

CRUCIAL WORK ENVIRONMENT FACTORS FOR DIFFERENT GENERATIONS' EMPLOYEE-ORGANISATION FIT

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Abstract: Recently, the challenges of managing different generations have been increasingly emphasised, arguing that different environmental factors are important for different generations, leading to the employee-organisation fit. Drawing upon the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, employee-organisation fit approach, and cohort perspective, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the crucial work environment factors for different generations' employee-organisation fit. While studying this issue, several presumptions were proposed and tested using a linear regression method. The quantitative data were collected from questionnaires distributed in Lithuania using simple random sampling (311 responses). The empirical research findings show that the factors of job resources (autonomy, feedback, trust, and leadership) affect the all different generations' employee-organisation fit more substantially than job demands factors (workload, work pressure, and emotional demands). Moreover, results confirm that the employee-organisation fit for different generations is ultimately determined by different environmental factors.

Key words: generational diversity, JD-R theory, employee-organisation fit

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2019.19.1.28

Article history:

Received March 15, 2019; *Revised* April 02, 2019; *Accepted* April 18, 2019

Introduction

Due to the changes in demographic characteristics of employees and the challenges they cause, management of different generations has attracted the interest of researchers and employers. According to the theory of Howe and Strauss (2009), every 20 years, a new, unique generation emerges and experiences social, economic, political and cultural events within a specific time span (Vincent, 2005; Lewis, 2015). These different experiences form the personal characteristics of each generation (Smits et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2012). Moreover, studies show that different generations have different work values and attitudes (Twenge et al., 2010; Gursoy and Karadag, 2013; Hillman, 2014; Cucina et al., 2018), motivation and expectations (Bennett et al., 2012, Singh and Gupta, 2015), and leadership and behaviour (Gentry et al., 2011; Rudolph et al., 2017). This implies the need for

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knowledge on the ways to manage each generation and the measures that could be taken to suit all generations.

Despite the research on intergenerational differences at work already carried out (Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Lewis, 2015, Yang and Matz-Costa, 2017), scientists and practitioners are currently faced with a mass of unsystematic evidence in different contexts and with different methodological and theoretical perspectives of generations (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). One of the directions of trended research is employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity, which presupposes a complex approach not only identifying the environmental factors that are important to different generations, but also linking them to the employee-organisation fit. The evidence of such linkage in the context of generational diversity would allow matching the needs of employees of different generations and provide evidence-based suggestions that enable managing the generational diversity by increasing the employee-organisation fit and leading to better individual and organisational performance. The paper seeks to close this gap by disclosing the crucial work environment factors for different generations' employee-organisation fit. While examining this issue, the paper deals with the following questions: a) What do we mean by employee-organisation fit? b) Which work environment factors are crucial considering the different generations' employees? c) Do these crucial factors of the work environment affect the employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity?

Literature Review

The research shows that person-organisation fit is one of the key issues when making the decisions concerning the employee selection (Sekiguchi and Huber, 2011) as this enables effective individual activity within the organisation. Moreover, employee-organisation fit affects innovative work behaviour through innovation trust (Afsar et al., 2015), has positive impact on organisational commitment and psychological empowerment (Farzaneh et al., 2014), as well as presupposes the employee well-being (Roczniewska et al., 2018). Finally, this allows ensuring the reduction of staff turnover (Liu et al., 2010; Memon et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2017).

According to Kristof (1996), a person-organisation fit occurs when there is a congruence between the abilities of the employee and demands of the organisation and at the same time there is satisfaction on both sides: the organisation is satisfied with the results shown by the employee and the employee is satisfied with the way his/her expectations are met.

Moreover, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) distinguishes the supplementary and complementary person-organisation fit. Supplementary fit emphasises the importance of congruence between the values upheld by the employee and organisation. Meanwhile the complementary fit highlights the match between the resources in terms of supply from the side of employee and demand from the side of organisation. It should be noted that the value aspect is crucial in the context of

generational management, seeing that different generations have different work values and attitudes (Hillman, 2014; Cucina et al., 2018) that lead to different needs and expectations. This poses challenges for the organisation in understanding the needs of different generations as well as responding to them by correctly designing the work environment factors relevant to different generations.

