
Level of Fulfilment of Expectations towards Work and Employer of Generation Z Employees

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Abstract:

Purpose: The main objective of the research was to identify, analyse and diagnose the level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z employees, as well as the key factors influencing it.

Design/Methodology/Approach: In order to verify the hypotheses posed, the literature analysis and critique method, the diagnostic survey method and statistical methods were used. The study was conducted on the basis of a survey questionnaire, with a randomly selected research sample of 2234 Generation Z people. Column proportions tests were used to determine significant differences in responses between individuals with different education, place of residence and experience in candidate military service. Relationships between variables were tested using Pearson's linear correlation coefficient and also based on the coefficient of the multiple regression model.

Findings: The level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z people is not high and is shaped by many factors. It has been found that the higher the sense of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z people, the higher their motivation to work, willingness to comply with rules, additional medical care, additional group insurance, higher commitment to work, higher acceptance of the service hierarchy, greater gender equality in the organisation and their higher level of coping with uncertainty/unpredictability.

Practical Implications: The practical business implications are mainly concerned with the possibility for managers to use the findings in the process of managing Generation Z employees.

Originality/Value: Education and experience in candidate military service were found to significantly differentiate the fulfilment of job/service and employer expectations among Generation Z.

Keywords: Generation Z, expectations, work, employer, employees.

JEL Classification: J24, M12.

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1. Introduction

The current labour market is still experiencing and will continue to experience a shortage of workers, and the demographic outlook indicates that we are entering a phase of rapidly shrinking labour resources and a concomitant ageing workforce (ManpowerGroup, 2023a). 77% of industrial employers are currently struggling to find qualified staff (Manpower Group, 2023b). Changing employee expectations and concerns about quality of work are becoming more prominent issues around the world (World Economic Forum, 2023; Gross-Gołacka *et al.*, 2022).

Revolution and industrial transformation 5.0 is taking place (European Union, 2022). Increased use of new and pioneering technologies and expanding digital access are the two biggest macro trends driving business transformation between 2023 and 2027 (World Economic Forum, 2023, p. 5).

Against this backdrop, there will be a growing demand for Generation Z, who have grown up in the digital world and have a higher level of competence in it. Soon Generation Z will surpass millennials as the world's most numerous generation, with more than a third of the world's population falling into this group.

Generation Z is entering the labour market at a time when the overall workforce is shrinking. Understanding what is important to them will be crucial to the success of companies in recruiting staff in the future (Deloitte, 2018). As the Generation Z population ages, there are many questions facing companies, including the differences in their expectations, how to manage them, promotion goals and retention strategies (Mengying, 2023).

To better understand the challenges facing this growing workforce and their impact on employers and the labour market, the Network of Executive Women (NEW) and Deloitte surveyed Generation Z to understand the key events that helped shape their lives; explore individual behaviours, attitudes and preferences; and separate myths and stereotypes from reality.

The results of this research showed that Generation Z differs in certain areas from other generations (Deloitte, 2018). This is especially true for behaviour and attitudes towards work, which are not completely different from previous generations, but there are significant differences (Mengying, 2023). Given the growing importance of Generation Z to the labour market, the level of fulfilment of their expectations of their job and employer in their current employment has become a key issue.

A review of the literature on the subject revealed that this is a very poorly recognised issue. The recognised research gap became the rationale for undertaking research whose main aim was to identify, analyse and diagnose the level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z employees, as well as the key factors influencing it (Thalassinos *et al.*, 2019).

These served to answer the following research questions:

Q1. What is the level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employers of Generation Z representatives?

Q2. Do education, place of residence and experience in military service as a candidate significantly differentiate the fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employers of Generation Z people in their current employment/service?

2. Characteristics of Generation Z and Research Hypothesis

Before presenting the characteristic features of Generation Z, it is necessary to make terminological arrangements regarding terms such as generation and Generation Z. A generation is "the totality of individuals born and living at the same time. Belonging to a generation is determined not only by the year of birth, but also by the community of experiences shaped by a particular society" (Golnau, Kalinowski, and Litwin, 2010, p. 231).

A generation is united by an awareness of the fate experienced, identical aims, attitudes and principles of action. Representatives of a generation often have a sense of generational distinctiveness, emerging as a result of a generational event or a generational conflict (Wyka, 1977, p. 50).

When defining the concept of "generation" at the level of the individual, it is necessary to point out the possibility of emergence of individualism, but all its representatives are united by the formation of a common consciousness as to the fate experienced, similar attitudes, rules of conduct and perception of reality (Hassa, 2015, p. 49). Each generation has slightly different beliefs, interests and expectations (Kachniewska, 2014, p. 154).

At the same time, when carrying out the analysis, it should not be forgotten that beliefs about generations are sometimes reduced to stereotypes, i.e., hurtful and unsubstantiated generalisations in which judgements are made about the salient characteristics of a particular individual person solely on the basis of his or her belonging to a specific generation (Costanza and Finkelstein, 2015).

Generation Z is the youngest generation currently entering the labour market. They are people born in the 1990s, i.e., born between 1990 and 1999 (Berkup, 2014, p. 219). Generation Z includes people born and raised in years marked by rapid technological advances and a highly developed digital age, it has the characteristics of the "N-Gen" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1).

Generation Z includes people born and raised in years marked by rapid technological advances and a highly developed digital age, it has the characteristics of the "N-Gen" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Representatives of this generation are more dependent

on online social interactions, in contrast to previous generations (Murzyn and Nogieć, 2015, p. 375). Raised in a digital world, they acquire information on competition, the company's environment, and other information on market behaviour or hiring processes from the web much more easily and quickly (Kotarbiński, 2015, p. 16; Kroenke, 2015, p. 91-104; Gross-Gołacka *et al.*, 2020; Kuzmina *et al.*, 2023).

According to Rusak, they are practical, smart rather than clever and, as they are courageous, they like to lead. They are more impatient and agile than their predecessors and are constantly looking for new challenges and impulses. According to P. Rusak, this generation is not afraid of constant change, having a lot of information from the world of the Internet, which unfortunately is often the main or even the only source for finding solutions to problems that arise (Rusak, 2013, p. 39).

They treat access to the Internet as a window to the world, which provides unlimited access to information and contact with peers, especially through social media (Wziątek-Staśko, 2015, p. 51-52). It is much easier and quicker for them to obtain information from the web about competition, the company's environment, and other information in terms of market behaviour or hiring processes (Kotarbiński, 2015, p. 16).

Gen Z are all comfortable with the digital world and rely on it for learning, shopping, and entertainment. They have never known a world without the Internet and have grown up with social media. Almost a third of Gen Zers spend six hours or longer a day on their phones, a considerably higher share than millennials (22 percent) and Gen Xers (10 percent). They also spend more time on social media (Kim, McInerney, Smith, and Yamakawa, 2020).

They have trouble functioning offline, which often manifests itself in a loss of contact with the people around them, poor ability to focus attention and neglecting other matters and responsibilities. When they need to engage in tasks that do not involve following online portals, discussion forums or Facebook, distractions from completing the activities they have been instructed to do occur (Stillman and Stillman, 2017, p. 4).

They live on the borderline between the real and virtual worlds, which permeate each other. Often virtual contacts replace their real lives, which significantly impairs their verbal communication skills (Wziątek-Staśko, 2015, p. 51-52). They are more demanding than representatives of previous generations. They have no problem looking for new employment, finding jobs throughout Poland or taking advantage of the international labour market (Wawer, 2013, p. 162-167).

They have higher knowledge of foreign languages and new technologies than other generations. They also seem to be more resilient to stress and better organised. By the realities created in the labour market, they are wildly determined and oriented

towards life in a realistic and materialistic way. They have grown up influenced by books (e.g., Harry Potter) and so-called "talent shows", as well as everything branded "i" – iTunes, iPhones, iPods, iPads. They are distinguished by their high mobility and have friends all over the world (Rosa, 2013, p. 33).

They are not afraid of risks and do not think in a schematic way, they learn quickly and make new friends (for them there are no cultural and geographical borders). They feel a gap between reality and desires, and experience the uncertainty of existence. They are restless, disillusioned and often sit at home waiting for someone to pay attention to them and express their opinion (Smolbik-Jęczmień, 2013, p. 89).

They are impatient, lack the ability to cooperate, are immature, demanding and even convinced of infallibility, selfish, overestimate their own abilities, and take criticism badly. They superficially analyze information and have problems with verbal communication (Berkup, 2014; McCrindle, 2014; Wziętek-Staśko, 2015).

Radically different than Millennials, this generation has an entirely unique perspective on careers and how to define success in life and in the workforce Deloitte (2018). Remuneration is a key factor of motivation for Generation Z (Fazlagić, 2008, p. 13-15).

In addition to this, Generation Z expects a fair connection between work performance and the remuneration received (Borges *et al.*, 2010). According to international research, the most expected aspects of their employment are: attractive salary and benefits (indicated by 66% of respondents) (Employer Brand Research, 2019). Gen Z still prioritises financial security over 'personal fulfilment' and looks for diverse and entrepreneurial opportunities, which also offer the safety of stable employment (Deloitte, 2018).

They always, or almost always, look for discounts (Kim, McInerney, Smith, and Yamakawa, 2020). Their views on gender and identity are unprecedented and non-traditional. They expect gender equality and acceptance of diversity (Deloitte, 2018; The New York Times, 2019).

Some authors consider Generation Z to be a diverse and internally divided group, in which many different characteristics, aspirations and attitudes intersect (Euromonitor International Strategy Briefing, 2011).

The study set out the following hypotheses.

H1: The level of fulfilment of job/service and employer expectations of Generation Z people in current employment is not high.

H2: Education, place of residence and experience in candidate military service, significantly differentiate the fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z individuals in their current employment/service.

H3: The fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z individuals is shaped by a number of factors.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

A quantitative and qualitative study was carried out in Lower Silesia, based on a survey questionnaire, among 2234 representatives of Generation Z. 81% of them were still school students. 8% were students. The structure of the respondents from the point of view of education was as follows: 5% had basic education, 5% basic vocational education and 1% higher education. 91% were unemployed.

Some of them already had work experience, although 64% had never worked before. 60% of the respondents resided in medium-sized towns (population between 20,000 - 100,000), 22% in rural areas, 11% in small towns (population below 20,000) and 6% in large cities (population above 200,000). Random sampling was used.

3.2 Measures and Variables Definitions

It was decided to establish the level of fulfilment of work expectations of Generation Z employees based on a self-assessment. The usefulness of self-assessment in the process of identifying qualities is indicated by numerous authors (Cattell, 1957; Costa and McCrae, 2008).

The level of fulfilment of job expectations was determined using a seven-point Likert scale from 1 to 7, where 1 - completely not met, 2 - not met, 3 - rather not met, 4 - no opinion, 5 - rather met, 6 - met 7 - completely met). Generation Z in the study was defined as those born between 1990 and 1999 (Berkup, 2014, p. 219). Expectations meant assumptions, hopes and desires (Słownik języka polskiego 2002, vol. II p. 420 and 820; vol. III p. 761). Job and employer expectations were defined as a group of expectations and demands placed on the job and employer by employees.

3.3 Data Analysis

The research was conducted in order to verify the research thesis formulated as a result of the analysis of the literature on the subject, which was that Generation Z's expectations towards work and employers were not fully met. The following methods were used to verify the theses and hypotheses: literature review diagnostic survey method, document research method and statistical methods. Quantitative and qualitative research was conducted using a self-administered survey questionnaire. Column proportion tests were used to determine significant differences in responses between people with different education, place of residence and different experience of candidate military service.

Relationships between variables were established using Pearson's linear correlation coefficient. A value of 0.05 was used as the level of significance (indicated * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$). A reliability check was undertaken for the scales in the questions from the survey questionnaire, which describe the consistency, reliability and reproducibility of the measurement results. The Cronbach's α -Cronbach's level for the questions diagnosing competences, concerning the circular economy, was 0.887, indicating high reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire. Calculations were performed, using the statistical programme R ver. 3.6.0.

4. Results

The hypotheses H1, H2, H3 formulated in the study were subjected to verification in the empirical studies. As a first step, it was undertaken to establish to what extent the expectations of Generation Z respondents towards work/service and employer were met in their current employment/service. Respondents were asked to rate the fulfilment of their expectations on a scale of 1-7. For 34% of respondents, in general, expectations towards work/service and employers were met (rather met, met, completely met), while for 23%, expectations were not met (rather not met, not met, completely not met). A fairly large group, 44%, felt that their expectations were neither not met nor met (Table 1).

Table 1. Meeting respondents' expectations towards work/military service and employers, taking into account the criterion of experience in candidate military service (cadet/potential candidate (civilian) ($N=2234$).

Please evaluate to what extent your expectations of your military work/service and employers have been met in your current work/service?	Everyone	Podchorąży (cadet)	Potential candidate for professional military service
	% of N	% of N	% of N
completely not met	13	2	13
not met	3	9	2
rather not met	7	10	7
neither not met nor met	44	19	45
rather met	20	32	19
Met	8	21	7
completely met	6	7	6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors' own research.

In the next step, the associations of fulfilling expectations with experience in candidate military service were analyzed. Large differences were observed in the fulfilment of expectations between cadets and potential candidates for professional military service. For up to 60% of cadets, expectations were met (rather met, met, completely met), while for 21% they were not met (rather not met, not met, completely not met).

Among potential candidates for professional military service, only 32% felt their expectations were met, while 22% did not (Table 1).

This may indicate that the Armed Forces, compared to other organizations, are more concerned with meeting the expectations of cadets doing military service as candidates. Meeting the expectations of the respondents was also analyzed according to their education and place of residence (Table 2).

Table 2. Meeting respondents' expectations towards work/military service and employers, taking into account the criterion of respondents' place of residence and education (civilian) (N=2234).

Meeting expectations towards work/military service and employers	Place of residence				Education				
	Rural areas	Small town (population below 20,000)	Medium-sized town (population between 20,000 - 100,000)	Large city (population above 200,000)	School student	Student	Basic vocational	Secondary	Higher
	% of N	% of N	% of N	% of N	% of N	% of N	% of N	% of N	% of N
completely not met	10	9	15	7	15	3	6	2	0
not met	4.8	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.3	7.2	0.0	2.8	0.0
rather not met	7	12	5	9	7	8	8	6	8
neither not met nor met	47	44	43	44	43	21	76	50	29
rather met	17	17	21	23	19	32	6	25	25
met	9	9	8	7	7	21	3	11	17
completely met	5	6	7	7	7	8	2	4	21

Source: Authors' own research.

The work/service expectations of those living in large cities were met to a higher degree compared to those living in smaller towns and rural areas. Similarly, the expectations of those with higher education were met to a higher extent than those with lower education (secondary and basic vocational) (Table 2). It was decided to test whether the differences in the fulfilment of expectations in the above-mentioned regard between the study groups were statistically significant.

A chi-squared test of independence was used to check whether the variable: meeting Generation Z's expectations towards work/service and employers and the variables:

experience in military service as a candidate, place of residence and education are independent (Table 3).

With all the criteria analyzed in Table 3, the p-value (2-sided asymptotic significance) in the chi-squared test table is equal to zero (.000), indicating that the probability of error in rejecting the true null hypothesis of no difference is very close to zero. Therefore, at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, there is a relationship between meeting expectations towards work/service and employers in current work/service and place of residence.

Table 3. Relationship between meeting expectations towards work/service and employers in current work/service and place of residence, education and military service experience (cadet/potential candidate for professional military service) ($N=2234$).

Please evaluate to what extent your expectations of your military work/service and employers have been met in your current work/service?		Candidate (cadet/potential candidate for professional military service)	Place of residence	Education
Meeting expectations	chi-squared	106.072	52.470	190.583
	Df	6	18	24
	Significance	.000*	.000*	.000*

Note: * the chi-squared test is significant at the .05 level

Source: Authors' own research.

Similarly, at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, there is a relationship between meeting expectations towards work/service and employers and education, as well as between meeting expectations towards work/service and employers and experience in candidate military service.

It was checked which rows and columns cause this relationship. In the column proportions test table, each category of the variable in the column was assigned a letter key A, B, C, D. For each statistically significant pair, the category key with the smaller proportion was placed under the category with the larger proportion.

For example, the letter B under the category A (cadet) next to the item "met" indicates that the expectations of cadets with regard to work/service and employers were met to a significantly higher degree than those of potential candidates for professional military service (Table 4). It was similar for the answer "rather met". Expectations towards work/service were completely not met for significantly more potential candidates for professional military service than cadets (Table 4).

Another criterion analyzed is the place of residence. With regard to the meeting of Generation Z's expectations at the level of "rather met", "met" and "completely met", no significant differences were identified in relation to place of residence. In

contrast, we found that the expectations of those from rural areas were not met to a significantly higher degree compared to those from small towns.

Similarly, the expectations of people from small towns were "rather not met" to a significantly higher degree compared to those living in medium-sized towns. The expectations of those with higher education were significantly met to a higher degree (at the level of "rather met", "met" and "completely met") than those with basic vocational education, and also at the level of "completely fulfilled" than those with secondary education (Table 4).

People with basic education do not have an opinion on the fulfilment of their expectations significantly more often than all other groups, such as school students, students, people with secondary and higher education.

Table 4. Statistically significant differences in responses on the meeting Generation Z's expectations towards work/service and employers between people with different place of residence, education and experience in military service (cadet/potential candidate for professional military service) (N=2234).

Please evaluate to what extent your expectations of your military job/service and employers have been fulfilled in your current work/service?	Candidate		Place of residence				Education				
	Podchorąży (cadet)	Potential candidate for professional military service	Rural areas	Small town (population below 20,000)	Medium-sized town (population between 20,000 - 100,000)	Large city (population above 200,000)	School student	Student	Basic vocational	Secondary	Higher
	A	B	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	E
completely not met		A			A		B C D				
not met	B		C					A			
rather not met				C							
no opinion		A					B		A B D E	B	
rather met	B						C	A C		C	C
Met	B							A C			C
completely met											C D

Source: Authors' own research.

Using Pearson's linear correlation coefficient, statistically significant positive moderate to weak correlations were found between Generation Z people's sense of fulfilled

expectations towards work/service and employer and a number of factors. It turned out that the higher the sense of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z people, the higher their motivation to work ($r = 0.581$; $p < 0.05$), willingness to conform to rules ($r = 0.433$; $p < 0.05$), commitment to work ($r = 0.322$; $p < 0.05$), acceptance of the work hierarchy ($r = 0.292$; $p < 0.05$), ability to cope with uncertainty/unpredictability ($r = 0.262$; $p < 0.05$) and mobility ($r = 0.221$; $p < 0.05$). It was also found that the level of fulfilment of expectations is shaped by factors offered by the Employer.

The fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z people is higher the more they receive from their employer: additional medical care ($r = 0.342$; $p < 0.05$), additional group insurance ($r = 0.326$; $p < 0.05$), gender equality ($r = 0.267$; $p < 0.05$), cinema/theatre tickets ($r = 0.249$; $p < 0.05$), subsidised meals at work ($r = 0.232$; $p < 0.05$), better technological computer/mobile phone equipment ($r = 0.204$; $p < 0.05$) and the opportunity to use digital technologies that will support mobile working (e.g. e-work, cloud, etc.) ($r = 0.167$; $p < 0.05$).

