Erzsébet Tőzsér

A Survey of the Organizational Situation of New Generations at a County Police Headquarters in Hungary

Abstract

Our organization is also affected by problems arising from the increasing presence of new generations in the labour market, such as differences in values, conflict situations and succession related difficulties. Therefore, a survey on the situation of new generations was carried out at the county police headquarters in the summer of 2020 (Tőzsér, 2020a). As part of this, an online questionnaire was conducted with the command staff (73 people) and the age group born from (after) 1 January 1990 (60 people). Both questionnaires included a structured interview part, but we also obtained quantifiable data - by evaluating 10 values from two perspectives. The results confirmed that there are large differences in terms of the perspective of the representatives of the older and younger generations. Young people are willing to meet only purposeful expectations that can be interpreted by them, and their loyalty is limited and based on reciprocity. Commander expectations for certain parameters, such as load capacity (resilience), may not prevail because they are not as important to young people. At the same time, leaders see the fast, efficient, and open-minded thinking of young people as an advantage. Overall, the study confirms the presence of a constant dynamic need for modernization within the organization.

Keywords: police, generation, organizational psychology, organizational development

Introduction

Representatives of Generation Z have appeared on the labour market alongside Generation Y and are gaining more and more ground. The differences between

these generations compared to their predecessors may not only be obvious to the average observer, but they also differ from previous generations based on sociological and psychological literature (Meretei, 2017). It is worth reviewing the characteristics of the new generations (Y and Z), as there are more and more of them in our organization as well (Tegyey, 2019). By Generation Y, we mean the generation born between 1980 and 1995 who are considered the first digital native age group because the computer appeared in their childhood, so its use is natural for them (Tari, 2010). Representatives of Generation Y born after 1990 are very similar in their values and characteristics to the representatives of Generation Z, therefore the literature recommends the name of Generation YZ (Steigervald, 2020).

Generation Z is the age group of those born between 1995 and 2010 who are already true digital natives (Prensky, 2001) since they were born into the world of the Internet. For them, technical devices are an essential part of their everyday life (Tari, 2011). The frontal method of education and Prussian leadership are not understood by them. Their way of thinking is strongly visual, and they are experience-seekers, but at the same time they are characterized by avoidance of failure (Steigervald, 2020). The conflict of young and old people in society has been present in civilization from the beginning, but the differences between the new generations (YZ and Z) and the older generations have never been so conspicuous and tense (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, & Juhász, 2016). Technological development and the acceleration of life have led to the intensification of differences, the separation of values and the sharpening of differences (Tőzsér, 2020b). Young people no longer want to continue the lifestyle that their parents and grandparents did, such as to do their job as a duty above everything else. They change jobs at any time if that job does not meet their needs. Everyone evaluates the behaviour of the other generation through the glasses of their own generation's values, so we sometimes judge young people along values which are irrelevant to them. Young people are also reluctant to deal with what older people would expect of them, and do not even want to adapt to expectations that are uninteresting to them, they rather prefer change as a solution (Steigervald, 2020).

Thus, it seems clear that conflicts arising from intergenerational differences in values can also be perceived within the organization of the police, which can also have an impact on the functioning of the organization. Therefore, we tried to map the thinking of the young executive and command staff with the following questions:
• How can young people integrate into the hierarchical organization of the police?

- How well the representatives of the new generation succeed? (according to their commanders and their own opinion)
- What tools can we have to increase and improve integration and proficiency? (educational, institutional, organizational)

Methodology

After interviewing a few managers, we decided to take an online questionnaire survey, also taking into account the pandemic situation. During the study, we planned to fill in two online questionnaires, one for the command staff, in order to get a picture of the organizational integration and 'success' of the new generation through the eyes of their leaders. The other online questionnaire was for the organizational representatives of Generations YZ and Z, i.e., those who were born from 1 January 1990. Google's free GoogleForms questionnaire module provided the technical background for the study.

Questionnaire 1 - Commanders Questionnaire

The questionnaire for the command staff consisted of three parts. In the first part, we asked 10 questions requiring text answers about their young colleagues born from 1 January 1990. Then, ten properties (accuracy, confidence, discipline, flexibility, camaraderie, reasonableness, loadability, patience, independence, responsibility) were evaluated as two types of statements using a 7-point Likert scale. The first statement states for each property that it is necessary for the police officer, and the second states that the particular property characterizes well the members of the new generation (born from 1990).

