# Motivational Strategies for improved Performance of Generation Y and Z Employees: A Grounded Theory Approach to Mining Companies in Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

The main thrust of the proposed study was to probe and come up with a theoretical framework for motivational strategies of generation Y and Z employees so as to enhance their performance in the mining sector in Zimbabwe. It is important to note from the onset that Generation Y also known as Millennials are youthful employees born between 1981 and 1996. These people are now aged between 26 and 41 years, and this is the most active generation in the labour force. It is imperative to study how these individuals can be motivated to foster productivity in Zimbabwe's second largest sector. On the other hand, Generation Z refers to employees born between 1997 and 2012 (Gomez, Mawhinney & Betts, 2020). A part of Generation Z, those aged 18 to 25 are the latest people employed in companies. Hence, it is urgent, critical and makes sense to understand how they are motivated. Therefore, the two groups make up a huge chunk of labour particularly in the mining sector, and it is vital to interrogate on their workplace behaviour, like what yesteryear psychologists did with older generations. The two generations grew up in a different environment from other generations and thus have different expectations from their employers. Therefore, the study probed and came up with a theoretical framework to motivating Generation Y and Z employees in the mining sector.

**Keywords**: Motivational strategies, Generation Y and Z, Grounded theory approach, Mining companies

## Introduction

Humans have been largely regarded as complex since the turn of the millennial. Psychologists have been in search of what motivates human capital. Perry, Gibson & Zayne (2020) conclude that Generation Y and Z would comprise 50% of the workforce by 2023, worldwide, including in Zimbabwe. Blanks & Motton (2018) state that over the years to much emphasis has been on how to motivate and retain baby boomers and Generation X. James & Litz (2017) observe that these two generations differed from the generations preceding them in terms of motivation and retention. However, in the United States there has been admission that Generation Y and Z are the leaders of today and the future, particularly in giant mining firms. In the US, 53% (35% Generation Y and 18% Generation Z) belong to the two generational age cohorts. In addition, Raymond & Thaiven (2019) believe that Generation Y and Z in America are enthused by different strategies as compared to what has been the winning formula for companies in the same country, with regards to motivation. A lot of studies in the US have been differing in terms of how to motivate Generation Y and Z

employees (Jedd & Morris, 2015; Redd & Campbell, 2021). However, what has been clear amongst these studies is that in terms of motivation these two generations differ from yesteryear generations. Westermarn& Yamamura (2017) are of the view that Generation Y and Z employees in USA value communication. On the other hand, Meister & Willyed (2010) study of 2200 professionals led them to submit that the world of work requires changes in values and practices, citing the inclusion of Millennials and iGeneration at the workplace. Studies in the United States cannot be taken seriously to represent occurrences in Zimbabwe. Hence, this spirited the need to carry out the study in Zimbabwe particularly the mining sector.

In the United Kingdom a handful of findings and observations have been done pertaining Generation Y and Z in the workplace. The workforce in the UK is mainly Generation Y and Z. They make projections that by 2023 60% of the labour force will be made up of these two generations. Marvis & English (2020) tested the applicability of McGregor theory X and Y on Generation X and Y. They found that only theory Y, applied to Generation Y and Z but still at a limited scale. They recommend the need to conduct a number of studies worldwide to find out strategies to motivate and retain this type of workers. Dries *et al.* (2008) in their survey of 750 working professionals in Belgium unearthed that younger generations have incongruity on their actual and preferred careers. Taylor & Keeter (2010) submit that studying generational motivation at workplace in Europe is difficult and requires longitudinal analysis. However, they conclude by reporting that studies on motivation of younger generations are an important investment especially in developing countries, as this will steer productivity. This enthused the researchers to carry out the study in Zimbabwe.

