

MILLENNIALS CHANGING THE GAME: THE NEW GENERATIONS CHALLENGING THE WORKPLACE

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UDC / UDK: 005.32

005.96

JEL classification / JEL klasifikacija: D23, M12

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22598/pi-be/2024.18.1.11>

Original scientific paper / Izvorni znanstveni rad

Received / Primitljeno: March 26, 2024 / 26. ožujka 2024.

Accepted for publishing / Prihvaćeno za tisak: May 27, 2024 / 27. svibnja 2024.

Summary

Purpose: With a substantial presence of Generation Y members in the workforce and a growing number of Generation Z employees, managers are increasingly confronted with the challenge of navigating intergenerational differences among employees. In this research endeavour, the authors sought to explore the anticipated impacts of the emerging generation on work dynamics. Specifically, the objective is to discern potential disparities among generational cohorts concerning their attitudes toward work centrality and how these disparities might influence work engagement, with a particular emphasis on Generation Z. Methodology: The research endeavour was based on data from 204 participants spanning various generational cohorts aged between 19 and 48 years. The survey gathered data on the respondents' demographic, work centrality, and work-related aspects and well-being. A Spearman's rank-order correlation and a t-test were used for data analysis in SPSS. Findings and implications: The findings revealed a significant correlation between age and work engagement, as well as between work centrality and work engagement, suggesting nuanced relationships within the diverse age groups in the workforce. Limitations: The study mostly concentrated on the research context of the

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Republic of North Macedonia, leaving space for cross-regional and cross-country studies. Originality: As the workforce becomes increasingly diverse in terms of age, newer generations are instigating a transformation in workplace values, consequently shaping a novel professional environment. This leads to a growing interest in academic and practitioner circles. Yet, after an extensive search query in the Scopus database, it was found that there were very few articles detailing the differences in work centrality and work engagement levels among different age groups. So, this study will attempt to fill this gap.

Keywords: *generation gap; workplace behaviour; work-life balance; employee engagement; work centrality.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The workplace has been constantly evolving and it can be noted that extending life expectancy has been offering possibilities for greater diversity in the sense of multiple generations present at the workplace at the same time. The interactions, collaboration, and coexistence of various generations have been challenging ever since but have marked new heights during the pandemic (Swift & Chasteen, 2021). In navigating the aftermath of the “new normal” landscape, the situation has not only heightened the contrasts within organizational structures but also spotlighted the standard challenge of managing individuals toward a common purpose (Smith & Garriety, 2020).

The integration of different generations of employees has introduced additional layers of complexity, particularly against the backdrop of heightened global connectivity (White et al., 2021). This shift has the potential to handle a more substantial influence on behaviour than traditional socioeconomic differences. In this sense, generational cohorts have similar recollections of experiences and events common to their generation, as well as unique preferences for leadership styles, which gives evidence that the distinctive generational characteristics represent a legitimate diversity area that organizations should identify and fully comprehend (Bakotić & Vulić, 2022). The largest transformation approaching the workforce agenda is expected to be brought by the very recent Generation Z. Most of the research agenda and even more, the agenda of human resource departments is centred around ways to cope with the incoming new workforce that is asking for increased flexibility, balance, and requests for more (Itam & Ghosh, 2020), leaving plenty of potential research areas unexplored.

While there is considerable attention directed towards understanding generational dynamics within the workplace, there remains a gap in the systematic examination of how distinct generational perspectives influence work centrality and

employee commitment. The arrival of new generations in the collective workplace introduces new and innovative insights, behaviours, and approaches to enduring challenges that have dominated the professional business environment (Sullivan et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2017).

Known by many connecting terms in contemporary management research, the degree of importance work plays in someone's life is referred to as work centrality (Li et al., 2020). Individuals with a strong sense of work centrality express an inclination to resume working even after approaching retirement age, or if their financial situation allows a comfortable lifestyle without any pressures made by the need to work (Hu et al., 2021). On the other hand, researchers claim that low work centrality can translate into decreasing employee satisfaction, rising turnover intentions, and lower employee engagement levels, resulting in changes in the overall organizational performance (Hajdu & Sik, 2018). As mentioned, work engagement has also triggered various discussions about this topic. In this regard, it is often believed that work engagement positively relates to one's work centrality (Toth et al., 2021). Connected to that, recent empirical investigations prompted by the interest in intergenerational dynamics in the workplace have revealed a decrease in work centrality, which can most likely be attributed to the fact that new generations enter the workforce (Della Puppa, 2023).

