

**GENERATION “Y” IN TURKISH CONTEXT:
MULTIPLE FOCI RESEARCH**

Engin Deniz ERİŞ

Dokuz Eylül University Izmir Vocational School

Assist.Prof.Dr.

engindeniz.eris@deu.edu.tr

Pınar SÜRAL ÖZER

Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Assoc.Prof.Dr.

pinar.ozer@deu.edu.tr

Ömür Neczan TİMURCANDAY ÖZMEN

Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Business

Prof.Dr.

omur.ozmen@deu.edu.tr

Özlem ÇAKIR

Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Assoc.Prof.Dr.

ozlem.cakir@deu.edu.tr

Güler TOZKOPARAN

Dokuz Eylül University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences

Assist.Prof.Dr.

g.tozkoparan@deu.edu.tr

—Abstract—

In the business literature studies on generations generally focused on consumer behavior area. Since 2000's this topic has become popular in management area but most of the publications were nonacademic. Recently Generation Y started to have an active role in business life and especially employee turnover rates have become higher than before. This new phenomena has created an interest among academicians studying in the managerial field. From this starting point of view our objective is to explore the characteristics of Generation Y in Turkish Context and the causes of differences among generations. In this study our perspective depends on sociological definition of generations accepting as a national

subculture. In order to attain the objective of this study, multiple foci research used as a data collecting technique. 12 focus groups have been designed with students from Generation Y, parents of Generation Y's, Generation Y employees and human resource managers of Generation Y's. As a result, in this study main characteristics of Turkish Generation Y were tried to explore by taking into consideration Turkish sociological background.

Key Words: Generations, Generation Y, Human Resources Management, Turkey.

JEL Classification: M10, M12, M19.

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The notion of generations long-standing in recorded history starts from Egypt and Ancient Greece (Joshi et. al, 2011:179). Many disciplines such as sociology, psychology, gerontology etc. have been interested in generational issues for long decades. On the other hand this research topic is currently new in business literature.

Recently, working life in all around the world has been changed with the entrance of new generation named as Generation "Y", born after 1980's. One of the important challenges of today's working life is to lead a multigenerational workforce effectively. Anecdotal and theoretical publications exhorting the drastic differences of generation Y at work abound (Kowske et. al, 2010: 265). These publications often discuss the differences between generations work values, working styles and behaviours. Because of these differences and also high turnover rates, practitioners have become increasingly interested in this subject. As Twenge (2010:201) mentioned, many articles in popular press and reports (e.g. *Business Week*, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*) have been published in 2000's. Although there are some pioneer academic researches about generational differences at work in 50's (Gusfield, 1957), especially before millennium as Smith (2000:1-2, 43) mentioned, there was scarce article about the subject in 90's US (United States) literature. However there is still a lack of academic researches about generational differences at work. Gioncola (2006:33) suggest that 'the generational approach may be more popular culture than social science'. Then academicians started to focus on this subject in the second half of 2000's and academic publishes about generational differences started to be on. For example *Journal of Managerial Psychology* published a special issue in 2008.

Academics became to empirically investigate what aspects differentiate the Generation Y from previous generations and also how they influence today's workplace (Macky et. al, 2008). While the awareness about generational differences at work was increasing in US, also in Turkey it started to be popular. Few academic researches have been published (e.g. Özer, 2007; Yelkikalan and Altın, 2010, Keleş, 2011; Inelman et al., 2012), however recently some popular business journal articles (e.g. *Bloomberg Businessweek Turkey, Turkishtime etc.*) and summits (e.g. held by ARELSEM, HR Dergi, PERYÖN Ege in 2012) have focused on generational differences.

The major concerns of the researchers are to describe the work value and attitudes of the new generation, to solve the problems and deal with potential conflicts between generations, to create more synergy at the workplace (Dencker et. al., 2008; Kuppershmidt, 2000).

The definition of generation concept differs between different disciplines. From the managerial research perspective the focus is on the sociological definition. Sociologically a generation is defined as 'an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages, sharing same values, beliefs, expectations and behaviours (Manheim, 1952; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Joshi et. al, 2011)'. Generation is one type of national subculture that reflects the value priorities emphasized during a country's particular historical period (Egri and Ralston, 2004:210). Culture is important because it differs some in how they approach age issues although most cultures expect younger people to defer to older people more than the reverse. How generations are determined also differs around the world. For example, in Israel people identify generations by wars, while in the US generations are typically described based on birth rates and large events (Deal et. al, 2010:194).

