Generation Y and their Involvement in Work

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Abstract: This article presents the characteristics of Generation Y who are also referred to as Millennials in literature. It's aim is to find out whether some of the general characteristics belong to young people in Romania, in the case of those who were born during the last years of Generation Y period. On the basis of a longitudinal sociological study where we have looked at the transition to maturity of 3509 high school students during a period of 8 years through a three waves research: when they were in the final high school years (12th and 13th grade), two years and 8 years after graduating from high school, we describe here the experience, perceptions and visions over workplaces and future career. 854 Generation Y young adults from Romania have responded to an online questionnaire during the three waves of the study.

Keywords: *Generation Y; work values; career; professional abilities.*

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1. Introduction

Organizations are facing a problem that they have never been confronted with before, because at the present time there are four different generations in the workplace: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and the youngest of all, Generation Z; each one of them having different values, ambitions and work styles. There is substantial debate regarding the boundaries of this generation, the intervals of their birth year being different according to various sources. For example, some researchers and generational experts affirm that Generation Y are people born between 1977 and 1994, while others state that they were born between 1980 and 1995 or 1999. Other researchers point out that Generation Y are all the people born after 1980 (Ball & Gotsill, 2010) or between 1981 and 1994 (Seemiller & Grace, 2019) or between 1981 and 2000 (DelCampo, 2011). A largely accepted generational model belonging to the Pew Research Center subsume in Generation Y people born between 1981 and 1996 who are now aged between 24 and 39 years old. Generation Y members are also known as the Net Generation, Digital Generation, the Nexters, Generation Next, Nintendo Generation, Echo Boomers and the Internet Gen (Zemke et al., 2013) or iGeneration, Generation Me, the Next Great Generation or MySpace Generation, but they are mostly known as Millennials (DelCampo, 2011). If Generation X, the generation just before them was „the lost generation”, this one is „the found generation”, their parents not only join them everywhere, but also they plead for their rights (Zemke et al., 2013). Some experts remark that this generation is bigger than the Baby Boomers Generation, actually in the USA being more than 71,2 million people, the greatest living adults generation so far (Pew Research Center, 2019). In Romania, there are 4.051.920 people belonging to the Generation Y, that is people between 24-39 years old, representing 20,87% of the total population (NSI, 2020a). At the present time, 35,26% of the total Romanian workforce are people belonging to the Generation Y (NSI, 2020b).

2. Generation Y – A Different Type of Employees?

Concerning work mentality, Millennials „work for living” compared to their parents’ Generation who used to „live for working” and aren’t interested in spending every day at their workplace. Even if they want to advance in their careers, they are interested in doing so in their way and this doesn’t necessarily mean working at the office from 8 to 17. Employees work a bit more than 8 hours, but young people between 16-25 work less over time (iSensSolutions, 2020). Generation Y people give importance to their social

and family life and do their best to avoid losing valuable time so that they can enjoy life more than work. Millennials avoid state-owned companies. The younger they are, the more they work in multinational companies (iSensSolutions, 2020). They think that productivity and results should matter more than being present at the office. If they do their job in a shorter period of time than others, they shouldn't be limited to stay at work or punished because they don't stay at the office until the end of the programme. They believe that employees should be rated exclusively on the basis of productivity not on how, when and where they do their job. They should be allowed to do their job anywhere they feel comfortable. It shouldn't matter whether they are at the office, at home or at a local cafe. Millennials aren't as motivated by financial rewards as their predecessors. Even though they appreciate a salary increase, they prefer immaterial advantages as free time, working from home or being involved in important projects. Although Millennials respect quality leadership, some of them believe that they should be in charge. Millennials respond poorly to those who act in an authoritarian manner and expect to be revered simply because of positional power. Millennials appreciate coming together as a team and thrive in an collaborative work environment. 48% of the young between 18-25 prefer teamwork more than other generations (iSensSolutions, 2020). Though they are confident in their skills and appreciate the opportunity to personally bring value to the organization, they enjoy collaborative environments where they can use the talents and abilities of everyone. Millennials appreciate having information so much that they have developed a „fear of missing out” if they are not included in the information sharing flow. Social media, smartphones, and constant contact with virtually anyone they want to communicate with at any time have instilled a deep desire to know everything that is going on. This reflects in their professional lives. Though they are comfortable with all forms of communication, Millennials prefer using technology such as email, text messages, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Messenger, Twitter, etc., over face-to-face interaction. This enables them to communicate with whomever they want to at any time. However, they prefer face-to-face interaction during emergencies and high turmoil situations when they want to have direct communication with leadership. Millennials appreciate the opportunity to work in a casual environment where they don't need to dress up. This is why working remotely is so attractive to many; it eliminates the need to wear proper business attire. So, Millennials are a new breed of employee. They love social media, multitasking, and technological advances, and expect to be treated with distinct value due to the unique skills and abilities that they possess. They

