

JOB CHARACTERISTICS AS A DETERMINANT OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF GENERATION Z

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Abstract: *Work motivation has received extensive attention by both management practitioners and researchers over the years. Various theoretical perspectives have been rigorously proposed, evaluated, and revised. In this article, we consider the job design perspective of work motivation to explain intrinsic motivation in an emerging workforce. Specifically, the focus of this paper is an empirical study that investigates the role of motivating job characteristics in intrinsically motivating Generation Z employees. Around 317 respondents were surveyed. Linear regression analysis, followed by Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) and Bootstrapping analysis, revealed job characteristics to be a significant determinant of intrinsic motivation. The results are explained through three perspectives – employee, organisational context, and task. Overall, the findings suggest that job characteristics significantly predict intrinsic motivation in this generational cohort. The results have important implications for human resource management theory and practice. This paper advances the understanding of work motivation by considering the individual and relational features of work, i.e., task characteristics important to the individual, as well as relationship with co-workers, in explaining intrinsic motivation. From the managerial standpoint, the findings of the study have implications for the design of various human resource practices, such as job analysis and design, learning and development, and performance management.*

Keywords: *Generation Z, Intrinsic Motivation, Job Characteristics, Quantitative Research*

JEL: *M10*

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is an important topic in organisational studies. It is central to our understanding of individual and organisational behaviour (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). It is defined as a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond the individual's being, which influences the initiation, direction, intensity, and duration of actions (Pinder, 2014, as cited in Kanfer & Chen, 2016). Research has long recognised different sources of motivation (Herzberg, 1966; Porter & Lawler, 1968; McGregor, 1960; Gagné, & Deci, 2005). An important contribution comes from the significant advances in the field of human relations movement (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which led to the development of the intrinsic motivation perspective. 'Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to expend effort based on interest in enjoyment of the work itself' (cited in Grant, 2008; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This is different from extrinsic motivation, where the efforts are contingent on factors external to

work, such as rewards or recognition (cited in Grant, 2008; Amabile, 1993).

Status of Research: Intrinsic Motivation

The increasing importance of motivation, especially in the last decade, is evident from the number of motivation-related publications that have appeared in business/management disciplines. A cursory perusal of the Web of Science database reveals that the number of publications (as indexed by the keyword count) has increased for general studies on motivation and, to a lesser extent, on intrinsic motivation.

In recent years, scholars have focused their attention on investigating the effects of motivation on constructs such as employee performance, stress, and human resource practices in organisations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Critiques of extant theories also find a place (Cerasoli, Nicklin & Ford, 2014) on their critique of the self-determination theory (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). Literature reviews that consolidated

and set the direction for adopting alternative research designs such as explorative/inductive studies and longitudinal design (Spector, 2006) are presented. Kanfer and Chen (2016) call for revitalising motivation studies by exploring the role of sub-conscious motivation (over the more prominent

conscious-goal directed theories). Interestingly, these studies on motivation predominantly focused on the existing cohorts of the workforce – Generation Y or Millennials, Generation X, and the baby boomers. Studies specific to the now-emerging generational cohort, Z, is nascent.

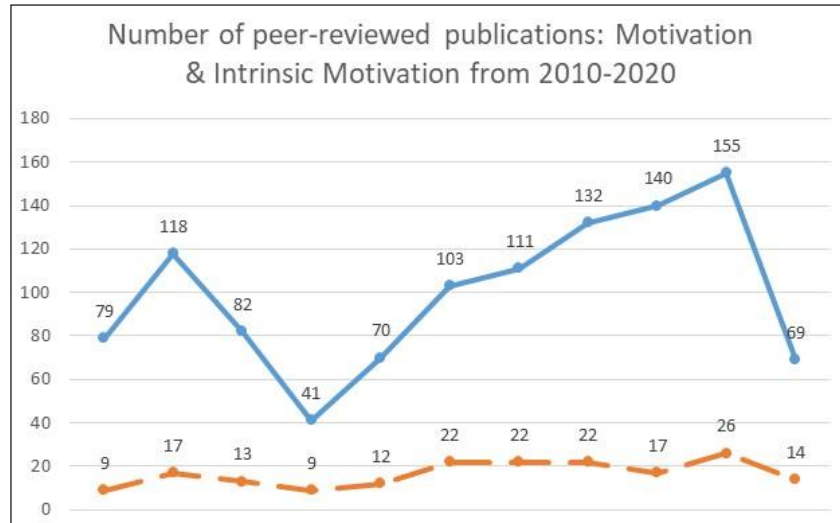


Fig. 1: Number of Peer-Reviewed Publications Containing the Terms ‘Motivation’, ‘Work Motivation’, or ‘Employee Motivation’, and the Term “Intrinsic Motivation”