In recent years, the working environment has attracted much attention from scholars and practitioners while seeking to design the human resource management practices that allow to improve the organisational performance (Delery and Gupta, 2016; Mehmood, et al., 2017). Posthuma et al. (2013) claim that *“it is crucial to evaluate and execute every aspect that increases employee productivity and performance”*. Murphy et al. (2018) stated that there is little consensus among researchers concerning specific HRM practices that should be used by every company to improve their organisational- or individual-level performance. Going deeper, different approaches and theories may be mentioned that emphasise different crucial factors of work environment associated with different contexts. Hackman and Oldham (1976) highlighted the linkage between the work design and employee motivation, distinguishing five main factors of work environment. According to them, requirements for diversity of skills, task identity and task significance confer meaningfulness to the work; autonomy through the responsibility for work outcomes leads to high performance, and feedback helps to obtain the knowledge about results and recognition (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). The Job Demands-Control Model (DCM) of Karasek (1979) deals with the occupational stress issues. According to this model, the result will be the best when a combination of high job requirements and low-level work control is applied (Karasek, 1979). Siegrist (1996) suggested the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Model as a further development of the person-organisation fit approach and Demand-Control Model. According to the ERI model, high effort/low reward conditions are considered particularly stressful. Siegrist (1996) provides an example when low reward, in terms of low status control in association with high extrinsic (e.g., work pressure) or intrinsic (person-related needs, e.g., high need for control) effort, independently predicts cardiovascular disease.

Recently, the Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Model that was introduced in the international literature more than 15 years ago (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017) has been among the most widely used in scientific literature. This model distinguishes two main dimensions: job demands and job resources. Job demands, according to Bakker and Demerouti (2007), cover mental, emotional and physical aspects of work (emotional pressure, high workload, work tempo, etc.) requiring the employee to mobilise physical and psychological (cognitive, emotional) efforts or skills. Meanwhile, job resources are associated with the organisational (autonomy, control, career opportunities, etc.) and social relationships (support from the manager and co-workers, feedback, etc.) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Recently, Bakker and Demerouti (2017) presented several insights regarding the JD-R theory while introducing a few contingency factors such as leadership that may be used

for investigation in different contexts. As can be seen, the JD-R theory has deep origins, linking the work environment factors to various contexts – stress, burnout, and engagement. Despite the fact that the JD-R theory itself covers a person-organisation fit approach, the linkage between the work environment factors in terms of job demands–resources and the state of employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity has been not investigated.

Summarising the models discussed above, it can be stated that all these models do not limit themselves to specific job demands or job resources. However, according to these models, the factors of job demands such as emotional demands, workload and work tempo can be distinguished. Concerning the factors of job resources, it is appropriate to investigate autonomy, feedback, control or trust, and leadership.

In order to formulate the prepositions concerning the linkage between the work environment factors and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity, features of different generations were determined.

Current research introduces four generations: Baby Boomers (born in 1946-1964), Generation X (born in 1965-1981), Generation Y (born in 1982-1999), and Generation Z (born in 2000 and later) (Howe and Strauss, 2009).

Based on the assumption that different generations have different work values and attitudes (Hillman, 2014; Cucina et al., 2018) it can be presumed that the different generations' employee-organisation fit can be caused by different work environment factors. In the light of the above preposition, the following research framework was developed (Figure 1).

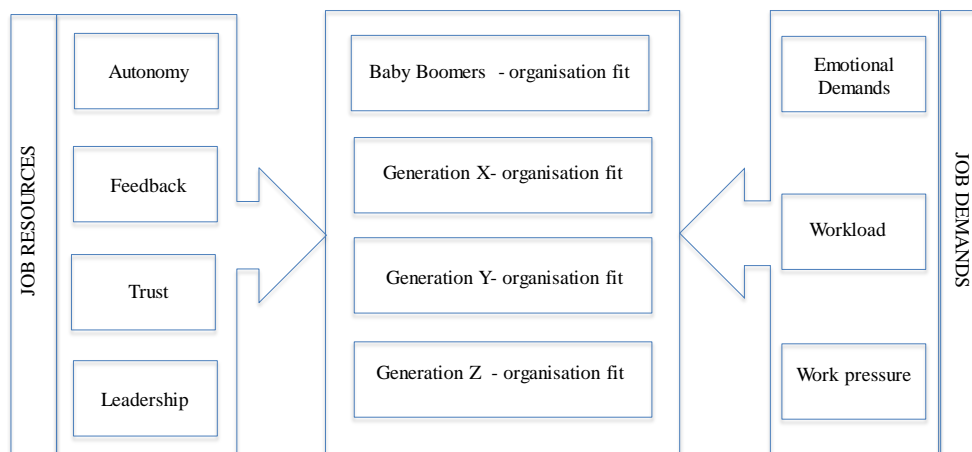


Figure 1. Research framework

Research Methodology

The quantitative research was carried out in March – May 2018 in Lithuania, EU. According to Lithuania Statistics report (Lithuania in figures, 2018), in Lithuania in 2017 were 1,354.8 thousand employed persons. Since the target population size

