

Understanding Factors Motivating Generation Z with Application of Maslow's Theory of Motivation

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Abstract:- Generation Z or digital natives is a fast growing workforce. As they are born in the era of technological advancement, their lifestyle, thinking patterns, values are varied from previous generations. As they will be the largest workforce in near future, it becomes the point of concern that motivates them for their work. Understanding factors of their motivation is important as it helps the organizations in their management effectively.

This article attempts to understand motivational factors among Generation Z which drives them to work using the framework of Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation. Article is based on secondary research using qualitative data and using descriptive method of research. Key findings of the study are that Generation Z looks for work life balance, meaningful work and supportive environment as their basic motivational factors. Other driving forces are financial security, positive work environment, team bonding, open communication, reward and recognition and learning and development.

Recommendation for future managers is that they should keep these factors into consideration while managing Generation Z for their effective management.

Keywords:- GenZ, Motivational Factors, Maslow's Theory of Motivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, also known as iGen, Home landers, Digital Natives, and more frequently referred to as Gen Z or Gen Zers, encompasses individuals born between 1995 and 2012. (Pichler, Chiranjeev Kohli & Granitz, 2021). GenZs are really different from other generations in terms

of their thinking patterns, values they obtain and factors from which they seek satisfaction and motivation. So it becomes important to understand how they get motivated. This research becomes relevant with the fact that in coming time a big number of workforces will be this Generation Z and it is very important for organizations to understand in order to retain them, be effective in talent management and enhancing productivity of the organization. So, understanding Generation Z individuals or workforce is imperative for achieving success in the business world and attaining a competitive edge. (Pichler, Kohli & Granitz, 2021).

Focusing on Generation Z, it is evident that this cohort exhibits a unique set of characteristics the historical milieu that shapes Generation Z is often intertwined with progressions in technology and the advent of the digital age. (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). Everything from them is just one click away. The swift advancement of technology serves as a fundamental catalyst for the transformation of values and behaviors within Generation Z, in contrast to those observed in preceding generations (Pichler, Kohli & Granitz, 2021). So they are born with fulfillment of basic needs as well as luxury needs unlike previous generations who struggled throughout the life for fulfilling their basic needs. So their needs of life have been changed in comparison with previous generations like millennial, Generation X etc.

➤ Timeline of Different Generations

People born between 1946 and 1964 being called baby boomers. Generation X is the people who were born between 1961 and 1979. Generation Y or Millennial are those born between 1980 and 1995. Generation Z are the people born between 1995 and 2010 (Mahapatra, Bhullar & Gupta, 2022).

