

WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG GENERATIONS: DO GENERATIONS REALLY MATTER ?

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between drivers of engagement and work engagement within X and Y generations. Work engagement is conceptualized through Schaufeli et al. (2002) approach with vigor, dedication, and absorption. As a work engagement predictors, we observed supervisory support, supervisory feedback, and perceived autonomy (drawing on the Job Demand - Resource model). Research conducted among employees of private sector indicates that supervisory support and perceived autonomy are significant predictors of work engagement. Results suggest that Gen X show higher levels of work engagement in general and with particular emphasis on the dimension of dedication.

Keywords: Work engagement, Generation X, Generation Y, Drivers of engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Engagement is a relatively new concept and interestingly, it first became popular among business and consultancy and later in academia. Some of the popular business consultants articles claimed that engaged employees could provide competitive advantages for an organization (e.g., Gallup Management Journal, 2005). Recent theoretical and empirical observations have identified engagement as predictors for different aspects of life in an organization, such as career development, performance and well-being (Bakker et al., 2008; Salmela-Aro et al., 2009, 2011; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Additionally, researchers also position engagement as an antecedent to organizational results such as high performance, customer loyalty, low turnover and absenteeism

(Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010). However, engagement still has a „fairly brief history,“ and therefore gaps in knowledge of engagement can be understandable (Rich et al., 2010).

The first engagement academic article was published by Kahn, W. A. in 1990. Still, it took almost decade before the concept entered academia (Schaufeli, 2013). In the 2000-2010 period, there have been evidently increased numbers of studies published on the engagement topic. According to Schaufeli (2013) until January 2013 around 1600 papers dealing with „work“ or „employee“ engagement were published. However, in this study, we prefer term work engagement because it is more specific and refers to relations between employees and their work. On the other side, term employee engagement more assigns to the organization, and by being conceptualized, it might lead to overlapping with concepts like workaholism, job involvement, organizational commitment and similar. Schaufeli (2013) stand on the position that one of the main reason for the expansion of interest in work engagement is the emergence of so-called positive psychology movement¹. Therefore, work engagement came to the organizational setting from positive psychology whose main idea is to improve work-life quality with health, safety, and well-being of workers (Schaufeli, 2013).

A contemporary work environment is faced with significant diversity in workforce. While some forms of diversity could be found in specific industries and organizations, age diversity is everywhere. Origin of the word generation comes from Latin *generāre* and means *to beget*. A quite widespread analogy of the word generation refers to phases of improvement and development in technology, meaning the evolution in general (Levickaite, 2010).

Scholars have long discussed if differences between generations are real, significant and relevant in organizational settings (e.g., Deal et al., 2010; Kapoor and Solomon, 2011). Some recent studies have shown new trends: workers do not retire after they reach assumed retirement ages, but they continue with work (Boone-James et al. 2011; Miller and Nyce, 2014). These trends may imply changes and possible new future movements in organizational behavior. Moreover, in a corporate setting, different generations may show distinct values, and therefore their perception of same organizational context might lead to different expectations and behavior. For instance, Kompier (2005) claims that Generation Y question meaningful work at a higher level than their older counterparts while Wong et al. (2008) argue that Generation X and Y are more ambitious but less optimistic than Baby Boomers. Schullery (2013) argues that same as managing performance can foster engagement, poor supervisory management can harm worker's

¹Positive psychology is a scientific study of optimal human functioning that aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals, organizations, and communities to thrive. Clearly, work engagement fits into this novel approach (Schaufeli, 2013).

engagement where for example Generation Y prefer immediate, frequent and direct feedback on job performance.

Bearing in mind that „older workers are more engaged than younger ones” (Schaufeli et al., 2002) the purpose of this research is to examine relations between drivers of engagement and work engagement through the prism of generational cohorts. The main aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between potential drivers of engagement and work engagement with moderating effects of Generations X and Y. Two main objectives of the study are:

1. To identify if there are significant differences in work engagement among generations X and Y and
2. To determine possible predictors of work engagement.

