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Research Article

Looking for Motivation? Understanding the Effects of Amotivation in a Multigenerational Workforce

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ABSTRACT

Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, the study investigated the impact of job design on amotivation, job engagement, time commitment, and work intensity among Generation Y and Z employees in the Philippine e-commerce industry. The study revealed that job design has a significant influence on amotivation and job engagement, with autonomy and competence emerging as critical factors. Relatedness, however, had minimal impact. The study also finds that job engagement fully mediates the relationship between job design and work intensity. These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of amotivation in the workplace by identifying key job design elements that affect it and its consequent impact on employee behaviors. The findings also guide organizations in designing jobs that optimize motivation and engagement for Generation Y and Z employees.

Keywords: *Amotivation, E-commerce industry, Employee engagement , Generational differences, Job design, Self-determination theory*

Introduction

Employees represent the backbone of organizations, as their daily participation drives productivity and profitability. However, this assumes motivated talent finds purpose and fulfillment at work. In contrast, some employees exhibit amotivation, characterized by reduced intention to act and withdrawal from organizational goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). While past motivation research focused extensively on intrinsic and extrinsic types, we have come to know that amotivation remains comparatively underexplored. This phenomenon increasingly impacts younger generational cohorts entering today's workforce, with critical implications for talent management (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

Knowledge gaps exist regarding how amotivation affects different generations and resulting organizational outcomes. According to studies, amotivated employees express inadequacy and helplessness, inducing disengage-

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ment and stress (Masood et al., 2022). Overlooking these risks impairs performance, growth, and retention. Therefore, timely research on amotivation's multigenerational impact is warranted. We examine in this study how job design impacts amotivation and resulting behaviors between Generations Y and Z e-commerce employees in the Philippines. The goal is to create organizational environments that optimize each generation's strengths. As this young workforce gains prominence over the next decade, appropriately managing amotivation will prove critical for maximizing individual and firm performance.

We apply in our research tenets of self-determination theory, which links amotivation to unsatisfied needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000) Amotivated individuals view tasks as meaningless, withdrawing effort and disengaging, affecting variables like time commitment (Snir & Harpaz, 2015). A mixed-methods approach provides statistical insights supplemented by narratives to fully understand this multifaceted issue. With youth defining e-commerce's future, leaders must align human resource practices with evolving expectations. Our findings aim to equip managers with actionable knowledge for interacting with Generations Y and Z talent. The desired outcome is enhanced satisfaction, productivity, and retention from properly designed jobs. This timely research illuminates the implications of amotivation across different generations in a strategic organizational context. The results can help stakeholders leverage diverse perspectives in building agile, high-performance workplaces aligned with human development principles.

Generations Y and Z

Defining the age brackets and characteristics of Generations Y and Z has been a topic of debate among researchers due to the lack of standardization. In this study, we adopt Bejtkovský's (2016) generational timeframe, which categorizes Gen Y as those born between 1981 and 1994 and Gen Z as those born between 1995 and 2001. It is, however, essential to recognize that the traits associated with each generation may vary, and it would be erroneous to assume that individuals born at the cusp of a generational timeframe will strictly embody the characteristics of the adjacent generation (Oh & Reeves, 2011).

Despite the differences in age brackets, Gen Y and Gen Z share some common traits. Both generations place a high value on financial rewards and benefits (Maloni et al., 2019). They prioritize career advancement and invest in acquiring valuable skills to increase their worth in the job market (Maloni et al., 2019). Additionally, both generations prefer flexible and autonomous work styles and appreciate feedback to gauge their performance and identify areas for improvement (Maloni et al., 2019; Gaidhani et al., 2019). However, there are notable differences between the two generations. According to Mahmoud et al. (2020), Gen Z is more intrinsically motivated than Gen Y, with the younger generation driven by inherent satisfaction in their work. Interestingly, Gen Z is also more sensitive to amotivation, which may explain their heightened reactivity to unpleasant situations. Consequently, material rewards tend to be more effective for Gen Z compare to Gen Y (Mahmoud et al., 2020).

The literature presents contrasting views on the characteristics of Gen Y and Gen Z. Bejtkovský (2016) describes Gen Z as the silent generation, lacking interpersonal skills to communicate effectively. As a tech-savvy generation, Gen Z considers websites as online communities, finding in-person meetings less relevant for building relationships (Bejtkovský, 2016). In contrast, Tysiac (2017) and Schawbel (2014) argue that Gen Z values face-to-face interactions with managers, indicating their desire to be heard and have their ideas valued. This generation wants to be taken seriously, with workplaces emphasizing contributions and ideas over age.

Regarding career paths, Tysiac (2017) and Lyons et al. (2015) suggest that Gen Z highly values flexibility, as they tend to explore various departments, industries, and positions. Gen Z prioritizes career stability over employer stability, making them more prone to job-hopping if it leads to faster advancement and overall career success (Maloni et al., 2019). On the other hand, Gen Y tends to be more loyal to companies that share their values (Jerome et al., 2014). Interestingly, Seemiller and Grace

(2017) argue that Gen Z may be more devoted employees compared to Gen Y.

These contrasting definitions highlight the variability in characteristics within each generational group. As researchers, we aim to identify which factors align with Gen Y and Gen Z in the Philippines, considering the context of our study. From here, we can better tailor our research to explore the impact of job design on their motivation, engagement, and work behaviors by understanding the similarities and differences between these generations.

