

THE CAUSES OF RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AMONG THE EMPLOYEES OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

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Abstract. Today, managing the resistance to change among different generations of employees is a challenge for many organisations, as each generation has its own values, behaviours, working styles and expectations, which results in different reactions to change in the organisation. Therefore, identifying the reasons for resistance to change among different generations of employees becomes one of the keys to success for organisations to improve and remain competitive. This paper aims to provide theoretical insights into the causes of resistance to change among different generations of employees. The scientific literature analysis was used to achieve the paper's aim. The findings suggest grouping the reasons for employee resistance to change into two groups: first, situational reasons, which are described by changes in organizational culture, increased workload, lack of support during changes, and inadequate communication, and second, individual employee reasons, which are associated with the employee's characteristics, such as perceptions, needs, beliefs, and values. A significant variable that affects employee resistance to change is their age, therefore the reasons for employee resistance to change of different generations differ. An analysis of the scientific literature has shown that the main differences are that older generation employees seeking job security, passively resist change, while younger generation employees resist change when they do not see the benefits of change for themselves and the organization.

Keywords: generation, generations of employees, changes, resistance to change, reasons of resistance to change

INTRODUCTION

In today's global world, where the economic, technological, political and other environments are changing rapidly, change is a given. Change is not limited to organisations where several generations are working simultaneously: Generations Z, Y, X and the baby boomers, and in some countries, the so-called silent generation - employees who are still working at the age of 78 or older (Perez, 2017). Each generation is distinguished by its values, behaviours, working styles and expectations, which results in their different reactions as employees to the changes implemented in the organisation.

Employee resistance to change is one of the main obstacles to the success of an organisation and one of the preconditions for negative working relationships. Therefore, to avoid and respond successfully to employee resistance to change, any organisational change must be managed through appropriate actions. One such action, according to Drejeris and Drejeriene (2021), is to identify the causes of employee resistance to change. According to the researchers, identifying the causes of employee resistance to change is relevant for every organisation, as the changes implemented enhance the company's competitiveness and distinctiveness and positively impact the organisation's success. However, different generations of employees have various reasons for their resistance to organisational innovation, as each generation has a different approach to work, interests and lifestyles (Rehman, Mahmood, Ibtasam, Murtaza, Iqbal & Molnár, 2021). Therefore, to be successful in implementing change in organisations, it is important to know and understand why the reactions of employees of different generations are different. This implies the *scientific problem* addressed in this article, which is formulated as the question: *what are the causes for the resistance of employees of different generations to change?*

The *object* of the paper: the causes of resistance to change among the employees of different generations. This paper *aims* to provide theoretical insights into the causes of resistance to change among different generations of employees.

The paper was prepared using the scientific literature analysis method.

CLASSIFICATION OF GENERATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF EMPLOYEES

In today's work environment, often work employees of different generations. These generations are characterized by different ways and forms of communication and collaboration. Each generation brings unique life experiences, attitudes, expectations and work styles; therefore, employees of different generations must be managed differently (Berisha, 2020; Carroll, 2020).

To reveal the characteristics of employees of different generations, it is appropriate to define the essence of the concept of generations. Valickas and Jakštaitė (2017), analyzing the concept of generation, present the definition of generation by sociologist Mannheim (1952), according to which a generation is a group of people of the same age which is united by some memorable historical event. Ryder (1965) also supports this idea of the scientist, stating that a generation

is a unit of individuals who are connected by the same events during the same period (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017). Kopperschmidt (2000) states that a generation is a group of people who are connected by their date of birth, position, and key events related to personality development. According to Valickas and Jakštaitė (2017), sociologists of the last decade of the 20th century introduced the new concept of “generation cohort” and defined a cohort as a group of people of the same or similar age, united by a common demographic event and/or historical experience, based on which a unique worldview is formed, distinguishing them from other similar formations.

