

# FOREIGN EXPERIENCE

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## Determinants of Job Satisfaction of Workers from Generations X and Y: Regional Research



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**Abstract.** The paper discusses job satisfaction in the context of different generations of workers and the entry of new representatives in the labor market. The study is both theoretical and applied; it uses materials of quantitative and qualitative research on the issues under consideration. The main source of empirical data is a sociological surveys conducted in 2015 and 2017 according to the method of random non-repetitive sampling among employees of individual enterprises of different forms of ownership operating in Podlaskie North-Eastern region of Poland, and analysis of the data. The goals of our work are to identify the most important organizational factors that influence job satisfaction and to identify differences between the employees from the older generation (X) and the younger generation (Y) at regional enterprises of different ownership forms as objects of functional management. According to four indicators reflecting professional job satisfaction (working conditions, sense of self-worth, possibility of development, relations with other employees), the findings of our study revealed similarities and differences between them in the older and younger generations. Similarity consists in the fact that material results of activity are a priority for both generations of workers. Difference consists in the predominance of pragmatism in the younger generation and conservatism in the older generation. The study is of theoretical and practical importance in the field of professional business management in the region. It indicates what factors are important for the younger generation of workers in the context of achieving job satisfaction compared to the older generation. Therefore, the management of any enterprise should use a variety of management tools to improve the efficiency of its activities, for example, to differentiate the motives that will satisfy different needs and incentives in the work of employees of different age groups.

**Key words:** professional job satisfaction, job satisfaction of generations X and Y, labor efficiency.

### Introduction

Job and labor satisfaction is one of the widely studied logical structures in social sciences. There are many studies on job satisfaction and its impact on employee engagement [1, 33. 991–1007; 2], on staff turnover and absenteeism [3, pp. 1146–1151], labor efficiency [4, pp. 165–175] and even the health and well-being of an employee [5, pp. 65–91].

Numerous studies also indicate a positive correlation between employee and customer satisfaction [6, pp.161–171], which is confirmed by the fact that the employees' approach (including satisfaction) affects not only the results of their work, but also the entire organization [7, pp. 57–61]. This issue is of interest among researchers in various fields and disciplines (sociology, psychology, economics and management). However, there are several

other aspects of the problem that require attention. One of them is the coexistence of different generations of workers (X, Y) and the entry into the labor market of their new representatives (generation Z).

The development of these generations of workers is associated with historical, political, and socio-economic changes and technology development. Significant changes in this area, which accumulate experience of these generations, determine the belonging to a particular age group with individual characteristics. It is believed that the current generation sees their work not only as a source of income, but also as a place where the employee can realize their own goals and aspirations, become independent and confirm their own value.

The perception of a workplace in the context of the working environment and the feeling of

professional satisfaction is determined by both personal characteristics and organizational indicators [8, pp. 5–12; 9, pp. 617–637]. Based on this approach, the category of job satisfaction can be considered both from the internal (personal traits, relations, values, knowledge, skills) and the external (organizational factors) point of view. External satisfaction is related to a specific situation and professional environment: organizational climate, management style, working conditions, relations with colleagues, etc. The determinants of internal satisfaction influence the perception of importance of external satisfaction indicators. What an employee perceives as satisfactory results directly follows from their internal needs.

Due to the differences in characteristics of different generations in terms of their attitudes and values, it can be expected that the perception of organizational factors, working conditions which affect job satisfaction are different. It is therefore important to identify factors that may affect job satisfaction. Thus, research in this area is of great practical importance. The diverse perception of external indicators of satisfaction among employees of different generations has an impact on the application of specific methods of personnel management. The management techniques used for older generation (X) may be quite useless in case of younger generation (Y).

In view of the above, we set the objective of the research to determine the organizational factors that affect job satisfaction and try to answer the following questions: are there differences in the perception of certain organizational factors that affect job satisfaction of generations X and Y, and what factors are the most important for generation Y.

