

WORK VALUES AS PREDICTORS OF BOUNDARYLESS CAREER ATTITUDES OF GENERATION Y TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

Ebru Evrensel Inanc¹, Elif Ozdilek²

¹MA., Bilkent University, TURKEY, evrensel@bilkent.edu.tr

²Dr., Bilkent University, TURKEY, sibelif@bilkent.edu.tr

Abstract

As of 2015, business world is hosting Baby Boomers (born between 1945-1964), Generation X (born between 1965-1980), and Generation Y (born between 1981-2000) as employees, and managers. The latest generation, Generation Y follows different work values and career commitment anchors, compared to previous generations. Now, the focus is on how to capture Generation Y at a workplace for more than several years. Gen Y is known for their job mobility. They are not much interested in long term goals and plans, but rather love to live the moment, in the most desired work place of their own. If their job expectations are not met, they do not hesitate to leave and look for another job. Although they give importance to status, they reject hierarchy. They like to be motivated, do their tasks in an enjoyable environment, and prefer to be the part of the decision-making process, rather than unquestioned compliance with the existing system. They are impatient, have unrealistic self-esteem values, and high egos. They do not consider being permanent in a workplace, and thus considered as "unreliable" by their managers. These factors, together with many more, are enough to alert the business environment, especially HR managers, to look for peculiar ways to make Generation Y commit to their workplace which has been needed for Generation X. Since Generation Y is assumed to dominate the business environment in a decade, it is becoming more and more important to understand the reasons for their uncommitment. Thus, this study is designed for Generation Y Turkish higher education students, who are the prospective work force in a couple of years, to understand their work values and how this affects their career attitudes, which will be, to our knowledge, the first in the literature. This study used self-reported online survey methodology. The survey consists of three parts. The first part is about the demographics of the participants. The second part consists of 23 items of Work Values Inventory, and the third part measures the boundaryless career attitudes of the students. In the light of being the first study about the influence of work values on the boundaryless career commitment of the Turkish higher education students, this study revealed some intriguing results. Generation Y Turkish higher education students interest in instrumental work values (pay, hours of work, security, benefits, and work conditions) have little to no influence on their physical and psychological mobility. On the other hand, cognitive (responsibility, advancement, achievement, influence, interest, feedback, meaningful work, use of abilities, independence, company, status, and contribution to society) and affective work values (relations with supervisor, coworkers, recognition, esteem, and opportunity to interact with people) have direct influence on their psychological mobility, but has no effect on their physical mobility. In a decade, Gen Y will dominate the business world. There is no doubt that work values of Generation Y, together with the new emerging career orientations should be understood well, in order to maintain an effective work environment.

Keywords: Generation Y, Turkish higher education students, work values, boundaryless career attitude

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation can be defined as the people who are born within the same time range. Generations differ from each other depending on the social and economic environment they were raised. These differences create variations in their character, business and social lives. The problems caused by different generations being in the same environment are due to the intergenerational perception, method, communication and practice differences. Therefore, interdisciplinary studies should focus on how to define these variations between the generations and, thus creating solutions for the problems arising from generational differences (Arsenault, 2004; Cogin, 2012; Crampton & Hodge, 2011; Kralj & Kandampully, 2012).

The studies carried out around the world helped to define categorization of generations based on the culture, historical date ranges, and socio-economic events. Although there are some differences in the date ranges, generally accepted generations are Traditionalists, Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. These generations, which carry different characteristics, living together brings along cultural enrichment and collective sharing of conscious; together with conflicts and many problems, especially communication misunderstandings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Generations in the Workplace

In order to understand the features and characteristics of Generation Y, focus group of this study, it is necessary to refer briefly to the generations at the workforce currently. Baby Boomers are the generation born between the years 1946 and 1965. The reason for this generation to be called Baby Boomers is due to the population boost after the II. World War. Incline in the economic prosperity, together with significant changes in the political arena influenced the thinking patterns of Baby Boomers (Yu & Miller, 2005). This generation is known for their high feelings of loyalty, abstinent and hard-working. Baby Boomers prefer to work within a company for years since they believe in the importance of hard work and long working hours (Jorgensen, 2003). As mentioned by Leiter, Jackson, and Shaughnessy (2009), Baby Boomers are self-motivated and do not yearn for appreciation. At the same time, Baby Boomers are known to be workaholic, selfish and authoritarian.

