

Generation Z's Perception of Artificial Intelligence Used in Selection Processes

A Percepção da geração Z sobre os processos seletivos mediados pela inteligência artificial

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to identify and analyze the perceptions of Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2009) regarding new practices, processes, and emerging topics in people management, with emphasis on the application of artificial intelligence, since this is a very recent generation, and authors are only beginning to consider it in sociodemographic studies. A survey with online questionnaires was used in the study. It was forwarded to the social networks of Generation Z students from a university in the city of São Paulo to identify how this generation has behaved in selection processes, in view of new trends, especially when artificial intelligence is used. Artificial intelligence use in selection processes is not very well accepted by the members of this generation, contradicting what is generally propagated and disclosed in the media. The respondents are more attracted to companies that offer growth opportunities, good salaries, and benefits than to companies that offer independence and autonomy.

Keywords: Generation Z, Artificial Intelligence, Labor market, Organizations, Recruitment, and Selection.

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A Percepção da Geração Z Sobre os Processos Seletivos Mediados pela Inteligência Artificial *Generation Z's perception of artificial intelligence used in selection processes*

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar e analisar a percepção da geração Z (nascidos entre 1995 e 2009) quanto às novas práticas, processos e temas emergentes em gestão de pessoas, com destaque para a aplicação da inteligência artificial, pois essa geração é muito recente e os autores apenas começam a considerá-la nos estudos sociodemográficos. O estudo utilizou-se de uma survey com questionários online cujos links foram encaminhados por meio de redes sociais de alunos pertencentes à geração Z de uma grande Universidade da cidade de São Paulo visando identificar como essa geração Z tem se comportado em processos seletivos, em face das novas tendências, principalmente quando envolve a inteligência artificial. A inteligência artificial em processos seletivos, não é muito bem aceita pelos membros dessa geração, ademais, contradizendo o que se propaga e divulga na mídia em geral, os respondents mostraram-se mais atraídos por empresas que oferecem oportunidades de crescimento, pagam bons salários e benefícios, do que por empresas que oferecem independência e autonomia.

Palavras-chave: Geração Z, Inteligência Artificial, Mercado de trabalho, Organizações, Recrutamento e Seleção.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, Generation Z is entering the workforce. These young people have difficulties with hierarchy, and support organizations that allow immediate access to their managers to solve problems that may occur during work time. In a professional environment, they interact better with people from the same generation, but incorporating Generation Z into organizations is not a simple task. Companies need to rethink retention strategies to provide organizational environment stability, using the skills of each one to maximize the results (Dalapria, Camargo, Degraf, Callegari, 2015).

Through this information, the insertion of technology can be an attraction for young talents, who were already born immersed in this revolution and inserting it does not only mean automating work routines, but also acting throughout the employee's journey, starting with the recruitment and selection processes.

Therefore, this study sought to capture the perception of generation Z about selection processes, especially the use of artificial intelligence, an emerging practice in people management, which allows recruiters to search for profiles, saving time and resources in the selection process.

In this context, this study aimed to identify and analyze the perception of generation Z about the processes and emerging themes in people management, with emphasis on the application of artificial intelligence in recruitment and selection, as a way to understand a little more about this generation. It also aimed to understand, at this time when young people of this generation are entering the job market, their difficulties and challenges in relation to technological solutions in the process of joining organizations of the current 4th Industrial Revolution. Socially, this work becomes important, as it offers the possibility to get to know a different social group better, in addition to understanding the aspirations of generation Z in the job market.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Generation Z is defined as the young people born from 1995-97 to 2010. This generation emerged after Generation Y and holds an intimately strong relationship with digital and technological means. As Gen Zers were born hyper connected and directly linked to technology, they show a new way of acting, thinking, and conducting their personal and professional lives (Rech, Viera, Anschau., 2017).