#### **Literature review**

*The construct of job satisfaction.* The classic definition of job satisfaction is as a set of feelings

and employee's attitude to work [10, pp. 891–906], that is, a positive attitude of employees to their duties, as well as to colleagues and the working environment, accompanied by a sense of satisfaction [11]. The term "satisfaction" is often interchangeable with the term "fulfilment". A significant part of researchers consider these concepts synonyms, although some authors point out the differences between them. It is believed that satisfaction is a strong sense of fulfilment [12, p. 228] which is usually left after a long period of satisfaction, as opposed to temporary satisfaction, which is instantaneous [13, pp. 192–196]. G.G. Tatarova and G.P. Bessokirnaya have similar definitions of these concepts: "Job/labor satisfaction is, in fact, an interdisciplinary category characterizing the state of labor relations from the position of the subject of labor. ... However, empirical studies usually record job satisfaction, that is, labor satisfaction here and now. These two terms are often used as synonyms" [14, pp. 8–26].

In addition to the terms "satisfaction" and "job satisfaction" there is also the concept of "job satisfaction". The use of these terms interchangeably here is a result of compatibility of definitions and clarity [15] and is quite common in literature because of the way the purpose of source identification is set and the level of perceived satisfaction associated with work is measured [16, pp. 54–56].

In this study, job satisfaction is defined as a pleasant and positive attitude towards one's work as a result of perception of work, working conditions and workplace, job responsibilities and professional environment.

*Job satisfaction* is one of the key categories in a company, as it means that employees work more and better if they are satisfied [17, pp. 4–9] as perception of work in terms of meeting individual needs in the workplace [18, pp. 34–

40] and performing certain tasks in specific physical and social conditions [19, p. 115]. Job satisfaction is also determined by favor and disfavor of one’s work [20, p. 210]. It is noteworthy that satisfaction is a feeling that can gradually decrease or increase: an employee can be very satisfied with their work, moderately satisfied or almost satisfied. Moreover, an employee may feel satisfied with certain stages of work such as objectives performed, while other components such as wage will leave them dissatisfied. These partial feelings related to individual components of labor form ultimate job satisfaction.

In literature, there are many theories and studies that determine the organizational (external) indicators, the most frequently mentioned factors that affect job satisfaction (Tab. 1).

At the same time, many authors agree that satisfaction is influenced by: (a) general working conditions related to the characteristics of work, wage or stability of employment; (b) the content of work performed, i.e. tasks performed, independence, an opportunity of development and promotion; (c) work environment: relations with superiors and other employees, organizational culture and management methods.

*The context of generations.* Generation is a certain group of people, which can be distinguished by indicators such as: birth year and age, experience associated with education in similar social, economic and political conditions [24, pp. 749–751; 25, p. 72].

Nowadays managers at many enterprises are facing the problem associated with the presence of several generations at these enterprises; they are characterized by different expectations and attitudes to work. Therefore, it is important to study the factors that determine job satisfaction, provide managers with knowledge in creating appropriate working conditions that contribute to increasing the satisfaction of workers from different generation groups.

The most widely used classification is that which distinguishes the generation born before war, i.e. in 1920–1945; the *baby-boomers* generation or the so-called demographic peak generation that took place after war, in 1946–1964; and generation X, i.e. those born in 1965–1979. The latter includes workers aged 39–53 years and over; generation Y, called *the internet generation, generation net, millennials, generation next* or *nexters* [26; 27] born between 1980–2000: the workers aged 18–38. Generation Z, i.e. those born after 2000 are workers aged 15–18. The classification

Table 1. Organizational factors in job satisfaction

Author of research	Factors in job satisfaction
Essen, 2002	Stability of employment, additional benefits in addition to wages, communication between employees and managers, as well as other professional groups, an opportunity to balance career and personal life, remuneration, an opportunity to be promoted, develop, the content of work performed, recognition of high quality work by the authorities, good relations with the immediate supervisor, autonomy and independence to make decisions, corporate culture, workplace safety, training, the importance of work and good relations with colleagues.
Schulz, Schulz, 2002	Remuneration, promotion, control, working conditions, relations, achievements, independence, recognition.
Schulte et al., 2006	Organizational culture, awareness that people are valued and respected.
Mendoza, Maldonado, 2014	Management techniques, working conditions, job description.
Source: compiled by the authors using [17; 21; 22; 23].	

is typical for the American society and may differ slightly in the range of years in different countries due to cultural, social and economic differences [28]. The most representative groups of employees of modern enterprises of different forms of ownership in Poland and its regions are generation X and Y [29, pp. 118–134]. Thus, further analysis will be based on these two generation groups.

