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THESE TODAY'S MILLENNIALS. AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF AGE AND GENERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE USA

Book review

EZEK A MAI MILLENNIUMIAK. EMPIRIKUS TANULMÁNY AZ ÉLETKORI ÉS GENERÁCIÓS JELLEMZŐKRŐL AZ EGYESÜLT ÁLLAMOKBAN

Könyvismertető

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"Today's young people don't care about anything"

This sentence can also be written with a period and a question mark at the end. According to popular belief, this statement may be even more appropriate for the Now Generation, or the Millennials. Encouraged by this way of thinking, I started searching for writings that would give some kind of answer to this suggestion. And Cynthia Pearce Lemay's book, Millennials and Conflict in the Workplace, Understand the Unique Traits of the Now Generation, gives much more than I first thought.

"A mai fiatalokat nem érdekli semmi"

Ezt a mondatot ponttal és kérdőjellel a végén is lehetne írni. A közhiedelem szerint ez a kijelentés még inkább a „Most generációra", vagyis az Ezredfordulósokra lehet igaz. Ezen a gondolkodásmódon felbuzdulva elkezdtem olyan írásokat keresni, amelyek valamilyen választ adnak erre a felvetésre. És Cynthia Pearce Lemay Millennials and Conflict in the Workplace, Understand the Unique Traits of the Now Generation című könyve sokkal többet ad, mint elsőre gondoltam.

Miley Cyrus, the famous American artist, has stated that millennials will enter the workforce as a "disruptive force" with their education and smartphone applications, to challenge the status quo and change the way work is done in all fields. (The author opens her first chapter with this quotation from Miley Cyrus.) Cynthia Pearce Lemay teaches subjects related to business education at Kennesaw State University in the United States, in addition, she also conducts consulting and training activities for business leaders. His book, entitled Millennials and conflict in the workplace, examines the workplace activities, characteristics, and attitudes of the Millennial generation (born between 1980 and 1994, Strauss & Howe, 2000) in several areas. Her research aims to dispel stereotypes that Millennials do not like to work, are dependent on technology, they feel entitled to everything, or their life goals are completely different from previous generations. Lemay seeks answers to three basic research questions in her book. The first is

how Millennials handle conflict at work. Second, what the dominant conflict styles of Millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers are. By this she means how they deal with conflicts, what strategies they use. And the third question is how the conflict styles of the Millennials are similar to the styles of Gen Xers of the same age. What differences, if any, exist in their strategies.

Based on Kenneth L. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann's theory of conflict models, Lemay used an arsenal of research methods to support the validity and reliability of her study. She carried out her study with longitudinal and quantitative methods, interviews and focus groups of 50 people, involving 10,911 participants. The study was published as a book in 2023 by Taylor & Francis Group Ltd.

The analysis primarily focuses on Millennials, however, at the time of sampling, it also examines the target groups of Generation X and Baby Boomers (Howe; Strauss, 2007) so that the data can form a suitable basis for comparison. The research determined three sampling dates, these are the database years of 2006, 2012 and 2018, so the study handles aggregated data for a 13-year period. Millennials, Generation Xers, and Baby Boomers of the same age are also compared, so that the research separates age differences from the cohort effect[1]. Methodologically, the research tool is binary logistic regression. It separates the approximately 11,000 participants in the data using two variables - conflict style and generational cohort. The analysis then predicts how statistically significantly the cohorts differ from each other. In other words, the analysis examines how likely each cohort and to which conflict style is prone to. In terms of dominant conflict styles, three generations and five conflict styles represent fifteen regression models, and the book analyses all of them. When filling out the questionnaires, education and working level[2] were also taken into account.

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[1] All factors that do not change with advancing age and are characteristic features of a given cohort are called the cohort effect.

[2] Under the level of work performance, the author means the mental and physical work, furthermore the work of an employee or middle manager.

Overall, in the case of the book we can speak of a generational study that is very carefully thought out, elaborated in detail, and provides precise answers to its research questions.

Structurally, the book consists of eight chapters and 172 pages, excluding the introduction, preface, and appendices. In addition to quotations and recommendations, it begins with two prefaces. One was written by the author, and the other by Darina Lepadatua, head of the State Sociological Society of Georgia. This is the professional recommendation of the book. In addition to the chapters, the author operates with additional sub-chapters, in which they have been compiled logically in line with the chapter.

Chapter I – The Millennial Majority

This chapter contains five additional subsections. The titles build on each other and introduce the reader to the mysterious world of the Millennial generation. The name of the phrase comes from Howe and Stauss (2007). As a result of their research, they came to the conclusion that the Millennial cohort will dominate the labour market in America by 2040, which is supported by the 2020 results of the Census Bureau. That is why this cohort is the central element of Lemay's research. It works with the data of those born between 1982 and 2000, based on data found in the United States Census Bureau. Therefore, the subjects of the research are between the ages of 22 and 40, who work full-time.

