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By Zion Lee

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I. Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods research design to explore the factors that influence Gen Z employees' motivation in the workplace. The study involved a literature review, an analysis of news and trends, and an exploration of potential impacts and solutions

II. Structure

The first phase of the study involved a systematic and comprehensive literature review. Relevant literature was identified through searches in reputable academic databases. Keywords related to Gen Z motivation, workplace motivation, and related concepts were used to conduct the searches. The literature review identified several key factors that motivate Gen Z employees, including meaningful work, opportunities for growth and development, a positive work environment, flexible work arrangements, and competitive compensation and benefits.

In the second phase of the study, an analysis of news and trends related to Gen Z motivation in the workplace was conducted. This involved examining articles from reputable news sources, industry reports, and social media platforms to identify emerging trends and issues. The analysis revealed that organizations face a number of challenges in motivating Gen Z employees, including their high expectations, short attention spans, desire for immediate feedback, and need for constant stimulation.

III. Introduction

a) Background

There has been an increasing interest in studying Generation Z, which refers to people born from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s (Prensky, 2001). Understanding the motives and opinions of this cohort is essential as they continue to represent a growing proportion of the workforce. However, there is a lack of comprehensive study that examines these perspectives within the specific setting of Hong Kong's highly competitive environment.

Hong Kong is widely recognized for its highly competitive educational system (Tsang & Lian, 2021). However, the changing influences of different generations require a new analysis. A poll conducted by CTgoodjobs (2022) examined the work perspectives of Hong Kong's Generation Z. The survey revealed that 60% of respondents would choose unemployment over being unhappy in their job. The sentiment was most pronounced among individuals aged 18-24, with 62% choosing unemployment rather than settling for unsatisfying occupations.

Gen Z's prioritization of work-life balance and flexibility is highlighted by this desire. Entering the job market with the widespread adoption of remote work due to COVID-19, this group prioritizes personalizing their lifestyle above adhering to inflexible timetables that limit socializing and pursuing hobbies (McKinsey, 2022). The survey indicated that the Gen Z workforce in Hong Kong aspires to achieve their career goals while also seeking personal fulfillment outside their formal responsibilities. They desire autonomy and the opportunity to prioritize their family, travel, and personal interests alongside their professional commitments.

Failure to address these needs runs the risk of alienating Hong Kong's expanding young workforce. However, there is a lack of in-depth analysis that investigates the various motivational factors that inhabitants have, which influence the development of strategies. Given the guidance of stakeholders, it is advisable to have a more thorough understanding of the factors that influence motivation in the context of educational reforms (Kirschner & van Merriënboer, 2013).

Therefore, understanding the factors that motivate Generation Z at a local level is quite important. The findings may assist educators, parents, and policymakers in acquiring behavioral insights (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). This involves recognizing the decrease in job motivation indicated in the survey in order to develop specific and effective solutions that address their needs. While there is existing study on motivation, there are few studies that specifically analyze this particular age segment from the perspective of Hong Kong. Therefore, doing a thorough examination of the specific motives of Generation Z is worthwhile.

Motivation varies in different environments due to biological and socio-emotional influences (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The scholastic atmosphere in Hong Kong, which is very competitive, adds to the complexity and requires personalized investigation. This study aims to gain a complete understanding of the key factors that

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influence local Generation Z students, in order to inform activities aimed at preparing them for the workforce.

b) Purpose of the Study

Extrinsic factors, influenced by external factors and associated with the work environment, including aspects such as compensation, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal interactions, and job stability (Robbins & Judge, 2019; Spector, 1997). On the other hand, intrinsic factors originate from the job itself and include elements such as accomplishment, acknowledgement, the characteristics of the task, accountability, chances for progress, and personal development (Robbins & Judge, 2019; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Prior studies have demonstrated that job satisfaction can have an effect on both personal well-being and physical symptoms (Judge et al., 2001; Wright & Bonett, 2002). It is valuable to examine the varying levels of satisfaction experienced by different groups of younger knowledge workers, such as Gen X and Gen Y or baby boomers, as documented by Ng et al. (2012) and Lyons et al. (2009). In a global organization, the presence of several cultures can result in varied expectations and views on work, which can lead to different levels of satisfaction among employees (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995).

The results of this study could aid HR managers in implementing a strategic method to efficiently inspire employees, evaluate job contentment, and establish career development plans (Locke & Latham, 2002; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Through diligent monitoring and thorough research, firms can ensure the stability and exceptional performance of their personnel, leading to long-term productivity growth (Pfeffer, 1998; Delery & Doty, 1996).