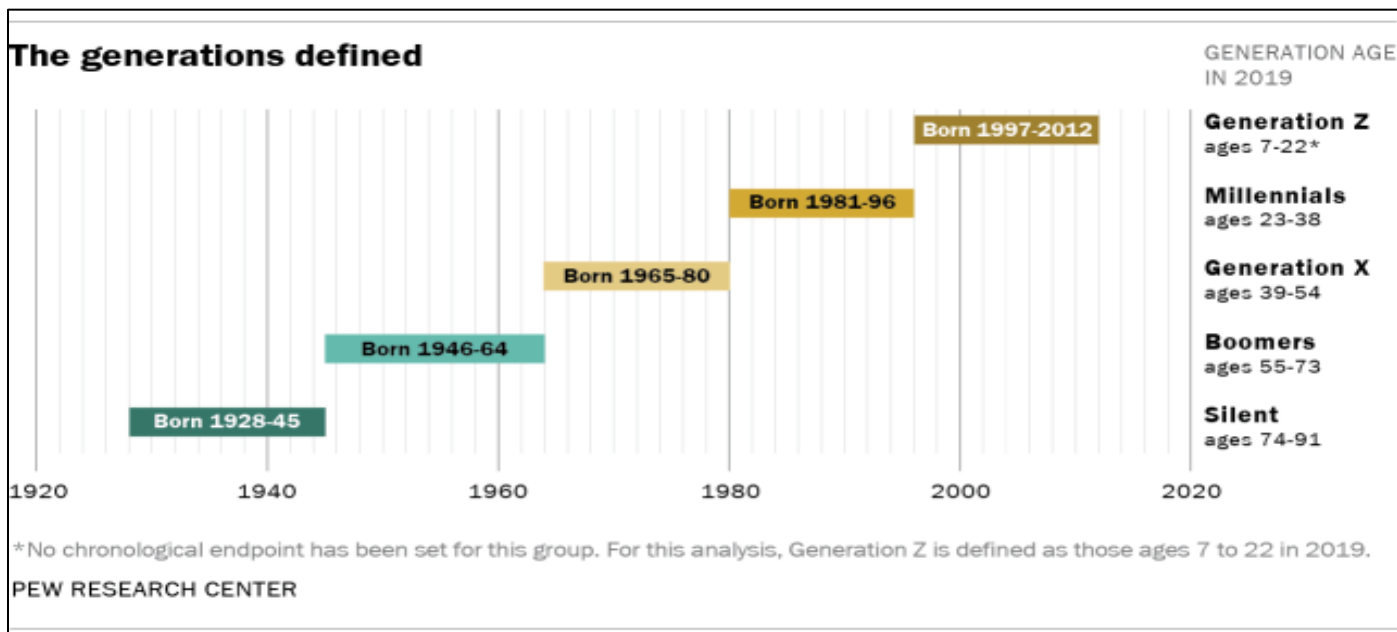


Fig 1 The Generations Defined
 Source: Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins (DIMOCK, 2019)

➤ *Maslow's Theory of Motivation*

As per the indeed editorial team (What is Maslow's motivation theory, 2023) Abraham Maslow proposed that human motivation is derived from an intrinsic drive to advance within the hierarchy of needs. Maslow illustrated his theory graphically in the form of a pyramid, analogous

to the food pyramid, wherein the base signifies the foundation and the most fundamental tier. Upon the fulfillment of a particular need level, according to Maslow, individuals are subsequently inclined to aspire towards attaining the succeeding tier. (Indeed, 2023)



Fig 2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
 Source: The New Hierarchy of Needs — Maslow's lost apex (Christian, 2020)

➤ *Motivation*

Motivation compels individuals to engage in behaviors that facilitate progress towards their objectives (The Psychology of What Motivates Us, n.d.). Motivation serves as a crucial factor influencing human behavior, acting as a catalyst for both competition and the initiation of social relationships (Motivation, n.d.). The core of motivation lies in the activation of energized and enduring goal-oriented actions. When individuals experience motivation, they engage in movement and proactive

behavior (What Is Motivation? A Psychologist Explains n.d.).

Humans exhibit diversity in their expectations, perceptions, and responses. The impact of a specific motivation can vary among individuals due to the challenge in anticipating their behaviors. Consequently, the study of motivation is intricate. As human desires are boundless, the fulfillment of a single need triggers the emergence of another, leading to an ongoing cycle. Hence, motivation is

an incessant phenomenon that persists beyond the gratification of a specific need. (Features and Importance of Motivation, n.d.)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study performed by Kirchmayer & Fratričová, it is been found that meaningful job is a motivation factor for Generation Z (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). In another study by Mahapatra, Bhullar & Gupta, 2022, it found that motivating Generation Z is a challenge for talent management and they have to adopt different approach to manage it. It is also found that GenZ don't care about the brand name of the organization. Study also concluded that due to advancement of technology social skills and social support of the generation is decreasing (Mahapatra, Bhullar & Gupta, 2022). In a study by Elomaa Milena, Generation Z is motivated by job security, and affective organizational commitment, and the extrinsic factors were promotion, training, and rewards (Elomaa, 2023). Another study on generation and Millennial found that employees are preferring more work from home (Pawar & Pandit, 2023). In recent many studies done on Generation Z motivation factors but most studies have been done on college students who are entering the workforce. This study aims to explore motivating factors in the current Generation Z workforce.

