

Rage-applying Phenomenon Across Different Generations - Implications of Employees Feeling Undervalued

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Abstract

Organisations intersect with different generations, (work) cultures, political orientations, organisational climates, and cultures and play a significant role in all organisations, regardless of size. It is essential that employees feel good in organisations because they are their driving force, which leads to climate and culture. In the research, we investigated the presence of the rage-applying phenomenon in organisations, its presence in different generations, and how they cope. The term is not new but has been around for a long time. It is only named differently in the 21st century, so we need to carefully study the literature, which is not so extensive with this name. The phenomenon can be seen in dissatisfied employees who seek better employment opportunities elsewhere.

Keywords: generational differences, rage applying, organisational climate, rage applying in different generations, innovative approaches for detection and minimisation of rage applying, minimising rage applying

INTRODUCTION

Global trends such as robotics and artificial intelligence seem poised to turn our way of working upside down, with 18% of jobs in Germany potentially at risk of automation in the next few years. Soon, the workforce will change as more people seek flexible working hours, the option of part-time work, the ability to work from home or contemplate becoming individual entrepreneurs. Since 2016, there has been a 78% increase in job postings mentioning "workplace flexibility," while 63% of millennials would switch jobs if they could work with flexible hours. A recent Statista Trend Compass survey showed that 79% of managerial workers expect temporary and freelance workers to significantly replace those employed full-time in the coming years (Armstrong, 2020).

Responses to various triggers, such as personal conflicts, perceived threats, frustrations, or feelings of injustice, can manifest in rage. It is often the result of accumulating anger over time or due to a sudden, traumatic event. The intensity of rage can vary from person to person, with some individuals experiencing brief "episodes," while others may have more persistent and chronic anger issues. Rage differs from ordinary anger, as it is typically more intense, impulsive, and can lead to harmful consequences. While anger can be a normal response to perceived threats or injustices, rage exceeds the bounds of typical anger and can impair an individual's judgment and rational thinking. Understanding these aspects is crucial for comprehending employees and their relationship with work (DiGiuseppe et al., 2016).

Rage is an emotion of intense anger, often accompanied by physical and psychological changes, such as increased heart rate, sweating, shaking, and muscle tension (American Psychological Association, 2020). This definition is based on several scientific studies investigating anger's neurological, physiological and psychological aspects. In his study, Davidson et al. (2015) found that rage is associated with activity in the amygdala, a brain region responsible for processing emotions such as fear and anger and that anger was associated with decreased activity in the prefrontal cortex, a brain region responsible for impulse control and decision-making. In their study, Bronson & Miller (2018) found that rage causes increased heart rate, blood pressure and cortisol levels, the stress hormone. These physiological changes can be preparatory to fight or flight, a natural response to danger or threat. According to the research of Novaco et al. (2017), rage can lead to aggressive behaviour such as verbal attacks, physical violence and destructive behaviour, and anger can also make it difficult to think clearly and make rational decisions. The term "rage" denotes a period of extreme or violent anger. At the same time, the word "applying" has multiple meanings, primarily signifying to demand something, usually formally, especially in writing or by submitting a form (Cambridge et al.; Cambridge et al.).

Rage applying occurs when an employee feels undervalued, hasn't been offered career advancement, or is inadequately compensated for their work. This sentiment inspires employees to apply for various work positions and send their resumes to numerous companies, hoping to secure a job with higher pay and a better working environment. Potential reasons for angrily applying to multiple jobs include limited advancement opportunities, poorly paid positions and factors such as high inflation and high interest rates for loans. Rather than feeling strong loyalty to the job and aligning long-term personal goals with the company's objectives, many Generation Z workers detach their individual goals and seek opportunities elsewhere if their current company's desired or expected opportunities are not presented (Hanlon, 2023).

Rage applying is a fierce phenomenon where employees mass-apply to multiple jobs simultaneously, intending to change their current position based on voluntary interest in the work. While applying for jobs, employees can assess whether potential employers offer job opportunities for which they can apply. If employment opportunities exist with these employers, employees may begin applying for them subsequently during an anger outburst (Sachs, 2023). Florjančič (1994) states in contemplating organisational structure: "Man is the basic driving force of the organisation. At the same time, he is the only subject and object of research. Rational association is the central form of his meaningful existence and a condition for development. For example, self-management as a perfect form of social integration should be the most developed form of social integration and the most advanced form of human and social life in the ontogenetic development of man and society."

