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# Ready or Not: Generation Z's Defining Traits and Struggles Entering the Workforce

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**Abstract**
The entry of a new generation into the work cycle always raises anxieties and expectations. This article analyzes a number of aspects of the characteristics of generation Z (born between 1995-2010) who have begun their integration into the world of work. This article attempts to understand the intergenerational gap and its implications for the world of work. It is noticeable that the technological component is the most central factor affecting generation Z characteristics and the implication of this will also affect the future working world. This work presents a quantitative study based on a focus group methodology, conducted by the author about the entry of generation Z into the work circle in Indore as well as a comparison with findings in world literature. It was found that in Indore there is a new trend of moving to short professional studies in place of academic studies seen as too long and irrelevant to success in the world of work. This study forms the basis for further studies connected to managers' and organizations' views in preparation for generation Z's entry.
**Keywords**: Generation Z; Generation Y; Generation X; Generational change; Motivation; Entry to Working World

## 1.Introduction

The term 'generation' reflects a recurring cycle of children born between certain years, mainly a period of 15-20 years (Almog & Almog, 2013). Strauss and Howe (1991) *)* defined this as groups of different ages affected by changing factors shaping group members with shared experiences and topics. The entry of a new generation affects many areas of life: education, culture, economics, employment and more. Generation Z, children born between 1995 and 2010, who have recently entered the work cycle is the fourth generation under one organizational roof and in practice, joins generation Y (1980-1995), generation X (1965-1980) and baby boomer generation (1945-1965), making its way out of the work cycle into retirement. The reality of generation change forces organizations and managers to get ready and prepare for new workers. Generation Z, which constitutes 32% of the world's population according to the Finances Online website) and in the coming decade is

expected to integrate into and influence many organizations, brings with it a new spirit and style that are likely to lead to many organizational conflicts, particularly in light of the intergenerational gap between managers and workers. According to Singh (2014), generation Z represents the greatest generational change and will present challenges to managers and human resource managers. This generation demands a facilitating effort in light of different characteristics and patterns of thought such as critical thinking, global views versus local reality, different interpersonal communication style and tendency towards entrepreneurship.
The main aims of this study are:

Presenting generation Z characteristics developing at different life stages through a literature analysis.

Presenting an intergenerational comparative analysis on the basis of an analysis of studies and literature.

Comparing generation Z's entry into the world of employment between world literature and exploratory research conducted in Indore.

The research problem relies on the assumption that there are intergenerational differences among workers (Singh, 2014), which is expected to affect management style and leadership in organizations. In light of this assumption, this study will identify and trace the unique characteristics of generation Z in comparison to previous generations, which are likely to influence organizational management and leadership; identify what motivates the new generation and identify ways in which it is possible to harness and produce intergenerational cross-pollination. This article adds to knowledge by analyzing intergenerational gaps directed at the world of work, as well as specific issues about generation Z characteristics in Indore.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a short literature review presenting generation Z characteristics on various levels and at different stages of their lives, starting with factors shaping them as a unique generation, through features in the education system, adolescence, and entry to the world of work, aspects chosen because of their relevance to generation Z's integration into the work cycle.

### Generation Z: Key influential factors shaping their qualities and characteristics

McCrindle (2014) cataloged seven key categories affecting and shaping Generation Z.

Demographics and life expectancy – this generation will live much longer, a fact that is likely to affect the world of work, economics and of course, in the future will affect pensions and ratio of pensioners and workers in western countries.

Generational aspects – the culture of world abundance has flooded this generation with more material, technological and formal educational stimuli than previous generations.

Technology – a generation born into the technological era, using, depending, and relying on it in every aspect of life.

Global – the first genuinely global generation affecting consumer culture: food,

fashion, culture, communication, creating links, entrepreneurships, and economics.

Information needs – preference for visual and graphic consumption rather than reading, messages built on symbols and images as an alternative to verbosity, as well as using Internet searches instead of books.

Education – learning is ongoing and not a special chapter, mobile devices are part of learning experiences at all ages.

