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### **GENERATION 'Z' IS COMING, ARE YOU READY? A WAKEUP CALL FOR HR STRATEGISTS IN PAKISTAN**

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#### **Abstract**

*The beauty of the strategic decision making is not only critically scan the current business environment but also consider the major foreseen shifts in business dynamics to remain competitive. Responding too slowly or too earlier to such changing dynamics may lead to serious threats for the organizations, profitability, and growth apart; their existence can come on stake due to such strategic decisions. This study has attempted to observe the existence of well-established characteristics of "Generation Z" in Pakistan, so the HR experts can respond appropriately to attract, select, and retain the generation being prepared for the employability. The differences of both generations (Y and Z) have been tested in this study in terms of personality and perception of upcoming human resources. A slow dispersion of Generation Z has been observed in Pakistan which has given a bit of additional margins to HR experts to modifying their organizational structure, policies, and practices to attract the best pool of resources coming into the job market in next 2 to 6 years.*

**Keywords:** Generation Z, iGeneration, Strategic HR Planning, Organizational Culture, Generation Difference

#### **Introduction**

Reaction of any study group directly relates to the demographic characteristics of every individual of that group as everyone analysis the situation in context of his/her own experiences and reacts in a way best suit to his/her perceptions (Angeline, 2011). Experts from different occupation use to club the group of people based upon one or more common demographic characteristics for their strategic decision making and policy formation. Some of these groups attain tremendous recognition and hence become the globally recognized terminologies. It is easier to describe the characteristics of such groups and predict their standard reaction in a given circumstances. They share some internally-common but externally unique lifestyles, values, and expectations about personal as well as professional life. Marketing and Sociology literatures are

enriched with four demographic groups based on birth years, i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z (Jorgensen, 2003; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The latest recognized group, Generation Z, is in the colleges and universities at the moment and is about to kick start the professional life. In order to remain competitive, it is the time for strategic HR managers to take necessary actions in order to attract, accommodate and retain the professionals getting ready to join professional world in coming years. Failure to do so may result in severe shortage of professionally intellectual resources in their respective organizations, which will automatically put the survival of the organizations on stake in this competitive business world. Strategic decision makers have to predict the futuristic behaviors of political, economic, social and technological (PEST) factors (Bennett et al., 1998) and when it comes to HR Business Partnership, the mindset, ideology, lifestyle and overall grooming of potential employees must have to be addressed in policies formation and diversity management. Organizations ignoring these dimensions will not be able to hire and retain the talented workforce in future, hence have to surrender the competitive advantage in the challenging business world.

Researchers and practitioners of advanced countries have already started working on this topic, but the distinguish characteristic of this generation (i.e. excessive dependency on technology) is yet to be investigated in under-developed countries like Pakistan. If the population of such country is not that much addictive to the technology as described in the literature, the employability attributes would not be much different than the previous generation, the Millennials. In such circumstances, organizational resources can be better utilized other than modifying employment policies and work environment. The objective of this study was to investigate how closely Pakistani teen is following international trends of adopting technology in their personal lives so that business community should also take necessary initiatives to welcome them when they will enter into the professional arenas. Those personality attributes have been identified which directly relate to employability but are not common in both generations (Generation Y and Generation Z) in this research activity and it was investigated how mindset and lifestyle vary between Generation Y and Generation Z across these attributes.

### **Literature Review**

Maturity, adoptability and wisdom do come by age but there are certain characteristics which usually remain unchanged due to some strong impressions of cultural, political, technological, social and economic factors during the phase of grooming and personality development. Broadly speaking, a generation can be described as the segment of population born within a range of some 20 years (Kupperschmidt, 2000) or a group of individuals sharing similar life events including but not limited to economic, technological, environmental and social experiences (Smola & Sutton, 2002). However, it can't be a floating slab as start and end of every generation must have to be marked with any signification demographic change taken placed to give each generation an identification having particular set of characteristics. Although these generations are dependent on the specific time slot when someone born, but different researchers have quoted different time spans for these generations. Generation X has been mentioned in the literature as people born from 1961 till 1975 (Adams, 2000), between 1963 and 1981 (Jurkiewicz, 2000), between 1963 and 1982 (Karp et al, 2002) and between 1968 till 1979 (U.S.