In Asia, China to be specific, 42% of employees belong to Generation Y and Z groupings. Lee & Chan (2020) assert that these types of employees will present the communist party and the industry with a lot of problem. One key aspect furthered by Mee & Yen (2021) is that Generation Y and Z employees are tech-savvy and further studies should concentrate on this theme in order to unearth, what motivates these kinds of employees. In United Arab Emirates, Lim (2012) study on migrant employees revealed that Generation Y requires a large deal of feedback. There is, thus, inconclusive observations in Asia on how to motivate Millennials and Generation Z employees. This stimulated the researchers to embark on the study in Zimbabwe.

The research was guided by the following objectives:
   i. To establish the factors that contribute to poor motivation of Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector;
   ii. To examine what has been done to motivate Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector;
   iii. To identify challenges that have been met in trying to motivate Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector; and
   iv. To find motivation strategies that could be used to improve organisational performance for Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector.

## Literature Review

### Generation Y

Millennials, children born in the new millennium, were born in a unique environment, and, therefore, have distinct features to other generations (Twenge, 2012). Chan (2015) states that they enjoy being on social media even at work in order to connect with virtual friends. This may be because they were born during the age of internet. Dill (2015) posits that this generation is self-confident and ambitious, and older generations interpret these attributes as being selfish and egocentric. Sing (2014) believes that millennials are generation of optimists, and they bring high hopes at work, and these include expectations for quick career progression. However, he notes that as they grow up, they become pessimistic. Krisha*et al.* (2012) highlights that Millennials are motivated by multitasking and being given autonomy to make decisions at work. Managers can thus take advantage of job enrichment and job enlargement strategies to inspire them to perform. Furthermore, Cook (2016) argues that Millennials are family oriented than money oriented. This means that they prefer work life balance. They are interested in spending more time with relatives and friends than being at work. However, they are also willing to work anytime and anywhere using technology. Elmore (2014) states that Generation Y employees embrace cultural diversity and are cooperative with co-employees. However, they do not hesitate to leave the employer if their expectations are not met. In a nutshell, Millennials are a unique age group which requires unorthodox means of motivational strategies in order to harness their skills.

### Generation Z

Generation Z, children born in the digital age, have features that are unique to themselves. Hence, the way they think differs from generations preceding them (Hardey, 2011). According to Cilliers (2015) iGeneration is an internet generation and is always glued to social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Csobanka (2016) states that Generation Z in Europe prefer to work individually, and the only way they can work as a team is through virtual collective work. White (2017) believes that this group prefers instant gratification, and the management should not delay in providing benefits as they may be frustrated. Half (2015) found that iGeneration members in the United States were brave, realistic and more practical. Ensari (2017) observes that Generation Z age group is not afraid of change and uses the internet to seek for solutions. Therefore, management should delegate tasks to them and allow them to innovate and solve problems at corporate level. Sing & Dangmei (2016) report that iGeneration is interested in influencing rather than being influenced, and is interested in sharing knowledge to other employees, rather than being micromanaged. Turner (2013) posits that this generation is aggressive, not interested in career and leave for the present. In a nutshell, they are a brave generation that is interested in pleasure and not committed for long lasting relations with the employer. All these attributes are unique and require tailor-made motivational strategies for this age group.

### Performance Concept

The concept of performance is highly subjective and contextual as reported by Brix & Peters (2015). There has not been an agreement on how to define performance as it can be qualitative and quantitative. Lysles (2014) believes that performance is a quality of an outcome of an individual or a group of employees. Hence, performance according to these lenses is a good result achieved individually or collectively. Negulescu (2019) argues that these definitions do not help as performance remains ambiguous and interpretive.

Performance is interpretive as it relies on the organisational results. Stayanov (2017) states that performance's achievement criteria is linked to organisational objectives. Therefore, performance is a result of action, and level of success linked to goals and targets that an employee is assigned with. Dragonir & Panzaru (2014) attempt to simplify by stating that performance is a state of competitiveness attained by being efficient and effective within a volatile, uncertain, changing and ambiguous business environment. The proposed study adopts that performance is the level of success of activities conducted by an employee against the set targets and organizational objectives. Richard *et al.* (2015) classify performance in terms of three measures that are financial performance (costs, profits and revenue), product market performance (continuous innovation, sales and market share) and shareholder return. This study borrows three perspectives from Kaplan (2010) balanced scorecard and uses them as performance measures, and these include financial perspective, customer perspective and internal business processes.