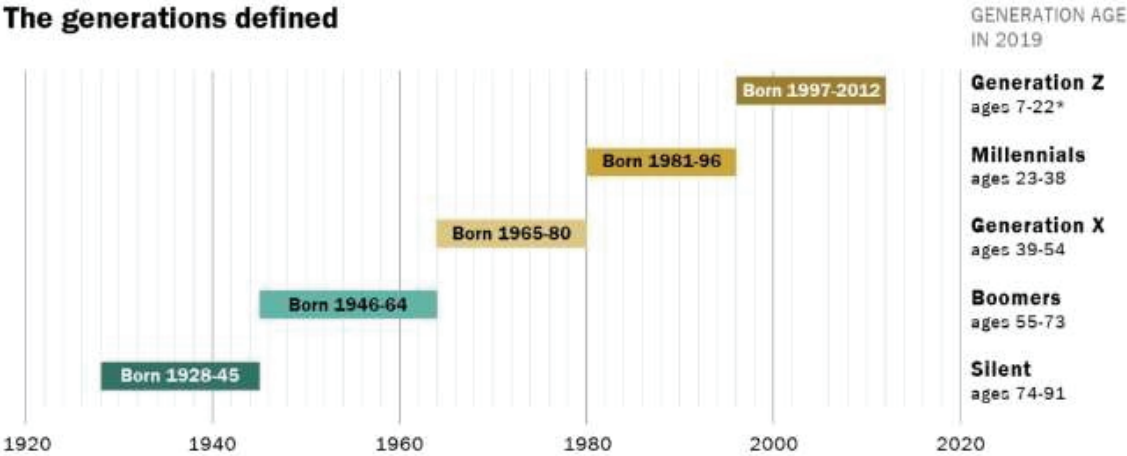
The study aimed to determine the frequency of the "rage applying" phenomenon, explore intergenerational differences in dealing with the phenomenon within organisations, and examine how employees and employers cope with it in the workplace. To carry out the research, we defined two research questions (RQ1 - What are the generational differences in applying for multiple jobs at the same time?, and RQ2 - How often do less satisfied employees decide to apply for numerous jobs at the same time?) which we checked with the help of semi-structured interviews.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN RAGE APPLYING

Definition of Generations

To facilitate understanding, let us first introduce the main features of the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y or Millennials, and Generation Z. It is essential to note that individual characteristics can vary significantly within any of the mentioned generations, and the listed traits are not universally applicable to all members of a particular generation. Nevertheless, these generalisations provide valuable insights into trends and tendencies observed within each generation. Figure 1 illustrates the birth periods of each generation.

Figure 1: Birth periods by generations



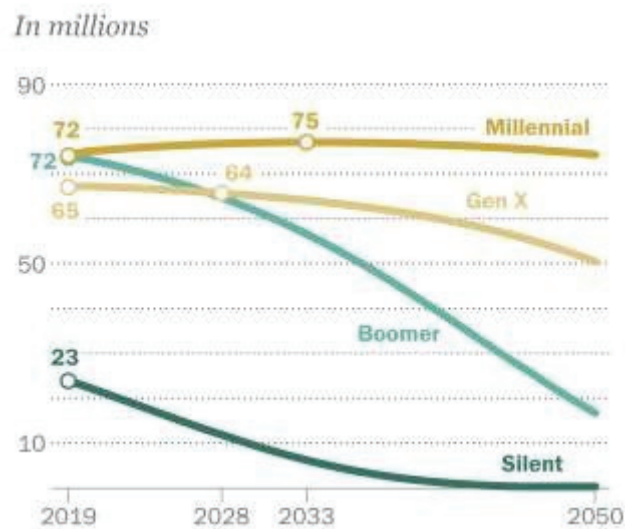
Pew Research Center (2019).

Baby Boomer Generation

The Baby Boomer generation refers to individuals born between 1946 and 1964, immediately after World War II. During this period, birth rates significantly increased in several countries, most notably the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. The term "baby boom" signifies the population surge during this time. Baby Boomers belonged to a generation when the war ended, soldiers returned, and the economy improved. Additionally, medical technology has advanced significantly. All these factors collectively contributed to couples feeling more confident and secure in family planning. The Baby Boomer generation profoundly impacted society, shaping cultural, economic, and political factors in the countries where they lived (Indeed, 2023). Members of the Baby Boomer generation shaped their values during a time of economic growth, optimism, and development (space race, contraception). The first signs of crisis influenced them, although their values are similar to those of the Veteran generation – dedicated work, employment, personal effort, and a high regard for teamwork. They are typically optimistic and remain in the same organisation throughout their lives (Kozjek & Ovsenik, 2015, pp. 17)-

32). Approximately 76 million individuals were born in the United States during this period. The demographic impact of the baby boom era can be seen from various perspectives: increased demand for schools, housing, and consumer goods during their upbringing (Fry, 2020). The Baby Boomer generation is the largest adult generation in the United States. As of July 1, 2019, there were 71.6 million members of this generation (aged 55 to 73). Figure 2 provides an overview of the Baby Boomer generation concerning other generations (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Figure 2: Population projections by generations



Pew Research Center (2020).