($N = 1354888$) is known, the Yamane formula was applied to determine the sample size of the survey (Singh and Masuku, 2014). The research included 311 representatives and according to the number of employed persons in Lithuania, such amount of responses reflects a 5.5% error which indicates the reliability of the data. Simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents. The questionnaire was distributed online using social media, thus ensuring the possibility of the equal access for all employed persons to participate in the research. In total, 317 questionnaires were received, of which 6 questionnaires were removed due to lack of answers. As mentioned above, the final number of respondents was 311, or 98% of the questionnaire responses were included in the statistical data analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample: An individual is assigned to a generation based on the recommendations provided by the Theory of Generations (Howe and Strauss, 2009). According to the date of birth, respondents were assigned to four different generations: 12.54% were defined as the Baby Boomers ($n=39$), 35.69% – Generation X ($n=111$), 23.47% – Generation Y ($n=73$), and 28.30% – Generation Z ($n=88$).

Instrument: Job resources-demands factors were measured using the scales from the Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire – COPSQ II, which has been developed by the Psychosocial Department, National Institute of Occupational Health, Copenhagen, Denmark. COPSQ II is a generic theory-based questionnaire covering broad range factors of the work environment and the central dimensions of the seven theories of psychosocial factors: Job Characteristics Model, Michigan Organisation Stress Model, Job Demands–Control Model, Sociotechnical Approach, Action-Theoretical Approach, Effort–Reward Imbalance Model, and Vitamin Model (Berthelsen et al., 2018). Person-organisation fit was measured using the perceived Person-Organisation Fit scale developed by Cable and Judge (1996). Cronbach's alphas were obtained as follows: $\alpha = .943$ for job resources, $\alpha = .863$ for job demands, and $\alpha = .848$ for person-organisation fit. The items were rated using a 6-point scale.

Research ethics: Participants of the research were volunteers and were provided with information on the objectives, progress and presentation of the results of the research. During the research, the laws and conventions protecting human rights were respected; privacy and anonymity of the subjects were not violated.

Findings and Discussion

Linear regression models have been developed to identify the linkage between the work environment factors and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity. Figure 2 shows the linkage between the job resources and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity.

The figure shows that the Baby Boomers'-organisation fit is determined by all factors of job resources. The results of the study are consistent with the broad description of Baby Boomers. They are motivated by their position, material well-

being and attention (Bursch and Kelly, 2014). Moreover, they are committed and loyal, respect the authority, but want to be equal (Crampton and Hodge, 2009). Boomers are expecting collaboration and at the same time aim to maintain formal organisational climate (Fogg, 2009). Furthermore, they are seen as having a strong expectation for formal feedback from supervisors (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007; Fogg, 2009).

The Generation X-organisation fit is also determined by all factors of job resources. Members of this generation value autonomy and independence, and relatively informal work climate (Twenge et al., 2010) and expect direct communication and feedback (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007). This is the reason why this generation, like Baby Boomers, need both freedom and independence at work, and social relationships allowing them to be recognised by the organisation.

