

HOW CAN WORK BE AN EXPERIENCE?

HÉDER-RIMA Mária

*Károly Ihrig Doctoral School of Management and Business, University of Debrecen,
Debrecen, Hungary*

heder.maria@econ.unideb.hu

Abstract: *Due to the fact, that there is a lack of workforce in the labour market, the importance of attraction and retention is becoming essential in corporate's operations. For ensuring the workforce which is needed for the operation, creating these activities and processes can be a key possibility from an organizational point of view. The aim of the study is to find out those everyday activities that make positive feelings on students of the University of Debrecen, Hungary. From the companies' perspectives it can be important to know those facts which cause positive impressions on students because of making purposeful action for achieving the potential target group in the labour market. Furthermore, it is essential to know these factors to strengthen organizational attractiveness and retention. The research was based on a questionnaire survey as a primary research. A significant part (67.8%) of the respondents feel that although their current lives are rather interesting and enjoyable this can be enhanced and they think that it is essential in terms of weekdays to be enjoyable and interesting. The survey exercise shows that in the examined target group the activity related to positive feelings was mainly due to sports, meals, learning, films, personal relationships, social media and computer activities. The most adverse feelings for students are caused by attending university classes, doing different kinds of housework and the commuting between the university and their residence. Based on the results of the examination we can identify those activities which rather support or rather block the creation of flow experience in terms of the students as the layer of potential employees. These factors can be well emphasized and developed in the case of an appropriate corporate strategy and can be supported by different HR activities and this way, the positive experiences by the company can be assured.*

Keywords: *Workforce shortage; flow; retention; attractiveness; happiness; satisfaction.*

JEL Classification: *J24; O15.*

1. Introduction

There have been several researches in connection with the factors defining workplace experiences (Harrington, 2019; AON, 2018a; PWC, 2017; IBM, 2016) the majority of which were looking to answer by what factors the organisation could have a positive effect on the employees. Such possibility is the creation of positive employee experience and because of the conscious application of which companies with a progressive approach can strengthen the existing employees' loyalty and retention in a way that in the meantime their performance can be increased (Jacob,

2017). It is important because today's career starters have different expectations, they are already mobile and generally less loyal (Dajnoki – Kun, 2016). It also makes the company attractive to potential workforce since during the process there is a major emphasis on revealing what messages people looking for a job are most recipient to, where they would like to work and what they desire. Getting know the needs of potential employees can be crucial for HR as for the attraction and retention the company needs to know their motivation and the factors that can make them satisfied (Gergely & Pierog, 2018). The significance of the creation and sustainability of corporate attractiveness goes without question (Szondi & Gergely, 2019) in such an economic state when there is a workforce shortage on the labour market and it is especially difficult to provide quality workforce and in numbers which can be said basically about all areas of the labour market (Korn Ferry, 2018) and among others Hungary, too (KSH, 2018; Poór et al., 2018). However, in order to successfully integrate workers with unconventional needs into the labour market, it is essential to know the expectations of these workers (Dajnoki, 2014a).

The aim of the study is to give a comprehensive picture of the role of experiences connected to the workplace in the organisational operation. Our aim is to reveal how much the applied examination method supplies us with practical results and at what level we can identify and categorise the students' everyday activities. Our further aim is to see what kind of characteristics can be drawn on the basis of one segment of potential employees, the analysis of which can also be interpreted from a job environment perspective, too, as well as what possible alternatives corporations can provide.

To achieve these aims we used primary research. The basis of the primary research was a separate questionnaire survey.

