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**Generation Y on the labour market - expectations for
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Generation Y on the labour market - expectations for shaping the work-life balance

Elżbieta Robak¹

Abstract

Research background: Entering of the generation Y on job market causes many interesting insights for both researchers, who analyze the specifics of this generation, as well as practitioners of modern organizations' management. Despite some differences in the characteristics of generation Y authors involved in this issue agree that generation Y is focused on education and development with simultaneous desire to maintain a balance between work and personal life. More often than older generations, they are willing to use the various programs, offered by company, supporting reconciliation of professional and personal life.

Purpose of the article: The aim of the article is to present issues concerning the functioning of the representatives of generation Y in the labor market with particular emphasis on the issue of balancing professional work and personal life.

Methodology/methods: The conducted research aimed to analyze the opinion of representatives of generation Y about the expectations associated with their professional work with special emphasis on creating a balance between work and personal life. In order to obtain answers to the research's questions method of diagnostic survey and questionnaire technique were used. To complement the obtained data, the additional qualitative research unstructured interviews were conducted.

Findings: Respondents confirmed the hypothesis that for their generation balance between work and personal life is very important. The collected respondents' opinions showed the image of flexible employment, as a good way to reconcile work and other obligations, which gives the ability to have multiple sources of income and that is a good solution especially for young people and people entering the labor market. The results of the conducted interviews pointed to a number of factors, that in opinion of young workers are important values in life and are related to the maintaining work-life balance.

JEL Classification: J53; J62

Keywords: *generation Y, labour market, work-life balance, relationships in the workplace*

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Introduction

The fact there are more and more representatives of young workers from generation Y appearing on the labour market makes employers recognize and take into account their expectations and needs when managing the staff. Attracting these workers, actions tailored to support their commitment to work and keeping them in a company constitute challenges persons managing contemporary organizations have to face. In this situation the way of functioning of generation Y representatives in the context of social and economic aspects of the labour market is worth becoming familiar with.

The aim of this paper is to present the issues connected with functioning of the generation Y representatives on the labour market with the particular emphasis on balancing professional work and personal life. Presented discussion basing on sociological approach to the social category represented by generation Y refers to both interesting and extremely current issue of balancing work and personal life. The empirical part contains results of carried out surveys and interviews by means of which the opinions of the representatives of the generation Y concerning their expectations associated with their professional work and shaping the balance between work and personal life are analysed. The presentation of author's own research results is preceded by the presentation of key terms connected with this issue. That is why the main features of the generation Y and the importance of work-life balance are briefly described.

Research methods

The carried out research being strictly connected with issues of entering the labour market by generation Y aimed to analyse the opinion of students on their expectations connected with their professional future especially shaping the balance between work and personal life. Last semesters of university studies are specific for students who make decisions about their specialisations and start to crystallise their professional careers then. The perspective of entering the labour market provokes reflection on the future work and also on the experience they have already gained at paid jobs during their studies.

In the research it was assumed that keeping the balance between professional life and personal life belongs to one of the priorities of generation Y. That is why the issues under research referred to the following questions:

- What are respondents' expectations for their professional future?

- How important is it for the respondents to maintain the balance between work and personal life after they start their jobs?
- Would the respondents like the balance between the professional sphere and a private one to be the same as in case of their parents?
- What do the respondents think about working overtime?
- What do the respondents think about flexible employment?
- How do the respondents evaluate the possibility of achieving the balance between professional life and successful personal life?

In order to gain the answers to the above questions the methods of diagnostic survey and of a questionnaire with the use of the anonymous auditorium questionnaire were applied. 183 correctly completed questionnaires were selected from all the received surveys and they constituted the basis for the analysis presented in this paper.

In order to complete and extend the scope of obtained data qualitative research in the form of interviews was applied. Three focus group interviews were carried out, in which 32 persons took part altogether. The choice of the group discussion as a research method was determined by the fact that it allows to obtain additional information that are revealed in the interaction of participants of this type of research. The research material under analysis was obtained both through surveys and interviews in January 2017.