Consequently, it becomes evident that work centrality influences various activities through which individuals develop knowledge, social competencies, and values necessary for assimilation into social groups, including generational cohorts (Volery & Tarabashkina, 2021). Furthermore, research suggests that work centrality represents a relatively steadfast belief system, which remains relatively unaffected by the specific conditions of a particular work environment (Jiang & Johnson, 2018). In today's rapidly evolving societal landscape, where new values are being established, younger generations are re-evaluating their approaches to work, often prioritizing a better work-life balance. Consequently, there has been a gradual erosion of work centrality, a trend observable even among Generation X and now further exacerbated among Generation Z (Ali et al., 2022).

The challenges posed by the recent global pandemic have underscored the imperative for workplaces to adapt and embrace technological advancements across all sectors. This shift has accentuated and highlighted the significance of generational differences, as individuals navigate the crisis in varied ways, reflecting diverse coping mechanisms and responses to the situation (Raišienė et al., 2021).

Subsequently, the objective of this research endeavour is to uncover the anticipated impacts of the new generation as it becomes part of the professional business world and its impact on work life. With that being said, the study focuses on exploring potential distinctions among generational groups concerning work centrality and examining the consequent effects on work engagement. To achieve this objective, the

authors collected data from a sample of 204 respondents, representing diverse generational groups. It is noteworthy that the data collection occurred during the peak of the pandemic, influencing both the responses and outcomes. Yet, considering the aftermath and return to business as usual, the research offers implications, which expand the understanding of the workplace.

As such, the article is structured as follows. Firstly, the authors outline the characteristics and typology of the generations present in the workplace. Then an explication of the used methodology and the data collection process will be provided. Afterward, the results are presented together with a discussion of the main findings, which can be useful for the academic community, human resource professionals, and managers or business leaders, who are tasked with observing, analysing, and regulating the organizational behaviour of the dynamic workforce.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The diverse, multigenerational landscape in the workplace

The concept of generations is intricate and susceptible to the multifaceted impacts of age, life stages, and career progressions (Beier et al., 2022). A generational cohort comprises people who share common historical and/or social life experiences (Parry & Urwin, 2021). These shared formative experiences contribute to a collective identity that predisposes individuals of the same generation to similar expectations, thereby distinguishing one generation from another (Burton et al., 2019). Moreover, the collective generational personality influences various aspects of members' lives, including their attitudes towards authority, organizations, work participation, and aspirations, shaping how they strive to achieve their goals (White et al., 2021). Thus, it can be observed that individuals born during transitional periods between generations may exhibit traits from either generation or a fusion of characteristics from both (Salvi et al., 2022). While it is acknowledged that each person within a generation possesses unique qualities, the recognition of shared recollections and experiences among members of a generation does not diminish individual distinctiveness (Parry & Urwin, 2021). However, the commonality of experiences and distinct preferences regarding organizational matters imply that generational differences pose significant diversity challenges that require acknowledgment, comprehension, and strategic addressing by human resource managers and organizations (Bakotić & Vulić, 2022).

Baby boomers. The term 'baby boomers' brings together a generation of people who were born between 1943 and 1965 or 1946 and 1964, respectively as the first generation, following World War II (Tolbize, 2008). Even though they are in the middle

or late part of their career, this generation is expected to retire in the traditional sense in around 2033 (Kim et al., 2022). Despite differing settings, the overarching influence of historical events has shaped a generation that shares common values and experiences that highly rank loyalty, workaholicism, independence, respect towards figures of authority, and competitiveness (Alferjany et al., 2020). In other words, members of this generation are typically focused on achievements and material rewards, while being attached to a single organization for most if not for their entire career (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

In the professional work setting, baby boomers tend to exhibit behaviours and attitudes that allude to their optimism, willingness to work in teams and acknowledge the input and effort made by their fellow team members (Van Rossem, 2021), while maintaining excellent relations with the management structure (Gupta, 2019). This leads to observed high levels of self-reliance, diligence, and work centrality when compared to their younger peers (McKercher, 2023). On the other hand, researchers draw some generalizations that this generation tends to be more technologically challenged and prone to solitary working spaces or working in a private office (Rudolph & Zacher, 2022).