Generation X

Generation X includes individuals born between 1961 and 1980 who grew up during the 1960s and 1970s, facing significant economic crises, recessions, high unemployment, and inflation in the 1990s (Ng et al., 2018). Members of Generation X were marked by a lonely childhood as their parents (mainly from the Silent Generation and Baby Boomer generation) focused on building careers and striving for a high standard of living, leaving little time for their children. The constant pursuit of their parents' careers manifested in the breakdown of traditional values, a high number of divorces, school violence, nuclear disasters, environmental issues, and the AIDS epidemic. Due to these factors, traditional values in this generation are less prevalent (Kozjek & Ovsenik, 2015, pp. 17–32). Generation X also witnessed the end of the Cold War, the rise of MTV and pop culture, and the advent of computers.

Consequently, members of this generation are characterised as independent, self-reliant, and adaptable, having faced various challenges during their formative years (Coupland, 1999; Strauss & Howe, 1997). As mentioned, this generation experienced continuous changes in the labour market and witnessed fewer organisations, subsequently impacting their careers. They had to adapt to technological advancements, including the emergence of computers and the internet (Taylor & Keeter, 2010; Kohnen, 2002, pp. 76–77).

Generation Y or Millennials

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, were born between 1981 and 1996, constituting a significant portion of the global workforce (Fry, 2018). This generation is closely associated with a strong understanding of technology, having grown up during the rise of the internet and other digital tools (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Data from 2017 indicates that at that time, 56 million millennials (those aged 21 to 36) were either employed or seeking employment. That surpassed the 53 million members of Generation X, representing one-third of the workforce in 2017 (Fry, 2018). Millennials exhibit distinctive relationships and preferences when it comes to work. They strongly desire a balance between their professional and personal lives, focusing on goal-oriented work while prioritising collaboration and feedback (Twenge, 2010, pp. 201-210). Many individuals from Generation Y, or millennials, are inclined towards entrepreneurship, actively seeking opportunities for innovation and often engaging in freelance work or additional income pursuits (Ng et al., 2018).

Generation Z

Generation Z, or Gen Z or iGeneration, refers to individuals born between 1996 and 2012. It is considered the first digital generation shaped by technology, globalisation, and significant social and cultural shifts. Members of this generation continue to grow up in a highly technological environment (Dimock, 2019). Generation Z, sometimes called the Network Generation, spends significant time online and has a distinct identity. As much as 96% of this generation is active on social media and the World Wide Web, establishing solid connections among themselves. They stand out from other generations by being more expressive, original, and artistic. They have transformed the ways of consumption and communication, are emotionally more open, and tend to learn through exploration (Kozjek & Ovsenik, 2015, pp. 17-32). The oldest members of Generation Z, born after 1996, are now entering the workforce. Last year, 9 million employed or job-seeking individuals (those who reached working age, aged 16 to 20) represented 5% of the workforce (Fry, 2018).

Presence of the Phenomenon in Organisations

Regarding the research on the phenomenon, we dare to assert that it is likely present worldwide. However, for research purposes, we will focus on and examine its presence more closely in the United States, Canada, and Europe, considering individual countries. The basis for our exploration will be the findings of a Gallup survey conducted from April 2022 to March 2023. The organisation surveyed 1,000 individuals in each country or region using a standard set of crucial questions translated into the main languages of the target countries. Given that rage applying is a relatively new phenomenon, its interpretation in the literature relies on its meaning rather than its literal naming. That can be observed in Figure 3, referred to as "Intent To Leave," indicating that employees intend to leave the organisation where they are employed (Gallup, 2023).

Figure 3: Employee Engagement and Labor Market Conditions Worldwide



Gallup (2023).

Gallup (2023), in its 2022 survey, reported on employee engagement, categorising it into three groups: "Thriving at Work" (Successful at work), "Quiet Quitting" (Discreetly disengaging from work tasks), and "Loud Quitting" (Openly disengaging from work tasks). We have focused on the second part of Gallup's (2023) study, where, in 2022, they also reported on the labour market conditions, dividing it into two categories: Organisational climate and intention to leave current employment (rage applying). The results indicate that 53% of respondents answered it is an excellent time to seek employment. Additionally, 51% of respondents reported actively looking for new job opportunities. Figure 4 shows that 44% of respondents reported experiencing negative emotions for most of the previous day due to stress, with 21% attributing these emotions to anger.