However, most researchers (Ludviga & Sennikova, 2016; Valickas & Jakštaitė, 2017; Vraňaková, Babel'ová & Chlpeková, 2021), considering the most important events of a certain period, divide people into generations simply - according to their date of birth. Such a generational classification was proposed by Strauss & Howe (1991), which is still used to categorize people and thus highlight the characteristics of their groups (Valickas & Jakštaitė, 2017) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Generational classification (Valickas and Jakštaitė, 2017)

Generation	Date of birth
<i>Lost Generation</i>	1883 – 1900
<i>Greatest Generation</i>	1901 – 1924
<i>Silent Generation</i>	1925 – 1942
<i>Baby Boom Generation</i>	1943 – 1960
<i>Generation X</i>	1961 – 1981
<i>Y/Millennial Generation</i>	1982 – 2001

Recently, representatives of another generation have been entering the labour market. They are described as the “iGeneration”, “Gen Tech”, “Internet Generation”, “Postmillennials”, “Facebook Generation”, “Switcher Generation”. Therefore, after such a generally accepted classification of generations, which is presented in Table 1, another one has appeared – Generation Z.

Čič and Žižek (2017), when examining the characteristics of employees of different generations, note that generational identities emerge in the workplace based on the collective memory of common events that occurred in the late formative years of each generation. This suggests that knowing the characteristics of different generations of employees would allow for the proper administration of the employee management process, which would ensure effective work.

Baby boom generation. Angeline (2011) describes the traditional baby boomer as a workaholic who rarely changes jobs. He is a dedicated, hardworking, motivated employee who expects to be promoted to positions based on his loyalty. Employees of this generation cherish the following values in their activities: optimism; risk-taking; orientation towards team goals; self-realization; hard work; the importance of personal growth and development; and equal rights and opportunities (Sarraf, 2019). According to Burke (2023), the added value of these employees to the organization is their wisdom, experience, and understanding of relationships, the ability to notice when people are lying, and the knowledge that ignoring one's values will cause harm.

Sarraf (2019) notes that this generation of employees prefers face-to-face communication over digital means. Kunze and Boehm (2013) argue that older employees are less motivated, less willing to learn, and less likely to engage in organizational change than their younger counterparts. Furthermore, according to Drejer and Drejerienė (2021), baby boomers may feel powerless due to their reluctance to acknowledge their skills gaps, and as a result resistance to change occurs. On the other hand, research has shown that older employees who believe that the organization they have worked for many years has always been open with them are more likely to trust it, which further strengthens their commitment and willingness to support change (Felix, Vhuramayi, Martin, & Nyasha, 2013). According to Kunze and Boehm (2013), baby boomers are generally associated with lower development potential (including learning new skills and tackling new challenges) and a higher degree of stability, and these features imply greater resistance to change among this generation. Furthermore, according to Felix et al. (2013), changes often occur so rapidly that employees of this generation feel unable to cope and adapt to them.

The characteristics discussed by baby boomers are particularly relevant when it comes to the features of employee communication and collaboration, performance appraisal, or resolving concerns. According to Carroll (2020), unlike younger generations who change jobs many times during their lives, baby boomers value job security, enjoy working in a team, and are helpful to younger generations. Managing baby boomers requires recognition of their hard work and utilization of their skills to make them feel valued and satisfied with their current roles, which will help retain them for many years (Carroll, 2020).

Generation X employees, according to Angeline (2011), are effective problem solvers but avoid extra work if possible. Compared to baby boomers, generation X employees are more pragmatic and sceptical. Generation X employees resent being constantly told and reminded what to do and that baby boomers are much harder workers than them. On the other hand, generation X representatives expect to be appreciated and rewarded as soon as they achieve the goals of the organization. When problems arise, they prefer to contact their managers directly so that they can quickly resolve them. Unlike baby boomers, generation X employees are not afraid to change jobs, as they are convinced that each new job will lead them to higher and better-paid positions.

Generation X representatives, according to Carroll (2020), are guided by the motto “work to live”. Therefore, when managing employees of this generation, the organization should offer some benefits that support this motto of employees, for example, paying for employees to attend a gym. Generation X values independence, so Carroll (2020) believes that to motivate them to perform even better, employees of this generation should be given more autonomy.