Generation X. Those born between 1968 and the beginning of the 1980s are known as Generation X, or Gen Xers, and are frequently characterized as autonomous, self-sufficient, and fun-loving (Mukherjee & Sivaraman, 2022). As the first generation expected to earn less than their parents, Generation X was born at a time of economic instability, recessions, high unemployment, inflation, downsizing, and high divorce rates (Yang & Guy, 2006). Because of this, people perceive them as being disloyal, concentrating on striking a balance between their personal and professional lives (Gupta, 2019), aiming for financial independence, and taking chances in their careers (Tulgan, 1995). All of this is done while prioritizing their families and quality of life over their careers (Burton et al., 2019). That does not, however, imply that the willingness to put in a lot of effort is correlated with this decrease in the value of work (Weerarathne et al., 2023).

At work, members of Generation X aim for more demanding tasks, more pay, or improved perks at their place of employment (Raišienė et al., 2021). It is clear from their work experiences that they also value ongoing education and skill development, detest monitoring, and are self-assured (Shragay & Tziner, 2011). In this sense, Gen Xers are less likely to be devoted to their jobs, to expect promotions earlier than previous generations, and to see their jobs as significant aspects of their lives (Parry & Urwin, 2021). While lack of money may cause this generation to become less motivated, money itself is not the primary incentive for them (Kuyken & Costanza, 2024). In addition, compared to boomers, this generation has a reduced work centrality (McKercher, 2023). Considering all of that, this generation is frequently perceived as being cynical, independent, pessimistic, impatient, and swiftly ready to criticize (Van Rossem, 2021).

Generation Y or millennials. Millennials, sometimes known as echo boomers or Generation Y, are those who were born between 1980 and well into the 1990s (Gerard, 2019; Arora & Dhole, 2019). This generation shares traits such as having a high value placed on lifelong learning, and the belief that family is a crucial aspect of overall happiness (Alferjany et al., 2020). Furthermore, millennials are often upbeat, truth-telling, open-minded, familiar with other cultures, and authentic (Waltz et al., 2020). According to Črešnar and Jevšenak (2019), Gen Y is the most educated, richest, and diverse generation in many ways. Since this generation is the first to live with computers daily, digital technology has affected them majorly (Črešnar & Nedelko, 2020). As a result, this element greatly influences globalization, which in turn impacts the values of millennials (Galdames & Guihen, 2022).

It has been discovered that Gen Y favours flexible work schedules, non-cash benefits, and an enjoyable work atmosphere (Chaudhuri, 2020; Weeraratne et al., 2023). In addition, they value learning chances, skill improvement, meaningful work, demanding experiences, group activities, and social interaction with their peers (Van Rossem, 2021). It is well recognized that this generation demands continuous direction and immediate feedback—not just once or twice a year, but whenever feasible (Waltz et al., 2020). This contributes to Gen Y's impatience, particularly when it comes to monitoring their development (Rudolph et al., 2021). Additionally, it has been discovered that millennials place a higher value on free time than previous generations and are more focused on performance and hard work when compared to Generation X (McKercher, 2023).

Generation Z. At the beginning of the new millennium, young people who are now navigating the transition from higher education to the workforce and who were born with or after the Internet are referred to as Generation Z, or Gen Z (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022). This group includes people who were born in 1995 or 1996 and beyond (Childers & Boatwright, 2021). Gen Zers are more individualistic in their communication, learning, and interpersonal interactions than previous generations because they are more receptive to technology (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). Compared to previous generations, Gen Zers are more diverse and accepting of other cultures and experiences that differ from their own (Benitez-Marquez et al., 2022).

There has not been a lot of scholarly study done on young adults thus far. However, there is agreement regarding the upbringing environment of Generation Z, which has been shown to greatly facilitate the formation of a certain configuration of expectations and desires toward employment and the workplace (Pichler et al., 2021). The pandemic has shown how technology has influenced society on a greater scale (McKee-Ryan, 2021). Because of this, Gen Zers are used to learning alone and have employed technology to do it (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). This may have a significant effect on how well Gen Z performs at work and handles organizational life in general.

2.2. Work centrality

Work centrality is recognized as one of the categories of work values (Reed et al., 2022). In this sense, higher work centrality indicates a closer identification with one's job duties and a perception of work as a significant component of life (Buss et al., 2023). Accordingly, the term work centrality broadly refers to the significance of work in an individual's life (Li et al., 2020). Although work centrality has been characterized by several researchers, the most frequent debates centre on how much a person believes their job defines them and how essential it is in their lives.