Census Bureau). There are so many other examples of varying range of time slot for Generation X and same is the case with other generations (Generation Y, Baby Boomers and Generation Z). For the sake of this study, the time ranges suggested by Philip Kotler, a marketing guru, has been adopted as a standard. He defined the Generation X as the group of individuals born from 1965 till 1977 (Montana & Petit, 2008) and Generation Y as the group of individuals having their year of birth 1978 or later, but till 1994 (Kotler, 2005). Similarly, people born after 1994 will be treated as Generation Z in this study.

Job related stress and conflicts are obvious things to happen if the employees belonging to different generations fail to recognize and accept the commonalities and differences of each demographic generation (Angeline, 2011). If members of one group keep on blaming the members of some other group on failing to accomplish their anticipations, ambitions, and individual goals, the situation alarms the presence of such consequences, which may lead to organizational resentment and anarchy (Angeline, 2011).

Though the literature is enriched with the argument that misunderstanding the colleagues belonging to different generations is one of the critical factor causing job-related conflicts, followers of anti-generation viewpoint have rejected this claim as well (e.g., Deal, 2007; Wilcke, 2007, Manning et al, 2009; McCaffree, 2007). Researchers from this school of thought dismiss the arguments trying to explain individuals' behavior on the basis of participants' demography. McCaffree (2007) presented the alternative justification of generational differences as the common psychology of individuals to blame others in order to handle their frustration when they fail in achieving their personal as well as professional objectives. Deal (2007) have also advocated the same philosophy by claiming that the generational differences presented in the literature are much weaker than the common civilized and ethical values of dedication, honesty, appreciation, recognition, happiness, self-respect, etc. which collectively draw their employability character and build workplace expectations. He claimed that these personality attributes are equally important for employees of all age groups, regardless of their ethnic or demographic differences.

As per the records available on the website of U.S. Census Bureau, more than 593 million population of the world was in the age bracket of 15-19 years in 2014. Majority of educated class from this age group is either attending higher classes or about to finish their degrees and are ready to occupy the vacancies in coming years. Similarly, the records on Pakistan Bureau of Statistics' website also claim that 48.75% of Pakistani population is less than 18 years of age; having 13% of total population in 10-15 years and almost 8% in 15-18 years age brackets. Following the definition of Philip Kotler for Generation Z, 53.77% of Pakistani population is born in 1995 or later. The records also claim that 10.37% of Pakistani population is in 15-19 years age group means this segment of population will be in professional field within next 2 to 6 years. This figure represents roughly 20 million workers, which can't be ignored easily.

It is observed that managers from Baby Boomer class don't have positive perception in general about employees from later generations (Gursoy et al., 2008). The same is the case with members of Gen X who consider their Gen Y colleagues a bit overconfident. Gen X employees are found condemning the organizational resource allocation for training & development of their juniors from Gen Y, though they perceive Gen Y smarter and fast learner than their own selves

(Angeline, 2011). The Daily Canberra Times reported in a story in its March 29, 2006's edition that the phenomena of watching their parents laid off despite their loyalties has boosted a significant tendency in Generation Y employees to switch their jobs more quickly (after two to three years on average) as compared to previous generation which had the average switching rate from three to five years (Montana & Petit, 2008; Broadbridge et al., 2007).

Generation Y has also been found of paying more attention to Work-Life balance as compared to their predecessors (Anon, 2006). These people have the mindset about their jobs as the means of supporting and financing their families and lifestyles (Kerslake, 2005). It is assumed that the Generation Y does have the desire to adore their job but they don't let their work rule their personal lives (Morton, 2002). Summarizing the work-related characteristics of Generation Y, they are better team-players, confident and caring (Zemke et al., 2000), fast learners and socially responsible (Angeline, 2011), like flexible work environment and decentralization (Gursoy et al., 2008), accept multitasking challenges and have better potential to be the part of multiple project teams simultaneously (Hill and Stephens, 2003), instead of relying on lifelong stagnant employment they prefer challenging and rewarding job roles (Baruch, 2004).

