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GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN WORK-RELATED EXPECTATIONS: EXAMINING PERIOD AND COHORT EFFECTS

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ABSTRACT. This study explores the extent to which cohort and period effects impact employees' work-related expectations in the context of the anticipatory psychological contract. This investigation focuses on the transition of the new Generation Z into the labour market and the preceding Generation Y. A longitudinal study based on a repeated questionnaire survey with 1,000 respondents was employed to examine cohort and period effects simultaneously. Differences in the development of work-related expectations between two generations were assessed using statistical linear mixed models. The findings indicate that the future work-related expectations of Gen Y and Z are primarily influenced by the cohort effect. The results also reveal that the expectations of both generations are relatively stable even during the turbulent period of 2019–2022. However, their levels differ between the two generations. The research findings have practical implications for managers, recruiters, and corporate human resource departments in terms of understanding and attracting and retaining the emerging generation of new employees. Some theoretical implications are also discussed.

Introduction

The labour market is becoming increasingly competitive, and the recruitment of multigenerational human resources presents a significant challenge for today's organizations. The entry of Generation Z (Gen Z) into the workforce has precipitated a shift in labour market dynamics, thereby creating new scenarios for organizations as they start recruiting members of this youngest generation in the workplace (Aggarwal et al., 2020; Karacsony et al., 2020). Understanding the differences and similarities between the expectations of Gen Z job seekers and those of previous cohorts can help organizations attract and retain the new generation of employees (MacKenzie & Scherer, 2019).

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Most researchers investigating generational differences in work-related expectations have adopted the cohort perspective (Magni & Manzoni, 2020; Egerova et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Costanza et al. (2023) notably proposed the social constructionist and life span development perspectives as a novel approach to the study of generational differences. However, this approach has its limitations (Nakagawa & Kobayashi, 2024). The generational cohort approach, as indicated by its name, is predicated on the assumption that generational expectations are primarily affected by the characteristics of generational cohorts. On the other hand, Azimi et al. (2022) argue that major current events such as economic recessions, technological breakthroughs, and one-off events may also play an important role in shaping the attitudes, values, and behaviours of generations. Yet, the empirical literature has paid little attention to the impact of contextual factors (i.e., period effects) on generational expectations (Rudolph & Zacher, 2020). This paper bridges this gap by considering both cohort and period perspectives when assessing the differences in work-related expectations of Gen Z and Generation Y (also known as Gen Y and Millennials).

In addition, most previous studies on generational differences adopted a cross-sectional design, while only a few were based on a longitudinal design (Kesharwani, 2020). However, cross-sectional designs might not be able to identify whether differences between generational cohorts are driven by cohort or period effects (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2021). Lyons and Kuron (2014) argue that longitudinal sequential data provides more explicit evidence of cohort effects. That is why scholars (e.g., Parry & Urwin, 2021) have called for moving research on generational differences beyond a cross-sectional design towards a longitudinal design. This study employs both longitudinal and cross-sectional designs to address this call and thereby the overcome limitations of previous studies.

The primary purpose of this research is to examine the extent to which period and cohort effects affect Gen Y's and Gen Z's expectations about future employers and whether these expectations have changed over time. Specifically, we look at the 2019–2022 period, which is characterised by significant economic and social changes caused mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study makes the following contributions. First, the research investigates the workplace expectations of Gen Z as the new generational cohort entering the workplace. Second, the study explores cohort and period effects on Millennials and Gen Z's work-related expectations. Third, the study makes a methodological contribution by simultaneously using a cross-sectional and longitudinal research design to study workplace expectations of Millennials and Gen Z. Finally, two theoretical frameworks, the anticipatory psychological contract and generational cohort theory, are applied to examine generational differences in work-related expectations.