This review highlights two main theoretical components of the work centrality concept. On one hand, there is absolute work centrality, which is related to a belief or value that is focused on work as a life role (Li et al., 2020). On the other hand, relative work centrality relates to a decision orientation about preferred life choices for behaviour (Li et al., 2020). The latter type is consistent with Barker's (1968) theory of behavioural settings and Dubin's (1956) central life interests.

Studies have demonstrated that, when viewed in a socio-political framework, individuals in socialist systems typically exhibit low levels of work centrality (Haller et al., 2023). The authors believe that increased government interference is likely to make it harder for people to focus on their jobs and limit the possibilities that come with living in a capitalist society. Consequently, a person's ability to pursue their professional goals may be limited if they have fewer prospects for job advancement (Kittel et al., 2019). While there will always be people who are not very focused on their jobs, there are several pathways that businesses can take to deal with someone who is not very focused on their work and displays lower work centrality, such as flexible work schedules, and work-from-home possibilities, to mention a couple (Smith & Garriety, 2020).

Moreover, work centrality affects the organization through its effects on ethics, discipline, work alienation, locus of control, employee engagement, and job participation (Li et al., 2020), which results in a growing interest among the academic and business communities alike. Subsequently, this impact should not be seen as constant throughout the career of the employee or the organizational lifecycle. In turn, the degree of work centrality tends to vary across longer periods even while it might remain constant for shorter ones (Burawat, 2023).

As mentioned, related to this is the idea of employee engagement, which is the emotional connection an individual has to a company and is demonstrated by the way an employer reacts to a worker's assessment of their workplace (Grego-Planer, 2019). In today's rapidly changing business environment, scholars are adamant that managers should assess a person's level of organizational commitment (Wang et al., 2010). Reduced absenteeism, higher employee retention, lower error rates, increased effort, and productivity, higher revenues and profitability, improved customer satisfaction and

loyalty, and a higher chance of business success are all linked to higher levels of employee engagement (Saks, 2022).

In this context, another captivating aspect of the emotions and perceptions at work is the term work-life balance refers to the equilibrium between obligations at work and obligations outside of paid employment; to attain this equilibrium, the equilibrium must be placed in a way that is appropriate for the individual in question (Bhende et al., 2020).

2.3. Work and well-being

Even while work is becoming a major topic of conversation, research suggests that striking a balance is even more crucial for organizations and the workforce (Chaudhuri et al., 2020). Because of the turbulence in the business environment, it is common for employees to be on the verge of burnout and anxiety (Treven et al., 2015). Therefore, the recognition that well-being metrics offer essential insights into people's quality of life is what is driving the increased interest in the field (Oginni et al., 2023).

The subject has grown significantly recently. Daniels et al. (2021) provide an illustrative range of indicators that are thought to be self-reported measures for measuring well-being, ranging from subjective ones like life satisfaction, and psychological functioning to objective ones like physical health and social well-being. The emphasis of various theories and metrics of well-being varies concerning internal or external personal circumstances, such as material belongings and social ties as opposed to vitality and contentment (Pradhan & Hati, 2022).

The topic of well-being may be considered complex by practitioners, psychologists, and managers alike, particularly when it comes to organizations. As a result, certain distinctions also emerge from the individual's internal assessment as well as the exterior appraisal made by others (Chaudhuri et al., 2020). Subjective well-being, which is defined as the entire internal state of mental welfare, is a frequent way for psychologists to define well-being (Pradhan & Hati, 2022). This emphasizes vitality, purpose, and self-realization (eudaimonic) within mental well-being in addition to the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of suffering (hedonic and desire-based) (Haddon, 2018).

2.4. Narcissism inventory

Researchers' attempts to describe a subclinical form of the personality disorder classified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) that reflected entitlement, superiority, self-love, and an exaggerated but flimsy sense of self-importance gave rise to the concept of subclinical or normal narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Liu et al., 2019). Since then, researchers have argued that narcissism is a

multifaceted feature with distinctions between pathological and normal versions, including the two distinct elements of vulnerability and grandiosity (Burawat, 2023).