If so, organizations could create generational – friendly environment and invest in the development of future leaders (Kunreuther, 2003).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Even engagement is a relatively new concept in organizational studies; it is not completely clear when was the first time engagement was linked with working setting. Possible credit for this might go to Gallup organization during the 1990s (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). However, academic articles argue that Gallup’s conceptualization of engagement is relating and overlapping with concepts of job involvement and job satisfaction (Schaufelli, 2013). Even literature can be confusing since terms like employee engagement, work engagement, employee involvement (to name a few) are interchangeably used. Likewise, it is a “must” for every study to define how it conceptualizes its definition of engagement (Hoole and Bonnema, 2015).

In this study, it will be used Schaufeli et al. (2002) definition of *work engagement* where authors define work engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." *Vigor* refers to physical energy, emotional strength, willingness to invest effort and endurance in difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Employees who score high on vigor usually have a lot of energy, zest, and stamina during work, while employees who score low on vigor shows less energy, zest, and stamina for their work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). *Dedication* is defined as the sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenges (Schaufeli et al., 2002). A high score on dedication means strong identification with one's work because it is experienced as meaningful, inspiring and challenging. Highly dedicated employees feel enthusiastic and proud of their work. In contrary, low dedication means the opposite: work is not meaningful, inspiring, challenging and employees cannot identify with work. Therefore, less dedicated employees are less enthusiastic and proud of their work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). *Absorption* is state of being completely concentrated in work in a way that time passes quickly and an employee has difficulties detaching from work (Schaufeli et

al., 2002). Employees absorbed by their work feel immersed in work so that everything else seems forgotten and time just flies. Low level of absorption means that employees are not immersed in work, and they have no difficulties in detaching from it (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). Since human capital is the only resource that cannot be copied, employees should be energetic and dedicated to work, rather than "symptoms free" healthy in traditional ways (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2008). In other words, organizations need engaged workers.

Work engagement shows the relationship with both organizational and positive home experiences. For instance, studies illustrate how work engagement is positively related to social support from working colleagues and superiors, performance feedback, coaching, job control, task variety, training facilities (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hakanen et al., 2006). Therefore, the more job resources are available; the more employees will be engaged. Job resources refer to physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that are: functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Social support, feedback, and autonomy are kind of job resources that may lead to job-related learning, work engagement and organizational commitment (e.g., Demerouti et al. 2001; Taris and Feij, 2004). For this study, we investigate supervisory support, supervisory feedback and perceived autonomy as potential drivers of work engagement. *Supervisory support* is a degree to which employees perceive how supervisors offer employees support, courage and concern (Babin and Boles, 1996). It is a key resource that moves employees to be engaged in their workplace (Menguc, B. et al., 2013).

H1. Supervisory support influences positively work engagement.

According to Jaworski and Kohli (1991), *supervisory feedback* is employees' perception that they are receiving clear information about their performance outcomes and suggestions for improvement. Providing feedback that can lead to improvement and corrective measures moves employees to be more engaged in their workplace (Menguc, B. et al., 2013; Jaworski and Kohli, 1991).

H2. Supervisory feedback causes a higher level of work engagement.

Based on Hackman and Oldham (1976) *perceived autonomy* is a degree to which employees feel they have independence, flexibility, discretion, and control in performing their jobs. With a higher level of perceived autonomy, employees feel a greater sense of motivation, empowerment, and competence (Marinova et al. 2008).

H3. A higher level of perceived autonomy causes a higher level of work engagement.

Sonnentag (2003) argues that work engagement is positively related to the extent to which employees recovered from a previous working day. More recovered employees show higher engagement at work and higher personal interest. Engagement comprehends positive interplay between work and home life: employees who transfer positive experiences from home to work (and vice versa) shows higher levels of engagement compared with those who do not show positive flow between two life dimensions (Montgomery et al., 2003). The study conducted by Bakker et al. (2005) have shown that marital partners' level of engagement is mutually influenced. If more studies confirm these findings, we will be able to assume that engagement is contagious (it crosses from one sphere of life to another, from partner to partner).