When managing Generation X employees, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the following values are characteristic of employees of this generation: variety, thought, and global interest, self-reliant, technology literature, entrepreneurship, scepticism and distrust, lack of loyalty to the organization, belief in meritocracy, flexible and highly adaptable, happy, joyful and entertaining, independent and independent, Self-control and self-esteem, attention to informality (Sarraf, 2019).

When ensuring smooth management of Generation X employees in an organization, according to Kicheva (2017), it is necessary to consider that employees of this generation perceive work not as work for someone, but as work with someone. Therefore, they assume the greatest responsibility compared to employees of other generations. Representatives of Generation X can easily leave their job and then look for another. Sometimes their demands are not always realistic in terms of wages. This situation arises due to the labour market itself and the widespread imbalance of supply and demand, as Generation X employees have higher requirements and know their value as specialists. Generation X has an entrepreneurial spirit and, unlike the baby boomers, is ready to “accept” changes in the workplace. They are focused on career growth but pay more attention to the family. Representatives of this generation strive for a balance between personal life and work, therefore, one of the features of managing Generation X employees in the organization is the offer of flexible work schedules for them.

Generation Y, or millennials, particularly value interpersonal communication in both real and virtual environments. According to Angeline (2011), Generation Y workers are more technologically savvy, faster, more flexible, and more receptive than Generation X workers. However, Burke (2023) notes that many Generation Y workers face financial instability for a variety of reasons, from high student loans to housing debt.

According to the International Labour Office (2019), Generation Y workers entering the labour market face a variety of challenges, which are determined by several factors, including lower levels of physical, psychosocial, and emotional maturity, education, insufficient job skills, and/or work experience. Young workers also do not have the same bargaining power as more experienced workers; therefore, they may accept dangerous working conditions and tasks, or similar conditions associated with unsafe work. They are more likely to work under non-standard employment contracts or in the informal economy, are often unaware of their rights and obligations in the field of occupational health and safety and may be reluctant to report hazards or incidents they encounter in the workplace (International Labour Organization, 2019). Therefore, to ensure successful management of this generation of employees, the organization could consider how it could help solve these problems of Generation Y employees and thus ensure their greater commitment, retention or loyalty to the organization. For example, one of the solutions for managing Generation Y employees could be offering them competitive wages or salary increases after a certain period.

One of the key characteristics of Generation Y employees, according to Carroll (2020), is that millennials spend more time working and they work not only during work but also during their free time. When managing employees of this generation, it is necessary to consider that Generation Y holds the following values: civil duty, self-confidence, goodness, social ability, success and selfishness, realism, sentimentality, friendliness of participation, important state of affairs, quick feedback, very fond of recreation, friendliness (Sarraf, 2019).

Thus, Generation Y representatives are characterized by hard work, perseverance, goal-oriented work, and self-realization and recognition are important to them. Considering this, organizational leaders should ensure various career growth opportunities for employees of this generation, which would further increase Generation Y employees' motivation and involvement in the company's activities.

Generation Z, who saw the world in the first decade of the 21st century, is described as immersed in the digital world, mobile and is not afraid to change their choices: field of study or workplace. They do not like routine and desire personal freedom, strive for career, and personal development, and are described by a strong orientation towards themselves (Dolot, 2018). Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) note that Generation Z can perfectly live and work in both the real and virtual worlds because they perceive them as complementary to each other. Generation Z uses various mobile devices, comments on reality, and the environment in which they live, expresses their opinion and point of view, and shares photos and videos. Generation Z not only consumes online content, but also creates and, in a way, controls it.