Although the name (generation Y could be named as millennials, nexters, echo boomers, digital natives etc.) and dates associated with the generation varies between different publications, the description of Generation Y is drawn from US literature and mostly used in Turkish publications. The sociological literature has generally conceptualized generations as nationally bounded entities and the anthropological (divergence) perspective assumes that culture, not economics (or technology), is the primary drivers of values in society. (Lynton and April, 2012: 67). But as Lynton and April suggest (2012: 67) in some study, it has been

asserted that youth around the world are more like each other than they are like the elders in their own countries, this is the main idea of convergence perspective which explain that economic ideology drives cultural values (Raltson et. al, 1993: 251; Theimann et. al., 2006:38) Edmunds and Turner (2005) suggest that the sociology of generations should develop the concept of global generations. This conceptual enhancement is important from their point of view because the growth of global communications technology has enabled traumatic events, in an unparalleled way, to be experienced globally. So the globalization and technology are mostly viewed as the causes of the similarities between youth from different country.

Our study's emic perspective view suggests that every culture has to describe its own generation taxonomy. Within this cultural description of national generational taxonomy some of the characteristics, values, beliefs or attitudes could be similar with other national description of the same generational cohorts because of the globalization and communication technologies that create a global consciousness.

The population of Turkey became over 75 million on December 31, 2012. In 2012, the population living in Turkey increased approximately 1 million persons compared to the previous year. 50,2% of the total population is males and 49,8% is females. The median age of the population in Turkey increased to 30,1 in 2012 from 29,7 in 2011. While the median age was 29.5 for males, it was 30.6 for females in 2012 (The Results of Address Based Population Registration System, 2012, No:13425, 28 January 2013). Considering the same statistical indicators the number of people between 25 and 34 years of age (who is named Y Generation in this study) has reached to 12 million 815 thousand persons in the period of January 2013. According to results of 2009 Research on the Entry of Young People into the Labor Market the number of non-institutional population was 70 million 435 thousand persons in the second quarter of 2009 and the number of people between 15 and 34 years of age constitute 33,5% of total non-institutional population. Of people who completed higher education, 57,6% of those employed as professional, technicians and associate professionals in their first job while only 2% employed in elementary occupations (Research on the Entry of Young People into the Labor Market, 2009).

This statistics show that this generation is important for Turkish work life and that empirical studies should to focus on describing their different characteristics in order to understand this new coming workers and focusing on strategies to manage them efficiently for more effective and happier workplace.

2. RESEARCH

As a qualitative study, this research is designed to understand Turkish Generation Y values, beliefs, expectations and behaviours by multiple foci research. Purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of Generation Y in Turkish Context and to examine the perception of managers and parents about them.

2.1. Methodology

In order to describe Generation Y characteristics, to identify how they are perceived by their parents and the managers belong to other generations such as Baby Boomers and/or Generation X, to describe the parenting style which will be the causes of the differences between Generation Y and others, total of 12 focus groups with discussion are conducted: 8 focus groups with students from different disciplines, 1 focus group with Generation Y employees, 1 focus group with human resources managers, 2 focus groups with parents of Generation Yers (Table 1).

Table 1: Structure of Focus Groups

Group Composition	Focus Groups' Numbers	Number of Participants
Students	8 (each group consist of 8 participants)	64
Employees	1	06
Human Resources Managers	1	06
Parents	2 (one group consist 6 and one group consist 12 participants)	18
Total	12	94

Members of the focus groups are invited by the “Dokuz Eylül University Career Planning Centre”^{*}, students and parents are selected randomly from the volunteer who made an application for this research to the Centre. Managers and employees focus group members are also volunteer who made an application for this research to “PERYON EGE”.

Each focus group is moderated by one of the researchers and one of the “Kataliz Calisma Grubu” members observed the sessions. Focus group discussions were recorded by tape recorders. These records were decoded separately by two researchers and then compared. Content analysis revealed to determine variables and themes for all of the focus groups.