also appreciate friendly, diverse environments, value corporate social responsibility and believe that everyone should have a voice when it comes to work aspects.

3. Research Methodology

The results of the longitudinal sociological study come from 854 young people who have responded during all the three waves of the study. Data acquisition during the first wave of the study unreeled between October 2012-February 2013, in 33 localities of our country, the research sample being composed of 3509 young people from 70 high schools, 12th and 13th graders from 219 different classes who have responded an online questionnaire. The sample type is randomized, multistadium layered (with four sample stages in terms of development region, county, high school, grades). The second wave of the study has been realized two years after graduating from high school between November 2014- February 2015 when the 3509 young people who had responded to the first wave of our study have been contacted by phone, e-mail, and on Facebook to answer a new online questionnaire. 1509 Romanian teenagers, 43% from the initial young people sample of the study's first wave have completed the online questionnaire on the project's website www.viitoradult.ro. Data acquisition during the third wave of the study unreeled between December 2019-February 2020, 8 years later by phone, e-mail, and on Facebook of all the young people from the initial sample. 854 young people responded during the study's third wave and so we could intercept a series of characteristics of their life journey and understand somehow the way young Romanians think about their life chances and problems during the transition period from adolescence to the stage of young adult. Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents during all the three waves of the study:

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics between the three waves of the study

Source: Author's own conception

Socio-demographic data of respondents between the 3 waves of the study		First wave 2012-2013		Second wave 2014-2015			Third wave 2019-2020			
		No.	% First wave.	No. ¹	% Seco nd wave	(%) ²	No. ³	Third wave	(%)	(%)
Gender	Girls	2043	58.2	891 (-1152)	59.0	43.6	521 (-1522)	61.0	25.5	58.5
	Boys	1466	41.8	618 (-848)	41.0	42.1	333 (-1133)	39.0	22.7	54.0
Mean age		18.00 years		20.02 years			25.07 years			
Residential area	Urban	2962	85.7	1389 (-1573)	92.4	46.8	798 (-2164)	93.4	26.9	57.5
	Rural	493	14.3	114 (-379)	7.6	23.1	56 (-437)	6.6	11.4	49.1
Low income		610	19.5	236 (-374)	16.6	38.6	117 (-493)	14.4	19.2	49.6
Total		3509		1509		43.0	854		24.3 ⁴	56.6 ⁵

¹ no. of young people from the second wave, less than in the first wave of the study

² percent of the young people from the total initial sample who submitted the questionnaire in the second wave

³ no. of young people from the third wave less than in the first and second wave of the study

⁴ percent of the young people **from the total initial sample** who submitted the questionnaire in the third wave

⁵ percent of the young people **from the second wave** who submitted the questionnaire in the third wave

