

A person-organization fit model of Generation Z: Preliminary studies

Magdalena Graczyk-Kucharska¹ , G. Scott Erickson² 

Abstract

The study looks at developing a person-organization fit model based on the unique characteristics of the new generational cohort, Generation Z, now entering the workforce. Theory suggests competitive advantage may come to a firm based on its unique human capital, the human resources it employs and develops. Further, organizations will be more successful in attracting the valuable employees they seek if they can provide a workplace appealing to them in terms of organizational values, culture, and other aspects that may also include more familiar enticements such as pay and benefits. To address the gap, this pioneering study investigates the context of person-organizational culture for the Z Generation entering the labor market. The key questions answered by the authors when describing the Person-Organization Fit Framework for Generation Z include the differences in how organizational culture appeals to Gen Z men and Gen Z women. The research results are presented in three steps: an analysis of workplace environment elements for Gen Z, correlation analysis between the workplace environment elements required by Gen Z, and presentation of a Person-Organization Fit Framework for Gen Z. From a sample of 3393 students at technological secondary schools in the Wielkopolska Region, the survey results provided evidence of the workplace preferences for this cohort. In addition, results were further analyzed for differences in gender and intended profession. For this region, Generation Z has variable individual needs and wants, some of which can be easily identified (gender, profession) but some of which may be less clear. These research results may be used for designing appealing workplaces taking into account person-organization needs for young people. Based on this novel research, organizations employing the resulting work framework for Gen Z will be better prepared to consider the nature and communication of what they have to offer as well as how they can be flexible in adapting these offerings to unique individuals.

Keywords: organizational culture, Generation Z, Gen Z, human resources

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INTRODUCTION

With increasing global competition, building and sustaining competitive advantage has become a more complex and difficult challenge for business. Strategists have developed the idea that competitiveness may come from differentiation on the basis of unique resources, the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). Human resources may be one particularly relevant factor in establishing a firm's competitive viability, especially in a time of big challenges such as globalization, technological and communication change, and environmental sustainability. But in the realm of human resources, resource availability can be a key issue (Szafranski et al., 2017). Young people choose their workplace for different reasons (Spychala et al., 2017), including the attractiveness of the workplace and person-organization fit, taking into account their personal characteristics and preferences (Kristof, 1996). A number of researchers have explored this issue of individual/organizational fit, the match between employee and firm needs and wants (Utcomes et al., 2017; Afsar & Badir, 2016; Kristof et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996).

Companies need to understand how today's young people choose their workplace (Csiszárík-Kocsír & Garia-Fodor, 2018), taking into account factors such as career path, job choice, work adjustment, and organizational climate (O'Reilly III et al., 1991). Historically, every time a new generation enters the labor market, a mismatch in understanding can occur between employers used to a previous cohort and their young, prospective employees. In line with McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) definition, a generation is a cohort of people born at a similar time, shaped by the same events and affected by similar social, economic, technical, and political circumstances. Three factors are vital to classifying such cohorts: a feeling of membership, common beliefs and behaviors, and common historical experiences and perspectives (Howe & Strauss, 1992). Identifying the tendencies of a new generation can be a challenge, including areas such as communication preferences, hierarchy of goals, workplace requirements, or ways of working and achieving goals. Creating an atmosphere to enhance motivation while encouraging innovation and great communication between employees of different age, culture, value systems, workplace, experience, social and professional competences can be difficult. Developing educational systems to prepare them for such workplaces is similarly challenging (Szafranski et al., 2019).

Previously identified generational cohorts include the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (Susanti & Natalia, 2018; Southgate, 2017). Now moving into the workforce is Generation Z, differing from other groups in the way they work and their work motivations.

Generation Z is a term suggested by Schroer (2008) to describe those born after the millennium (Amiama-Espaillet & Mayor-Ruiz, 2017). Also referred to as “postmillennials” or “centennials,” more recent descriptions have included “pivotal” (Southgate, 2017) or “zappers” (Csiszárík-Kocsír & Garia-Fodor, 2018). Individuals in this generation have never known life without the Internet, part of their experience from an early age, and treated as an evident presence (Roblek et al., 2019). Ubiquitous use of the Internet was already recognized by Prensky in 2001 (2001a, 2001b), and those trends have only accelerated. This generation is constantly in touch with friends (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017) and has a higher number of friends than in previous generations. They are capable of effectively multitasking yet find it difficult to focus on a single activity. They are materialistic, want everything, and want it immediately and yet are also realistic. They are creative and ambitious. They learn mainly from online sources, often creating ideas themselves without reference to traditional sources of existing knowledge. They share freely through digital media (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017). They also interact through online games (Perez, 2016). In terms of the workplace, Gen Z is comfortable with modern recruitment tools (Dalessandro, 2018; Derous & De Fruyt, 2016) and prefers flexible working arrangements (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017).

Organizational culture is a widely used term encompassing several different aspects of organizations, including how their members cohere and how organizations and members interact (Adler & Jelinek, 1986). One underlying assumption is that top management may drive and enhance the organizational culture, establishing a more effective and more appealing work environment (Schein & Night, 1993). Generally, organizational culture changes slowly, the result of the cumulative activities of many people. “Organization culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Adler & Jelinek, 1986: 81, quoting Schein, 1984).