Questionnaire 2 - Questionnaire of Generations YZ and Z

The questionnaire to be completed by Generations YZ and Z consisted of three parts. In this case, we asked 15 questions requiring text answers to young colleagues born from 1 January 1990, about their studies and organizational experience, vision, and suggestions. We asked them to indicate which law enforcement degree they have (secondary or higher), whether they are civilians, so that we can group their answers based on this. Then, the ten properties included in the commander questionnaire evaluated as two types of statements using a 7-point Likert scale. For each property, the first statement says that the particular property is necessary for a police officer and the second statement says that

the particular property is important to the respondent. In both questionnaires, other data were included, such as age, field of expertise, etc., however, due to the length of the study, the study cannot cover them in detail, so we only use them to characterize the sample population.

The Study

Completion data of the questionnaire for the command staff

According to position, group leaders, heads of sub-department, heads of department, head officials, heads of police station, heads of service, or directors were all included in the group of commanders. In the one-month time interval, a total of 73 people completed the questionnaire, which is almost half of the requested commanders (sent to 152 email addresses).

The distribution of areas of expertise among the respondents is shown in the diagram below; 44% representing the law enforcement line, 30% representing the criminal specialization and 26% representing other).

Figure 1: *Areas of expertise of the responding commanders*

|		
● Criminal:	22	30%
● Law enforcement:	32	44%
● Other:	19	26%
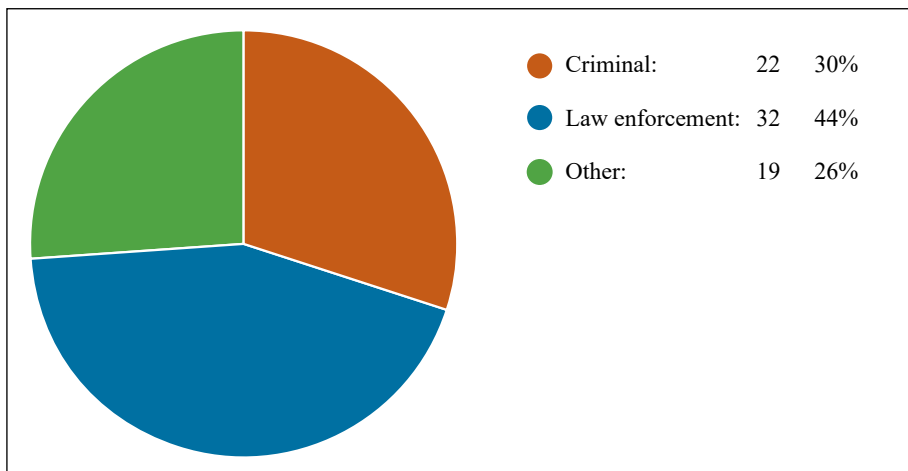
Note. Created by the author.

The dates of birth of the commanders were also indicated in five-year time intervals, and a comparison was made based on the responses of the groups in the following breakdown. It is clear that more than half of the respondents, 55%,

are commanders born in the 1970s. So, there is clearly an X-generation pre-dominance of the responding commanders.

Figure 2: *Age distribution of the responding commanders*

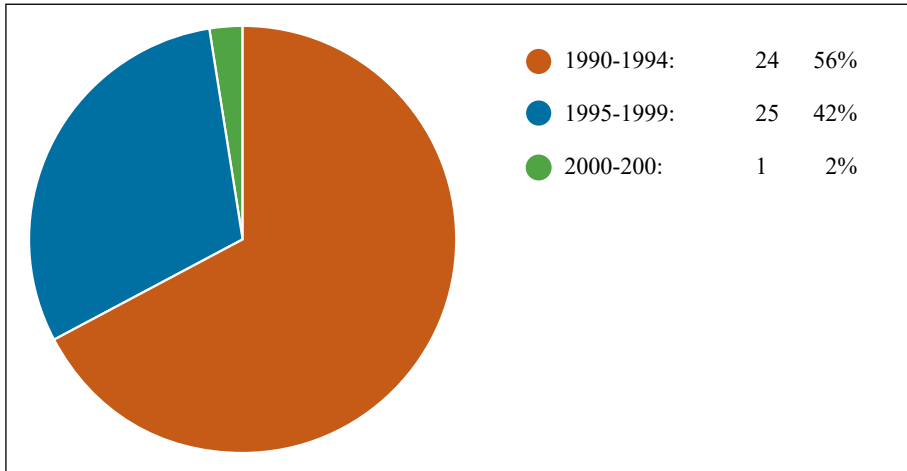|		
1980-1994:	18	25%
1970-1979:	40	55%
1960-1969:	15	20%
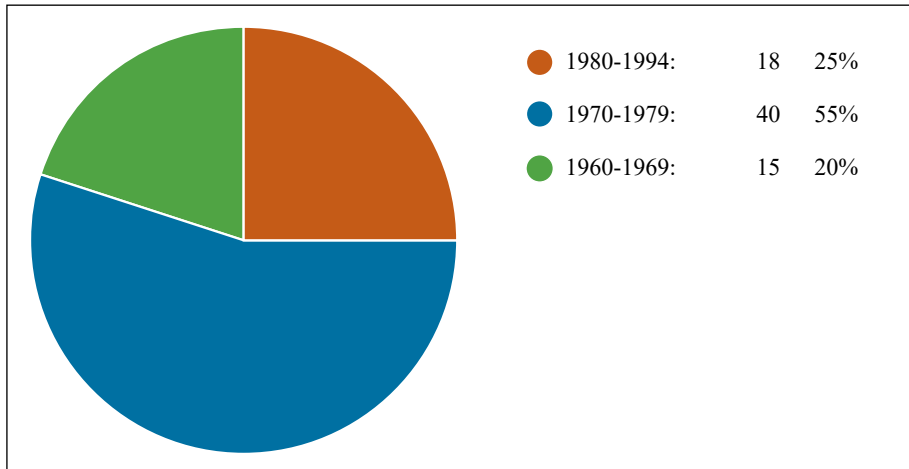
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Completion data of the questionnaire for the generations YZ and Z