Characteristics of the generation Y in the context of the work-life balance issue

Elaborations available in the literature on the subject indicate that generation Y is different from earlier generations in terms of mentality, perception of the world and of themselves and the way they work and the sense of achievement (see Pink, 2009, p. 2; Reisenwitz & Iyer 2009, pp.91-103; Hardey, 2011, pp. 749-751). Although researchers do not agree about the date of birth of their representatives it is often assumed that they are people born after the year 1980. The fact that they grew up in a specific environment had an impact on the values they follow and their expectations as to the reality that surrounds them. On the one hand personal and affiliate values (happiness, love, friendship, family life), and on the other hand work treated as a condition for successful life and source of satisfaction constitute pillars of the internal world of the representatives of generation Y. Representatives of generation Y are associated with higher flexibility and bigger openness to change, readiness to learn and reluctance to long-term commitments and these features are believed to be connected with the necessity to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

What is important despite high expectations concerning the remuneration and appreciation of the results of their work, representatives of the generation Y to a greater extent than other generations pay attention to the conditions and to the process of achieving success and are less willing to sacrifice other spheres of life in favour of work (Broadbridge, Maxwell & Ogden, 2007, p. 526). As they do not want to feel limited by their work, they appreciate employers with flexible approach to working hours, thanks to whom they will be able to reconcile professional and personal life. The importance of relations with the family and with people they are close to and the realisation of their own passions cause that they particularly appreciate the balance between work and other spheres of life.

Balance between work and personal lives is described as an ability to join work with other aspects of human life, such as home, family, social activity and interests (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003, p. 513). It occurs when work do not overtake the private live, and vice versa - when non-work life is not developed at the expense of working. Looking for the work- life balance refers to the workers' ability to decide how much time, where and when will they devote to the activities, respectively connected with work and personal lives. The possibility of using the autonomy in the same area is referred to the issue of general life quality and promoting of the quality of work and its conditions (see Robak & Słocińska, 2015, pp. 138-148; Robak, Słocińska & Depta, 2016, pp. 88-95).

Research results

Data obtained from 187 students of full-time courses and extramural courses of Czestochowa University of Technology were used in the analysis of the carried out surveys. There were 56 women and 127 men at the age from 22 to 32 among the respondents. All the respondents were from the second-cycle degree and they already possessed diplomas of engineering and of the first-cycle degree programme completion. They studied at the faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science (147 persons) and at the Faculty of Management (36 persons) on 5 fields and 10 specialisations.

90,7% of respondents took up a paid job already during their studies. It means that very many students, including those from full-time programmes can boast professional experience in front of their future employees which fact significantly increases their chances on the labour market (Vinogradov, 2017, p.50).

The survey started with a question about students' expectations connected with their future careers. Each respondent could choose the answer from a selection of suggestions or indicate his or her own one. High

income most of respondents look forward to (80,3% of answers) was at the first place. Professional work is to be based on stable employment (71,6% of answers) that matches their interests (66,1% of answers). What is very interesting, however, from the point of view of the analysed problems, maintaining the balance between work and the non-work life was indicated by a little less respondents (65% of answers). It means that young people who are about to enter the labour market want to have well paid jobs but not at the expense of time for them and their families. Respondents are also interested in having good relations with colleagues in the future (58,5% of answers), and in achieving professionalism in their jobs (42,6% of answers) and also in carrying out creative and developing work (30,6% of answers).

In order to check the significance of work-life balance for generation Y in the questionnaire respondents were asked to address the issue of how important it would be for them to maintain balance between the requirements of work and personal life. The respondents confirmed the thesis that for their generation work-life balance has a significant meaning, as 53% of them stated that it is very important for them and 42,1% indicated it as important. It also turned out in the research that the women who took part in it attached special meaning to the work-life balance, as 64,3% of them evaluated the meaning of this issue as very big and the others as big. Highlighting the importance of this issue by women in the research can mean that they are aware of potential difficulties in fulfilling different roles in life and especially in reconciling family duties and professional ones.