Regarding this, it was shown that social ties and status had a greater impact on narcissists (O'Reilly & Chatman, 2020). As an example, a lot of narcissists display extraverted behaviours to increase the likelihood of a positive initial impression, but they are also prone to revealing unpleasant habits in the future (Moon & Morais, 2023). Consequently, they can ascend to success by quickly obtaining resources from their surroundings due to their captivating character (Kim et al., 2021). Additionally, there is a negative association between narcissism and performance, which suggests that this might make it difficult to retain a positive reputation over the long term (Liu et al., 2020).

While pathological narcissism may be harmful, a certain amount of narcissism can be seen as good and necessary for self-assurance and self-assertion in the job (Wirtz & Rigotti, 2020). Recent research suggests that although self-assurance and accomplishment have been declining, neuroticism and narcissism are rising among newer and future generations (Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2022).

Considering all the outlined theoretical background, the study proposes three distinct hypotheses (H):

H1: There is a strong and significant correlation between age and work well-being.

H2: There is a weak and significant correlation between work well-being and work centrality.

H3: Age impacts the narcissism orientation with younger generations being more narcissistic.

3. METHODOLOGY

Considering that the primary objective of this research endeavour is to investigate the potential disparities among generational cohorts concerning their attitudes toward work centrality and how these disparities might influence work engagement, the methodological approach was grounded in investigating work centrality, work-life balance, and narcissism considering the generational context. Many studies evaluated the work centrality in terms of the outcomes, on one hand, like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, amount of total working hours, and work engagement, and the antecedents, on the other hand, including gender, age, education, tenure, job position, and benefits (Volery & Tarabashkina, 2021).

The collection of primary data lasted four months, using a convenience sampling method and a structured survey which was electronically disseminated. The authors

believed that as a non-probability approach, convenience sampling offers the opportunity to select respondents for inclusion in the sample due to the proximity and willingness of the participants (Winton & Sabol, 2022). Hence, it was easier for them to give their consent because the questions had a higher degree of emotional sensitivity. A total of 204 respondents fully filled in the survey, thus participating in the research endeavour.

Among the respondents, 25.5% were male and 75.5% were female. Furthermore, the participants' ages ranged between 19 and 48 years with a mean score of 23.38 and a standard deviation of 6.2. In this sense, more than 40% of the participants were in their twenties, born circa 2001, while more than 60% were born between 1982 and 2002. Regarding education, 59.8% completed high school, 38.2% graduated from undergraduate studies, and 2% possessed a master's degree or a Ph.D. Of the total respondents, 68.6% stated they were employed.

The structured survey comprised three distinct sections, which referred to best practices of past research and were grounded in empirically proven scales. This research instrument was developed in line with a six-point Likert scale, where respondents had the option to choose how much or little they agreed or disagreed with a given statement. The available options included 6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. More specifically, in Section A, respondents were asked about their gender, age, level of education, job position at the time, management rank, and work experience, among other demographic details. Statements related to work centrality, as indicated by the Work Centrality Scale (Paullay et al., 1994), were provided in Section B. The purpose of Section C was to investigate the connection between work and well-being. This was achieved using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure employee engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

In our study, we used different Likert scales across survey sections to enhance the data collection integrity. This approach, supported by prior research endeavours like the ones of O'Reilly and Chatman (1986), Eisenberger (1997), and Fenzel (2013), aimed to improve reliability and validity. We ensured clarity for respondents by using scales tailored to distinct aspects. For instance, the Work Centrality Survey (Paullay et al., 1994) utilized a 1 to 6 rating scale, while the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006) employed a 1 to 7 frequency scale. By aligning with established frameworks and using tailored scales, we captured a comprehensive range of insights in our study. The items of the survey are presented in the Appendix.