Consequences of work engagement are positively related with job-related attitudes, individual health, extra-role behaviors and performance (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2008). Engaged workers are more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to their companies and show higher tendency to stay longer in one company (Demerouti et al. 2001). However, engaged employees are not supermen, and they feel tired after long day of work, but they describe tiredness as a pleasant state since it is associated with positive accomplishment. Also, engaged employees are not addicted to work and comparing with workaholic workers, for engaged ones working is fun (Bakker, 2008). In other words, engaged employees are energetic, dedicated and absorbed in works.

Generations are one way of grouping age cohorts. One of the pioneering yet very influential research on generations we can trace back in 1923 and work of Karl Mannheim (Keszemeti, 1952). In his essay *The Problem of Generations* (1923) Mannheim proposed Theory of Generations or so-called Sociology of Generations, where he argues that people are significantly affected by the socio-historical environment and shared experiences. Thus, Mannheim defines *generations* as cohorts of individuals born in the same span of the time and raised in a similar social and historical environment (Murphy et al. 2010).

According to Weingarten (2009) generations typically span a period of 15 to 20 years. However, as we can see from coming examples, precise demarcation may vary across context, particularly nations and cultures. D'Amato and Herzfeldt (2008) specified four generations in Europe in 1946-1980 time span: early boomers, late boomers, early X generation and late X generation. While Mitchell (1998) names Americans born between 1909 and 1933 as WWIIers and those between 1934 and 1945 calls Silents, Kupperschmidt (2000) argues that term Traditionalist comprehends both WWIIers and Silents. In general, there are marginal differences in dates across generations. Literature recognizes next generational cohorts:

1. *Lost Generation*, known as *The Generation of 1914* in Europe. This generation was marked by World War I (Wohl, 1979).

2. *The Greatest Generation*, born around 1910 – mid-1920s. This generation was marked with World War II and Great Depression (Strauss and Howe, 1991).
3. *The Silent Generation*, born around 1930 – 1945 and too young to join service during WWII. They tend to be practical, loyal, diligent and compliant (Patterson, 2005).
4. *The Baby Boom Generation*, born between 1946 – 1964. Independent generation that challenges authority (Mitchell, 1998) and prefers teamwork, optimism, and ambition (Patterson, 2005).

As we can see, in the first half of 20th-century generations were named by the historical events. In the second half of 20th-century social aspects are more emphasized in the process of demarking generations. Therefore, our list continues with:

1. *The X Generation*, born between 1965-1980. The ambition and diligent work of their parents vanished due to jobs instability (Kupperschmidt, 2000).
2. *The Y Generation*, born between 1981-1999. The generation shaped by technological inventions, social medias, on line dating and under huge influence of negative media reports (Wong et al., 2008).
3. *The Z Generation*, born after 2000. The generation full of technology users and so-called „instant online“ generation. Strauss and Howe (1991) also call them *The New Silent Generation*.

This study focuses on empirical research based on Generation X and Y since they are mostly represented in the current workforce, and moreover, Generation Y will be shaping organizations in coming years. *Generation X (Gen X)* has been active in the organizations for the past 30 years. In a historical sense, this generation is shaped by numerous political and cultural experiences. Some of them are: 1976 Arab Oil debacle, the fall of Berlin Wall, the splitting apart of USSR and Yugoslavia, the tragedy of Tiananmen Square in China, Margaret Thatcher was named as a first female British Prime Minister and John Lennon was killed (Robinson, 2015). Technologically speaking, they saw the inception of the home computer (Apple, Tandy), video games, and usage of Internet for social and commercial purposes. They are highly educated, active, balanced, happy and family oriented (Swanbrow, 2012). They tend to be independent and individualistic, giving more value to their careers than being loyal to organizations (Beutell and Wittig – Berman, 2008). Xers carry some of values of their parents (Baby Boomers) like a drive for money, challenging career but same time they value more informal work environment and prefer to make a balance between job and families. Comparing with Baby Boomers, they show more flexibility, and they are not work-centric (White, 2011; Twenge, 2010). They appreciate given autonomy and freedom from the supervisors in the workplace (Jurkiewicz, 2000). Xers are described as geeks, independent thinkers, engaged in interesting work and efficient since they value their time. They resist to micromanaging bosses and find them distasteful and undesirable