2.2. Findings

According to the content analysis, findings from focus groups are briefly reported as shown in Table 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Table 2: Findings of Student’s Focus Groups

Variables	Themes
Future orientation	Pessimistic Short-term oriented
Most valued subjects in their life	Family, health and career
Entrepreneurship intention	Not near future Mainly male profile
Organizations attractive factors	Institutionalization, human orientation, Regular working hours, promotions and advancement
Decision making	Asking family, relatives and close friends.
Sharing knowledge	They share information if it is common, don’t want to share specific knowledge.

^{*} Special thanks for their contribution to the research to Dokuz Eylül University Career Planning Centre, PERYON EGE (Aegean Human Management Association), Management Consultancy Firm (Kataliz Calisma Grubu)

Perceptions about other generations	Generation X and Baby Boomers are challenging, idealistic and contented. Youngers are self-contained, independent and technology oriented.
--	--

Table 2 summarise the findings of the student's focus group. As presented in Table 2, the Generation Y-ers (as future workforce) are pessimistic and short term oriented because of the unemployment risk and labor market conditions in Turkey. Their expectations from workplace are human-oriented organization culture, regular working hours to equilibrate their special and working life, advancement. They are not willing to start-up their own enterprise after their graduation. The most valued subjects in their life are family, health and career.

Table 3: Findings of Employee's Focus Groups

Variable	Theme
Perception about the expectations from today's workforce	Creativity, motivation, commitment and involvement, adoption to organizational culture
Characteristics of Generation Y-ers	Selfish, pessimist, greedy, independent, brave, self-confident, easy to adopt innovations, brave,
Perceptions about Generation X-ers and BB-ers	Resistance to innovations and change, Not willing to delegate, distrust to youngers, uninterested with new technology.
Why Generations Y-ers are different than the previous ones	Technology, education system, easy access to knowledge
Expectations from their managers and organizations	Coaching, friendliness, informal communication, feedback.

According to findings from employee's focus groups, which are presented in Table 3, Generation Y employees perceive themselves as selfish, pessimistic and greedy, on the other hand self-confident, brave and independent. They expect from their managers coaching, friendliness, informal communication and positive or negative feedback about their performance for motivation to work. On the other hand employees born in 1980's think that they are similar to X-ers but the 1990's generation is different from themselves.

Table 4: Findings of the Human Resources Manager's Focus Groups

Variable	Theme
Today's workforce profile	Impatient, want to rapidly advance, demanding, very relax, irresponsible, easily change their job,
Difference between Generation Y-ers and others	They need coaching, support like family; don't want to be member of a team if they will not gain anything. Outspokenness, daringness. High turnover.
Why Generation Y-ers are different than the previous ones	They use to access everything easily
Are Generation Y-ers thread for managers	In terms of technological developments and world trends.

As presented in Table 4, Human Resources Managers have negative perceptions about Generation Y-ers. According to HRMs they are demanding, very relax, outspoken, daring, and irresponsible because of their parent's who present them easily life conditions.

Table 5: Findings of the Parent's Focus Groups

Variable	Theme
Main Characteristics	Very relax and large, ambitious, aggressive, friendly in social media with peer.

Difference between Generation Y-ers and others	Selfish, unaware of the reality, senseless, independent, part of cyber world, no intimate relationship with parents
Values/features you have been given to them	Honesty and trustworthiness, education, respect for others
Your success and failures	Behaving warmly and being protective, giving them the opportunity to participate to the decision making processes.

Table 5 summarise the findings from the Parent's focus group. The parent's think that Generations Y-ers are very relax, ambitious and aggressive. They are communicating with their friends mostly via Internet using new technological devices and applications; they are part of the cyber world. They have not special connection with their parent's family and their relations with their parents are not intimate.

3. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study showed that Generation Y-ers have certain 'global' characteristics such as technology orientation, independence, self-confidence in Turkish context. On the other hand findings about some characteristics such as honesty and trustworthiness, respect to others and the importance of family that are thought caused by social cultural effects are remarkable.

The focus of this research is only on Generation Y-ers, therefore further researches should analyse and compare Baby Boomers and X Generations' characteristics in Turkish Context to define a generation's taxonomy.