4. RESULTS

The research primarily focuses on generational cohorts with millennials or members of Generation Y dominating the landscape. This perspective could significantly influence the findings. Notably, a considerable majority, exceeding 60% of the sample, comprises individuals born in the years 2000 and 2001. Besides, a predominant female presence, what is additionally characteristic about the sample is the average age of the sample which is 23.3 years. Moreover, the sample primarily consists of employed individuals, making up over 68% of the total sample. This positions the study as a robust representation, particularly capturing the emergence of the new workforce entering the business world. Additional data regarding the demographics of the sample is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic characteristic	Percentage of respondents
<i>Gender:</i>	
Female	75.6
Male	24.4
Don't want to disclose and other	0
<i>Range of birth years:</i>	
1943 or earlier	0
1944-1960	0
1961-1981	3.4
1982-2002	93.7
2003-2020	2.9
<i>Latest degree of finished education:</i>	
Primary school	0
Secondary school	59.5
Higher education (undergraduate)	38.5
Higher education (postgraduate)	2
<i>Industry of employment:</i>	
Accounting services	10.8
Automobile sales and service	0
Banking, finances, and insurance	0
Education	9.2
Forestry, agriculture, and fishing	0
Health and social work	6.2

ICT and media	4.6
Legal services	7.7
Leisure, hospitality, entertainment, art, and recreation	10.8
Manufacturing, engineering, architecture	10.8
Public sector/government	4.6
Retail and wholesale	6.2
Transport, storage, logistics	1.5
Utilities, energy, mining	0
Other	27.7

Source: Authors' work

The analysis reveals an inconsequential correlation between age and work centrality aspects, approaching zero. However, it is important to highlight that the implications derived from this correlation are sporadic and offer limited insights into the presented results. The authors believe that the significance of maintaining a balance between work and personal life rises as the generations in the workplace are younger most likely due to their inherent willingness for autonomy, flexibility, and care for physical and mental health.

Reliability testing was performed for work centrality, work and well-being, and narcissism inventory. Respectively, the results for Cronbach's alpha are presented in Table 2. Thus, the provided measures can be deemed acceptable with work well-being standing out as being an excellent measure.

A Spearman's rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between the age and various aspects of the sample. Moreover, a weak and significant correlation between age and work well-being has been implied ($r_s(203) = .353, p = .000$). On the other hand, a correlation between work well-being and work centrality has been implied, too ($r_s(203) = .377, p = .000$). This leads the authors to reject the first hypothesis and accept the second hypothesis.

Table 2. Reliability statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Work centrality	.752	9
Work well-being	.952	17
Narcissism	.723	16

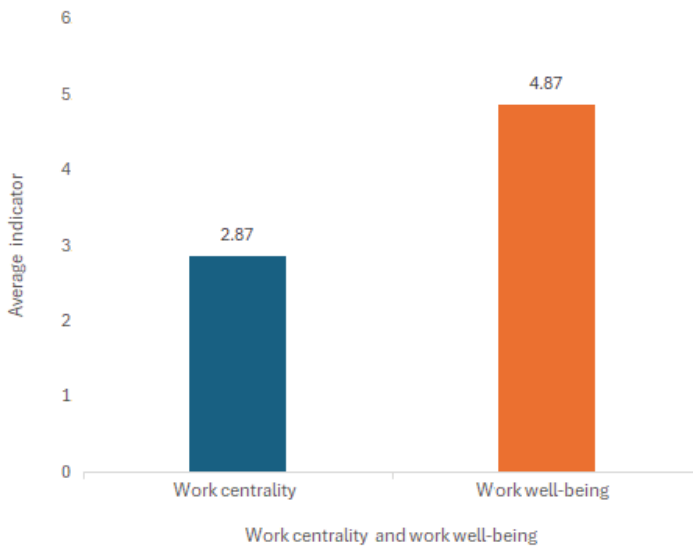
Source: Authors' calculations

In terms of the generational groups, a t-test was performed related to the generational groups and the narcissism inventory. The reasoning behind this is to assess

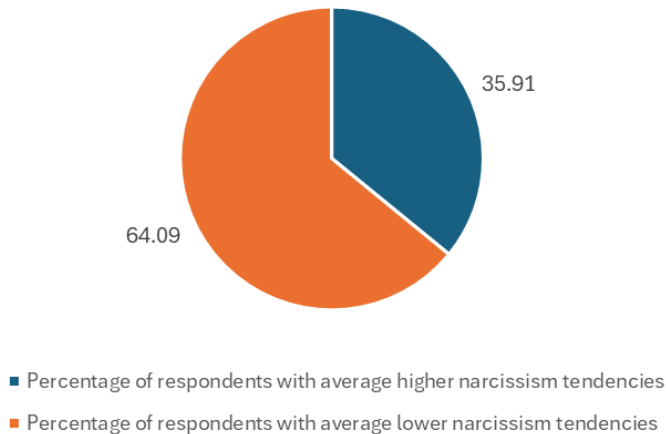
whether there is a statistical difference among the groups in their tendency to be more narcissistic. Evidently, age is significantly influencing the higher or lower orientation toward narcissism with younger generations displaying more narcissistic behaviours. The gap is evident when two very time-distant generations are compared like baby boomers and Generation Zers.