Freire Filho and Lemos (2008) define this generation as a: "Digital Generation" because it has grown up in the midst of the so-called 4.0 Revolution, which involves advanced technological processes such as artificial intelligence.

Authors differ on the exact date that defines this generation, Grubb, (2018, p. 39), for example, adopts the year 1998 and states that this generation is still so recent that experts are only now including it in their demographic analyses. Following a similar line of reasoning, Tapscott (2010, p. 32) states that the Internet Generation watches less television than their parents and does so in a different way.

Vieites (2019) reminds us that we are living in a time when humans are serving machines, positions are being filled by robots, and organizations' use of artificial intelligence has become a trend that goes far beyond fads.

The use of Artificial Intelligence - AI, if well applied, can reduce time in recruitment and selection processes and enable greater diversity inclusion. AI has also made it possible for HR professionals to gain more time, allowing them to focus on other issues, while technology analyses profiles and applies tests. However, applying this technology is not simple and it is up to the professionals to monitor the algorithms so that biases are not reproduced (Stachewski, 2021).

In recruitment and selection processes, AI helps to achieve a high level of assertiveness, compiling information, analyzing profiles, and performing a more detailed analysis. In fact, this kind of analysis can be done using a behavioral analysis and management tool. (Barros Neto, 2022). Finally, the possibilities of using artificial intelligence in human resources are very promising (Cruz, Barros Neto 2020) because they can help in various processes, ranging from recruitment and selection, relocation of employees, filtering of professional profiles, and performance evaluation to the conduction of work environment surveys.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory study, since according to Lakatos and Marconi (2017, p. 297), this type of research is composed of a "bibliographic survey, contact with people experienced in the subject matter, allowing to have a closer approach to the problem, assisting in the structuring of hypotheses."

Initially, it was necessary to carry out bibliographic research to look for sources of information, to search for authors who have focused on this generation to gain more knowledge about the topic, and to elaborate a survey using a questionnaire to collect information that was analyzed in light of the bibliographic references.

This survey was sent to several WhatsApp groups of different semesters students from the morning and evening shifts of the administration course of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo - PUC SP, which was chosen by the researchers.

The data was obtained voluntarily, since the forms established as a prerequisite to be part of Generation Z and to be a business administration student at PUC-SP. The questionnaire was composed of twenty-four questions to meet the objectives proposed by the study to understand how Generation Z has behaved in selection processes considering the new technological trends, especially artificial intelligence, a method that companies have been adopting to improve their recruitment and selection processes.

3 RESULTS

To analyze the primary data collected through the electronic questionnaire, the statistical method was used with the aid of Microsoft Excel© to make graphs and tables based on 108 (one hundred and eight) questionnaires answered and considered valid.

Regarding the age of the respondents, 38.9% of the students were between 17 and 20 years old, representing the majority of the participants in this research, adding up to 42 students; 32.4% were between 21 and 23 years old, coming in second place, totaling 35 students; and finally, 28.7% were between 24 and 26 years old, that is, 31 students.

Forty-eight point one percent of these students (52) stated that they were interns, 36.1% (39) were already permanent employees, and 15.7% (17) were neither interns nor had any kind of connection with any organization. Regarding the search for job positions, four response options were provided as follows: Through the General Coordination of Internships (Coordenadoria Geral de Estágios, CGE) at PUC-SP; Through the company's ads on job posting websites; Through the company's postings on their social networks; and Others. This last option was given so that students could express themselves better in case the first three were not how they had actually obtained the position or how they were seeking it. The answers were remarkably diverse. The majority of students participating in the survey answered: a) Through CGE - 22.2% - 24 students; b) Through the company's ads on job posting websites - 50% - 54 students; c) Through the company's postings on social networks - 18.5% - 20 students; d) Others (referrals) - 9.3% - 10 students.

When it comes to insertion in the job market, what most attracts Generation Z in a given company contradicts what some authors write. The respondents were more attracted to companies that offer growth opportunities, good salary, and benefits than to companies that offer independence, autonomy, and flexible schedules.