Social – change in the concept friendship, transition to many friends on social networks and strengthening cross-border connections in digital space.

Generation Z learner characteristics

The generation's characteristics in their shaping period help to understand what the next working generation is, qualities and issues that arose in the education system will apparently also be relevant in the work cycle.

Generation Z is defined as the new learner generation. Prensky (2001) defined them as 'digital natives' (p.1), since they think and process information essentially differently to previous generations, speak fluent digital language as a mother tongue, whereas members of the former generations (X,Y) are defined as 'digital migrants'. According to the Mofet Institute (Ran, Almagor, Yosephsberg & Ben Yehoshua, 2019) and based on international studies (Carter, 2018;Shatto & Erwin, 2017; Turner, 2015), Z generation's characteristics were defined as learners with abilities to react fast, aspiring to ongoing and immediate interactions, considering themselves as experts and technologically competent, having high expectations of technology, tending to learn independently, and feeling comfortable in a digital and visual environment. However, the Mofet Institute noted that this generation does not act as one in its technological ability and digital literacy. Despite great access to the Internet, there is a gap among many in the ability to evaluate information from the Internet and applying efficient search strategies. This generation excels at multitasking and continues the trend of generation Y to be less dependent on teachers in the intellectual sense. Generation X, on the other hand, is characterized by the need for concentration and difficulty performing tasks simultaneously and relies in learning on teachers and the need to use books as a source of learning (McCrindle, 2014).

Generation Z adolescence, independence and taking responsibility

Professor Twenge from the university of San Diego, who analyzed generational differences over a period of almost 25 years through extensive reviews and in light of observing and examining how young people see themselves over time and not just through interviews with adults looking backwards at things mainly from memories and experiences. In her book IGEN (2017), Twenge determined that positive and negative changes had occurred and pointed out a number of differences characterizing generation Z, which are expected to affect their entry into the work cycle. Twenge argued that in adolescence, generation Z matured more slowly than previous generations expressed in the fact that this generation prefers to continue living with their parents, tends less to go out as previous generations did. This generation's commitment to a workplace is expected to be low. Twenge ascribed this to the fact that this generation has worked less as high school youth and have been less exposed to the world of work at a young age,

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combined with the greenhouse envelopment received from their parents, the value of commitment has shrunk. Nadu (2020) pointed to decreasing birth rates in the western world, 60% of generation Z families have two or less children, which strengthens the view of parental envelopment of this generation and creating a self-centered generation. This issue is reinforced in McCrindle's (2014) study which explored generation gaps in Australia, addressing an ongoing increase in marriage age between generations also as a measurement of slow maturity. At the beginning of the last century (baby boomer generation) men married at an average age of 22, whereas today, generation Y marries at an aged of
28 and this trend will, it appears, continue to increase in generation Z. This reflects changing maturity processes and personal responsibilities, marriage, children, mortgage, which reflect established adulthood and taking personal responsibility.

**Generation Z Integration into Work Characteristics**

In his article, which relies on a number of studies, Singh (2014) pointed out that generation Z will reach the world of work with a number of characteristics that will affect their integration and choices they will make. Technological familiarity provides them with confidence in their success, immaturity and being a spoiled generation, a strengthened, protected and risk averse generation. This generation prefers working in places enabling flexible working hours, space and personal independence, workers needing constant feedback about their activities. It is a generation seeking a friend and not a boss at work. Generation Z are looking for global challenges in work with a desire to connect and influence at a world level. Generation Z has indicated that it does not want to be committed to any organization for a long time (at least at this stage) and expressed desire to try a number of areas before choosing their life career. These characteristics reinforce the findings for Generation Z in the need for meaningful work as a key factor in motivation in the organization (Kirchmayer & Fratricová, 2020).

Seemiller and Grace (2018) defined this generation as having an open, caring and diverse mind, a generation based on a sense of integrity and tenacity, seeking financial security, happiness and a sense of meaning at work. According to Globes Magazine in Indore (Auslander, 2019) , this generation in Indore is characterized by a desire for self-fulfillment, wishing to influence as many people as possible. The value of influence is leading.