(Grimes, 2015). Besides The X Generation in literature, they are also called Gen Bust, Post-Boomers, Twenty – Something's, Baby Busters (Schroer, 2015).

Generation Y (Gen Y) is shaped by historical events such as prison release of Nelson Mandela, Princess Diana's death, the World Trade Center attacks (Wiedmer, 2015). They are more involved in technologies than in everyday life, and since grown up in the age of social media and cyberspace they have the significant advantage over other generations regarding being technologically practical (Deal et al., 2010). Gen Y is sometimes called as "Peter Pan Generation" describing those who do not want to grow up and stay home longer than their parents (Levickaite, 2010). Like Gen X, Gen Y value freedom and work-life balance. As well, they prefer jobs that provide more vacation time than older generations (Twenge, 2010). While they are not tolerant to less challenging work (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002), recent research found that their intrinsic work values are slightly lower compared with older generations (Twenge et al., 2010). Gen Y wants to grow, learn and feel valued at work. If an organization does not provide this kind of values, they do not hesitate to leave the organization. Due to technology, they apt for multitasking and to work for greater good (White, 2011). Still, Gen Y expects more supervision and feedback, clear goals, structure and mentoring (Gibson, 2015). Often, Gen Y is called Echo Boomers, Millennials, Generation We, Internet Generation, Connect 24/7 and Leave No one Behind (Schroer, 2015).

H4. Level of work engagement is higher among Generation X than among Generation Y.

Considering socio-demographic factors, it was found that level of work engagement increases with increasing age and economic status (Bilgel, 2012). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), older employees feel more engaged.

H5. Generation moderate the relationship between drivers of engagement and work engagement such that this relationship will be stronger for Gen X than Gen Y.

Some of the recently conducted studies show inconsistent results among different cultures and regions. For example, Hewitt (2013) argues that Baby Boomers are most engaged in areas such as Europe, North America, Latin America and Asia Pacific while in Australia, Baby Boomers and Gen Y are more engaged than Xers (Australian Public Service Commission, 2012). Some studies indicate that older generations in general experience higher level of engagement than Gen Y (Coetzee and De Villers, 2010). However, Boone – James et al. (2011) view age as a new factor of diversity and imply that generations should be considered while studying engagement.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Sample and procedures

The research was conducted within the private sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). As a sampling technique, we employed non-probability sampling and research was conducted online (the questionnaire was built with LimeSurvey). Respondents were sent an e-mail with an invitation to participate in the study and a questionnaire link. The sample frame included 1500 valid e-mail addresses of employees within the private sector in the capital of B&H. An email contained covering letter with a short description of the purpose of the study, guarantee about anonymity and confidentiality of research, link with a questionnaire. As well, we emphasized that participation in the research is voluntary. E-mails were sent in two iterations: first time in April 2017 and the second time in May 2017 and data collection process is ended in June 2017. Out of 1500 e-mail addresses, 455 participants accessed to link questionnaire, and that makes response rate of 30,33%. However, after data purification process, the final response rate is 15,06%.

The data purification process was conducted in 4 rounds as follows:

1. According to Hair, et al. (2010) response that contains more than 10% of missing data should be excluded from the final sample. In this manner, we excluded 39,78% of data. Also, even some responses contained less than 10% missing data, if age and sector were missing, we excluded these replies as well.
2. In the second round, we excluded responses from those who do not fit into Generation X and Y criteria (13,13% of the replies).
3. In the third round, 3,36% responses were excluded since they were not from the private sector that we observed in our analysis.
4. In the last round, multivariate outliers were removed (1,73%) using Mahalanobis distance. For data analysis, we used SPSS version 22.