Job design

Job design, as defined by Gallagher and Einhorn (1976), encompasses the content, procedure, and relationship of a job to fulfill the job holder's technical, organizational, social, and personal needs. While this definition serves as a tool for meeting employee and organizational needs (Belias & Sklikas, 2013), it is considered constricting and mechanical, as it fails to encourage employee morale beyond assigned work (Parker et al., 2017; Van Broeck et al., 2017). Modern definitions of job design acknowledge the importance of motivation and employee contentment (Humphrey et al., 2007; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Self-determination theory (SDT) provides a lens through which job design explicitly affects individuals' psychological needs, consequently influencing motivation (Manganelli et al., 2018). SDT emphasizes the fulfillment of three basic needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—as important predictors of optimal performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2008).

Van den Broeck et al.'s (2010) study captures autonomy, competency, and relatedness in the context of a work-related environment. Autonomy refers to the freedom and decision latitude an employee has in carrying out tasks (Karasek, 1979), while competence looks at an individual's satisfaction with their capacities and the additional knowledge gained to accomplish future tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Relatedness refers to an employee's social support in an organization (Viswesvaran et al., 1999), with the innate need to feel a sense of belonging in a group (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). When these needs are met through job design, critical psychological states of satisfaction are reached, fostering effective performance and motivation in employees (Dahling & Lauricella, 2016).

Amotivation

Amotivation, a concept within the self-determination theory, represents the absence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, characterized by an individual's lack of intention or desire to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Amotivated individuals fail to meet the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as they perceive no link between their desired outcomes and behaviors (Ryan, 1995). Consequently, they view tasks as worthless, leading to disengagement and apathy (Symonds et al., 2019; Imran et al., 2017).

While research on amotivation's effects on employee engagement is limited, studies in education, sports, and medicine have shown its adverse outcomes, such as lower effort, increased boredom, and higher dropout rates (Banerjee & Halder, 2021; Ricard & Pelletier, 2016). In the business context, amotivation leads to emotional exhaustion and employee detachment, inspiring turnover intentions (Gagné et al., 2015; Tremblay et al., 2009). Notably, amotivation is more prevalent among younger generations (Gens Y and Z), resulting in short job retention and low job satisfaction (Mahmoud et al., 2020). To mitigate this, research suggests that management styles and environmental aspects significantly influence the fulfillment of psychological needs and employee motivation (Kovjanic et al., 2012; Gagné et al., 2015).

Job engagement

Shkoler and Kimura (2020) define job engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees are said to work harder (vigor), be more involved (dedication), and be more immersed (absorption) in their jobs (Bakker et al., 2008; Shkoler & Kimura, 2020). High levels of job engagement, as shown by several empirical studies, lead to exceptional job performances that organizations value, such as low turnover rates and increased job performance, which redounds to improving customer loyalty, sales,

and profits (Roberts & Davenport, 2002; Owens et al., 2016). In Roberts and Davenport's (2002) study, engaged employees reveal how their work ensures they use their talents and abilities, challenges them, and gives them a sense of success.

Time commitment

Time commitment is one of two aspects that stem from the concept of heavy work investment (HWI). Simply put, this variable describes the number of hours an employee invests at the workplace without regard for the effort exerted (see work intensity section) (Snir & Harpaz, 2015). HWI, and by extension time commitment, is distinct from job engagement because immersion and involvement does not necessarily require long hours at work (Snir & Harpaz, 2015). Existing literature shows that a massive investment of time for work endorses work dissatisfaction, decreased performance, and work-life imbalance (Shkoler et al., 2021).

Work intensity

Work intensity is the second of the two aspects related to heavy work investment as an umbrella term. This factor refers to the effort and energy invested at work, both physical and mental. In this study, we consider the investment of action, in addition to time, because time, in isolation, does not paint a comprehensive picture of the employee's motivation at work (Shkoler et al., 2021). Employees, for instance, may physically spend long hours in the office but only for presenteeism to make a good impression on colleagues and bosses.

Methodology

Theoretical framework

This study uses the self-determination theory initially developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), which posits that fulfilling three innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—is crucial in enhancing self-motivation and mental well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The pair defines amotivation as a lack of the aforementioned psychological needs, which consequently leads to an employee's perceived lack of value or competence in an activity (i.e., doing an activity for its own sake and prevents individuals from experiencing higher forms of motivation, such as integration regulation and intrinsic motivation (see Figure 1). On the other hand, Shkoler and Kimura (2020) build on SDT by applying it through an organizational lens. Specifically, the pair studied the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on job engagement, time commitment, and work intensity (see Figure 2). However, this study investigates how amotivation, as defined by Ryan & Deci (2000), affects the latter three variables.

Research framework

Based on the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci 2000) and Shkoler and Kimura's (2020) conceptual model, this framework, as we have illustrated in Figure 3, was applied to Generations Y and Z participants separately to assess whether there are differences in how the groups process amotivation. The framework posits six relationships between the adopted variables, as we have listed in Table 1. We hypothesize that better job design will negatively affect Ryan and Deci's (2000) amotivation variable, as improvements in the former variable satisfy employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). With this, we also hypothesize that higher levels of amotivation negatively affect time commitment, job engagement, and work intensity. Lastly, we posit that higher levels of job engagement led to better time commitment and job engagement, as engaged employees are more likely to exhibit vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker et al., 2008; Shkoler & Kimura, 2020).

Behavior	Non-self-determined					Self-determined
Motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic motivation				Intrinsic motivation
Regulatory styles	Non-	External regulation	Introjected regulation	Identified regulation	Integrated regulation	Intrinsic regulation
Perceived locus of causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat external	Somewhat internal	Internal	Internal
Relevant regulatory processes	Nonintentional, non-valuing, incompetence, lack of control	Compliance, external rewards and punishments	Self-control, ego-involvement, internal rewards and punishments	Personal importance, conscious valuing	Congruence, awareness, synthesis with self	Interest, enjoyment, inherent satisfaction

Figure 1 Self-determination continuum
Source: Authors' illustration based on Ryan and Deci (2000)

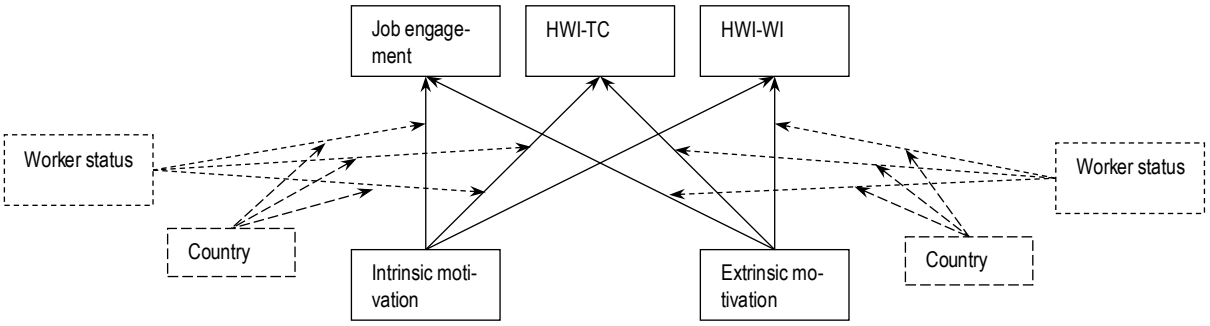

Figure 2 Conceptual model and hypothesis
Source: Authors' illustration based on Shkoler and Kimura (2020)

Research design

To determine the relationships between the independent, dependent, and mediating variables in the conceptual framework, we employed a mixed-methods approach using a sequential-explanatory design (Creswell, 2006). We began with a quantitative phase using an online survey with Likert-type questions to identify factors in job design that influence levels of amotivation for Generations Y and Z. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to determine causal relationships between variables, and Cronbach's alpha assessed the reliability of the survey. The qualitative phase followed, involving in-depth interviews with selected Gens Y and Z participants who displayed high and low levels of time commitment, work intensity, or amotivation. The interviews aimed to provide narrative data to explain the quantitative findings, allowing us to explore participants' work experiences and gain context about their feelings and ideas. Interview transcripts were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative content analysis (Coe & Scacco, 2017).

We conducted pre-testing using responses from 23 undergraduate students who completed at least one three-month internship. The original scales consisted of 38 Likert-type items, and all scales returned Cronbach's alpha values of at least 0.722. After removing 13 items to increase reliability and shorten survey

completion time, the final survey contained 25 questions with Cronbach's alpha values of at least 0.728 for scales and 0.660 for subscales.

The target demographic was Gen Y (born 1981-1996) and Gen Z (born 1997-2012) individuals who worked in the Philippine e-commerce industry for at least six months. A minimum of 67 participants was determined using Soper's a priori sample size calculator for multiple regression. Convenience sampling was used, with Facebook, Messenger, and LinkedIn as primary dissemination platforms. Consistent with the sequential-explanatory design, the same participants were included in both phases to assist in comparing data and developing themes. Four participants (two high amotivation, two low amotivation) were interviewed for each generation, totaling eight interviewees.

Quantitative data was collected via online surveys. Qualitative data, on one hand, was gathered through interviews lasting 30-80 minutes, with us echoing interviewees' insights to minimize misinterpretation. We used Jamovi, an open-source statistical platform, for quantitative analysis, including Cronbach's alpha, multiple regressions, and mediation analysis. Dedoose, a cross-platform program, was used for coding and content analysis of interview transcripts to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the variables of interest.

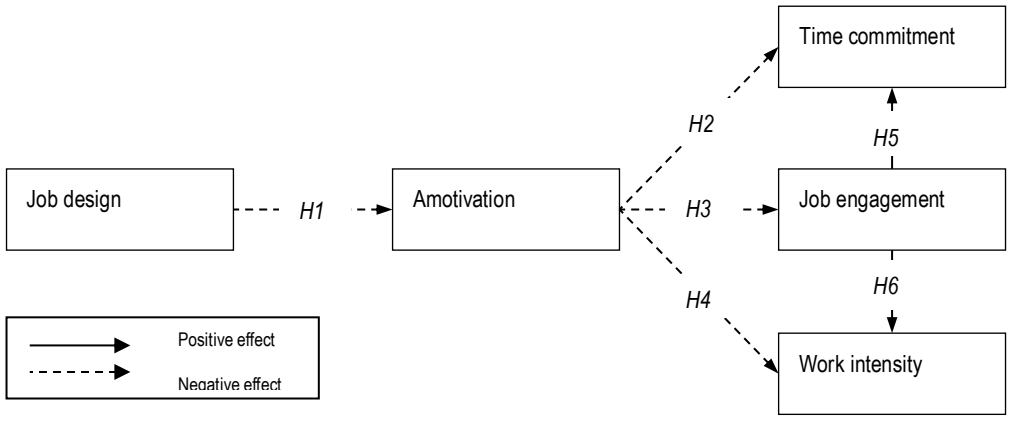

Figure 3 Research framework
Source: Authors' illustration

Table 1. Variables and hypotheses for statistical method

Measures	Variable type	Hypotheses			Cronbach's α
		Code	Effect	Affected variable	
Work factors					
Job design (Van den Broeck et al., 2010)	Independent	H1	Negative	Amotivation	0.824
Amotivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000)	Mediating	H2	Negative	Time commitment	0.728
Time commitment (Snir & Harpaz, 2015)	Dependent				0.829
Job engagement (Bakker et al., 2008)	Dependent	H5	Positive	Time commitment	0.865
		H6	Positive	Work intensity	
Work intensity (Shkoler et al., 2021)	Dependent				0.833

Conducting research and results

Descriptive statistics

We gathered data from 80 respondents (N = 80). Forty-five were from Gen Y, and 35 were from Gen Z. Among the participants are 44 females (55%) and 36 males (45%). All respondents are employees from different corporations with e-commerce functions across the Philippines (i.e., Shopee Philippines, Lazada Philippines, BeautyMNL, TikTok Shop, Amazon, and Grab). Split between Gen Y (birth year ≥ 1996; mode = 28, mean = 29.93) and Gen Z (birth year < 1996; mode = 26, mean = 25.11), the ages ranged from 23 to 38 years old. As a basis, we tested one independent variable, one mediating variable, and three dependent variables to perceive the effect of job design on job engagement, time commitment, and work intensity, mediated by amotivation. All variables utilize the five-point Likert scale, while two variables under job design and job engagement have subcategories that measure their overall effect.

Correlation analysis

We construct a correlation matrix to assess the possible linear associations between the latent variables and job engagement. Job design, amotivation, time commitment, and work intensity showed significant associations toward job engagement. Overall, job design was most correlated with job engagement (R = 0.613), while work intensity was least correlated (R = 0.531). Time commitment did not show significant p-values, which suggests the possibility of rejecting H4.

Mediation analysis

We use Jamovi software's GLM mediation model under the program's jAMM module created by Galluci (2020). The model utilizes the paths stated in our initial hypotheses and adds direct paths between the independent and mediating variables towards the various dependent variables to test the degrees of mediation. We explore three different mediation models. Mediation model 1 (MM1) explores the effect of job design on job engagement, with amotivation as a mediating variable (H3). Mediation model 2 (MM2) examines the effect of job design on time commitment through amotivation and job engagement as mediators (H2, H5). Lastly, mediation model 3 (MM3) assesses the effect of job design on time commitment with amotivation and job engagement as mediating variables (H4, H6).

Table 2 Mediating model 1: Effect of job design on job engagement with amotivation as mediator

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence interval		*β*	*z*	*p*
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	JD→Am→JE	0.253	0.084	0.090	0.417	0.169	3.030	0.002
	Gen Y	0.160	0.083	-0.002	0.323	0.122	1.930	0.053
	Gen Z	0.438	0.208	0.031	0.846	0.251	1.930	0.035
Component	JD→Am	-0.778	0.165	-1.101	-0.455	-0.467	-4.720	< 0.001
	Gen Y	-0.530	0.224	-0.969	-0.091	-0.332	-2.360	0.018
	Gen Z	-1.145	0.224	-1.584	-0.707	-0.654	-2.360	< 0.001
	Am→JE	-0.326	0.082	-0.487	-0.164	-0.361	-3.960	< 0.001
	Gen Y	-0.302	0.09	-0.479	-0.126	-0.366	-3.350	< 0.001
	Gen Z	-0.383	0.166	-0.707	-0.058	-0.384	-3.350	0.021
Direct	JD→JE	0.667	0.137	0.398	0.936	0.444	4.860	< 0.001
	Gen Y	0.674	0.144	0.393	0.956	0.513	4.690	< 0.001
	Gen Z	0.611	0.290	0.043	1.179	0.351	4.690	0.035
Total	JD→JE	0.920	0.133	0.659	1.182	0.613	6.900	< 0.001
	Gen Y	0.835	0.153	0.534	1.135	0.634	5.454	< 0.001
	Gen Z	1.049	0.239	0.581	1.517	0.602	5.450	< 0.001

Note: JD = Job design; Am = Amotivation; JE = Job engagement

MM1 validates H3 with amotivation as a partial mediator between job design and job engagement (see Table 2). Considering both the direct and indirect pathways, the total effect of job design on job engagement indicates a significant positive relationship between job design and job engagement (estimate = 0.920; p = < 0.001). Amotivation acts as a partial mediator between the two variables, with an indirect path estimate of 0.253, accounting for 27.5 percent of the total effect. Interestingly, amotivation is a much more relevant mediator in the Gen Z sample (indirect estimate = 0.438; total estimate = 1.049), indicating that amotivation accounts for 41.8 percent of the positive relationship between job design and job engagement. In contrast, Gen Y's indirect path is marginally insignificant (p = 0.053), with indirect and total estimates of 0.160 and 0.835, respectively. This result means that amotivation may not be a particularly relevant mediator between job design and job engagement for the generation. Despite this, job design has a statistically significant and impactful direct effect on job engagement for Gen Y (estimate = 0.674, p = < 0.001), suggesting that job design may have a direct impact on job engagement, possibly bypassing the need for amotivation in Gen Y. Alternatively, we can say that there might be other factors more suitable as mediators.

The statistical analysis for MM2 disproves H2 and H5 (p = 0.447; p = 0.118). In contrast, MM3 validates H6 (estimate = 0.106; p = 0.013). Furthermore, this relationship only exists within the Gen Y sample—the data indicates that job design does not affect Gen Z's work intensity, regardless of the presence of amotivation and job engagement as mediators. MM3 also disproves H4 (p = 0.974). Overall, the total effect of the model is 0.313 with a p-value of 0.009. There is no significant direct effect between job design and work intensity, indicating full mediation by amotivation and job engagement. Job engagement, as the sole mediator, has a significantly stronger effect (1,740 basis point difference) than when amotivation is included. This result highlights the mediating role of job engagement and suggests that job design primarily impacts work intensity through job engagement.

Regression analysis

To further explore the relationships between job design, amotivation, job engagement, work intensity, and time commitment, we ran four multiple regression models to explore H1, H3, H5, and H6, as we have listed in Table 3. Regression model 1 (RM1) analyzes the relationship between job design and amotivation as the independent and dependent variables, respectively. Regression model 2 (RM2) analyzes the relationship between job engagement as the dependent variable, with job design and amotivation as independent variables. Regression models 3 and 4 (RM3, RM4) analyze the relationships between job engagement as the independent variable, with time commitment and work intensity as the dependent variables, respectively.

Table 3 shows that RM1, RM2, and RM4 are statistically significant for the entire sample and when regressed using only Gens Y or Z respondents. Their multiple r values of 0.467, 0.691, and 0.531 indicate a moderately strong correlation between the predictors and the outcome. RM2's r-squared value suggests that 52.2 percent of the variation in job engagement can be explained by variations in job design and amotivation supporting H1 and H3. RM4's statistic indicates that job engagement accounts for 36.8 percent of the variation in work intensity, supporting H6. In contrast, RM3's p-values exceeded 0.05 for all population samples, indicating no significant relationship between job engagement and time commitment, suggesting that H5 must be rejected. These regression findings are consistent with the correlation and mediation analysis results, which, except for time commitment, showed a statistically significant association between the relevant variables. Additionally, there is a significant difference between Gen and Z's RM1 r-squared values. Job design explains 11.1 percent of the variance in amotivation for Gen Y, while the same explains 42.8 percent of the variance in amotivation for Gen Z. However, there is only a marginal difference in the two generations' RM2 r-squared values (Y = 0.522; Z = 0.477), suggesting that other factors may influence job engagement for Gen Y.

Table 3. Regression model fit measures

Model		*R*			*R^2*			*p*		
Ind. variable	Dep. variable	All	Gen Y	Gen Z	All	Gen Y	Gen Z	All	Gen Y	Gen Z
JD	Am	0.467	0.332	0.654	0.218	0.111	0.428	< 0.001	0.026	< 0.001
JD, Am	JE	0.691	0.723	0.668	0.478	0.522	0.447	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001
JE	TC	0.182	0.108	0.266	0.0333	0.0117	0.0708	0.105	0.479	0.122
JE	WI	0.531	0.607	0.468	0.282	0.368	0.219	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.005

Note: JD = Job design; Am = Amotivation; JE = Job engagement; TC = Time commitment; WI = Work intensity

We also did the regression estimates of job design and amotivation towards job engagement as a dependent variable (RM2). Overall, the model indicates that a 1-point increase in a respondent's job design scores leads to a net increase of 0.667 in job engagement. Meanwhile, a 1-point increase in amotivation leads to job engagement scores decreasing by 0.326. There are moderate differences between the amotivation coefficient estimates between Gens Y and Z. Amotivation has an 810-basis point higher effect on the Gen Y sample.

It is important to note that while the overall RM2 model on the Gen Z sample is statistically significant, the coefficient for job design has a p-value greater than 0.05 (p = 0.052) and confidence interval limits crossing 0. This indicates that the specific contribution of job design on Gen Z, considered in isolation, may not be distinguishable from zero, as evidenced by the moderately higher level of collinearity between the independent variables for the Gen Z sample (VIF = 1.75) compared to Gen Y (VIF = 1.12). However, the coefficient's p-value is only marginally higher than 0.05. A larger Gen Z sample size may, therefore, improve coefficient significance.

Furthermore, we did the regression of job engagement with work intensity as its dependent variable (RM4). Overall, the coefficient for job engagement shows that a 1-point increase in the variable results in an increase of 0.391 in work intensity scores. There is a significant difference between the job engagement coefficient estimates between Gens Y and Z, with the former sample's value being 1,960 basis points higher. This result indicates that for a given change in job engagement, the corresponding change in work intensity is relatively higher in Gen Y compared to Gen Z.

Summary of quantitative analysis

We present in Table 4 a comprehensive summary of the quantitative analysis, examining their alignment with the hypotheses and research objectives proposed in this paper. Furthermore, the mediation and regression results for H2, H5, and H6 consistently align with no instances of contradiction, providing robust evidence for the findings and enhancing the overall confidence in our study's conclusions.

Table 4 Summary of hypotheses results based on quantitative findings

	Research objectives	**Summary of results for quantitative results**
RO1:	To determine whether job design affects amotivation and to what extent.	H1: Job design has a significant direct negative effect on amotivation (p = < 0.001).
RO2:	To identify critical factors in job design that influence Gens Y and Z's amotivation.	Based on the additional regressions run, autonomy (p = < 0.001), and competency (p = < 0.001) serve as the critical factors that influence the overall population's amotivation. On the other hand, relatedness (p = 0.935) shows no significant effect on amotivation.
RO3:	To identify themes in how Gens Y and Z's amotivation	H2, H3, H4, H5, H6: With the mediation of amotivation, job design has a significant indirect positive effect on job

Research objectives	Summary of results for quantitative results
affects their behaviors (job engagement, time commitment, and work intensity).	engagement (p = < 0.001). However, this does not apply to time commitment (p = 0.447) nor work intensity (p = 0.947) as it shows no significant effect. However, with the mediation of both amotivation and job engagement, job design shows a significant indirect positive effect on work intensity (p = 0.013) but still no effect on time commitment (p = 0.118).

Note: Authors' compilation

Quantitative impact of autonomy, competence, and relatedness

We create an additional regression model using job engagement as the dependent variable and the job design sub-elements (autonomy, competence, relatedness) as independent variables. The additional model resulted in statistically significant results (p = < 0.001), with the r-squared value showing that the independent variables can explain 44.5 percent of the variation in job engagement. The differences between Gens Y and Z are marginal in this regard. Furthermore, both generation samples indicated that relatedness did not significantly affect job engagement. That is, an e-commerce employee's sense of communion and development of close relationships at work (Van den Broeck et al., 2010) do not necessarily contribute to higher job engagement.

On the other hand, employees with higher levels of autonomy (those who experience higher levels of agency and personal freedom) and perceived competence are more likely to be more engaged at work. Interestingly, we find competence only has a 3.7 percent stronger association with job engagement than autonomy in the Gen Y sample. In contrast, autonomy has a much stronger effect on Gen Z, having a 79.3 percent higher standard estimate than competence. What we have found suggests that employers can better engage their Gen Z employees at work by creating task structures that enable them to experience a higher sense of agency, volition, and psychological freedom (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

Qualitative analysis

We conducted semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into the statistical relationships uncovered through the study's quantitative surveys. Our interviews examined how the key job design elements of autonomy, competence, and relatedness influence important values, including amotivation, job engagement, time commitment, and work intensity. Additionally, generational differences between Generations Y and Z were explored. This visual, as we have shown in Figure 4, highlights the key generational differences that emerged from the qualitative analysis regarding the variables of interest. The web summarizes how Generations Y and Z responded differently to factors like autonomy, competence, engagement, and intensity while also calling out the common findings that applied to both generations.

Autonomy job design on amotivation

Having the agency to think and contribute is essential to one's autonomy. This variable is geared towards their agency to be themselves and act freely to contribute to the company and their personal goals. Six out of eight respondents (with four of them from Gen Y) mentioned that understanding their roles (i.e., their job responsibilities and work space) fosters a sense of agency. Understanding one's roles and responsibilities also fosters competency, which may hint towards an interconnected relationship between autonomy and competence. In conjunction with this observation, a lowly-motivated Gen Y participant emphasizes that:

It is important to have rules and guidelines. Without them, it would be chaotic. But I think it is also important to understand your role, your scope of responsibilities, but especially your purpose in the company. […] I use the experience so I can learn more about my role and ready myself to be a more compelling problem solver at the company.

Looking at the factors affecting amotivation, participants are driven by three factors

(ranked by importance), namely, (1) self-improvement by learning and growing, (2) contributing to company goals or helping others, and (3) economic factors like benefits packages, promotions, and recognition.

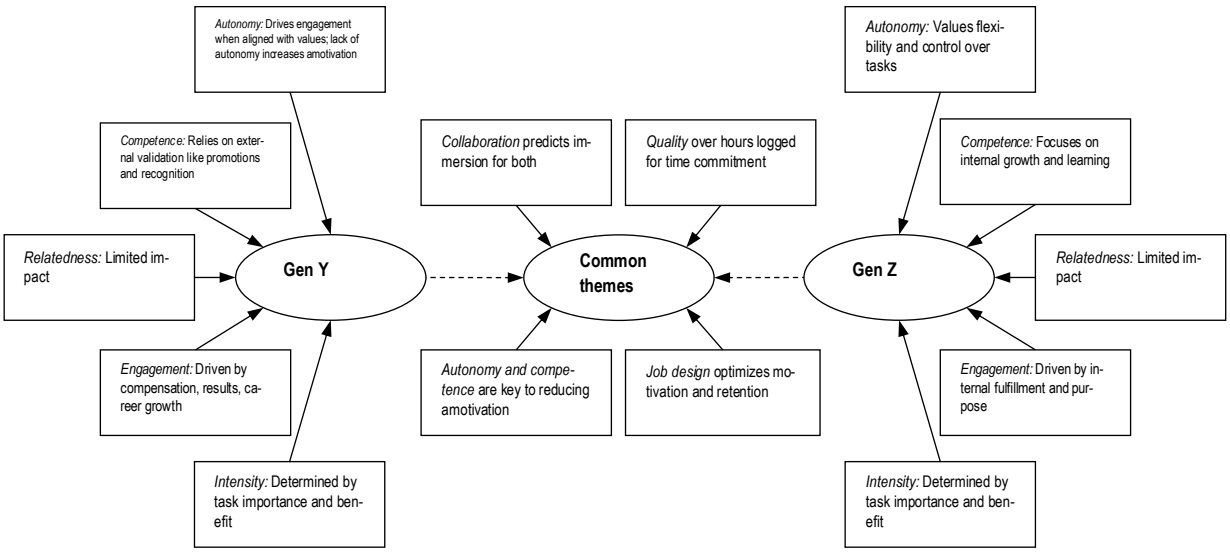

Figure 4 Emerging thematic web analysis of key generational differences
Source: Authors' illustration

The qualitative interview reveals how all the participants are internally motivated and are on the journey of continuously improving themselves. Hence, experiencing lapses in any of these three factors demotivates them. A recurring theme among three highly-amotivated participants is how paying bills and working for a promotion incentivizes them to work. With these findings, it makes sense how three interviewees (with two classified under high amotivation) raised that doing tasks outside their role demotivates them because they are not paid to do such tasks. However, two respondents from Gen Y say they understand that the following management directives (e.g., company systems and processes) are necessary aspects of employee life despite the fact that, in some cases, they restrict their autonomy.

Management plays an important role in driving employee motivation because highly-amotivated participants, regardless of their generation, aired how not feeling valued by the company adds to their amotivation levels. Such factors that add to the feeling include poor working conditions (e.g., poor benefits packages, minimal tools or equipment to support them in doing their tasks) and management's resistance to change (e.g., employees' projects or initiatives are disregarded due to varying reasons, such as misalignments in resources and priorities). Given these findings, management can benefit from underscoring the value of every task they assign and the freedoms they give to their employees to accomplish their work.

Autonomy job design on job engagement

Consistent with the quantitative findings, we found that employees who exhibit higher levels of task agency (autonomy) are more likely to be engaged at work. An interviewee summarized the sentiment of six others by sharing how she becomes more immersed (job engagement: absorption) and involved (job engagement: dedication) in her tasks when she can afford to showcase creativity and make decisions that align with personal values and professional goals, highlighting the significant role autonomy plays in driving job engagement. Having autonomy encourages ownership over tasks, which, according to a Gen Y participant, leads to high-engagement behaviors that organizations would benefit from:

I constantly seek opportunities to improve processes, enhance communication, and promote innovation within our team. […] I strive to

implement positive changes that lead to increased productivity, efficiency, and overall success in our work environment.

Competence job design on amotivation

We further categorize engagement into three dimensions: vigor (working hard), dedication (being involved), and absorption (being immersed). In terms of vigor and dedication, all eight interviewees identified self-fulfillment as a motivating factor that drives their efforts. Within the realm of self-fulfillment, six out of eight participants (three from each generational group) mentioned that they work hard when the task boosts their self-confidence. The same number of participants expressed that they exert extra effort when the task offers an opportunity for growth and learning. When the task aligns with this need for learning and growing, they feel engaged in their work. A Gen Y interviewee says:

I get excited about the prospect of picking up a thing or two in the process because I know that it will be an opportunity to grow.

Moreso, six interviewees (four from Gen Y) also feel engaged when the task impacts stakeholders (helping the company, helping others). Interestingly, three Gen Y employees also mentioned that being compensated well for their efforts also drives their engagement. With this, their engagement increases when tasks align with employees' goals and competencies, irrespective of their motivation levels and generation. This result aligns with Pranitasari et al.'s (2022) finding that increasing employee competence increases their work engagement, particularly by focusing on their assignments and how well these align with their talents and interests, which make them "like their work."

Echoing the relationship between competence and amotivation, highly-amotivated Gen Ys tend to rely more heavily on external factors, such as observing the outcomes of their work (i.e., witnessing project continuity, achieving key performance indicators), seeking career advancements, securing promotions, and receiving acknowledgements from supervisors, team members, and clients. On the other hand, regardless of their amotivation score, Gen Zs primarily derives a sense of achievement internally. They associate engagement with growth and learning, and their involvement at work is heightened when their projects yield positive results for the company, much like their Gen Y counterparts.

Moving on to absorption, seven out of eight participants indicate that they experience the highest level of immersion at work when collaboration is involved in their tasks. Working alongside stakeholders and witnessing the impact of their contributions emerges as a common trend for both Gens Y and Z interviewees. As such, a collaborative environment or task structure can contribute to employees' overall engagement.

Relatedness job design on amotivation

Unlike autonomy and competence, relatedness does not play a significant role in amotivation. Seven out of eight participants mentioned how their most significant driver of relatedness is their work environment being a safe space to connect and interact with people. Upon digging deeper, we found that participants primarily mingled to facilitate work. A highly-amotivated participant said:

You may need to ask for favors from other departments. So, it is important to build connections to help with that.

Nevertheless, a lowly-amotivated interviewee who shares the same sentiment as the recently cited highly-amotivated interviewee revealed that shared experiences, collaborative projects, and casual conversations help establish common ground and form connections with colleagues, suggesting that feelings of belongingness (relatedness) on a personal level can arise from professional interactions. However, we cannot conclude that relatedness has a significant role in amotivation because participants with both high and low amotivation do not lose or gain motivation through their closeness with their teams or the frequency of their interactions.

Relatedness job design on job engagement

Relatedness does not directly affect job engagement. The interviewees revealed that their

source of engagement mainly comes from activities that spur feelings of competence, such as contributing positive impact to the company and other stakeholders and getting recognition and compensation for the work:

There are times that I feel I don't feel motivated to work. However, when that happens, I always keep in mind that I am helping people—my team and my clients—through the work I do. No matter how big or small that is, I always take pride in it as I am somewhat helpful to society. Also, work pays the bills.

While relatedness does not significantly impact engagement, it is not without merit. Establishing connections towards belongingness nurtures accountability over projects and other people.

Job design and job engagement on work intensity

Dedication, which refers to deriving a sense of significance and importance from one's work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), emerges as the crucial dimension in job engagement because it validates the quantitative findings of job engagement acting as a mediating variable to work intensity. According to the interviews, participants work intensely depending on the importance of the task:

I'll devote my attention and energy, depending on that certain job's level. I have a daily to-do-list for myself […]. I try to chop down things I need to do in a day. Once I'm done, I could advance tasks for the remaining days of the week. But if this task is something that needs to be done ASAP, I can put the others on pause.