- Financial perspective (Revenue, costs and profits).
- Customer perspective (customer satisfaction, retention and market share).
- Internal business processes (operational efficiency and continuous innovation).

**Impact of Motivation**

Motivation has always been beneficial for the individual, department and the entire organization since time immemorial. A lot of benefits of motivation have been documented in the psychology and human capital management literature. According to Landy & Conte (2010) motivation results in happy workers, and as a result leads to a sound team spirit. Mirea, Naftanaila & Mirea (2012) submit that motivated employees have discipline and can take orders from their superiors without disputing. Nemeckova (2013) reports that Czech Republic employees in the financial sector are motivated and this resulted in health competition amongst employees. This competition resulted in increase in market share for firms. Chintaloo & Mahadeo (2013) submit that Ireland Blyth Limited improved productivity because of motivated staff. However, performance is not a function of motivation alone. Fisher (2012) asserts that performance is a function of ability and motivation (P = AM; where P stands for performance, A stands for ability and M stands for motivation). Motivation just inspires employees who already have the requisite skills to perform. Mehmood & Amhed (2013) states that motivation in government agencies Pakistan results improved quality of service and good customer care. Muhammad & Wajid (2013) observe that absenteeism rates drastically decreased in Pakistan health sector due to motivated staff. Yassen (2013) concludes that motivated staff is efficient, as there is reduction of resource wastage. Ryan & Deci (2020) provide that motivated employees are more creative and innovative than unmotivated staff. However, causal relationship between motivation and innovation has limited documentation. In a nutshell, motivation is beneficial regardless of location of a firm. Some of its packages include retention of critical employees, attraction of the right employees, and it enhances performance provided the employees are qualified. Motivation is thus essential for organizations to enhance performance and achieve sustained competitive advantage.

**Empirical Evidence and Knowledge Gap**

There have been limited studies on the motivation of Generation Y and Generation Z, globally. In the US, Wiggins (2016) explored motivation and retention of Generation Y leaders within the service industry. His study found that Millennials are motivated and

retained by career advancements, better offices, job security and work life balance. However, the major job dissatisfier for them was rigidity and micro-management. In as much as this study is helpful, it is focused on millennial leaders, and the proposed study seeks to explore motivation of all Millennials regardless of job rank in Zimbabwe a country which has different socio-context to USA. In Russia, Safarov (2020) interrogated motivational factors of iGeneration. The study conducted a survey of 372 students from Moscow State University, and established that they are motivated by money, and largely dependent on intrinsic rewards. In as much as Safarov's (2020) study is helpful, it has three areas that opens a gap for the proposed study. The study was quantitative, and this study will employee qualitative methodologies to gain deeper understanding of motivational strategies to employ for Generation Z. The study used students who may assume what will motivate them when they are employed. This study used actual employees who gave facts of what really motivates them. In Malaysia, Kian (2012) investigated motivation and citizenship of Generation X and Y in electric and electronic industry. The study was a survey of 124 employees from two multinational electric companies and established that Generation X had higher organization citizenship than Generation Y, and these two generations had different motivators. Kian (2012) study focused on Generation Y and X, and the proposed study will focus on Generation Y and Z, hence there is room for further exploration. In South Africa, Close (2015) interrogated generational motivation and preference for reward and recognition in a South African facilities management firm. The quantitative study found that there were differences between reward structures that motivate each generation, with Generation Y motivated by work life balance. However, this study excluded Generation Z and the proposed study will also study motivational strategies for Generation Z. In Zimbabwe, Zhakata*et al.* (2017) studied factors affecting employee performance among Millennials in Public hospitals in Zvimba District. They undertook a survey of 116 Millennials who showed that they preferred to be deployed near friends and family, where there is technology, adequate equipment, and transport and internet connectivity. However, this study closed the gap as it looked at motivational strategies of Generation Y and Z employees in the mining sector that is different from the health sector.