The key question is whether companies will force this younger generation to adapt to existing organizational cultures or whether managers will try to adapt organizational responses to this changing environment and Gen Z’s preferences. Further, are there differences in how organizational cultures appeal to Gen Z men and Gen Z women or between different professions? Good organizational cultures tend to have strong foundations and stable rules but also need to be adaptable to changes in the nature of their employee pool, demonstrating flexibility based on knowledge gained from the process of problem solving and enhanced by lessons learned (Graczyk-Kucharska, et

al., 2018; Chang & Lee, 2007). This research looks more deeply into these questions, examining the person-organization fit regarding Generation Z as well as gender and profession differences through a preliminary study among young students from technical schools from the Wielkopolska Region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Culture

During the past forty years, organizational culture has been a subject of growing interest among researchers and practitioners, analyzing the concept through the prism of several different perspectives (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2019). Organizational culture is described in the literature mostly in terms of its relationship with a variety of different factors, including conflict resolution and empowerment (Khan & Rasli, 2015), leadership (Masa'deh et al., 2017; Schein & Night, 1993), ethical challenges (Smith et al., 2018), motivation (Fernandes, 2018), knowledge (Kucharska & Wildowicz-Giegiel, 2017; Alattas & Kang, 2015; Rai, 2011), technology and innovation (Akhtar et al., 2018), Hofstede's international cultural dimensions (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2019; Štreimikienė, 2012) and others (Kangas et al., 2017).

The concept of organizational culture originates in cultural anthropology and is prominent within organizational behavior, management, and marketing literatures (Hogan & Coote, 2014). Organizational culture can be defined as attitudes and norms shaping staff behaviors and, consequently, the organization's performance. The concept of culture is seen as a kind of bridge between the individual and the organization. It will differ across enterprises. If positive, it can facilitate employee commitment and enhance system stability (Kim & Wang, 2016). Organizational culture can be crucial to companies' success (Alattas & Kang, 2015) and needs to overcome cultural barriers. Schein noted decades ago that organizational culture can be a major differentiator between entities and can be associated with different levels of effectiveness. He defined culture as: "A pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (1988:7). It can have a considerable impact on knowledge management and organizational effectiveness, perhaps more than strategy and structure. Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1999), for example, stressed the importance of what they termed social capital in facilitating the sharing of

knowledge across the firm. Fernandes (2018:1088) defined organizational culture “as the shared values that are embraced and how organizations and their members act against things associated with outside parties.”

Organizational culture’s impact on human resources is a growing question. To the extent that culture is a determinant factor in enhancing and achieving organizational objectives (Ramdhani, et al., 2017), it is tied to all the functions of the business, but particularly human resources. The culture can guide how organizations face environmental changes and use internal resources, including the workforce, to implement responses to those changes (Pool, 2000). A strong culture improves employee motivation and engagement, establishing a stronger identification, more positive feelings, and thus greater contributions toward the company’s success as well as the individual’s job fulfillment.

Motivational dynamics have changed dramatically to reflect new work requirements and worker expectations. Employers engaged with the process focus on cultural cohesion, going beyond employee happiness or satisfaction (Evangeline & Gopal Ragavan, 2016). Servant leadership has an impact on both organizational structure (Harwiki, 2016) and engagement, recognizing all employee needs, emphasizing positive aspects of the workplace, and supporting employee acceptance of environment change. Managers can go further and try to build a learning organization culture that could also support organizational innovativeness (Hussein et al., 2016). A learning organization culture encourages the acquisition of the skills and capabilities to produce and apply knowledge, transforming the individuals acquiring new knowledge and vision (Garvin, 1993). According to Simon (1991), an organization grows knowledge in only two ways: from learnings by its current members or bringing new members with new knowledge into the organization. Organizational systems and routines thus have a role in influencing individual and group learning by encouraging learning in pursuit of organizational goals (Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2016). Organizations can motivate individual learning as well as attitudes toward knowledge sharing (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016). Knowledge acquisition and sharing helps to increase the efficiency of the business, achieve goals, improve the quality of work and final products, and strengthen relationships inside and outside the enterprise (Charband & Navimipour, 2016). Finally, multilevel structural equation modelling by Kangas, et al. (2017) showed that, at the individual level, perceptions of a strong, ethical organizational culture were associated with less sickness absences after controlling for background factors, further strengthening the motivational case.

One important recent extension of topics related to organizational culture is gender differences. Akgemci et al. (2016) raised the question of

female employees' careers and organizational barriers. Harwiki (2016) studied women's impact on servant leadership and organizational culture. Nonetheless, despite considerable attention on the topic of organizational culture, extant literature does not sufficiently explore gender, profession and generational cohort differences to uncover deeper insights and relationships. An unanswered question worth studying is whether gender and profession, linked with specific competences, has an influence on the relationship of Gen Z with organizational culture.

Person-organization fit of Generation Z

A central aim of this paper is to contribute to the existing literature by providing a clearer understanding of the links between person-organization fit and an organization's culture. In doing so, we provide a more complete account of the key cultural characteristics and processes related to the new generation of young people, including motivation for work and long-term orientation towards a single company. We do so in the context of the individual knowledge, skills and attitudes emphasized in the strategic human capital literature as being key to employee contributions to organizational performance (Ployhart et al., 2014), more specifically how needs-based employee education and training programs (Szafranski, 2015) fit with organizational strategic directions (Agustriyana et al., 2019).

Person-organization (PO) fit concerns the antecedents and consequences of compatibility between people and the organizations in which they work. A strong PO fit may be achieved by well-organized processes of hiring and socialization (Kristof, 1996). PO fit theory posits that there are characteristics of organizations with the potential to be congruent with the needs and wants of their workforce. Those individual employees' attitudes and behaviors will be influenced by the perceived degree of congruence or "fit" between themselves and their organizations (Afsar & Badir, 2016; Chatman, 1989). These conditions may influence a variety of important outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment and performance. Job satisfaction is of particular interest to employers as it reflects the extent to which people find gratification or fulfillment in their work. Extensive research in job satisfaction indicates personal factors such as how an individual's needs and aspirations determine attitude, along with group and organizational factors such as work conditions, relationships, work policies and compensation (Pool, 2000).