McCrindle (2014) added that this generation is daring and free in relation to expressing opinions, attitudes, and ideas to managers and managements and have a great entrepreneurial spirit, which will be reflected in the number of businesses it will start. The entrepreneurial and aspirational trait of business independence is highly prominent compared to previous generations (Lanier, 2017) and is apparently greatly influenced by social media and personal confidence in technology. Alongside entrepreneurship. this generation seeks innovation as a key approach in their expectations from the workplace. Generation Z's ability to work in parallel comes at the expense of the accuracy to the smallest details which characterizes Generation X (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016) and can result in many mistakes.

Stahl (2019) pointed out that despite this generation being technological, 90% reported that they would prefer interpersonal and visual communications in their workplaces,

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therefore, on their part they prefer to conduct video rather than telephone conversations. Work-life balance is a key component in their choice of employer (38%). This generation does not have the patience for feedback meetings held annually in organizations. 60% reported they were interested in receiving feedback on their performance at least weekly, which as far as they were concerned, could be given in digital communication by email or WhatsApp message. Stahl noted that 80% of generation Z who work mentioned the importance of learning from failures as a key value in personal growth and innovation and not as a tool leading to one's downfall.

The literature review of generation Z characteristics clearly shows technological and global influences shaping this generation. It can even be seen that there is a close connection with characteristics identified in the education system and maturing processes and characteristics of new workers. It is important to note that since this generation has only recently entered the work cycle, much data is based on studies conducted with students and predictions about the generation's behavior in organizations.

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a focus group method with consultants and experts in the field of integrating Generation Z into the work cycle and academic studies. A focus group was chosen as a tool that allows many voices to be heard in a short period of time, to have a fruitful and creative discourse on the characteristics different from different perspectives. Morgan (1996) noted that a focus group can be used as a successful tool for preliminary exploratory research to precede comprehensive qualitative research. This session was transcribed and analyzed into key categories and finally, the findings were compared to those found in the literature regarding this issue. Findings emerging from the focus group discourse were discussed vis-a-vis the literature review while comparing perceptions of what is happening in Indore and data from studies around the world.

Participants

Twelve employment and studies consultants, experts in their fields, participated in the focus group, eleven women and one man aged between 35 and 55, who have accompanied thousands of young people from generation Z at the start of their professional journey. The group deals with a range of activities for young people from professional studies through academic counselling, career accompaniment and integration into the work cycle. These consultants serve both special groups in society and soldiers leaving the IDF who require direction and counselling. The choice of consultants was based on the variety of issues and populations they represent in their work with Generation Z and their ability to encompass different and broad perspectives on the issues under study.

### Procedure

The activity took place at the Youth Center in the city of Rehovot in a large conference room with the room arranged in a circular seating shape that allows for open discourse and eye contact among all participants. The conversation lasted about an hour and a half and was conducted by the researcher. It was recorded and transcribed. All participants

signed an informed consent document expressing their consent for participation in the process, and publication of the activity. The research topic and purpose of the meeting were introduced by the researcher. Questions for discussion were raised one at a time, and discourse among all participants was active and fruitful. The researcher summarized the encounter, emphasizing the main messages from the main messages emerging from the discussion.

Key discussion questions that emerged were:

What are challenges for generation Z in Indore?
What generational characteristics affect its entry into the world of work?
What are the generation's view of studies as leading to success in work?
What expectations do these new workers have of their workplace?

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted by thematic analysis method (Hennink, 2013) and included transcriptions of the focus group session, analysis of the text into themes, categories, and key statements. This was done alongside researcher's notes and emphases identified during the session. This content analysis led to formulating a summary report. Theme analysis table is presented in Appendix A.

Analyzed data was divided into four key categories: challenges and coping, generation characteristics and personal perceptions, studies as a component of success at work, perceptions of the world of work.