People born between the years 1965 and 1979 are referred to as Generation X. They are in harmony with technology and information, innovative, target oriented and independent (O'Bannon, 2001). Generation X refrains from stressful jobs, and tries to simplify the tasks given (Rodriguez, Green,& Ree, 2003). Considering the first personal computer was introduced during this time; Generation X is known to have the fundamental understanding of technology (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). However, they are known as being incapable of "catching up". As mentioned by Eisner (2005), when a member of Generation X becomes a high level manager, the problems are anticipated due to the fact that, Generation Y, pioneer and impatient for a quick promotion, will be working as low to medium level employees who are much more qualified in terms of technological developments and innovations.

Generation Y consists of people born between 1980 and 2001. They are the first generation that grew up with the appeal of digital media and two third of this generation was introduced to computer before the age of five. Being able to reach their family, friends, and information any time they want, this generation is known for their optimism (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Compared to other generations, Generation Y has the eldest parents, and was raised in an elementary family concept. Thus, they are accustomed to being the center of attention, and have high expectations. They can define their target precisely, however may lack the perseverance to reach that target. They possess high adaptation potency and are prone to multi-tasking. As well as that, they are known to get easily bored from the work they are performing (Kilber, Barclay, & Ohmer, 2014; Lewis, 2015). This may be due to the fact that, they have high level of thinking and can reach and process information very quickly. Generation Y is willing to embrace the change as well as challenging the future by trying new approaches (Laird, Harvey, & Lancaster, 2015). They are smart, give importance to their freedom, and considered as technology addict, as approximately 15 hours of their daily time is spent on the media and communication technologies (Bolton et al., 2013). They do not like stressful environments (Kilber, Barclay, & Ohmer, 2014).

Generation Y, who are in their early 20s and 30s, demand flexible working hours, more "personal time" in the workplace and constant feedback and career advice from their managers (Laird, Harvey, & Lancaster, 2015). At the same time, they believe that, their managers can learn a lot from them, especially related with the technology. The most significant feature of Generation Y can be considered as preferring a dynamic

workplace, and looking for quick promotion. As mentioned by Saxena and Jain (2012), this may be the result of their familiarity with hyper-connectivity introduced to them by technological advancements. Compared to other generations, Generation Y is known for their lack of loyalty and commitment to the workplace, and their job and has difficulty in understanding the hierarchical structure of an organization (Krahn and Galambos, 2014). This is why they are not much impressed with status and title a traditional hierarchical structure offers. Tulgan and Martin (2001) claim that, as they got used to being included in the decision-making process by their families as they grew up, they cannot comprehend the concept of hierarchy. Generation Y believes that every employee in the organization, regardless of their status, should be informed about the organization and job related issues and ones who have a good solution to any problem should be given a chance to express him/herself. Since they get used to receiving instant replies through Facebook and Twitter like social media, they expect the same instantcy in the workplace from their managers, and when that doesn't happen, they are frustrated. According to a study carried out by Tulgan (2009), 80% of them expect feedback from their managers on a regular basis. They do not like to wait for six months or a year for feedback related with their work. Generation Y mostly prefers flexible work hours and flexible working environment, even flexible rewarding system. They believe that, as long as the task they are assigned to is completed, it should not be important whether it was done at the office or at home (Cogin 2012).

2.2. Work Values Concept

Work values concept is referred to as one of the most significant topics in organizational settings currently. In a global, competitive and fast-changing business world, human resources gain the attraction it deserves. That is the reason organizations put emphasis on the value systems of individuals. The values possessed about the work is considered as "work values" and guides the individuals about what is right and wrong, what is appropriate or inappropriate on the process of realizing the mission of the organization.

As mentioned by Warr (2008), work values influence employee behaviors, and experiences directly, thus help to unfold the operational values set. At the same time, work values of an individual, determines the work expectations, job performances and even colleagues in a direct and indirect manner. Empirical and theoretical studies reveal that, if there is a match between the work values of an individual and values of the organization, it helps increase the organizational performance as well as have positive influence on the commitment and satisfaction of the employee.

In 1950s, Donald Super, Rene Dawis and Lylof Lofquid carried out studies related with the reflection of personal values to work values (Leut and Hansen, 2011). An individual, being aware of his/her personal values, and transforming it to the career choice is the basis of work values concept. Schein (1990; 2007) defined work values as a whole that includes an individual's skills, interests, basic values, and needs.