This means the third hypothesis can be accepted. The mean also withdrawn from the gathered data also suggests a rather high value or, in other words, a strong orientation towards narcissism with an $M = 1.3$ (1 is considered the narcissistic response, and 2 refers to the non-narcissistic approach). Considering that age can act as a predictor, it could be interesting to consider whether the relation can further impact the constructs in any way.

Figure 1. Work centrality and work well-being on average



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 2. Narcissism tendencies of the respondents

Source: Authors' calculations

Additionally, the average levels of work centrality and well-being at work are presented in Figure 1 together with the average level of narcissism in Figure 2. Evidently, the level of work centrality is lower, but has a tendency towards the middle of the scale, while employees lean towards higher rates of well-being at work. Subsequently, significantly more of the respondents on average displayed less narcissistic inclinations and vice versa.

5. DISCUSSION

The results implied some of the aspects related to the generational cohort discussions. The trends evolving around the workplace have been fascinating scholars and triggering interest in the wider business community, too, besides the scientific one. Life expectancy has been extended and naturally, this imposed new workplace arrangements. The clash of generations is something that needs to be considered in light of managing people and organizations.

The provided results reassure that within the Macedonian context, generations follow some main typological generational patterns. Evidently, that is in line with what was suggested by other researchers who claim that a key motivator for millennials is maintaining work-life balance (Younas & Waseem Bari, 2020). Furthermore, another study by De Stefano (2012) found variance in work centrality among generations.

Millennials scored lower ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .64$) than Generation X ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .62$), while no significant differences were observed between millennials and baby boomers ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .95$) or between Generation X and baby boomers (De Stefano, 2012). Yet, career development and financial stability may explain higher work centrality among older generations (Zhou et al., 2023).

Although the research has not provided any viable result concerning work centrality, the results provided from the research implicate a correlation between work centrality and work well-being, which is interesting for further consideration. In this regard, the individual level of psychological engagement in one's work occupation may mirror the general level of passion one has for professional life (Jiang & Johnson, 2018). Similarly, a meta-analysis on work centrality uncovers strong relations between the construct of job involvement and work centrality; a positive relationship is demonstrated between the latter and employee satisfaction (Zhou et al., 2023).

Moreover, it was found that younger generations tend to display more narcissistic behaviours. Some researchers challenge the prevailing belief that they are more narcissistic, arguing that narcissism does not increase with age but rather undergoes a continuous decline (Weidmann et al., 2023). The various types of workplace environment considerations related to this perspective should also be considered.

The sample is mainly concentrated on millennials as they are considered the main working force at this moment and understanding them can bring greater cohesion in organizations. While recognizing generational disparities holds significance, it is equally crucial to emphasize shared traits (Appelbaum et al., 2022). At the same time, this can serve as a research limitation that can be addressed by future research endeavours. Additionally, other studies can scale it up in other regions so that the findings can get a cross-country and cross-cultural dimension, considering the increasingly interconnected nature of global teams.

6. CONCLUSION

The workplace landscape is constantly evolving, particularly in the face of recent challenges posed by the pandemic. The aftermath of the pandemic reshaped various aspects of work, including organizational structures and communication methods. The entrance of different generational cohorts in the office is another major observed change, which was addressed by the study. With the anticipated retirement of baby boomers and the influx of younger workers (Generations Z and Alpha) poised to become the leaders of tomorrow, discussions around the evolving workforce dynamics are paramount.

Motivated by this, the study's research objective was to explore the differences in work centrality and employee engagement across different generations in the workplace. Following the data collection and analysis, the study's findings indicate that while there are no statistically significant differences in work centrality among the members of different generations, there are still substantial variations in employee engagement as well as in the relationship between employee engagement and their perceived work centrality.

Amidst all transformations occurring in the workplace, it is essential to recognize the enduring importance of strategies that promote work centrality and foster employee engagement, as they significantly influence personal and organizational performance outcomes. The findings outlined in this research may be useful for developing such strategies for adapting to these changes effectively. This presents an opportunity to enhance practices by aligning employee engagement with evidence-based guidelines rooted in theory and research.

