



## **Nationality Differences in Gen Z Work Values: An Exploratory Study**

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# Nationality Differences in Gen Z Work Values: An Exploratory Study

## Purpose

Generation Z (Gen Z) will account for a growing proportion of the global workforce in the coming years. Therefore, it is vitally important to understand this generation’s unique perspectives and preferences regarding work. This exploratory study examines the prioritisation and desirability of Gen Z work values according to respondents’ nationality.

## Design/methodology/approach

Data for this study was collected through a survey among 1188 undergraduate students enrolled in one university each in China, Germany, the Netherlands and Thailand. ANOVA test and Tukey post-hoc analysis was used to find out the difference between the groups based on nationality.

## Findings

Findings indicate nationality serves as a key differentiator in work value preferences. The findings challenge the concept of a global generation Z as only two of the measured values, learning and visible results, were found to have universal appeal across the nationality groups. Despite increased levels of global interconnectedness and accompanying crossvergence of values, the results show significant statistical differences in work values based on the respondents’ nationality.

## Research limitations/implications

Due to the scope and explorative design of the present study, it cannot be certain that the results are exclusively from Gen Z characteristics or influenced by other, non-cultural, variables.

## Practical implications

This study suggests there is a need for study programmes at a tertiary level to embed experiential learning components and individual study pathways in their curricula to enable students to develop realistic expectations about the workplace and their place in it. In turn, these programmes will be able to develop a competitive advantage in HE landscape.

## Originality/value

The insights gained can be leveraged by internationally oriented study programmes, such as IB, to better address Gen Z needs and expectations.

**Keywords:** Generation Z; work values; national culture; higher education

## Introduction

The nature of work has significantly changed in recent decades as a result of increased globalisation and the IT revolution. This development has also impacted universities around the globe as they prepare graduates for the labour market. Through their design and delivery, university programmes have started to put extra emphasis on the attainment of so-called 21<sup>st</sup>-century, or transversal, skills to meet industry demands for graduates with the right set of competencies (Bridgstock and Tippett, 2019; Pereira *et al.*, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2016). International Business (IB) programmes are increasingly aware that, beyond offering relevant curricula, they play an important role in having students develop realistic expectations of the workplace to ensure a good transition from education to work (Chan *et al.*, 2020; Ng and Burke, 2006; Schwieger and Ladwig, 2018).

Many industries face difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff as they increasingly find themselves competing in the “War for Talent” (Maloni *et al.*, 2019). At the same time, demographic developments also play a role in shaping a different professional world. The Baby Boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964, for decades the main workforce in many sectors, has largely retired and due to the aging populations in many parts of the world, companies particularly those operating in rural areas, have trouble filling positions (Oecd, 2017; Randstad, 2016).

Consequently, companies and HR practice will need to address employee preferences and expectations in order to engage them and fully leverage the value they can bring. Generation Z, those born after 1995, henceforth called Gen Z, enters the workforce at this time of tremendous transformation and is expected to account for twenty percent of the global workforce by 2021 (O'Boyle C *et al.*, 2017) Although some of the traits ascribed to Gen Z were previously observed in Generation Y, Schroth (2019) argues Gen Z has its own distinctive set of traits and motivating factors. Gen Zers, for instance, attach great value to development, career advancement, good relationships, and generous pay (Iorgulescu, 2016). These are only some of the factors that will need to be properly understood to successfully manage Gen Zers' integration into the workforce, especially considering that they represent much-needed human capital.

Generational studies, particularly those examining Gen Z, have become more widespread as this realisation has taken hold. Several studies examined specific Gen Z characteristics in a work context, such as their technological savviness, self-reliance, need for feedback and flexibility and how these compare to previous generations (Dolot, 2018; Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015; Singh and Qi, 2016). The conceptualisation of work values related to Gen Z is also emerging, however, these studies (Goh and Lee, 2018; Maloni *et al.*, 2019) are primarily monocultural in emphasis and appear to suggest a certain degree of universality of Gen Z work values. As work values are generally understood to be heavily influenced by culture (Dowling and Nagel, 1986; Hofstede, 1980; Minkov, 2018), it is surprising that fairly little attention has recently been devoted to how Gen Z work values translate across cultural and national boundaries.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the present void in cross-national Gen Z studies, examining the universality of Gen Z work values. This is done through a comparison of motivational factors and work expectations of (predominantly) business students in four distinct countries in Europe and Asia, namely China, Germany, Thailand and the Netherlands. In doing so, this research seeks to ascertain Gen Z business students' perceptions and expectations regarding their professional career and determine the influence of nationality.