The researcher anticipates that this research will yield valuable insights into several aspects, including years of service, satisfaction with one's company or sense of belonging, work-life balance across different generations, and the key factors that influence individuals' levels of job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2001; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

This study has the capacity to broaden and enhance the existing scarce literature on job satisfaction in Hong Kong and serve as a point of reference for future research in management disciplines (Lam, 2002; Farh et al., 1997). Moreover, it provides tangible advantages to professionals when using the idea in practical situations, namely in the realm of strategic human resource management (Purcell et al., 2003; Boxall & Macky, 2009).

c) Research Questions

The objective of this study is to comprehend the primary factors that influence motivation among Generation Z individuals in Hong Kong. The primary research question is:

RQ1: What are the determinants of motivation levels among Generation Z persons in Hong Kong?

Prior research has not examined this specific setting, highlighting the importance of identifying the fundamental factors that influence the motivation of Generation Z at a local level.

Another research inquiry concerns the impact of technology on the motivation of Generation Z:

RQ2: What is the influence of technology on the motivation of Generation Z in Hong Kong?

Despite the widespread presence of technology in everyday life, Jeffery and Adele (2010) contend that there is a lack of study on the connection between technology usage and the motivation of young individuals. It is necessary to provide further explanation about this relationship.

Finally, an examination will be conducted on changes in motivation across different generations.

RQ3: What disparities exist in the motivational elements between Generation Z and previous cohorts in Hong Kong?

It is worth investigating if theories formulated in Western contexts are applicable to the motivation of Gen Z individuals in multicultural and quickly evolving Hong Kong. An analysis of generational drives could provide unique social understanding.

The primary objective of this study is to enhance the current limited knowledge on the motivation of Generation Z in Hong Kong. This will be achieved through qualitative investigation of the main significant factors.

IV. Literature Review

a) Definition of Motivation

Motivation is a multifaceted and intricate concept that encompasses the driving force behind human behavior (Cohen, 1992). In the context of student motivation, individuals may be propelled by the fulfillment derived from pursuing goals, such as achieving a promotion or receiving high grades (Locke & Latham, 2002). Conversely, the fear of negative consequences, such as the fear of appearing foolish, can also act as a motivator (Judge et al., 2001). When we refer to motivation as the driving force behind behavior, we imply that it serves as the primary reason for people's actions (Pfeffer, 1998). However, behavioral psychology posits that certain actions can be performed spontaneously, irrespective of the underlying motives, akin to a physiological response (Robbins & Judge, 2019). In contrast, motivational theories contend that innate inclinations do not constitute individual motives in themselves, but rather encompass vast clusters of motives (e.g., the desire for sustenance) (Boxall & Macky, 2009). Despite the advent of the internet and personal computers, motivation remains a topic of extensive study within academic psychology, as it is

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intricately intertwined with human emotions and behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 2003). It is worth noting that despite the advancements of modern society, humans continue to exhibit a wide range of moods and emotions, reminiscent of our ancestors (Spector, 1997). Furthermore, societal norms act as a deterrent, preventing individuals from acting upon irrational urges or engaging in behaviors that undermine their civility (Delery & Doty, 1996). Consequently, the study of motivation poses ethical challenges, particularly concerning attempts to alter an individual's motivations (Triandis, 1995). Nevertheless, ongoing research is essential, given the ever-increasing complexity and popularity of the subject (Wright & Bonett, 2002).

When a particular behavior is repeatedly performed, yielding consistent outcomes, regardless of the underlying motive, a habit may develop (Lam, 2002). For instance, an individual habitually entering a cold room may associate the room with the desire for warmth, thereby transforming the initial motive into a habitual action (Lyons et al., 2009). Researchers in this field often emphasize an evolutionary perspective of human nature, particularly in areas such as mating and group dynamics (Farh et al., 1997). Sigmund Freud, in the late 19th century, posited that basic bodily functions served as the foundation for human drives, a notion that continues to influence contemporary research (Hofstede, 1980). Moreover, Darwin's contributions, such as his concept of "three levels of natural selection," remain relevant references in the field (Everitt et al., 2011). The Latin root of motivation, "movere," meaning "to move," underscores the diverse range of actions that can be initiated by a single motive, as well as the potential accumulation of multiple motives underlying a specific action (Hair et al., 1995). It is crucial to recognize that motivation encompasses both conscious and unconscious motives, as well as the initiation and sustenance of activities, as highlighted by early 20th-century psychologist William McDougall (Judge et al., 2001). Building upon McDougall's work, Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of the "hierarchy of needs," wherein the satisfaction of specific needs leads to a desired state of equilibrium, known as "homeostasis" (Wright & Bonett, 2002).

b) Motivation Theories

Motivation is a complex subject that has been explored through various theories. These theories can be categorized into four main groups: instinct theories, arousal theories, humanistic theories, and social motivation theories.