4. Results And Discussions

Generation Y entered the labour market in large numbers for more than a decade ago and since then they have required new rules in the workplaces changing almost radically the work world, but the results presented in this article refer to the characteristics and the behaviour of a sample of Generation Y Romanian young people born between 1994-1995 (during the last years of generation Y period) and who entered recently the labour market. The study results refer to 854 young people who have responded during all three waves presenting the situation of the third wave's young people compared to the other two waves. In the first two waves of the study, when the high school students were about to graduate from high school, but also two years after graduating, those who wanted to have a job were more compared to those who didn't want to work in the next 2-3 years. This reflected in the status of employee in the third wave of the study, those

who planned to work in the next 2-3 years being employed to a higher extent. When they have been asked in both waves of the study „Do you plan to... have a job in the next 2-3 years? most of them answered affirmatively, and this reflects in their present work status, those who planned to work in both waves, are currently hired. The difference between those who didn't plan to have a job compared to those who wanted to work and the current status on the workplace, that is hired, is statistically significant. In the first wave of the study 89,7% from the young people planned to have a job and they are now hired compared to 82,6% who didn't plan to work and are now hired ($h^2 = 7,75$, $df = 2$; $p < 0,05$), and in the second wave 88,9% from those who planned to have a job compared to 74,5% from those who didn't plan to work are hired at the moment the difference being statistically significant $h^2 = 9,75$; $df=3$; $p < 0.05$ (Table 2).

Table 2. Young people who plan to work

Source: Author's own conception

Aim to have a job	First wave 2012-2013						Second wave 2014-2015					
	Yes		No		I don't know		Yes		No		I don't know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do NOT have a job- third wave	61	10,3	16	17,4	20	17,9	71	11,1	13	25,5	12	15,6
I have a job third wave	533	89,7	76	82,6	92	82,1	570	88,9	38	74,5	65	84,4
Total	594	100	92	100	112	100	641	100	51	100	77	100

If we refer to the 854 young people who responded in all the three waves, the number of those who have a job has increased from 410 (48.0%) - those who said that they had a job in the second wave two years after graduating from high school to 744 that is 87,6% those who said that they had a job in the third wave of the study. As a matter of fact most of the third wave young people have a job (87,6%), and the others 12,4% that is 105 do not have one yet (Table 3).

Table 3. Young people who have a job

Source: Author's own conception

Statuts on work labour	Second wave 2014-2015		Third wave 2019-2020	
	N	%	N	%
I have a job	410	48,0	744	87,6
I do NOT have a job	444	52,0	105	12,4
Total	854	100	849	100

In the first wave of the study, I have asked the young people how often they have discussed in the last month aspects of their future with any of the adults they live with and 69,6% said that they had discussed about their future plans three times or more and 68,5% have talked with their parents about the career they would like to make.

In the second wave of the study, 2 years after high school graduation, most of them said that they were going to continue their studies: 704 young people that is 82,8% said that they were university students, 45 young people that is 5,3% were joining post high school, and 101 young people, that is 11,9% weren't studying any more after high school graduation.

Figure 1. What are the reasons why you have chosen this specialization? (Second wave)

Source: Author's own conception

Generation Y people choose to study in a certain field in order to prepare for the the job and career they want to have, to get a higher income

and for the employment perspectives after graduation. 76,3% from them affirm that they have chosen in a great and very great measure to study a certain specialization because it coincides with their professional interests. 75,6% have chosen that specialization due to career opportunities on the long-run, 70,4% due to their wish to have a higher income and 64,2% due to employment perspectives after graduation. They had less regard to what their classmates have chosen as specialization (2,1%), to their friends' advice (4,6%), to budget places (5,3%), to domicile nearness (8,3%) and to their teachers' advice. (9,3%) (Figure 1).

Table 4. Young people hired during their studies

Source: Author's own conception

Studies continuation in the second wave	Occupational status in the second wave			
	Not hired		Hired	
	N	%	N	%
Yes, I go on studying	248	93,2	73	50,7
I stop my studies	18	6,8	71	49,3
Total	266	100	144	100

Most of the young people who went on studying, two years after graduation, in the second wave of the study weren't hired. Among those who continued their studies 93,2%, that is 248 young people weren't hired compared to 50,7% that is 73 young people who continued their studies, were hired too. The difference is statistically significant $hi^2 = 99,47$; $df = 1$; $p < 0.001$ (Table 4).