➤ Research Objectives

- Below are the research objectives of this study.
- Exploring motivational factors among Gen Z workforce using Maslow's theory of motivation as theoretical framework.
- To investigate the degree to which Generation Z places importance on various tiers of needs as delineated in Maslow's hierarchy theory.
- To Propose Recommendations for effective management of this generation's workforce.
- These objectives aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Gen Z's work values align with Maslow's framework and how organizations can leverage this understanding to optimize engagement and performance among younger employees.

➤ Research Methodology

This research paper is been commenced using secondary research data from various sources like previous research papers, survey reports, and web articles.

III. APPLICATION OF MASLOW'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION

As per the theories put forth by Maslow in 1943 and 1954, the hierarchy of human needs was structured in such a way that the basic physiological needs associated with survival were positioned at the foundation, while the higher-level needs related to self-actualization, creativity, and intellectual fulfillment were situated at the apex. (McLeod, 2024)

➤ Basic Need-

According to Maslow, the fundamental requirement for individuals is the preservation of physical well-being, serving as the primary driver of their actions. Following the satisfaction of this foundational need, subsequent tiers of needs come into play, propelling individuals forward. Maslow emphasized the significance of physiological needs, deeming them paramount as other needs assume a subordinate role until these are adequately addressed. (McLeod, 2024). Aligning this thought process with the case of GenZ, some important observations have been made. These are:

Meaningful and interesting work- Meaningful work that one can enjoy is a vital factor for GenZ workforce motivation (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018). For the Gen Z workforce, interesting work comes as the most significant factor of them having work motivation in the first place. (Elomma, 2023). In a study, it was found that doing interesting work and having enough of a challenge in it is important for work motivation (Elomma, 2023). In a study conducted, it was found that GenZ prefers challenging roles or work as their motivational factor. (Shah, 2018)

Supportive environment- According to Indian Employer Forum ("The Great Debate: Rewards vs. Culture", 2023) Young individuals nowadays place great importance on achieving a harmonious balance between professional responsibilities and personal activities, consequently, they are inclined towards selecting workplaces that foster a supportive environment for their overall welfare. In a research study, it is found that even when Gen Z individuals choose a corporate position, their preference leans towards flexibility over a higher salary. These individuals are perceived to possess a harmonious integration of their personal and professional lives (Mehta, 2021).

Flexibility- As per the indeed editorial team (10 Generation Z Characteristics, 2023) Generation Z has witnessed a transformation in the workplace over the last few decades, characterized by the rise of remote work arrangements and flexible employment terms. This has led them to place a high premium on adaptability, particularly on their professional trajectories. They prioritize benefits like paid time off, maternity and paternity leave, comprehensive healthcare benefits, complimentary meals, gym memberships, and other supplementary perks. The ability to accommodate flexibility is crucial for both attracting and retaining Generation Z personnel, underscoring the significance for organizations to embrace the concept of integrating remote work into standard business practices. Driven by their desire for holistic well-being and work-life integration, younger generations perceive remote work as a promising avenue for achieving professional goals alongside personal aspirations (Putri & Amran, 2021, as cited in Mantha & Krishna, 2024).

It is important to note that Generation Z is well taken care of by their parent, compensation and benefits might not be a great incentive to them in generationally diverse

workplaces (Che, Alang & Nguyen, 2023). Gen Z prioritizes work-life balance and well-being over brand prestige and excessive commitment (Mantha & Krishna, 2024). Hence, it is been justified that GenZ looks for work-life balance, and flexibility as their basic needs and values it more than the higher payouts.