Status of Research: Generation Z

Generation Z or Gen Z is the demographic cohort after Generation Y, also known as the Millennial. While there are differences between the two cohorts, most of the researchers and demographers consider the years between mid-1990 and mid-2000 as the beginning years of Gen Z. In organisational behaviour literature, generational traits have been widely discussed (Christensen, Wilson & Edelman, 2018; Grow & Yang, 2018). The generational differences between Generation Z and other preceding generational cohorts – Millennial, Generation X, and the baby boomers – has also been presented (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017; Bejtkovský, 2016).

As Generation Z prepares to establish itself in the current labour market, existing management is likely to face some inter-generational issues. Given these inter-generational differences, there is a need to understand how workplace perceptions have changed for Generation Z. From the academic point of view, research on Generation Z at the workplace is increasing, although sporadic.

Thus, in this paper, this research gap is addressed. This research investigates the impact of job characteristics on the intrinsic motivation of Generation Z.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job Characteristics and Intrinsic Motivation

There is extensive literature that focuses on the relationship between job characteristics and behavioural outcomes in general, and intrinsic motivation, in particular. However, intrinsic motivation has mostly been reported as a proximal outcome or a regulatory outcome between job characteristics and other behavioural outcomes. For example, Li and Chen (2018) show that intrinsic motivation is a mediating variable between job autonomy and individual creativity. Similarly, Dahling and Lauricella (2017) show that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between one’s satisfaction of needs through job and career success. Van Hooff and Van Hooff (2017) show work motivation to mediate the relationship between work characteristics and work-related boredom. Gukdo Byun, Soojin and Seung-Wan (2016), when studying the effects of an empowered leader on employee creativity, show that intrinsic motivation moderates this relationship, i.e., the effect of leadership on employee creativity is more profound on intrinsically motivated individuals than others. On non-behavioural outcomes such as employability of individuals, studies have shown that intrinsic motivation has

no effect (Van Emmerick, Schreurs, de Cuyper, Jawahar & Peeters, 2012); neither do demographic factors have an effect on intrinsic motivation (Ghamari, Derakshanrad, Ghamari & Ghamari, 2012).

Coming to robust theoretical underpinnings, the interplay of job characteristics and intrinsic motivation is documented well in literature. Job characteristics model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) explained how job design fosters motivation. The model posits that motivational job characteristics impact employee behaviour through eliciting psychological outcomes in the individuals, such as meaningfulness of work, task responsibility, and knowledge of results (Zhao, Ghiselli, Law & Ma, 2016). Subsequent research was built on this model, to further refine the model of motivation. Most notable among these studies is the self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). It is a macro theory of human motivation that broadly postulates the relationship between different types of motivation, and employee performance and well-being (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). The theory categorises motivation into autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation is characterised by individuals willingly engaging in work activities. When an individual's engagement with work activities is contingent upon a reward (such as financial), it is termed controlled motivation. Intrinsic motivation is categorised as a form of autonomous motivation, where individuals spontaneously enjoy working on the activities and see it as a reward in itself (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017).