According to Carroll (2020), this generation is the most technologically savvy, which allows them to make creative decisions that other generations might not have thought of. Generation Z employees, when interacting with their managers, value a mentoring and coaching style rather than a top-down management style. They value collaborative relationships that help them grow and learn as they perform their duties. Generation Z employees are young, so to understand and manage them as best as possible, the organization should answer the question: are there ways that could help the organization to support Generation Z employees and retain them longer? This question should also be asked when managing employees of other generations, but it takes on special significance in the context of managing Generation Z employees. Although at first glance, Generation Y and Generation Z employees are similar, according to Sarraf (2019), there are significant differences between them. These differences become even more apparent in the workplace, especially when it comes to collaborating with employees of other generations, for example, sharing knowledge and transferring information. Generation Z, according to Berisha (2020), has little professional experience compared to other generations

but is concerned with social and ecological issues, values communication, and is innovative. Since Generation Z is still young, more detailed research on their characteristics as employees is expected in the future.

REASONS FOR RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AMONG DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF EMPLOYEES

Change is any change that occurs in the work environment and affects the performance of employees. Paulikas and Paulikienė (2022) define resistance to change as the negative behaviour of employees, by which they express resistance to implementing a change. Table 2 presents definitions of resistance to change proposed by different authors.

Table 2

Definitions of resistance to change (Paulikas and Paulikienė, 2022)

Definition of resistance to change	Author, year
It is a consequence of cognitive, cultural, and structural approaches to transformation.	Senge, 1990
It is a multifaceted negative attitude or hostile behaviour of employees, due to which the process of strategic change is unplanned delayed, expensive and unstable.	Waddel and Sohal, 1998
It is a disagreement with the change process (sequence of actions), which the employee considers unpleasant, inconvenient or burdensome for personal or group reasons.	Giangreco and Pceci, 2005
It is a natural and human element of organizational activity, a natural initial reaction of the employee, more often defined as a process, not an event.	Van Dijk and Van Dick, 2009
It is a covert or overt expression of negative reactions, or a defence mechanism used to resist change management and the adoption of new practices.	Berna-Martinez and Macia-Perez, 2012
It is a concept that managers use to explain, in their opinion, unpopular and undesirable behaviour and interaction of employees. What managers call resistance to change depends not on the observed behaviour of the employee but on the interpretation and judgments of the observers.	Barely and Rupert, 2018

Thus, it can be stated that resistance to change is a set of individual, interpersonal and organizational factors that cause employees to resist change (Cheraghi, Ebrahimi, Kheibar & Sahebihagh, 2023).

When implementing changes in any organization and aiming to mitigate employee resistance to change, it is appropriate to discuss the forms of employee resistance to change, and the reasons that determine them.

According to Damawan and Azizah (2020), the following forms of resistance to change are most often manifested among employees: boycott, decreased interest, concealment of information, opposing opinions, strikes, and demonstration of a negative attitude. Meanwhile, researchers Kuzhda (2016) and Karaxha (2019) distinguish the following forms of resistance to change:

1. Logical and rational resistance occurs when an employee lacks the time, skills, or resources to implement a proposed change. According to Damawan and Azizah (2020), resistance to change based on logical analysis and rationality indicates that the resources required to implement the change exceed the benefits of the change, and therefore employees are not interested in this change.

2. Psychological resistance is based on emotions and attitudes towards the change. Employees may fear the unknown, distrust management, or feel that their safety and ego are threatened.

3. Social resistance occurs when the well-being, values, or interests of the organization's employees are believed to be affected. Social resistance, according to Kuzhda (2016), manifests itself through employee coalitions, resistance to proposed values, and the maintenance of personal interests.

The reasons underlying employee resistance to change arise from *situational* circumstances, such as changes in organizational culture, increased workload, lack of support during change, inadequate communication, etc. (Tran, Pham, & Bui, 2020; Malhotra, Zietsma, Morris, & Smets, 2021) and *individual* employee characteristics, such as perceptions, beliefs, values, and needs (Damawan & Azizah, 2020).