**Methodology**

The study employed – mixed methodologies which are a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. However, the major methodology was qualitative, and quantitative methodology was only used to identify relationships. The researchers were quanQUAL entailing that the researchers gathered data which is quantitative in nature first and later seek explanations from qualitative data. Troksa (2016) posits that quantitative research involves collection of numerical data to make meaningful conclusions. This is in line with the proposed study which seeks to understand on what motivates Generation Y and Z employees in organizations. Gentiles et al (2015) posit that qualitative research looks at people in natural settings and reflect on occurrences. The study collected numerical and non-numerical data such as beliefs, perceptions, feelings, behavior attitudes and behaviors of younger generations in the mining sector. The study use mixed methodologies so as to establish validity of findings on the motivation of Generation Y and Z. In a nutshell the study was to understand what motivates Generation Y and Z to perform in the mining sector. The population of Generation Y and Z are unknown but large-scale mines are mines with 400 employees or more. The organizations that fall under this category are ZIMPLATS, RioZim, Premier Africa Minerals, Zimbabwe Consolidated Diamond Company (ZCDC), Anjin Investments, Caledonia Mining, Falcon Gold, Duration Gold Mine, Unki Mine and Hwange Colliery. For quantitative data the study employed Cochran (1963) formula since the

population is unknown giving a sample size of 323 respondents. The researchers arranged Generation Y and Z employees in alphabetical order and every 7th member was selected. Gravetter & Wallnau (2017) claim that the best sample size determination method for gathering qualitative data is saturation point method. The study adopted the saturation point method. The researcher interviewed two sets of employees, namely Millennials and iGeneration. The saturation point was determined after 20 participants have been interviewed belonging to the two generations.

**Results and discussion**

Table 1 below shows that the major factors that motivate Generation Y and Z are self-actualisation, social and physiological needs, while job security remains a non-motivator depicted by a P value of 0.948 above 0.05 as according to Elmore (2014) generation Z employees are not hesitant to leave work if their expectations are not met. Krisha et al. (2012) highlights that Millennials are motivated by multitasking and being given autonomy to make decisions at work and Elmore (2014) notes that they have high need for self-belonging at work places and at home and can even sacrifice work time to socialize with their families.

Table 1: Factors that contribute to poor motivation of Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.916 | .290 | | 10.074 | .000 |
| | Self-actualisation needs | -.639 | .066 | -.837 | -9.661 | .000 |
| | Job security | -.003 | .046 | -.004 | -.066 | .948 |
| | Social needs | .218 | .030 | .468 | 7.303 | .000 |
| | Physiological needs | .071 | .036 | .116 | 1.977 | .049 |

Table 2 shows activities that have been done in the mining sector to motivate employees in generation Y and Z. The impact of the activities indicates that working from home during the Covid-19 era, as noted by Cook (2016), the generation is willing to work anytime and anywhere using technology and Flexible working shifts that balance work and life (Cook, 2016) remain dominant as motivators with P values of 0.001 and 0.000 respectively less than 0.005 significant level. This assertion is supported by Sing & Dangmei (2016) on their report that iGeneration is interested in influencing rather than being influenced, and is interested in sharing knowledge to other employees, rather than being micromanaged.

Table 2: Examination of what has been done to motivate Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.430 | .244 | | 9.974 | .000 |
| | Working from home | .260 | .076 | .208 | 3.396 | .001 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clocking system | -.125 | .047 | -.164 | -2.690 | .008 |
| Flexible working hours | -.189 | .027 | -.430 | -6.957 | .000 |
| Punishment for un accomplished tasks | -.079 | .040 | -.121 | -1.948 | .052 |

The major challenges in motivating generation Y and Z were depicted as differential goals and expectations from the ageing generation (Table 3). This is in line with Turner (2013) who posits that this generation is aggressive, not interested in career and leave for the present. The generation believes in inclusive decision making than centralisation as according White (2017) this group prefers instant gratification whenever they achieve imposed targets. However, high targets and change within an organisation were noted as factors with no impact in motivating the generation depicted by P values of 0.954 and 0.091 respectively. These findings are supported by Ensari (2017) that Generation Z age group is not afraid of change and uses the internet to seek for solutions.

