

Factors Affecting Career Aspirations of Generation Z

Suneet Lavhale

Student Marketing Management MIT ADT University Pune

suneetlavhale252@gmail.com

Under the Guidance of Dr. Vijaya Gondane

Associate Professor

MIT College of Management

Abstract

In this paper, an attempt has been made to identify the influence of internal demographic factors and other extrinsic factors on Generation Z, i.e. people born between 1995 – 2010, while they make their career choices. An effort has also been made to identify the role played by job traits in career choices of Generation Z individuals and compare them on the basis of gender. To address this question, a comprehensive research design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods was employed. Firstly, an extensive literature review was conducted to identify and categorize the various factors impacting the career choices of Generation Z. Then a structured online questionnaire was prepared and circulated through the required population to collect the primary data. The responses were then analyzed with the help of statistical and descriptive methods. Demographic factors and certain job traits do play a significant role in career aspirations and choices of Generation Z. This research will help recruiters to analyze the factors they will need to pay attention to while recruiting employees.

Keywords – Generation Z, Career Aspirations, Career Choices, Quantitative Research, Qualitative Methods, Demographic Factors. Job Traits.

Introduction

Theories about generational differences were popularized by Strauss and Howe (2000), who differentiated the generation into five groups: Baby Boomers (1946–1960), Generation X (1960–1980), Generation Y (1980–1995), Generation Z (1995–2010), and Alfa Generation (2010+). As generations passed by, the demographics of an individual in every generation underwent changes.

These demographic factors have been playing a major role in fulfillment of career aspirations and choices of individuals. The influence of these factors over career related decisions has been varying along with changing generations. Generation Z or Gen Z is the newest generation to enter the workforce. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors determine Gen Z's career aspirations. Gen Z has well-defined career expectations and career development plans. In our research, intrinsic factors include one's age, gender, educational status, family type and income. Extrinsic factors include family influence, work arrangement, societal obstacles and different job traits.

Importance of Understanding Career Aspirations Of Generation Z

Understanding Generation Z's career aspirations is crucial for organizations looking to attract and retain young talent. Gen Z represents the future workforce and consumer base, making it essential for businesses to align their branding, recruitment marketing, and workplace strategies with this generation's expectations.

1. Talent Acquisition as Employer Branding – Organizations must position themselves as attractive employers by marketing their work culture, career growth opportunities, and corporate values.
2. Customization & Personalization – Just as companies tailor products for Gen Z consumers, they must also personalize career paths, training programs, and work experiences to meet Gen Z's expectations.
3. Digital-First Engagement – Gen Z relies on social media, digital platforms, and employer review sites to assess career opportunities, making digital recruitment and employer brand marketing essential.

Emphasizing Brand Purpose – Businesses that highlight their commitment to sustainability, diversity, and ethical values will resonate more with Gen Z's aspirations.

Scope of Studying Generation Z's Career Aspirations

1. **Employer Branding & Reputation Management** – Companies need to craft compelling employer value propositions (EVP) and actively manage their reputation on platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and social media.
2. **Targeted Recruitment Campaigns** – Just as brands segment their audience for product marketing, data-driven recruitment strategies can help businesses target Gen Z candidates based on their career preferences.
3. **Influencer & Peer Marketing in Hiring** – Organizations can leverage employee testimonials, alumni success stories, and campus ambassador programs to enhance their recruitment efforts.
4. **Workplace as a Brand Experience** – Companies must market their workplace culture, flexibility, learning opportunities, and benefits as part of their brand identity to attract Gen Z talent.
5. **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & Career Alignment** – Organizations that highlight their commitment to sustainability, social impact, and innovation will attract Gen Z professionals who prioritize meaningful careers.