This narrative aligns with dedication, confirming the quantitative findings of job engagement acting as a mediating variable to work intensity. Identifying the task's importance is mainly measured by its benefit to the company (improved key performance indicators, decreased costs) and other stakeholders (improved efficiency, supporting tools), by their position's expected responsibilities, or tasks that can further their own growth. Hence, if the task aligns with these factors, they work intensely and prioritize it. Otherwise, they save their energy on ad hoc tasks.

Job design and job engagement on time commitment

Echoing the quantitative results, time commitment is not significantly affected by any variable in job design, amotivation, or job engagement. The participants acknowledged that investing long hours in the office does not necessarily equate to productivity. Instead, they emphasize the importance of focusing on the quality of their output, and they prioritize understanding the goals of a project and contributing their efforts to achieve those goals effectively. An interviewee shared how:

[T]he recognition I receive is not solely based on the hours I keep, but also on the quality of work and the outcomes I deliver […]. I believe that it's the quality of work and the outcomes achieved that truly matter. While arriving early and occasionally leaving late may contribute to my overall work ethic, I strive to focus on delivering results and contributing to the team's success rather than simply being associated with specific arrival or departure times.

Discussion

The e-commerce industry has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, intensifying the competition for top talent, particularly among Generations Y and Z. We highlight the significance of job design in influencing employee motivation, engagement, time commitment, and work intensity, with a focus on the sub-elements of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

Our findings reveal that autonomy and competence are key drivers of job engagement and motivation for both Gens Y and Z employees (Lartey, 2021). Providing opportunities for independent thinking, decision-making, learning, and growth fosters a sense of ownership and enables employees to contribute meaningfully to their organizations (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Conversely, limited autonomy is a significant driver of amotivation. The study also suggests a positive feedback loop between competence and autonomy, where employees who demonstrate high levels of autonomy are

granted more opportunities to enhance their skills and advance their careers, further reinforcing their sense of competence (Van den Broeck et al., 2010; Lartey, 2021).

While both generations value autonomy and competence, there are notable differences in their preferences. Generation Z places a stronger emphasis on flexibility, control, and continuous skill development, whereas Generation Y prioritizes external validation, such as career development and meeting performance targets (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Organizations must tailor their approach to cater to these generational differences.

We also underscore the detrimental effects of micromanagement on employee autonomy and competence (Delgado et al., 2015). To promote these critical elements, organizations should establish clear expectations regarding job roles and processes, enabling employees to explore alternative methods for achieving desired outcomes (Delgado et al., 2015). This approach not only enhances productivity but also fosters a greater sense of personal effectiveness. Surprisingly, the quantitative results indicate that relatedness does not significantly impact the studied variables. Qualitative interviews, however, reveal that both generations highly value a sense of belongingness in the workplace (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This suggests that job engagement may be primarily driven by intrinsic motivators like autonomy and competence, allowing organizations to retain talent even with suboptimal work cultures (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

Lastly, we found differences in the influence of job design on work intensity between generations. While job engagement fully mediates this relationship for Generation Y, the qualitative findings indicate that perceived task importance is the primary driver of work intensity for both generations (Shkoler & Kimura, 2020). Employees are more likely to increase their work intensity when they believe their tasks significantly contribute to organizational success and stakeholder well-being. What we have found emphasize the importance of considering generational differences in job design to optimize employee motivation, engagement, and performance (Mahmoud et al., 2020). Organizations should focus on fostering autonomy, competence, and perceived task importance to create an environment that attracts, engages, and retains top talent from Gen Y and Gen Z, ultimately contributing to the success and growth of the e-commerce industry.

Conclusion

In this study, we investigated the impact of job design on amotivation, job engagement, time commitment, and work intensity among Gens Y and Z employees in the Philippine e-commerce industry. Our mixed-methods approach revealed that job design significantly influences amotivation and job engagement, with autonomy and competence emerging as critical factors. Relatedness, however, had minimal impact. We also found that job engagement fully mediates the relationship between job design and work intensity. These findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of amotivation in the workplace by identifying key job design elements that affect it and its consequent impact on employee behaviors. Practically, our results guide organizations in designing jobs that optimize motivation and engagement for Gens Y and Z employees, ultimately leading to improved talent acquisition and retention. Our study's substantive contribution lies in its exploration of amotivation in the context of the growing e-commerce industry and its focus on the increasingly dominant Gens Y and Z workforce. Methodologically, using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between the variables, with qualitative findings providing context and explanation for the quantitative results. Our research highlights the importance of considering generational differences in job design and the need to further investigate amotivation in diverse industries and contexts.

Recommendations

Based on our findings, we recommend that e-commerce organizations collaborate with employees in job design analysis to enhance autonomy, competence, and relatedness in job roles. Managers should emphasize autonomy and cultivate a learning-oriented environment to support competence development, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Although relatedness had no significant impact on job engagement, promoting collaboration can contribute to a supportive and inclusive work environment, facilitating innovation and knowledge sharing, as per SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). We recommend that future researchers extend the study beyond the e-commerce industry to investigate job design practices in different sectors and explore alternative mediators, such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, to uncover additional pathways linking job design to SDGs 4 and 8. The limitations of this study include its focus on the e-commerce industry in the Philippines and the lack of a standardized definition for the generational cohorts, which may pose challenges for comparison.

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