In the county, at the time of the investigation, 149 people have been born since 1 January 1990, and 114 of them are professionals (police officers). During the one month of the questionnaire completion period, a total of 60 people completed the questionnaire, which represents a completion rate of approx. 40%.

	Secondary law enforcement	Higher education law enforcement	Civic education	
1990-1994	23	6	5	34
1995-1999	15	7	3	25
2000-2004	1	0	0	1
	39	13	8	60

56% of respondents were born between 1990 and 1994, while 42% were born between 1995 and 1999, and only 2% were born after 1999.
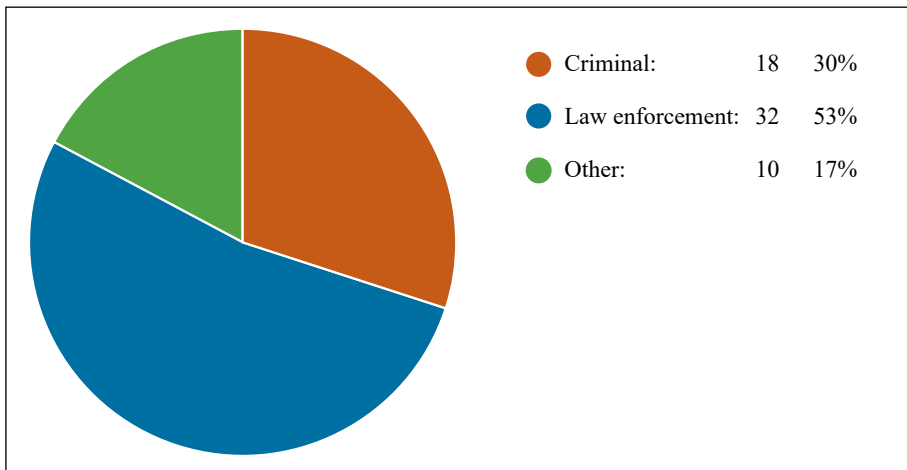
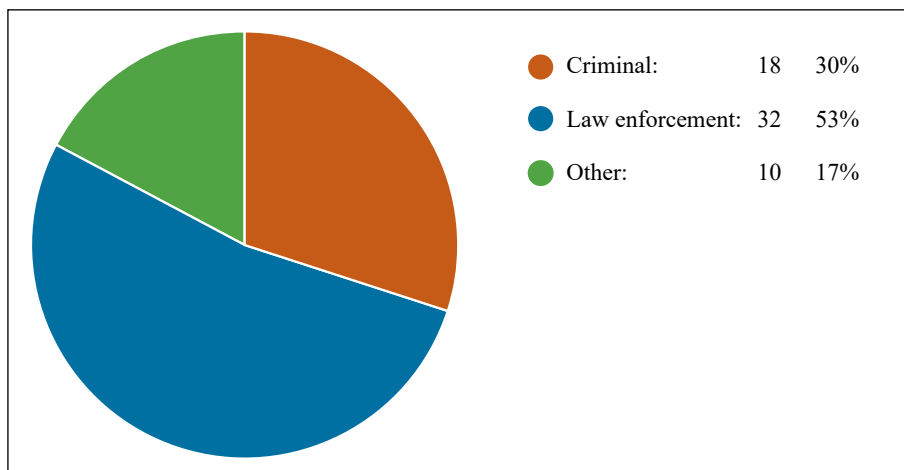|		
● 1990-1994:	24	56%
● 1995-1999:	25	42%
● 2000-200:	1	2%

Note. Created by the author.

The distribution among the specialties is the following: criminal 30%, law enforcement 53% and other 17%.