2.2.1 Cognitive, Affective and Instrumental Work Values

According to Elizur (1984), cognitive work values can be defined as the belief system that is based on appropriate behaviours, like success. These values; rather than being material or social, can be referred to as psychological outcomes. Cognitive work values include success, promotion, feedback, status, contributing to society, being influential on the work and organization, possibilities of personal development and being able to use knowledge and skills at work. Affective work values include social relationships and consist of friendly co-workers, recognition and appreciation at work, and being able to meet and interact with others. Instrumental work values is related with material sources like pay, working hours, safety in the workplace, and clean and comfortable work environment (Elizur, 1984).

2.3. Career Attitudes

Career can be defined as the successive work experience an individual has over the years (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). Career also refers to the developmental process that consists of the work and related experiences gained in a single or more various organizations (Baruch & Rosenstein, 1992). Due to the innovations introduced in this era, everything, including the concept of "career", is changing rapidly. Due to this fact, career is considered to have multi-dimensions, rather than being limited to a single organization. There may be many different opportunities beyond the organization. For example, according to protean career attitude, which is dynamically structured; and formed independently from the organization the individual is working, the employee focuses on the career success that is based on his/her own work values and experiences. This can be explained by self-directed attitude. Here, the employee is motivated by appropriately behaving to reach career, personal targets and principles. The career tenure is more important than the physical age. In order to be successful, the individual has to make necessary adjustments in his/her technological knowledge to comprehension, from job safety to employability, and from organizational career

to protean career; since career is a continuing personal journey. Another new trend in career attitudes, and which is the interest of this paper, is “boundaryless career attitude”.

2.3.1 Boundaryless Career Attitude

Boundaryless career attitude was first mentioned by Arthur (1994). Boundaryless career attitude refers to an individual's different career paths in different organizations. This is about the boundless probabilities in a career; and how they might benefit from being aware and pursuing these opportunities. In the boundaryless career approach individual intelligence (individual being aware of the roles and tasks necessary for the job), and industrial intelligence (individual being aware of the career conditions, when to move forward and when to stop in terms of his/her position) always interact.

Boundaryless career defines an approach that is open to change in physical and psychological context; in other words it is an approach that does not carry the features of organizational career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Boundaryless career does not involve a commitment to a single organization; instead it is about multiple career changes. Boundaryless career attitude happens as a result of ending their career development within an organization. This might be due to leaving the company voluntarily or to be forced to resign. The concept of boundaryless career attitude is examined in two sub dimensions; “psychological mobility” and “physical mobility” (Elizur, Borg, Hunt, & Beck, 1991).

Psychological mobility refers to the concept of unlimitedness within the mind of an employee (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). An individual may show psychological boundaryless career attitudes if that person takes support from internal or external networks, if there exists new career opportunities to be explored, and if the organization allows horizontal mobility within the company (Clarke, 2009). However, an individual may continue to work in the same organization in spite of adopting the idea of boundaryless career attitude. An employee, who is inclined to boundaryless career attitude, is motivated by commitment, autonomy and attention. As the individual's need to commitment increases, the individual internalizes the organization more, and will not tend to change his/her current organization. An interaction opportunity that helps to boost the motivation for the employee determines the level of commitment, and thus the individual continues to work for the same organization. At the same time, need for autonomy motivates the individual to move beyond the boundaries, and together with commitment to the organization, helps to develop positive and satisfying interpersonal relations. Boundaries cannot be imposed to an individual who is in need for autonomy, since these people prefer to organize the tasks they feel fit to them, and that enables them to use initiative.

According to Sullivan and Arthur (2006), physical mobility refers to an individual's physically changing job, organization and country. Source of motivation for an individual who has the tendency towards physical mobility; are pay, status and promotion. Additionally, if an individual seeks for variety and novelty, this would influence his/her motivation at work. If the organization is open to innovation and change; this would help the individual to become more committed to the workplace, and thus this would create a barrier for the physical mobility. For an employee who has tendency towards physical mobility, job stability is not motivating at all. As a result, these types of individuals are motivated by instrumental resources such as pay, status, promotion and need for attention; rather than employment reliance.

2.4. The Relationship between work values and boundaryless career attitude

When the literature is analyzed, it can be seen that there are no studies that focused on the influence of work values of an individual on the career attitudes he/she possesses. Thus, to our knowledge, this study will be the first to study the relationship between work values and career attitudes.