Generation X is a generation of professionally active people for whom work is of great importance. The most important values for them are: personal development, independence, diversity, initiative, hard work [30, p. 44]. Professional career is associated with hard work, conscientious performance of their duties, often at the expense of imbalance between work and personal life [31, pp. 11–12]. The satisfaction of this generation depends on success at work, high position and work image. This generation is characterized by [32; 33]: loyalty, workaholicism and high work ethics, recognition of authorities, a sense of importance and suitability at work, good relations with the team, which is expected to support, the pleasure of work, which reinforces motivation.

In contrast, generation Y is a relatively homogeneous group with different values, patterns of behavior and expectations than the previous generation. It is pointed out that the representatives of this generation are more trusting, tolerant, and mobile (Furrow, 2011), appreciate independence and self-sufficiency [34; 10], moreover, they are better educated, especially in terms of technological progress [35, pp. 70–76], they attach greater importance to the quality of life [36, pp. 61–84]. They are brought up in free access to information using latest technologies and therefore are well-versed in the surrounding, often virtual, reality, which, in turn, is a weak point of the

older generation. On the one hand, they can communicate well by e-mail, SMS, all kinds of messengers, but it is more difficult for them to have a “face to face” conversation. This can weaken the relations with others, especially colleagues, which in the context of work can have a significant impact on their sense of job satisfaction. In this regard, the following research question was formulated:

**RQ1:** *Are relations with colleagues more important for generation X than for generation Y as an organizational factor affecting job satisfaction?*

As generation Y have different values than the previous generation, they also have different expectations about the workplace, the tasks to be performed, and the role of a manager. *Millennials* expect that their work will help them fully use their knowledge and skills, which has a positive impact on their motivation [36]. They want to do hard work that stimulates creativity and enables them to become a member of a dedicated and motivated team; they want to be led by open, positive managers [26] who will provide them with regular feedback on the work they do [27]. The opportunity of career development, acquisition of new knowledge, additional training, professional development is also important for them [37, pp. 42–63]. The opportunity of continuous training and using creative solutions win in confrontation with routine work. However, opinions differ regarding to the role of remuneration. Some researchers point out that remuneration is less important for generation Y than for generation X, while others believe that remuneration is an important or even the most important aspect of their work [34; 38, pp. 43–58]. Moreover, remuneration should be directly related to performance and value added created by an employee. Other research questions were put further:

**RQ2:** *Is wage more important for generation Y than for generation X as an organizational factor affecting job satisfaction?*

**RQ3:** *Is awareness of value created for the enterprise more important for generation Y than for generation X as an organizational factor affecting job satisfaction?*

There is no doubt that if the expectations of generation Y in terms of work are not met, this may be reflected in dissatisfaction [39, pp. 256–268]. They do not feel attached either to the profession or to the employer and have no problems with changing jobs [36]. Consequently, the methods of managing employees used by managers so far may not be effectively applied to this generation characterized by a new approach to work and their role in it, as well as bold demands on working conditions.

The most significant aspects for this generation are: flexibility, mobility (from the point of view of changing profession, company, place of residence), self-fulfillment (development of non-professional skills, hobbies, interests and their implementation). Therefore, it is very important to define the concept of professional satisfaction in the case of this generation, for which another research question was put:

**RQ4:** *What organizational factors affecting job satisfaction are the most important for generation Y compared to generation X?*

#### **Research methodology and methods**

The study was conducted in two stages: in June 2015 and in November 2017 – at the enterprises of various forms of ownership in Podlaskie North-Eastern region of Poland. At the first stage, based on the method of quantitative research we used PAPI (Paper and Pencil Interview) method for data collection through random selection of respondents. First,

a random sample was used among working students of Politechnika Bia ́ostocka (Bia ́ystok Technical University) as representatives of generation Y to ensure the internal accuracy of the research and representative sampling. Then the “snowball” technique was used, which helped cover respondents of appropriate age, that is, those who meet the criteria of generation X. In general, the survey was addressed to 256 respondents, who gave back 102 filled questionnaires with answers to the questions. The second stage of the research included structured in-depth interviews with the representatives of both generations to clarify the information obtained during the quantitative study. Surveys were conducted among 20 representatives of generation X and 20 representatives of generation Y. The respondents were selected by random non-repeated sampling. The respondents were people who were different from those who participated in quantitative research. The use of a mixed approach in the research, using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, helps better understand the problem under review and provides a higher confidence level in the results obtained than the use of a single method.