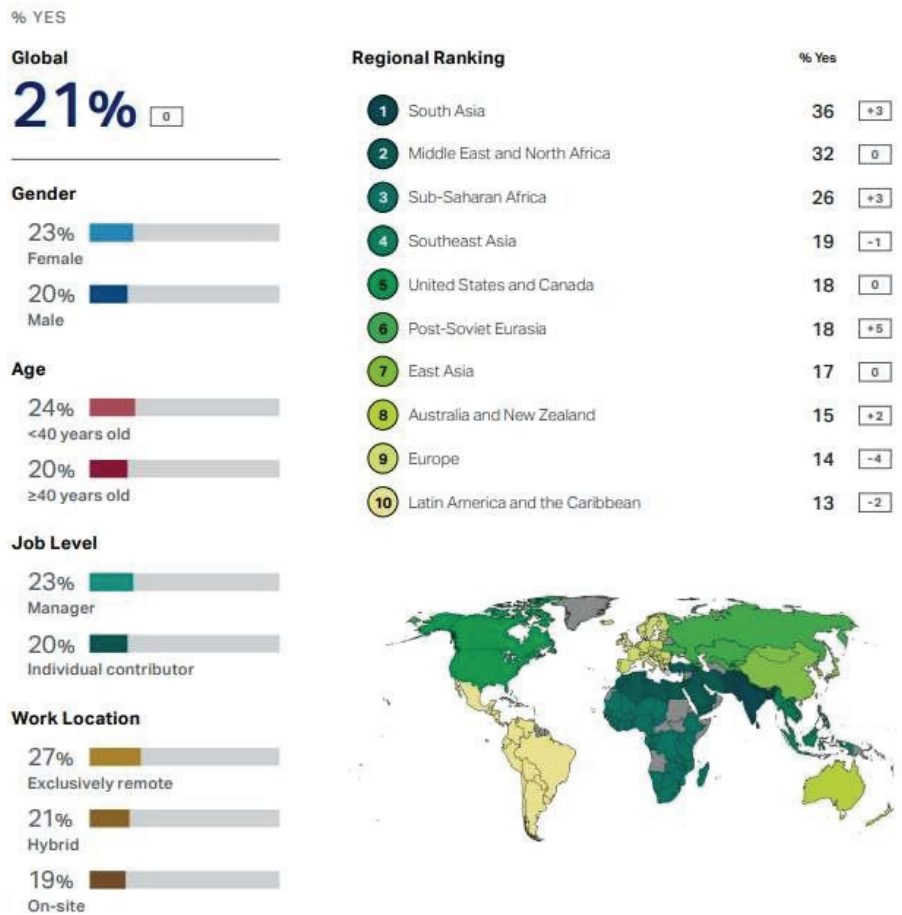
Figure 4: Daily Negative Emotions



Gallup (2023).

When examining the results of Gallup's (2023) global survey in Figure 5 regarding the presence of anger, it is observed that 21% of respondents answered "yes" to the question "Did you feel anger for most of the day yesterday?" Within this 21%, 23% were women and 20% were men, with 24% being aged up to 40 and 20% over 40. Among the respondents, 23% worked as managers and 20% as individual contributors. Regarding work arrangements, 27% worked exclusively from home, 21% had a hybrid work model, and 19% worked in office spaces. The highest percentage of respondents answering "yes" was in South Asia, at 36%, followed by the Middle East and North Africa at 32%, sub-Saharan Africa at 26%, Southeast Asia at 19%, the United States and Canada, and post-Soviet Eurasia at 18%. Eastern Asia followed at 17%, Australia and New Zealand at 15%, Europe at 14%, and Latin America and the Caribbean at 13%.