➤ *Safety Needs-*

Safety needs under Maslow's hierarchy is safety, security, and protection. Just as physiological needs necessitate continuous upkeep over the course of an individual's life, the need for a sense of security also follows a similar pattern. This particular need has a more psychological aspect (Poston, 2009). Drawing a pattern with this need with Generation Z, it is been figured out that they look for financial security. In the prior research conducted on a distinct cohort of Generation Z individuals, the concept of reward emerged as a pivotal element influencing both retention rates and overall job satisfaction. The findings of the present investigation indicate that the Generation Z cohort predominantly prioritizes the fundamental salary component when delineating the aspects of a motivating reward package. The variable pay aspect was only marginally referenced, with a prevalent association with the intrinsic desire for recognition and appreciation for one's contributions. Strikingly, the array of benefits was notably disregarded by a significant majority of the surveyed participants. (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018)

Interestingly, the concept of job security is not perceived as a fundamental safety requirement within the Generation Z workforce. For individuals belonging to Generation Z, the professional realm has the potential to transform into a continuous pursuit of a career that resonates with their passions, thereby lacking the motivation to remain in a position once it ceases to provide intrinsic fulfillment. (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018)

➤ *Love and Belongingness-*

This requirement pertains to a fundamental human emotional necessity for interpersonal connections, affiliation, connectivity, and inclusion in a social collective (McLeod, 2024). Keeping this need in the framework of Maslow's need hierarchy theory from the prospect of GenZ, it is been found that Generation Z is characterized by a strong inclination towards fostering relationships, with a particular emphasis on the connections established in a professional setting. The significance of these bonds lies in the sense of being valued as individuals, as well as the potential influence on the level of dedication and passion exhibited in their work. Gen Z is simply more motivated by the connecting part of working with others (Vickberg & Tankersley, 2023).

According to the Indian Employer Forum Generation Z seeks an environment that values individual differences, promotes equality, and provides equal growth opportunities for all. These generations thrive in a collaborative and empowering work environment. They appreciate open communication, teamwork, and the ability to contribute

their ideas. Companies that foster a culture of trust, transparency, and empowerment will resonate with them ("The Great Debate: Rewards vs Culture", 2023).

Moreover, Gen Z seeks a workplace characterized by positive coworker relationships, and a dynamic atmosphere (Mantha & Krishna, 2024). Employee performance is further enhanced by the presence of effective leadership. The overall value of a company is expected to grow as competent managers guide their employees toward success. Distinguished leaders can facilitate favorable changes that enhance the overall performance of the workforce (Sentoso, Setiawan & Vivianti, 2024).

➤ *Self Esteem-*

Esteem embodies the conventional human longing for acceptance and appreciation from peers. Individuals frequently immerse themselves in a vocation or pastime in pursuit of acknowledgment. Such pursuits afford individuals a perception of making a meaningful contribution or holding significance. Maslow posited that the requirement for esteem or admiration holds utmost significance for juveniles and teenagers, antedating genuine self-regard or honor (McLeod, 2024). Matching this idea of self-esteem with GenZ employees, it is been found that the GenZn workforce wants recognition for effort and knowledge/expertise.(Vickberg & Tankersley, 2023). According to the Indian Employer Forum ("The Great Debate: Rewards vs Culture", 2023) regular feedback, recognition, and appreciation play a crucial role in motivating these generations. They appreciate a positive and inclusive work environment that fosters collaboration and celebrates individual and team achievements. (Vickberg & Tankersley, 2023)

As per the indeed editorial team (10 Generation Z Characteristics, 2023) in the professional setting, the competitive inclination of Generation Z individuals could potentially intertwine with their aspiration to receive acknowledgment for their efforts. The significance they place on precise specifications regarding achievement metrics and career progression is notably high.

An employer who welcomes discussions and provides ongoing support effectively nurtures a feeling of satisfaction among Generation Z staff, signifying that their accomplishments adhere to established criteria.