Chapter II – Meet the Millennials

This chapter has five subsections. In the chapter, the author continues her deeper understanding of the generation by examining the environmental and historical influences, which also covers the relationship between parent and child, which is characteristic of the generation. We can get to know the new term *helicopter parent* (Howe; Strauss, 2007), which is a kind of justification for their behaviour according to the author. Furthermore, by presenting researches, the author draws

conclusions on the image of identifying the characteristics of Millennials, such as Douglas Schoen, the public opinion researcher of the Democratic Party, (2011) who came to the conclusion that 49% of those marching in demonstrations are under 30 years old, or a survey by Baruch College professor Hector R. Codero-Guzman and business analysts Harrison Schultz (Amanda Greenfeld, 2011), who conducted research involving 1,619 people, which revealed that 64% of those participating in the Occupy Wall movement were under 34. In relation to environmental analyses, Plantronics, on behalf of Future Work Place, found in a study (Poly, 2019) that the younger the employees, the more they like to work in open offices (56%). They like common work areas and rooms for rest and downtime during the day. Millennials are more advanced technologically, but their written and verbal communication is less developed.

They are distrustful, they like teamwork, they have high expectations about workplaces, and they think differently about social issues, they stand up for themselves (Poly, 2019). In the second chapter, the author presents the different behaviour of the Millennials compared to the X and Baby Boomer generations through a number of similar studies.

Chapter III – How Millennials Deal with Conflict

The chapter contains six subsections. Methodologically, this is the first chapter, which gives us a deeper insight into the data that forms the basis of the research. On the one hand, based on focus group interviews, we gain insight into how employees of other generations view Millennials in the workplace. What they experience during interactions with them. On the other hand, we can get to know in more detail the five conflict styles model of K. L. Thomas and R. H. Kilman, and how scientifically supported research uses them to analyse the conflict styles of generations in the examined periods. In the chapter, numerous figures and tables make the information easier to understand.

Chapter IV – Millennials Are Born to Scram – How to Keep Them Satisfied

The fourth chapter is the longest and contains the most tangible examples of the book, with twelve subsections. It starts by processing the interviews recorded in the focus group and talks about what the interviewees said about what employers can do to make the workplace environment comfortable for Millennials (Gallup, 2016). This is also an important question, as how employers attract workers to their companies came to the fore after COVID-19 and what kind of technological skills they possess, which is inherent to this generation. The focus group interviews related to this chapter show that Millennials feel that they are judged negatively by the older generation, because they strive for flexibility, a more holistic way of living life and their own time frame, according to which they can work. At the same time, they want feedback and appreciate workplaces where there is an opportunity to learn and develop. Based on focus group interviews found in the book (These are the focus group interviews recorded during the database years of 2006, 2012 and 2018, which the author recorded in the Millennial and Generation X target groups.) the picture emerges in front of us that they want more than an average paid employment. They want to be part of something higher (Deloitte, 2017).

Chapter V – Gender and Conflict Styles

This chapter has six subsections. It is interesting that, based on the data collected using the K.L. Thomas and R.H. Kilmann conflict models, it analyses the conflict coping techniques of people belonging to different generations from a new aspect, i. e. according to gender. This chapter primarily analyses the style, strategy and coping patterns of men's and women's salary negotiations, and how the conflict management styles of the sexes and generations differ from each other. Furthermore, whether or not this difference in style changes over time between generations.

Chapter VI – Support Networks: Millennials and Social Media

The chapter has six subsections. And its focus area is exactly how the inherent ability of Millennials - the use of technology - culminates in their everyday lives. How Millennials use their technology advantage. How they use the power of social media to achieve their goals. What effect this has on workplaces, the political sphere, and society as a whole.

Chapter VII – A Higher Purpose: Social, Political, and Economic Issues

This chapter is the shortest in the book, it has three subsections, which is quite telling from the point of view of research. As these are the areas that are the least interesting for the studied generation, of course this cannot be applied to all aspects. Although economic and political issues do not play a central role in the lives of Millennials, social issues, environmental protection, and volunteering are very decisive in their lives. This chapter discusses which social movements Millennials are most involved in.

Chapter VIII – What We Learned about Millennials

This chapter is divided into four subsections. It is a kind of summary of the research, interviews and focus group discussions. It includes both consolidated research findings and conflict style analysis. It examines generational conflict styles in the database years 2006, 2012, and 2018. Finally, it compares Millennials and Gen Xers of the same age to isolate the age cohort effect. The chapter includes an analysis of Millennials' political views and how it relates to their workplaces, since it is important to them what type of position the organization, they work in takes on certain issues.

Differences and distances between generations can be apostrophized as an accepted phenomenon in all societies, and there are also characteristics that are especially characteristic of youth. However, Cynthia Pearce Lemay highlighted in her research that millennials have some characteristics that are considered new

from a social, economic, and technological point of view. In public discourse, this generation seems lazy and indifferent, who are constantly staring at their phones. Lemay's research created an opportunity to look at this generation from another point of view and realize that a paradigm shift is necessary in order to see how these qualities can move our society forward.

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