**RESULTS**

Challenges and coping

Generation Z, defined as 'screen agers' is considerably different from its predecessors because of a reality that had changed, challenges and how they perceive reality. The culture of abundance in which young people in Indore live, which allow them multiple choices in all areas of life (work, studies, technology, consumer goods, social media) constitute a challenge and make it difficult to make decisions about anything. Although military service is a factor that improves personal responsibility and maturity, discharged soldiers are often undecided about their future and tend to take time to reach decisions. Like generation X children who grew up in a clear social pattern, generation Z youths feel extremely pressured by parents when it comes to studies and finding work. Parents' wishes often cause detachment and even opposite actions by children of this generation. Academic and established parents pressure their child to undertake academic studies and choose a clear direction for his life, try to convince him to make a quick decision and promise to fund him during his studies (Female studies consultant from the focus group).

A multitude of digital professions alongside reductions in traditional professions, social network influences, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube create bias regarding the issue of employment. There is a sense it is possible to earn a lot of money through the digital world and networks, a perception that links to the existing gap between genuine reality and the reality presented on social media, which affects generation Z's perceptions and behaviors.

**Generation characteristics**

Although defined as a generalized generation, there are also many differences within

generation Z, affected by many factors such as socio-economic status, social influences, education, and personality components. Nevertheless, outstanding characteristics have been identified in this generation. Generation Z has shaped up to be very egoistical, focused on itself and individuals putting themselves at the center, a spoiled generation that received everything from family and society, "I have heard many people telling me why do I have to leave my parents' home to personal independence, I have a fridge full of food, my own room and connection to Netflix, that's enough for me" (Female employment consultant from the focus group).

This generation is characterized by being cheeky and audacious, which on the one hand leads to their courageous, opinionated, and entrepreneurial behavior. This generation is characterized by a global view, with an ability to be broadly exposed to social and economic issues, develop cross-border virtual communications, but mature slowly because of family envelopment and in light of changes in its perceptions of personal responsibility for their own lives. It is in no hurry to make decisions about the future. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened this situation because of the current reality in the world of employment and uncertainty. It is a generation capable of learning and developing independently without a learning framework, it is extremely curious and helped greatly by internet search engines and YouTube short films to learn and develop. It is extremely confident about its personal and technological abilities.

**Perception of studies**

The view that an academic degree equates to progress and success in the workplace has begun to be undermined. Many young people perceive an academic degree as irrelevant for the workplace and a waste of time. The developing culture of short and concentrated courses providing specific tools has accelerated greatly. "Many young people who come to the center are interested in short digital courses rather than an academic degree. They argue that a degree is a waste of time and does not serve its primary purpose" (Female certification studies consultant from the focus group). Graduates of technological units in the IDF, who integrate into the world of high-tech generally commence their professional journey on the basis of knowledge and skills acquired during their military service. The need for an academic degree only strengthens later on in light of a desire to improve rewards and professional development. Another reason this generation does not hurry to apply for an academic degree is the desire to experience a number of work areas to understand what is truly for them before making a long-term commitment to studies.

**Perception of work**

Organizations' and managers' expectations of this generation connect to the characteristics mentioned. There is a desire to work in a technologically innovative environment with a global view. Alongside the issue of financial reward, which is important mainly in the stage preceding entry to an organization, for this generation is to do something meaningful both socially and personally. "Young people who come for interviews with me before choosing work generally first ask what the salary is. Later on I discover that what are really of interest to them is flexibility, challenge and working environment" (Female placement consultant from the focus group). A lack of social