Studies stemming from self-determination theory suggest a natural link between job characteristics and intrinsic motivation (Pohl, Dal Santo, Battistelli, 2012; Den Berg, 2011; Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2011; Kim & Jogaratnam, 2010). More recent research in this direction critically evaluated the effects of autonomous and controlled motivation on behavioural outcomes. For example, Thibault Landry, Zhang, Papachristopoulos, & Forest (2020) investigated the impact of monetary rewards on employee motivation. The study concludes that when rewards are presented to support employee autonomy, it leads to more intrinsic motivation than when rewards are presented in a controlling way. Other research presented the mediating role of leadership that affects the relationship between task characteristics and intrinsic motivation (Pauli, Chambel, Caoellari & Rissi, 2018). Rivkin, Diestel and Schmidt (2018) emphasise the need to look beyond job characteristics to workflow (how the tasks are organised). They posit workflow affects intrinsic motivation. Other factors such as changes to the nature of employment (van der Voet & Stejin, 2019), job resources (Olafsen & Halvari, 2017), and innovative work design

(Devloo, Anseel, De Beuckelaer & Salanova, 2015) were also investigated for their regulating effect on the relation between job characteristics and intrinsic motivation.

While these studies greatly add to our understanding of the dynamics of intrinsic motivation, the specific influence of job characteristics on intrinsic motivation may be lacking.

Generation Z and Motivation

There have been studies on the characteristics of Generation Z workforce (Lanier, 2017), their work values (Christensen, 2018), and expectations from their work environment (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2020). Some research has also been conducted on how Generation Z workforce learns in the organisation and on the job (Bejtkovský, 2016). In this regard, Berge & Berge (2019) discuss three work-related attributes of Generation X that precedes Millennials and Generation Z. The three attributes are: work ethics, preferred mode of acquisition of soft skills, and preferred mode of acquisition of hard skills. They conclude that Generation X workers do not engage in extra-role behaviour, prefer to learn soft skills through interaction and discussion with peers, and acquire hard skills through on-the-job learning. Furthermore, this generation values education early in one's career, vis-à-vis Generation Z, which espouses continuous learning through one's active years in career (Berge & Berge, 2019).

Pertinent research on workplace practices affecting behavioural outcomes in Generation Z workers has been sporadic, yet there are successfully initiated studies on the topic. For example, Grow and Yang (2018) state that Generation Z employees tend to value health-care benefits and financial stability at work. Furthermore, they view the work environment as supportive when it accommodates their schedule and non-work related commitments. Although Generation Z can be termed as 'digital natives', born into an environment of digital technology, they still prefer in-person performance appraisal (Lazányi & Bilan, 2017; Iorgulescu, 2016). This generational cohort is also low on optimism (vis-à-vis Millennials) (Christensen, Wilson & Edelman, 2018), and therefore considers working in large-stable organisations that offer job security and generous pay important. However, this is not to say that Generation Z values only extrinsic factors. Opportunities to learn and develop their skills, and making a positive impact, are equally important (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2020). In the same vein, Goh and Lee (2018) identify a myriad of workplace practices important to Generation Z: interesting work, cross-training (across job functions), working hours, anti-discrimination policies, and workplace safety.

Thus, we infer that workplace characteristics do have a role in shaping the perceptions of Generation Z employees towards their work and organisations. This in turn is likely to affect their behavioural outcomes such as motivation.

HYPOTHESIS

Motivating job characteristics are a determinant of numerous positive work attachment variables, such as work motivation, job involvement, and organisational commitment. Looking at the relationship between job characteristics and motivation, Hadi and Adil (2010) hypothesised that job characteristics significantly predict both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Specifically, task identity is an antecedent to intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Gudko, Byun, Soojin and Serung-Wan (2016) show that high task visibility is an important condition for intrinsic motivation. Using Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory as a lens, Allan, Autin and Duffy (2016) conclude that work autonomy is positively related to perceptions of meaningful work, which characterises intrinsic motivation. Pohl, Battistelli, and Libecht (2013) hypothesise that job characteristics influence intrinsic motivation as well as other positive behavioural outcomes, such as organisational citizenship behaviour. Other task characteristics, such as job resources (Van Emmerik, Schreurs de Cuyper, Jawahar & Peeters, 2012), extent of job involvement, and organisational communication (Park & Rainey, 2012) have been studied for their effect on intrinsic motivation.

This leads us to our hypothesis:

Hypothesis (H1): Motivating job characteristics is positively related to intrinsic motivation in Generation Z workers.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

In line with the research question, the empirical research method was applied to determine how motivated the employees were at work. Eighteen items, based on the scale developed by Campion (1988), was used. Through a snow-ball sampling method, we reached out to Generation Z working professionals through the authors' professional contacts. In addition, potential respondents were recruited through Facebook. Around 317 members participated in this study. The average age of the participants was 22.3 years (*S.D.*: 1.9). The average work experience was 2.5 years (*S.D.*: 2.4). The participants represented a wide range of geographical regions, which is summarised in Fig. 2.