1. Literature review

1.1. The anticipatory psychological contract

The anticipatory psychological contract (APC) is a valuable framework for investigating what a potential employee expects from a future employer (Zupan et al., 2018). It can be defined as individuals' unwritten pre-employment beliefs and perceptions and the commitments they are willing to make to their future employers (Gresse et al., 2013). In this study, we look at the APC from the Millennials' and Gen Z' perspectives, including their perceptions of what a future employer should offer them. Some of these obligations and expectations are formed in the pre-entry stage, i.e., before a potential employee enters an organization, during which individuals develop a mental scheme of what they expect from their future employer (Gresse & Linde,

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2021). Thus, the APC plays a significant role in a candidate's final decision on choosing a particular employer and has important implications for recruiting and retaining potential employees (Zupan et al., 2018). Furthermore, individuals from different generational cohorts have developed various mental schemes and perceive their psychological contract differently (Lub et al., 2016). The psychological contract is viewed as a multidimensional concept which contains different dimensions (Lub et al., 2012). In our study, we use the five-dimensional model by Lub et al. (2016), which distinguishes the following dimensions: job content, career development, social atmosphere, the fairness of organizational policies and rewards.

1.2. Generational expectations

This research focuses on the two youngest generational cohorts of employees, Generation Y (Millennials, Gen Y) born in 1981–1994 (Eger et al., 2018) and Generation Z (Gen Z) born in 1995–2010 (Bencsik et al., 2016).

Most Millennials grew up during a time of relative economic prosperity and stability, providing them plenty of opportunities (Talmon, 2019). As a whole, Millennials have been described as a generation with an optimistic outlook on the world around them (Zhao, 2018). Prior studies reported that Millennials have high expectations regarding attractive salary, career advancement, rewards and job training (Chopra, & Bhilare, 2020; Pasko et al., 2020). Bouwmeester et al. (2021) stated that this generation considers work-life balance the uppermost factor in their job choice. Gen Y expects meaningful work and a flexible work environment (Ng et al., 2022) and tends to expect frequent feedback and detailed instructions for tasks from their supervisor. Gen Y also values teamwork (Maloni et al., 2019) and strongly emphasises job security (Magni & Manzoni, 2020). Unlike previous generations, Millennials expect their managers to act as mentors (Kong et al., 2015). On the other hand, Millennials have low expectations regarding social atmosphere and working in an environment with a high level of social interaction is not as important for them (Lub et al., 2016).

Members of Gen Z have been raised in an era of economic recession, downsizing and layoffs, which have shaped their worldview (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). Ngoc et al. (2022) reported that, like Millennials, Gen Z job seekers prefer flexible work arrangements, work-life balance and compensation. According to Hampton and Welsh (2019), Gen Z individuals also have high expectations regarding an interesting and engaging job. Other studies (Puiu, 2017; Barhate & Dirani, 2022) demonstrate Gen Z's personal and career development preferences. Gen Z also expects a supportive organizational environment and a friendly and open-minded supervisor (Grow & Yang, 2018). Unlike Millennials, Gen Z emphasises social atmosphere, stability, job security and value security (Hampton & Welsh, 2019; Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). Gen Z also prefers to work alone independently and does not like being a team member (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

1.3. Cohort effects and the APC

Previous research (Jones et al., 2018; Maloni et al., 2019) examining generational differences in the workplace context has almost exclusively adopted the generational cohort approach. The central premise of this approach is that each generational cohort shares similar values, beliefs and attitudes and holds specific characteristics that set one generational cohort apart from others (Maloni et al., 2019; Brink & Zondag, 2021). Viewing generations from the cohort perspective enables us to describe a generational cohort as a more homogenous group with observed characteristics (Egerova et al., 2021). Pasko et al. (2020) define a generational cohort as individuals approximately the same age who have experienced the same or similar

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events during their formative years. Different generations' experiences and events produce different expectations and preferences about a future employer (Alkire et al., 2020; Reissová et al., 2024). However, generational cohorts' values and beliefs remain stable throughout their lives (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Based on prior theory and research, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Anticipatory psychological work-related expectations differ between Millennials and Generation Z.

H2: Differences between Millennials' and Generation Z's anticipatory psychological work-related expectations are stable over time.