Work values determine what type of features an individual expects from the career journey. These expectations have to be related with career approach that individual possesses. As mentioned by Mignonac and Herrbach (2003), work values also influence career anchors. Abu-Saad and Isralowitz (1997), examined the work values of higher education students, and concluded that male students scored higher on values like pay and independence, whereas female students scored higher on values such as cooperation, and contributing to others.

As mentioned by Posner (2010), individuals who choose their careers depending on their work values, tend to be more successful in their jobs compared to the ones who do not choose their careers based on their work values. Work values such as creativity, cooperation, pay, promotion, safety, contributing to society, and personal development are shaped in early years with experience and the impact of environment. According

to several authors, if an employee finds the exact match of possessed work values within an organization, this would increase the commitment of the employee to the organization (Kristoff, 1996).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Model

The proposed research model for this study is shown below:

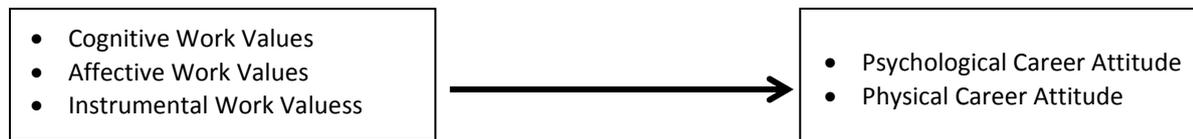


Figure 1 research Model

3.2. Hypotheses

H₁: There is a positive correlation between cognitive work values and psychological boundaryless career attitude

H₂: There is a positive correlation between affective work values and psychological boundaryless career attitude

H₃: There is a positive correlation between instrumental work values and psychological boundaryless career attitude

H₄: There is a positive correlation between cognitive work values and physical boundaryless career attitude

H₅: There is a positive correlation between affective work values and physical boundaryless career attitude

H₆: There is a positive correlation between instrumental work values and physical boundaryless career attitude

3.3. Sample and data collection

The sample group of this study is higher education students in Ankara, capital city of Turkey. The respondents were informed about the study via e-mail and asked to fill an on-line self-reported survey. The survey was displayed in the academic web page of the author and could be accessed for one-month period. Totally 201 students completed the survey. There were no incomplete or missing data. %37,3 of the respondents (N=75) are female students, whereas %62,7 (N=126) of the respondents are male students.

3.4. Measures

3.4.1 Work Values Scale

In order to assess work values, the respondents were asked to rank the work values proposed by Elizur (1984) on a 6 point Likert scale (1=not important, 6=very important). Elizur et al. (1991) mentioned that, these work values are based on several theories such as; hierarchy of needs, existence needs theory (appreciation, prestige, personal development), achievement needs theory (cooperation, achievement), intrinsic motivators theory (being able to use skills and abilities, a meaningful job, independency) and, job characteristics model. Thus, the work values inventory proposed by Elizur (1991) was based on the above mentioned theories, and thus all items represent Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory components. The scale consists of 23 items.

3.4.2 Boundaryless Career Attitudes

Boundaryless career attitude was assessed by using the scale developed by Briscoe, Hall & Frautschy DeMuth (2006). The scale consists of 12 items, and the respondents were asked to answer to the extent they agree to the statements on a 5 point Likert scale (1=to little or no extent, 5=to a great extent).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive statistics.

Table 1 lists the means, standard deviations (SD), and Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for the variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, Alpha coefficients and correlations

Variable	Mean	S.D	Alpha Coefficients
1.Cognitive WV	5.06	0.71	0.89
2. Affective WV	5.44	0.73	0.80
3. Instrumental WV	5.20	0.67	0.72
4. Psychological CA	3.84	0.77	0.77
5. Physical CA	2.65	0.85	0.80

4.2. Preliminary Analyses

Before testing the hypotheses, first the measurement model was tested by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the factor structure of the scales and to determine how well the measurement model fits to its data (Bollen, 1989).

4.2.1. Measurement model with CFA.

To test the validity of the scales AMOS 22 program was used. As a first step, the data were screened for assumptions of CFA.

For the Work Values (WV) scale, CFA results revealed that the 3-factor model provided a poor fit with the data initially. As a result for the inspection of modification indices for WV items, 4 out of 23 items (three for cognitive, one for affective) were deleted from the model and covariance terms were added between items 1 & 2. The CFA is conducted with the remaining 19 WV items and provided a relatively more satisfactory fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 350.246$, $\chi^2/df = 2.54$, GFI = 0.85, CFI = 0.95 and RMSEA = .073). All estimated loadings were significant.