Much of the recent interest in the concept of PO fit can be traced to the attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) framework, suggesting individuals and organizations are attracted to each other based on similar values and goals.

The model, described by Schneider (1987), includes the difficulty of bringing about organizational change, the utility of personality and interest measures for understanding organizational behavior, the genesis of organizational climate and culture, the importance of recruitment, and the need for individual-based theories of leadership and job attitudes. Further research has shown that job applicants self-select into organizations based on perceived PO fit and that interviewers use PO fit when evaluating and hiring job applicants (Cable & Parsons, 2001). PO fit may evolve also through socialization. Effective socialization can build commitment to the organization, making employees less likely to quit. In this case, companies can proactively work on PO fit, gaining returns from investments in effective recruitment, selection and training.

Cattell (1943) suggested that personality can be measured by observation and defined personality can predict behavior in a given situation. In real life, personality can be difficult to assess and use as a predictor, e.g. job choices based on personality traits (Judge & Cable, 1997; Cable & Judge, 1996;). Even so, a positive significant relationship exists between HRM practices and organizational culture (Kim & Wang, 2016). Indeed, researchers have found that human resources and organizational culture are inseparable (Smith, et al., 2018). Organizations need to focus on developing and maintaining an ethical cultural aligning of employee development with organizational strategy while also taking into account the unique needs of this new generational cohort. Young Generation Z will choose employers on the basis of their perceived fit with jobs and the organization itself (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Generation Z is used to communicating and working with new information technology solutions. Use of information technology allows any individual or organization to carry out a variety of activities that are more accurate, timely and of high quality. Information technology also helps organizations in empowering human resources and makes data, information and knowledge available throughout the enterprise (Fernandes, 2018). New technologies are often strongly related to innovation and are of interest to Gen Z, enhancing their professional motivation and engagement.

Members of Generation Z aspire to pursue successful careers, immediately and effortlessly, and do not accept a vision of long-term career building based on small steps. They are characterized by mobility and knowledge of foreign languages, making them look for jobs not just close to where they live but further afield, including options in foreign countries. They quickly adapt to new countries and new conditions. Generation Z is accepting of high risk. Its members do not necessarily care about work stability. They desire diversity and avoid routine. They are eager to learn about and discover new things, manifested, among others, by a willingness to communicate with other cultures, take on foreign internships, apply new work methods and

improve established processes (Graczyk-Kucharska, 2019; Lazányi & Bilan, 2017; Żarczyńska-Dobiesz & Chomątowska, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS ---

Methodology

The research results are presented in three steps. Initially, we provide an analysis of workplace environment elements for Generation Z, further delineated by gender and profession (IT, Logistics, Economics and Mechatronics). Each is one of the most representative professions pursued in the Wielkopolska Region (Table 1) where the research was done. The second step is a correlation analysis between workplace environmental elements required by Gen Z, again further divided by profession and gender. The third and last step presents a Person-Organization Fit Framework for Generation Z as seen in this specific region.

An empirical study was conducted among young students from technical secondary schools in the Wielkopolska Region. Validated survey items from the literature, discussed above, enabled a large-sample, quantitative approach to the research questions, appropriate to the substantial population of students available for study. Even though not a technically random sample, access to the full population enabled results accurately reflecting these students, but extending the findings beyond these specific circumstances should be done with care. The data were gathered between April 2017 and March 2019, totaling 3393 students. A survey was distributed to all students participating in classes in laboratories within the project “Time for Professionals BIS – Professional Wielkopolska” carried out by the local government of the Wielkopolska Region in partnership with Poznań University of Technology and including the technical secondary schools mentioned above. The target group included students 16–18 years of age, enrolled in their last or next-to-last year prior to secondary school leaving exams and possible tertiary level education. By definition, all respondents were members of Generation Z. Respondent numbers are reflective of their participation in particular occupations in the Wielkopolska Region program. There were 1377 women and 2016 men in the sample. Descriptive results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The statistical sample specification

Group description	Number of respondents	Percentage of the research sample	Percentage of learning students in technical secondary schools at the research time
All respondents	3393	100	
Gender-related division			
Females	1377	40.1	
Males	2016	59.9	
Division due to the field of study			
Economics technician	859	24.5	18
IT technician	832	25.3	11
Logistics technician	650	19.2	13
Mechatronics technician	276	8.1	11
Advertising technician	173	5.1	9
Trading technician	121	3.6	16
Electronics technician	116	3.4	12
Forwarding technician	104	3.1	13
ICT technician	103	3.0	17
Mechanical technician	83	2.4	8
Digital graphic processes technician	53	1.6	13
Electrical technician	23	0.7	2

The research questionnaire was composed of two main parts. The first reflected information on the sample respondents (gender, age, profession, localization of secondary technical school, year of graduating). The second included preference questions concerning work environment, based on a five-point Likert Scale. Questions included:

- Q1. Prefer individual work (1) – Prefer group work (5).
- Q2. Prefer to work with a Polish group (1) – Prefer work with an international group (5).
- Q3. Prefer to work in the enterprise's office (1) – Prefer remote work (5).
- Q4. Prefer a structured eight-hour workday schedule (1) – Prefer a task-based work schedule (5).
- Q5. Prefer a good atmosphere at work (1) – Prefer higher pay (5).
- Q6. I am passionate about my work (1) – I just put my time in at work (5).
- Q7. Prefer to work in an innovative enterprise (1) – Prefer to work in a traditional enterprise (5).

The questions were drawn from the literature discussed earlier, specifically addressing the critical requirements of Generation Z as well as the work environment. Generation Z, for example, likes new technologies (Roblek et al., 2019), and this is reflected in the innovative or traditional company item. Similarly, the young cohort's work atmosphere vs. salary preference (Kodithuwakku et al., 2018) is also included. Other factors have more to do with work adjustment and organizational environment.

STUDY RESULTS

The study results are presented in several steps, both here and in the discussion. We first show the summary statistics, looking for differences between genders and the intended professions (IT, logistics, economics, and mechatronics). We then consider the correlation matrix for each group, and, finally, suggest a person-organizational fit model based on the context of these results (Polish secondary school students). The results from the overall analysis showed a linear correlation coefficient $p < 0.05$, Cronbach's Alpha index of 0.645, and standardized Alpha of 0.609.

Step 1: Mean values by group

As noted, we initially studied the summary statistics from the questionnaire results, broken down by gender and the four professions. The intention was to identify clearly visible differences in the responses of these groups, enhancing the later analysis.

The results are graphically presented in the spiderweb diagram in figure 1, illustrating the average values of each workplace characteristic, overall and divided by group. We can see some readily apparent differences between the professions, the most obvious between IT professionals (Computer Technicians) and Economics. The biggest disparity is seen in work location. Here, the results show that Economics students have a stronger preference for working in the enterprise's office, while IT students are more open to working remotely. The second clear difference is between 8-hour work and task-based work, with Economics students preferring the former and IT students the latter. Further, IT students are more comfortable with an international workgroup, while Economists more prefer to work with domestic colleagues. Slightly smaller differences are seen in the other results between IT workers and Economists, and the preferences of the other professions fit somewhere in between and are not as dramatically different.

Gender differences are also visible. Women have a stronger preference for a good atmosphere and domestic colleagues. Women also have a preference for onsite work and eight-hour days. Men's preferences have apparent differences specifically in terms of salary, individual work, and international colleagues. As indicated, they also have a stronger preference for remote work and task-based schedules. These differences provide initial guidance for the person-organization fit recommendations.

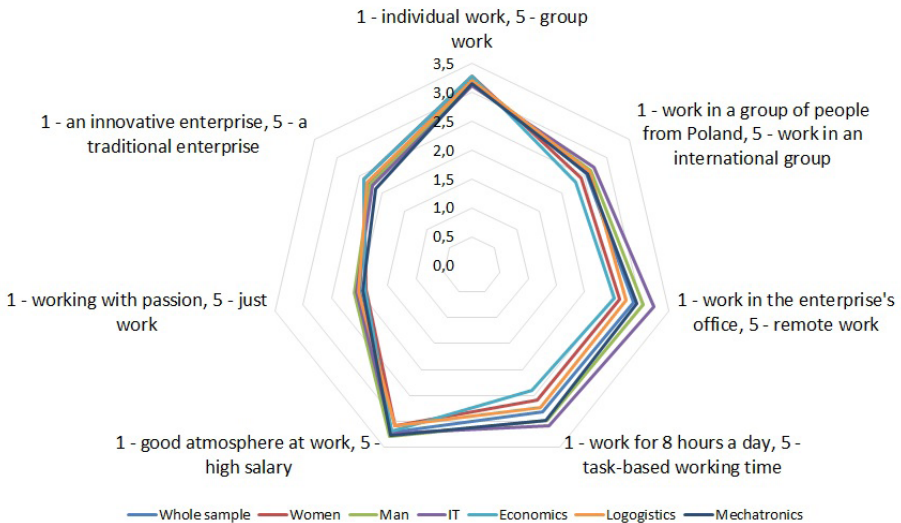


Figure 1. Generation Z mean workplace results, overall and by group

Step 2: Analysis of correlation

Next, we conducted a correlation analysis between the seven questionnaire items, again broken down by gender and intended profession. Table 1 presents the overall Gen Z correlation matrix as well as the results for males and females. Table 2 shows the results for the four courses of study: computer technician, economist, logistics technician, and mechatronics technician. As can be seen, the analysis can provide guidance on differences in workplace preferences between all these groups. Relationships significant at the 95% confidence level ($p < .05$) are identified with an asterisk. The significant correlations with values above 0,200 are further summarized in Figures 2 and 3.

Table 2. Correlation matrix general for Generation Z, man and women

Group analysis	Question no.	Standard deviation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
GENERAL FOR GENERATION Z	Q1	1.2953	1.0000						
	Q2	1.3359	0.0752*	1.0000					
	Q3	1.3407	-0.0044	0.2741*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.4718	0.0318	0.2934*	0.4210*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.2892	0.0317	0.1840*	0.2199*	0.1774*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.2692	0.1214*	0.2054*	0.2192*	0.2279*	0.3491*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.2446	0.1321*	0.0513*	0.1321*	0.0969*	0.1447	0.4342	1.0000
MEN	Q1	1.2408	1.0000						
	Q2	1.2992	0.0925*	1.0000					
	Q3	1.2655	-0.0077	0.2351*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.4131	0.0172	0.2750*	0.3844*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.2057	0.0383	0.1689*	0.1916*	0.1185*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.2517	0.1087*	0.1773*	0.1382*	0.1525*	0.3202*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.1775	0.1118*	0.0732*	0.1264*	0.0910*	0.1230*	0.4665*	1.0000
WOMEN	Q1	1.3692	1.0000						
	Q2	1.3791	0.0612*	1.0000					
	Q3	1.4084	0.0130	0.3055*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.5257	0.0621*	0.3020*	0.4405*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.3938	0.0312	0.1916*	0.2333*	0.2290*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.2843	0.1470*	0.2314*	0.3020*	0.3091*	0.3765*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.3327	0.1516*	0.0346	0.1609*	0.1219*	0.1796*	0.4100*	1.0000

Note: * Coefficients with an asterisk are significant from $p < 0.05$.

Table 3. Correlation matrix for computer, economics, logistics, and mechatronics technician

Group analysis	Question no.	Standard deviation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
COMPUTER TECHNICIAN	Q1	1.2130	1.0000						
	Q2	1.2730	0.0466	1.0000					
	Q3	1.2032	-0.0869*	0.2169*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.3770	-0.0566	0.2597*	0.3831*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.1668	-0.0191	0.1993*	0.1554*	0.0832*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.1921	0.0963*	0.1472*	0.1032*	0.1000*	0.2664*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.1230	0.1000*	0.0213	0.0987*	0.0152	0.1135*	0.4766*	1.0000
ECONOMICS TECHNICIAN	Q1	1.3238	1.0000						

Group analysis	Question no.	Standard deviation	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
	Q2	1.3143	0.0384	1.0000					
	Q3	1.3491	0.0607	0.2827*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.4511	0.0871*	0.2845*	0.4761*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.3610	0.0339	0.1959*	0.2200*	0.2240*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.2578	0.1062*	0.2247*	0.3022*	0.3031*	0.3598*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.2793	0.0990*	0.0500	0.1514*	0.1466*	0.1030*	0.3408*	1.0000
LOGISTICS TECHNICIAN	Q1	1.3722	1.0000						
	Q2	1.3875	0.0861*	1.0000					
	Q3	1.4353	0.0435	0.3200*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.5413	0.0334	0.2949*	0.3799*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.3811	0.0428	0.1404*	0.2603*	0.2094*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.3222	0.1245*	0.1728*	0.2067*	0.2236*	0.3339*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.3084	0.1533*	0.0313	0.1773*	0.1177*	0.1624*	0.4744*	1.0000
MECHATRONICS TECHNICIAN	Q1	1.1749	1.0000						
	Q2	1.2905	0.0250	1.0000					
	Q3	1.1856	0.0575	0.1741*	1.0000				
	Q4	1.3055	-0.0015	0.2354*	0.3344*	1.0000			
	Q5	1.1292	0.1250*	0.1569*	0.3027*	0.1984*	1.0000		
	Q6	1.1155	0.1617*	0.2133*	0.2280*	0.1786*	0.3005*	1.0000	
	Q7	1.1262	0.0143	0.1593*	0.0729	0.1515*	0.0877	0.4604*	1.0000

Note: * Coefficients with an asterisk are significant from $p < 0.05$.

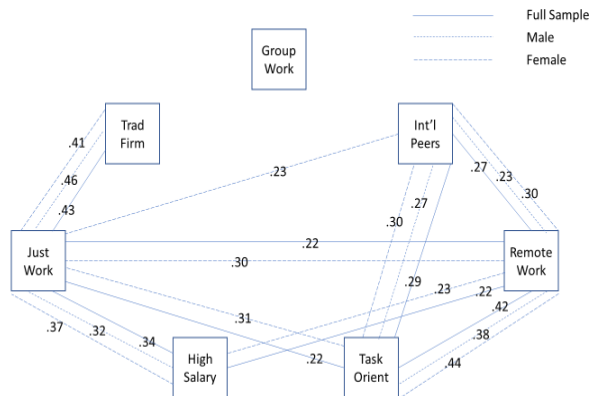


Figure 2. Correlation of Generation Z students' workplace preferences, by gender

As illustrated (Figure 2), numerous significant correlations are apparent between preferred workplace environment for all of Generation Z respondents and for both genders. All of the significant correlations are positive. The most significant correlation for the full sample is seen between passion (Q6) and innovative firm (Q7) and is somewhat isolated. A slightly lower correlation is then found between remote work (Q3) and task-based work (Q4), a result that makes up something of a pod with nearly as high correlations with each variable and prefer international (Q2). Similarly, task-based is moderately correlated with high salary (Q5) and slightly less with just work (Q6), though the latter two are only weakly related. The core takeaway is that passion/just work (Q6) is correlated with a number of the other items (though not always in the expected way) as is remote work (Q3).

The results are much the same for the different genders. Male respondents are similar in the main results, with the strongest correlation between innovative firm (Q7) and passion (Q6), and then a slightly less apparent relationship between remote work (Q3) and task orientation (Q4). There is again something of a pod with interrelationships between remote, task, and international (Q2, Q3, Q4), but not as evident as a full grouping between task, high salary and just work (Q4, Q5, Q6). For the female respondents, the main correlations are even more similar to those of the full sample, with the same relationships and groupings. What is different is that the level of correlation tends to be a little higher in many of the relationships and noticeably higher than the male respondents in almost all instances. There is also an additional correlation between international coworkers (Q2) and just work (Q6) that is not substantive enough to report in the full sample or with the males.

Unsurprisingly, the correlation patterns are similar for the sub-samples by intended profession although, once again there are some apparent differences between the groups. Table 3 shows the correlation matrix while Figure 3 illustrates the most substantive significant relationships. As noted earlier, these programs of study are the most popular in the Wielkopolska Region technical schools. For Computer Technicians, like the overall sample, the most significant correlation is between passion (Q6) and innovative firm (Q7). There is also a similar pod of related items amongst international colleagues (Q2), remote work (Q3) and task orientation (Q4), especially between the latter two. The only other apparent relationship, at a low level (.26) is seen between atmosphere (Q5) and passion (Q6).

For the Economists, on the other hand, considerably more substantive correlations are apparent. Here, the highest correlation is between remote work (Q3) and task orientation (Q4) which again form a clear pod in their relationships with international colleagues (Q2). Passion (Q6) and innovative firm (Q7) are correlated though not to the same degree as in all the other professions, the

genders, or the full sample. The economists do have the second pod apparent, with noticeable interrelationships between task orientation (Q4), high pay (Q5), and just work (Q6). There is also a slight correlation between remote and just work that is not noticeable in most of the other subsets.

Logistics Technicians follow the standard pattern. The highest correlation is between passion (Q6) and innovative firm (Q7). The international (Q2), remote (Q3), and task orientation (Q4) pod is apparent, with moderate correlations between all three variables, as is the task orientation (Q4), good atmosphere (Q5), and just pay (Q6) pod though with lower correlations.

Mechatronics Technicians also adhere to the pattern though generally at lower correlations, with some not high enough to be included. Again, the obvious connection is with passion (Q6) and innovative firm (Q7). The international (Q2), remote (Q3), and task orientation (Q4) pod does not quite present itself as the Q2/Q4 correlation is lower than what we have been including. The other pod does not really form at all, with only the good atmosphere (Q5) and just pay (Q6) apparent. There are a couple of unique correlations, though at relatively low levels, between remote work (Q3) and atmosphere (Q5), as well as remote and just work (Q6).

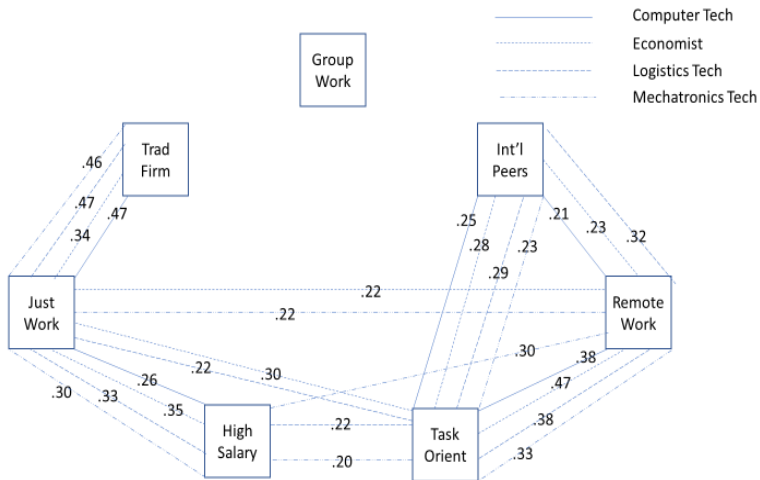


Figure 3. Correlation of Generation Z students' workplace preferences, by profession

Generally, there is a clear overall pattern in the data, with strong preferences in the expected direction for all variables. Gen Z students desire group work and international colleagues, and strongly desire remote work,

task-based work, a high salary, working at something they are passionate about, and working at an innovative firm. This pattern does not vary much by gender or professions sub-groups.

The correlations apparent in the data suggest a more complicated story. At the full sample level, there is a relatively high correlation between pursuing a passion and working at an innovative firm. There is also an apparent connection between working with international colleagues, in a remote manner, and with task orientation. At a lesser level, there are some relationships between just putting in time at work, a high salary, and task orientation. Within these general patterns, there are clear distinctions among gender and among the four intended professions. Some have stronger or weaker correlations but still mirror the general pattern. Others have weaker correlations, weak enough that we do not include them in the discussion and so the relationships essentially disappear. Others have stronger correlations, enabling some relationships to appear that are not visible in other sub-groups or in the overall sample.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Step 3: Designing a person-organization fit framework for Generation Z

These findings can be incorporated as we construct a person-organization fit model for Generation Z. In Figure 4, a suggested model is presented, including items from the literature and previous studies (*How to communicate to motivate the generation of Millennials*, 2018) and as informed by the study. It includes two groups of factors, on the organizational side and on the personal side.

This entire study is based on the evidence that the Gen Z cohort may be very different from its predecessors, the Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y. The results confirm some of the unique tendencies of Gen Z detailed in the literature (e.g. Southgate, 2017) including in identified areas of interest such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ployhart et al., 2014). This new generation entering the workforce will have different characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, motivators, and other tendencies including but not limited to those included in this study. As demonstrated in this research, there will also be differences in terms of gender (male, female, and perhaps groups not identifying with either) and intended profession, which can be further described as the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during education. As illustrated, for example, women have a stronger preference for a good atmosphere, work they feel passionate about, and with colleagues from their own country. The

men rate somewhat higher on desire for a high salary, task-orientation, more individual work, and collaborating with international colleagues. Similarly, the relationship between task orientation and remote work is apparent for all professions but is considerably stronger for Economists, particularly so when compared to Mechatronics Technicians. Or there is a weak correlation between remote work and just getting work done for the Logistics and Mechatronic Technicians but that correlation does not appear for the Computer Technicians and Economists.

Other factors, some apparent in the survey and some related, include motivators, individuality, and work environment. Gen Z appears to be motivated, at least to some degree by salary and other compensation, as shown in the results. Beyond monetary compensation, we know that pursuing passions can be a motivator for some, and finding opportunities to support causes such as environmental sustainability is important for large groups of this cohort. In terms of individuality, although Gen Z is comfortable with working in groups, there are those that prefer remote work and/or the opportunity to complete tasks on their own schedule and in their own manner. As with motivators, they want the opportunities to pursue their passions in the workplace. Moreover, the correlation results show that the inter-relationships between these variables are complex, so that those pursuing passions may or may not be those preferring remote work or group work assignments. The workplace environment is also a factor, including the work atmosphere, the nature of colleagues (local/international, etc.) and whether tied to an office or not. Other factors include communication preferences, as the Gen Z cohort has grown up with new communication technologies, including digital media, which did not exist for prior generations. Indeed, communicating with Gen Z using traditional technologies may be ineffective. Finally, working environments may be more or less stable, including large or small workforces and traditional or innovative companies. Again, our results indicate variations in what appeals to Gen Z and complex correlations about which groups prefer which conditions. While some are drawn to stable, traditional companies with reliable compensation, others are more prone to innovative firms with less stable environments and outcomes.

On the organizational side, firms need to be true to their mission and values but will also want to adapt their processes and culture to attract Gen Z employees. As in the figure, these aspects can fall into several areas. Initially, in terms of the organizational environment, processes need to be geared to fit the new cohort's tendencies, as do work atmosphere and motivators/demotivators.

In the first case, organizational processes should be reviewed with an eye to Gen Z tendencies and preferences. This could include operations or

marketing and sales, support activities such as human resources or finance and accounting, or other aspects of the business. In recruitment and selection, for example, transparency and appropriate communication can be important. Workplaces need to be accurately described, the value proposition of the work communicated, and recruiting requests delivered in attention-grabbing (social media) and engaging (recruitment games) ways (Szafranski, 2017). Interviews still remain critical, as is timely and supportive feedback for both successful and unsuccessful candidates. A relevant and stakeholder-oriented mission with associated values would be necessary to attract the attention of these candidates.

The work atmosphere may also need attention in order to appeal to Gen Z. The rigidity of the organization (partly reflected in the traditional/innovative firm scores) could be softened, and these workers may be less interested in the stability of a particular job or even holding an ongoing position in the company. Gen Z has explicit preferences for a more diverse and inclusive work environment (again, partially reflected in the results showing the appeal of international colleagues). And recognizing individual differences in background such as gender, ethnicity, and so forth are obviously a required organizational competency made clear in the survey results. On the other hand, the survey responses demonstrated that a desire for a “good atmosphere” could be overcome by a higher salary, so some traditionally valued aspects of work life might not be as desired by this new generational cohort. Which means that in terms of motivators and demotivators for Gen Z the level of salary seems important, as do similar aspects of compensation including benefits, availability of loans, access to in-kind benefits (e.g. wellness programs), and so forth. Even so, it is also important to understand Gen Z values compensation as a means to achieving dreams rather than as an objective measuring stick.

A related aspect of the organization that matters in the person-organization fit is its tolerance of a worker’s desire for flexibility in their work assignments and lives. Very clear from the results is a general but not universal desire for group work vs. individual as well as for task-oriented assignments rather than standardized eight-hour workdays and for remote work rather than an office environment. The high result for questions 3 and 4, and the strong correlation of these items (remote, task) with other Gen Z associated variables points to the strength of this factor.

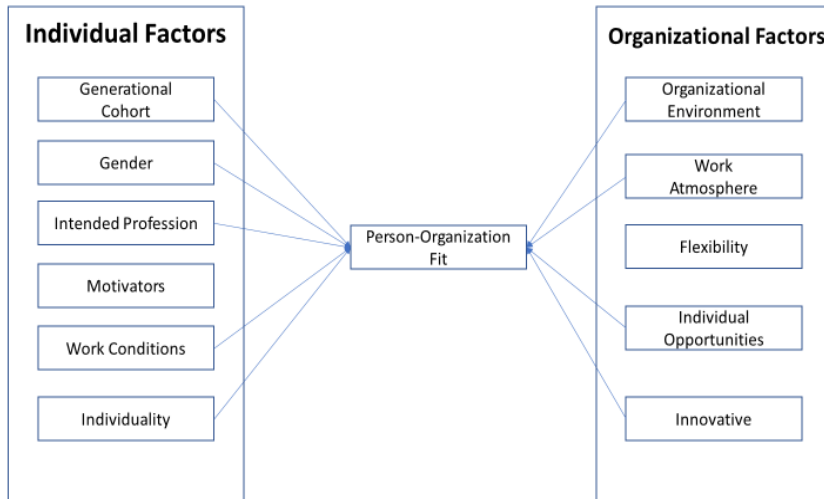


Figure 4. Person-Organization Fit Framework for Generation Z

A fourth aspect of the organization to be considered in relation to Generation Z is the opportunity for individual contributions. This can be related to group/individual work preferences but not necessarily. Even individuals who like and excel in working in groups can look for opportunities to get ahead. From the literature, we know Gen Z values situations lending themselves to individual growth. From the literature and also implicit in a number of the survey items are characteristics related to entrepreneurship, finding creative solutions to business problems. Organizations that can provide opportunities for personal growth, mentoring to help with the process, transparency in terms of progress, and similar characteristics will better appeal to Gen Z.

Finally, the survey responses show a very clear preference for innovative firms rather than traditional. As throughout this discussion, this result is related to those previously covered, being an aspect of hierarchy, processes, flexibility, and such. Different ways of doing things, including innovation, processes, communication, and related aspects of the firm appeal to Gen Z and, again, come out in many of the ways already discussed.

In short, the survey confirms, explains, and extends much of what we know from the literature about the Generation Z cohort. There are clear generational differences, including the cultural and lifestyle factors associated with growing up today. But these differences are not universal and vary by gender and intended profession as well as by individual characteristics. In order to appeal to this diverse generation, organizations need to think about the structure, culture, and atmosphere of the entity. Probably most

importantly, firms will need to provide considerable flexibility in what they offer to this diverse generation with diverse needs and wants.

CONCLUSIONS

Person-organization (PO) fit models have a lengthy history dating to O'Reilly III et al. (1991). The topic remains relevant today as the subject of continued scholarly attention (Lau, et al., 2017; Afsar & Badir, 2015; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1996). Employee competencies can be a competitive advantage for companies, particularly in the geographical region covered by this paper (Goliński & Miądowicz, 2019), and those advantages will be more sustainable if employee and organization fit well together, if employees are satisfied and organization see enhanced returns.