Factors Affecting Career Aspirations of Generation Z

- **Intrinsic (Personal) Factors – Aligning Career Preferences with Brand Positioning**
 1. **Demographic Segmentation** – Like in consumer marketing, segmenting Gen Z based on age, gender, education, and socio-economic background helps tailor career offerings.
 2. **Psychographics & Brand Affinity** – Gen Z professionals are drawn to companies whose brand image aligns with their values, such as work-life balance, flexibility, and innovation.
 3. **Personal Branding & Social Media Influence** – Many Gen Z candidates curate their personal brands on LinkedIn and other platforms, making social media engagement a key factor in career choices.
- **Extrinsic (Market-Driven) Factors – Employer Branding & Competitive Positioning**

1. **Family & Peer Influence as Word-of-Mouth Marketing** – Gen Z trusts peer reviews and family opinions when making career decisions, similar to how they rely on word-of-mouth before purchasing products.

2. **Societal Trends & Work Culture Marketing** – The demand for remote work, flexible hours, and diverse workplace environments influences Gen Z's career aspirations.

3. **Economic Trends & Competitive Compensation Strategies** – Just as pricing impacts consumer choice, competitive salaries, benefits, and career growth opportunities play a crucial role in career decisions.

4. **Technology & Digital Marketing in Recruitment** – AI-driven job recommendations, virtual job fairs, and interactive career portals enhance the recruitment experience for Gen Z.

5. **Employer Differentiation Through Job Traits** – Companies that offer unique job traits (flexibility, creative freedom, meaningful work) differentiate themselves in the job market, just like brands position themselves uniquely in product markets.

Literature Review

1. Goh and Lee, in 2017, categorized the family under a “subjective norm” governing Gen Z's career aspiration. They found out that Generation Z acknowledged that the role of family members posed a dominant influence over the individual's decision of joining the hospitality workforce. They investigated Gen Z's planned behavior by studying their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived difficulties. An outcome from their research was that lower salary was the more commonly perceived barrier, which will govern the workplace choice of Generation Z.
2. Aguado, C. L., Laguador, J. M., and Deligero, J. C. L., in 2015, studied that personal interests, talent, and academic achievements influence students' career choices. Other factors that can influence students in deciding their university major are financial support, gender, and job opportunities.
3. The IUJ Journal of Management (ICFAI University, Jharkhand) studied traits of jobs like incentives, health benefits, appraisal, etc., that affect the decisions taken by students. It concludes that the interplay of the above factors comes into play when students make occupational choices, and no factor alone influences the decision of career choice.

4. Bhagyashree Barhate and Khalil M. Dirani

(2020) further emphasized the combined influence of environmental factors, family, and work exposure on Gen Z's career aspirations, highlighting the need for in-depth research using Gen Z employees as participants. Their research also stresses the importance of diverse contexts and methodologies to enhance career development theories, practices, and research specific to Gen Z.

Research Gap

While existing studies have examined various factors influencing the career aspirations of Generation Z, there remains a notable gap in understanding whether the society in general imposes any obstacles and plays a role to shape these aspirations or not. It also remains to be studied how the job trait and work arrangement preferences of individuals are differentiated on the basis of gender.

Research Objectives

1. To find out the impact of societal obstacles on the basis of gender in choosing career field.
2. To identify the influence of families on the career choice of individuals on the basis of family income.
3. To study the impact of gender on work arrangement preferences of Generation Z.
4. To study the job traits preferred by Generation Z while choosing their careers based on and gender.

Hypothesis

- H0A: There is no impact of societal obstacles on the basis of gender in choosing career field.
- H1A: There is impact of societal obstacles on the basis of gender in choosing career field.
- H0B: There is no influence of families on the career choice of individuals on the basis of family income.
- H1B: There is influence of families on the career choice of individuals on the basis of family income.
- H0C: There is no impact of gender on work arrangement preferences of Generation Z.
- H1C: There is impact of gender on work arrangement preferences of Generation Z.