Figure 4: *Areas of expertise of the responding young people*

● Criminal:	18	30%
● Law enforcement:	32	53%
● Other:	10	17%

Note. Created by the author.

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Figure 5: *Education of young respondents*

| | Criminal: | 18 | 30% |
| Law enforcement: | 32 | 53% |
| Other: | 10 | 17% |

Note. Created by the author.

65% of the respondents have a secondary degree in law enforcement, 22% of the respondents have a higher education law enforcement degree, while 13% of the respondents were not police officers.

Results of the questionnaire of the command staff and their interpretation

We can see in the chart below that among the 10 properties, the command staff considered flexibility to be the least necessary, when they had to judge their need for a police officer (blue) - although the average scores varied within the range of 6.18 to 6.75 - while discipline, camaraderie, and responsibility were considered most important. When the command staff had to evaluate the 10 properties (red) as a characteristic of the new generation, averages between 4 and 5.5 were obtained with a larger standard deviation. According to their view, self-confidence, flexibility, and reasonableness are most characteristic of young people. And they are least characterized by responsibility, discipline, and patience.
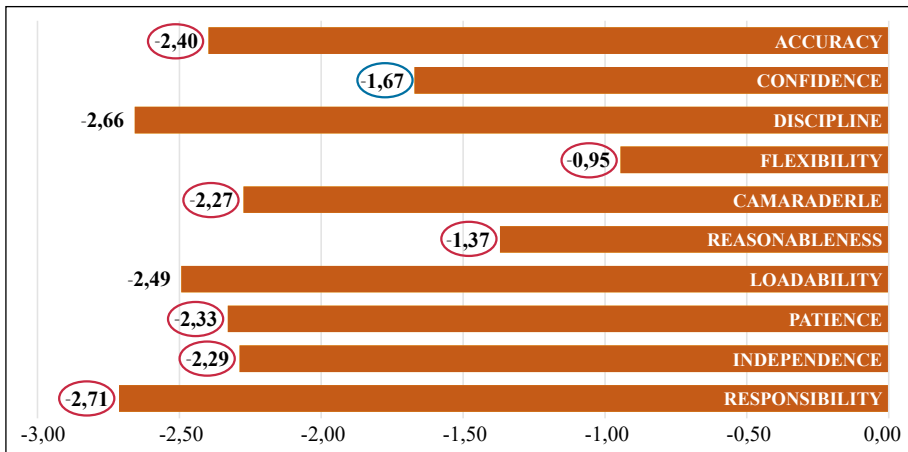
Figure 6: *Average response values of commanders*
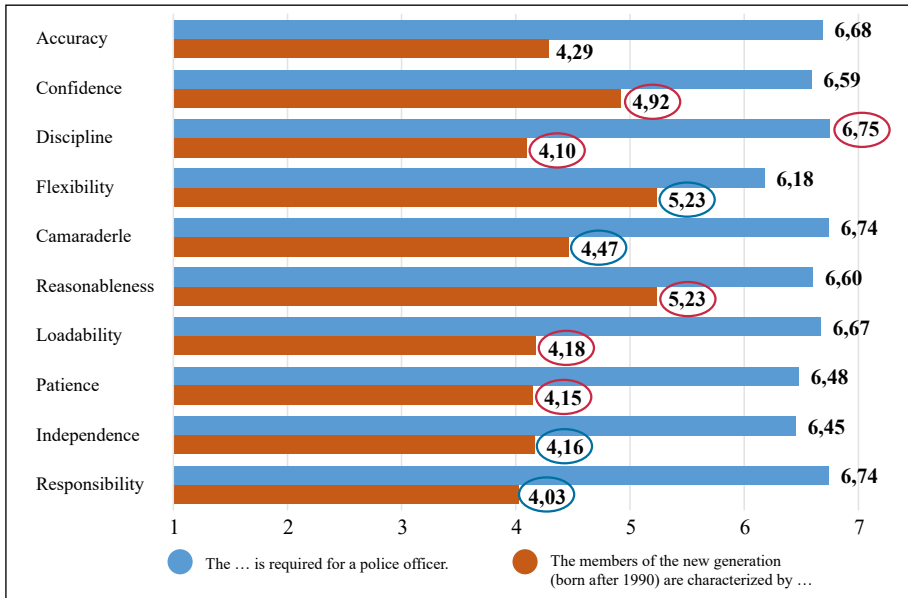
Note. Created by the author.

Comparing the average of the two responses, we can see that there is a big difference between what commanders expect from a police officer and how they see young people.

Figure 7: *Differences between commanders' average response values*

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Thus, the biggest differences are experienced by leaders in terms of responsibility, discipline and loadability compared to the requirements they set. Interestingly, however, even in terms of flexibility, young people are lagging behind with almost one integer compared to their expectations. So, it is clear that there is a negative discrepancy between the values expected of police officers and the characteristics of young people, a pattern that applies to all properties in terms of commanders' responses.