Instinct theories, which propose that people are primarily driven by genetically determined instincts, have lost favor in recent times (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Advances in medical science have shown that genetic determinism is not as influential as once believed. Furthermore, empirical evidence supporting instinct theories is lacking (Vroom, 1964). This is particularly true when considering the motivation of individuals in the Gen Z demographic, as they are influenced by a multitude of factors beyond genetics (Twenge, 2017).

Arousal theories suggest that motivation begins with a need (Hull, 1943). An ordinary physiological imbalance commences this process, leading to behavior aimed at achieving a set goal and re-establishing the balance of need fulfillment. Take the curiosity stimulation theory as an example, it is claimed that people who possess higher curiosity and lower stimulation need are highly motivated to seek out activities that can augment their physiological arousal level (Berlyne, 1960). This type of motivation is greatly influenced by the environment, and as per recent research, altering an employee's surroundings can significantly enhance their motivation and productivity (Grant & Parker, 2009). This theory proves particularly interesting in the context of Gen Z, as numerous studies indicate that the environmental factors surrounding individuals in this demographic have a substantial impact on their motivation levels and output (Elphinston & Noller, 2011).istic theories emphasize the importance of healthy psychological growth and self-development (Maslow, 1943). Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this theory proposes a five-stage model wherein the needs at each level must be fulfilled before individuals can progress to higher levels of personal growth. This theory is widely accepted and easily comprehensible, making it commonly applied to modern life and the understanding of Gen Z's motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, critics argue that the real empirical validity of this theory is limited and may not accurately capture the complex nature of human motivation in its entirety (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).

Social motivation theories highlight the role that others play in influencing human motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). For instance, the work on goals has been central to the study of social motivation. Recent research has demonstrated that different types of goals can predict distinct outcomes, further emphasizing the impact of social factors on motivation (Grant, 2012). It is crucial to acknowledge that all types of motivation theories offer a diverse range of tools that researchers can utilize, enhancing the scientist's repertoire and guaranteeing continuous progression in motivation studies (Grant & Dweck, 2003). These theories ultimately expand the inferential power of the field. Therefore, it is recommended to utilize all these types of theories to comprehensively understand the various elements that drive human motivation, given the inherent differences among individuals (Amabile, 1993). One single theory cannot fully explain the intricate and multifaceted nature of motivation experienced by all people (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

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c) Previous Studies on Gen Z Motivation

Generation Z students, as originally defined by Prensky (2001), are highly adept and proficient in utilizing technology due to their upbringing in the digital age. They possess extensive knowledge and expertise in various technological tools and are most successful and fulfilled in learning environments that offer unrestricted access to state-of-the-art technology. These exceptional learners truly excel in interactive and dynamic learning experiences that are tailored to their specific interests, enabling them to actively collaborate with their peers and engage in productive knowledge creation. As discovered by Kirschner & van Merriënboer (2013), self-directed learning significantly motivates and empowers Generation Z students, granting them a strong sense of autonomy and control over their own education. Moreover, Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2012) have comprehensively examined the positive impact of technology on the motivation of these learners, emphasizing the crucial need to seamlessly and innovatively integrate technology into teaching practices. These extensive research studies unmistakably highlight the urgent demand to create captivating and highly personalized learning experiences that effectively incorporate technology, whilst simultaneously considering the unique preferences and aptitudes of each individual student. By thoroughly investigating and comprehending motivation theories and acquiring deep insight into the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z, educators can masterfully craft and implement highly effective teaching strategies that expertly address any potential issues of demotivation that may impede these students' educational progress and achievements.

V. Factors Influencing Gen Z Motivation

a) Impact of Family Background

According to SEEK Employer in 2022, the younger generation in Hong Kong like Gen Z, have had a significant increase in wealth compared to previous generations. As a result, many individuals belonging to the middle class no longer face significant financial pressures to sustain their livelihoods. Nevertheless, individuals hailing from more affluent households have diminished levels of motivation in comparison to their counterparts from less prosperous upbringings (Munir et. al, 2023). The variation can be elucidated by examining aspects such as the cultivation of self-efficacy, the satisfaction of fundamental needs, and the influence of generational values in relation to the socioeconomic condition of the family.