The minority, that is 16.7% (18 respondents), seeks independence and autonomy in their routine and only 2.8%, (3 respondents) said they prioritize flexible hours. This result did not confirm what we found in the theoretical foundation, that is, that Generation Z prefers companies that offer autonomy at work, and that these young people do not stay for a long time in the same organization, precisely because they are restless and like to be constantly changing.

Table 1 shows how much the participants value the main benefits offered by companies that according to the theoretical framework would be appreciated by Generation Z. The table shows both percentage and number of respondents using a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

Table 1 - What is most valued at work

	Not important (1)	Not very important (2)	More or less important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
Support and praise	0,9% (1)	2,8% (3)	21,3% (23)	38,9% (42)	36,1% (39)
Training	0,9% (1)	0% (0)	9,3% (10)	32,4% (35)	57,4% (62)
Use of smartphones at work	5,6% (6)	17,6% (19)	36,1% (39)	23,1% (25)	17,6% (19)
Unrestricted Internet access	7,4% (8)	13,9% (15)	25,9% (28)	19,4% (21)	33,3% (36)

Source: Research data

Students indicated that support and praise are important, and they value them to stay in companies. In addition, more than half of the respondents showed interest in training to improve their performance in their positions. Issues such as the use of smartphones and unrestricted Internet access are often discussed among authors when referring to Generation Z, since they are digital natives and are more connected to technology than any other generation. As for the use of smartphones, emblem of the digital generation, the participants were quite divided. The majority gave a score of 3, demonstrating that Generation Z (in the sample researched) would not be very associated with the use of smartphones in the work environment. In the last question, however, the majority favored unrestricted Internet access during work hours, with more than half of the scores being equal to or above 3 points on the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where the higher the score, the greater the agreement with the statement.

The participants were also asked whether they would feel comfortable with their personal data (school, professional etc.) being evaluated by machines using artificial intelligence technology to select the appropriate profiles to move forward in selection processes. In this question, 61.1% of the participants, totaling sixty-six students, said they felt safe about this practice, while 38.9% of the participants (42 students) reported that they felt insecure and not yet comfortable with this new way of collecting and processing personal data.

Considering that they are all Gen Zers, it can be said that the disapproval percentage of the use and treatment of data by artificial intelligence was high. These respondents were asked (mandatory question) to inform the reasons why they did not approve of their data being processed by AI in order to understand what causes insecurity about data being analyzed by machines in selection processes.

Chart 1 was created with the data obtained from the forty-two answers given. Some reasons were repeated, so for the sake of simplicity, all duplicate content was removed to avoid repetitions in the Chart 1.

Chart 1 - Discomfort with data analyzed by artificial intelligence software

When a machine evaluates my data, there is no possibility to actually analyze my information and qualify whether it is good or not, even if it is outside the programmed standards.
It is complicated to think that all my data is stored and used for an unknown purpose.
The technology will not understand me as a human being would.
I think it is a privacy breach.
My personal data used as an evaluation method.
I trust more in the human tact of analysis.
I do not read any online terms from any page I access; I have no idea what it can be done with my data.
Algorithms follow patterns and biases always; humans sometimes do not.
I feel that personal contact can make a lot of difference in hiring and understanding each person. It is not just about a résumé, but what can that person add or contribute to a company.
Possible presence of hackers, misuse of information, and poorly developed artificial intelligence.
Technology does not have sense of interpretation based on sensations and feelings, so when machines evaluate people, they are only evaluating numbers.
Machines are programmed to see in black and white, and reality does not work that way. There are several factors that must be analyzed as a whole, and artificial intelligence does not do that.

Source: Research data

In the following question, 69.4% of the participants or seventy-five students stated that they were not in favor of online reasoning tests. In contrast, the remaining 30.6% of the participants (33) reported that they were in favor of applying these tests online.