Research Methodology

The research methodology consists of primary data collected through an online survey conducted through a structured questionnaire. A survey was conducted in the Indian state of Maharashtra with a population of 12.8 Cr. The sample size of the data is 210 and the sampling method used was Convenient Non-Probability Sampling. The sampling unit consists of individuals born between 1995 – 2010 which is popularly known as Generation Z. The research carried out was a Descriptive Research with data analysis done on SPSS software.

Data Analysis

The Data Analysis is done on the basis of responses and data collected from the online questionnaire and analysed in the SPSS Software. The data analysis consists of the following tables –

1. Demographics of respondents.
2. Cross tabulation and significance test of societal obstacles and the gender of the respondents.
3. Cross tabulation and significance test between the influence and the income of the families of the respondents.
4. Cross tabulation and significance test between the preferred work arrangements and the genders of the respondents.
5. Frequency distribution of the preferred job traits on the basis of genders of the respondents. Demographics (Table 1) (N=210)

Table 1, shows a very slight majority of females, with approximately 51%, amongst the total number of respondents. 51% of the respondents are of the age group of 22-25. There's an even distribution in the number of respondents with regards to total family income. 76% of the respondents are education-pursuing students. 46% of the respondents are graduates. 78% of the respondents are living in a nuclear family.

Variable		Frequency
Gender	Male	103 (49%)
	Female	107 (51%)
Age	18-21	87 (41.4%)
	22-25	108 (51.4%)
	26-28	15 (7.2%)
Total Annual Family Income	Upto 5 Lakhs	70 (33.3%)
	5-10 Lakhs	67 (32%)
	More than 10 Lakhs	73 (34.7%)
Employment Status	Student	160 (76.2%)
	Employed	44 (21%)
	Unemployed	6 (2.8%)
Educational Status	12 th /ITI	37 (17.6%)
	Graduate/Diploma	97 (46.2%)
	Post Graduate	76 (36.2%)
Family Type	Nuclear	165 (78.6%)
	Joint	45 (21.4%)

TABLE 2
Crosstab and Chi-square Test – SOCIETAL OBSTACLES x GENDER

Gender * Do you anticipate facing any specific challenges or obstacles in choosing your career field because of your gender? Crosstabulation					
Do you anticipate facing any specific challenges in your chosen career field because of your gender?		Yes	No	Maybe	Total
Gender	Male	6 28.5%	69 57.5%	28 40.6%	103
	Female	15 71.6%	51 42.5%	41 59.4%	107
Total		21 100%	120 100%	69 100%	210

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.933 ^a	2	0.011
Likelihood Ratio	9.083	2	0.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.12	1	0.729
N of Valid Cases	210		

TABLE 3
Crosstab and Chi-square Test
FAMILY INFLUENCE x FAMILY INCOME

How much influence do your parents/guardians have/had on your career aspirations? * Annual Family Income Crosstabulation		Annual Family Income			Total	
		up to 5 lakhs	5-10 lakhs	more than 10 lakhs		
How much influence do your parents/guardians have/had on your career aspirations?	Highly Influential	24	17	17	58	
		34.3%	24.3%	24.3%		
	Somewhat Influential	14	15	28	57	
		20%	21.4%	40%		
	Neutral	27	30	19	76	
		38.6%	42.8%	27.1%		
	Less Influential	2	1	7	10	
		2.8%	1.5%	10%		
	Not Influential at all	3	0	6	9	
		4.3%	0%	8.6%		
	Total		70	63	77	210
			100%	100%	100%	

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.660 ^a	8	0.017
Likelihood Ratio	19.776	8	0.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.191	1	0.662
N of Valid Cases	210		

Table 3, shows that in families having total annual income up to 5 Lakhs, 34.3% families are highly influential and 38.6% families have a neutral influence on the career aspirations of the respondents. Families with income of 5-10 Lakhs, there is a 42% neutral influence and a combined 45.7% of significant to high influence on career decisions of respondents. Families having income of more than 10 Lakhs have a combined 64.3% significant to high influence on career aspirations of individuals. Meanwhile, there is a very minimal influence of less than

10% on the career aspirations of respondents irrespective of the total annual family income. As the Pearson Chi-Square Significance value is 0.017, the result is established as significant and we reject the null hypothesis. The achieved alternative hypothesis is H1B: There is influence of families on the career choice of individuals on the basis of family income.