Table 3: Challenges that have been met in trying to motivate Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector

| Model | | Un standardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.208 | .200 | | 16.039 | .000 |
| | Differential expectations with the 18th Century generation | -.408 | .044 | -.645 | -9.374 | .000 |
| | Imposed targets | .184 | .036 | .400 | 5.069 | .000 |
| | High targets | -.002 | .028 | -.003 | -.058 | .954 |
| | Organisational Change | -.074 | .044 | -.092 | -1.696 | .091 |

Table 4 indicate that generation Y and Z are motivated by using technology during work, mixing work and leisure, being given autonomy to try new decisions and promotions for achievement regardless of experience at work. These assertions are in line with Turner (2013) the generation is interested in pleasure and not committed for long lasting relations with the employer. White (2017) believes that this group prefers instant gratification, and the management should not delay in providing benefits as they may be frustrated. Half (2015) found that iGeneration members in the United States were brave, realistic and more practical and supports intensive use of technology. The main frustrating de-motivator was noted as report writing and paper work than working indicated by a P value of 0.494 above 0.005 significant value.

Table 4: Motivation strategies that could be used to improve organisational performance for Generation Y and Z employees in the Zimbabwean Mining Sector

| Model | | Un standardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.500 | .211 | | 7.096 | .000 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Use of technological driven techniques | .241 | .062 | .342 | 3.868 | .000 |
| | Mixing work with leisure | .190 | .058 | .179 | 3.258 | .001 |
| | Autonomy to try new ideas | -.189 | .027 | -.508 | -7.094 | .000 |
| | Recognition and quicker career avenues | -.161 | .049 | -.299 | -3.277 | .001 |
| | Detailed paper reports | -.021 | .030 | -.033 | -.684 | .494 |

From the qualitative data, the major dominant themes were that generation Y and Z valued socio-technological factors (Cowan, 2014) as this young generation was born into extensive usage of internet and is digitally entrenched. It was noted that they were also motivated by reward and recognition, work life balance and being deployed near friends and family, where there is technology, adequate equipment, and transport and internet connectivity (Krisha et al, 2012; Cook, 2016). The other deduced theme was their need for multitasking and being given autonomy to make decisions at work. These are supported by Sing & Dangmei (2016) that iGeneration is interested in influencing rather than being influenced, and is interested in sharing knowledge to other employees, rather than being micromanaged.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The quantitative study noted that generation Y and Z are mainly motivated by self-actualisation needs, social needs and physiological needs while security needs are a non-motivator as they seek to fulfill their short-term life and work needs. The generation seeks to achieve career goals within the shortest time period than to be awarded long term service certificates. It was also noted that the generation seeks flexible working conditions and working from home arrangements. The generation is different from the traditional generations that were motivated by signing the clock register and ensuring clean files of work record. The major challenges noted in motivating generation Y and Z were that differential expectations with the 18th Century generation, being de motivated by imposed target, being given high targets high targets and change that is not information technology driven. The qualitative study noted that the generation craves to satisfy social needs than organisational needs and prefer being micromanaged while working in flexible working conditions.

The study recommends that:
- Generation Y and Z have been noted as an impatient generation which seek to merge, please and work, the employer should allow flexible working conditions and deploying them close to their families will keep them motivated
- Mines are recommended to blend work and social life
- Mines are encouraged to ensure technological advancement and offer autonomy to decision making to generation Y and Z employees.
- Mines are to create clear quicker career ladders, based on achievement does not experience.

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