Figure 2. What is the main reason why you work/worked?

Source: Author's own conception

In the second wave, two years after graduating from high school, the main reason why these young people have chosen to work, for most of them this being the first work experience, was to earn money, 72,9% said this, that is 298 young people, 24,0% that is 98 young people said they worked to gain experience, and 1,5%, 6 young people said that they the reason was to create relationships for employment. In the third wave of the research most of the young people, 62,2% said that they were working/worked to earn money, but the percentage of those who said they worked to gain experience is bigger, 28,4%.

Table 5. Concordance between study field and workplace

Source: Author’s own conception

Second wave 2014-2015			Third wave 2019-2020				
Yes	No		In high school	In post high school education	In bachelor’s level university studies	Within other initiation, retraining, development or specialization programmes	None
N	68	324	42	29	454	82	228
%	21,0	79,0	5,0	3,5	54,4	9,8	27,3

For most of them more exactly 79%, 324 young people who were working in the second wave of the study, that is during their studies, their job didn’t have any connection with their university specialization. Instead, in the third wave of the study, a bit more than a half of the young people, that is 54,4% who are working affirm that their job connects with their univesity studies. A significant number of young people, 228 that is 27,3% affirm that their job doesn’t have any connection neither with the high school/post high school education profile nor the university studies, nor other initiation, retraining, development or specialization courses. As a matter of fact, the majority of the young people 239, that is 58,7% who were working in the second wave of the research said that their current job doesn’t help them in the realization of their career plans compared to 168 young people, that is 41,3% said that their job helps them in their career. Studies show a small percentage of those who work in the field they have studied for, 40% in the age group 18-25 years (iSensSolutions, 2020).

In the second wave of the research they have been asked if for the Romanian young people corruption in society (95,2%), social inequalities (87,8%), young people's chance to get a job (85%) and to get their own house (81,6%) represent a very serious problem or just a serious one. To a lesser extent they say that access to the education they want (40,2%) and the necessary conditions to start a family (52,9%) represent a serious or even very serious problem. (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Why did you leave your first job? (Second wave)

Source: Author's own conception

Figure 4. How do you consider things are going on in our country regarding to:

Source: Author's own conception

The percentage of young people who say that they know both the profession and the field they want to work in is bigger for the young people from the third wave of the research 91,2% compared to 85,1% who were affirming the same thing in the second wave. A possible explanation would be the fact that in the third wave the majority of young people have already passed through higher education system and probably it is more clearly to

them what profession and in what field they want to carry out the professional activity once they possess a bachelor's degree in a certain field. On the other hand, Millennials have clear expectations concerning what they want to do, whom to work for and who they want to be in the future. (Wong et al., 2017). Young people from the third wave responded to a lesser extent that they partially or totally agree with the affirmations listed for the question How do you imagine your future career? Compared to the young people from the second wave. 82,9% from the young people in the third wave say that they want to be able to work in various fields compared to the bigger proportion of those who affirmed this in the second wave, when 85,5% said that they agreed partially or totally that they wanted to be able to work in various fields. Maybe now that they possess a bachelor's degree for most of them it is clear what they want to do and they prefer working just in the field they have studied for. Studies (Baruch, 2004; Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012) show that this generation prefers changing jobs many times because they are less interested in doing the same job for the rest of their lives, they expect working in many places throughout life (Weiss, 2003) and expect to begin their career supposing that they will need to change frequently their job (Wallace, 2001). In the third wave young people answer to a lesser extent compared to how they answered in the second wave, 86,6% compared to 92,2% say that the most important thing in their professional life is to build a career or get on the professional ladder. Many studies showed that Millennials look for those challenging jobs, which offer them opportunities of growing and continuous development of their abilities (Gursoy et al., 2013), they want to accomplish their goals and to improve their occupational status. (Uba, 2012). The results of a study (iSensSolutions, 2020) show that young people in the age group 18-25 years have bigger growth and development opportunities through work. Millennials expect to be promoted and to get a quicker salary increase and enjoy new opportunities in career. (Ng et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2007). Also in the third wave they say to a lesser extent 84,5% compared to 95,3% how they said in the second wave relating to the fact that if they dream of certain job they have to specialize in that field. Probably many of them assume that if they have got a bachelor's degree they have finished their specialization. But there are studies that show that Generation Y are interested in challenging and significant jobs which can help them to achieve high aims in their career (Wong et al., 2017).