As members of Y-ers employees focus group have mentioned the differences between Y-ers born in 1980's and Y-ers born in 1990's. For the further researches it is necessary to investigate Generation timeline along with as generation characteristics by taking into consideration sociologic, economic and ecologic macro factors.

It is expected to contribute the findings of this study and the following generation characteristics, which are special to Turkish Culture, and causes of differences between generations to determine strategies creating synergy in work life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bloomberg Businessweek Türkiye. 2012. Öğrencilerin Gözü Bu Şirketlerde, 25-31 Mart, 52-63.

Deal, J.J, Altman, D.G. and Rogelberg, S.G. 2010. Millenials at work: what we know an what we need to do (if anything), *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 191-199.

Dencker, J.C., Josschi, A. and Martocchio, J.J. 2008. Towards a theoretical framework linking generational memories to workplace attitudes and behavior. *Human Resource Management Review*, 18, 180-187.

Edmunds, J and Turner, B.S. 2005. Global generations: social change in the twentieth century, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56(4), 559-577.

Egri, C.P. and Raltson, D.A. 2004. Generations cohorts and personal values: a comparison of China and the United States. *Organization Science*, 15(2), 210-220.

Giancola, F. 2006. The generation gap: more myth than reality?. *Human Resource Planning*, 29(4), 32-37.

Gusfield, J.R, 1957. The problem of generations in an organizational structure. *Social Forces*, 35(4), 323-330.

İnelmen, K., Zeytinoğlu, I.U., and Uygur, D. 2012. Are millennials a different breed? Turkish hospitality sector front line employees' intention to stay. *Managing the new workforce international perspectives on the new millennial generations içinde* (ED: Eddy, S. Ng., Lyons, S.T, Schweitger, L.), Massachusetts USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Ing.

Joshi, A., Dencker, J.C., and Franz, G. 2011. Generations in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 31, 177-205.

Keleş, H.N. 2011. Y kuşağı çalışanların motivasyon profillerinin belirlenmesine yönelik araştırma. *Organizasyon ve Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 3(2), 129-139.

Kowske, B.J., Rasch, R. and Wiley, J. 2010. Millennials' (lack of) attitude problem: an empirical examination of generational effects on work attitudes. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 265-279.

Kupperschmidt, B.R. 2000. Multigeneration employees: strategies for effective management, *The Healthcare Manager*, 19, 65-76.

Lower, J. 2008. Brace yourself here comes generations Y, *Critical Care Nurse*. 28(5), 80-84.

Lynton, N. and April, K. 2012. Connected but not alike: Cross-cultural comparison of Generation Y in China and South Africa, *Academy of Taiwan Business Management Review*, 8(1), 67-80.

Macky, K., Gardner, D. and Forsthy, S. 2008. Generational differences at work: introduction and overview. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 857-861.

Manhnhheim, K. 1952. The problem of generations. From *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, 276-322, Copyright © 1998. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK.

Raltson, D.A, Gustafson, D.J.; Cheung, F.M. and Terpstra, R.H. 1993. Differences in managerial values: A study of U.S., Hong Kong and PRC managers. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 24 (2), 249-275.

Smith, T.W. 2000. Changes in the generation gap 1972-1998, *National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, GSS Social Change Report*, No:43, October, 1-41.

Theimann, N.M., April, K. and Blass, E. 2006. Context tension: Cultural influences on leadership and management practice, *Reflections*, 7(4), 38-51.

TUIK, 2013. The Results Of Address Based Population Registration System, 2012, No:13425, 28 January 2013.

TUIK, 2009. Research on the Entry of Young People into the Labor Market, 2009, No: 229, December 29.

Turkishtime, 2012. Sahne Y Kuşğunın. Şubat, 44-53.

Twenge, J.M. 2010. A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes, *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 201-210.

Özer, P.S. 2007. Kariyer Yönetimi ve İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi Uygulamaları, (ED: Şimşek vd.), Gazi Kitapevi, Geliştirilmiş 2. Baskı, Ankara: Baran Ofset içinde Dördüncü Bölüm, Bilgi çağında yeni bir kuşak farklı bir sınıf: Y kuşağı bilgi işçileri ve kariyerlerinin yönetimi, 191-208.

Yelkikalan, N., Altın E. 2010. Farklı kuşakların Yönetimi, Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi, 8(2), 13-17.