1.4. Period effect

Each generational cohort is formed not only by the time they come of age but also by how they continue to be shaped by the environment and dynamic changes at any particular point (Rudolph & Zacher, 2020). Thus, to assess differences between generations, attention should be paid to other effects, namely period effects that may provide alternative explanations to the cohort effect (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). Parry and Urwin (2021) note that failure to distinguish between period and generational/cohort effects is one of the limitations of previous generational studies. Period effects are seen as evidence of the effect the actual time and important events have on shaping the attitudes, values and behaviours of different generational cohorts (Spurk & Straub, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic can be considered a momentous event that deeply impacted everyone's economic and living conditions. The workplace context has affected many areas, such as working conditions, employee motivations and behaviour, job and career attitudes, career development, and employee health and well-being (Spurk & Straub, 2020). The notable feature of the COVID-19 pandemic is the rise in economic uncertainty accompanied by financial and job insecurity.

Job insecurity has been defined as the concern about the continuity and stability of one's employment (Rho et al., 2023). It is based on an individual's subjective perceptions and interpretation of the current work environment. It reflects an individual's growing uncertainty about their economic future in the contemporary environment (Probst et al., 2023). The relevant determinants of job insecurity perception are individual background characteristics such as age, gender and education (Nam, 2019). Further, job insecurity affects employees' behaviours, attitudes and values (Khawaja et al., 2021), and it is negatively associated with employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job engagement and motivation (Jung et al., 2021). On the other hand, job insecurity is not necessarily perceived negatively by individuals, and a certain level of insecurity is accepted as an opportunity (Smithson & Lewis, 2000). Based on prior theory and research, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Perceived job insecurity affects Millennials' and Generation Z's anticipatory psychological work-related expectations.

Financial insecurity is defined by uncertainty regarding one's ability to manage financial circumstances, meet an individual's needs, and achieve future life goals (Weinstein & Stone, 2018). It involves an individual's concern about whether they will afford what they need now and, in the future, (Abeyta et al., 2017). Howell et al. (2013) emphasise the subjective nature of financial insecurity, which they define as perceptions of one's inability to meet financial responsibilities. Sinclair and Cheung (2016) provide evidence of the negative effects of financial insecurity on both individuals and organizations. Cheng et al. (2021) argue that

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individuals who experience more financial insecurity are more pessimistic about their financial future and less satisfied with life. Weinstein and Stone (2018) reveal that financial insecurity disrupts essential psychological need satisfaction, reduces well-being and leads to problematic financial behaviours. Qu et al. (2023) propose that financial insecurity elicits feelings of anxiety, which may draw attention away from other desires. Sinclair and Cheung (2016) identify the negative effects of financial insecurity on employees' performance, organizational commitment and work engagement. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Perceived financial insecurity affects Millennials' and Generation Z's anticipatory psychological work-related expectations.

2. Methodological approach

2.1. Study design

In our quantitative empirical study, we used a five-dimensional model by Lub et al. (2016), who distinguish the following dimensions: job content (JC), career development (CD), social atmosphere (SA), organizational policies (OP), and rewards (RE). The online questionnaire survey using Talk Online Panel was conducted in the Czech Republic in autumn 2019 (Egerova et al., 2021) and repeated in 2021 and 2022. Data were not collected in 2020 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Each time, 1,000 fully completed questionnaires were obtained from a generationally and gender-balanced sample of respondents (250 respondents per generation and gender). Table 1 characterizes the age distribution of the respondents. Their participation in the survey was voluntary. As a member of the ESOMAR organization, Talk Online Panel followed its ethical data collection standards (Talk Privacy Policy, 2024).