The relationship between Generation Z respondents' interest in professional military service and the level of fulfilment of their expectations of their job and employer was also analyzed using the coefficient of the Beta (β) regression model. It allows the validity of the predictors in the model to be compared with each other (in the case of multiple regression analysis).

Table 5. Associations between the interest in professional military service of Generation Z respondents and the level of fulfilment of their expectations of their job and employer based on the coefficient of the regression model ($N=2234$).

Model	Non-standardised ratios		Standardised β s	T	Relevance	Collinearity statistics	
	B	Standard error	Beta (β)			tolerance ratio	VIF
Level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z employees	-0,011	0,023	,009	-0,48	0,629	0,675	1,481

Source: Authors' own research.

It was found that there is a very weak negative relationship between the predictor (fulfilment of expectations towards job and employer) and the dependent variable (interest in professional military service). Meaning that the higher the level of fulfilment of expectations towards job/service and employer, the lower the interest in professional military service.

However, the p-value of 0.629 was found not to be statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that although the

expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z will be fulfilled, this does not mean that they will be less interested in professional military service (Table 5).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study made it possible to verify hypotheses H1, H2 and H3. Hypothesis H1 was confirmed, as it turned out that the level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z people, in their current employment, is not high. Interpreting these results, it can be concluded that the younger generation may have higher expectations of work/service than the older generations, and/or contemporary managers are insufficiently concerned with meeting their needs. This may be due to a lack of knowledge about the issue or ignoring it.

Hypothesis H2 was partially confirmed, i.e., that education and candidate military service experience significantly differentiate the fulfilment of job/service and employer expectations of Generation Z individuals. Hypothesis H3 was positively verified, as it turned out that the level of fulfilment of expectations towards work/service and employer of Generation Z people is shaped by a number of factors.

It turned out to be higher the higher their motivation to work, their willingness to comply with rules, their commitment to work, their acceptance of the work hierarchy, their ability to cope with uncertainty/unpredictability and their mobility, but also additional medical care, group insurance, gender equality, free cinema/theatre tickets, subsidised meals at work, technologically better computer equipment/phone and the possibility to use digital technologies that will support the mobile working mode (e.g., e-work, cloud, etc.).

In approaching the discussion of the research results obtained, it is important to state that gender equality and social justice are important to Generation Z people, as previous research has also pointed out (Mengying, 2023). The situation is analogous with regard to mobility at work, which Generation Z people prefer (Rosa, 2013, p. 33). In contrast to other studies, health security and the associated additional medical care and group insurance became important for Generation Z people.

Thus, their expectation of the security of stable employment (Deloitte, 2018) and satisfactory remuneration (Kupczyk *et al.*, 2021; Fazlagić, 2008; Borges *et al.*, 2010; Employer Brand Research, 2019) has been extended to other areas, such as maintaining good health through additional private healthcare or subsidised food at work. Generation Z depends on the level of fulfilment of their expectations from their job and employer on the technological sophistication of the equipment they use at work, as other studies have already pointed out (Mengying, 2023), nevertheless they are now strongly betting on the possibility of using digital technologies to support a mobile work mode (e.g., e-work, cloud, etc.).

It should be noted that the empirical findings presented in the paper have their limitations. For example, the relationships between the level of fulfilment of expectations of work/service and employer and the factors influencing them are moderate and some are low. Nonetheless, they cannot be underestimated, especially as Generation Z is the digital generation and is key to the developing Industry 5.0.

Further theoretical and empirical exploration in this area should therefore be considered necessary in order to rationalise the research methodology and organise terminology and views. Particularly useful would be research carried out in an international setting and this would take into account gender, age and personality criteria.

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