Text responses of commanders and their interpretation

The commander's textual responses show well that they consider young people *ambivalent*. After all, openness and modernity are classified as benefits for young people, but at the same time they are described as impatient, easily distracted, and absentminded, and considered less loadable. However, most commanders also see that these generational differences are a complex social phenomenon, and that the organization does not offer ready-made solutions to deal with the situation, it still needs to be adapted to new or slightly different needs. There is also an ambivalent picture of young people's work attitudes based on command staff responses, as many of them have written about more reasonable, more flexible and faster problem-solving, but at the same time about the lack of perseverance and commitment. According to them, the difference of the new generation in the attitude at work can be well seen in their actions. The kind of willingness to comply that has resulted in uncritical loyalty among older generations does not characterize them. This is almost completely absent from most members of Generation Z or cannot be present with the same intensity as in case of previous generations. Many commanders have described that young people have an attitude of 'shifting towards weaker resistance', the process of which may be worth examining in the organisation. My hypothesis is that the advantage of the new generations is that, due to the accelerated development of information technology, they come to the organization with a 'system-recognizing' or 'pattern-recognizing' competence, which enables a much faster recognition and transparency of organizational processes and even 'utilization'. It can also be felt that most of them do not intend to get to know the organization in depth and detail, but they rather collect only the information that is important to them. Immediate feedback is also used for this purpose, in order to provide information and orientation in the given circumstances. On the other hand, the hierarchical and bureaucratic system gives them the experience of consequencelessness, since many times the given mistake or mission is so far in time from the consequence that they are not connected to them, and so can seem to be no connection between the two. (This is also true in positive cases,

as rewarding or promoting is also extremely bureaucratic and slow in our organization.) This violates the sense of justice for conscientious people, destroys their work ethic, while it can strengthen the choice of easier paths and work avoidance for the extremely 'ingenious' (and less inhibited) ones.

Commanders see that young people are following more democratic communication, authoritarian communications are not working for them, they need arguments, reasonableness to understand. They require constant feedback, so they can adjust accordingly. This, in turn, can be burdensome for the environment and can sometimes portray them as less independent. An important part of young people's communication is bidirectionality, reciprocity - not only do they need feedback, but they have questions and/or opinions on most things, which they are happy to share with the stakeholder if there is a relationship of trust or a need and curiosity to do so. The picture of young people's expectations and goals is also ambivalent, as they are seen as drifting, dreamy and consciously planning and self-assertive at the same time. There may be large individual differences, and the current organizational situation does not support the long-term planning of the younger generation within the organization. Commanders repeatedly mention the utilitarian approach of the younger ones, which means that they are dissatisfied with the energy and time they invest to achieve a particular goal - such as a higher position, more salary, more experience, expertise and so on. Probably this is also due to the kind of change in which our world has transformed, as we have become more comfortable, we are getting further with less energy, since smart solutions are like that. This may be reflected in the way young people think. Commanders believe that young people's expectations of the organization are realistic, but nonetheless may be unattainable under the current career model and pay conditions. So, there is a mismatch between expectations and the framework provided by the organization, this urges organizational renewal. Commanders see that young people do not really want to live up to unreasonable expectations. According to the commanders, when individual interests conflict with the interests of the community, young people show less humility and self-sacrifice. Respectively, they experience issues in problem solving and independent work among young people. An alternative explanation for the phenomena experienced may be that young people, socializing in the new 'smart world', do not know what to do with certain organizational characteristics that make it difficult to carry out their work efficiently. To illustrate the irrationalities of bureaucracy in the organisations, they say the following proverb: '*We pick up and carry the sphere. We roll the cube. But only until its edges wear off, then we pick it up and carry it!'.* Workers in the organization often struggle with these types of anomalies in bureaucracy during their day-to-day work and they develop strategies for these situations to get their