Damawan and Azizah (2020) distinguish individual reasons for an employee's resistance to change:

- employees simply do not want to leave their comfort zone;
- lack of self-confidence;
- employees may resist change because they believe that they do not need change;
- increased stress. Stress may increase not because of the change itself, but because of the inconveniences that arise during the implementation of the change. For example, an employee may imagine that he will lose his status due to the change, and therefore, under the pressure of stress, may begin to resist the change;
- feelings of insecurity. This feeling arises when there is a lack of information about the intended change, so employees feel insecure about the future and the requirements of the change itself, which leads to the rejection of the change;
- habits. Employees' work is largely based on habits, and work tasks are implemented according to a certain professional routine. Organizational changes require changing these habits, which is why employees resist them;

- intolerance of change. Some employees have a personal characteristic of not tolerating change. Such employees always have a negative attitude towards any changes, because they see them as a threat, for example, to their salary. It is normal to expect that those employees who feel that they will lose part of their salary will resist change;
- fear of failure. Such a fear is experienced by pessimistic employees, they are afraid of personal failure. For example, an employee may fear that after implementing a change in the organization, he, as a professional, will not be able to learn new things necessary for his work after the change is implemented;
- fear of the unknown. Organizational changes in many cases cause uncertainty and a certain fear. When employees feel uncertainty in the process of change, and receive little or no information at all, in this case, they believe that the change is something dangerous. This uncertainty influences the members of the organization to resist the proposed changes;
- too weak emotional commitment. Employees with weak commitment to the organization lack psychological attachment and orientation to work and are not willing to stay in the organization voluntarily, in other words, employees do not care about the future of the organization and tend to resist change.

Researchers Pakdel (2016), Lomba-Portela et al. (2022) note that a significant variable affecting employees' resistance to change is their age. A study of teachers' attitudes towards change conducted by the latter researchers showed that age becomes a determining variable between positive and negative attitudes towards change among teachers, with negative attitudes being more associated with older workers, so it is important to be prepared to control any unwanted resistance. Therefore, to successfully reduce employees' resistance to change, it is necessary to know the reasons for employees' resistance to change of different generations. Scientific literature analysis (Ludviga & Senņikova, 2016; Vraňaková, Babel'ová & Chlpeková, 2021) allows us to state that different generations of employees accept changes differently due to various reasons for resistance to change (see Table 3).

Table 3

Reasons for resistance to change among employees of different generations (Ludviga & Senņikova, 2016; Vraňaková, Babel'ová & Chlpeková, 2021)

Generation	Age	Reasons for resistance to change
Baby boom generation	59 – 77 y. o.	This generation seeks job security and dislikes problems. Such employees may passively or not resist change, but they may enjoy it less than employees of other generations.
X generation	43 – 58 y. o.	Generation X employees primarily want to know the benefits of change and how it will “help them,” what they will gain if they adopt a new approach. Resistance occurs if employees of this generation believe that change will hinder their ability to achieve results. Some authors argue that Generation X representatives are very results-oriented and suggest involving them in the planning process. Generation X representatives need to see how changes can increase performance. In general, they adapt to change quite easily.
Y generation	23 – 42 y. o.	Generation Y grew up in a world of constant change and rapid technological change, which makes them adaptable to a wide range of changes. Millennials expect organizational change to happen quickly and frequently. Resistance can arise if the initiative is driven by top-down management or if they do not see the significance and impact of change. They may be reluctant to follow a code of conduct in the workplace and have difficulty building relationships with their managers. Millennials value training and are generally positive about change.
Z generation	17 – 22 y. o.	The youngest generation of workers cannot imagine life without new and modern technologies. They are characterized by frequent job changes, they are independent. Employees of this generation like to multitask and have good communication skills. Self-realization, achievements and identity are important for Generation Z, but work is also very important in their list of values. Due to their young age, this generation is still establishing itself in the labour market. Some representatives of this generation have already started their working careers while still students.

The importance of analyzing the reasons for resistance to change related to individual employee characteristics is demonstrated by the fact that, when changes occur in an organization, employees naturally seek to understand the situation and adapt their expectations to the new experiences arising from the changes. In addition to the individual reasons for employees' resistance to change, researchers (Malhotra, Zietsma, Morris & Smets, 2021; Tran et al., 2020) also analyse contextual reasons for resistance to change, which include:

- the organizational environment before the changes occur, including culture, climate and trust in management;
- the change process: participation, communication, information and support from the manager during the changes;
- the perceived results and/or impact of the changes;
- changes that affect the organizational structure, strategy or possible systemic changes that cause stress, which can negatively affect employees' daily lives and personal well-being.