Table 1. Means (and standard deviations) for the age of respondents at the time of the survey year by generation and gender

	2019		2021		2022	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
GEN Y	32.3 (4.3)	30.4 (3.7)	35.5 (3.7)	32.3 (3.5)	36.8 (3.6)	33.6 (3.6)
GEN Z	20.1 (2.7)	19.2 (2.7)	22.1 (3.0)	21.9 (3.0)	23.0 (2.8)	23.0 (2.8)

Source: own compilation

In the repeated surveys in 2021 and 2022, to achieve the greatest possible explanatory power of the obtained data, the effort was to reach the same respondents as in the previous year(s) and then supplement the research sample with new respondents with similar characteristics. In the end, a total of 1,925 respondents took part in the survey, of which 479 respondents participated in two rounds and 298 in all three rounds of the survey. The questionnaire included questions focused on individual dimensions of the APC. In 2022, the questionnaire was longer, as it also had queries identifying job and financial insecurity.

2.2. Measurement tool

We used multi-item measures. To measure the APC, we modified the Tilburg Psychological Contract Questionnaire (Freese et al., 2011; Lub et al., 2016) and used 30 five-point items (1–completely unimportant, …, 5–completely important), with six items per APC dimension. Cronbach's alphas verified the questionnaire reliability in item consistency for

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individual dimensions in all three years (JC: 0.77/0.72/0.77, CD: 0.81/0.79/0.83, OP: 0.84/0.80/0.83, SA: 0.80/0.77/0.80, RE: 0.84/0.80/0.85).

To measure financial insecurity (FI), we selected three items from the five-item Financial Threat Scale (Marjanovic et al., 2013). For job insecurity (JI), we chose three items from the eight-item measurement tool published by Jung et al. (2021). The Likert five-point scale was used for both insecurities, with higher values indicating greater insecurity. Related Cronbach's alphas exceeded 0.80 (FI: 0.89, JI: 0.86).

2.3. Statistical analysis

To evaluate H1 and H2, we used longitudinal APC data from 2019 to 2022 and a linear mixed model that respects this data type – correlated and unbalanced data (Verbeke, 1997; Pinheiro, & Bates, 2009). We considered two types of linear mixed models – random intercept models with the year–generation interaction and random intercept models without this interaction. A random intercept model includes various dependent variable levels for individual respondents. The model with interaction then assumed different changes in particular APC dimensions over time between generations.

Further, we tested H3 and H4 using (general) linear models with and without interactions based on cross-sectional data from 2022. Models with interactions assumed that generation moderates the influences of financial and job insecurity on the APC dimensions. Specifically, including interactions in the models made it possible to test whether these influences are similar or significantly different for both generations. In addition, gender entered all considered statistical models as a control variable, as it is a relatively significant factor regarding work-related expectations (Egerova et al., 2021).

Besides, in considering statistical models, generation, gender, and year were categorical factors. Generation and gender were represented by one dummy variable each (Gen(Z), Gender(F)), while two dummy variables represented the year factor (Year(21), Year(22)). The reference categories for generation, gender and year were Gen Y, male, and 2019.

3. Conducting research and results

3.1. Summary statistics

All considered variables were created as average scores across the corresponding items. Table 2 presents basic descriptive characteristics for the APC dimensions by generation and year, with the order of importance of the APC dimensions remaining the same between generations and over time: 1/RE, 2/OP, 3/SA, 4/JC, and 5/CD. Furthermore, both generations are slightly more concerned about financial insecurity than job insecurity. However, the highest sample mean reached the middle of the five-point rating scale (Table 2).

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Table 2. Means (and standard deviations) for observed variables by year and generation

	2019		2021		2022	
Variable	**Gen Y**	**Gen Z**	**Gen Y**	**Gen Z**	**Gen Y**	**Gen Z**
Job Content	3.91 (0.63)	3.82 (0.64)	3.88 (0.60)	3.85 (0.58)	3.91 (0.62)	3.82 (0.65)
Career Development	3.77 (0.65)	3.80 (0.69)	3.63 (0.66)	3.77 (0.68)	3.58 (0.71)	3.67 (0.76)
Organizational Policies	4.18 (0.64)	4.10 (0.64)	4.14 (0.54)	4.11 (0.59)	4.16 (0.55)	4.05 (0.68)
Social Atmosphere	4.07 (0.61)	3.95 (0.65)	4.01 (0.61)	4.00 (0.58)	4.04 (0.59)	3.94 (0.67)
Rewards	4.33 (0.61)	4.24 (0.66)	4.24 (0.57)	4.24 (0.59)	4.24 (0.62)	4.20 (0.71)
Financial Insecurity					2.79 (0.96)	3.00 (0.99)
Job Insecurity					2.60 (0.93)	2.83 (0.99)