Figure 5. How do you imagine your future career?

Source: Author's own conception

In the second wave of the research I have asked Generation Y Romanian young people what are in their opinion the most important aspects of a job? They answered that they consider important and very important that the job allows them a working programme as flexible as possible (89,5%) and to leave them enough time for other things in their life (83,3%). This fact is in line with the studies that show that Generation Y cherishes free time (Twenge et al., 2010). Millennials cherish flexible ways of working and want a flexible working environment because they want to have time to spend on things that are important for them whenever they need (Mikitka, 2009). They want to have a life besides the job and they aren't ready to sacrifice themselves for the company (Gursoy et al., 2013). Moreover (Kleinhans et al., 2015) have found that Millennials present lower levels of disequilibrium between professional life and personal one and institutional loyalty. Other studies on Romanian Generation Y people showed that the loyalty of the young employees towards the company is lower (iSensSolutions, 2020). For Generation Y the balance between personal life and the professional one is important. (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Millennials want to enjoy their work, but they don't allow it to take hold of their life. They work for living but they don't live for working as Baby Boomers did (Gursoy et al., 2008, 2013; Twenge et al., 2010). On the next place, Romanian Generation Y people prefer that the job allows them to become famous (86,1%). Younger generations want immediate recognition

as title, praise, promotion and pay (Gursoy et al., 2013). Another reason is that the job gives them the chance to meet many people. (85,9%). Millennials believe in the collective work and are optimistic, they love team work showing a strong will to carry out (Gursoy et al., 2013) and enjoy social connections at workplace (Lee et al., 2012). Generation Y young people are less sociable in the daily life, but more sociable at office (iSensSolutions, 2020). Contrary to some studies (Smola & Sutton, 2002) that indicate that Generation Y is motivated to work for organizations that promote ability development more than status, a large percentage of these people affirmed that the job should offer them a better and prestigious status (80,3%). A significant number of people say that it is important to them that the job allows them to participate in the decision making process (78,5%). Millennials do not necessarily accept status quo, they resist the traditional leadership style and they feel empowered to question the system, rules and procedures. They look at leaders and authority as part of a participative process, even though they respect authority, they often challenge and contest it and they aren't intimidated by it. Their access to information and the fact that their parents and teachers have encouraged them to ask questions about the world they live in, made them feel comfortable with people in „higher levels” and traditional hierarchy doesn't matter too much to them (Gursoy et al., 2008; Nobel et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2016). Millennials look for jobs with increased responsibility and active participation in decisional making process (Walsh & Taylor, 2007) and want to be given power and authority (Wong et al., 2017). Involving Generation Y employees in the decision making processes, managers would satisfy their need for transparency and could offer thus clear directions at workplace. Managers should make creative working spaces (Lim, 2012), a recent study showing that 34% from the young people between 18-25 years are more involved in creative tasks compared to the older ones (iSensSolutions, 2020). Managers should apply a less direct supervision, so that Gen Y employees can have opportunities to take responsibilities to a greater extent, to learn independently and to prove themselves that they are capable (Lim, 2012). In line with other studies that show that Generation Y young people look for jobs that fulfil them significantly or to help others (Eyoun et al., 2020; Garlick & Langley, 2007) 75,2% from this lot's young people say their job has to offer them many opportunities to help others. Other studies showed that Gen Y young people love to contribute to society through their work (Lee, 2012). Contrary to the popular opinion, Generation Y is as altruistic as Generation X or Baby Boomers, empirical studies point that altruist work values mostly constant between generations (King et al., 2017; Twenge,

2010). The least important for them, this lot's young people consider that work doesn't constitute a central part of their life and identity (45,4%) and that workplace should be stable, with few chances to be fired (33,1%) (Figure 6).