One of the factors contributing to diminished motivation among employees is the absence of gratitude or appreciation. The failure to acknowledge or commend the completion of difficult tasks can diminish an individual's drive to tackle assignments and lead to a decline in overall productivity.(Sentoso, Setiawan & Vivianti,2024)

Personal accomplishment is also a significant contributor to the motivation of the Generation Z workforce. (Vickberg & Tankersley, 2023)

➤ *Self-Actualization-*

Self-actualization requirements represent the utmost stage within Maslow's hierarchy, pertaining to the fulfillment of an individual's potential, pursuit of personal growth, self-fulfillment, and peak experiences. (McLeod, 2024). According to the Indian Employer Forum ("The Great Debate: Rewards vs Culture", 2023), Continuous learning and growth opportunities are highly valued by these generations. They seek a working environment that nurtures their skills and offers avenues for professional advancement. Organizations that invest in employee development programs and provide access to training and mentorship programs are more likely to attract and retain Gen Z talent. Some reports have shown that Gen Z looks for more opportunities to learn and practice new skills or expertise or they leave the organization. (Vickberg & Tankersley, 2023).

IV. FINDINGS

- With the help of the Framework of Maslow's theory of motivation harmonizing with the literature review following have been found.
- They value work balance so much even more than the high-paying salaries. If an organization offers them a very high package but wants them to work for extreme hours, they are most likely to prefer the organization that is offering less salary but a work-life balance where they can have their private time as well.
- Flexibility is also a core need of this generation as they want to work as per their comfort, terms, and conditions.
- Generation Z values companies with a positive environment.
- This generation is inclined to their workplace and believes in workplace bonding with their colleagues, manager or supervisor, and top management. They like open communication and teamwork.
- Generation Z is highly invested in the part of learning and development which is their self-fulfillment. They prefer workplaces that provide them the opportunities for skill development and learning.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ORGANIZATIONS

As Gen Z will be the largest workforce in coming time, it becomes very important for future managers to understand them and provide them all the things which can actually lead them to be motivated. Some recommendations are following:

Organizations can focus their HR policies on providing a balance between work and personal life. Keeping working hour limited and periodical checks on fatigue level of employees can help in this regard.

From being providing this generation monotonous work, they can be treated with some challenging and meaningful work.

Flexible working hour and choice of mode of work can boost the productivity of this generation's employees.

Periodical evaluation of performance and appreciation and reward.

Managers can provide them open environment where reaching to any level of hierarchy becomes accessible. Basically implementing open door policy. This will lead to open communication as well as create positive atmosphere in the organization which is a motivational factor of the workforce.

More than usual leadership, Gen Z prefers mentorship. So future managers, with open communication can fulfill their need as well.

Organization must provide them with regular training on soft skills as well on technical skills which will boost their self-worth as well as benefit to the organization.

Adopting these recommendations can help organizations in attracting candidates, retain them for a longer term, and motivate them and ultimately boosting productivity of the organization.

VI. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Using Maslow's theory of motivation it is been found that Gen Z gets motivated when an organization serves them with positive and open environment which values their efforts, recognize importance of their work and provide them with the opportunity of learning and development. This research article has been written with the aim of finding out the factors which can affect the motivational level of employees. The article also throws light on levels of factors of motivation as per the framework of Maslow's theory of motivation. Gathering this information regarding motivation of the Gen Z workforce will help the future organizations and managers to retain their valuable employee, marginalizing HR cost of the organization, managing them in a better way, enhancing productivity of organizations and enhancing brand value.

This article is based on a very efficient framework of motivation that is Maslow's theory of motivation hence provides a deep understanding of factors of motivation affecting Generation Z employees. Descriptive research methodology and qualitative data has been used for the paper and though it is based on previous research findings. Moreover, it does not explore the differences in motivational factors among Gen Z and previous generations. More research in this field by future researchers and quantitative data and varied methodology can be used. For upcoming researcher, the key findings of this article are how to implement a theory into practical and contemporary scenario and using the research findings for the benefit of the organization.

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