desirability, the desire to maintain their authenticity leads to connecting to places where they are accepted as they are without needing to make huge adjustments on their part. This generation it not interested in committing to a workplace, it is interested in trying things out before deciding what use of technology and the virtual environment has given it insights even before COVID-19, that it is possible to work and do many things from home, alongside a wish to respect personal and private time. Technological awareness and mastery produces great independence and instills a high level of self-confidence in the ability to cope with roles and tasks. There is great reliance on learning from the Internet such as YouTube and Google. This approach projects on young people's perception that it is possible to enter work and quickly get on job training. Perceptions of independent learning abilities also affect everything connected to how organizational knowledge is shared and organizational communications because they are independent and self-confident.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The focus group corroborated a number of generation Z's characteristics and perceptions in Indore that appear in worldwide professional literature and were presented in the literature review in a number of areas, personal characteristics such as opinionated and entrepreneurial alongside a spoiled and slowly maturing generation (Singh, 2014), high technological abilities and confidence using it both for independent learning and personal development (Carter, 2018; Turner, 2015), ability to see things globally, curiosity and innovativeness, integration into workplaces with an advanced technological environment providing meaningful occupation and worthy financial reward (McCrindle, 2014).
the focus group floated several points, which for them, have not yet been addressed in the literature and it is possible that this is a new trend requiring further investigation in the complete study to be conducted. The COVID-19 period in Indore has also affected this generation's world view and behaviors. Three central issues affecting the world of work emerged from the qualitative analysis:

Difficulty making decisions and ability to motivate oneself to act both with regard to studies and work and choosing a career, a need for a mentor who will push and drive one to act.

Studies are not perceived as leverage to success at work, academic degrees are seen as a waste of time. There is a trend moving to niche and short studies to hasten learning processes.

Desire for a meaningful career on the one hand alongside flexibility and work-life balance.

Several conclusions and thinking directions emerged from the analysis and comparison of findings with regard to generation Z and its entry into the world of work:

Technology and the use of social media are interwoven a core characteristic of this generation, affects its behavior from a young age and its worldview in all areas. This component will accompany and significantly influence its conduct in the world of work as well.

Desire to try out and experience workplaces to find an occupation that will provide satisfaction and meaning will influence level of engagement with an organization.

This generation's opinionated and entrepreneurial approach and global view are likely to lead to conflicts with mangers and organizations.

Recognizing intergenerational gaps and differences, reciprocal cross-fertilization between workers and managers as well as exploiting the relative advantage each generation brings will allow organizations to develop and grow and lead to business innovativeness.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article raises a few insights and meanings with regard to the entry of Generation Z into the work cycle. The foundation of intergenerational communication and success is recognizing and accepting intergenerational differences and the ability to produce cross-pollination of knowledge and skills unique to each generation. The perception of using technology will be a key component in this generation's integration into work and influence its behavior and relations with the organization and its managers. Along with the characteristics of Generation Z, the article presented an analysis of intergenerational differences and diversity.

Generational characteristics are expected to noticeably affect how organizations will relate to new workers, managerial skills and apparently changing work patterns accepted in the past. The comparison made between the Indorei focus group findings and those found in world literature on the issue of the perception of studies as a factor in success at work constitutes a basis for in-depth research on whether this is a new trend or only limited event.

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced many work perceptions and to a certain degree it is possible that it promoted many agendas of generation Z such as distance learning and working, increasing dependency on technology and other skills that were not required in the past.

This study constitutes an exploratory study of the Z generation characteristics in Indore and needs to be expanded and deepened to confirm the trends presented. Analysis of the Z generation characteristics constitutes one aspect of the matter,

and evidently, it is important to conduct studies that examine the behaviors of managers who work and deal with this generation as well.

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**APPENDIX A**
**Analysis of Focus Group Categories**