Source: *own compilation*

3.2. Longitudinal study results (for H1 and H2)

As the dependent variables were the five dimensions of APC, we analysed five linear mixed models with the year–generation interaction (Year×Gen) and five models without this interaction. Table 3 summarizes the results. The results for the models with interaction suggest that, except for the SA–dimension ($p=0.049$), the included interaction was insignificant (p-values ranged from 0.088 to 0.221). Therefore, a model with interaction was further analysed only for the social atmosphere. Simpler models without interaction were chosen for the other four APC dimensions (JC, CD, OP, RE). The bold highlighting of the APC dimensions' labels in Table 3 indicates models selected for further analyses.

The analysis of selected linear mixed models without interaction (Tables 3–4, left parts) shows that the differences between generations within individual years (cross-sectionally) are statistically significant in the case of career development (CD: $b=0.10$, $p=0.001$) and organizational policies (OP: $b=-0.07$, $p=0.006$). Specifically, Gen Z perceives career development as more important than Gen Y, and conversely, Gen Z perceives the importance of organizational policies as lower than Gen Y. The observed differences between generations are constant over time. Besides, the perceived importance of career development changes significantly over time, and it declines.

Table 3. P-values of Wald tests for the significance of time and variable effects (and the significance of the year-generation interaction) within linear mixed models

	Models without interaction					Models with interaction				
Factor	**JC**	**CD**	**OP**	**SA**	**RE**	JC	CD	OP	SA	RE
Year	0.851	<0.001	0.274	0.876	0.051	0.283	<0.001	0.445	0.315	0.013
Gen	0.060	0.001	0.006	0.007	0.140	0.069	0.255	0.034	0.003	0.017
Gender	0.009	0.250	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.009	0.256	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
Year×Gen						0.221	0.088	0.243	0.049	0.118

Source: *own compilation*

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Table 4. Estimates (and standard errors) of fixed effects within linear mixed models

Effect	Models without interactions					Models with interactions				
	JC	CD	OP	SA	RE	JC	CD	OP	SA	RE
Gender(F)	0.07	-0.03	0.17	0.15	0.11	0.07	-0.03	0.17	0.15	0.11
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Year(21)	-0.01	-0.08	-0.02	0.00	-0.04	-0.04	-0.13	0.04	-0.05	-0.08
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Year(22)	0.01	-0.14	-0.04	-0.01	-0.06	0.01	-0.16	-0.03	-0.02	-0.09
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Gen(Z)	-0.05	0.10	-0.07	-0.07	-0.04	-0.07	0.05	-0.08	-0.11	-0.09
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Year(21)×Gen(Z)						0.06	0.11	0.05	0.10	0.10
						(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Year(22)×Gen(Z)						-0.01	0.05	-0.02	0.02	0.06
						(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)

Source: *own compilation*

Using the linear mixed model with interaction (Tables 3–4, right parts), we found that differences in workplace social atmosphere expectations change significantly over time between generations (2019: 0.11, 2021: 0.01, 2022: 0.09), with Gen Z having lower expectations. For better visualization, Figure 1 shows the development of SA and the other APC dimensions from 2019 to 2022. In addition, the results in Tables 3–4 demonstrate a significant effect of the gender variable on the four APC dimensions – JC (b=0.07, p=0.009), OP (b=0.17, p<0.001), SA (b=0.15, p<0.001), and RE (b=0.11, p<0.001), with women having higher expectations. Gender differences can also be seen in Figure 1.
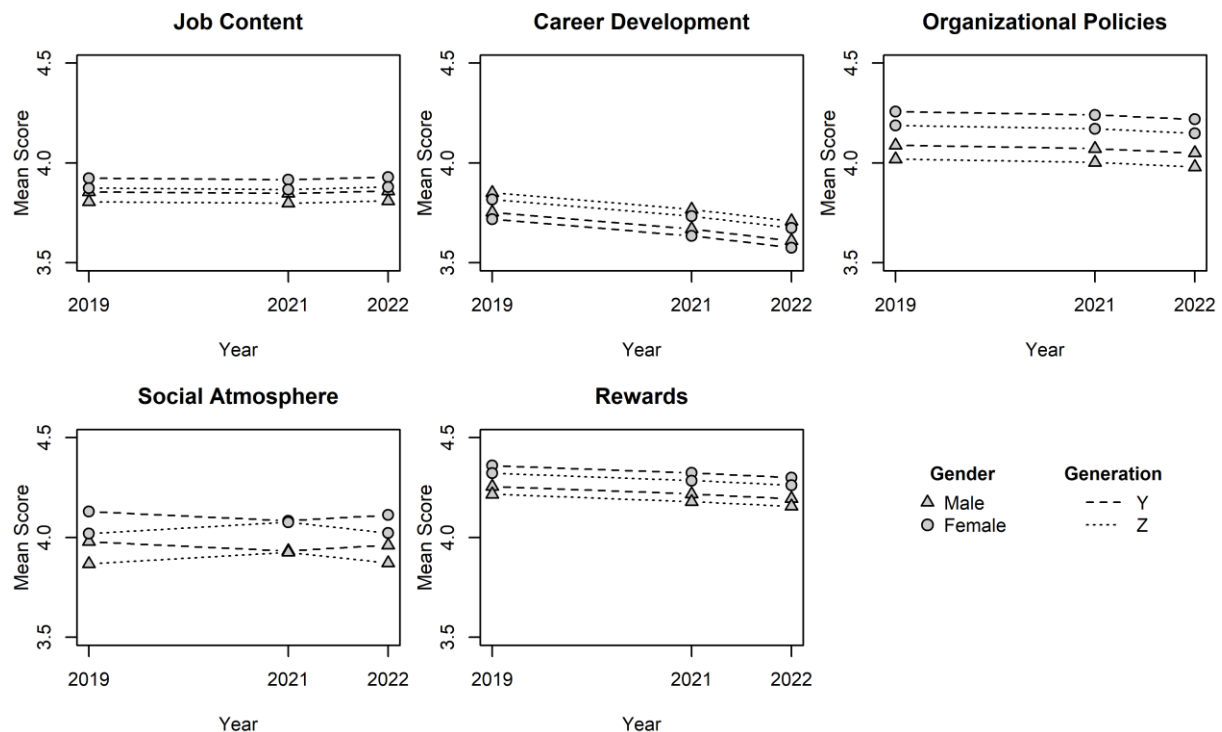

Figure 1. Development of APC dimensions
Source: *own data*

Regarding the evaluation of hypotheses, Hypothesis H1 about generational differences in work-related expectations was confirmed for three APC dimensions (CD, OP, SA). We

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rejected Hypothesis H2 only for the SA dimension, regarding the stability of generational differences in workplace expectations over time. In other APC dimensions, either expectations do not differ significantly between generations (JC, RE) or the identified generational differences are similar over time, even in the case of declining CD.

3.3 Cross-sectional study results (for H3 and H4)

This cross-sectional study is based on data from 2022, as financial insecurity and job insecurity were collected only for that year. A total of 10 linear models with quantitative and categorical predictors were constructed to investigate the influence of job and financial insecurity, five of them with interaction between the insecurity variables and the generation factor. Tables 5–6 summarize the results of these analyses. Similar to the previous section, the significance of interactions was confirmed only for social atmosphere. For JC, CD, OP, and RE, the moderating effect of generation on the relationship between the relevant insecurity variable and APC dimension was not demonstrated, and simpler versions of the models assuming constant generational differences could be used.

The JC, CD, OP, and RE analysis results (Tables 5–6, left parts) demonstrate significant generational differences in job content (b=-0.09, p=0.028) and organizational policies (b=-0.11, p=0.004), with lower expectations for Gen Z. Furthermore, the results show that financial insecurity statistically significantly affects expectations in career development (b=0.06, p=0.035) and rewards (b=0.07, p=0.009). For both dimensions, there is a positive correlation; higher financial insecurity is associated with higher expectations and vice versa. In contrast, job insecurity has no significant effect on these four APC dimensions. Therefore, Hypothesis H3 regarding the effect of job insecurity on APC was not confirmed for JC, CD, OP, or RE. The results did not confirm Hypothesis H4 regarding the effect of financial insecurity on APC for JC and OP.

The situation is more complicated for SA (Tables 5–6, right parts) as generation moderates the effects of job and financial insecurities on workplace social atmosphere expectations (JI×Gen: p=0.027, FI×Gen: p=0.017). Financial insecurity has a more significant (positive) impact on Gen Y's perception of the importance of the workplace social atmosphere. In contrast, it has a more minor (negative) effect on this perception of Gen Z (Gen Y: b=0.10, Gen Z: b=-0.02). Furthermore, job insecurity has the opposite effect on the generations' perception of the workplace social atmosphere (Gen Y: b=-0.07, Gen Z: b=0.04).

The results also demonstrate a significant dependence of the three APC dimensions on gender (OP: b=0.16, p<0.001; SA: b=0.15, p<0.001; RE: b=0.09, p=0.041). Female employees have higher work-related expectations than male employees in these dimensions.

Table 5. P-values of t-tests for the effects' significance (and interactions' significance) within linear models

Effect	Models without interactions					Models with interactions				
	JC	**CD**	**OP**	SA	**RE**	JC	CD	OP	**SA**	RE
Gender	0.064	0.352	<0.001	<0.001	0.041	0.065	0.358	<0.001	<0.001	0.044
Gen	0.028	0.096	0.004	0.006	0.215	0.821	0.172	0.228	0.615	0.204
FI	0.386	0.035	0.053	0.153	0.009	0.416	0.010	0.043	0.006	0.013
JI	0.763	0.991	0.473	0.850	0.791	0.784	0.569	0.147	0.081	0.814
FI×Gen						0.762	0.121	0.351	0.017	0.335
JI×Gen						0.925	0.428	0.189	0.027	0.574

Source: *own compilation*

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Table 6. Estimates (and standard errors) of effects within linear models

Effect	Models without interactions					Models with interactions				
	JC	**CD**	**OP**	SA	**RE**	JC	CD	OP	SA	RE
Gender(F)	0.08	-0.04	0.16	0.15	0.09	0.07	-0.04	0.16	0.15	0.09
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Gen(Z)	-0.09	0.08	-0.11	-0.11	-0.05	-0.03	0.21	-0.16	-0.07	0.18
	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.14)
FI	0.02	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.11	0.07	0.10	0.10
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
JI	0.01	0.00	-0.02	0.00	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	-0.05	-0.07	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
FI×Gen(Z)						-0.02	-0.09	-0.05	-0.12	-0.05
						(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
JI×Gen(Z)						-0.00	0.05	0.07	0.11	-0.03
						(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)

Source: *own compilation*

4. Discussion

The findings of this study offer several theoretical and practical implications. In terms of theoretical implications, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on generational differences in the following ways. First, many past studies on generational differences (e.g., Magni & Manzoni, 2020; Egerova et al., 2021) have almost adopted the cohort perspective without a more substantive understanding of the period effect or considering these two effects as two separate perspectives (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). This approach ignored the fact that generational changes in attitudes and values may also result from the period effect (Azimi et al., 2022). The study results showed that Millennials' and Gen Z's expectations for their future employers are mostly influenced by the membership to the generations (cohort effect), and to some extent, by current contextual influences (period effect). Thus, this study provides a unique empirical contribution supporting the notion that to study generational differences, it is important to distinguish between period and cohort effects and, at the same time, to consider these factors as related perspectives (Parry & Urwin, 2021).