The surveyed enterprises of Podlaskie region by the number of surveyed employees were distributed as follows: 58% – small (less than 50 employees); 17% – medium (less than 250 employees); the rest – 25% – large enterprises (250 or more employees). Half of the surveyed enterprises (51%) were engaged in provision of services, a third (35%) – in production, the rest (14%) had a mixed profile.

The distribution of enterprises by profile and number of employees helped obtain a fairly complete image of perception of importance of certain factors in job satisfaction among

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents (N= 142, % of respondents)

Characteristics of respondents	Share in total number, %
<i>Sex</i>	
Female	41
Male	59
<i>Education</i>	
Higher	37
Secondary	58
Vocational	5
<i>Belonging to generation</i>	
Representatives of Generation X	35
Representatives of Generation Y	65
<i>Professional experience</i>	
1–5 years	53
6–10 years	18
11–20 years	17
More than 20 years	12
<i>Legal basis of employment</i>	
Employment agreement	41
Fixed-term employment agreement	19
Contractual order	24
Other	16

*Source: authors' own solution.*

workers of different generations. The respondents were employees of various professional groups of surveyed companies selected through random non-repeated sampling. *Table 2* shows the characteristics of respondents.

The majority of respondents of generation Y have little professional experience (53%) – from 1 to 5 years and at least secondary education (58%). A significant share of people work under an employment agreement (60%), including open-term and fixed-term.

The purpose of the research was to identify significant organizational factors affecting job satisfaction for the representatives of generation X and Y.

Based on analysis of the scientific literature, 20 factors affecting job satisfaction were identified, relating to management techniques (e.g. management style, work environment, correct assessment); working conditions

(stability of employment, flexibility, fair remuneration system); management tools applied (promotion and training opportunities) and relations with managers and colleagues. The respondents were to assess the importance of these factors in terms of satisfaction on a five-point scale, where 5 – very high satisfaction, 1 – very low).

### Research results

The outlining of the research results began with the analysis of individual groups of factors in order to group similar values in larger groups. This reduced the number of variables and identified the most important aspects characterized by various factors affecting employee satisfaction with work (*Tab. 3*).

As a result of data analysis through *Statistica* program four main components (Varimax rotation of standardized factors) were identified. The following elements were not taken into account: full use of potential, self-esteem,

Table 3. Factor analysis of elements affecting job satisfaction

Characteristics of factors	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3	Indicator 4
Full use of potential	-0.247508	0.145387	0.131996	0.440489
Self-esteem	0.378837	0.154842	0.081328	0.302821
Recognition by a manager	0.384774	0.277392	- 0.059034	0.402783
Awareness of value for the company	0.034129	<b>0.730979</b>	0.125220	0.138237
Measurement of part of value invested in company's growth	0.114933	<b>0.747875</b>	0.024525	0.387796
The feeling that someone is part of the team	0.146862	0.425455	- 0.045066	<b>0.654405</b>
Independence in carrying out one's work	0.096388	<b>0.649211</b>	0.231447	- 0.024503
Engagement in work	0.265966	0.272362	0.412217	0.254947
Promotion opportunities	0.332801	0.295971	<b>0.517155</b>	- 0.281483
Opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills	0.194617	0.042110	<b>0.806003</b>	0.075719
Participation in training	0.165398	0.292395	<b>0.651177</b>	- 0.022145
Ability to perform various tasks	0.080165	0.031022	<b>0.719700</b>	0.318756
Interesting work	0.423089	- 0.103650	0.342277	0.435410
A pleasant (comfortable) place to work	0.323841	- 0.231436	0.239344	<b>0.605461</b>
Friendly relations with colleagues	0.264566	0.199139	0.073193	<b>0.584574</b>
Remuneration corresponding to professional competences	<b>0.771429</b>	0.013500	0.147288	0.062415
Remuneration corresponding to work results	<b>0.716429</b>	0.113000	0.046362	0.128975
Flexible working hours	0.039170	0.366179	0.311289	0.092560
Stability of employment	<b>0.559026</b>	- 0.211079	0.178271	0.175340
Ability to balance work and personal life	<b>0.641426</b>	0.319767	0.086790	- 0.036683
Percentage accumulation of variance of random variable	<b>25.24</b>	<b>34.94</b>	<b>43.36</b>	<b>50.15</b>
Cronbach's alpha	<b>0.833</b>			
* Specified units > 0.55. Source: authors' own solution using Statistica program.				

recognition by a manager, engagement in work, interesting work, flexible working hours. We distinguished four factors explaining in total 50.15% of variance of a random variable in particular, the first figure is 25.24% of variance of a random variable. Cronbach's alpha is 0.833, which means that the responses received are relatively reliable.