Regarding the application of behavioral tests or soft skills assessments, 77.8% of the participants (84) said they believed in the importance of these tests and assessments, while the remaining 22.2% of the participants (24) said they did not believe in this type of assessment conducted by technology.

It is worth noting that in this type of tests, 12% (13 students) reported trying to cheat the system (for example, omission of information) to take advantage during the selection process. On the bright side, the vast majority, 88% (95) said they were absolutely truthful in their answers, regardless of the fact that it might negatively impact the result.

Chatbots are software robots built to behave like a human being, a type of technology that is already widely used in many organizations to provide customer service and is taking over the role of interviewer in many selection processes. In fact, 47.2% (51) said that during a selection process, they had already experienced exchanging messages with this software at some point, but only 11.1% (12) said they had had positive experiences with this software, and 46.3% (50) reported that they believe the chatbot helps, but only to a certain extent.

Gamification is a technological practice that is spreading in corporate training and selection processes. It turns diverse experiences and contexts into games, and since Gen Zers love video games, the participants were asked if gamification should be a step adopted in recruitment and selection processes.

Sixty students (55.6%) of 108 participants were in favor of this practice and believe that more companies should adopt and include it in their selection processes, while forty-eight students (44.4%) were against this practice, considering it does not add value to the selection process.

When students were asked if gamification generated engagement or contributed positively to attracting candidates, sixty-seven students (62%) reported that the practice increases engagement, while forty-one students (38%) said it makes no difference and does not influence the attraction of Generation Z candidates.

Finally, seventy-one students (65.7%) stated that they did not believe that one day artificial intelligence would totally replace human beings in recruitment and selection processes. On the other hand, thirty-seven students (34.3%) reported that artificial intelligence could replace human capital in recruitment.

As can be seen, even Generation Z, considered as the technology generation, still has some reservations about the subject, whether we refer specifically to selection processes or technology in general.

CONCLUSION

The analyses of the results show that Generation Z is not only just made of those who strongly believe in technology, nor of those who consider that the purpose of companies is more important than their individual interests, such as having a career plan, good salary, and competitive benefit packages. In fact, 47.2% of the respondents are focused on the growth opportunity within a company and 33.3% stated that not only growth is necessary, but also a good salary and benefits, as well as flexible hours. Human Resources departments must, therefore, be aware of the fact that there are many members of this generation who think differently from the media stereotypes and be prepared to design more appropriate offers to those who, despite having been born in the second half of the 1990s, do not fit perfectly into the idealized description of a Generation Z member.

For most students who answered the survey, there is a factor not well assimilated when facing a selection process: artificial intelligence. Furthermore, there is a certain distrust with the fact that personal data is available in technological platforms.

The use of artificial intelligence is increasingly present in Human Resources, and its use is more explicit in selection processes in order to maximize resources, time, and gain greater assertiveness regarding the candidate's profile. Artificial intelligence makes it easier for the recruiter to match the candidate to the prerequisites of the posted vacancy. Sixty-one point one percent of the respondents feel comfortable with this form of evaluation, but 38.9% of them do not feel that way, so recruiters must be prepared for possible impacts of this discomfort on the final result of the selection.

Another key aspect identified was the lack of trust of many respondents in relation to online tests. Therefore, it can be concluded that the so-called Generation Z, famous for having been born connected and in the technological environment, still has some members who feel more comfortable to perform selection processes face to face with a human recruiter or without the need for much technology.

We must acknowledge that this study has the limitation of its small sample and restricted to a single course at a single university; however, this does not invalidate the research, it even shows that in supposedly homogeneous

environments and within the same generation there is a lot of diversity, a factor that should be recognized and dealt with appropriately.

In light of the above, this study indicates the need for further research that seeks to better understand the conventionally called Generation Z, in order to make it clear that this demographic concept cannot be confused with a label or stereotyped view of a large number of young people extremely socially diverse.

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