### ***Generations***

The conceptualisation of generations as a sociological phenomenon was initiated by Mannheim (1952), who argued they are shaped by individuals' shared experiences, which significantly influence their perspectives and how they make sense of the world. Generalizations and definitive statements on generational characteristics are often criticized for not doing justice to people's individuality. However, a plethora of studies do suggest commonalities in traits, values and perspectives between individuals belonging to the same generation, which are markedly different from previous generations (Ng and Parry, 2016; Scholz, 2019; Scholz and Grotefend, 2019; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Twenge and Campbell, 2008; Twenge *et al.*, 2010).

While some scholars note differences between generations are gradual, others (e.g. Scholz, 2019) contest this and argue Gen Z is rather different from Gen Y due to the formative events shaping it (Schroth, 2019). Additionally, Jenkins (2015) notes that, "Gen Z is more pragmatic, more cautious, more global, more individual, more disruptive and less focused on their work than Generation Y." They are tech savvy, having been exposed to the Internet since birth, making them more digital centric. Besides, technology

is considerably more central to their identity than for previous generations (Gaidhani, Arora, Sharma, *et al.*, 2019; Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015).

Each generation is confronted and shaped by circumstances and historical events on a global, national or local and personal level. Whereas for Baby Boomers the defining experience was the aftermath of World War II and subsequent era of reconstruction, for Gen Z, the rise of digital tools and features, a global financial crisis, social justice movements and growing up in a culture of safety and overprotectiveness are generally considered formative influences (Rue, 2018; Schroth, 2019; Twenge, 2010).

The financial crisis, uncertain job market, and corporate and social scandals have led to Gen Z appreciating structure, security, a feel-good work environment and happiness in their work (Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015; Scholz, 2019). Studies by Randstad (2016) and Deloitte (2018) indicate key drivers for Gen Z job satisfaction are financial rewards, a shared and positive culture and continuous learning, allowing them to advance quickly in their career. Gen Z also needs to feel engaged through giving and receiving feedback (Dolot, 2018; Gaidhani, Arora and Sharma, 2019; Ozkan and Solmaz, 2015). Schroth (2019) stresses the need for managing expectations and a realistic job preview to enhance commitment, so that Gen Z is retained providing companies with needed human capital.

### ***Work values***

Values serve as a guide and help individuals navigate life and provide a moral compass on how to live their lives. Work values relate to the work context and are those that “individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in the work role” (Brown, 2002, p. 49). Additionally, work values have been found to influence job

satisfaction and commitment (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008). Values, and in connection with those work values, are culturally specific and the result of what Hofstede (1980) termed the different ways of collective mental programming. As these are deeply engrained, they are hard to change. These values play an essential role in shaping individuals' preferences and expectations pertaining to work and how they would respond in work situations (Chan *et al.*, 2020; Lyons *et al.*, 2009; Yadav and Chaudhari, 2020).

Since the 1970s, research into work values has become widespread. However, the categorisation and conceptualisation of these values has received increasing attention in recent years (Hurst and Good, 2009; Luscombe *et al.*, 2013; Ng *et al.*, 2010; Twenge *et al.*, 2010). More recently, Maloni *et al.* (2019) developed a set of seven distinct categories compiled from previous studies. These include extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, supervisory facilitation, social values, altruism, leisure and stability.

Other recent studies stress the importance of being prepared for Gen Z workers and mindful of their work values, as this is considered vital in attracting and retaining qualified personnel as well as creating synergy in terms of intergenerational collaboration (Goh and Lee, 2018; Schroth, 2019). This is particularly relevant considering existing labour shortages in specific industries and rural areas where companies increasingly have to compete to attract qualified staff.

### ***Nationality***

Forty years since its initial publication, Hofstede's seminal work "Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values" remains a landmark study of how nationality contributes to a predisposition in thinking within groups of

individuals (Hofstede, 1980). His multi-dimensional work has been heavily scrutinised for equating countries with cultural values while discounting the heterogeneity existing within countries and insufficiently acknowledging the dynamic nature of cultural change (Gelfand *et al.*, 2011; Kirkman *et al.*, 2017; Minkov, 2018). This, however, does not mean that values should be discounted in cross-country organisational studies, as they remain useful in explaining differences (Beugelsdijk *et al.*, 2017).

In a study examining intergenerational shifts in values throughout the twentieth century, Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018, p. 1498) argue that although there is a significant level of cultural change resulting from economic development, generational effects and a country's political history and geographic location, cultural differences appear rather constant and country rankings are quite stable. They state that the nation as a construct continues to be among "the most powerful" ones in the categorisation of people. Zupan *et al.* (2015) acknowledge the importance of nationality in a comparative study of Chinese and Slovenian business students, but note it is not the decisive factor influencing work values.

Beugelsdijk *et al.* (2017) support the assertion made by Kirkman *et al.* (2006, 2017) that cross-cultural studies at a country-level should be more comprehensive in nature, thereby extending beyond the Hofstede framework and incorporating other theories to account for value variance. One of these is work by Gelfand *et al.* (2011) distinguishing tight cultures, those with a strong normative system and low tolerance towards deviance of norms, from loose cultures, which have weaker norms and are more tolerant of deviance.