3.2 Measures

Work engagement was assessed with Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). UWES contains 17 items and three engagement subscales: Vigor (6 items), Dedication (5 items) and Absorption (6 items) (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). The items are rated on 7 point scale from 0 – never to 6 – always. Higher scores imply higher engagement and classification of UWES scores to very low, low, average, high and very high is made by engagement scores described in UWES Manual (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003).

Drivers of engagement (DoE) were measured by scale adapted by Menguc, B. et al. (2013) work. DoE scale contains nine items from three subscales: Supervisory support (3 items), Supervisory feedback (3 items) and Perceived autonomy (3 items). The items are rated on 5 point scale (1 – Never, 5 – Always).

In the last part of the questionnaire, participants provided demographic information such as gender, marital status, generation, sector, level of education, total working experience, working experience in the permanent company and the company's core business.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptives

A total of 56, 2% respondents were female where 33,86% of them are Gen X, and 66,14% are Gen Y. Out of 43,8% male respondents and 52,52% are Gen X and 47,47% are Gen Y. As we can see, the sample consists of 42,04% of Generation X and 57,96% of Gen Y. Most of the respondents obtain university degree (46,02%) and master degree (25,22%) while rest obtain high school (16,81%), college education (8,41%) and doctoral degree (3,54%). Majority of the respondents are married (54,87%) while 38,94% is not, and rest of the respondents are either divorced or widowed. As it is previously emphasized, all respondents are part of the private sector, with an average number of 12,35 years of total working experience and average number 6,85 years in the current company.

4.2 Validity and reliability of measures

The scales used in this study have been validated in the previous studies. For UWES scale Schaufeli and Baker (2003) assessed Cronbach's α based on databases for nine countries and the individual studies. Other empirical results as well confirmed the internal consistency for UWES 17 scale with general range for Cronbach's α between 0.8 and 0.9 (Schaufeli and Baker, 2003). Drivers of engagement (DoE) scale is based on job resources and is adapted by Menguc et al. (2013) on research from Canadian retail sector on a sample of 422 respondents where Cronbach's α for drivers of engagement were as follows: Supervisory support 0,90, Supervisory feedback 0,86 and Perceived autonomy 0,78.

Both UWES and DoE scales are originally in English, and therefore they were translated and adapted to Bosnian language and context by parallel translation. To the best of our knowledge, scales were not previously used in Bosnian context, so we first employed pilot study (sample of 50 respondents). Pilot study helped us to exclude all possible misunderstandings considering content, context and cultural barrier. With pilot study, we tested all aspects of the questionnaire, including question content, wording, sequence, form and layout, question difficulty and instructions (Malhotra et al., 2006) and therefore fine-tuning of instruments has been achieved.

For work engagement, we created a higher order construct by averaging the total score of its three dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption) (Salanova et al., 2005). To assess internal consistency, we used Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is acceptable if it is above 0,70 (Field, 2009). For UWES we obtained Cronbach's α score of 0,94 (Cronbach's α Vigor = 0,89,

Cronbach's α Dedication = 0,93, Cronbach's α Absorption = 0,87) and for DoE Cronbach's α is 0,93 (Cronbach's α Supervisory support = 0,93, Cronbach's α Supervisory Feedback = 0,9, Cronbach's α Perceived Autonomy = 0,87).

