Generation Z's career aspirations.
Literature review and preliminary findings

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Abstract. *This research investigates the professional goals of persons born between 1995 and 2012, known as Generation Z, Gen Z, or digital natives. Generation Z was born and raises with the social web, they are digitally oriented, and technology is an extension of their identity. This generation will enter the workforce in the future, but still, there is less knowledge about their strengths, demands, and work style. This paper systematically reviews the academic literature about Generation Z's aspirations. The research was done in three major academic databases to gather material for review: Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The predictions of previous studies concluded that Generation Z had well-defined professional aspirations and objectives for career development. They demand increased freedom and the ability to work remotely, collaboratively, and seamlessly across all of their devices in the workplace. Contributing meaningfully to the world is also essential to them. Individuals want their participation to be valued and are less tolerant of authoritarian circumstances, such as a hierarchical corporate culture. This research focuses on the career goals of Generation Z, their varied characteristics, and the environmental factors that influence their professional progress and job aspiration understanding the new generation's aspirations are critical for designing successful employment policies. Youth employment programs that aim to align talents with labor market opportunities may continue to fail if career aspirations and life objectives are not considered.*

Keywords: Career aspiration; Career development; Generation Z; Gen Z; Employment.

Introduction

Generation Z constitutes 26% of the total population across the world (Wise, 2022). Generation Z will soon surpass Millennials as the world's most populous generation, representing more than a quarter of the global population (Wise, 2022). Its members are about to enter the workforce, therefore their professional aspirations must be studied to support organizations in building an efficient inclusion strategy for them.

According to the current searches, generations are linked through shared experiences, life experiences, and values; each generation has different views regarding labor and the workplace (Pinzaru, et al., 2016). Companies are continuously struggling to improve their people strategies in order to comply with the needs of Generations X and Y. In addition to this, now, organizations should update their strategies in order to meet the aspirations and demands of a very new generation, Generation Z. The appearance of these new employees will have immediate effects on the workplace, retail consumption, and technology, as well as on politics and society. This generation has a different outlook

on employment and how to measure success in life and at the workplace compared to Millennials (Deloitte, 2019).

The challenges for companies are not just to serve Generations X and Y, but also to anticipate the working demands of the upcoming Generation Z, so that multigenerational teams may function effectively (Maloni, Hiatt, & Campbell, 2019). Therefore, companies should anticipate the demands of the workplace and adjust their strategies for attracting, motivating, and retaining these new young workers who will soon be entering the workforce. It is essential for companies to understand in order to retain the talents of the newest generation, as well to realize their advantages to sustain the company's growth. By knowing the qualities and interests of Generation Z, organizations will be able to attract and connect them so they can be developed to become the company's future leaders. Without this knowledge, companies would struggle to recruit and retain the most brilliant members of Generation Z, and they will fail to excite and inspire them, which will have a negative influence on organizational performance (Pinzaru, Mihalcea, & Zbuchea, 2017).

This theoretical investigation aims to answer the following research questions: What characteristics and particulars define Generation Z? Which studies have been conducted on Generation Z in the area of its professional aspiration? Because many Generation Z studies have been conducted on students, predicting their working behavior is difficult. This research combines current information about Generation Z students' job objectives and the expectations of their prospective employers and synthesizes empirical studies on Generation Z professional ambitions. It outlines the findings of theoretical research on Generation Z.

Literature review

There has been a generational gap in understanding between older employers and younger applicants every time a new generation has entered the workforce. A generation is a cohort of individuals born around the same time who are influenced by the same social, economic, technological, and political conditions (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010). They also define a generation as a group of individuals with a common birth date, go through the same formative experiences, and are influenced by the same era's social, economic, technological, and political climates (McCrindle, & Wolfinger, 2010). Belonging to a group, sharing similar values and practices, and have had similar life experiences and viewpoints are the three most important criteria for grouping people together (Howe & Strauss, 1992).

Academic studies have extensively researched older generations such as baby boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Callahan & Greenhaus, 2008; Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012) but with Generation Z entering the workforce, organizations must understand also this newest generation to fulfill all of their employees' workplace demands and to create the proper organizational culture. Identifying the trends of a new generation may be difficult, particularly in areas such as communication preferences, professional goals, workplace needs, and methods of working and attaining objectives. It can be also challenging to foster an organizational culture that inspires individuals of all ages, cultures, values, working experiences, social and professional competencies, and communication skills to work together productively. Therefore, it is difficult to design

managerial systems that will adequately educate organizations and employees for such professional environments (Vasilyeva et., 2020).

Preliminary studies in the fields of education and marketing have looked into Generation Z and their educational choices, as well as how to sell to them. Generation Z has been described as digital natives (Noble & Bernes College, 2018; Twenge, 2017) extremely achievement-oriented (Barna, 2018), and seeking intriguing and important jobs (Schroth, 2019). The studies show that members of this generation have grown up with the Internet always present in their lives (Roblek et al., 2019). This generation has more friends than previous generations (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017) and maintains frequent contact with them. Despite their ability to deal with many tasks at once, they often struggle to focus on any of them for very long. They are materialistic in that they want everything and they want it now, but they are also practical. They are ambitious and open to new ideas. They get much of their education online and often develop new concepts on their own, rather than relying on more established bodies of information. They openly disseminate online information (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017). When it comes to the workplace, members of Generation Z are accustomed to using digital recruiting tools (Derous & De Fruyt, 2016) and are more likely to select flexible work schedules (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017).

Generation Z is not satisfied with the traditional view of a profession as a series of incremental gains over time; they want success now and want it to come easily. They are characterized by their mobility and knowledge of other languages, which leads them to seek employment not only in their direct proximity but also in other countries. They easily adjust to new nations and environments. Generation Z is open to high risk. Its members are not always concerned about job security. They want variety and dislike regularity. They are eager to learn about and discover new things, for example, by a willingness to communicate with people from other cultures, take on foreign internships, implement new work methods, and improve existing processes (Chomątowska et al., 2021).

Organizations are seeing a mix of four generations simultaneously, with Generation Z as the newest player in the workplace. Organizations are witnessing an increasing work-value conflict and variances in learning styles, beliefs, and communication styles with four distinct generations in the workplace (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016).

The essential dilemma is whether corporations will push this younger generation to adhere to established organizational cultures, or whether managers will attempt to adjust organizational responses to this shifting environment and Generation Z's preferences. Good organizational cultures often have solid foundations and solid standards, but companies must also be responsive to changes in the nature of their workforce pool, demonstrating flexibility based on the problem-solving process and lessons learned (Fratričová & Kirchmayer, 2018).

Methodology

The literature review is a crucial component of the research to detect potential gaps, offer the appropriate background for the intended investigation of Generation Z's professional aspirations, and determine which questions have already been answered.

From a practical standpoint, this research aims to establish a foundation upon which to build the future management model for Generation Z.

The objectives of this review are to:
O1. Identify the relevant literature about Generation Z's aspirations, beliefs, expectations, and the relationships between them.
O2. Compile the existing studies and provide a comprehensive review of Generation Z's career aspirations
O3. Determinate research gaps and make recommendations for future desired data collection.

Because each area of this review has its own scope and aims, multiple search approaches were used to identify the most relevant research. In order to build the notion of aspirations, early academic and business discussions of aspirations were reviewed (Bert & David, 2016). The criteria for the systematic review follow a clear strategy (Figure 1). The papers utilized in this study were found by a systematic search (Rother, 2007) of Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus databases. The search outcome is a total of 127 articles, business reports, conference papers, and books from the aforementioned data sources.

Database Selection	Keyword Selection	Article Collection	Inclusion/Exclusion criteria applied	Reviewing the final selection

Figure 1. Methodology
(Source: Own processing)

The research was done by searching the following terms using versions of Boolean connectors ("AND" and "OR"). Aspirations, Generation Zs' aspirations, aspirations and labor market outcomes, occupational outcomes and choices, drivers of aspirations, social interactions and aspirations, aspirations, and economic change, career development, career aspiration, Generation Z, Gen Z, and iGen were among the keywords used to identify relevant papers. The article or book title, primary author, source database, type of work, organization or scientific publications, the country where the paper was published, publication year, and keywords related to the research were all indexed in an excel-folder. The preliminary findings imported into an excel spreadsheet have been read and assessed whether to be included in the review (Carver et al, 2013). The final step included reading all of the titles returned by the search and the abstracts and complete articles. The inclusion criteria followed the abovementioned path but applied to standalone industry reports. The research eliminated certain publications where the article's focus was not on Generation Z's professional goals. Some publications just referenced Generation Z briefly and concentrated on other generations in the workforce, particularly millennials or Generation Y. There were excluded articles that did not make a clear distinction between Generation Z and other generations in the workforce. Some articles used the phrase Generation Z to refer to both Generation Z and Generation Y. The articles that did not provide any empirical data to support their findings have been excluded and industry reports without consistent evidence of data gathering.

Results and discussion

Despite the fact that the majority of research was conducted on students, it is important to note that the studies that have been reviewed presented worldwide perspectives on Generation Z's aspirations for their professional lives. It is worth highlighting an increased focus on this topic after 2020 (Figure 2).
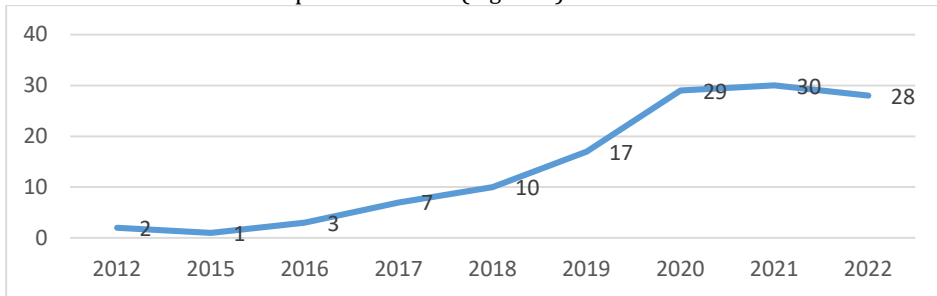
Figure 2. Years Distribution
(Source: Own processing)

After consistently reviewing the existing literature (Figure 3), this research classified the following subthemes under the larger topic of professional aspiration: personal elements influencing job ambitions, external factors influencing career aspirations, and future organizations' leadership model.
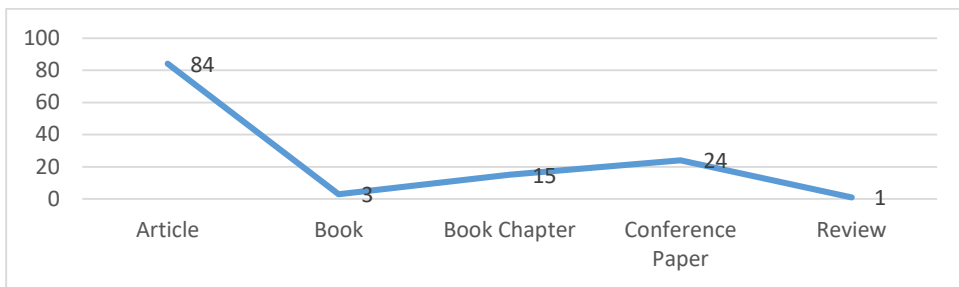

Figure 3. Type of papers(Source: Own processing)

Personal elements influencing Generation Z's professional aspirations

Generation Z has high self-perception and awareness (Iorgulescu, 2016). Generation Z's strong levels of self-confidence and perseverance are the result of their independent learning and practice. Their perseverance enables them to develop the optimistic and self-confident outlook necessary for achieving entrepreneurial success and monetary objectives (Cseh-Papp et al., 2017).

Dell (2018) questioned 12,000 high school and college students from around the globe, where 17 countries have been represented, about their views on future careers. The key findings (Figure 4.) align with the majority of the existing studies. Generation Z is eager to use their skills to the development of new technologies and to teach others about them; Generation Z wants more than simply money for its work; Generation Z is ready for more human engagement; Generation Z is concerned about data security but is

unclear how to solve it; Generation Z is confident in their technological abilities but that does not correspond to job readiness (Dell, 2018).
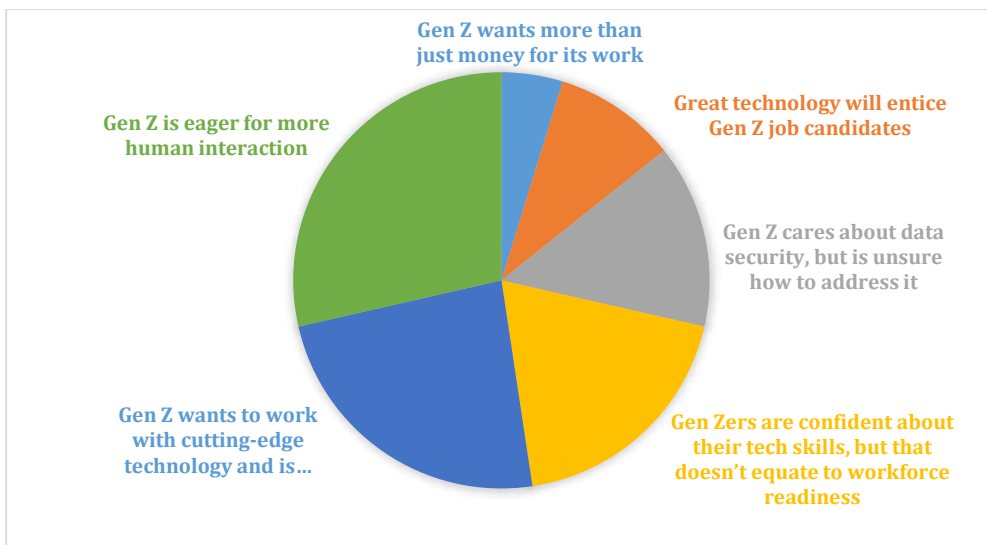
Figure 4. Generation Z aspirations
(Source: DELL, 2018)

External factors influencing Generation Z's professional aspirations

Deloitte (2022) performed a recent study on Generation Z in order to analyze their top concerns. According to Deloitte(2022), members of Generation Z are extremely concerned about the status of the world and are struggling to find a balance between their desire for change and the limitations of their day-to-day lives. They are experiencing concerns over their finances while also attempting to invest ecologically. Regardless of their exhaustion, many are doing second jobs while advocating for better pay and greater freedom in their first employment. Employees increase their influence on their employers to take actions to combat climate change, particularly in areas in which they can make a difference. Businesses, on the other hand, maybe give up opportunities to encourage more comprehensive and efficient climate action. They have motivated their organizations to improve conditions for mental health at work, but employees are not always open to discussing their own issues or taking advantage of existing support services. Many individuals all over the world have reviewed their priorities as a result of the dynamic circumstances of the previous few years. This period of unprecedented voluntary turnover gives several chances for Generation Z. Employee requests for ongoing workplace transformations, such as higher compensation, more flexibility, a better work-life balance, increased learning and development opportunities, better mental health and wellness support, and a greater commitment from businesses to positively impact society, are also the strategies that will help employers attract and retain talent (Dell, 2018).

Generation Z desires to work in software enterprises (Dell, 2018; Glassdoor, 2019). 80% of Dell, (2018) survey respondents wanted to work with cutting-edge technology. Companies such as IBM, Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and Deloitte are five of the most

aspiring places to work because of the independent work culture promised by they (Glassdoor, 2019).

They justified their decision with phrases like "work atmosphere," "flexible hours," and "excellent salary" (Glassdoor, 2019). Over the course of three months, positions such as software engineers and software developers drew one out of every five Generation Z candidates across all industries, including information technology (IT), retail, manufacturing, and finance (Glassdoor, 2019). Organizational characteristics, such as size, attracts Generation Z employees (Iorgulescu, 2016; Cseh-Papp et al., 2017) and nearly half of Iorgulescu's (2016) sample expressed the desire to work for a multinational corporation.

Future organizations' leadership model

This research outlines the big dilemma of organizations that do not know if their organizational culture should be adjusted to new generation aspirations or push them to comply with existing models. Organizations are still unsure how to fulfill Generation Z's job goals based on what is known about them (Fratričová & Kirchmayer, 2018). Generation Z is now 26% of the global workforce (Manpowergroup, 2018), making it critical for enterprises to understand them to make realistic suggestions. While most companies have access to technology, Generation Z may have unfulfilled professional aspirations since organizations are not always ready to host this new generation.

Companies must assess their performance appraisal and compensation adjustment systems in order to develop and benefit from this generation. Employee engagement and making the workplace enjoyable will ensure employee loyalty and organizational performance.

Conclusions

This research met its initial objectives and concluded that there is an increased academic interest in Generation Z's professional aspirations, life, and customer perspective.

Furthermore, the findings identified the practical need for future research on leadership models and managerial techniques to address Generation Z's needs. Moreover, the existing research is focused on the personal and external drivers that define Generation Z's goals. However, there is a research gap regarding the industry concerns about the impact of Generation Z on the company's growth. It is important that future research be also concentrated on filling this gap in order to provide a consistent approach.

Regarding the leadership framework, the key takeaway is that members of Generation Z have distinct demands and preferences from businesses. Fortunately, there are distinguishing factors between some of them. However, in order to attract Generation Z employees, managers and HR departments in particular will need to build a new leadership model so that they can meet Generation Zs' demanding standards for communication speed, transparency, openness, commitment to core values, etc.

The key individual factors from this research and the review literature are linked to the need for a new leadership model that is more inclusive of the new generation's expectations. Generation Z is driven by innate motivation. Companies must recognize this and create more empowering and self-driven rules rather than hierarchical ones. The emphasis of speed, efficiency, and data validation are emphasized in Generation Z

DNA. Companies must establish trustworthy relationships with these on-the-go employees and try to realize that their restless outer behavior is what makes them productive and effective at multitasking. The more effective method to approach the core of this generation is through proper training, a friendlier attitude, and social networking. Organizations must assess their performance appraisal and compensation adjustment systems in order to develop and retain this generation. Employee engagement and making the workplace enjoyable will ensure employee loyalty and performance for the firm.

Generation Z is the newest generation to enter the workforce. With limited research on this cohort, this research compiles the existing knowledge of Generation Z students' career aspirations and their future employers' expectations. All research on Generation Z is focused on students; hence, predicting their workplace behavior is challenging (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). In addition, the fact that there are just a few academic databases selected as sources presents an extra limitation for the research to overcome. From a practical perspective, there is also an additional constraint in the industry involvement in quantifying the impact of Generation Z's entry into the workforce. Practical researches are a critical element for having a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z adoption. This research compiles the existing limited knowledge about Generation Z's professional aspirations and introduces the need for empirical studies to assist the organization and managers in identifying how to empower, engage, and grow Generation Z employees.

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