






GENERATION Z AND ETHICALITY OF ADVANCEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: A STUDY OF SLOVENIA AND LITHUANIA

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Abstract. The main purpose of this study was to examine the ethicality of future employees' attitudes toward advancement in the workplace in Slovenia and Lithuania. This study focuses on students representing young adults from Generation Z as future employees in organizations. Using a survey of work-related issues, we collected 212 answers from Slovenian and 159 from Lithuanian students from business faculties. We used t-tests and regression analyses to obtain results. We found that the future employees in Slovenia see organizationally beneficial behavior and self-indulgent behavior significantly more acceptable for their advancement, than their Lithuanian peers. No differences exist in the perception of destructive behavior among participants from both countries. Substantial differences in the importance of personal values among Generation Z members in both societies, provide a strong support for the divergence nature of Generation Z across cultures. The impact of personal values on the ethicality of different behavior for advancement in the workplace among future employees in both societies is substantial, but biased and follows different patterns. In Slovenia, the dominant role has power, followed by hedonism, benevolence, security, conformity, tradition, and universalism, while in Lithuania, the dominant role belongs to self-direction, followed by tradition, universalism, security, achievement, and power. This study will help us to understand Generation Z values and their perceptions regarding ethicality of advancement in the workplace and enable organizations to manage the behavior of their future employees.

Keywords: Generation Z, personal values, Slovenia, Lithuania, unethical practices, ethicality, behavior, advancement in the workplace.

JEL Classification: M10, M12, M50.

Introduction

Over the last decade, one of the most important challenge for organizations has been the employment of new generation of employees (Twenge et al., 2010; Jenkins, 2015; Gomez et al., 2020). Currently, already more than one quarter of the employees in organizations

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belong to Generation Z, which is seen as a social group of “people born from the mid to late 1990s to early 2020” (Buzza, 2017; Schroth, 2019). Generation Z members share many traits with previous generation of Millennials, while they also bring in new patterns of behavior (Schroth, 2019; Weeks & Schaffert, 2019; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Generation Z have some unique traits (Buzza, 2017; Janssen & Carradini, 2021), have different attitudes and behaviors, and assign substantially different importance to personal values (Okoń-Horodyńska et al., 2020; Janssen & Carradini, 2021), compared to the previous generations (Twenge et al., 2010; Jenkins, 2015; Dimock, 2019).

In order for organizations to be able to successfully manage newcomers in organizations belonging to the Generation Z, a comprehensive insight into the behavior of future employees regarding advancement in the workplace is crucial. The extant literature has mainly addressed advancement in the workplace via assessing importance of different ethical behavior for advancement in the workplace (Egri et al., 2000; Hochwarter et al., 2000; Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002; Ralston et al., 2009). Different ethical behavior is typically categorized into several dimensions, and for example Ralston et al. (2009) identified three dimensions of strategies for advancement in the workplace, namely, organizationally beneficial behavior, self-indulgent behavior, and destructive behavior. Existing studies mainly included representative samples of an organization’s population, while only a few studies focused specifically on employees belonging to young adults (Ralston et al., 2009; Weeks & Schaffert, 2019). In addition, this literature stream is limited, as ethicality of different behavior for advancement in the workplace is typically assessed by professionals across diverse cultural contexts, revealing an absence of studies focusing on future employees belonging to young generations (Egri et al., 2000; Hochwarter et al., 2000; Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002; Ralston et al., 2009).

In the context of work-related preferences, Generation Z place the greatest importance on building a career (Tolstikova et al., 2020), career advancement (Kirchmayer & Fratříčová, 2018), and achievements (Schenarts, 2020). Despite the higher importance of building career for members of Generation Z (Schroth, 2011; Fratříčová & Kirchmayer, 2018), the literature puts the most emphasis on the question of how the use of modern technology influences the values and behavior of members of Generation Z (Scholtz & Rennig, 2019; Schenarts, 2020; Tolstikova et al., 2020).

The current literature in the field of advancement in the workplace does not provide evidence as to what future generations of employees are willing to do, to gain advancements in the workplace (Ralston et al., 2009; Maloni et al., 2019), and how their needs for achievement will be met (Schroth, 2019). Furthermore, the need to study Generation Z in the context of advancement in the workplace is heightened with their difference from previous generations (Twenge et al., 2010; Tormos et al., 2017; Jayathilake et al., 2021), leading to a lack of knowledge about the preferences of future generations regarding their preferences for advancement in the workplace. As Generation Z highly appreciate more money, financial security and advancement at the work place (Fratříčová & Kirchmayer, 2018), this triggers a debate on career advancement among member of Generation Z, which has so far not aroused much interest among researchers.

Our study seeks to identify young generations’ preferences about the importance of different ethical behavior regarding advancement in the workplace for future employees, by

examining their attitudes (Egri et al., 2000; Hochwarter et al., 2000; Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002; Ralston et al., 2009). Focusing on Generation Z, sparks the debate as to whether the Generation Z are similar across diversified societal contexts, as the opinions are biased (Maloni et al., 2019; Weeks & Schaffert, 2019). In terms of the convergence vs. divergence of Generation Z values across the globe, there is relatively sparse research regarding values (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Scholtz & Rennig, 2019; Tolstikova et al., 2020), and this does not provide a clear answer with regard to the convergent or divergent nature of Generation Z's values across the globe (Tormos et al., 2017; Scholtz & Rennig, 2019). From the perspective of societal-level convergence and crossvergence (Ralston, 2008), there is no definitive answer as to whether Generation Z's values across diverse cultures are really convergent, due to the lack of studies and biased results (Tolstikova et al., 2020). This triggers the question as to whether the macro-level "society" is a predictor of Generation Z's attitudes toward advancement in the workplace.

Studies of employees' attitudes toward advancement in the workplace have been performed in diverse cultural contexts (Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002; Ralston et al., 2009), implying that further studies should also be undertaken in various societal contexts (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Jayathilake et al., 2021). Coupled with the possible idea of societal-level convergence and divergence of Generation Z's values, it would be highly important to highlight Generation Z's values regarding advancement in the workplace in various societal-cultural contexts, to examine whether they differ.