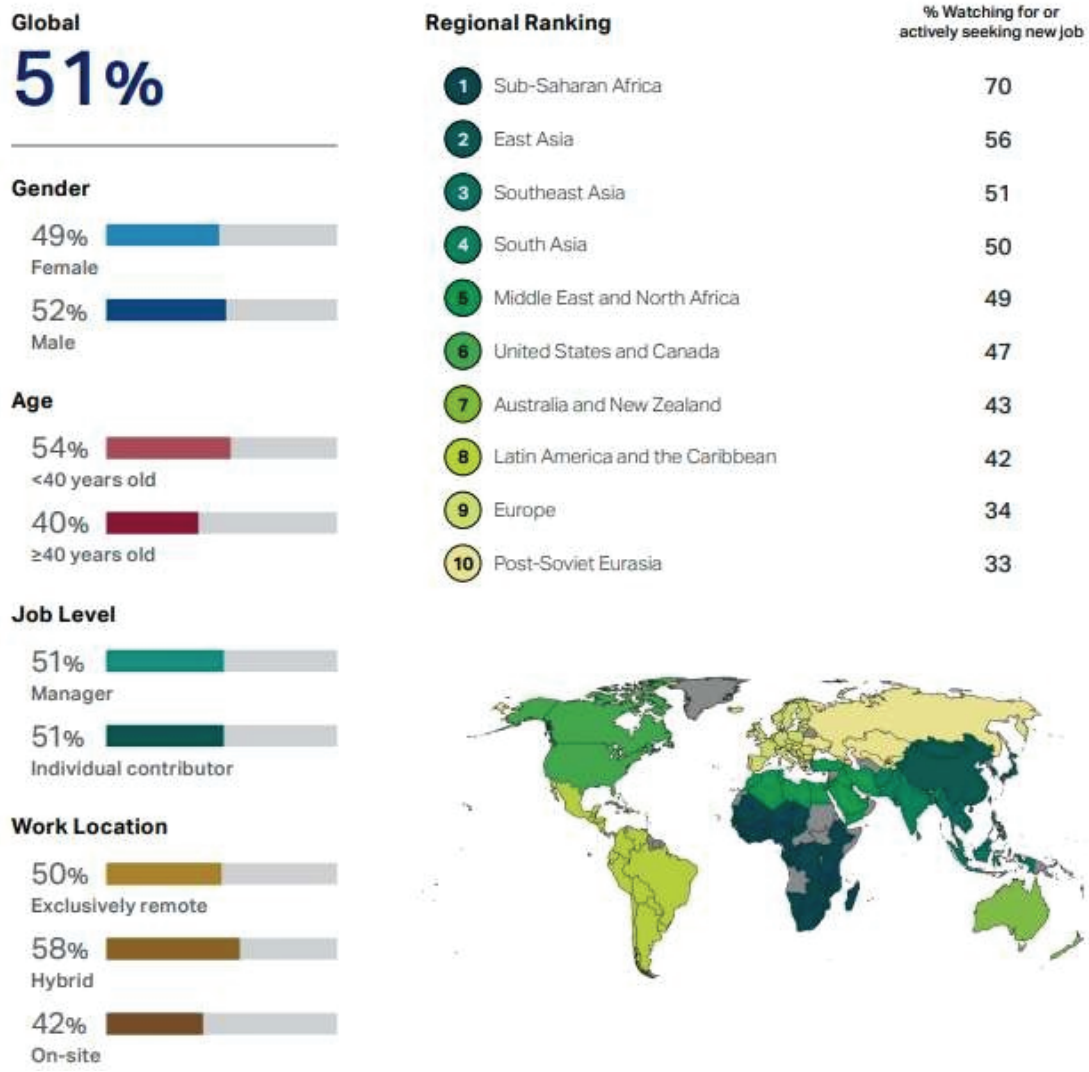
Figure 5: Daily Anger



Gallup (2023).

Gallup's (2023) study also covered the "Intent to Leave" aspect, where 51% of respondents worldwide expressed actively seeking a new job or work opportunities. In Figure 6, it can be observed that among these 51% of respondents, 49% are women and 52% are men, divided into two age groups - up to 40 years old, where 54% of respondents fell, and above 40 years old, where 40% were. Among these 51% of respondents, regarding job positions, 51% work as managers, and 51% as individual workers. Additionally, within these 51% of respondents, 50% exclusively work from home, 58% follow a hybrid work model, and 42% work in their organisation's offices. We can also observe the regions where employees are most willing to leave their current jobs and seek new ones. Sub-Saharan Africa ranks first with 70%, followed by East Asia with 56%, Southeast Asia with 51%, South Asia with 50%, the Middle East and North Africa with 49%, the United States and Canada with 47%, Australia and New Zealand with 43%, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean with 42%, Europe with 34%, and finally, post-Soviet Eurasia with 33%.

Figure 6: Proportion of observers or active job seekers



Gallup (2023).

Employee engagement in the United States and Canada is distributed similarly to global employee engagement, divided into three equal groups: Thriving at work, Quiet Quitting, and Loud Quitting. For the first option, 31% were answered; for the second, 52%; and for the third, 17% of respondents (Figure 7). According to the exact figure regarding the job market, 71% of respondents believe it is an excellent time to find a new job, and 47% intend to leave their current job or actively seek new employment opportunities. Regarding daily negative emotions experienced the previous day, 52% responded that these were due to stress, and 18% attributed them to anger (Gallup, 2023).