work done. But the representatives of the new generation can no longer interpret this workplace dynamics, since in a 'smart world' the shortest path between two points is straight, and it cannot be rewritten for them by any internal regulations or customary law. So, as we can read in the commanders' responses, it is worth thinking that they may be right about this, and that certain internal operations should be restructured, simplified, rationalized.
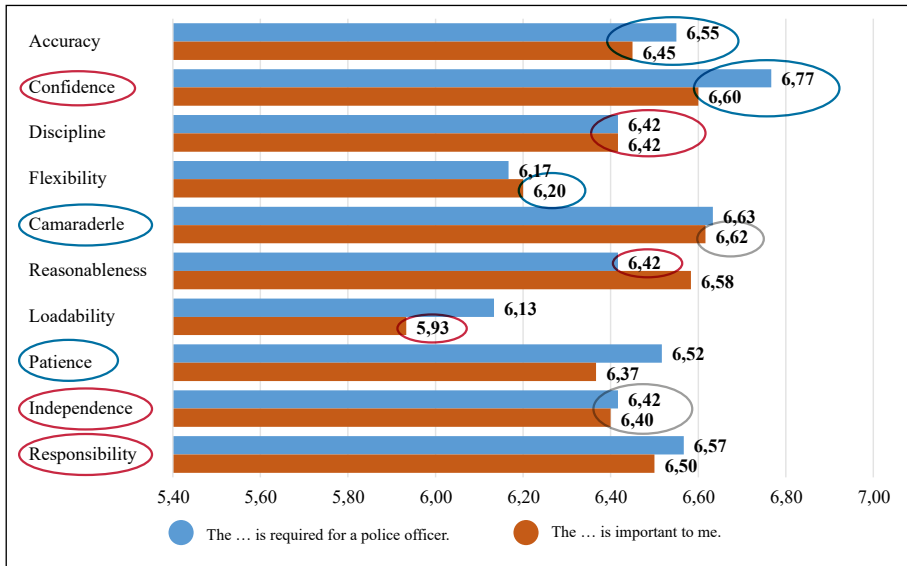
Commanders say their IT skills are much better, they can innovate the organization and at the same time they bring the need for modernization. They bring dynamics to the system that is prone to fossilization. The organizational retention of young people is, of course, primarily possible through settling the wages and financial benefits, as well as a predictable career path. The flexibility of the managerial attitude is also mentioned by several people, which can be manifested in the provision of benefits and works naturally and mutually. A lot of commanders also write about good community, good relationships and teams that are also essential to retaining the workforce. It is also important to develop a mission consciousness by emphasizing the common goal, raising awareness that their work contribute to the well-being of the community, to make the world a better place. Commanders also experience how important it is for young people to integrate well into the workplace community, to be useful members of the community, to look at them as partners, to be happy to work with them. And working together gives them the opportunity to gain experience, develop, and meet challenges. It was noted about the trainings that their most important expectation is to be practice oriented.

As we can see, the command staff is aware that the current situation requires adaptation, both from the organization and from them. We can say that all responding commanders are open to modernization, and that they not only passively expect it from the organization, but they also actively try to adapt their own behaviour in accordance with the new expectations.

Evaluation of questionnaire of the YZ and Z generations

When evaluating the 10 properties, we obtained the following averages regarding the opinion of young people for the *'... is required for a police officer'* statements (blue). It is clear that confidence, camaraderie, and responsibility are, in their view, the most necessary for a police officer, while flexibility and loadability are the least necessary. The personal importance of values (red) develops similarly, as camaraderie is followed by confidence, and then reasonableness gets on the podium. Flexibility and loadability are also considered as least important in this case.

Figure 8: *Average responses of young respondents*

Accuracy: 6,55 / 6,45
Confidence: 6,77 / 6,60
Discipline: 6,42 / 6,42
Flexibility: 6,17 / 6,20
Camaraderle: 6,63 / 6,62
Reasonableness: 6,42 / 6,58
Loadability: 6,13 / 5,93
Patience: 6,52 / 6,37
Independence: 6,42 / 6,40
Responsibility: 6,57 / 6,50

The … is required for a police officer.
The … is important to me.

Note. Created by the author.

It is worth comparing in which cases there are differences between the need for each property and the personal importance of that property, even if the young people's response averages, apart from a single case, are above 6 integers, which means that they do not show large differences. We can see that there is the biggest negative difference in terms of personal importance compared to the expected values of confidence, patience, and loadability. However, in the case of reasonableness (and flexibility), the judgment is reversed, its personal importance is given a higher value than is considered necessary for a police officer. Thus, it is worth thinking about whether we truly evaluate the representatives of the new generation along parameters that are important to them as well. In this case, for example, loadability seems to have lost the kind of significance it had 20-30 years earlier, as technology is evolving at a pace that makes our lives easier, we live in a 'smart world'. Thus, it is no longer certain today that load capacity is as important a criterion as it was for previous generations. Today, for example, to deliver a message to the other end of the world does not require endurance, tenacious walking, or above-average load-bearing capacity, but simply how to send our message, for which modern information technology that offers countless simple ways to do so. That is it, in this modern, globalized world, load tolerance was not necessary for new generations. Most of them were transported to school by their parents, they did not have to walk or travel by public transport.

They have been looking for easier, smart solutions all their lives. In this world, bearing the load makes only sense for them when there is a challenge, and they want to prove this ability to themselves and/or their environment. Otherwise, if they do not have a specific purpose that is well understood by them, they will not tolerate it. Even when required by workplace factors (e.g., overtime due to staff shortages) because they believe that there should be a solution that handles the situation without compromising their interests.