4.3 Hypothesis testing

In order to examine the relationship between proposed drivers of engagement and work engagement, we employed correlation analysis. Pearson's coefficient shows the positive moderate relationship between work engagement and supervisory support, supervisory feedback and perceived autonomy ($r=0,63$, $r=0,6$, and $r=0,58$ respectively, with significance level $p<0,01$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Supervisory support				
2. Supervisory feedback	.853**			
3. Perceived autonomy	.513**	.540**		
4. Work engagement	.631**	.605**	.588**	
Mean	3.66	3.42	3.89	4.49
SD	1.08	1.19	.91	0.98

* $p<0,01$

Regression analysis was employed to test if proposed drivers of engagement significantly predict work engagement. The obtained results indicate that two predictors explained 49,6% of the variance ($R^2= 0,496$, $F(3,222) = 72,89$, $p<0,01$). It was found that Supervisory support ($\beta = 0,358$ and $p<0,01$) and Perceived autonomy ($\beta = 0,342$ and $p<0,01$) predicts work engagement while Supervisory feedback ($\beta = 0.114$ and $p>0,01$) doesn't have significant explanatory power. Since Supervisory feedback is not significantly related to work engagement Hypothesis 2 is not supported while Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3 are supported.

Table 2. Regression analysis for drivers of engagement and work engagement

Variable	Coefficients ^a		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Supervisory support	0,323	0,083	0,358
Supervisory feedback	0,924	0,077	0,114
Perceived autonomy	0,367	0,061	0,342
<i>R</i> = 0,704; <i>R</i> ² = 0,496; <i>Adj. R</i> ² = 0,489			

^aDV: Work engagement

As a test for Hypothesis 4, an independent sample *t*-test was conducted. This test was found to be statistically significant $t(224)=2,074$, $p<0,05$. These results indicated that Gen X ($M=4,65$, $SD=0,9$) showed a higher level of work engagement than Gen Y ($M=4,38$, $SD=1,02$) and therefore Hypothesis 4 is supported. The effect size of the analysis ($d=0,26$) was found to show small effect according to Cohen's convention (Cohen, J. 1988). Results of *t*-test ($t(224) = 2,486$, $p<0,05$) indicates that there is a statistically significant difference among Gen X and Y in dedication, where X-ers ($M=5,06$, $SD=0,99$) tends to be more dedicated comparing with Millenials ($M=4,65$, $SD=1,34$). Vigor and absorption were found to be statistically non significance among Gen X and Y.

Moderated regression analysis was performed to test the moderating effects of generations on drivers of engagement – work engagement relationship. Supervisory support and perceived autonomy were found to be significantly related to work engagement across generations while supervisory feedback did not reach the level of significance. However, no drivers of engagement – generation interaction effect was found (Table 3).

Table 3. Moderated regression analysis for moderation effect of generation on drivers of engagement – work engagement relationship

Variable	Coefficients ^a		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
(Step1)			
Supervisory support	0,323	0,083	0,358
Perceived autonomy	0,362	0,063	0,338
Generation variables	-0,032	0,097	-0,016
<i>R = 0, 705; R² = 0,49; Adj. R² = 0,48</i>			
(Step2)			
Supervisory support*Generation	0.044	0,174	0,031
Perceived autonomy*Generation	-0,008	0,129	-0,005
Generation variables	-0,040	0,098	-0,020
<i>R = 0, 708; R² = 0,5; Adj. R² = 0,48</i>			

Model moderated with generation effect on drivers of engagement carry 50% of variance explained (model without moderation effect explains 49% of the variance).

Level of work engagement was calculated and compared with UWES scale author's norm. Classification of work engagement based on UWES scale goes from very low, low, average, high and very high where higher scores denote higher engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). Table 4. shows norms and obtained results from this research.

Table 4. Engagement level for X-ers and Millenials

B&H (total score)	Mean (SD)			
	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Total
Gen X (N=95)	4.45 (1.01)	5.06 (0.99)	4.51 (1.04)	4,65 (0,9)
Gen Y (N=131)	4.19 (1.13)	4.65 (1.34)	4.33 (1.11)	4.38 (1.02)
Work engagement (N=226)	4.3 (1.09)	4.82 (1.22)	4.41 (1.08)	4.49 (0.98)
Norm	3.99 (+/-1.08)	3.81 (+/-1.31)	3.56 (+/-1.1)	3.82(+/-1.1)

Research indicates that employees from private sector achieved average work engagement level (M = 4,49, SD= 0,98), with the highest level of dedication. However, results for Gen X shows a high level of work engagement (M=4,65, SD = 0,9) with the highest level of dedication. Research shows that Millenials have an average level of work engagement (M=4,38, SD = 1,02)