Self-efficacy necessitates the development of expertise by successfully surmounting challenges (Bandura, 1997). Nevertheless, students hailing from privileged backgrounds frequently benefit from extensive parental assistance, which enables them to effortlessly overcome challenges, hence restricting their chances to enhance their self-efficacy through autonomous problem-solving (Bandura, 1997; SEEK Employer, 2022).

Additionally, these children exhibit a higher level of contentment with their fundamental physiological and security demands, as stated by Deci and Ryan (1985). According to the self-determination theory, this can diminish the incentive that arises from showcasing expertise and establishing connections with others (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Research on different generations also suggests that the younger generation of today values direct cash compensation more than earlier generations. This is attributed to their upbringing in a time of material abundance (SEEK Employer, 2022). Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who are used to having access to stable resources may naturally have their drive diminished by needs that go beyond basic subsistence.

Overall, variations in the methods of developing self-confidence, levels of meeting fundamental needs, and evolving generational beliefs across different socioeconomic groups can impact the levels of motivation among students. Specific interventions may be necessary to facilitate success among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

b) Education in Hong Kong cannot Equip with the Skills of Real-World Job

Critics have pointed out that the current education system in Hong Kong, which focuses heavily on exams, fails to effectively equip students with the necessary skills for real-world professions (Yung, 2021; Grant, 2012). While the focus is often on academic accomplishments, other skills that are important for future employment may be overlooked (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021; Tsui et al., 2019). Students in Hong Kong experience significant pressure as they prepare for high-stakes public examinations, with a focus on prioritizing exam outcomes rather than discovering particular interests and abilities (Yung, 2021). This results in disparities in educational achievement as pupils from disadvantaged socioeconomic situations often struggle academically in tests due to limited access to resources and insufficient academic assistance at home (Grant, 2012). Consequently, a significant number of individuals complete their education without a clear understanding of their suitability for a particular vocation and the relevant abilities they possess (Yung, 2021; Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021).

An integrated framework that combines classroom learning with work exposure has the potential to effectively develop the unique talents of Generation Z (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021; Tsui et al., 2019). Although academics remain important, Hong Kong's

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education system might be improved by striking a balance between assessment and promoting self-directed skill development and exploration of personal interests through curriculum reform (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021; Tsui et al., 2019). This initiative aims to enhance students' understanding of the practical applications of their school education in relation to their future career choices. It also seeks to tackle the issue of skills not aligning with the demands of the job market and, as a result, improve the opportunities for social advancement after graduation.

c) Social Media and Peer Influence, Comparison

The popularity of social media has grown significantly over the years. According to a report by Kwong (2022), almost 90% of the youth in Hong Kong possess a social media account. The advent of social media platforms has brought about a significant shift in the manner in which individuals engage in comparison and how technology shapes motivation. Prior to the emergence of social media, individuals were primarily comparing themselves to their immediate peers, such as classmates, which occasionally led to increased motivation. Nevertheless, social media has expanded the pool of possible individuals who can serve as points of reference. The prevalence of extensive social connections on social media platforms can potentially result in diminished motivation among individuals in our present era (Leung & Lee, 2005; Vogel et al., 2014; Stefanone et al., 2011). When users upload attractive photographs on Instagram, positive status updates on Facebook, and uplifting posts on Twitter, it is common for individuals to perceive that everyone else is living a more fulfilling and pleasant existence (Gardiner-McGregor, 2019).

This occurrence is sufficiently widespread that it has been assigned a label, "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO). FOMO, or the fear of missing out, is the strong desire to not miss out on an opportunity, trend, or event that is popular on social media, even if the individual doesn't have a specific interest in it (Alutaybi et al., 2020). Due to the presence of social media platforms, which facilitate the identification of appropriate subjects for comparison. According to the idea indicated above (Deci & Ryan, 1985), an individual's motivation is more likely to be negatively influenced and reduced due to the extensive scope and ease of comparison in the online realm. Furthermore, the impact of peer influence on social media might also contribute to decreased motivation within the specific demographic, Generation Z (Król et al., 2021). The majority of social media users consist of young individuals, who often show interest in following Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and popular trends shared by others. The motivation for following others may stem from the fact that the content being shared is either intriguing coming from Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) or trendsetters (He and Pedraza (2015)). Followers aim to demonstrate genuine interest in the issues that are popular among many people.