This study involves a cross-national comparison of Gen Z work values of university students in China, Germany, Thailand and the Netherlands to establish similarities and differences, particularly in terms of nationality, in their perceptions and expectations about their future professional career. The aim is expressly not to reach generalisations, but rather to explore the suitability and viability of conducting cross-culturally comparative work value research and establish whether scope for further research exists.

The present study addresses two specific questions, namely:

RQ1: Which work values do Gen Z students consider most important in a future job?

RQ2: How do student characteristics, particularly nationality, impact Gen Z work values?

## Methods

The study was designed as an exploratory study to evaluate Gen Z work values across different nationality groups. Data for this study was collected from a convenience sample of 1188 students from one university each in China, Germany, Netherlands, and Thailand. The study used an online questionnaire to collect responses from participants and participation was voluntary. The questionnaire was prepared in English and subsequently translated to German, Mandarin and Thai with the help of research partners from the universities where data collection took place. The research partners were also used to check and ascertain the face validity of the translated questionnaires. In Netherlands, the questionnaires were in English, and in Germany, China and Thailand, they were in German, Mandarin and Thai respectively. In Thailand and Netherlands, an intercept approach at the university premises was used to enlist participants for the study by answering the questionnaire on a tablet. In Germany and China, a link to the online survey was used to recruit participants to the study. All respondents were assured anonymity and an appropriate data management plan was followed complying with EU GDPR principles.

The respondents primarily consisted of Generation Z business students (82.4%) enrolled in an undergraduate programme (95.5%) in China, Germany, Thailand or the Netherlands. Students in their third and fourth year formed the majority of the sample (66.4%), whereas 31% was enrolled as a first- or second-year student. It is important to note that Asian students were substantially overrepresented in the sample with Chinese (50.6%) and Thai (22.9%) respondents making up nearly three quarters of the total number having completed the online questionnaire. Dutch and German respondents accounted for 13 and 13.5% respectively. In terms of gender, 67.9% of respondents was male and 31% female. One percent identified as neither. Appendix 1 presents the respondent characteristics.

Eight latent work value constructs were the focus of this study: extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, stability, altruistic, supervisory facilitation, social engagement, leisure, and global citizenship. Table 1 provides a definition of the work values measured and presents the individual work values that constituted these latent work value constructs. To measure the work values, this study replicated the measurement approach of Maloni *et al.* (2019). For the purpose of this research, the (latent) work value of global citizenship was added as it was noted that global citizenship plays an important role for Gen Z (Broadbent *et al.*, 2017; Rue, 2018).

[Insert Table 1 here]

The study participants were asked to rate how important an item was for them in an ideal job upon graduation from their current studies on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = not important to 5

= absolutely essential). These items represented 25 individual work values, which were then clustered into eight work value constructs. The work value constructs and their constituent individual work values served as the main focus of this study. Appendix 2 presents the wording that was used in the survey for the items that represented the work values.

For this study, the eight work value constructs were created as a composite variable using the simple average of the individual work values that constitute the construct (Song *et al.*, 2013). Table 2 presents the mean value and ranking for the work value constructs and their respective Cronbach alphas. The lowest reliabilities were found for the constructs of supervisory facilitation (Cronbach alpha = 0.63) and global citizenship (Cronbach alpha = 0.65). Although the study sample was multicultural and multinational, for this exploratory study the alpha reliabilities for the work value constructs were acceptable as they were between 0.63 and 0.83 (Taber, 2018; Ursachi *et al.*, 2015).

[Insert Table 2 here]

For analysis, the ranking of work values, both for the constructs and individual, were based on their mean values. ANOVA test and Tukey post-hoc analysis were used to find out the difference between the groups based on nationality. Table 3 presents the findings of the data analysis, Appendix 3 presents the key findings of the Tukey post-hoc analysis, and Figure 1 presents the mean differences for the work value constructs by nationality.

[Insert Table 3 here]

## Findings & Discussion

A ranking of Gen Z students' work values by construct provides an overview of their most and least desired values. The results show intrinsic motivational values are deemed most important, followed by stability and global citizenship values, largely corroborating extant research (Fratričová and Kirchmayer, 2018; Goh and Lee, 2018; Maloni *et al.*, 2019). Least desirable values are leisure, social engagement and supervisory facilitation, as they are ranked lowest. The relatively low ranking of the latter two constructs is inconsistent with work by Ozkan and Solmaz (2015) and Dolot (2018), who established feedback, supervisory support and social engagement respectively to be among Gen Z students' top rated work attributes. The present study's multinational sample may also partly explain the inconsistency as previous studies were based on homogeneous, mononational samples.