Analysing the textual responses of generations YZ and Z

In terms of their career choice motivation, professionalism and willingness to help are typically dominant. The family example, or the appropriate role model as a motive, is also a common answer, just like the secure job. The variety of work and the fact that it is a challenge and an opportunity to prove also appears among many of them when choosing a career. Interestingly, early retirement was mentioned several times in the responses, and at the same time young people also complain about its abolition. The training period is mostly described as pleasant, positive, but most of the time it is because of the good company and a looser lifestyle compared to their current constraints. Training is often considered superficial or too theoretical. They want case presentations, interactive, situational tasks in education and training aimed at the practical application of the legislation. They want action tactical training, leadership training, and other practical trainings, even to help them how to use IT tools more effectively. In all cases, they lack the more practical knowledge, and they still want trainings, which provide knowledge that can be applied immediately (instantly) and develop their competencies (skills). In order to promote the career path among their contemporaries, they think it is essential to appear on social media. Almost all young people described that an increase in motivation for the career could be achieved by settling wages, especially non-commissioned officer wages, and everything else comes only after that. But administrative overload and the proliferation of bureaucracy were often mentioned in the responses too. Characterizing the Police as a workplace, most cited a secure income as an advantage, as they can expect their income to arrive every month. This was followed by responses to varied, exciting work, with many describing their love – their passion – for the profession. Many people value good company and atmosphere in their workplace community as an advantage. Many of them also see this job as an opportunity for development, which is also in a sense an opportunity for them to prove themselves. In terms of disadvantages, as expected, most mentioned salary, especially among the non-commissioned officer respondents. This was

followed by the responses about the unpredictability of working hours (overtime, stressful services), which make it difficult for them to have a balanced private life and family life. This was followed by the mention of organizational injustices, the obsolescence of the organization, the tension, burnout of colleagues and the administrative overload. The majority of responses to the development of the Police as a workplace included an increase in salaries. Modernization also appeared very often in the answers, including the material environment, tools, IT background, and the management attitude and organizational procedures (reduction and realization of administration). Here, too, some of them have raised the issue of restoring early retirement. For the most part, they find communication with them positive and they feel that the community in which they work is inclusive, while many of them describe that they had to work for the respect of their older co-workers. Overload is usually seen in the background of conflict situations and tensions. The answers to the question about the expectations of the organization show that here they experience a higher system of expectations, which is an opportunity for them to develop, in terms of independent work, responsibility and at the same time it is a great springboard to a well-paying, civic job or undertaking if they do not experience change. Young people have a basic need to develop, to expand their professional knowledge, to gain experience, but this is often hindered by the system itself. One such barrier is overload, which calls into question the effectiveness of any real training, because, as they write, after a while they were too tired to really profit from a training day.

   It would be worthwhile to exploit the self-education potential of young people, even by advertising online training opportunities and professional online competitions for them, which could provide them with development opportunities and challenges. Of course, the system could operate on a voluntary basis, so that the chances of completing the training should not depend on the current staffing situation of the group or the attitude of the leader. When asked about their plans, the answers again confront us with the impossible situation of non-commissioned officers, which makes it necessary to modernize their careers. At the same time, it can be seen that although they view their careers very consciously and self-assertively, they have a need for development, but understandably not with the waiting times that the career currently has.

Comparing the responses of commanders and young people

Both commanders and young people rated the 10 properties according how much they deemed it necessary for a police officer. Comparing the averages of the responses of the two groups, we can see that commanders in most cases

have higher expectations towards the imaginary police officer than young people. There is a difference in two properties - and the expectations of young people are higher than those of commanders – in patience and confidence. But we should also keep in mind that the response averages of both groups are above 6 integers, that is the differences are minimal, they are rather indicative only.