TABLE 4
Crosstab and Chi-square Test – WORK ARRANGEMENT x GENDER

Gender * Which type of work arrangement do you prefer? Crosstabulation						
		Which type of work arrangement do you prefer?				Total
		Business	Freelance	Remote	9-5	
Gender	Male	44	11	21	27	103
		62.8%	44%	46.7%	38.6%	
Gender	Female	26	14	24	43	107
		37.2%	56%	53.3%	61.4%	
Total		70	25	45	70	210
		100%	100%	100%	100%	

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.773 ^a	3	0.032
Likelihood Ratio	8.855	3	0.031
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.741	1	0.005
N of Valid Cases	210		

Table 4, shows 62.8% of males prefer business type work arrangement. There is approximately equal preference for freelance and remote work arrangement by both males and females. 61.4% females prefer a 9-5 job work arrangement.

As the Pearson Chi-Square Significance value is 0.032, the result is established as significant and we reject the null hypothesis. The achieved alternative hypothesis is H1C: There is impact of gender on work arrangement preferences of Generation Z.

TABLE 5
JOB TRAITS preferred x GENDER

	Salary and benefits	Passion for the field	Opportunities for advancement	Work-life balance	Location	Social impact	Prestige/ status
Male	78	74	71	64	44	44	38
	47.8%	48.4%	50.7%	45%	49.4%	63.8%	59.4%
Female	85	79	69	78	45	25	26
	52.2%	51.6%	49.3%	55%	50.6%	36.2%	40.6%
Total	163/210	153/210	140/210	142/210	89/210	69/210	64/210
	77.6%	72.9%	66.7%	67.6%	42.4%	32.9%	30.5%

Table 5, shows the percentage wise distribution of the different job traits preferred by both the genders. 55% females prefer to have work-life balance as compared to 45% males. 63.8% and 59.4% males give importance to social impact and the prestige and status of their job respectively.

Findings And Conclusions

- Majority of the males as well as females don't anticipate any obstacles in choosing their career field because of their gender.
- Comparatively a greater number of females are unsure about whether gender will impose any challenge in taking career related decisions as compared to males for the same.
- Gender is a challenge for very few males as well as females in career choices.
- Respondents with a total annual income level between 5-10 Lakhs, there is a balance between a neutral and significant influence of a family on an individual's career choice.
- Respondents with a total annual income less than 5 Lakhs and as well as more than 10 Lakhs, there is

majorly a significant influence of a family on an individual's career aspirations.

- Maximum number of males prefer to run a business of their own whereas maximum number of females prefer to work in a traditional 9-5 job.
- No significant difference in preferences by males and females for freelance and remote work arrangements.
- There is an equal preference by males and females for job traits like Salary and Benefits, Passion for Field, Opportunities for Advancement, Work-Life Balance and Location.
- Greater preference by males as compared to females for job traits like Social Impact and Prestige and Status.
- Overall, Salary and Benefits is the most sought-after job trait by the respondents followed by Passion for the Field, Opportunities for Advancement, Work-Life Balance, Location, Social Impact and Prestige and Status.

Q14.) What factors/job traits do you consider while choosing a career? (Select all that apply)

- Salary and benefits
- Passion for the field
- Opportunities for advancement
- Work-life balance
- Location
- Social impact
- Prestige/status

Q15.) Do you anticipate facing any specific societal challenges or obstacles in your chosen career field because of your gender?

- No
- Maybe
- Yes (please tick this box as well as the box below and specify in the given blank)
- Other:

