



PERCEPTION OF WORK PERFORMANCE IN HOME-OFFICE MODE: COMPARISON AMONG DIFFERENT GENERATIONS IN BRAZIL

*Percepção de Desempenho no Trabalho no modo home-office:
Comparação entre Diferentes Gerações no Brasil*

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ABSTRACT

Work in home office mode is already a reality for many national and international organizations. In Brazil, according to Sobratt (2018), 45% of 315 companies from different areas of the economy have already joined this work modality. As a result of the pandemic of Covid-19, companies in sectors classified as non-essential, from both spheres, public and private, were pushed to adopt remote work to continue their business activities. So, this study aims to analyze the perception of work performance in the modality of Home-Office comparing the average indexes of different generations. Findings showed that despite of Y and Z generations are theoretically composed of a profile of people with greater skills for digital technologies (Kurz, Li, Vine, 2019) which seem to be a prerequisite for adapting to remote work (FIA, 2020)¹, on average, Z generation reached a level (2.84) of perception below the average (3.0) considered for this study. In addition, Y generation, despite being above the average (4.06), obtained a lower index when compared to X generation (4.35).

Keywords: Perception; Work Performance; Home-Office; Generation and labour market.

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¹ <https://fia.com.br/blog/home-office/>



PERCEPÇÃO DE DESEMPENHO NO TRABALHO NO MODO HOME-OFFICE: COMPARAÇÃO ENTRE DIFERENTES GERAÇÕES NO BRASIL

*Perception of Work Performance in Home-Office Mode:
Comparison Among Different Generations in Brazil*

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RESUMO

O trabalho em casa já é uma realidade para muitas organizações nacionais e internacionais. No Brasil, segundo a Sobratt (2018), 45% de 315 empresas de diferentes áreas da economia já aderiram a essa modalidade de trabalho. Como resultado da pandemia da Covid-19, empresas de setores classificados como não essenciais, de ambas as esferas, pública e privada, foram pressionadas a adotar o trabalho remoto para dar continuidade às suas atividades empresariais. Assim, este estudo tem como objetivo analisar a percepção do desempenho laboral na modalidade de Home-Office comparando os índices médios de diferentes gerações. Os resultados mostraram que apesar das gerações Y e Z serem teoricamente compostas por um perfil de pessoas com maiores competências para as tecnologias digitais (Kurz, Li, Vine, 2019) o que parece ser um pré-requisito para a adaptação ao trabalho remoto (FIA, 2020), em média, a geração Z atingiu um nível (2,84) de percepção abaixo da média (3,0) considerada para este estudo. Além disso, a geração Y, apesar de estar acima da média (4,06), obteve índice inferior quando comparada à geração X (4,35).

Palavras-chave: Percepção; Desempenho no trabalho; Home-Office; Geração e mercado de trabalho.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Human Resources (HR) or Human Capital (HC) management has been perceived as an important asset for companies (Cascio, Boudreau, 2011). Its core function is to mediate organizational and employees' goals and its practices are structured around assumptions contained different theories of organizational psychology (Zanelli et al., 2004; Kanaane, 2012; Cascio, 2015).

In a globalized and highly competitive economy, such as contemporary times, the overall performance of companies is intrinsically related to the performance of their employees, promoting the achievement of collective objectives (Souza & Souza, 2016).

To work in the Home-Office mode is already a reality for many national and international organizations. In Brazil, according to Sobratt (2018), 45% of 315 companies surveyed from different areas of the economy have already joined this work mode. However, because of the pandemic of Covid-19, companies in sectors classified as non-essential, from both spheres, public and private, were suddenly pushed to adopt remote work mode in order to survive in this unique environment of Covid-19.

In this scenario, companies in search for more synergies are reorganizing themselves to align their efforts to reach not only organizational but personal goals and targets to increase productivity and to enhance competitiveness (Kanaane, 2017). Thus, this is a unique opportunity to verify how different generations perceive their performance when work activities are done remotely.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the perception of work performance in the home-office modality by comparing the average indexes of different generations under this new environment imposed by the pandemic of Covid-19. In summary, it allows the verification of how different generations perceive their performance at work, when it is done remotely. By shedding light on this object of study, its results shall help companies in enhancing HR management practices to achieve greater assertiveness in this new modality of work.

1. SOME INSIGHTS ABOUT WORK PERFORMANCE

One of the companies' goals is to obtain profit and this goal is empowered by the capacity of their workforce to perform activities efficiently and effectively. Keeping the workforce motivated and in high productivity level is an important variable for the company to reach their goals (Munsterberg, 1913; Taylor, 1990).

To keep the workforce motivated and in high performance level and productivity, companies have to measure and manage employees' work performance in order to align individual's and team's performance along with the company's goals (Cascio&Aguinis, 2008; Cascio, 2015). According to Bernardin and Beatty (1984), work performance is the result produced in a certain job or activity in a predetermined period.

Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) argued that, in practice, the management of work performance needs to consider several factors as each employee, most of the time, are involved in different functions. Because of the complexity of those functions, it is suggested the use of different metrics and indexes.

According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993), the analysis of employee's performance should consider two aspects: (a) performance related to the task and (b) performance related to the context where the employee is involved. Performance related to the task involves all tasks developed by the employee to accomplish certain activity. Performance related to the context considers the individual's voluntary behaviors which include extra efforts to complete the task, to support the organizational's main goals and objectives and cooperation with others. Thus, it is pretty much associated to behavioral aspects of individuals.

Queiroga, Borges-Andrade and Coelho Junior (2015) showed that, although the analysis of employee's performance is always related to behavioral aspects, what distinguishes behavior and performance is the fact that the second is associated to the achievement of the organizational goal

2. GENERATIONS AND LABOUR ENVIRONMENT

People who are born in a certain period form the set of generations. Each generation has characteristics that distinguish them from the others. What identify members of a certain generation -besides, they are born in a certain period - refers to the experiences acquired throughout their lives. A generation shares a historical identity in how they experience the world they live, their consciousness and identity, habits, and behaviors (Mannheim, 1982; Barros, 1987).

According to Kurz, Li, and Vine (2019), theoretically, there are several generations cataloged, but those that coexist in the contemporary labour market are:

- I. Baby boomers. They are born between 1946 and 1964;
- II. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980;
- III. Generation Y, also called Millennia, born between 1981 and 1997and;
- IV. Generation Z, born from 1998 (Zemke et al., 2000; Culpin et al., 2015).

The period that separates each generation may differ from one author to another; however, the characteristics of each period seem to converge.

Considering the discussion of how each generation interacts with the labor environment, authors, such as Kanaane (2017), considers it very complex, independently of gender and age. He argues that the basic premises are that men and women of different generations have different professional aspirations and young people are more familiar with technology when compared to older ones. The author also argues that such assumptions are anchored in the statement that, in the case of generations, reality is socially constructed. It should be noticed that although people born in a given period of time might be classified by belonging to a certain generation, it does not imply generalization, because not everyone will have the same generational profile that are theoretically attributed to them (see Figure1 which summarizes personal characteristics and generational professional profile).

For Kannane (2017, p.170), knowledge and skills, which compose the professional profile, are elements acquired in the trajectory experienced by people at different times and which, in turn, have “social, economic, cultural, political determinants, psychological and anthropological” aspects, which are likely to influence individual and collective behavior in the labor market.

Figure 1: Main characteristics of each generation

Generation	Personal Characteristics	Professional Profile
X	Noticeable by creativity, self-confidence, willingness to entrepreneurship, rational and self-centered thinking; they do not like rules and prefer flexibility. They prioritize freedom over status.	Emphasis on intellectual development through greater academic training. Focus on goals, not deadlines. Seeks individuality without losing group life. Willingness to leadership and tendency to communication skills.
Y	Demonstrate resilience, spontaneity, dynamism, and immediacy; they are ambitious and unstable. They have a strong involvement with technology, have environmental and social awareness, tend not to be concerned with power and authority relationships, live well with ethnic, social and gender diversity and like challenges.	They share knowledge and prioritize jobs that provide challenges for their development. Job stability is not a concern. They are always connected to new technologies and new trends. Difficulties to handle with negative feedbacks of their job.
Z	Evidence anxiety, greater adaptability; they are multitasking and hyper connected people; They have low political engagement and superficiality in interpersonal relationships. They do not care about geographic frontiers; they are a native digital born generation; prioritize relationships through technological means in the detriment of interpersonal due to frequent use of the internet.	They are change agents when introduced to the corporate environment; break pre-established standards and presents behaviors that do not respect functional hierarchies.

Source: Adapted from Kannane (2017).

3. ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION

For the analyses and discussion of data, this research opted for a quantitative approach and the use of descriptive statistics through the calculation of averages, which is a measure of central tendency in a set of numerical data.

As typicality, sample matches as a non-probabilistic sampling definition. The respondent's profile refers to people who were employed at the time of the survey and were designated to work remotely by their employers at the time of the pandemic of Covid-19. This survey used a questionnaire with closed question on a Likert type format of 5 points. Also, it was distributed through the Survey Monkey platform during the period between May 19 and June 26, 2020. The total of respondents was 399.

The scale used for data collection of self-perception performance at remote work in the Brazilian context, was validated by Queiroga, Borges-Andrade and Coelho Júnior (2015). The researchers decided for using a reduced version of this scale which contains six items on perception of work performance.

The age criterion was used to verify which generation the respondents belong to. From, the total of samples, 41% of respondents belong to X generation, 19% to Y generation and 40% belong to Z generation. Also, findings showed that 152 respondents are male, 243 female and 4 identified themselves as non-binary gender.

The scale used to measure perception of remote work performance was a Likert type format of 1 to 5 points. The midpoint was considered 3; below 3 are low levels and high levels above 3. The findings showed that the average was 3.75 and a standard deviation of 1.42.

The distribution by generation, as well as their levels of perception of performance, is organized in Table 1.

Table 1: Perception on Work Performance and Generations

	Generations		
	X	Y	Z
Average of perception on work performance	4.35	4.06	2.84

Source: Prepared by authors.

According to Table 1, the average of X generation was 4.35 (high level), Y generation 4.06 (high level) and Z generation was 2.84 (low level) against the midpoint of 3 established by this study. Z generation was the lowest average among other two (X and Y generations), and an ANOVA test show very significant differences among them ($F = 97.74$ and $p=0.000$). Although the number of respondents in each generation was unbalanced since this study did not propose deviation control, the outcome does not interfere in the calculation of the weighted average; and actually there is a significant difference even between Generations X and Y ($t=3.86$ and $p=0.000$).

Findings also showed different levels of perceptions on work performance grouped by gender, and generations (See Table 2). When data were grouped by gender, despite women have had a higher level of perception than men in X and Y generations, in Z generation they were below average, while men reached a level slightly above average.

As far as employment types such as public or private is concerned, findings showed that, among 134 respondents categorized as public employees, the average was 4.10 against 3.48 for private ones (265 respondents). This finding corroborates Cheng and Chan (2008) who argued that performance at work be guided by job security. That is the case of public employees whose jobs are secured by law in Brazil.

Table 2: Generation and Gender Identity

	Average by generations		
	X	Y	Z
Female	4.40	4.20	2.47
Male	4.30	3.93	3.97
p (t-test)	0.122	0.658	0.000

Source: Authors, 2020.

As this study was focused on the remote work model, findings showed that 90% of respondents work and live in the same city. According to FIA (2020), one of the advantages of the home office model is about eliminating the physical distance between people and their respective companies, which could lead to more satisfaction, reduction of stress and less delay.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to verify the level of perception of remote work performance under circumstances of pandemic of Covid-19 considering different generations. The respondents were all employees of public and private sector who were compelled to work remotely.

In general, findings showed that despite of Y and Z generations are theoretically composed of a profile of people with greater skills for digital technologies (Kurz, Li, Vine, 2019) which seem to be a pre-requisite for adapting to remote work (FIA, 2020), on average, Z generation reached a level (2.84) of perception below the average (3.0) considered for this study. In addition, Y generation, despite being above the average (4.06), obtained a lower index when compared to X generation (4.35).

The direct implications of this study seem to refer to the need to assess employees just before allocating them a remote working model such as home office. As this study did not approach other variables such as employees' income range, the findings are limited to compare remote work performance considering only different generations.

As a suggestion for future studies, researchers could carry out a qualitative strategical survey to understand the perception of remote work performance, even though, at least in the present study, X generation, which was considered the less likely to adapt to remote work model, was the one which achieved the highest level.

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