In summary, the proliferation of social media and its role in shaping comparisons online demands further study regarding its technology's impact on motivation levels, particularly for younger generations immersed in digital landscapes.

d) Low upward Mobility Chances in Hong Kong

There are various factors that restrict the chances of achieving higher social status in Hong Kong. The exorbitant surge in housing prices has rendered homeownership unattainable for a significant number of individuals, hence impeding the ability to transition from overcrowded public housing across generations (Sun, 2022). The scarcity of affordable private housing exacerbates socioeconomic disparities. Moreover, the absence of well-paying employment opportunities hinders upward social mobility (CUHK, 2023). The majority of newly generated employment opportunities are concentrated in the service sector, particularly in industries such as food and retail. However, these jobs typically offer little remuneration and minimal opportunities for professional advancement, as reported by McKinsey in 2022.

Merely having an education does not ensure upward social mobility, as the prevalence of degrees is increasing while the number of graduates who are underemployed is also on the rise (O'Sullivan and Tsang, 2015). The competition for high-quality public sector positions is extremely fierce. Collectively, these underlying causes contribute to a sense of pessimism among young people regarding their ability to achieve higher living standards in comparison to their parents (Li, 2022). In order to overcome the barriers that hinder equal access to social and economic possibilities in Hong Kong, it is necessary to implement affordable housing, living wage laws, and create more high-quality job prospects.

VI. Implications and Recommendations

a) Implications for Education and Parenting

Future societal and economic success is greatly determined by the behaviors and work attitudes held by youths (Pool et al., 2016). Due to the perpetual decline in motivation for working seen in the Hong Kong youth, it appears that the current workforce is destined for failure (CUHK, 2023). Expected job characteristics change with generational values. Gen Y values extrinsic motivation, Gen X values both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, while Gen Z values intrinsic motivation more (Luscombe et al., 2013). The change going from valuing extrinsic to intrinsic motivation is detrimental to the Hong Kong workforce since there is a lack of employees with the right motivation for today's workforce (Dennis et al., 2009).

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Thus, it is important to realize what has caused this decline in motivation in order to rectify the situation and avoid future recurrence. Social media and easy social comparison has led to a higher level of "fear of missing out" and lower self-esteem in youths, reducing their intrinsic motivation (Kwong, 2023; Vogel et al., 2014; Leung & Lee, 2005). With this understanding, both educators and parents are in a better position to prepare their children for the future work challenges. Schools can incorporate career guidance to help youths discover their strengths and interests, while parents can avoid excessive social media use and promote a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

By identifying the factors which influence motivation for working in the youths of today, we can then elaborate and suggest ways in which a positive work motivation can be instilled. Educators should focus less on academic performance and more on developing intrinsic interests, self-efficacy and social-emotional skills. Parents can lead by example through pursuing meaningful work themselves. With concerted efforts, the next generation's workplace motivation can be strengthened.

b) Strategies to Enhance Gen Z Motivation

Enhancing the level of happiness and motivation among Gen Z workers can be achieved by implementing effective strategies, resulting in major benefits. This may be achieved via several methods, and one of the most direct ways to implement it in the workplace is by involving younger team members in the decision-making process. Research has shown that this approach enhances an individual's intrinsic motivation by fulfilling their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Another direct method is to elucidate the goals. Locke and Latham (2006) suggest that enhancing self-efficacy and motivation can be achieved by establishing work goals that are clearly defined and realistically achievable. Regularly doing feedback sessions is an excellent approach for boosting motivation. Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that feedback should be constructive in order to sustain motivation over a prolonged duration. Dries et al. (2008) suggest that an effective approach is to identify specific leadership and career paths. As stated by Krasman (2010), this generates a sense of purpose and growth, which are very influential factors in motivating individuals.

c) Future Research Directions

It is crucial to comprehend the influence of societal, familial, and peer expectations on volunteers engaged in community activities out of their own volition. It is essential to devise strategies to customize community programs to meet the diverse needs and desires of all individuals.

Subsequent investigations might also conduct empirical studies on tangible incentive systems to determine their efficacy and identify any shortcomings. It can examine whether providing monetary compensation for community work actually diminishes the benefits obtained from internal motivation. This can potentially offer valuable insights for government and non-profit organizations (NPOs) who are contemplating providing financial compensation to volunteers for their services. Additionally, it has the capability to compare diverse types of concrete incentives, such as monetary compensation, subsidized transportation, and food, with variable levels of frequency.

Considering the worldwide scope of the economic context, it would be beneficial to compare the data obtained from this study with data from other samples in diverse cultural or economic contexts. This research provides a solid foundation for comparison as it is among the initial studies to examine the factors influencing teenagers' engagement in community activity from an economic standpoint. Meaningful conclusions can be derived by comparing and contrasting cross-country or cross-cultural data, in order to determine the most effective methods of motivating diverse groups to contribute to their community.

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