Knowing the reasons for employees' resistance to change allows managers to look for ways to reduce resistance to change, considering the reasons for employees' resistance to change of different generations, because the same change may be evaluated differently by employees of different generations. For example, the introduction of a new document task management program in an organization may cause support from Generation Z employees, while at the same time causing resistance from Baby Boomers. This is because Generation Z cannot imagine life without new and modern technologies, while the Baby Boomers are less technologically savvy.

Felix, Vhuramayi, Martin, and Nyasha (2013) argue that baby boomers who have already established careers are inflexible concerning various changes, they are more focused on the short-term perspective, and therefore are more resistant to change. Based on these arguments, it can be argued that older workers are generally associated with lower development potential (including learning new skills and solving new challenges) and a higher degree of stability, both of which imply greater resistance to change. In addition, changes in organizations often occur so quickly that older workers feel unable to cope and adapt to events. Baby boomers may be psychologically unable to accept radical changes. Older generations are generally more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to the organization, they pay less attention to extrinsic rewards and are more interested in intrinsic rewards, care more about the quality of their social relationships, are more emotionally stable, and value stability and routine at work more. Baby boomers change jobs less often, and they miss work less often but for longer periods due to health problems.

Paulikas and Paulikienė (2022) present providing clear and timely information about the change to employees as an important way to reduce resistance to change. According to the authors, by communicating the expected changes in a timely and clear manner, organizational managers can reduce excessive employee stress caused by fear of change. Employees should learn about the changes from their managers, and not from other sources, such as the media or rumours circulating in the organization. Information about the changes, the expected time and scope of the changes, as well as decision-making procedures and transition support mechanisms, should be sufficiently detailed and clear for employees of all generations of the organization. Employees' opinions about the change are influenced by the sufficiency, consistency and accuracy of the information provided, as well as the reliability and trust in the information source. According to Paulikas and Paulikienė (2022), organizations that provide employees with the opportunity to provide information and control its importance, structure and decision-making criteria can avoid resistance to change related to emotional stress for employees. To ensure a continuous flow of information, it is necessary to keep in mind that employees of different generations have different communication and information needs. By using various communication channels, such as e-mail, general organizational information systems, social networks and internal communication platforms, it is necessary to ensure several conditions: first, all employees can quickly receive the necessary information about the expected changes in the organization, second, they have to receive it in a way that meets their needs.

In summary, it can be stated that resistance to change occurs for reasons related to the individual characteristics of the employee, such as intolerance of change, stress, fear, selective information processing, etc. In addition, resistance to change can also occur for various situational (contextual) reasons: changes in organizational culture, increased workload, lack of support during change, inadequate communication, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Scientific literature analysis allows us to define a generation as a group of people of a certain age and a group that is connected by historical and social events that occurred during their lifetime. Experiences of this group shape its unique thinking, values, and attitudes towards work. Managers of organizations where employees of several different generations work at the same time have a difficult task, which is to manage employees of different generations, whose needs, experience, abilities, and attitudes towards innovations and changes differ.

2. Employee resistance to change is determined by situational and individual employee reasons. The latter reasons are associated with the employee's inherent and individual characteristics, such as perceptions, needs, beliefs, and values. A significant variable that affects employee resistance to change is their age, therefore the reasons for employee resistance to change of different generations differ:

- The resistance of baby boomers to change is usually caused by the following reasons: fear of losing their jobs, changes implemented quickly or unclear benefits of changes, and lack of feedback or communication.
- The resistance of Generation X employees is usually caused by the following reasons: hasty implementation of changes causing additional stress, insufficient involvement of managers when changes are imposed from above, unclear benefits of changes or unallocated responsibilities.
- The resistance of Generation Y and Z employees is usually caused by the following reasons: failure to listen to employees' opinions, limited opportunities for promotion and self-realization, and lack of financial and non-financial benefits.

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