Second, our results show that generational differences between Millennials and Gen Z regarding work-related expectations remain relatively constant over time. The only exception was the expectations regarding workplace social atmosphere. The most notable differences by cohort were found in the case of the APC dimensions of career development and organizational policies. Additionally, compared to Gen Z, millennial respondents reported higher levels on average in four APC dimensions, namely job content, social atmosphere, organizational policy and rewards. On the other hand, Gen Z emphasised the career development dimension more. We also found that the order of importance of the APC dimensions remains the same for both generations over time. These findings are consistent with the notion that generational cohorts develop similar expectations (Ng & Parry, 2016) and generational differences are attributed to cohort membership (Rudolph et al., 2019).

Third, the study's findings show declines in the rewards and career development dimensions for both generations between 2019 and 2022. We found that financial insecurity significantly affects these two APC dimensions and the social atmosphere dimension across both generations. In the case of social atmosphere, the results indicate that with higher financial insecurity, its importance increases for Gen Y, unlike Gen Z. The effects of financial insecurity on expectations of job content and organizational policies have not been confirmed. It was found that apart from social atmosphere, job insecurity has no significant effect on the remaining APC dimensions. Job insecurity has opposite effects on the generations' perception

of workplace social atmosphere than financial security. These findings support the notion that the current socioeconomic context, in our case mainly financial insecurity, influences expectations across both generations, although not necessarily in the same way (Rudolph et al., 2019).

Fourth, most research identifying generational differences relies on a cross-sectional approach. This approach is problematic in distinguishing differences across generations and can result in misleading conclusions and advice (Brink & Zondag, 2021). Our empirical study overcomes this limitation by adopting concurrently longitudinal and cross-sectional designs to study generational differences between Millennials and Gen Z.

Finally, Gen Z is the newest generation currently entering the workforce and represents a significant generational shift in the workplace (Maloni et al., 2019). Like other generational cohorts, this generation has unique personal and professional expectations that differ from previous generations (Grow & Yang, 2018). Thus, this study advances the previous research on expectations by adopting the lens of Gen Z to examine its expectations.

The study also offers practical implications for organizations in managing the expectations of Millennials and Gen Z about future employers. More specifically, we identify critical work-related expectations for these two generations, which could help organizations develop recruitment strategies. Next, this study suggests that organizations should apply a generation-conscious focus when attracting members of different generations. This aligns with the statement that one of the essential criteria for employers who attempt to reach out to future employees is to deliver targeted solutions intended for this specific generational group (Aggarwal et al., 2020). On the other hand, it is also evident that the economic situation influences both generations' expectations. Thus, organizations need to consider current contextual influences to develop strategies to attract future employees from these generations.

Finally, the findings of our study are also relevant for marketing managers. Companies should build a strong employer brand as it can form expectations amongst prospective employees and contribute to their decision-making to join an organization (Ruchika & Prasad, 2019). The results show what APC dimensions Gen Y and Gen Z perceive as most important. Organizations should pay attention to these dimensions when developing their employer-branding strategies.

Conclusion

The present study supports the notion that the generational and period effects are related perspectives. Specifically, the study results showed that Millennials' and Gen Z job seekers' expectations are mainly influenced by cohort and, to some extent, also by current contextual influences. Thus, HR managers must consider cohort and period effects to design practices attracting prospective employees and overcoming stereotypes about generational differences. Moreover, the study shows that it is desirable to move beyond a cross-sectional approach towards a longitudinal approach to explain generational differences, which provides richer evidence.

It should be noted that the current study has some limitations. First, the study results are generally restricted because it was conducted in one country in Central Europe (Czech Republic). Thus, future research should address other geographical areas. Next, to measure the APC, we used a five-dimensional model. It may be helpful to extend it to other dimensions as well. In addition, we investigated the effect of financial and job insecurity on the APC based on a cross-sectional study. Therefore, it is desirable to verify the results using longitudinal data. Lastly, the study applied a quantitative approach, which has its limitations. Thus, we encourage future research to use a qualitative or mixed-design approach to develop a deeper insight.

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