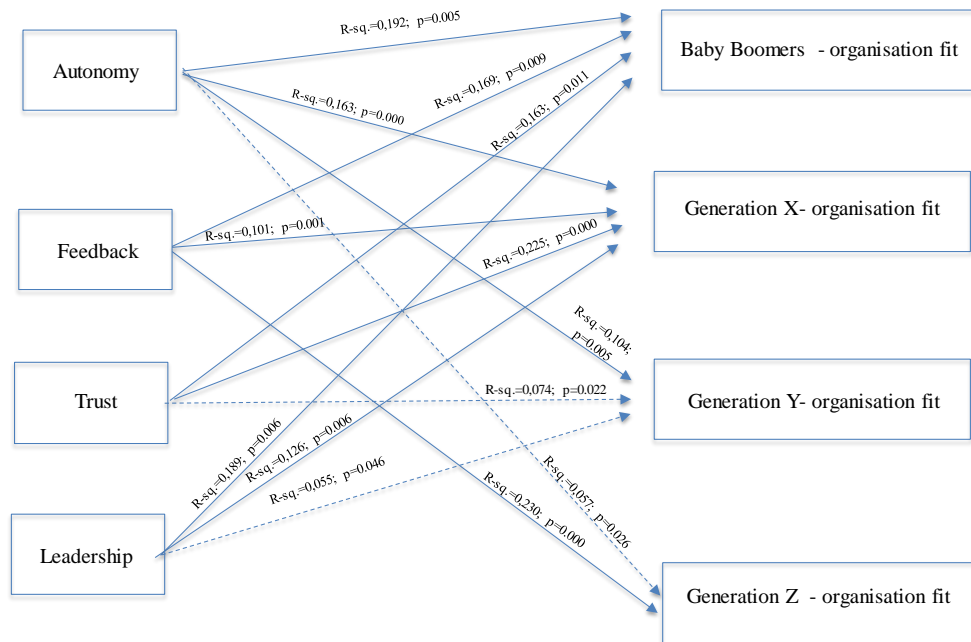


Figure 2. Linkage between job resources and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity

Generation Y is characterised as technologically savvy, globally concerned, highly innovative, and willing to try anything (Marcinkus Murphy, 2012). Moreover, Twenge et al. (2008) exclude the Generation Y as more individualistic and self-focused compared to other generations. The Generation Y has grown up in the technology era, using a variety of social medias as the main source of communication, which is different from the previous generation's face-to-face way of socialising (Twenge et al., 2010) and that could determine more individualistic behaviour. Moreover, this could explain the fact that the Generation Y-organisation

fit is only partially influenced by feedback, trust and leadership. The moderated impact of trust and leadership, and the absence of the impact of feedback on the Generation Y-organisation fit could be explained by the debate among scholars who examine the features of the Generation Y. According to Bursch and Kelly (2014), representatives of the Generation Y want to get regular feedback and be constantly praised. However, Warner and Sandberg (2010) stated that the variety of social media created a specific way of communication, but in reality, Generation Y may be timid and closed.

The Generation Z-organisation fit is influenced only by feedback and partly by autonomy. Currently, scholars analyse the features of the Generation Z, which is inseparable from modern technologies even more than Generation Y. According to scholars, Generation Z could be characterised as infantile (Carrington et al., 2015), they want to be taken care of and keep in touch. Moreover, the research of Dolot (2018) shows that feedback is the most important characteristic of Generation Z in terms of expecting the feedback from someone who delegates tasks to them. Nevertheless, they do not like strict rules (Williams et al., 2010) and want to be exclusive and different, thus presupposing the need for autonomy.

Figure 3 shows the linkage between the job demands and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity.

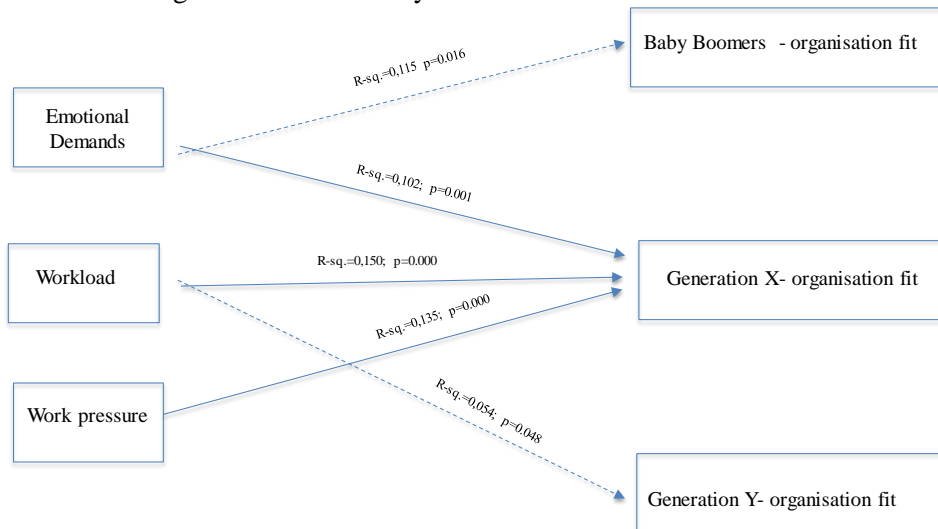


Figure 3. Linkage between job demands and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity

While discussing the results concerning the linkage between job demands and employee-organisation fit in the context of generational diversity, two main findings can be distinguished. First, all three factors of job demands influence the employee-organisation fit only for Generation X. Second, Generation Z is not influenced by any of the job demands' factors. However, these results are more

likely to be interpreted not in the cohort context, but from the age and career stage perspective. The X generation has reached the maturity of their working activity. Their knowledge and experience, the attained status at work, and work-life balance that is typical for the Generation X imply the significance of all three factors of job demands in relation to employee-organisation fit. Meanwhile, Generation Z is just starting their working career, they are young; hence, it can be assumed that factors of job demands are not relevant in the context of other factors.