Generation Z is the latest recognized group in the literature and these individuals are still in their decisive years, have faced the direct/indirect impact of global terrorism, increasing school brutality, the aftereffects of 9/11, the worldwide financial crisis, and the resulting downfall of insurance and mortgage industries (Williams and Page, 2011). They belong to oldest parents as compared to other generations with mothers having median age of 31 at birth of their first babies, and taught by oldest teachers with median age of 42 (Levickaite, 2010). These individuals belong to very diverse background carrying diversified life experiences and philosophies, are addictively attached with high-tech gadgets and really heavily upon multiple sources of information (Mission and Ministry, 2010), great internet geeks polished for multitasking (Levickaite, 2010). They have a greater tendency to effectively lead online collaborative initiatives (Geck, 2007), lack in face-to-face interaction, have low conflict management skills (Angeline, 2011) and admire strong organizational structures. They are matured, confident, behave much sensible than their age, prefer digital resources on printed material, strive hard for quick results, and feel stressed for success (Posnick-Goodwin, 2010).

The members of Generation Z community are described as passionate, optimistic, and honest (Retail Merchandiser, 2003). They prefer career oriented jobs, fair process of progression, strong organizational structure and caring management style (Morton, 2002). Having duality in their nature; they perform better working alone but yet are better team players than the previous generations, love clear work instructions from the managers but hate micromanagement style and prefer to get the task done in their own innovative style (Martin, 2005). They assume honesty and self-respect more contributory to loyalty as compared to tenure, and consider employment flexibility a tool for work-life balance (Kerslake, 2005); provision of implementing their ideas is the greatest motivator for this generation (Amar, 2004), depend heavily on social networking platforms for quick exchange of information (Angeline, 2011), more interested in challenging work environments and tough assignments for the sake of their own personal learning and career development instead of focusing on job security (Broadbridge et al., 2007). Apart from the shared values with Generation Y, employers have to pay attention on the varying attributes of

Generation Z in order to accommodate them in winning teams as the employers will not have any option other than Gen Z'ians for induction purposes.

### **Methodology**

The characteristics, lifestyle and social behavior of Generation Z are well established in the research literature but identification of this demographic group in a particular society is still a big question. The population has been classified in different generations based upon some unique set of behavioral attributes and these generations have been labelled majorly with the periods in which their members born, different time slabs have been reported in the literature for these generations based upon the confirmatory evidences of associated attributes.

The political, economic, social and technological conditions vary region to region. It is quite logical to assume that ICT infrastructure in developed countries will be much better, cheaper, accessible and reliable as compared to developing countries at any point of time. This assumption is confidently applicable to countries like Pakistan where penetration of ICT services in the community is at least a decade behind from the advanced countries like USA, UK, Australia, etc. As the building of Generation Z's concept is built on the foundation of internet services adoption in daily life, the confirmation of Generation Z attributes in Pakistani society is very important for considering it in organizational strategic planning.

### **Research Design**

This is a survey based descriptive study to check the presence of Generation Z attributes in Pakistani population born in 1995 or later. The year 1995 was picked as the starting point of Generation Z based upon the study conducted by marketing guru, Philip Kotler in 2005. Following the positivism paradigm, a study is designed to check the varying attributes of people born in 1995 or later from the people born earlier than 1995. A questionnaire was developed based upon the previous studies conducted on identification of workplace related unique attributes of Generation Y and Z. Content validity was assured by translating the instrument in Urdu and then re-translating it back in English and amending the narrations of three questions reportedly having some ambiguities in the statements. The engagement of two Heads of Human Resource departments of leading software houses in instrument designing phase assured the context validity.

### **Research Variables and Hypotheses**

Previous studies conducted on the subjects of varying attributes of Generation Z were consulted to identify prominent attributes of this demographic group for this study. The variables considered in this research study included: daily internet usage (Williams and Page, 2011), in-person social interaction with friends (Miller & Pesl, 2012), online purchasing trends (Gibson, 2010), job recognition, organization's standing in the industry and salary structure (Montana & Petit, 2008), on-campus recruitment drive (Hole, 2010), online employment assessment (Rawal & Pandey, 2013), membership of professional bodies and executive clubs, online training preferences (Perera, 2010), organizational culture supporting idea generation and implementation (Goodman, 2001), and cyber socializing habits (Levickaite, 2010).