5. DISCUSSION

This study focused on the relationship between drivers of work engagement and work engagement with a particular emphasis on differences among generational cohorts X and Y. One of the main objectives of the study was to find out if supervisory support, supervisory feedback, and perceived autonomy are significant predictors of work engagement in private sector. Since some studies offer conflicting results about engagement level among generational cohorts (Hoole and Bonnema, 2015), we also examined the degree of work engagement among generational cohorts. Also, drivers of engagement – generation interaction effect was employed on drivers of engagement – work engagement relationship. Findings of the study can be grouped into following *managerial implications*.

First, study results showed that work engagement could be predicted with dimensions from Job Demand-Resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). As predictors, we employed supervisory support, supervisory feedback, and perceived autonomy using scale adapted by Menguc et al. (2013). Study results indicate that supervisory support and autonomy feedback are significant predictors of work engagement while supervisory feedback was non significant. Based on results, managers should provide more support, encouragement and show more concern for their employees. In this manner, employees feel more secure and believe that company supports their welfare (DeConink, 2010). Since autonomy represents how employees

perceived their level of independence, flexibility, and control while doing a job, companies should pay attention to environments with less hierarchical levels. A Higher level of autonomy indicates a greater sense of motivation, empowerment, and competence (Marinova, Ye and Singh, 2008). With a higher level of autonomy, employees will have more space for creativity, new solutions, and ideas for work improvement. Results from this study indicate that supervisory feedback did not reach significance level as a predictor for work engagement. Since supervisory feedback refers to employees' perception that they receive clear feedback about their performances and suggestions for future improvement, we believe that managers could provide more clear and supportive feedback. Also, if employees are provided with sufficient and adequate supervisory support, they could perceive a supervisory feedback as a part or reflection of supervisory support. Therefore, employing both supervisory support and feedback might cause redundancy, and thus one of the variables could be omitted. Menguc et al. (2013) provide to some level similar suggestion where they propose that instead of supervisory support we should apply coworker support and supervisory feedback.

Second, study results suggest that Gen X has a higher level of work engagement than Millennials. This result is compatible with some of the main traits of X-ers and Millennials where X-ers are described as independent and individualistic. Also, while they prefer autonomy, freedom at work, on the other side, literature describe Millennials as employees that prefer more supervision in the sense of clear goals and mentors; they prefer to feel valued at work when X-ers evaluate more their career than an organization. According to research, differences among generational cohorts are especially noticeable with a dimension of dedication where X-ers reach a high level of dedication and Millennials reach an average level of dedication according to proposed norms. In other words, results suggest that X-er are more proud, inspired and challenged by their work compared with Gen Y.

Third, in this study no drivers of engagement – generation interaction effect was found in drivers of engagement – work engagement relationship. Results imply that both generations (X and Y) could be engaged with same predictors, regarding supervisory support and perceived autonomy. Same time what is making X-ers more engaged than Millennials is their high dedication to work.

Based on the study results we propose that organizations of the future should consider generational differences. These especially imply in term of preparation for future working places that will be filled with X-ers, Millennials and moreover with new coming Generation Z. If we can feel generational differences now, can we imagine how new work place will look alike when new „instant online“ generation arrive?

6. CONCLUSION

Engagement of a workforce is something that cannot be acquired or outsourced (Rice et al., 2012) while same time workforce diversity is visible among generational cohorts. In this manner, we would like to mention some limitations of the conducted study and use them as suggestions for future research. First, based on the survey results we propose that not only three drivers of work engagement should be examined, but more. Also, supervisory support and supervisory feedback should be more tested as predictors in order to avoid redundancy. To get a broader idea of generational influences, in some of the future studies, we suggest including both Baby Boomers and when become possible Generation Z. Results of this study extend previous generational and work engagement research and imply that generational differences do matter for organizations.

LITERATURE

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