For the Career Attitudes (CA) scale, CFA results revealed that the 2-factor model didnot provide an adequate with the data initially. After conducting the inspection of modification indices for CA items, 3 out of 12 items (three for psychological) were deleted from the model. The CFA is conducted with the remaining 9 CA items and provided a relatively more satisfactory fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 49.645$, $\chi^2/df = 1.909$, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.96 and RMSEA = .067). All estimated loadings for the scale were significant.

4.2.2. Hypothesis Testing

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to test the proposed hypotheses. AMOS 22 program is used for the analyses. The results are shown in Fig. 1*.

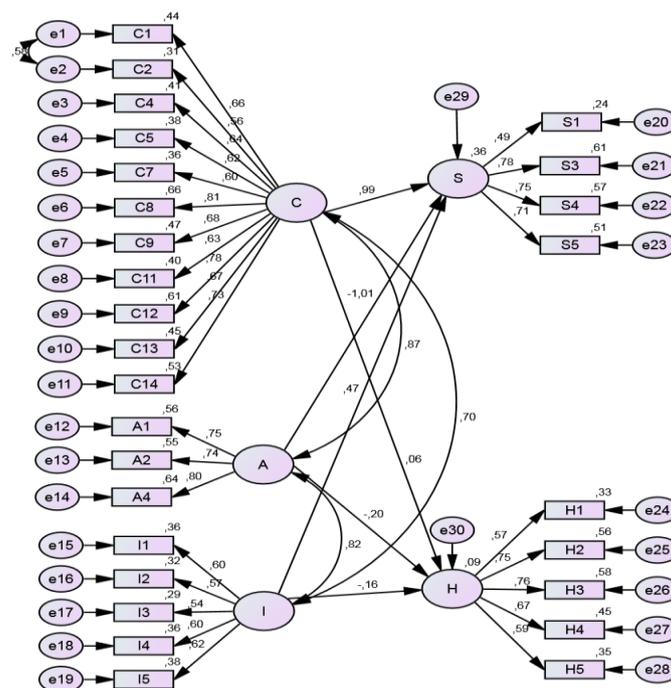


Fig 1. Results of the hypothesized model.

*: C= Cognitive Work Values, A= Affective Work Values, I= Instrumental Work Values, S= Psychological Boundaryless Career Attitude, H= Physical Boundaryless Career Attitude

Fit indices for the model reveal that the model is acceptable in terms of structure. The results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Structural Model Fit Indices

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Fit Indices	702,863	340	2,067	0,85	0,95	0,073
Model Fit*			≤ 3	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,97$	$\leq 0,05$
Acceptable Fit Values*			$\leq 4-5$	0,89-0,85	$\geq 0,95$	0,06-0,08

* Resource: Steiger, 1990

Table 3. Structural Equation Model Coefficients

Variables	Standardize d β	Standard Error	p	R ²
Cognitive WV – Psychological CA	0,99	3,237	0,001	0,36
Affective WV – Psychological CA	-1,01	-2,305	0,021	
Instrumental WV – Psychological CA	0,47	1,751	0,080	
Cognitive WV – Physical CA	0,06	0,277	0,782	0,09
Affective WV – Physical CA	-0,20	-0,663	0,507	
Instrumental WV – Physical CA	-0,16	-0,791	0,429	

Table 3 shows the standardized β coefficients, standard error, p and R² values for SEM. As it can be seen in Table 3, among the direct effects, CVW affects psychological career attitudes ($\beta = .99$, $p < 0.05$) and AVW has an influence on the psychological career attitudes ($\beta = 1.01$, $p < 0.05$) significantly. Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported.

On the other hand, there exist no relation between instrumental work values and psychological career attitudes ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 was rejected. Additionally, no direct effect between the work value dimensions and physical career attitudes ($p < 0.05$) was found. Thus, hypotheses 4, 5 and 6 were also rejected.