Based on the analysis, a group of certain indicators affecting job satisfaction of employees is identified.

**Indicator 1 – working conditions** – is defined as remuneration received according to

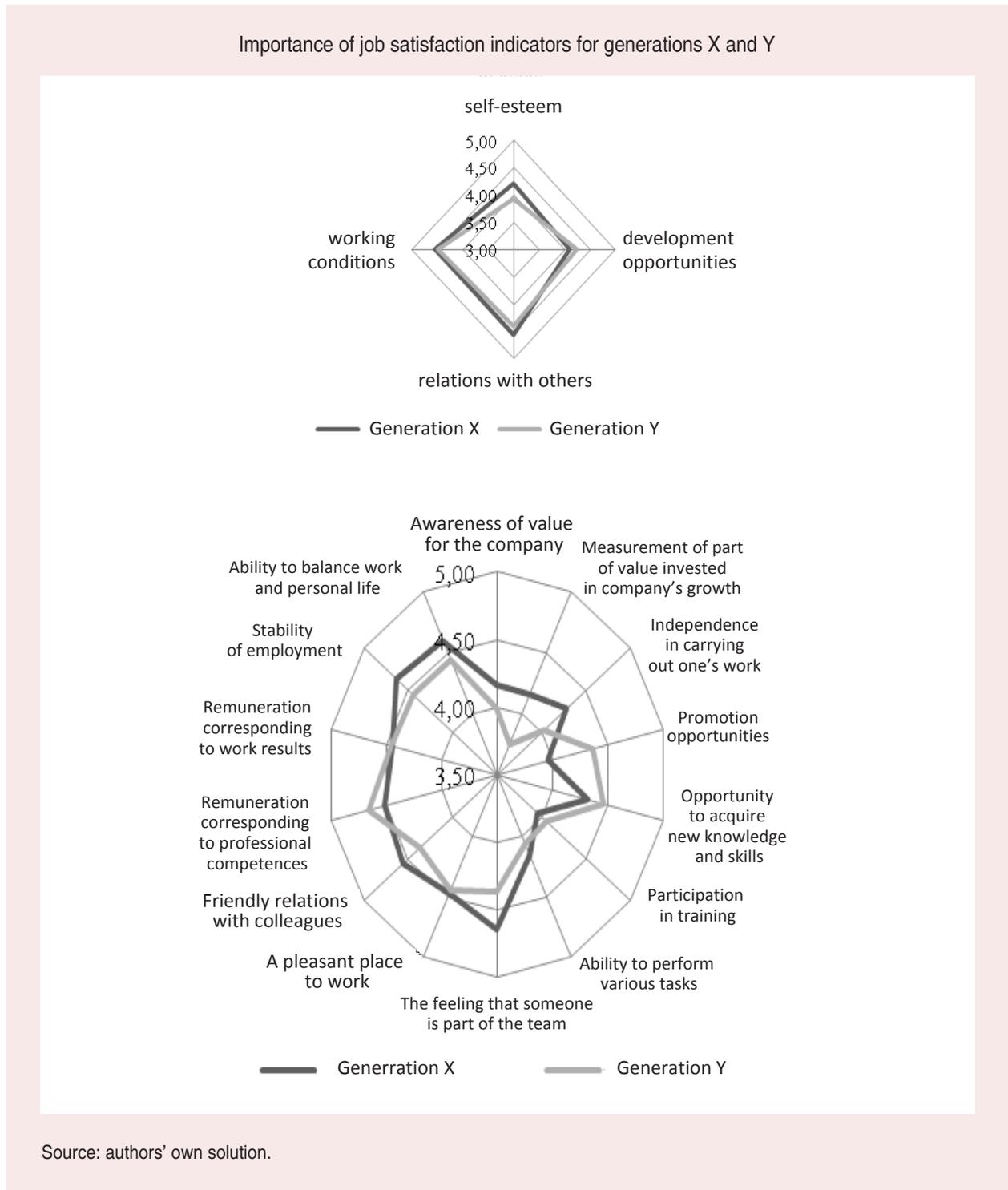
the existing professional competencies: remuneration received according to work results; stability of employment; ability to balance work and personal life.