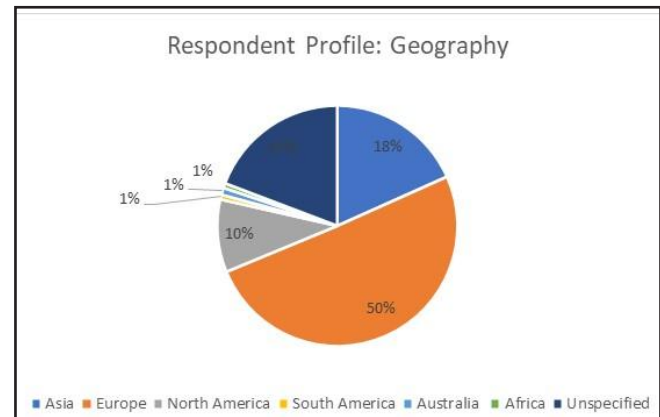


Fig. 2: Respondent Profile by Geography (in percentage)

Procedure

We collected data over a four-month period. The participants received the electronic link to the survey (created using Google Doc). Research background, objectives, and the expected conclusions of the study were explained. Informed consent from the participants was obtained prior to them taking the survey, with a detailed data management plan provided to the participants, ensuring security of data, access, and the respondent's rights to withdraw from the study.

Measures

We measured work motivation using an 18-item scale developed by Campion (1988). This multi-method job design questionnaire is built on the motivational perspective of job design. The items represent various aspects of a job, such as autonomy at work, feedback on the job, social interaction, task goal clarity, task identity, task variety, skill variety, task significance, growth and learning, promotion, achievement, participation, communication, pay adequacy, recognition, and job security. An additional item to determine the overall level of perceived (work) motivation was added to the instrument. All the items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 standing for 'strongly disagree' and 7 'strongly agree'.

We measured intrinsic motivation using a three-item scale developed by Gagné et al. (2015). The items are part of a multidimensional work motivation scale that is based on the self-determination theory of motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). It provides a multidimensional conceptualisation of motivation comprising five constructs: amotivation, external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and intrinsic motivation. Our larger research study investigates

the effects of job characteristics on each of these five motivational outcomes. The scope of the current paper however, is restricted to intrinsic motivation.

Table 1 presents the list of items and the corresponding abbreviations used for the purpose of analysis.

Table 1: Summary of Variables and Items

Variable	Item	Abbreviation
Independent variable: Job characteristics	The job allows freedom, independence, or discretion in work scheduling, sequence methods, procedures, quality control, or other decision making.	frdmtsk
	The work I do provides me with direct feedback about the effectiveness (e.g. quality and quantity) of my performance.	fdbwrk
	My managers and coworkers provide me with feedback about the effectiveness (e.g. quality and quantity) of my performance.	fdbcoll
	My job provides opportunity for social interaction, such as team work or coworker assistance.	scintr
	The job duties, requirements, and goals are clear and specific.	jbrespclear
	I have a variety of duties, tasks, and activities on my job.	tskvrty
	The job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work. It gives you a chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.	tskidnty
	My job requires a high level of knowledge and skills.	advskills
	My job requires a variety of knowledge and skills.	varskills
	My job is significant and important compared to other jobs at the organisation.	tsksignfce
	My job provides opportunity for learning and growth in competence and proficiency.	jblearn
	My job provides opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs.	jbprmntn
	My job gives me a feeling of achievement and accomplishment.	jbachvmnt
	My job gives me the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect my job.	jbdecimkng
	The job has access to relevant communication channels and information flows.	eascomm
	My job offers adequate pay compared to job requirements and pay in similar jobs.	payadtq
The job provides acknowledgement and recognition from others.	jbrcgtn	
My job offers job security as long as I perform well.	jbsecurty	
Dependent variable: Intrinsic motivation	Because I have fun doing my job.	Intrin1
	Because what I do in my work is exciting.	Intrin2
	Because the work I do is interesting.	Intrin3