5. DISCUSSION

This study was carried out in order to explore whether work values of Generation Y Turkish higher education students acts as a predictor of their prospective career attitude orientations. Although the literature consists of studies that inspect work values of higher education students; the researchers usually analyzed this topic in terms of its influence on work outcomes; such as organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Additionally, the concept of “new career orientations”, that includes boundaryless career attitude has quite recently emerged (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996.; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006), and this topic has mostly been studied in terms of evaluation of its dimensions. When the literature is analyzed, there is no study that examined the influence of three aspects of work values (cognitive, affective, and instrumental) as proposed by Elizur (1991) on the boundaryless career attitude that consists of physical and psychological mobility of the employees.

In the light of being the first study to our knowledge, about the influence of work values on the boundaryless career commitment of the Turkish higher education students, this study revealed some intriguing results. Generation Y Turkish higher education students interest in instrumental work values (pay, hours of work, security, benefits, and work conditions) have little to no influence on their physical and psychological mobility. On the other hand, cognitive (responsibility, advancement, achievement, influence, interest, feedback,

meaningful work, use of abilities, independence, company, status, and contribution to society) and affective work values (relations with supervisor, coworkers, recognition, esteem, and opportunity to interact with people) have direct influence on their psychological mobility, but has no affect on their physical mobility. Additionally, work values of the students have no influence on their physical mobility aspect of career attitudes.

5.1.1. Limitations and Implications for Future research

Although Wolf, Harrington, Clark, and Miller (2013) found sample size requirements ranging from 30 (Simple CFA with four indicators and loadings around .80) up to 450 cases (mediation models) for Structural Equation Modelling, analyzing the same topic with higher number of participants might yield different results. Additionally, since this study is carried out in one city only (Ankara), the results cannot be generalized to bigger populations.

If this study can be conducted in different countries, then the results can be compared to make further assumptions about the influence of work values on the career commitment. Since Turkey is a collectivistic culture, this may explain the reluctance of employees' intentions of physical mobility, as collectivistic cultures are known for their member interdependence (Hartung, Fouad, Leong, & Hardin, 2010). This study can be replicated in an individualistic culture, such as Canada or United States of America, to compare the results from Turkish sample.

6. CONCLUSION

Both organizations and managers, together with the co-workers that come from different generations, should try to adapt to the expectations of Gen Y. Otherwise managing the Gen Y employees, and attracting and/or keeping them in the organization would not be easy.

Managers should enhance their leadership skills, in the light of the expectations from Gen Y employees, and thus get the chance to work with a creative and well-motivated team. Managers should include Gen Y employees to the decision-making process, should implement a democratic decision-making mechanism, should get rid of the top and bottom barriers with this generation and should let Gen Y employees have autonomy in their tasks and responsibilities. In order to keep Generation Y in their organization who put affective work values, such as relationship with managers and co-workers and interaction with other people, on top of other factors, the managers should be a role-model for them by identifying the technical and managerial deficiencies of the employees, transferring them to the Gen Y employees in a constructive way, and finally creating road maps for their development opportunities. In the past traditional organizations, the employees were trying to gain the attention of their managers, and make the manager like them. However, this started to be mutual with the inclusion of Generation Y to the business life. Otherwise, Gen Y will simply prefer physical mobility, to work with a more appropriate manager who can understand his/her needs. Thus, a manager who created negative influences on Gen Y might experience hard times finding employees, even if the organization is attractive for the employees.

Researches show that newly graduated Gen Y, will change jobs/organizations in every 2,4 years (Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng, & Kuron, 2012). Additionally the researches reveal that the cost of filling in the position of an employee who left the job, is equal to his/her one or two year worth salary. Thus, the tendency of Gen Y towards physical and psychological mobility affects the organizations in a negative way. In order to avoid this, organizations should encourage systematic internal job rotation, should create flexible work environment, and flexible rewarding system where Gen Y employees can enjoy their job and interact with their co-workers in a relaxed and fun environment. It may seem paradoxical that on the one hand the business environment is getting more and more automatized and mechanical, companies are compelled to create a more humanitarian business environment where employees can feel themselves at home. The concept of 'sense of belongingness' may seem to be too difficult to achieve for Gen Y, hence corporations should try to understand what their priorities and expectations are and whether their personal values are overlapping with the corporate values or not, so that it will be more probable to create 'us' feeling.

As a conclusion, generations change, together with their unique characteristics, expectations and sources of satisfaction from business life. It is inevitable that organizations should adapt to the changing environment, where Gen Y is expected to dominate with its 75% presence within ten years. In this change, there is no doubt that work values of Generation Y, together with the new emerging career orientations should be understood well.

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