**Indicator 2 – feeling of self-worth** – is defined as the awareness of value for the company, the need to measure the contribution to the company's value, as well as independence in work.

**Indicator 3 – development opportunity** – is associated with career development, acquiring new knowledge and skills, performing various tasks, participation in training.

**Indicator 4 – relations with other employees** – is defined as the feeling of being part of a team, friendly relations with colleagues, pleasant, comfortable place of work.

Next, we conducted comparative analysis of a specific construct for workers of generations X and Y (*Figure*). The analysis proves that there are small differences between individual



indicators affecting job satisfaction and helps draw some conclusions. The most similar are responses related to working conditions (on average 4.55 for generation X and up to 4.5 for generation Y), and at the same time this indicator significantly affects the feeling of satisfaction. Remuneration mentioned in this group of indicators is more important for generation Y. This is also supported by the views expressed in the interviews. The respondents of generation X noted that “remuneration is of secondary importance, the paramount is the idea of what you do, what you like and pleases you at work” and “if you work in unpleasant conditions, no money will give you satisfaction at work”.

On the other hand, Y respondents often expressed opinions such as “remuneration is one of the key factors affecting job satisfaction” or “remuneration is very important and we work to achieve financial benefits, I believe that financial motives are the most important”.

Generation X appreciate relations with others, although their average rank is almost the same as in the case of working conditions, namely 4.56. This group of job satisfaction factors is less important for generation Y, but it is the second important. According to the interviews, the representatives of specific generations point to completely different difficulties associated with building and maintaining good work relations. Generation X note more often that this was the result of “competition, unwillingness to share knowledge” and “envy and jealousy”, while generation Y were much more likely to emphasize “the differences in opinions” or “the differences in character, status, shared beliefs or habits”. This may indicate the younger generation’s greater awareness of the differences between people and probably greater recognition.

The greatest controversy is observed in terms of awareness of the value for the company and the need to measure it – an average of 4.2 for generation X and 3.9 for generation Y, respectively. This is the only group of factors that was estimated below average (4) for generation Y.

The following answers were given to the question of how awareness of the value created for the company affects job satisfaction: “If we know that what we do affects company’s development and the management express gratitude, then we work better, with greater satisfaction and productivity (generation X); “If we are valued, we are satisfied with work” (X) and “It helps us judge whether the work we do has a purpose and is useful for something/ someone” (Y); “We realize that what we do affects the functioning of the company and is therefore very important” (Y); “It identifies us with the company” (Y). These statements may indicate that the value created for the company for the older generation of respondents should be assessed by the supervisor, while for younger respondents it is more identified with the sense of doing something important.

All these groups of job satisfaction factors (working conditions, relations with others, and self-esteem) were rated higher by generation X. The only group of factors that was rated higher by generation Y than by generation X is the opportunity to develop. This is confirmed by the results of previous studies, which show that life-long training, acquiring new knowledge, the opportunity to develop skills, as well as rapid career are elements of professional environment important for the younger generation. Therefore, together with the corresponding remuneration, these are important factors in job satisfaction.

### Conclusions

When forming final research results, it should be noted that relations with other people are less important for the younger generation of workers (Y) than for the older generation (X) (answers to RQ1). Communication with other people through various communication networks successfully replaces personal communication and relations with employees; although important, they are not decisive in job satisfaction. Remuneration is a more important factor in job satisfaction for the younger generation (Y) than for the older generation (X), especially in the context of its compliance with competencies (RQ2). But wages associated with the results of work are as important for them, as for generation X, and is a natural result of the fact that generation Y has no need

to prove their value at work (RQ3). The most important factors increasing job satisfaction among young generation (Y) are remuneration and the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and develop skills, stable employment, balance between work and personal life, comfortable working place (RQ4).

The present research is of theoretical and practical importance in professional business management in the region. It indicates which factors are important for the younger generation in the context of achieving job satisfaction compared to the older generation. The study draws attention to the fact that managers within a company should use a variety of management tools, for example, differentiation of motives to meet different needs and incentives for the employees of different age groups.

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