Based upon the literature review conducted, the research hypotheses for this study are as under:

- H<sub>0</sub>1      There will be no significant difference in daily internet utilization among members of Generation Y and Generation Z.
- H<sub>0</sub>2      There will be no significant difference in daily time spending trends on social networking sites among members of Generation Y and Generation Z.
- H<sub>0</sub>3      There will be no significant difference in trends of in-person social interactions among members of Generation Y and Generation Z.
- H<sub>0</sub>4      There will be no significant difference in online purchasing trends between members of Generation Y and Generation Z.
- H<sub>0</sub>5      Members of both generations (Y and Z) give equal importance to Job Recognition in their employment preferences.
- H<sub>0</sub>6      Members of both generations (Y and Z) give equal importance to organization's repute in the market while taking employment decisions.
- H<sub>0</sub>7      Members of both generations (Y and Z) give equal importance to organization's salary structure while taking employment decisions.
- H<sub>0</sub>8      Members of both generations (Y and Z) expect equally that companies should take on-campus recruitment initiatives to make graduates aware about themselves.
- H<sub>0</sub>9      Members of both generations (Y and Z) prefer equally that companies should arrange online evaluation tests, as and when required.
- H<sub>0</sub>10      Members of both generations (Y and Z) prefer equally that companies should arrange online video interviews for recruitment purposes.
- H<sub>0</sub>11      Members of both generations (Y and Z) give equal importance to membership offer to relevant professional bodies as part of the compensation package.
- H<sub>0</sub>12      Members of both generations (Y and Z) give equal importance to membership offer to elite hotels/clubs of the city as part of the compensation package.
- H<sub>0</sub>13      Members of both generations (Y and Z) prefer equally that companies should arrange online training and development sessions as compared to in house arrangements.
- H<sub>0</sub>14      Members of both generations (Y and Z) treat strictness in employment rules equally.
- H<sub>0</sub>15      Members of both generations (Y and Z) treat freedom of discussion/argumentation with their seniors equally.

**Population and Sample**

As per the data published by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 53.77% population of Pakistan falls in Generation Z category and some 20 million people are in the age bracket of 15-19 years. They will probably join the professional world within next 2 to 6 years. As generalizing the results for such a huge population is not an easy task, this study is being conducted just to verify the trends of participant, rather than generalizing the research results. To get the quicker responses, the questionnaire was uploaded on the specialized survey site and the link of the survey was circulated on different groups on facebook having majority of the members in the age bracket of 15 to 30 years to cater both generation Y and Z. Birth year is our grouping variable and Independent Samples T-Test is used to analyze the data collected with the help of online survey.

**Results and Analysis**

The finalized survey link was circulated on different student groups on facebook and members (both students and alumnae) were requested to participate in it. Respondents with following demographics have taken part in our research study.

**Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents**

Generation	Gender	Status	Respondents	Total
Y	Male	Student	11	34
		Employed	20	
		Graduate, but unemployed	3	
	Female	Student	2	8
		Employed	2	
		Graduate, but unemployed	4	
<i>Total</i>			42	
Z	Male	Student	27	30
		Employed	2	
		Graduate, but unemployed	1	
	Female	Student	15	16
		Employed	1	
		Graduate, but unemployed	0	
<i>Total</i>			46	
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>88</b>	

Total 88 respondents participated in this research study with 27% female ratio. 48% participants were from Generation Y having their year of birth 1994 or earlier and 52% were from Generation Z who born in 1995 or later. Three responses were rejected as they claimed that they

born prior to 1978, which marked them from Generation X. In this study, Generation Y yielded 19% participation from female side and Generation Z observed 34.7% female ratio. Overall, 62.5% participants were studying, 28.4% were doing their jobs and remaining 9.1% have completed their studies but were unemployed at the time of participating in this research study. Independent Sample t-Test was implemented to analyze the responses collected. Generation to whom respondents belong was taken as grouping variable and above mentioned variables were considered as the independent variables in this test, which yielded the following results:

**Table 2. Inferential Statistics**

Hypothesis #	Independent Variables	T-test Value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Result
H <sub>0</sub> 1	Daily Internet Usage	-2.083	0.043	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 2	Cyber Socializing Habits	-4.394	0.000	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 3	In-Person Social Interaction	2.193	0.034	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 4	Online Purchasing Trends	-1.332	0.191	Accepted
H <sub>0</sub> 5	Job Recognition	-1.946	0.049	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 6	Organization's Repute	-0.053	0.958	Accepted
H <sub>0</sub> 7	Salary Structure	1.904	0.065	Accepted
H <sub>0</sub> 8	On-Campus Recruitment Initiatives	-2.723	0.013	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 9	Online Evaluation Tests	-3.133	0.005	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 10	Online Interviews	-1.412	0.176	Accepted
H <sub>0</sub> 11	Professional Membership	-3.168	0.003	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 12	Elite Club Membership	2.538	0.017	Rejected
H <sub>0</sub> 13	Online Training	0.204	0.840	Accepted
H <sub>0</sub> 14	Strictness of Rules	1.735	0.094	Accepted
H <sub>0</sub> 15	Idea Sharing/Implementation	-1.064	0.296	Accepted

Out of 15 hypotheses developed in this study, the results of statistical significance test accepted seven null hypotheses. Though, results for some of the variables were very close to the significance level (0.05) e.g. online purchasing trends, salary structure, online interviewing and strictness of rules but couple of variables received very higher *p*-values, e.g. organizational reputation, preference to online trainings and liberty to raise concern in front of the managers. Even some of the null hypotheses got rejected but they were very close to the threshold *p*-value, average daily internet usage, social interaction and job recognition were found in this category.

**Discussion**

Rejection of almost half of the hypotheses is not a good sign for a research activity in general, but a bit deeper analyses can elaborate the situation in this particular case. There were probably some other socio-economic factors playing their part in this research activity. First of all, neither

these results are generalizable based upon the number of participants and scope of the subject, nor it was the objective of this study.

Though not much far from the acceptable  $p$ -value, online purchasing trend is found similar in both generations under observation. The limited exposure to online banking in country like Pakistan (Kaleem & Ahmad, 2008), the overall reluctance of using such services due to fraud threats, the limited purchasing decision making authorities/responsibilities of the segment under investigation, and common purchasing norms of the society might have contributed in this context. The online shopping trend is increasing day-by-day in Pakistan, mostly the teen is engaged in such purchase transactions, and the common items being purchased online are accessories for mobiles, laptops and similar gadgets, cloths and gift items (Nazir et al., 2012).

Organizational reputation in the market and preference to salary packages in making employment related decisions are also not proved significantly different among the generations under investigation. The inflation rate and significant unemployment might have influenced the mindset of working class in Pakistan, who prefer to have a job instead of targeting a dream job (Nasir, 2005). Although the trend is changing, but still accepting the old-bossy and dictatorial leadership style and accepting the organizational environment where young professionals are not being welcomed to interrupt their managers are the outcomes of tight job market and heavy unemployment rate.

Generation Z have different approach towards online evaluation tests as compared to the previous one, and it surely help them save the time, traveling cost as well as not going against their nature of being anti-social in terms of face-to-face interaction. On the other hand, both generations have shown similar level of interest in interviews via video links. This probably would be due to the impact of lower bandwidth availability by ICT service providers in the country. 3G and 4G services are just introduced in the Pakistani market and these are expensive too, so threat of broken/weaker links might divert this Generation's preference from this technological utility. Not preferring the online training and development opportunities may also be the result of same reason.

## **Conclusion**

Acceptance of seven null hypotheses out of fifteen, though with a tight margin in most of the cases, lead to the conclusion that universally recognized and accepted set of generation-specific attributes are penetrating in Pakistani society but at a slower speed. Weaker economic conditions, energy crisis, downfall of overall industrial segment, increasing inflation and unemployment, war on terror, political instability and other similar factors are some of the barriers hindering the growth of ICT infrastructure in Pakistan, hence restricting the changing demographic characteristics as being observed in the stable, advanced countries. This slow penetration of Generation Z in Pakistani job market has offered a bit extended response time to the HR strategic decision makers to align their organizational structure and policies with the perceptions and demands of the pool jumping into the employment market. However, this penetration speed is not slow enough to let HR strategists sit relaxed; if they will do so, they will put their existence on stake.

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