Figure 7: Summary of the United States and Canada region

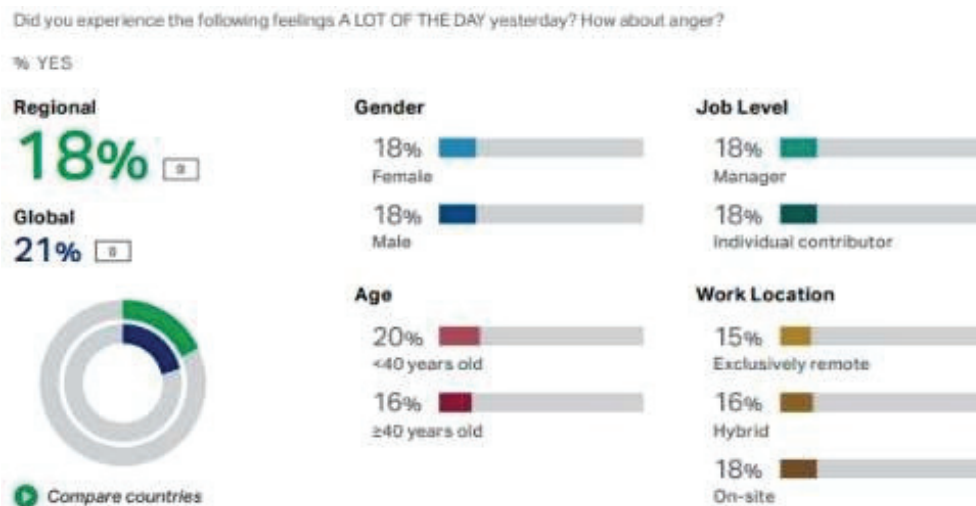
Boxed numbers indicate the percentage-point change from 2021 to 2022 where available.



Gallup (2023).

When mentioning anger, which is often a reason for leaving a job or actively seeking new employment opportunities, we must present the responses to the question "Did you feel anger for most of the day yesterday?" found in Figure 8. That indicates a "yes" response of 18%. This 18% includes 18% women and 18% men, with 20% aged up to 40 and 16% over 40. Regarding job types, 18% are managers, and 18% are individual employees. Regarding the work location, 15% exclusively work remotely, 16% in a hybrid manner, and 18% in the organisation's offices where they are employed (Gallup, 2023).

Figure 8: Daily Anger in the United States and Canada



Gallup (2023).

Employee engagement in Europe is divided in the same way as in the global context into three equal groups. The first options (Thriving at work) were chosen by 31% of the respondents, and the second (Quiet

quitting) by 52%, and the third (Loud quitting) by 17%. In Figure 9, regarding the job market in Europe, it can be observed that 56% of respondents consider it an excellent time to look for a new job, while 34% are contemplating leaving their current job or actively seeking a new employment opportunity. Regarding whole-day negative emotions experienced the day before the survey, 39% responded that these were due to stress, and 14% attributed them to anger (Gallup, 2023).

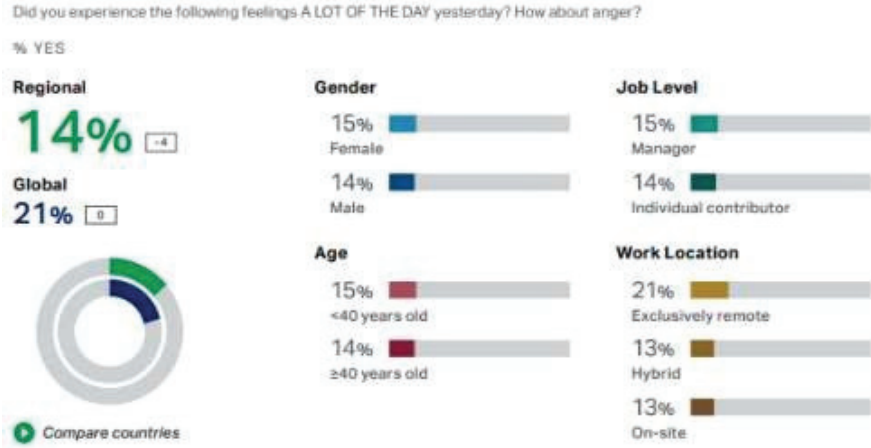
Figure 9: Summary of the European Region



Gallup (2023).