Generation Millennials young people are characterized as having digital literacy capabilities and they are multitasking. They direct towards personalized careers and wish they personalized their working space (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015). Gen Y pay more attention to leadership and consider that social environment is important at workplace, they wish they met their purposes and improved their occupational status (Uba, 2012). They look for flexible, nonlinear career pathways, where sideways and descendent moves are acceptable as long as they help achieving more rapid big career moves and success (Ng & Johnson, 2015). They wish they could openly communicate with their supervisors and teamwork is best for them (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Millennials want honest and upstanding leaders, development opportunities, co-workers' friendship, humour and fun at workplace, respectful treatment and flexible activities (Williams et al., 2016). Managers should be their mentors and models and they should be offered instruction and mentorship intergenerational programmes (Gursoy et al., 2013). Young people are more motivated if they are friends with one of their managers (iSensSolutions, 2020). Employment flexibility is a way to be in balance with professional and personal life, whereby management and organizational culture should promote such a flexibility (Maxwell, 2005). Researchers (Lee, 2012; Zuboff & Maxmin, 2002) pointed out that Gen Y are more individualistic and they prefer intrinsic work values such as work autonomy, work identity, challenging jobs where they can express themselves. Kultalahti and Viitala's (2014) concluded that supervisors need to be „nice” (that is supportive and closer) and apply intrinsic motivation (such as development opportunities) and recommend that leaders should adopt a „coaching” style for Millennials Generation.

Figure 6. How important is it for you that your job...?

Source: Author's own conception

5. Conclusions

Same as Pew Research Center, we consider 1996 the last birth for Generation Millennials. Anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (people between 24 and 39 years in 2020) is considered to be part of Generation Y and anyone born from 1997 on takes part from the new generation called Generation Z. in this article we referred to the youngest Romanian Generation Y members, born in 1994-1995, high school class of 2012 whose path we observed towards adulthood for a period of 8 years. On the basis of a longitudinal sociological study, 854 Romanian young people answered 3 online questionnaires for a period of 8 years, the first one in 2012 when they were in the final high school years, the second one two years after graduating from high school and the third questionnaire 8 years after graduating high school when most of them passed through university studies too and have already made contact with job market.

The main reason why most of them worked during their university studies was to earn money, and the jobs they did didn't have any connection with their specialization. After graduating university the percentage of

Generation Y Romanians who work in the fields they prepared for is bigger. Half of our lot's people affirm that their current job is connected with the university studies they followed. On the third place after corruption and social inequalities, Romanian Generation Y people, consider that young people's chance to have a job is a problem. After graduating university they seem to know better what job and field they want to work in. Concerning the job, Romanian Generation Y people wish they had a working programme as flexible as possible in order to leave enough time for other things in their life. Also they affirm that it is important for them to participate in the decision making process, to allow them to become famous and to offer them a better and prestigious status. Our results are in line with what studies show about the specific characteristics of Generation Y, thereby we can say that because of globalization young people from all over the world seem to have the same vision about their future career and behaviour on the job market. Even though generally speaking specific characteristics of each generation described in literature come from the American society, because of the global culture that spreads through internet and multinational companies, they seem to find themselves in other societies and cultures too, just like the Romanian one.

Thus we can say that attitudes and behavior of Romanian Generation Y people towards work are similar to those described by Americans participating actively at the work world changing because of the development explosion and internet spread.

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