FINDINGS

Data analysis strategy followed a two-step approach of linear regression analysis (using SPSS V.26), and Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)

and Bootstrapping, using smart PLS 3.0. The reliability of the items was determined using Cronbach alpha and split-half methods. The construct convergent validity was determined using composite reliability score and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). These findings are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability and Construct Validity

Variables	Number of Items	Reliability	Construct Validity
Job characteristics	18	Cronbach alpha: 0.91	Composite reliability: 0.92 AVE: 0.40
		Guttman split-half coefficient: 0.86	
Intrinsic motivation	3	Cronbach alpha: 0.88	Composite reliability: 0.92 AVE: 0.81
		Guttman split-half coefficient: 0.82	

Furthermore, the item-total statistics show high reliability of the items.

Table 3: Item-Total Statistics: Job Characteristics

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
frdmnsk	88.1985	257.016	.409	.230	.911
fdbwrk	87.9559	251.577	.606	.612	.906
fdbcoll	88.1066	251.941	.579	.628	.906
sclintr	87.8125	251.253	.602	.493	.906
jbrespclear	87.9816	255.620	.521	.389	.908
tskidnty	87.9485	253.171	.570	.518	.907
tskvrt	87.6801	257.067	.485	.444	.909
advskills	88.1875	244.633	.665	.676	.904
varskills	87.8676	251.200	.619	.669	.905
tsksignfce	89.4779	250.265	.488	.330	.910
jblearn	87.8676	248.130	.682	.613	.904
jbprmntn	88.5956	247.983	.511	.378	.909
jbachvmnt	87.9706	245.438	.753	.678	.902
jbdecimkng	88.2096	245.812	.707	.610	.903
eascomm	88.2978	248.114	.641	.503	.905
payadt	88.5846	256.111	.429	.286	.911
jbrcgntn	88.6875	245.788	.635	.523	.905
jbsecurity	88.0074	255.033	.529	.380	.908

Table 4: Item-Total Statistics: Intrinsic Motivation

Item-Total Statistics					
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
intrin1	10.2535	8.706	.705	.510	.903
intrin2	10.6479	6.943	.849	.732	.775
itrin3	10.5352	6.879	.800	.687	.823

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether job characteristics predict intrinsic motivation, and if yes, to what extent.

The Pearson correlation ($r = 0.58$; $p \leq .05$) suggests a positive correlation between job characteristics and intrinsic motivation. The adjusted r squared is .33, which further suggests that job characteristics is a moderate to significant predictor of intrinsic motivation.

Tables 6, 7, and 8 present the results of the linear regression analysis model summary, ANOVA, and coefficient table, respectively.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Results: Intrinsic Motivation Total (Composite Variable) and Job Characteristics (Composite Variable)

Correlations			
		intrintot	wmtot
Pearson Correlation	intrintot	1.000	.581
	wmtot	.581	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	intrintot	.	.000
	wmtot	.000	.
N	intrintot	287	287
	wmtot	287	287

Table 6: Linear Regression Analysis: Model Summary

Model Summary ^b										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.581 ^a	.338	.335	1.12103	.338	145.351	1	285	.000	2.036

a. Predictors: (Constant), wmtot

b. Dependent Variable: Intrintot

Table 7: ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	182.663	1	182.663	145.351	.000 ^b
	Residual	358.160	285	1.257		
	Total	540.822	286			

a. Dependent Variable: intrintot

b. Predictors: (Constant), wmtot

The regression model predicts the effects of job characteristics on intrinsic motivation as well ($p < 0.005$).

Table 8: Coefficient Table

Coefficients ^a											
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.909	.364		2.494	.013					
	wmtot	.830	.069	.581	12.056	.000	.581	.581	.581	1.000	1.000

a. Dependent Variable: intrintot

The results of the linear regression analysis reveal a moderately significant association between job characteristics and intrinsic motivation ($r = 0.58$; $p \leq .05$).

Linear regression analysis was followed by consistent Partial Least Square (PLS) Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and PLS Bootstrapping using PLS 3.0. In this, we present job characteristics as a latent variable, measured using 18 indicators (Campion, 1988). The dependent variable is intrinsic motivation, measured using three indicators (Gagné et al., 2015).

The initial weights of all indicators were set at +1. The maximum number of iterations were set at 500.

The overall model fit was evaluated using SRMR, where the recommended threshold is 0.080 or less. The SRMR in this case is 0.086, which is just above the recommended threshold. Focusing on the model, the path coefficients are significant indicating that job characteristics predict intrinsic motivation. These results are presented in Fig. 3 and 4.

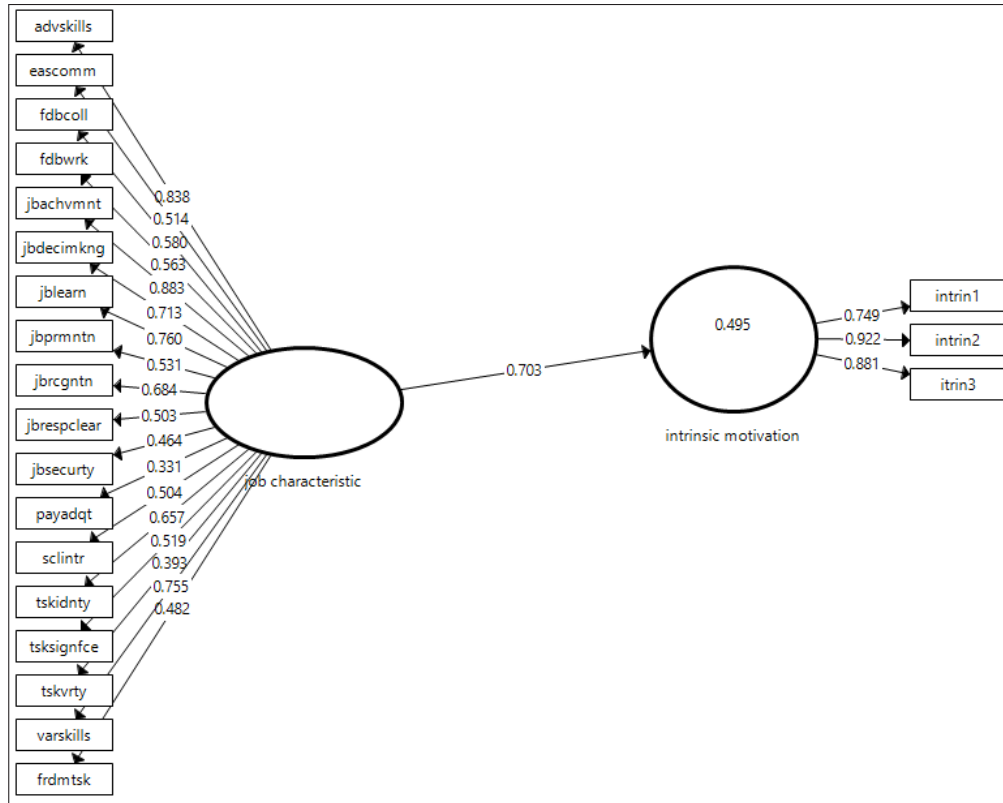


Fig. 3: Results of Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling

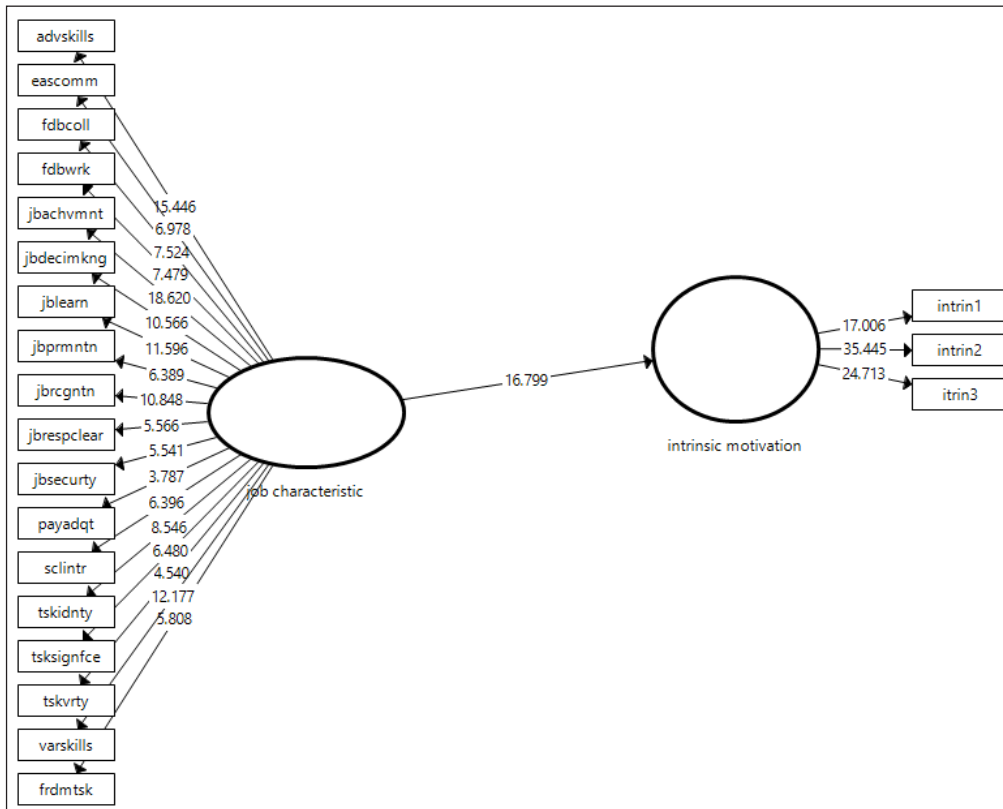


Fig. 4: Results of Bootstrapping

DISCUSSION

This study empirically examined the role of job characteristics in fostering intrinsic motivation among Generation Z employees. Overall, the results suggest that job characteristics significantly predict intrinsic motivation. Extant research calls for renewed scholarship to refine the topic of work motivation in organisations. Extending the established theories such as job characteristics and SDT to investigate the motives of Generation Z employees is a step in that direction.

Our findings show that positive evaluation of work characteristics is important for psychological need satisfaction, as expressed through intrinsic motivation.

Work characteristics, such as opportunities to learn new skills, easy access to work related information, and feedback on performance (both intrinsic and from colleagues) initiates a high level of intrinsic motivation. These findings were validated by studies in organisations where motivating work characteristics such as these promote internal motivation (*c.f.* Standage et al., 2005; Ulstad et al., 2016). In addition, a review of pertinent literature shows that support from competent managers and colleagues helped develop employees' positive attitude towards work, thus leading to intrinsic motivation (*c.f.* Deci et al., 2017; Parfyonova et al., 2019). In order to further explain our results, we put forward three perspectives to our argument – the employee perspective, the organisational context perspective, and the task perspective. Each of these points of view will demonstrate how the job characteristics are intricately related to each other, and lead to intrinsic motivation.

Employee Perspective

Innovation, intentional generation of new ideas, and reorganising working arrangements have become the cornerstones of success in modern organisations. Consequently, organisations have invested in strategies that develop employee innovativeness (Birdi, 2020). To this end, employees are expected to evaluate their performance, and proactively identify opportunities to develop their skills (Annosi, Monti & Martini, 2020). In other words, employees demonstrate a strong learning orientation to master challenging tasks by constantly acquiring knowledge and skills, and making decisions related to their work (Annosi, Monti & Martini, 2020). An essential precondition to learn is the employee's intrinsic interest in the task (Dweck, 2000). Extending this line of argument, Annosi, Monti, and Martini (2020) show the interplay between one's intrinsic disposition to learn and the context, such as formal and informal

interaction with colleagues, feedback on performance vis-à-vis standards, and gaining knowledge of their own capabilities through such feedback (Parker, Halgin & Borgatti, 2016, as cited in Annosi, Monti & Martini, 2020). Therefore, from the employee's perspective, opportunities to learn, feedback on performance, autonomy to make decisions at work, and experiencing a sense of achievement contribute significantly to enhancing one's intrinsic motivation towards work.

Organisational Context Perspective

Employee learning is intricately linked to career advancement. Ding, He, Wu and Cheng (2016) suggest that economic incentives and positive relations among colleagues lead to shared learning. Further evidence towards refining this argument is provided by Yildiz, Murtic, Zander and Richtnér (2019), who studied the relationship between employee learning and intrinsic motivation. They show that an individual's absorptive capacity to learn is positively related to their intrinsic motivation. Economic incentives only partially predict an individual's learning motivation. Yunus, Adams and Sofyan (2020), in their study of public sector employees in Indonesia, concluded that there is a significant relationship between motivation and career development. Reconciling the debate on whether knowledge sharing, and therefore employee learning, is more significantly related to intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, Pee and Lee (2015) conclude that employees value both goal-driven outcomes, such as career advancement and financial rewards, and intrinsic outcomes, such as enjoying the nature of work, when they engage in knowledge sharing and learning. Thus, an organisational context that provides economic benefits and career advancement play an important role in employee learning, thus leading to intrinsic motivation.

Task Perspective

The task structure determines how employees carry out their work. It shapes their view of their work and organisation, which leaves a lasting impression on the psychological state of the employee. This then becomes an important condition to foster intrinsic motivation (Pee & Lee, 2015). The earliest studies on the impact of task characteristics on motivation were presented by the seminal works of Hackman and Oldham (1980) through their job characteristics model. An important element of the job characteristics model is task identity, where the employee is engaged in the most important activities of the job, from beginning to end. The other two elements are skill variety and task variety, where the employee performs a variety of tasks on the job, thus demonstrating a variety of skills to successfully

complete these tasks. These three elements – task identity, skill variety, and task variety – render a sense of meaning to the employee’s job, thus intrinsically motivating them. Subsequent research (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, Chen & Chiu, 2009).

Taken together, the results of our study confirm the extant literature. The job characteristics significantly affect intrinsic motivation. While these results are well established for certain generational cohorts, such as Millennials and Generation X, it is true in the case of Generation Z as well.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Theoretical Implications

From the theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the need to further investigate intrinsic motivation. The theoretical underpinnings of this study integrate two distinct approaches to motivation – the ‘person-centric’ perspective to motivation, which explores needs, motives, wants, and likes of individuals, and the ‘socio-environmental’ perspective, which includes attributes of the individual’s work environment (such as job demands, workplace interactions). In studying the effects of job characteristics on intrinsic motivation, we are aiming to advance the understanding of these two important research approaches (Kanfer & Chen, 2016). Motivational scholars call for a better understanding of contextual factors, such as situations and events, to explain motivation (Kanfer & Chen, 2016). Our study responds to this call. Yet another important issue pertains to measurement of job characteristics. Humphrey et al. (2007) note that the job characteristics model focuses on a limited number of contextual variables and does not consider the wider ‘relational features of work’ (Kanfer, Frese & Johnson, 2017). Our construct of job characteristics replicates the original construct proposed by Campion (1988), which included task (task variety, task significance, task identity, skill variety, task autonomy, and feedback from work) and relational features (feedback from colleagues, social interaction with colleagues and superiors, adequacy of pay, and job security). Moreover, the study has been validated in a novel sample of Generation Z employees.

Practical Implications

It is expected that our findings will have some implications for work performance and employee well-being (Kuvaas, Buch & Dysvik, 2020). Intrinsic motivation is strongly related to human wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017, as cited in Kuvaas, Buch & Dysvik, 2020). The findings of this study

may provide inputs to design human resource practices, such as employee development, compensation management, and job analysis, which are aligned with the expectations of Generation Z, a generation that would consolidate their position in the labour market in the decades to come.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the empirical analysis of 317 Generation Z employees reveals that job characteristics play a significant role in intrinsically motivating the employees. Furthermore, specific results from structural equation modelling and bootstrapping reveal that various aspects of work – the task, individual disposition, and organisational context – are closely related to each other. It is this interplay that creates motivating job characteristics. The findings of the study extend the established theories of intrinsic motivation into a new realm of demography – Generation Z. It is expected that this work will initiate a dialogue, among the academic community for a more rigorous investigation of intrinsic motivation, and among practitioners for formulating appropriate human resource practices.

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