With a view to incorporate different social contexts, we examined these values in two distinct societies, namely Slovenia and Lithuania. Due to the substantial lack of research regarding Generation Z's values in the former transition economies in Europe, we use Slovenia as a representative of Central European culture and Lithuania as a representative of Baltic culture (Hofstede, 1984; Ralston et al., 2011; Lu et al., 2020). The selection of these two countries reflects selection criterion in cross-cultural studies, where societies in the study should have similar sociocultural roots, but different macro-level situational circumstances for development in last decades (Ralston et al., 2009). This gives us the opportunity to examine the attitudes of future employees regarding advancement in the workplace in distinct cultures, undergoing different transitional processes toward a free-market economy since the 1990s, and current economic development.

With this research, we test whether the perception of Generations Z regarding the ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace is culturally bonded. For that reason, we will examine the role of diverse cultural contexts on Generation Z's perception of ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace. We also address the perception of ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace for both considered countries in the study and explain rationales for obtained results.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section provides an overview of the literature by defining three types of unethical behavior in context of advancement at the workplace, Generation Z and personal values. Based on outlined theoretical cognitions four hypotheses of the research are formulated. Next section presents used methods, instrument, samples and research design. Third section outlines results of the study. In fourth section results are discussed. The final section provides conclusions.

1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

The business ethics has attracted the research interest of academics and practitioners in the last decades (Gino et al., 2009; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019). The history of researches about ethical issues of organizational operating and behavior is a long one, and includes “studies conducted before 1960s”, “establishment of business ethics as scientific discipline in the 1980s”, and “researches conducted after mid-1980s” (De George, 1987; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019).

The initial studies of ethics in organizations created basic theories and knowledge about ethical research and validation of operating and working relations of organizations through consideration of the use of operating factors – operating resources, objects of work and labor, relations between operating factors, working relations and relations of organizations to the environments (Trevino et al., 2006; Rupp et al., 2015; Maloni et al., 2019). The results of this research have enabled the conceptualization of business ethics as “a form of applied ethics or professional ethics that examines ethical principles and morals or ethical problems that may arise in a business environment” (De George, 1987, p. 205).

Increasing organizations’ interest for ethical issues has led to numerous studies on multi-functional conceptualization of business ethics – i.e. ethics as entity of actions and practices in various functional areas of the organization such as production, accounting, marketing, etc. (Moorhead & Griffin, 1995; Trevino et al., 2014), and multi-levels conceptualization – i.e. ethics at micro-, mezzo- and macro-levels in organizations, and specified individuals, groups, organizations, and society as their main subjects (Goodpaster, 1992; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019).

Significant progress in understanding business ethics was made in the 1980s when researchers have expanded research on business ethics with ethical behavior of organizations, different forms of ethical behaviors and the need of organizations to achieve social goals (Gino et al., 2009; Rupp et al., 2015). The treatment of ethical behavior in organizations is based on the findings of social psychology which defined human behavior as “a range of actions and reactions made by humans in conjunction with themselves or their environment, which includes the other humans around as well as the inanimate physical environment” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 14) and organizational behavior as “human behavior in organizational settings, the interface between human and organization behavior, and the behavior of the organization itself” (Moorhead & Griffin, 1995, p. 4).

Less consensus is among researchers regarding the contextual conceptualization and definition of “ethical behavior” (Trevino et al., 2006; Moore et al., 2012). Some researchers judge the ethical behavior based on the adequacy of stakeholders’ behavior to achieve governing principles of organizations (Minton & Khale, 2014), while social theorists expand the assessment of ethics of behavior by considering social dimensions and established ethical behavior as “behavior of a stakeholders which goes beyond what is legal and doing what is right” (De George, 1987, p. 207). Such behavioral studies advanced theoretical cognitions about ethical behaviors of organizations (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Guerrero et al., 2021), appropriate behaviors of organizations themselves and their stakeholders (Gino et al., 2009; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019), and promoted mutually supportive actions and initiatives for linking of business

goals and social roles in achieving the ethical behavior of organizations (Guerrero et al., 2021; Janssen & Carradini, 2021).

Based on theoretical presumptions about the judgment of behavior ethicality, scholars have developed several classifications of ethical behavior in organizations – such as classifications of Trevino et al. (2006), Rupp et al., (2015) and Ralston et al. (2009). In our analysis we follow the work of Ralston and peers (Egri and Ralston, 2004; Ralston et al., 2009) which considered ethicality of behavior in organizations through consideration of organizationally beneficial behavior – as desired and prescribed behavior in the organization, self-indulgent behavior – as behavior which to serve individuals in the organization for their egoistic interests, and destructive behavior – as behavior which directly hurt others as well as organization. We use this classification as a theoretical framework for analyzing of ethicality of working actions and a comparison analysis of actual behavior of individuals and applicable ethical norms of the organization (Ralston et al., 2009; Jayathilake et al., 2021).

The changing role and growing importance of employees for modern organizations has further focused researchers' attention on the actions and belonging behavior of individuals in organizations (Minton & Khale, 2014; Rupp et al., 2015). Among them are at the forefront the question of the realization of the interests, social role and working behavior of individuals in organizations (Trevino et al., 2014). Although many conceptual studies address employee ethics in organizations (Goodpaster, 1992; Gino et al., 2009), there is still insufficient empirical evidence to more comprehensively assess the state and development trends of employee ethical behavior in organizations, especially on issues of their affiliation, rewarding and promoting in organizations (Kaptein, 2008; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019).

By the studies of Kaptein (2008), Trevino et al. (2014), and Kish-Gephart et al. (2019) we focus our attention on social relations in organizations with analyzing of acceptability of different employees' behavior for their promotions on in the workplace. Several studies from the 1980s and 1990s reported that organizations give priority in promotion to employees who working ethically and which behavior follow valid social norms of organizations (Rupp et al., 2015). In addition, studies find that the promotion of employees in organizations depends on their fulfillment of organizational interests, respect accounting or auditing regularities, and appropriate working morality, etc. (Trevino et al., 2006; Kaptein, 2010). In contrast, studies on working practices of employees who did not follow valid legal and legitimate norms of related organizations e.g. connected with thefts, frauds, wastes, discrimination, and harassment, reported about negative impact of "un-ethical behavior" of employees' (Kaptein 2008; Gino et al., 2009). Due to the need of the organizations for highly professional and ethical staff were researchers expanding the treatment of employees to future employees – i.e. as a group of young adults (Maloni et al., 2019; Seibert, 2021) who complete different education programs, and are about to enter the labor market (Egri et al., 2000; Egri & Ralston, 2004).

The organization's consideration of the ethical behavior of employees or future employees for their advancement in career, has led to the development of a series of studies on how employees understand the connection between their behavior and the possibilities of their advancement (Egri et al., 2000; Trevino et al., 2006). Research in this area thus reports that employees perceive a link between their ethical behavior and their career development (Furrer et al., 2010; Rupp et al., 2015), a positive association between improving the ethics of

their behavior and faster progress in the workplace (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Gino et al., 2009) and the growing importance of social behavior in the workplace (Moorhead & Griffin, 1995; Kaptein, 2010).

However, studies on the importance of ethical behavior of employees and/or future employees for their promotion in organizations from different backgrounds revealed contradictory results, caused mainly by diverse of sociocultural influences on organization and employees' ethical norms and ethical behavior (Trevino et al., 2014; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019). Comparative intercultural research theories explain perceived differences with the way by which sociocultural factors in individual society effected on business ethics – such as divergence, convergence and cross-vergence effects (Egri et al., 2000; Ralston, 2008) and the way by which situational circumstances of environment effect on ethical behavior – such as advanced development or situational caused changes of ethics (Trevino et al., 2006; Gino et al., 2009).

In our analysis we research intercultural diversity in different countries with the use of “Global clustering of Countries culture” developed by Hofstede (1984), House et al. (2004), and Schwartz (1992). The concept of cultural clusters provides a framework for understanding and explaining cultural (and belonging ethical) diversity among future employees (Malmi et al., 2019; Seibert, 2021). Sociological and psychological researchers have used nine human behavior' dimensions for identification and definition of ten main cultural clusters, which include similar culture of nations with a shared history, religion, economic development, regional proximity, and other factors (Hofstede, 1984; Schwartz, 1992; House et al., 2004).

In this context, we focused our research on the comparison of samples of future employees – currently undergraduate and graduate students, from Slovenia and Lithuania, as examples of social groups from transition countries that have experienced the fastest economic development among the new members of the European Union in recent decades (Potočan & Mulej, 2007; Furrer et al., 2010). Globe project defines both countries as part of the East European cultural cluster and, based on cultural characteristics, places Slovenia in the East European sub-cultural cluster and Lithuania in the Baltic sub-cultural cluster (House et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2018). The results of past research suggest that the culture of selected countries was similarly influenced by the political, economic and cultural development of Central Europe until the Second World War, some similar characteristics of development during the socialist (in Slovenia) and communist (in Lithuania) development after 1945 until their independence (Slovenia 1991 and Lithuania 1990) and their rapid economic development after accession to the European Union (House et al., 2004). Past comparative studies of these two countries also suggest differences in their culture, especially regarding about Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Collectivism, Future Orientation, and Restraint, and Uncertainty Avoidance (see more in Hofstede (2018) and Schwartz (1992)).

Integration of studies regarding the ethical characteristics of young adults as future employees (Egri & Ralston, 2004), working relations in organizations (Gino et al., 2009; Kish-Gephart et al. 2019), importance of ethical working behavior for promotion of employees (Trevino et al., 2006; Ralston et al., 2011), and cultural diversity of Slovenia and

Lithuania (Potočan & Mulej, 2007; Furrer et al., 2010), guide our analysis of differences between presumptions of future employees from Slovenia and Lithuania about acceptability of different ethical behavior for their advancement in the workplace. Thus, we hypothesized:

H 1: Future employees from Slovenia and Lithuania perceive organizational beneficial ethics behavior in terms of advancement in the workplace significantly differently.

H 2: Future employees from Slovenia and Lithuania perceive self-indulgent ethics behavior in terms of advancement in the workplace significantly differently.

H 3: Future employees from Slovenia and Lithuania perceive destructive ethics behavior in terms of advancement in the workplace significantly differently.

Selected samples for our research include students as representatives of young adults who, according to “generation theory,” can be considered as Generation Z (Dimock, 2019; Gomez et al., 2020). Generation Z can be most generally understanding as a social cohort consisting of individuals born from the mid to late 1990s to early 2020 (Dimock, 2019; Schenarts, 2020). In explaining the characteristics and trends of ethical behavior of generations – including Generation Z (Weeks & Schaffert, 2019; Bulut & Maraba, 2021), scholars paid the most attention to their behavioral factors and especially their personal values (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Twenge et al., 2010).

In the literature, the values of individuals, social groups, or societies are addressed by individual “Theories of Values” (Schwartz, 1992; Trevino et al., 2006; Gino et al., 2009), from which we chose “Theory of Personal Values” developed by Schwartz (1992). He defined personal values as concept or beliefs referring to desirable behaviors or end states, transcending specific situations and for consideration of values developed value survey which includes 56 single questions – where 45 are used to compute the 10 different value types. Based on

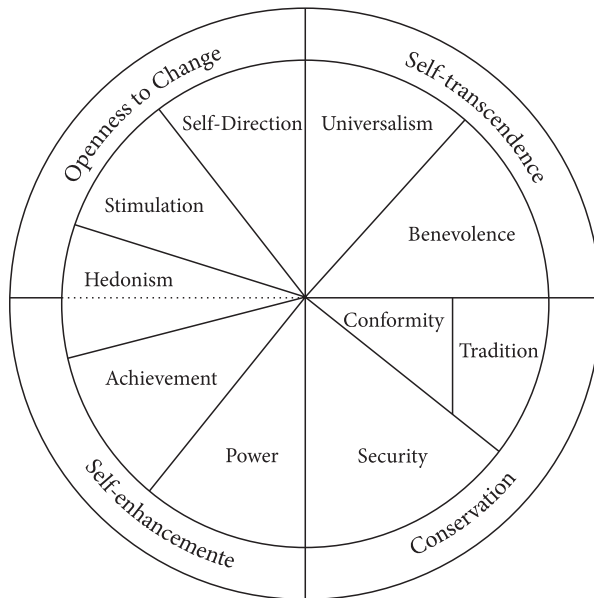


Figure 1. Universal structure of personal values

researching the importance of these values in 67 countries Schwartz (1992) proposed model of a universal structure of personal values, valid across cultures (see Figure 1, adapted from Schwartz, 1992).

In the last decades, researchers have addressed different issues related to the importance of personal values for transcending specific situations among young adults (Schroth, 2019; Mahmoud et al., 2021) – from different generations such as millennials, Generation Y, Generation Z, etc. (Twenge et al., 2010; Tolstikova et al., 2020). Schwartz (1992) and other researchers of personal values were empirically analyzed the characteristics of young adults' values (Ajzen, 2005), effects of these values on their behavior chain and its parts (Minton & Khale, 2014; Bulut and Maraba, 2021), relationships of personal values for other predictive factors of behavior (Minton & Khale, 2014; Weeks & Schaffert, 2019), and relationships of their values with prominent organizational factors (Fratriciova & Kirchmayer, 2018; Gomez et al., 2020).

Media describes Generation Z as digital natives who truly live and breathe a life of virtual connection (Janssen & Carradini, 2021; Mahmoud et al., 2021), care for the common good, believe that everyone has the right to be what they want in their lives, and support credible people and groups (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Tormos et al., 2017). Among the personal values of Generation Z past research exposed mainly their egalitarianism, individualism, interpersonal trust, tolerance towards diversity values orientation (Schroth, 2019; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021), and high importance of building career and prioritizing financial security (Tormos et al., 2017; Dimock, 2019; Scholtz & Rennig, 2019).

The analysis of personal values among young adults from countries belonging to different cultural clusters raises the question of similarities or differences in the development of values of individuals from same social cohort (Ralston, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). Thus, many past studies have highlighted the importance of similar socio-cultural developments of societies around the world for convergence forming of similar or same personal values and behaviors of individuals from each social cohort regardless of the location of their being (Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002; Tormos et al., 2017). In contrast, the second group of studies emphasized the importance of specific situational factors and conditions – and consequently diversified experiences of individuals, and different local environments for the development of individuals' values (Egri et al., 2000; Kish-Gephart et al., 2019). This in turn leads to a divergent development of values and ethical behavior among individuals from the social cohort themselves, living in different environments (Twenge et al., 2010; Scholtz & Renning, 2019).

In accordance with the latest studies (Okoń-Horodyńska et al., 2020; Bulut & Maraba, 2021), which mostly indicate prediction meaning of situational circumstances for development of personal values of individuals (Kish-Gephart et al., 2019; Gomez et al., 2020; Walters, 2020), we analysis divergence development of personal values among sampled young adults from different cultural clusters. We therefore hypothesize that:

H 4: The influence of personal values on the assessment of the ethicality of strategies for advancement in the workplace by future employees is different in two diverse societal contexts, namely, Slovenia and Lithuania.

2. Methods

2.1. Instrument

A questionnaire entitled "A survey of work related issues", developed by The University Fellows International Research Consortium (University of Oklahoma) under supervision of Prof. Dr. David Ralston and his research group (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Furrer et al., 2010) was used to collect the responses from business students. Its first part includes a list of personal values, as defined in Schwartz's value survey (Schwartz, 1992). The second part includes 38 short scenario (Egri et al., 2000) items regarding possible strategies for advancement in the workplace. The third part consist of 25 items aimed at measuring the economic, natural, and social aspects of organization's corporate social responsibility (Furrer et al., 2010). The last part consists of ten personal and organizational demographic variables, typically used in business studies (Egri & Ralston, 2004). The questionnaire was initially developed for use on samples of employees. The authors adapted the wording so that students could assess their attitudes from the viewpoint of future employees.

The original instrument, which is the basis for this in our study, was used on different generations like Generation X, baby boomers and silent generation (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Ralston et al., 2009). Evidences of using same instrument on different generations can also be found in the literature, where same questionnaire was used across various generation ranging from Baby Boomer, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z (Maloni et al., 2019; Bencsik et al., 2021; Guerrero et al., 2021). Based on these presumptions we used adopted version of above-mentioned questionnaire developed by the consortium on Generation Z, despite it was not initially developed for surveying Generation Z.

2.2. Sample and procedure

Our sample consisted of 212 and 159 responses from Slovenian and Lithuanian business students, respectively. The respondents in both countries were selected using convenience sampling. The survey was conducted in the academic year 2017/2018 and included business students from diverse years of study. In Slovenia, it was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business (University of Maribor), and in Lithuania it was performed at Faculty of Business Management (Vilnius Gediminos Technical University). The surveying was conducted during classes and all students participated voluntarily. We followed ethical procedures and ensure anonymity of the respondents. Participants did not receive any reward for participation in the survey.

Examination of students, as future employees, is established practice in business research. Researchers had assessed attitudes toward business ethics of Finnish and American business students, who were considered as future managers (Grunbaum, 1997), investigated students' perceptions of ethical organizational climates and attitudes towards ethical issues, where students were considered as a new generation of employees (Jaffe & Tsimmerman, 2005), examined work values of business student from Canada and France (Zhang et al., 2007) and business students at U.S. universities (Maloni et al., 2019), among others. Besides that, we presupposed that students have already become familiar with business environment, as they

have mandatory studying practice, as part of their study program, while are performing in student work during their study.

The average age of Slovenian business students was 21.61 years, and that of Lithuanian students was 20.85 years. In the Slovenian sample, 26.9 percent of participants were males and 73.1 percent were females, and in the Lithuanian sample, 30.8 percent were males and 69.2 percent were females. With regard to the level of study, the Slovenian sample included 78.8 percent bachelor students and 21.2 percent master's students. The Lithuanian sample included 84.9 percent bachelor students and 15.1 percent master's students.

2.3. Measures

Student attitudes toward the ethicality of different behavior for advancement in the workplace were assessed using 38 short scenario items from the second part of the questionnaire. We flipped the original scale, so that respondents rated each statement based on an 8-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely acceptable) to 8 (extremely unacceptable). Each scenario started with, "As a strategy to get ahead at my work, my future co-workers would consider it acceptable (ethical) to ...".

Based on the results of confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) of the 38 short scenario items, we formed three groups of behavior for advancement in the workplace ($KMO = 0.969$ indicates that sampling is adequate, and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .001$) justifies the utilization of factor analysis (Hair et al., 1998). We formulated constructs based on a study by Ralston et. al. (2009), which identified three groups of behavior for advancement at the workplace. We followed the confirmatory approach, because the central purpose of our contribution is to research the attitudes towards advancement in the workplace in two different cultural clusters as perceived by future employees. This approach is supported with alignment of our dimensions of behavior with those in previous studies (Ralston et al., 2009).

Cronbach's alpha reliabilities, average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) are well above the commonly accepted thresholds. This additionally provide a strong support for same factorial structures, as established in prior research (Ralston et al., 2009). Table 1 outlines the factor loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's α for three groups of behavior for advancement in the workplace in our study.

For the three groups of strategies, all measures of the internal consistency (Cronbach's α) are well above the cut-off point of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978), ranging between 0.898 and 0.922. Factor loadings range between 0.589 and 0.777, which is way above conventional cut-off values (Dabić et al., 2021). In terms of the convergent validity of measures, the CR for the three measures is well above the suggested threshold of 0.600 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE is slightly below the suggested level of 0.500 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), although based solely on CR alone, it can be judged as to whether the convergent validity of the measure is adequate (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, p. 46). We can sum up that the three formed measures of strategies for advancement in the workplace are reliable.

Personal values were measured using Schwartz's value survey, which includes a list of 56 single personal values (Schwartz, 1992). Respondents in the survey rate each of 56 personal values using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "opposed to my values" (-1)

Table 1. Measurement items, factor loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's alpha for three groups of strategies for advancement in the workplace (created by the authors)

| | Factor loadings | AVE | CR | Cronbach's α |
|---|-----------------|------|------|---------------------|
| "As a strategy to get ahead at my work, my future co-workers would consider it acceptable (ethical) to ...". | | | | |
| <i>Organizationally beneficial behavior</i> | | .451 | .830 | .898 |
| Demonstrate the ability to get the job done | .661 | | | |
| Help subordinates to develop their skills so that the subordinates, in turn, will be in a position to help them attain their objectives | .635 | | | |
| Behave in a manner that is seen as appropriate in the company | .743 | | | |
| Ask to be given the responsibility for an important project | .750 | | | |
| Maintain good working relationships with other employees, even if they dislike these other employees | .589 | | | |
| Work overtime, if necessary, to get the job done | .636 | | | |
| <i>Self-indulgent behavior</i> | | .474 | .818 | .922 |
| Spread rumors about someone or something that stands in the way of their advancement | .672 | | | |
| Try to influence the boss to make a bad decision, if that decision would help them to get ahead | .679 | | | |
| Use their network of friends to discredit a person competing with them for a possible promotion. | .682 | | | |
| Withhold information to make someone else look bad | .646 | | | |
| Blame another for their own mistakes | .758 | | | |
| <i>Destructive behavior</i> | | .590 | .878 | .912 |
| Threaten to give valuable company information to someone outside the organization if their demands are not met | .774 | | | |
| Offer sexual favors to a superior | .767 | | | |
| Try to create a situation where a competitor for a promotion might be caught using illegal drugs or engaging in some other illegal activity | .777 | | | |
| Steal secret corporate documents and give them to another company in return for a better job at the other company | .766 | | | |
| Make anonymous, threatening phone calls to psychologically stress a competitor for a promotion | .757 | | | |

to “of supreme importance” (7). We collapsed single values into ten individual level sub-dimensions, namely power (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.650$), achievement ($\alpha = 0.582$), hedonism ($\alpha = 0.432$), stimulation ($\alpha = 0.651$), self-direction ($\alpha = 0.595$), universalism ($\alpha = 0.787$), benevolence ($\alpha = 0.698$), tradition ($\alpha = 0.608$), conformity ($\alpha = 0.470$), and security ($\alpha = 0.649$). Cronbach’s α ranged from 0.432 to 0.787, which is comparable to the other surveys using 10 dimensions as defined in Schwartz’s value theory (Schwartz, 1992). For instance, Ralston et al. (2011), in their study of values in 50 societies, reported comparable reliability measures, where, for instance, the mean Cronbach’s α for power was 0.65, for stimulation was 0.65, and that for security was 0.60, to mention few of them. Furthermore, in their study, hedonism ranged between 0.12 and 0.70. We can sum up by stating that measuring personal values in our study is adequate and the measures are reliable.

2.4. Research design and analysis

Our research had three steps. First, the elements of the descriptive statistics and zero-ordered correlations among the variables of interest for the aggregated sample of the Slovenian and Lithuanian business students were outlined. Second, the results of the independent sample t-test regarding business students’ perceptions about the ethicality of the three groups of strategies for advancement in the workplace were outlined, as well as for the ten dimensions of personal values. In the final step, we used regression analyses in order to determine the impact of personal values on business students’ perceptions about the ethicality of the three groups of strategies for advancement in the workplace. All the calculations were performed in IBM SPSS 24.0.

In the interest of space, and mainly due to the neutral or weak influence of demographic variables (age, gender, and level of study), as well as non-significant models in the frame of hierarchical regression analysis, we did not include demographic variables in further analysis.

The possibility of bias exists, since we have a single source of data (Podsakoff et al., 2012). We estimated the common method variance by using the Harman single-factor technique in SPSS. Within factorial analysis, items comprising the three groups regarding advancement in the workplace (17 scenarios) and 10 dimensions of personal values (56 values) were loaded onto a single factor and constrained so that there was no rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The newly introduced common latent factor explains 18.90% of the variance, which is way below the acceptable level of variance of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Regarding the multicollinearity, our tolerance values are greater than 0.10 and our VIF values are way below 10 (Hair et al., 1998, p. 14), indicating that multicollinearity is not an issue in this research.

3. Results

Table 2 shows the mean values, standard deviations, and zero-ordered correlations among variables in the study for the aggregated sample of Slovenian and Lithuanian respondents.

Several associations from Table 2 are noteworthy. First, the significant impact of country on personal values and the perception of the three dimensions of possible behavior for advancement in the workplace demonstrates a need for deeper examination of the role of

Table 2. Mean values, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables (created by the authors)

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
|--|-------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1. Age | 21.28 | 1.45 | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender | 1.72 | .46 | -.22** | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Level of study | 1.19 | .39 | .73** | -.17** | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Country | 1.43 | .50 | .26** | -.04 | -.08 | - | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Power | 4.13 | 1.21 | -.07 | -.01 | -.03 | -.30** | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Achievement | 4.79 | .99 | -.05 | .02 | -.03 | -.25** | .58** | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Hedonism | 5.43 | 1.06 | -.06 | .02 | -.02 | -.21** | .40** | .38** | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Stimulation | 4.16 | 1.42 | -.09 | .02 | -.07 | -.28** | .49** | .56** | .45** | - | | | | | | | | |
| 9. Self-direction | 5.24 | .85 | -.01 | .06 | .02 | -.16** | .41** | .71** | .43** | .55** | - | | | | | | | |
| 10. Universalism | 4.90 | 1.01 | .04 | .05 | -.01 | .00 | .20** | .37** | .20** | .31** | .54** | - | | | | | | |
| 11. Benevolence | 5.32 | .85 | -.05 | .03 | -.06 | .01 | .23** | .42** | .23** | .26** | .50** | .61** | - | | | | | |
| 12. Tradition | 3.48 | 1.28 | -.03 | -.04 | .00 | -.17** | .40** | .36** | .29** | .26** | .34** | .51** | .50** | - | | | | |
| 13. Conformity | 4.84 | 1.29 | -.13* | .08 | -.14** | -.18** | .44** | .41** | .25** | .29** | .42** | .45** | .56** | .52** | - | | | |
| 14. Security | 5.23 | .88 | -.08 | .15** | -.08 | -.12* | .46** | .48** | .33** | .39** | .54** | .60** | .60** | .52** | .56** | - | | |
| 15. Organizationally beneficial behavior | 2.74 | 1.07 | -.14** | -.06 | -.08 | -.36** | .17** | -.02 | .08 | .03 | -.04 | -.11* | -.15** | .08 | -.03 | -.10 | - | |
| 16. Self-indulgent behavior | 5.95 | 1.09 | -.05 | .04 | -.02 | -.38** | .01 | .08 | .01 | .08 | .18** | .10* | .10 | .02 | .18** | .13* | .12* | - |
| 17. Destructive behavior | 7.21 | 1.05 | -.03 | .15** | -.02 | -.00 | -.18** | -.02 | -.17** | -.06 | .08 | .06 | .13* | -.12* | .07 | .15** | -.14** | .54** |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

sociocultural context. Second, the plethora of significant associations between personal values and the three dimensions related to the advancement in the workplace demonstrate the need for the examination of the role of personal values in shaping the perception of future employees belonging to Generation Z regarding the ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace.

Table 3 outlines the attitudes of future employees regarding advancement in the workplace for Slovenian and Lithuanian participants.

Table 3. Ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace in Slovenia and Lithuania (created by the authors)

| Variables | Slovenia | | Lithuania | | t-test |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------|-----------|------|---------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | |
| Organizationally beneficial behavior | 2.41 | 1.07 | 3.18 | 1.07 | 7.32*** |
| Self-indulgent behavior | 5.59 | 0.96 | 6.43 | 1.12 | 7.73*** |
| Destructive behavior | 7.21 | 1.00 | 7.22 | 1.13 | .08 |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3 reveals that future employees in the Slovenian societal context see organizationally beneficial behavior and self-indulgent behavior as significantly more acceptable and consequently less ethical than their Lithuanian peers. No significant differences exist in the perception of destructive behavior among both countries. This gives support to Hypotheses 1 and 2, while offering a rejection of Hypothesis 3.

In Table 4 we outline the importance of personal values for future employees in Slovenia and Lithuania, which reveals that significant differences exist for eight out of ten dimensions of personal values between both countries. Thus, we are able to confirm the divergent nature of Generation Z in the two sampled societies.

Table 4. Personal values of future employees in Slovenia and Lithuania (created by the authors)

| Variables | Slovenia | | Lithuania | | t-test |
|----------------|----------|------|-----------|------|---------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | |
| Power | 3.82 | 1.15 | 4.55 | 1.16 | 6.04*** |
| Achievement | 4.58 | .95 | 5.08 | .97 | 5.01*** |
| Hedonism | 5.23 | 1.15 | 5.68 | .85 | 4.32*** |
| Stimulation | 3.81 | 1.41 | 4.62 | 1.30 | 5.64*** |
| Self-direction | 5.13 | .76 | 5.39 | .93 | 2.93** |
| Universalism | 4.90 | .93 | 4.89 | 1.12 | -.01 |
| Benevolence | 5.33 | .72 | 5.32 | 1.00 | -.09 |
| Tradition | 3.29 | 1.21 | 3.73 | 1.32 | 3.36** |
| Conformity | 4.65 | .98 | 5.10 | 1.58 | 3.19** |
| Security | 5.14 | .84 | 5.35 | .93 | 2.27** |

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Next, we present the impact of personal values on organizationally beneficial behavior (Table 5), self-indulgent behavior (Table 6) and destructive behavior (Table 7) for Slovenian and Lithuanian respondents.

Table 5. Regression analysis results for the impact of personal values on organizationally beneficial behavior (created by the authors)

| | Slovenia | Lithuania |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Power | .19* | .18 |
| Achievement | -.14 | -.34* |
| Hedonism | .00 | .08 |
| Stimulation | .00 | -.12 |
| Self-direction | -.07 | .40* |
| Universalism | .16 | -.37** |
| Benevolence | -.33*** | .22 |
| Tradition | .24** | .10 |
| Conformity | .00 | -.09 |
| Security | -.16 | -.17 |
| N | 212 | 159 |
| R ² | 18.2 | .14 |
| Model F | 4.41*** | 2.41* |

Note: Standardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 6. Regression analysis results for the impact of personal values on self-indulgent behavior (created by the authors)

| | Slovenia | Lithuania |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Power | -.22* | -.19 |
| Achievement | -.04 | -.09 |
| Hedonism | -.16** | -.05 |
| Stimulation | .05 | -.04 |
| Self-direction | .11 | .50** |
| Universalism | .20* | -.25 |
| Benevolence | .08 | -.08 |
| Tradition | -.05 | -.26* |
| Conformity | .26** | .16 |
| Security | -.06 | .23 |
| N | 212 | 159 |
| R ² | .19 | .17 |
| Model F | 4.70*** | 2.95** |

Note: Standardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 7. Regression analysis results for the impact of personal values on destructive behavior (created by the authors)

| | Slovenia | Lithuania |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Power | -.29** | -.30** |
| Achievement | .00 | .11 |
| Hedonism | -.21** | -.17* |
| Stimulation | .00 | -.05 |
| Self-direction | .04 | .32* |
| Universalism | -.03 | -.21 |
| Benevolence | .15 | -.03 |
| Tradition | -.12 | -.39** |
| Conformity | .04 | .19 |
| Security | .32** | .37** |
| N | 212 | 159 |
| R2 | .20 | .25 |
| Model F | 5.14*** | 4.48*** |

Note: Standardized regression coefficients are shown. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The results from Tables 5, 6 and 7 reveal a significant influence of personal values on future employees' perception of the ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace. It is seen that, in Slovenia, the dominant role belongs to power, followed by hedonism, benevolence, security, conformity, tradition and universalism, while in Lithuania, the dominant role belongs to self-direction, followed by tradition, universalism, security, achievement, and power. Based on biased impact of personal values on ethicality of behavior for advancement in the workplace in both societies, we support Hypothesis 4.

4. Discussion

The high importance of building career, prioritizing financial security and achievement orientation among generation Z (Turner, 2015; Schroth, 2019; Gomez et al., 2020; Tolstikova et al., 2020) naturally triggers the debate what are members of this generation willing to do to achieve these goals, viewed through the prism of workplace advancement. Assessing the ethicality of different behavior for advancement in the workplace reveals, that Slovenian future employees see the ethicality of organizationally beneficial behavior in a similar way to the early adult populations of Brazil, China, Germany and the U.S. (Ralston et al., 2009). Inversely, Lithuanians declare such behavior as substantially less acceptable than the Slovenians and the other mentioned samples. Lithuanians see the ethicality of this behavior in a similar way to the early adult populations of Brazil, China, Germany and the U.S. (Ralston et al., 2009). Inversely, Slovenians consider such behavior as more acceptable than their Lithuanian peers and the other mentioned samples.

Such perception of organizationally beneficial behavior and self-indulgent behavior by Lithuanians express their stronger work ethics, comparing to Slovenian peers, which is sup-

posed to be a feature of Generation Z (Schenarts, 2020; Vizcaya-Moreno & Pérez-Cañaveras, 2020). While for Slovenes “the work ethics feature” is not in the forefront, individualism become dominant in determining ethicality of actions for advancement in the workplace, comparing to Lithuanians, which is emphasized as an important feature of Generation Z (Jenkins, 2015; Pichler et al., 2021). More “individualistic nature” of Slovenian future employees compared to the Lithuanian peers, may stem also from the historical dominance of small businesses in Slovenia, which put in the forefront the individualist orientation, as well as rising culture of individualism in Slovenia, after the independence in 1990s.

Members of Generation Z are seen as individualistic and money conscious, but they are also concerned for their career in the future, morality and work ethics (Bulut & Maraba, 2021). We may further argue, that the need for ethics prevails among Lithuanians, while individualism comes to the forefront among Slovenes. The need for the achievements of Generation Z (Schroth, 2019) is more strongly expressed among Slovenes than Lithuanians. This is reflected in the lower perceived ethics regarding advancement in the workplace among Slovenes.

Regarding destructive behavior, there are no significant differences in assessing it between Slovenians and Lithuanians. This indicates, that when it comes to assessing ethics regarding destructive behavior in context of advancement in the workplace, individualism is no longer a key factor in behavior of Slovenes, but similar to the Lithuanians, another important feature of Generation Z comes to the fore, namely a strong commitment to work ethics (Schenarts, 2020; Bulut & Maraba, 2021). Furthermore, there is also no notable difference when comparing these values with the early adult populations of Brazil, China, Germany and the U.S. (Ralston et al., 2009). It becomes clearly evident that there are no generational differences when perceiving destructive behavior, which includes “dirty practices”. This follows from the fact that such practices are prohibited by law. Furthermore, there are no differences in perceptions of this behavior between cultures – i.e. Slovenia vs. Lithuania, although some researchers report differences between countries (Egri et al., 2000).

Looking at the state of personal values among Generation Z, significant differences exist regarding the importance of personal values, for eight out of ten dimensions of values between Slovenia and Lithuania.

Slovenian participants put on a pedestal benevolence values, indicating a more collectivistic value orientation, closely followed by individualistic value orientation (e.g., hedonism and self-direction). This combination of individualistic and collectivistic mindsets can be attributed to the long history of the collectivistic mindset in this area (Potočan & Mulej, 2007).

Lithuanians assign highest importance to hedonism and benevolence values. Looking deeper into the history, the values of Lithuanian society were strongly affected by historical events (i.e., independence was restored only thirty years ago) and the cultural values of neighbor countries, especially Russia for a long time. However, global tendencies and modernity have more and more impact on the mindset and the whole mental health of Lithuanian society.

In Lithuania, although there are traditions of collective work dating back to the Soviet period, as in Slovenia from the Yugoslavia period, people were highly individualistic in their pursuit of personal goals, even in unethical ways. This was especially true in Slovenia after

separation from Yugoslavia, where individualism skyrocketed, as numerous small enterprises were established, often out of the need to survive, due to the high level of unemployment. Turning to Lithuania, at the micro, mezzo and macro levels, selfishness, power, and influence similarly prevail (Zautraitė, 2009).

Thus, we can argue that in both societies, despite some differences, Generation Z continue to follow these traditions, resulting in high levels of competition in today's organizations and expressing a preference for self-direction, hedonistic satisfaction of their needs, striving to attain the greatest achievements at their workplace, which coincides with the priorities of Generation Z regard to building career and prioritizing financial security (Gomez et al., 2020; Tolstikova et al., 2020). Furthermore, we may argue that for both countries, looking through the importance of values, young generation places importance on individualism and independence, which is driving them to achieve their goals, even though unethical means, where the main motivation behind this might be also hedonism. The tendency toward individualism among participants of the survey in both countries is thus reflecting the characteristics of Generation Z (Jenkins, 2015; Schenarts, 2020; Tolstikova et al., 2020).

The results regarding the impact of personal values on the ethicality of organizationally beneficial behavior, self-indulgent behavior, and destructive behavior, in two societally diverse contexts, do not reveal similar patterns regarding the significance of the value groups for three groups of the behavior.

In Slovenia, the dominant role belongs to the power values. We can argue that the self-indulgent and destructive behavior are becoming more acceptable, and represent important means for achieving social status and prestige, even if this means lowering ethical standards.

We may further argue that Slovenians distinguish between two types of ethical behavior for advancement in the workplace, where self-indulgent and destructive behavior may be characterized both as destructive behavior. Thus, self-indulgence is legal destructive behavior, while destructive behavior is illegal destructive behavior (Egri et al., 2000), but both are harmful for the organization, while beneficial for individual. Organizationally beneficial behavior is acceptable, since it brings benefits to the organizations when individuals are striving for their goals. This again emphasizes the “more individualistic and egoistic nature” of Slovenian future employees, i.e., business professionals, which reflects the fact that Generation Z are more individualistic and self-focused (Schenarts, 2020).

In Lithuania, the unified impact of self-direction values on all three groups of behavior, may imply that all three groups are considered as “opposing the valid ethical standards”, even though that organizationally beneficial behavior may bring some benefits to the organizations. This shows higher commitment to the work ethics of Generation Z members in Lithuania, than in Slovenia, and supports the claims of strong work ethics among Generation Z (Schenarts, 2020; Vizcaya-Moreno & Pérez-Cañaveras, 2020).

Substantial differences in the importance of personal values among Generation Z members in both societies, coupled with differences in perceiving ethicality of organizationally beneficial behavior and self-indulgent behavior between examined societies, we found strong support for the divergence nature of Generation Z across cultures, reflecting some prior findings (Scholtz & Rennig, 2019).

In summary, it is perhaps surprising that Slovenes do not have values associated with individualism in the first place, as individualism is an important feature of Generation Z (Bulut & Maraba, 2021; Pichler et al., 2021), while at the same time the development of individualism in Slovenia has been on the rise recently. However, it is evident, that when it comes to issues related to the ethics of behavior regarding advancement in the workplace, the individualism of Generation Z among Slovenes clearly comes to the forefront. Turning to Lithuanians, their background could indicate the predominance of individualism, but just as with Slovenes, it does not come to the forefront when we monitor importance of personal values. Contrary to Slovenes, individualism does not come to the forefront, also when assessing the ethics of behavior regarding advancement in the workplace.

This study has following theoretical contributions. It reveals attitudes of Generation Z regarding the ethicality of different behavior for advancement in the workplace for the Generation Z, going beyond the existing cross-cultural studies, limited to samples of professionals and previous generations (Egri et al., 2000; Terpstra-Tong & Ralston, 2002; Ralston et al., 2009). Second, the findings contribute to the discussion about “convergence vs. divergence” issue (Ralston, 2008) among Generation Z across the globe. Our results tilt the tab on the scales in the direction of divergence of Generation Z values across cultures, complying with previous research reporting divergence nature of Generation Z values (Scholtz & Rennig, 2019; Tolstikova et al., 2020). In context of values, the paper contributes significantly to the understanding of the role and importance of individualism of Generation Z, which is an important feature of this generation, both in general sense and in the context of assessing the ethics of behavior regarding advancement in the workplace.

The results of this study will be beneficial for organizational practice in several ways. The strong emphasis on achievements and building a career among future employees (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018; Schroth, 2019; Schenarts, 2020) may lead to increased use of unethical principles to achieve goals regarding advancement of Generation Z. Despite claims of strong work ethics (Vizcaya-Moreno & Pérez-Cañaveras, 2020; Bulut & Maraba, 2021), a desire for rapid and frequent advancement, as well as desire to quickly make money and ensure financial stability (Gomez et al., 2020), may prevail. This implies that future employees may consider strategies for advancement in the workplace as more acceptable, due to their striving for money (Turner, 2015), money consciousness (Bulut & Maraba, 2021), and achievement orientation (Schroth, 2019). Here organizations must play a role in order to be better prepared to prevent such inclinations.

As one among most important motivator at work among future employees are good co-workers to work with them (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2018), it will be crucial to establish a stimulating working environment with clear and detailed advancement programs, which will enable future employees to forecast their career paths, and thus realize their search for wealth, position, prestige and status (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), as members of Generation Z consider good opportunities for advancement as the best incentive that will motivate them to work hard and stay longer within organization (Jayathilake et al., 2021). Therefore, organizations need to address these claims in order to minimize unethical behavior regarding advancement at the workplace. For instance, as they appreciate ethical values (Bulut & Maraba, 2021) organizations must capitalize on that in promote programs related to sustain-

ability, climate changes, etc. with the aim to address their goals related to the achievements in the workplace, to minimize potential occurrence of unethical behavior.

Arising from the desire to increase the welfare of their co-workers (especially in Slovenia), and welfare of society (especially in Lithuania), organizations should ensure that future employees will have the opportunity to contribute to the welfare of others, society and co-workers, for instance via including them in actions related to the preservation of the natural and social environment, climate change and hunger (Gomez et al., 2020).

Future employees also should have the opportunity to demonstrate their competence in order to achieve success in the organization. In that context, organizations should change their work practices, reward systems, flexibility of work, etc., in order to provide a simulative environment for Generation Z to realize their work-related preferences, like considering that Generation Z are very interested in work–life balance, among other (Kirchmayer & Fratričová, 2017). To sum, up, a special attention will thus have to be paid to the realization of the expectations of members of Generation Z, as its members are very achievement oriented, compared to previous generations (Schroth, 2019).

Conclusions

This research outlines the ethicality regarding advancement in the workplace of the future generation of employees belonging to Generation Z, by focusing on samples of Slovenian and Lithuanian business students. Lithuanians perceive organizationally beneficial behavior and self-indulgent behavior as significantly less acceptable than their Slovenian counterparts. There is no significant difference in the perception of destructive behavior among Slovenians and Lithuanians. The current state of personal values from Slovenia and Lithuania reveals differences for eight out of ten dimensions of values between societies and expose divergent nature of Generation Z values, for samples belonging to different societal context and culture clusters. The impact of values on the ethicality of strategies for advancement in the workplace among future employees in both societies is more biased. In Slovenia, the dominant role has power, followed by hedonism, benevolence, security, conformity, tradition, and universalism, while the pattern of the impact in Lithuania is rather different, as the dominant role belongs to self-direction, followed by tradition, universalism, security, achievement, and power.

The paper's main limitation is focusing on two small cultural clusters, namely Central Europe and the Baltic, which may limit broader generalization due to the divergent nature of Generation Z values. Another limitation lies in the used classification of personal values according to Schwartz's values survey, while we focused on ten dimensions of personal values. Another limitation is convenience sample, which limits the possibility of including participants which are geographically dispersed within a country. A minor limitation is also focusing on small proportion of the entire population of Generation Z in both countries.

The future research should examine whether the pattern of the results is valid beyond the two considered societal contexts and contribute to the debate about the convergence vs. divergence issues regarding Generation Z across various societal contexts. Beneficial will be also comparison to the perception of ethicality regarding advancement in the workplace

with previous generations. It would be also beneficial to examine the composition of groups of behavior for advancement in the workplace, as there may be differences in perceptions of ethical behavior regarding advancement at the workplace among generations, as current state of literature frequently highlights strong ethics among members of Generation Z.

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Author contributions

Conceptualization, ZN, KP, VVP; methodology, ZN, KKP; validation, VP, VVP; formal analysis, ZN, GL; investigation, KKP, VVP; resources, ZN, KP; data curation, ZN, GL; writing – original draft preparation, ZN, VVP, KKP; writing – review and editing, ZN, VP, KKP, VP; visualization, GL; supervision, KKP, VVP; and funding acquisition, ZN, VP, KP, KKP, GL, VVP. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

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