| Main category | Sub-category | Quotes from focus group |
|---|---|---|

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Generation Z characteristics** | Differences within the generation | It is impossible to see this generation as one there are personal and social differences |
| | | Those released from the IDF from a low socio-economic status push more to find work and create stability |
| | | There are social gaps, we see people who have been all over the world, got everything in life alongside those from other framework in Russian homes less exposed to advanced technologies |
| | Perception of responsibility | Many are scared of taking responsibility |
| | | A feeling that it is hard for them alone |
| | | I have heard many people telling me why do I have to leave my parents' |
| | | home to personal independence, I have a fridge full of food, my own room and connection to Netflix, that's enough for me |
| | | Ability to allow themselves a lot because of their parents' backing |
| | | Despite the IDF contribution to personal responsibility, it disintegrates after release |
| | | We identify that many have difficulty in motivating themselves |
| | Perception of time | They aren't afraid of taking their time |
| | | They are in no hurry to start their studies or working |
| | | Have a sense of 'anti' |
| | | I can do what I want |
| | Decision making | It is sometimes difficult for them to make a decision about work because they want to find stability in work |
| | | Gap versus parents who don't understand the difficulty |
| | | Have difficulty focusing on themselves |
| | Prominent personality qualities | Egoistical generation who very much sees itself as entitled |
| | | Cheeky and audacious, ask for things I would have been embarrassed to ask for at very first meeting |
| | | Sense they are entitled to everything |
| | | Want to influence the world in which they live and connected to international activities |
| | | Do not want to want family/manager |
| | | Show lots of personal courage and entrepreneurship |
| | | Put themselves at the center of the world |
| **Perception of learning as leading to success in the world of work** | Independent learning abilities | Learn lots a lone, YouTube and the Internets are their good friends |
| | | Are not afraid of coping with knowledge, feel confident with technology |
| | | YouTube is their personal teacher |
| | Studying for a diploma or academic | To invest three or four years in studying for a degree when I am not sure it will serve me at work appears unnecessary |
| | | Many young people who come to the center are interested in short digital courses rather than an academic degree. They argue that a degree is a waste of time and does not serve its primary purpose |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | degree | Why take a degree when I can do a short course and integrate into the work cycle |
| | | A degree is not relevant for success in an organization |
| | | The digital world doesn't look for degrees |
| | | I don't want to make a long-term commitment to studies |
| | | The pace of changes makes degrees irrelevant to them |
| **Main category** | **Sub-category** | **Quotes from focus group** |
| Expectation of work and managers | Perception of workplace | There is a gap in this generations understanding of the concept workplace |
| | | Bring authenticity already to work interviews in dress and conversation |
| | | They interview the interviewer |
| | Market in Indore | Multitude of professions and roles in the technological field are interesting to them |
| | | Greatly influenced by advertising on social networks mainly Instagram |
| | | Demands of workers have grown |
| | | Those release from the IDF who are graduates of intelligence units feel confident they will integrate into the high-tech world |
| | Reward | The issue of salary on entry to them occupies them a lot, they generally assess themselves higher than accepted wages |
| | | Want to have a title on entry |
| | | Young people who come for interviews with me before choosing work generally first ask what the salary is. Later on I discover that what are really of interest to them is flexibility, challenge and working environment |
| | | Look for good conditions from the start |
| | Meaning | Want to do meaningful things |
| | Gap between managers and workers | Looking for personal time while manages want maximum availability |
| | | Interpersonal communications work differently |
| | Work environment | Want flexibility in the working environment, office is a worse option |
| | | If it is not awesome for me, I won't go to that workplace |
| | | Innovation is a key word for them |
| | Culture of abundance | Grew up in a reality different from their parents, are in a culture of abundance, all they need to do is choose and it is very difficult |
| | | They are confused by the amount of choice they have in every sphere: food, fashion, technology |
| | Parental pressure | Parents expect them to be like they were and it doesn't work at all |
| | | Academic and established parents pressure their child to undertake academic studies and choose a clear direction for his life, try to convince him to make a quick decision and promise |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Challenges and coping | | to fund him during his studies |
| | Changing world of work | The Internet changed all the rules of the game in the field of work, new professions, commerce, digital marketing are all new players in the world of work |
| | | Corona changed everything here and has created a new reality in the world of work with new social conventions, and in the end it will serve them |
| | Perception of reality versus social media | Many of them feel the virtual world is the real word, they don't see the gap |
| | | Social media drives them nuts, they see successes and it creates an pretense of being equal, it is not true reality |
| | | The gap between successes in the media and reality result in disappointment |

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