### *Individual value level*

At the level of individual work values, Gen Z students attach most importance to learning new skills, suggesting that, at least early in their professional careers, they wish to emphasise learning and gaining new perspectives of use to their further careers. This also implies that Gen Z students are rather conscious of the need to acquire new knowledge and skills for them to successfully leave their mark and progress professionally. Although previous studies have found this value to be highly ranked, in none does it appear as the most important value. Promotion and seeing visible results of the work done rank second and third respectively, largely confirming prior research which showed Gen Z students seek fast career advancement and career success while at the same time need to know their work matters (Deloitte, 2018; Fratričová and Kirchmayer, 2018; Maloni *et al.*, 2019). While intrinsic motivational work values are at a construct level found to be most

important, only two of the underlying values, learning and visible results, are ranked in the top five.

Another stark contrast is found in the ranking of extrinsic motivational work values at a construct level and the values constituting the construct. On the one hand, factors such as promotion and money are ranked highly, while respect and status, are near the very bottom of the ranking. Pace, a leisure value, is considered the least important work value measured in the present study. This aligns with Maloni *et al.* (2019), who also found pace to be the lowest ranked work values, however, in contrast to their Gen Z work value ranking, the results of the present study show social engagement values, namely common interests, contacts and friends, to be slightly more important in the overall ranking.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

### ***Work Values and Student's Nationality***

Results of the cross-national analysis reveal that, at a construct level, nationality serves as a key determinant in terms of work value desirability as significant statistical differences were found for all eight work value constructs measured in this study. These findings are partly confirmed by Gahan and Abeysekera (2009), who found strong support for the relationship between national cultural and intrinsic work values, albeit mediated by individual level orientations. However, contrary to the present study, they were unable to identify a significant relationship between nationality and extrinsic motivational factors. At the level of individual work values, the intrinsic motivational

factors learning and visible results, two of the three most highly ranked values, were exceptions in that they were not significantly different based on nationality. This suggests these values have more universal appeal appearing to be desirable irrespective of Gen Z students' nationality.

### *Intrinsic motivation*

This study shows Chinese and Thai respondents rate intrinsic motivational factors significantly higher in importance than those from Germany and the Netherlands. At the level of individual intrinsic motivational factors, based on nationality, significant differences were found in the importance attached to sustainable skills and creativity. Chinese and Thai respondents considered the lasting nature of skills significantly more important than their European counterparts. In recent years developing countries such as China and Thailand have become increasingly aware of the importance of skills development and put greater emphasis toward it, specifically through technical vocational education and training (TVET), to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth (Maclean *et al.*, 2013; Stewart V, 2015). It may be assumed that the desirability of developing employability skills has permeated the values Chinese and Thai Gen Z students carry as they have been on the receiving end of a more skills-oriented education.

Creativity was also found to be deemed considerably more desirable by Chinese and Thai Gen Z students, particularly in comparison to German respondents. German Gen Z students' comparatively lower endorsement of creativity might be explained by Germany being the most uncertainty avoidant of the four nationalities measured in this study (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010). Another possible explanation might be that Germany is considered a rather tight culture (Gelfand *et al.*, 2011). Chua *et al.* (2015) examined the

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2  
3 impact of culture on creativity and found that cultural tightness is reflected in a country's  
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5 low tolerance for deviant ideas and behaviours. Although China and Thailand are  
6  
7 considered tighter cultures than Germany, Niu (2006) notes that creativity is generally  
8  
9 equated with intellectual giftedness in China. As for Thailand, educational reforms aimed  
10  
11 at boosting the country's competitiveness have, in part, contributed to cultural  
12  
13 transformation and an increased recognition among undergraduate students of the  
14  
15 importance of creativity (Power, 2015).  
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### 21 *Stability*

22  
23 The results suggest that both nationality and sex are differentiators in terms of stability  
24  
25 work values. Chinese, Thai and German students rate these factors as significantly more  
26  
27 important than their Gen Z counterparts from the Netherlands. This could be best  
28  
29 explained by the existing Dutch social welfare system, which is perceived as providing  
30  
31 sufficient job security for employees and non-employees alike (van Oorschot, 2006;  
32  
33 Vonk, 2021). Therefore, it can be assumed that in the Netherlands stability work values  
34  
35 are not considered as vital as in developing countries, such as China and Thailand, where  
36  
37 retirement and benefits are far less anchored in society and not a given (Ghosheh N,  
38  
39 2013).  
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### 46 *Global citizenship*

47  
48 For the global citizenship construct and each of the underlying values of open  
49  
50 communication, international orientation and idealism statistically significant differences  
51  
52 are observed between the different nationalities part of this study. Chinese and Thai Gen  
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54 Z students attach considerably greater value to these compared to those from Germany  
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56 and, especially, the Netherlands. This is rather surprising as boosting global citizenship  
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has for many years been a key component of Western universities' internationalisation agendas in preparing graduates for a global career (Aktas *et al.*, 2017). At the same time, throughout Asia, cosmopolitan perspectives may have found their way into the secondary and tertiary level curricula, but, according to Alviar-Martin and Baldion (2016), neoliberal and national discourses remain most prominent (Ballantine and McCourt, 2011).

### *Extrinsic motivation*

Nationality clearly functions as a differentiator concerning the desirability of extrinsic motivational factors. Results show Chinese Gen Z students considering extrinsic motivational factors significantly more important than the other respondent groups, with Dutch students rating them by far lowest in importance. Chinese Gen Z students' strong preference towards career advancement is confirmed by Zupan *et al.* (2015), who found it to be Chinese students' top rated work value. The explanation may lie in Chinese society being rather status-oriented and aspirational, whereas in the Netherlands egalitarianism is deemed virtuous (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Pieke, 2016).

### *Altruistic*

Significant differences were found in the importance attached to altruistic values, such as doing work that is worthwhile to society and helpful to others based on respondents' nationality and their sex. Chinese and Thai Gen Z students rate these values considerably higher than German and Dutch students, with the latter comparatively scoring them lowest. This is not entirely surprising as Thailand and China are both collective and tight cultures in which group norms about the moral obligation of looking out for each other are widely shared (Gelfand *et al.*, 2011; Hartung *et al.*, 2010; Hofstede, 1980). This is also consistent with Yablo and Field (2007), who found Thai students to be more altruistic



than their American counterparts with religion, Theravada Buddhism, having a mediating effect. They further argue Thais' stronger inclination towards "charitable and sympathetic acts" is best explained by the prominence of Buddhism and Thai society being affiliative, collective in nature. They suggest the existence of a relationship between dominant socio-cultural-religious values and prosocial values. Further corroboration is found in Lee *et al.* (2013), who demonstrated Chinese students are more positively disposed towards others emphasising the influence of Daoism and its core principles of harmony and humanism as a major philosophical influence on Chinese thought. Yet another explanation might lie in interpretations of altruism being culturally specific and it being undesirable in some circumstances (Brañas-Garza *et al.*, 2018; Coulter *et al.*, 2007; Ng and Sears, 2010; Smith *et al.*, 2013).

#### *Supervisory facilitation*

Supervisory facilitation in the terms of support provided and feedback and instructions given is appreciated to varying degrees according to Gen Z students' nationality. Both Asian and German respondent groups rated supervisory facilitation values significantly higher than the Dutch Gen Z students especially. This is corroborated by Hartung *et al.* (2010), who found positive relationships between collectivism dimensions and among others supervisory relations. In a similar vein, Chaiprasit and Santidhirakul (2011) conclude supervisory support is a key factor in achieving employee happiness in a study of Thai SME employees.

#### *Social engagement*

This study suggests social engagement factors are rated significantly differently based on respondents' nationality as they were deemed most important by China and Thai students

with German students putting significantly less emphasis on them. This might be best explained by collectivist countries attaching greater value to social relationships and interdependence (Hartung *et al.*, 2010; Triandis, 1995). A related explanation is the less strict division between work and private life common in Asian societies in general and the starker divide in Western ones, particularly Germany, where work is not considered an environment in which one socialises outside of work-related activities (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

*Leisure*

Prevailing work conditions and differences in organizational culture in Asia and Europe may explain why nationality is shown to be a differentiator in terms of importance attached to leisure values. Chinese and Thai students demonstrate significantly greater preference for leisure factors, such as vacation, having time for other things in life besides work, and the pace at which work happens. The reasons for this may be that these factors are considerably less commonplace in Asia (Ghosheh N, 2013), with benefits being considerably less generous or non-existent. In Europe and other parts of the world these may be taken for granted as part of a well-established social and work benefits system.

**Implications & recommendations**

The findings of this study demonstrate considerable variation within Gen Z work values across the four nationality groups. Only two values, learning and visible results, were deemed equally important across all four nationalities. This suggests these values have universal appeal and should therefore function as key components of globally operating companies' HR policies.

Despite increased levels of global interconnectedness and an accompanying crossvergence of values, the results clearly demonstrate statistically significant differences in work values based on the respondents' nationality. This gives credence to the assertion made by Ralston *et al.* (1997) that organisations with a global presence need to have a thorough understanding of existing value differences of their multinational workforce. These differences should be accommodated, for instance in terms of work design, rather than impose a single corporate culture upon them. This will allow for Gen Z labour market entrants to remain engaged.

This study also has implications for international study programmes, such as IB, offered at a tertiary level. The findings underscore the need for these IB programmes to be acutely aware of Gen Z students' work values. Through curriculum design and delivery, they have a vital role to play in managing Gen Z's labour market expectations (Chan *et al.*, 2020). Schroth (2019) noted that Gen Z possesses considerably less work experience than previous generations, reinforcing the need for IB students to develop a realistic view of the industry for which they are educated via curricular and extracurricular activities. For this reason, experiential, cooperative or action learning elements are rightly becoming more embedded into IB curricula for students to experience first-hand what working within the context of international business entails and develop valuable insights into their own abilities and desires (Dean *et al.*, 2020; Ng and Burke, 2006; Pierce *et al.*, 2011). This is essential in aligning student and industry needs and achieving successful integration into the workforce.

The problematisation of Gen Z as a uniform global phenomenon shows that IB programmes should consider offering students with opportunities to shape individualised

study paths. Through elective courses, reflection and personal development courses students are able to gain a range of experiences and consciously align these with their personal values (Chan *et al.*, 2020). Being mindful of student expectations and better connecting with them has been shown to be instrumental in attracting and retaining students in today's competitive higher education landscape (Schwieger and Ladwig, 2018). It has also been found to increase student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction which are essential prerequisites for an interactive and dynamic teaching and learning environment in international classrooms (Maloni *et al.*, 2019).

As this was an exploratory study, some caution is needed in interpreting the key findings. For one, due to the scope and explorative design of the present study, it cannot be certain that the results are exclusively from Gen Z characteristics or influenced by other, non-cultural, variables. For instance, Farrell and Phungsoonthorn (2020) note the limited extent of cultural convergence between cohorts from developed and developing countries as a result of unequal access to technology and different labour market conditions. Additionally, labour market characteristics have been shown to affect individuals' work values in that people value what is scarce relative to their socio-economic position (Gesthuizen and Verbakel, 2011; Putman, 2013).

Another limitation is that the sample was comprised of students in different locations, studying at four different universities and following a range of, primarily business, majors. Although male students still outnumber females in business studies at the tertiary level (Ball, 2012), the divide (two-third male, one-third female) is not as stark in undergraduate programmes as the sample suggests, which may affect the

representativeness of the study. Additionally, we explored differences between nationalities, but did not examine variance within the nationality groups.

Variance within nationality groups would merit further exploration as this would allow for a more detailed examination of local contexts and the extent of cultural tightness. For a comprehensive understanding of other factors influencing Gen Z work value preferences, it would be valuable to explore variables, such as a student's major, work experience as well as experience abroad, as these are presumed to influence work value orientation.

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**Table 1.** Work value definitions. Sources: Maloni, Hiatt and Campbell (2019) and Reysen & Katzarska-Miller (2018)

Latent Work Value Constructs	Definition	Constituent Individual Work Values
Intrinsic Motivation	Intangible rewards reflecting inherent interest in work	Learning Sustainable Skills Visible Results Creativity
Stability	Need for long-term certainty	Retirement Benefits Future
Global Citizenship	Motivation to interact and engage with the world through work	Open Communication International Orientation Idealism
Extrinsic Motivation	Tangible work rewards external to the individual	Money Promotion Status Respect
Altruistic	Motivation to help others and society through work	Worthwhile Helpful
Supervisory Facilitation	Interaction with and oversight by supervisor	Feedback Instruction Support
Social Engagement	Need to belong or to be connected at the workplace	Friends Contact Common Interests
Leisure	Opportunity for work-life balance and easy paced work	Vacation Time Pace



**Table 2.** Work value ranking and Cronbach's alpha

Composite Work Value	Individual Work Value	Rank	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Intrinsic Motivation	Learning	1	4.11	0.576	0.73
	Sustainable Skills				
	Visible Results				
	Creativity				
Stability	Retirement	2	4.05	0.694	0.83
	Benefits				
	Future				
Global Citizenship	Open Communication	3	3.90	0.657	0.65
	International Orientation				
	Idealism				
Extrinsic Motivation	Money	4	3.85	0.658	0.80
	Promotion				
	Status				
	Respect				
Altruistic	Worthwhile	5	3.84	0.780	0.75
	Helpful				
Supervisory Facilitation	Feedback	6	3.78	0.630	0.63
	Instruction				
	Support				
Social Engagement	Friends	7	3.73	0.723	0.75
	Contact				
	Common Interests				
Leisure	Vacation	8	3.67	0.741	0.71
	Time				
	Pace				

Table 3. Work value ranking and mean difference of nationality groups

Work Value Construct	Rank	Mean	Individual Work Value	Rank	Mean	F value	p value (Nationality)
Intrinsic Motivation	1	4.11 <sup>+++</sup>				4.327	0.000
			Learning	1	4.27	1.464	0.223
			Sustainable Skills	9	4.00 <sup>+++</sup>	12.724	0.000
			Visible Results	3	4.17	2.028	0.108
			Creativity	8	4.01 <sup>+++</sup>	19.748	0.000
Stability	2	4.06 <sup>+++</sup>				13.159	0.000
			Retirement	13	3.90 <sup>++</sup>	4.348	0.005
			Benefits	6	4.12 <sup>++</sup>	10.359	0.000
			Future	4	4.15 <sup>+++</sup>	19.513	0.000
Global Citizenship	3	3.90 <sup>+++</sup>				9.779	0.000
			Open Communication	7	4.04 <sup>+++</sup>	14.718	0.000
			International Orientation	18	3.74 <sup>+++</sup>	13.473	0.000
			Idealism	12	3.92 <sup>+++</sup>	34.516	0.000
Extrinsic Motivation	4	3.85 <sup>+++</sup>				54.680	0.000
			Money	5	4.12 <sup>+++</sup>	20.460	0.000
			Promotion	2	4.24 <sup>+++</sup>	13.709	0.000
			Status	24	3.48 <sup>+++</sup>	59.590	0.000
			Respect	23	3.56 <sup>+++</sup>	55.152	0.000
Altruistic	5	3.84 <sup>+++</sup>				18.341	0.000
			Worthwhile	15	3.84 <sup>+++</sup>	35.441	0.000
			Helpful	16	3.83 <sup>+++</sup>	15.640	0.000
Supervisory Facilitation	6	3.78 <sup>+++</sup>				9.673	0.000
			Feedback	21	3.68 <sup>++</sup>	4.716	0.003
			Instruction	20	3.72 <sup>+++</sup>	64.591	0.000
			Support	11	3.93 <sup>+++</sup>	15.267	0.000
Social Engagement	7	3.73 <sup>+++</sup>				9.409	0.000
			Friends	19	3.74 <sup>+</sup>	3.362	0.018
			Contact	22	3.68 <sup>++</sup>	14.037	0.000
			Common Interests	17	3.76 <sup>+++</sup>	39.978	0.000
Leisure	8	3.67 <sup>+++</sup>				38.221	0.000
			Vacation	14	3.85 <sup>+++</sup>	10.926	0.000
			Time	10	3.93 <sup>+++</sup>	16.370	0.000
			Pace	25	3.21 <sup>+++</sup>	135.767	0.000

Statistical significance difference of Mean of groups based on Nationality: + p < 0.05, ++ p < 0.01, +++ p < 0.001

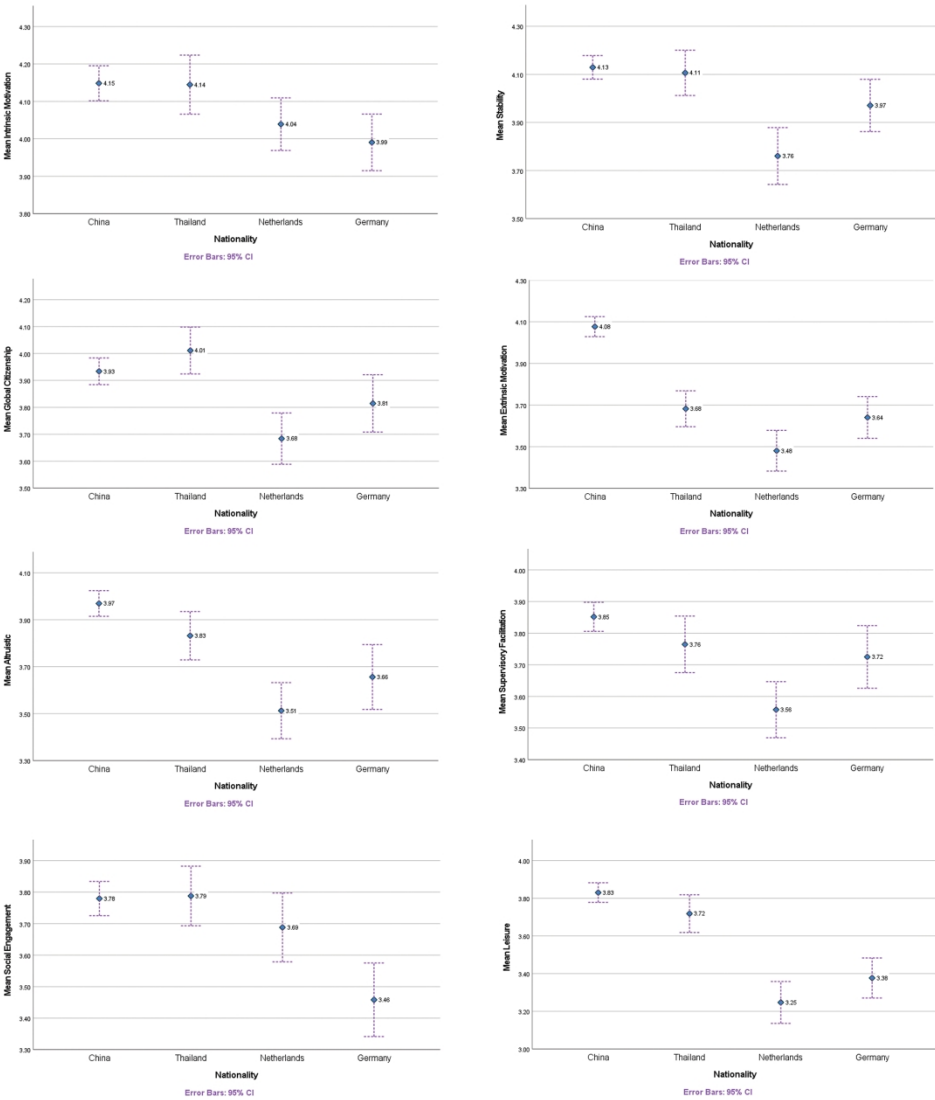


Figure 1. Work Value Differences by Nationality

1227x1428mm (72 x 72 DPI)