Summary

The aim of the paper was to investigate the crucial work environment factors for different generations' employee-organisation fit. The research shows that the different environmental factors are crucial for different generations and determine the employee-organisation fit. The factors of job resources affect all generations' employee-organisation fit more substantially. Autonomy has an impact on person-organisation fit for all generations. Feedback influences the fit between Baby Boomers, Generations X and Z, and organisation. In the case of an organisation dominated by Baby Boomers and Generation X, attention should be paid to trust and leadership. Generation Y will dominate in the labor market in the near future. As more individualistic and self-focused compared to other generations, Generation Y needs an autonomy and a balanced workload. Considering to forthcoming generation Z, managers should pay more attention to the interpersonal relationship. Whereas a feedback is a crucial factor for Generation Z, the conversations with the employees, which are one of the latest modern trends in human resource management, should become an everyday practice.

Generational differences lead to challenges for managers. Nevertheless, understanding and recognition of the generational differences and similarities can help the managers redesign the working environment in ways that are more relevant and appealing to each generation in order to ensure the employee-organisation fit.

However, this research study has got certain limitations. The respondents were only the employees from Lithuania. It has a limitation due to its restrictive generalizability. In order to overcome that factor, future research could be extended to other countries. In addition, it would be useful to investigate more factors of work environment to get a wider view. Moreover, it would be appropriate to apply a qualitative research method, for instance interview or focus group, to learn more about the phenomenon, and to get a deeper understanding of how to design the work environment that is favorable to all generations.

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DECYDUJĄCE CZYNNIKI ŚRODOWISKA PRACY DLA PRACOWNIKÓW RÓŻNYCH POKOLEŃ – DOPASOWANIE ORGANIZACJI

Streszczenie: Ostatnio coraz częściej podkreśla się wyzwania związane z zarządzaniem pokoleniami, argumentując, że różne czynniki środowiskowe są ważne dla różnych pokoleń, co prowadzi do dopasowania pracowników do organizacji. Bazując na teorii zapotrzebowania na zasoby (JD-R), podejściu dopasowanym do organizacji pracowników i perspektywie kohortowej, celem tego artykułu jest zbadanie kluczowych czynników środowiska pracy dla dopasowania pracowników z różnych pokoleń. Podczas badania tego zagadnienia zaproponowano kilka założeń i przetestowano je za pomocą metody regresji liniowej. Dane ilościowe zebrano z kwestionariuszy rozprowadzanych na Litwie przy użyciu doboru celowego próby badawczej (311 kwestionariuszy). Wyniki badań empirycznych pokazują, że czynniki zasobów pracy (autonomia, informacja zwrotna, zaufanie i przywództwo) wpływają bardziej na organizację pracowniczą wszystkich pokoleń niż czynniki związane z wymaganiami pracy (obciążenie pracą, presja na pracę i wymagania emocjonalne). Ponadto wyniki potwierdzają, że organizacja pracowników dopasowana do różnych pokoleń jest ostatecznie zależna od różnych czynników środowiskowych.

Słowa kluczowe: różnorodność pokoleniowa, teoria JD-R, dopasowanie pracownik-organizacja

不同代人员 - 组织机构的工作环境因素

摘要：近来，人们越来越强调管理不同代人的挑战，认为不同的环境因素对不同代人来说都很重要，从而导致员工与组织的契合。借鉴工作需求 - 资源（JD-R）理论，员工 - 组织契合方法和队列视角，本文的目的是研究不同代的员工 - 组织契合度的关键工作环境因素。在研究这个问题时，提出了几个假设并使用线性回归方法进行了测试。定量数据来自立陶宛分发的问卷，使用简单的随机抽样（311个答复）。实证研究结果表明，工作资源（自主，反馈，信任和领导）的因素影响所有不同代的员工 - 组织比工作需求因素（工作量，工作压力和情感需求）更为合适。此外，结果证实，适合不同世代的员工组织最终取决于不同的环境因素。

关键词：代际多样性，JD-R理论，员工 - 组织契合度。