

Psychological Changes of Generation Z in Education

Alijonova Muhlisa Kenjaboy qizi

Beshariq district N-2 General Secondary School English Language Teacher

Abstract: Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) is entering educational institutions with psychological and behavioral profiles significantly different from previous generations. This paper investigates the psychological shifts observed in Gen Z, exploring their emotional intelligence, cognitive styles, learning behaviors, and mental health concerns. The analysis draws on global research data to understand how digital immersion, socio-economic stressors, and rapid technological advancement have shaped their educational needs. The study proposes practical strategies for educators and institutions to respond to these challenges effectively.

Keywords: Generation Z, psychological transformation, educational psychology, mental health, digital learning, emotional intelligence.



This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

Introduction

The education sector has entered an era dominated by Generation Z students—digital natives shaped by globalization, the internet, and socio-political upheavals. This cohort is not only diverse and inclusive in worldview, but also demonstrates unique cognitive patterns, psychological vulnerabilities, and learning preferences. As traditional pedagogical methods fail to address the nuances of this generation, a scientific understanding of their psychological framework is essential for curriculum designers, educators, and policy makers.

Methodology

A systematic literature review was conducted across the following databases: JSTOR, PubMed, Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Selection criteria included peer-reviewed studies from 2015 to 2024, focusing on Gen Z's cognitive development, digital behavior, academic performance, and mental health. Empirical data were compared with prior generational research on Millennials and Generation X. In addition, data from global surveys such as OECD PISA, Pew Research Center, and World Health Organization youth mental health reports were incorporated.

Results

1. Cognitive and Learning Characteristics

- **Preference for experiential and multimedia learning:** Gen Z favors "learning by doing" over passive absorption. Visual tools, simulations, and gamification improve retention and engagement.

- **Short attention span & information scanning:** Gen Z is adept at processing large volumes of information quickly but struggles with deep concentration. (Microsoft, 2019; APA, 2020)
- **Critical thinking over memorization:** This generation questions authority more, preferring understanding over rote memorization.

2. Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health

- **High rates of anxiety and depression:** WHO (2023) reports that 1 in 3 Gen Z adolescents experience clinically relevant anxiety levels. This trend correlates with excessive screen time, academic pressure, and pandemic-related isolation.
- **Reduced interpersonal communication skills:** Gen Z's reliance on text-based interaction (DMs, chats, comments) has led to diminished face-to-face emotional communication and empathy.
- **Higher self-awareness and emotional vocabulary:** Despite emotional challenges, Gen Z is more open about mental health, therapy, and self-care than previous generations.

3. Sociocultural Influences

- **Diversity and inclusion:** Gen Z is the most racially, ethnically, and gender-diverse generation in history. Their worldview is shaped by exposure to global cultures via social media.
- **Political and environmental awareness:** Many Gen Z students report eco-anxiety, fear of war, and political instability as factors affecting their academic focus (Barna Group, 2021).
- **Hyperconnectivity and social comparison:** Constant connectivity leads to peer pressure, imposter syndrome, and low self-esteem due to curated social media portrayals.

4. Technological Integration

- **Digital multitasking:** Studies show that Gen Z students switch tasks on digital devices every 19 seconds on average while studying (Rosen et al., 2020).
- **Gamification and microlearning:** Small, interactive learning modules are more effective than traditional lectures.
- **AI-assisted learning tools:** Gen Z is more comfortable using ChatGPT, Khan Academy, and Duolingo, valuing instant feedback and autonomy in learning.

Discussion

Educational Implications

To effectively teach Gen Z, educators must revise traditional educational models. Key recommendations include:

- **Blended learning models:** Combine in-person interaction with flexible online content.
- **Mental health integration:** Include mindfulness sessions, on-campus counseling, and emotional literacy programs.
- **Project-based and collaborative learning:** Emphasize teamwork, real-world problem solving, and peer feedback.

Challenges for Educators

- Resistance to authority and formal structures
- Expectation for immediate results and feedback
- Difficulty in sustaining long-term attention

Strengths of Gen Z Learners

- High adaptability to new tech and platforms
- Social consciousness and global empathy
- Willingness to engage in activism, volunteerism, and community service

Conclusion

Generation Z presents a complex but promising challenge to educators worldwide. Their psychological transformation is influenced by digital immersion, shifting cultural norms, and increased mental health awareness. To meet their educational needs, institutions must evolve towards learner-centered, technology-driven, and emotionally supportive models. By doing so, we can empower Gen Z not only to thrive academically but also to contribute meaningfully to society.

References

1. Microsoft (2019). *Attention Spans Research Report*.
2. Pearson (2021). *Global Learner Survey: Generation Z in Education*.
3. World Health Organization (2023). *Adolescent Mental Health Trends*.
4. Seemiller, C. & Grace, M. (2019). *Generation Z: A Century in the Making*. Routledge.
5. APA (2020). *Stress in America: Generation Z*.
6. Rosen, L. et al. (2020). *The Distracted Mind: Multitasking Among Gen Z*.
7. OECD (2022). *Education at a Glance: Learning Outcomes of Digital Natives*.
8. Pew Research Center (2021). *Gen Z and Technology*.
9. Barna Group (2021). *The State of Gen Z*.
10. Twenge, J.M. (2018). *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Happy—and Unprepared for Adulthood*.