



## A LOOK AT WORK MOTIVATION IN A GENERATIONAL CONTEXT

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The analyzed data come from the research project entitled “Work Motivation in a Generational Context – 2023/24” conducted under the author’s supervision and published in the form of a monograph [1]. Due to the extensive scope of the material presented in the book, this article focuses on a selected part of the results, emphasizing issues highlighted in the title.

Following a review of the relevant literature, three research questions were formulated:

1. Which aspects of work are most valued by employees in different occupational and generational groups?
2. What are the most common sources of job dissatisfaction, and how do they affect professional motivation?
3. What are the differences in the perception of work between different generations?

On this basis, the following research hypotheses were proposed for the part of the study presented below:

H1. Older generations are more strongly connected with work at the level of professional development and organizational impact, whereas younger ones are still shaping their expectations toward it.

H2. There are universal factors influencing job satisfaction, regardless of generational affiliation.

In organizing and conducting the study, general scientific methods such as synthesis, induction, deduction, abstraction, and generalization were applied to understand the theoretical and methodological foundations of the chosen research direction. Comparative methods were used to identify differences or similarities between selected indicators. Primary data for empirical analysis were collected using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) technique. The questionnaire was made available on a dedicated website. The survey was conducted between 31 October 2023 and 30 June 2024, yielding 460 valid responses.

The analysis showed that Generation X values independence (45.1% vs. 25.8%), task diversity (40.7% vs. 27.8%), challenges (29.0% vs. 15.2%), and a sense of meaningful work (42.6% vs. 30.3%) more than Generation Z. This

suggests that for the older generation, a sense of influence over their work and the ability to achieve personal professional goals are crucial. This aligns with other findings of the project showing that managers and specialists (mainly from older generations) are more likely than manual workers to seek challenges and creative opportunities for growth.

Responsibility, understood as the ability to make decisions, was also more valued by Generations X (34.0%) and Y (37.0%) than by Generation Z (18.7%). This may stem from career stage – older generations are more often in managerial positions and accustomed to greater autonomy at work. Similarly, job security was more important for Generations Y (48.0%) and X (43.2%) than Z (32.3%), as concerns about labor market changes increase with age, making stability a dominant value. No significant differences were found in factors such as good workplace atmosphere, supervisor support, clearly defined duties, or proper working hours, which suggests these are universal values appreciated regardless of age.

In summary, Generations X and Y place greater importance on autonomy, diversity, and meaningful work, while Generation Z attaches less weight to these elements, focusing more on basic aspects of employment. These results confirm hypothesis H1: older generations are more connected with work through professional development and organizational influence, while younger ones are still shaping their expectations.

Next, the relationship between generational affiliation and the choice of least liked aspects of work was examined. Data analysis showed that Generation Y more often than Generation Z pointed to workplace competition as a negative factor (40.0% vs. 24.7%), which may result from their greater sensitivity to social relations and preference for cooperation over rivalry. This is consistent with earlier studies showing that Generation Y values workplace atmosphere and team support. It was this generation that brought to organizations demands for stronger emphasis on values, improved atmosphere, and meaningful cooperation rather than individualistic competition.

The issue of unreliable coworkers was most frequently raised by Generation X (46.3%), while among Generation Z it was only 28.3%. This may suggest that older employees, with greater work experience, pay more attention to the quality of cooperation and expect greater responsibility from others. This is in line with previous findings showing that Generation X more often values independence and responsibility at work.

Unfair pay was particularly important for Generation Y (43.0%), which may reflect their professional aspirations and unmet expectations in the early stages of careers, as well as job changes. Among Generation Z, this percentage was 27.8%, suggesting younger workers are more flexible and not yet strongly focused on financial aspects. These results align with earlier studies showing that



Generation Y more often feels financially underappreciated and perceives pay injustice.

In other aspects such as stress, internal conflicts, or fear of job loss, no significant generational differences were found. This confirms hypothesis H2 that these are universal factors influencing job satisfaction, regardless of age. Generational differences in work perception stem not only from age but also from career stage and related expectations.

The study revealed that attitudes toward work differ between Generations X, Y, and Z, highlighting the importance of generational diversity management in organizations. Older generations (X and Y) show stronger attachment to autonomy, responsibility, and meaningfulness of work, while younger ones (Z) more often perceive it as a necessity or a tool for achieving short-term goals. A good workplace atmosphere and relations with supervisors, however, proved to be universal values across all generations. The study also confirmed that factors such as stress, conflicts, or lack of respect are negatively perceived by all groups, pointing to shared employee needs for safety and recognition. For those interested in the topic, the author recommends the referenced publication presenting the full research results, as well as the website [projectxyz.wase.edu.pl](http://projectxyz.wase.edu.pl), which provides additional information including the research report “Work Motivation in the XYZ Era.”

#### REFERENCES

1. Kisiołek A. (red.), (2025), *Motywacja do pracy w erze XYZ. Nowe wyzwania i perspektywy*, Wydawnictwo TNOiK Dom Organizatora, Toruń.