In order to compare the expectations for the work-life balance of generation Y with the situation of the preceding generation the respondents were asked if they would like to achieve a similar balance between professional sphere and personal life as their parents. According to the obtained data 57,9% of respondents gave a negative answer to this question. What is important, not fewer than 42,6% of them want to be less involved in professional life in comparison to the work of their parents. Only 15,3% assumes that they will work more than their parents.

The issue of flexible employment is particularly important in respect of the issue of balancing work and non-work life. Due to this fact questions revealing opinions on this issue were also used in the questionnaire survey. According to the obtained data respondents highly appreciate companies offering flexible working hours, because until 80,1% of them gave positive answers to this issue. Most respondents (59,9% of choices) would appreciate the fact that they could work professionally at home. Almost every second respondent (49,5% choices) would accept work in compressed working week (e.g. 10 hours of work daily and then three days

off). However the style of professional functioning also had numerous opponents (27,3% of checked options).

In the end the respondents were asked how they assess the possibility of striking the balance between work and successful personal life. Respondents turned out to be optimistic on this issue because not less than 96,2% of them believed that they would succeed in balancing these two major spheres of life in the future.

In order to complete and extend the scope of obtained data qualitative research in the form of interviews was applied. The conducted focus group interviews were to lead to the analysis of the respondents' opinions concerning their expectations connected with shaping the balance between the professional sphere and their private life after graduation and starting a new job. Three focus group interviews were carried out, in which 32 persons took part altogether - 14 women and 18 men. The interviewees were at the age from 25 to 28 and they were at the last year of their master studies. The common feature of all the interviewees was that they belonged to generation Y and were in the same situation connected with graduation from the higher school and entering the labour market.

Thanks to the research material gather during the interviews it was possible to complete the data obtained in the survey with the views that extended the scope of information on selected issues of the analysed subject. According to the interviews the respondents believe that in case of an ideal balance between work and personal life the degree of the commitment to work and the amount of time spend on working allow for good functioning in personal life. The separation of work from personal life is important for them. This division was defined as the lack of the need to complete professional activities at home and as distancing themselves from professional issues in private life. There were persons among the interviewees who have pointed out that the right work-life balance is connected with working time flexibility that allows to realise themselves in both spheres of life, that is in professional life and in private one. Some of the women stressed the fact that proper relationship between the professional and personal life is when personal life and all such significant matters connected with it as family, friends and individual interest are more important than work.

When asked about their expectations concerning shaping the relationship between work and personal life after graduation and taking up a permanent job, respondents answered briefly that they would like their professional life not to influence their private life too much. After finishing work they want to have time for their families and interests. Interviewees believed that work should not be taken home and professional issues should be left at work and not transferred to private life.

Summing up the results of surveys and interviews it must be stated that the research assumption that keeping the balance between professional and personal life constitutes one of the priorities for generation Y was confirmed. The comparison of presented here information with the results of other studies concerning the opinion of students and graduates of higher schools on their expectations regarding their future jobs show numerous similarities in obtained data. Researches and analyses relating to the functioning of generation Y on the labour market shed additional light and complement the issues mentioned in this elaboration (compare Baran & Kłos, 2014, p. 212-216; Ostasiewicz & Zawadzki, 2016, pp. 102-110), the content of which was limited by the volume of this paper.

Summary

Taking into account the presented results of research and elaborations in the literature on the subject it can be concluded that the commitment to work of the employees from generation Y and preventing them from changing the employer depend not only on the support of their professional development, offering them interesting and well paid employment or good atmosphere in the team but also from enabling them to maintain work-life balance. In this context all the activities taken up by employers in order to support their workers in keeping the work-life balance and facilitating them in performing their family roles, realisation of their own passions and their own life style become increasingly important (Cappelli 2002, p. 103-112).

However, it should be emphasised that the analysis of the needs of workers through the prism of which generation they belong to, although it provides many valuable information, it is certainly not sufficient. Expectations of individual representatives of generation Y can vary considerably as it is in case of the approach and commitment to work and in case of the amount of time spend on working and private life. Therefore, to effectively identify individual objectives and preferences of workers related with shaping the work-life balance it is necessary to cultivate good relations between workers that are based on open communication and trust.

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