying with the statements and possessing the set of characteristics stated within each question. The argument is the respondents being part of the same generation. This result is more than expected and again proves the common interest of one generation. The frequency analysis proves that the majority of respondents agree with the provided statements in the questionnaire. Analyzing the provided response, it is clear that most of the respondents value their relationship with their superiors. In this line, it is considered that the trust and respect from leading superiors is one of the most important issues. Most of the issues related to the employer, and as well as the superior, have a high ranking. With high 83.3% respondents totally agree that they strongly value enjoying the trust

from their superior and with 71.1% the feedback and knowledge passed over from older colleagues. With over 70% the respondents imply that a good employer is considered to be flexible, responsible with goals set and invest continuously in the education of his employees. It is interesting that most of the respondents share dominantly the values. This, of course, is as a result of being members of the same generation Z. Obviously this new generation is ambitious and close to their parents with a high mean of 4.40. The research indicates strong orientation toward themselves and 56% of the respondents consider that they represent what is valuable. So they have a pretty high sense of self-worthiness. This generation value the flexibility at work, a good paycheck, flexible working hours and working in different shifts with a mean of 4.32 and large percentage of over 52% totally complying with this. Another thing strongly valued by this generation is the diversity at the workplace, diversity of opinions, gender and cultures, so with a high frequency of 4.24 and with over 52% totally agree concerning the importance of diversity.

Conclusion

The academic discussion has stressed some distinct and powerful differences between the generations. However, literature is scarce with grounded empirical studies, and most empirical studies were focused on specific work-related variables. Furthermore most sources indicating some valuable analysis of the upcoming generation Z are present mainly in digital media. It is recommended that all conclusions regarding the impact of the four generations on business management strategies should be viewed cautiously. Still employees find themselves torn between their family and profession. Their attitude towards their work is often embedded in the values, experiences and set of characteristics possessed. Work-life balance is a tool that has been adopted by the most successful organizations, so both sides, the individual and the organization itself should make an effort in order to achieve the best result. Hence, work-life balance initiatives are the win-win situational tools for the employers and the employees as the organization's goals are accomplished and fulfilled successfully along with the personal needs of the employees.

This paper has explored the probability that employees in different age groups have different expectations concerning their working environment. Separating employees into generations, and then defining the characteristics of these generations, is well documented in the literature for previous generation. Nevertheless, establishing what each of the generations expects of the working environment is still at the early stages of research and development.

It is notable that Generations Z seems to have different requirements and motivating factors than the earlier generations. It is important for the organization to determine the most important aspects for Generation Z for the future development and growth of the business. The researches cover different aspect of the personal and professional life of respondents, indicating that the proposed values are in line with those expected by Generation Z in literature so far. It is obvious that the upcoming generation share a set of values and attitudes toward work and organization and this could be mainly withdrawn from the research performed in Macedonia as well.

References

- Barnett, R.C. (1994), "Home-to-work spillover revisited: A study of full-time employed women in dual earner couples", *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 56, pp.647-656.
- Bielby, W. T., Bielby, D. D., (1989), "Family ties: Balancing commitments to work and family in dual earner households", *American Sociological Review*, Vol.54, pp.776-789.
- Blauth, C., McDaniel, J., Perrin, C., Perrin, P. (2011). *Age-based Stereotypes: A Silent Killer of Collaboration and Productivity*. Achieve Global. Tampa: FL.
- Bogdanowicz, M. S., Bailey, E. K. (2002), "The Value of Knowledge and the Values of the new Knowledge Worker: Generation X in the new Economy", *Journal of European Industrial Training*, Vol.26, No.2, pp.125 - 129.
- Brennan, E. M., Rosenzweig, J. M. (1990). "Women and work: Toward a new developmental model. Families in Society", *The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, Vol.71, pp.524-533.
- Bruening, J.E, Dixon M.A, (2008), "Work-Family Negotiations Within a Life Course Perspective: Insights on the Gendered Experiences of NCAA Division I Head Coaching Mothers", *Springer Science Sex Roles* Vol. 58 pp.10-23
- Guest, D. (2002), "Perspectives on the Study of Work-life Balance", *Social Science Information* Vol.41, No.2 pp: 255-279,
- Hammill, G.(2005). "Mixing and managing four generations of employees", *FDU Magazine Online*, Vol.12, No.2 Retrieved from <http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/05ws/generations.htm>
- Higgins, C. A., Duxbury, L. E., & Irving, R. H. (1992). "Work-family conflict in the dual-career family", *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol.51, pp.51-75.
- Howe, N. and Strauss, W. (2000). *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Howe, N. and Strauss, W., (2007). The next 20 years. *Harvard business review*, 85, pp.41-52.
- Iorgulescu, M.C., (2016), "Generation Z and Its Perception of Work", *Cross Cultural Management Journal*, Vol.9, pp.47-54.

- Coombs J.(2013).Generation Z: Why HR Must Be Prepared for Its Arrival Retrieved from <http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/articles/pages/preparefor-generation-z.aspx>
- Knoll. (2014). What comes after Y? Generation Z: Arriving to the office soon. Retrieved from https://www.knoll.com/media/340/742/Infographic_Generation_Z_3pgs.pdf.
- Kupperschmidt, B. (2000). Multigeneration employees: Strategies for effective management. *Health Care Manager*, 19(1), 65-76.
- Lockwood, N.R. (2009), "Work/Life Balance: Challenges and Solutions" *Journal of Business & Economics Research*, Vol.7, No.4.
- O'Bannon, G. (2001), "Managing Our Future: The Generation X Factor", *Public Personnel Management*, Vol.30, No.1, pp. 95-109,
- O'Reilly, B., Vella-Zarb, K. (2000). *Meet the Future*. In R. Luhman (Ed.), *The Sociological Outlook: A Text with Readings* (7th Ed. ed.). San Diego: Collegiate Publishing Group.
- Robert H. (2015). Get ready for generation. Retrieved from <http://www.roberthalf.com/workplace-research/get-ready-for-generation-z>.
- Singh, A.P. and Dangmei, J., (2016), *Understanding the Generation Z, the future workforce*, ISSN:2349-7858:SJIF:2.246:Volume 3 Issue 3
- Swift, L. (2002). "Work-life balance important in relief world, too", Reuters AlertNet. Retrieved from <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/reliefsources>
- Tapscott, D.(2008). *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World*. McGraw-Hill. pp. 15–16. ISBN 9780071508636.
- The Word Spy., Work-life balance from <http://www.wordspy.com/words/work-lifebalance.asp>
- Tulgan, B. (1996), *Managing Generation X: How to Bring out the Best in young Talent*, Capstone, Oxford.
- Tulgan, B., (2013), Meet Generation Z: The second generation within the giant" Millennial" cohort *Rainmaker Thinking*.
- Twenge, J. M. (2006), *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*. New York: Free Press.
- Twenge, J.M., Campbell, S.M., Hoffman, B.J. and Lance, C.E., (2010), "Generational differences in work values: Leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing", *Journal of Management*, Vol.36, No.5, pp.1117-1142.
- Wood, S., (2013), "Generation Z as consumers: trends and innovation", Institute for Emerging Issues: NC State University, pp.1-3.
- Zedeck, S.; Mosier, K. (1990) "Work in the family and employing organization", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 45 No.2, pp.240-251.