Just as we discussed anger in the United States and Canada, we must present data on the question "Did you feel angry for most of the day yesterday?" for Europe, as shown in Figure 10. The data indicate a "yes" response with 14%. Within this 14%, 15% are women and 14% are men, with 15% being under 40 years old and 14% over 40 years old. Regarding job positions, 15% are managers, and 14% are individual employees. Regarding the location of work, it can be seen that 21% work exclusively remotely, 13% work in a hybrid manner, and 13% work in the organisation's offices.

Figure 10: Daily Anger in Europe



Gallup (2023).

RESEARCH

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed to determine the frequency of the rage-applying phenomenon, explore intergenerational differences in dealing with it within organisations, and examine how employees and employers cope with it in the workplace. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate why employees engage in rage-applying. We decided on the topic because the phenomenon mentioned is not new, and it is now being discussed more in the post-epidemic period than in the 20th century.

Methodology and Sample

The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with eight individuals, including four managerial employees and four non-managerial employees within organisations. The non-managerial employees held positions not classified as leadership roles within the organisational structure.

All participants were asked for permission to record the conversation during the interviews. After the interviews, transcripts were created, and the analysis utilised a coding method. While we had prepared basic interview questions, additional sub-questions were employed to better understand the interviewees' opinions. This approach allowed us to provide answers to the research questions through analysis later.

All questions posed were unambiguous, and during the interviews, we refrained from offering suggestions or biases concerning the responses. Upon obtaining consent for the interviews, participants were informed about the process and purpose of the interview, the approximate topics, and the anticipated time required. Interview schedules were adjusted to accommodate the work and personal obligations of the participants. The interviews involved guided discussions where participants responded to the posed questions based on their own experiences and insights. The questions were open-ended, allowing for free expression on the researched topic.

Following the conclusion of the interviews, each was transcribed and documented. A categorisation process ensued, breaking the information into categories (codes). We logically summarised and grouped similar content areas through these codes, forming responses to the research questions following a deductive approach. When analysing the text (transcripts of interviews), we used the following codes: communication, organisational climate, generation, motivation, and reward. After the coding, we prepared the interpretation of the data and an explanation of the content of the text.

The limitations that could present us with problems in research are mainly the unexplored nature of the field, the lack of information, data and general research in the chosen research area. In addition to the mentioned limitations, we also consider that a lot of professional literature is not freely available online, and it is not (yet) available in the library.

General research findings

Through coding, we reached four areas related to our research that show rage-applying as a phenomenon in organisations. The analysis led to a report in which we summarised the observed results and thereby identified laws and patterns during the interviews and the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. In communication and relationships, we find that poor communication between management and employees, absence of listening to workers, poor and disrespectful communication, inadequate conflict

resolution, and lack of communication negatively impacts satisfaction and motivation for work and increases employee dissatisfaction. In an organisational climate, we find that poor and unfavourable organisational climates and problematic cooperation between departments within the organisation also increase employee dissatisfaction and escalate individual employees' rage. In motivation and reward, we find out inadequate financial and non-financial compensation, absence of reward, and restructuring of the salary system can also negatively impact employees' motivation and anger and dissatisfaction with the workplace.

After the coding of the obtained data, the interpretation phase followed, where we presented an explanation of the content of the text in such a way that it is comprehensible and that we can easily see the importance of individual relationships between it. After analysing the answers from eight interviews, we find that different generations in different workplaces have different views, opinions and attitudes regarding the investigated phenomena. Employers, managers, and business owners know the importance and influence of an excellent organisational climate on their employees, leading to more successful organisations. Even workers employed in non-managerial positions are aware of the importance and impact of an outstanding organisational climate in organisations, and most claim that this is the fundamental driver of a "healthy" organisation.

Discussion on Research Questions

At the beginning of the research, we formulated two research questions, and through the conducted qualitative research, we discussed them. The first research question addressed generational differences regarding rage application. Reviewing theoretical insights in the literature and the study conducted by various authors, we found significant differences among generations concerning the investigated phenomenon. Each generation possesses specific characteristics and values in different aspects. The baby boomer generation tends to have more traditional habits than the currently youngest working generation Z. Stability and job security are more critical for the baby boomer generation than for generations X, Y, or Z. Due to more traditional values, Generation X appears less engaged and motivated in their work. Signs of withdrawal behaviour, such as absenteeism, late arrivals, early departures, or extended breaks, are observed in Generation X. Generation Y shows even more dissatisfaction, frequently changing jobs due to discontent. Like Generation X, this generation is less committed and loyal to their job and organisation. Many Generation Y and Z members are exploring alternative employment methods. In the reviewed literature, Generation Z is accustomed to frequent job changes (Kozjek & Ovsenik, 2015, pp. 17-32).