Figure 9: *Comparison of the responses of commanders and young people*
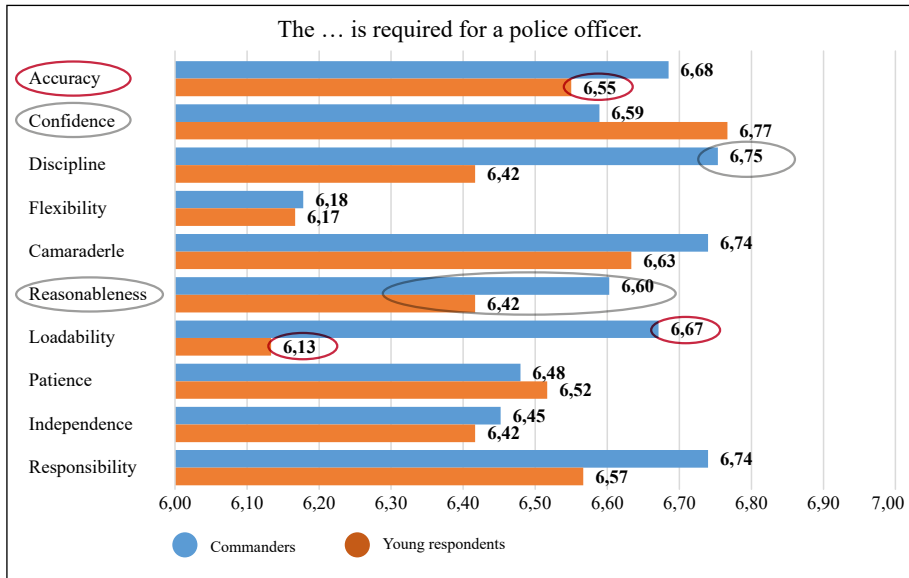
Note. Created by the author.

And regarding the values of loadability and discipline, we see the biggest difference between commander and youth responses. So again, it is worth thinking about how appropriate the selected parameters are. Are the properties of loadability or discipline still valid in this age? Or do these parameters represent organizational nostalgia? Maybe a young person who is confident, comradely (loyal to the goal and/or community) and takes responsibility, can be more successful and can live a more balanced life, even in our organization?

Summary

Overall, we can see that both commanders and young people want rationalization and modernization. Irrationalities are very badly tolerated by young people, as they have socialized in a changing world based on speed, efficiency (smart),

and it is not acceptable for them to have one thing to be manually administered in three places when it could be retrieved from an electronic system. So, rationalizing and modernizing the administration cannot be bypassed for the organization, if it wants to keep young people. In the field of vocational training, it must be borne in mind that they want practical, personalized training that provides them with knowledge that can be applied well and immediately in their everyday lives. So, it is worth thinking about a small interactive training, as well as courses that can be taken online, which can be continued by online professional competition, and it is their own independent decision and responsibility to do it, not controlled by the environment. It is also recommended to rethink the early retirement pension system, or to find an alternative to recharging and renewing the individuals after long decades of burdensome service. We did not come across any big surprises when answering our research questions. We have been confronted with large individual differences in the way the age groups view each other, and we can also see fundamental differences in the way the commanders and young staff characterize an ideal police officer.

How can young people integrate into the hierarchical organization of the police?

In their own special way. We clarified at the beginning of the study that the generations YZ and Z have special characteristics as they are the first digital native generations who came to the organization with a completely different socialization. Nevertheless, they can fit well into the life and work responsibilities of a workplace community. Their problems stem from the scarce opportunities provided by the organization, that is, as a novice police officer, they are unable to create and plan a proper existence for themselves, and at the same time, the environment offers them many tempting opportunities.

How well the representatives of the new generation succeed? (according to their commanders and their own opinion)

The above is also true to their success, it works in their own way, and there can be big differences between individuals as well. They only try to meet the expectations that can be interpreted for them, purposefully. They are no longer characterized by the kind of compliance compulsion and uncritical loyalty that accompanies the Baby Boomer and X generations for the rest of their lives.

What tools can we have to increase and improve integration and proficiency? (educational institutional, organizational)

The well-known organizational problems, the high fluctuation, the unpopularity of the career path basically call for many organizational changes. For

example, significant increases in non-commissioned wages are needed to enable young people to view their profession as a realistic livelihood. Rethinking the career model is also essential and realizing waiting times is essential for the requirements of modern society.

Modernization within an organization is also a perpetuating dynamic need that can no longer be reversed or eliminated. It permeates the entire organization, including the modernization of the material environment, tools, IT background, and management attitude, organizational procedures (administration). As the modernization of recruitment, it is necessary to combine new opportunities (online space) and our own organizational talents.

Opportunities must be created for employees to develop themselves, their professional knowledge, and expand their interest. All this should be done in accordance with the requirements of the modern age, strengthening independent working and decision-making.

Training needs to be made shorter and more effective. They need immediate, practical knowledge in an interactive environment.

Overload calls for immediate action. The current situation calls for the review and rationalization of the procedures within the organization and the reduction of unnecessary circles, administrative plus procedures, and the making of the procedures 'friendlier to the executor/employee'.

Although the scientific interpretation of the research is limited, as it was conducted with a small sample, only at a county police headquarters, with voluntary participation, the results still clearly confirm the statements of previous researches (URL1; Batts, Smoot & Scrivner, 2012; URL2), according to which younger generations come to traditional organizations with different needs and expectations, and to remain in the long-term, it is essential for them that the organization takes these generational characteristics into account when formulating human strategy.

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