Schneider's (1987) Attraction–Selection–Attrition Framework relates hiring to organizational goals, themselves affected by organizational culture aspects such as values, norms, behavior patterns, symbols, rituals, artefacts, rites, and rewards (Kirill, 2013). Ethical hiring practices (Smith et al., 2018) would be in line with the organizational culture as well as financial, legal, social and personal variables, and other environmental factors. Appropriate consideration of these factors can improve the fit from the organizational side but does fail to include other potential variables such as generational differences, gender, and profession.

Our results, of course, are limited to their context, Poland and the Wielkopolska region. While perhaps applicable to other locations, the actual fit of this model to other circumstances would need to be confirmed by additional research. Further, the individual and organizational factors in this PO Fit model may not be the only important aspects in relation to Gen Z. These were the preliminary areas for study identified in previous literature and so were included in this study, but this limited framework may be incomplete. Again, future research may uncover other pertinent values on the employee side and important competencies on which organizations may need to focus.

Similar work has also been done on the match between knowledge management and organizational culture (Rai, 2011). Employees individually possess unique knowledge, sometimes referred to in the literature as knowledge, skills, and abilities. How the firm configures work routines, relationships and formal exchanges, provides openings for using employee insights, and encourages knowledge sharing, teamwork, collaboration, empowerment, and participative decision-making can have a considerable impact on whether employees feel their knowledge is valued or not. Employee motivation to share their knowledge for the benefit of the firm is critical to

knowledge management success (Asrar-ul-Haq & Anwar, 2016) and can lead to higher levels of organizational performance (Charband & Navimipour, 2016).

Finally, the human resources function itself must fit the needs of both the organization and the individual (Kim & Wang, 2016). Hiring and retaining the right employees will strengthen the organizational culture and increase job satisfaction. Consequently, HR tasks such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, and compensation also need to be part of the PO fit. These aspects should also take generation, gender, and profession into account.

Putting all of these pieces together into this research project enabled us to study PO fit in a specific context and include the sometimes-overlooked variables. The Wielkopolska Region has 3.5 million inhabitants and a low unemployment rate of only 3%. Workers are in high demand and hiring is extremely competitive. While uniquely suited to this type of research, the results could be different in other economic, geographic, and social conditions. Consequently, there are clear limitations to the research results but also considerable opportunities for further research.

This study of almost 3400 technical students sheds light on a specific application of the Person-Organization Fit model with particular attention to the young Generation Z cohort now moving into the workforce. The study confirmed many of the expected preferences of Gen Z, including group work, remote work, task-based work, high salary, working at something for which one has a passion, and working for an innovative firm. We were also able to identify differences in these preferences based on gender (male/female) and profession (computer technician, economist, logistics technician, mechatronics technician). In addition, the study established correlations between sets of preferences. A preference for international colleagues, remote work, and task-based work, for example, was a clear relationship in the results though the strength of the correlations and, in some cases, whether a correlation was significant at all again varied noticeably by gender and profession.

The conclusion, in terms of the PO Fit framework, is that Gen Z expects different things from organizations and, further, displays variety in its desire for those things. Fortunately, some differ by variables that can be identified. But organizations and HR departments in particular need to be able to engineer some flexibility into their appeals to younger workers while still fulfilling expectations about speed and type of communication, transparency, organizational values, and so forth. Consequently, our adaptation of the PO Fit model illustrates some of the pertinent individual variables from our study and the literature matched with the corporate capabilities that will be important in creating the required fit expected by the new generational cohort.

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Abstrakt

Publikowane wyniki badań odnoszą się do modelu dopasowania osoby do organizacji opracowanego w oparciu o unikalne cechy nowej grupy pokoleniowej, Generacji Z, wchodzącej obecnie na rynek pracy. Źródła literaturowe wskazują, że przewaga konkurencyjna może być budowana w oparciu o unikalny w danej organizacji kapitał ludzki, który zatrudnia i rozwija. Wyniki pionierskich badań pozwalają na wypełnienie luki badawczej i wnioskowanie w kontekście kultury osobowo-organizacyjnej pokolenia Z wchodzącego na rynek pracy. Kluczowe pytania, na które autorzy artykułu odpowiadają, opisując model dopasowania osoby z pokolenia Z do organizacji, to między innymi atrakcyjność kultury organizacyjnej dla mężczyzn i kobiet z młodego pokolenia. Wyniki badań przeprowadzono w trzech etapach: analiza czynników środowiska pracy dla pokolenia Z wpływających na kulturę organizacyjną, analiza korelacji między czynnikami środowiska pracy wymaganymi przez przedstawicieli młodego pokolenia Z, prezentacja struktury dopasowania osoby reprezentującej pokolenie

Z do organizacji. Na podstawie próby 3393 uczniów szkół średnich w Wielkopolsce i wyników zebranych z kwestionariusza ankiet dostarczono dowodów preferencji miejsca pracy dla tej grupy. W Wielkopolsce pokolenie Z ma różne indywidualne potrzeby, z których niektóre można łatwo zidentyfikować (płeć, zawód), ale niektóre mogą być mniej jasne. Wyniki badań mogą posłużyć w praktyce do projektowania atrakcyjnych miejsc pracy z uwzględnieniem potrzeb organizacyjnych młodych osób. W oparciu o te nowatorskie badania, organizacje zatrudniające osoby z pokolenia Z będą lepiej przygotowane do budowania długotrwałej relacji współpracy z młodymi osobami, prezentacji tego, co mają do zaoferowania oraz elastyczności dopasowywania warunków pracy do wyróżniających się osób z pokolenia Z.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura organizacji, pokolenie Z, gen Z, zasoby ludzkie

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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