Employees from Generation X and Y, holding managerial positions, have encountered the concept and phenomenon of "Rage Applying" as they have witnessed colleagues leaving due to dissatisfaction and conflicts. However, they have not used this approach. In a managerial role, a member of the baby boomer generation has not yet encountered this phenomenon.

Non-managerial employees from different generations have experienced or become aware of the phenomenon. A Generation Y member has used "Rage Applying" when extremely dissatisfied with their previous job, applying for around thirty positions within a year, ultimately securing employment in another organisation. Other Generation Y and Generation Z members have encountered the phenomenon but have not personally utilised it. A Generation X member has not experienced it yet.

Based on the above, we can affirm that differences exist between generations concerning the simultaneous application to multiple job positions in frustration. Interviewed members of Generation Y have encountered or even tried this phenomenon and successfully obtained suitable positions, or they know someone who has used this method effectively. Half of Generation X members have not encountered the phenomenon, while the other half is acquainted with someone who has been a "Rage Applier." The baby boomer generation has not heard of the term yet.

The second research question addressed how frequently dissatisfied employees resort to "Rage Applying." Similar to the first research question, we had to explore how often dissatisfied employees decide to use "Rage Applying." We found that different generations have different habits and needs. Gallup's (2023) research highlights that globally, 51% of employees plan to leave their jobs due to dissatisfaction. Of these, 54% are aged up to 40, indicating a widespread phenomenon among Generation Y and Z. We further investigated this phenomenon through interviews.

Generation X and Y members in managerial positions have encountered the phenomenon, having had colleagues leave due to dissatisfaction and conflicts, although they have not used it. In a managerial role, a member of the baby boomer generation has not encountered this phenomenon yet.

Non-managerial employees, primarily from Generation Y, have experienced or become aware of the phenomenon. A Generation Y member has used "Rage Applying" when extremely dissatisfied with their previous job, applying for around thirty positions within a year, ultimately securing employment in another organisation. Generation Y and Generation Z members have encountered the phenomenon but have not personally utilised it. A Generation X member has not yet experienced it.

Members of different generations decide differently to use "Rage Applying," as they view these processes differently. The research showed that unappreciated, unmotivated, and dissatisfied individuals use this phenomenon. The elements leading employees to decide on "Rage Applying" include poor and disrespectful communication within the company, poor relationships between employees and leaders or coworkers, lack of leadership's listening to employees, poor organisational climate, lack of monetary and non-monetary rewards, and lack of motivation. In most cases, interviewees have not decided to attempt "Rage Applying" independently, but many have witnessed it in their workplaces.

Participants added that they believe the phenomenon can be addressed by:

- Encouraging employees,
- Establishing proper communication (vertical and horizontal),
- Clearly defining boundaries between professional and private life,
- Motivating employees,
- Providing appropriate monetary and non-monetary rewards.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon we researched occurs worldwide and is utilised by employees who are dissatisfied with their current jobs. The "Rage Applying" phenomenon manifests as the frustrated employee's "angry" application to multiple job positions simultaneously – as the name suggests, employees, due to their current work situation and dissatisfaction, start seeking another job and apply to several of them in

the hope of finding another (better) employment opportunity. The phenomenon attests to the importance of job satisfaction and its significant impact on individual behaviour and career decisions.

In our study, we found that a good organisational climate and culture are crucial for every organisation, as a supportive environment enhances the commitment and dedication of employees, thereby increasing their productivity. Satisfied employees indicate a successful organisation, so each should identify its strengths and weaknesses and act accordingly. Additionally, organisations should pay attention to their employees, recognise them as individuals with their personal goals, and leverage acquired information to motivate them and improve their performance in the market.

In addition to the above, organisations must ensure the well-being of their employees by providing breaks from work, fostering effective communication within the organisation, promoting advancement and personal growth, adequately rewarding for work done, and simultaneously caring for their health. Healthy organisations ensure the well-being of their employees.

In the future, it would be advisable to conduct research on a larger sample or number of interviewees or use a focus group or panel in the case of qualitative research. If opting for quantitative analysis, a survey should be prepared, requiring a large sample. Research could also be differentiated between managerial and non-managerial employees, thus gaining perspectives on the phenomenon from both sides within the same organisation. Moreover, we believe that more literature covering the phenomenon with unified terms will be available in the future, facilitating further research. It is essential to emphasise the importance of continuing research, as employees are the driving force behind organisations in which they are employed.

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