Given that generational groups are profoundly shaped by significant events, such as the pandemic and digital transformation, understanding the implications of these events on the "new normal" workplace is imperative for future research and practice. In this regard, the research holds substantial potential implications for practitioners, business leaders/managers, and policymakers besides the wider scientific community. Connected to this, these various stakeholders are tasked with regulating and analysing different aspects of the contributions and outcomes of different generations in the workplace.

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APPENDIX

Survey Items

Work centrality (based on the Work Centrality Scale by Paullay et al. (1994))

1. In my opinion, an individual's personal life objectives should be work-related.
2. My work provides the majority of my happiness in life.
3. I prioritize other hobbies over my work.
4. I would probably continue to work even if I did not need the money.
5. Almost everything in life is more essential than a job.
6. Overall, I believe work to be highly important to my existence.
7. Work should only be a minor aspect of one's life.
8. Only when individuals are fully engaged in their job does life become worthwhile.
9. The vital things that have happened to me are related to my career.
10. Work should be seen as fundamental to life.
11. My work represents only a small portion of who I am.
12. Even if the unemployment compensation was substantial, I would still choose to work.

Work and well-being (based on the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale by Schaufeli et al. (2006))

1. I feel so full of energy at work.
2. I believe there is a lot of significance and purpose in the work I perform.
3. When I am working, time flies.
4. I feel energized and strong at work.
5. I have passion for what I do.
6. I lose track of everything else when I am working.
7. I am inspired by my work.
8. I have the need to go to work when I wake up.
9. When I am working hard, I feel content.
10. I take pride in the work I accomplish.
11. I am fully absorbed in my task.
12. I am able to work for extended amounts of time.
13. I find my work to be challenging.
14. When I work, I get carried away.
15. I have a strong mental resilience at work.
16. I find it hard to separate myself from my work.
17. I always persevere at work, even when things do not go as planned.

MILENIJALCI MIJENJAJU IGRU: IZAZOVI NOVE GENERACIJE NA RADNOM MJESTU

Aleksandra Janeska-Iliev & Bojan Kitanovikj

Sažetak

Svrha: Sa značajnom prisutnošću članova Generacije Y na radnom mjestu i sve većim brojem zaposlenika Generacije Z, menadžeri se sve više suočavaju s izazovom upravljanja međugeneracijskim razlikama među zaposlenicima. U ovom istraživačkom radu, autori su željeli istražiti utjecaje novih generacije na dinamiku rada. Konkretno, cilj je bio uočiti potencijalne različitosti među generacijskim kohortama u pogledu njihovih stavova prema radnoj centriranosti i kako bi te različitosti mogle utjecati na angažman na poslu, s posebnim naglaskom na Generaciju Z. Metodologija: Istraživački poduhvat temeljio se na podacima od 204 sudionika iz različitih generacijskih kohorti u dobi od 19 do 48 godina. Anketom su prikupljeni podaci o demografskim karakteristikama ispitanika, radnoj centriranosti i aspektima rada te dobrobiti. Za analizu podataka u SPSS-u korištena je Spearmanova korelacija redoslijeda ranga i t-test. Rezultati i implikacije: Rezultati su otkrili značajnu korelaciju između dobi i angažmana na poslu, kao i između radne centriranosti i angažmana na poslu, što sugerira nijansirane odnose unutar raznolikih dobnih skupima na radnom mjestu. Ograničenja: Studija se većinom usredotočila na istraživački kontekst Republike Sjeverne Makedonije, ostavljajući prostor za prekogranične studije. Originalnost: S povećanjem raznolikosti radne snage u smislu dobi, nove generacije potiču transformaciju vrijednosti na radnom mjestu, što posljedično oblikuje novo profesionalno okruženje. To dovodi do rastućeg interesa u akademskim i profesionalnim krugovima. Ipak, nakon opsežnog pretraživanja baze podataka Scopus, utvrđeno je da vrlo malo članaka detaljno opisuju razlike u radnoj centriranosti i razini angažmana na poslu među različitim dobnim skupinama. Stoga će ovo istraživanje pokušati ispuniti tu prazninu.

Ključne riječi: generacijski jaz; ponašanje na radnom mjestu; ravnoteža između posla i privatnog života; angažman zaposlenika; radna centriranost.