Appendix 1. Respondent characteristics

Item	Percentage (%)	Item	Percentage (%)
Sex		Study Program	
Female	31.0	Business/Economics	82.4
Male	67.9	STEM	4.0
Prefer not to say	1.1	Others	13.6
Nationality		Stage or Year of Study	
China	50.6	Year 1	16.4
Thailand	22.9	Year 2	14.6
Germany	13.0	Year 3	42.4
Netherlands	13.5	Year 4	24.0
Level of Study Program		Other	2.0
Bachelor	95.5		
Master	2.5		
Other	2.0		

## Appendix 2. Wording in Questionnaire

Work Value Construct	Individual Work Value	Wording in survey
Intrinsic Motivation	Learning	A job where you can learn new things, learn new skills
	Sustainable Skills	A job where the skills you learn will not go out of date
	Visible Results	A job where you can see the results of what you/they do
	Creativity	A job where you have the chance to be creative
Stability	Retirement	A job with a good retirement plan
	Benefits	A job with a good health care and benefits plan
	Future	A job that offers a reasonably predictable, secure future
Global Citizenship	Open Communication	A job that allows you to communicate openly with your colleagues
	International Orientation	A job that allows you to work with people from different cultures
Extrinsic Motivation	Idealism	A job that allows you to make the world a better place
	Money	A job which provides you with a chance to earn a good deal of money
	Promotion	A job where the chances for advancement and promotion are good
	Status	A job that has high status and prestige
Altruistic	Respect	A job that most people look up to and respect
	Worthwhile	A job that is worthwhile to society
	Helpful	A job that gives you the opportunity to be directly helpful to others
Supervisory Facilitation	Feedback	A job where you receive frequent feedback on your work
	Instruction	A job where you receive detailed instructions for your/their work
Social Engagement	Support	A job where your supervisor supports your personal commitments
	Friends	A job that gives you a chance to make friends
	Contact	A job that permits contact with a lot of people
Leisure	Common Interests	A job where you have common interests with co-workers.
	Vacation	A job where you have more than two weeks' vacation
	Time	A job which leaves a lot of time for other things in your life
	Pace	A job with an easy pace that lets you work slowly

Scale: 1—not important, 2—somewhat important, 3—important, 4—very important, 5—essential

Appendix 3. Key Findings of Post-Hoc Analysis using Tukey HSD

Work Value Construct	Groups with significant mean differences	Mean difference	p-value	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Intrinsic Motivation	China - Germany	0.157	.011	-0.104	0.112
	Thailand - Germany	0.154	.036	0.007	0.301
Stability	China - Netherlands	0.369	<.001	0.210	0.528
	China - Germany	0.158	.046	0.002	0.315
	Thailand - Netherlands	0.346	<.001	0.168	0.524
	Germany - Netherlands	0.210	.033	-0.409	-0.112
Global Citizenship	China - Netherlands	0.250	<.001	0.099	0.401
	Thailand - Netherlands	0.327	<.001	0.159	0.496
	Thailand - Germany	0.197	.013	0.030	0.364
Extrinsic Motivation	China - Thailand	0.395	<.001	0.274	0.515
	China - Netherlands	0.596	<.001	0.449	0.744
	China - Germany	0.436	<.001	0.290	0.582
	Thailand - Netherlands	0.202	.009	0.036	0.367
Altruistic	China - Netherlands	0.456	<.001	0.280	0.007
	China - Germany	0.313	<.001	0.138	0.488
	Thailand - Netherlands	0.319	<.001	0.121	0.517
Supervisory Facilitation	China - Netherlands	0.234	<.001	0.149	0.438
	Thailand - Netherlands	0.207	0.006	0.045	0.368
Social Engagement	China - Germany	0.322	<.001	0.158	0.485
	Thailand - Germany	0.330	<.001	0.146	0.514
	Netherlands - Germany	0.230	.023	0.022	0.437
Leisure	China - Netherlands	0.583	<.001	0.419	0.747
	China - Germany	0.453	<.001	0.291	0.615
	Thailand - Netherlands	0.471	<.001	0.288	0.655
	Thailand - Germany	0.342	<.001	0.160	.0523