2. The connection of flow theory to work

The flow experience is a state which gives a highly striking and extreme emotional gratification, to reach this state any kind of activity be helpful in which we can absorb while we charge ourselves from the happiness that comes from the activity itself. One of the renowned expert of the field is Csíkszentmihályi (2010:22) according to whom flow is "the phenomenon when we are so engrossed with the task at hand that anything else is miniscule that the experience itself becomes so enjoyable that we want to continue that activity at all costs just for itself". This feeling is described by the expert as the perfect experience which lends such a satisfaction that we want to reach it again and again. To reach this, the emergence of the optimal balance of the challenge coming from tasks to be done and the skills within the individual is needed (Csíkszentmihályi et al, 1987; Massimini and Carli, 1988). Another characteristic of the phenomenon is that it can be usually reached not in a passive state but on the other hand we need an active activity which we can experience even while we are working. In the 8-channel model of flow (Massimini – Carli, 1988; Ellis et al, 1994) the connection of the different level meeting of challenges and abilities can be well-tracked (Figure 1). In the case if the individual has a high-level of competency needed to perform the task and also the difficulty level of the task

connected to it is also high enough – so it gives a right challenge – then the flow state can be reached. Though its condition is that on the one hand employee competencies should be revealed regularly and precisely and on the other hand the activities connected to certain jobs should be optimal so it would not pose a bigger challenge or a smaller one than the personal skills enable the individual. However, regular evaluation is crucial because the system of competencies can not be considered permanent. Individual's competencies can change, one of the reasons being that due to changing labour market and workplace requirements, the workforce needs to be continuously developed (Dajnoki et al, 2015), which also plays an important role in developed societies (Pierog et al., 2015).

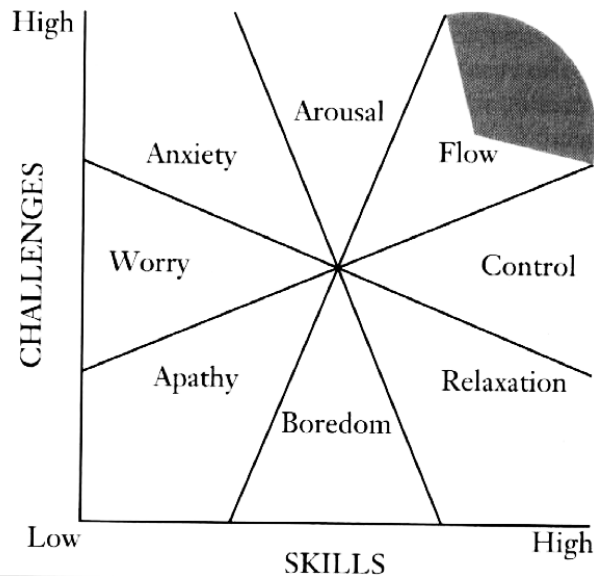


Figure 1: 8-channel model of flow
Source: Massimini and Carli, 1988; Csikszentmihályi 2010

The significance of experiences emphatically affects behaviour at every generation (Törőcsik et al., 2014). Though its scale cannot be precisely defined but we can safely say that work has less significance in everyday life in the case of the younger generations and with this its interpretation is formed differently from the previous generations (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Considering that thanks to the natural change of labour market the younger generations (Y, Z) are full members in the world of work thus it is important to deal with their characteristics and peculiarities to be able to understand how they operate since today's students will become the employees of tomorrow. The youngest people of the market are Generation Z employees who are mostly looking for experience, adventure and overcoming challenges during their activities (Deloitte, 2017; Skinner et al, 2018). At the same time; however, it is essential that work has to be useful, which is also one of the critical points of

integration (Dajnoki, 2014b). Moreover, it is a great motivation also if people who have a disadvantage in the labour market get the chance to work and to prove, for example disabled people which often generates the feeling of “being a useful member of society” in the worker which helps to increase loyalty, as well (Dajnoki, 2015). But for Generation Y employees there are often different areas in the forefront, based on an earlier survey (Juhász – Terjék, 2014) for them salary, the leader and working hour schedule are more important. That is why it is important to reveal which activities appear in the average life of tomorrow’s employees and which of these create a positive and which of these create a negative feeling in them. By examining the results we can identify those activities which because of their positive effects can be interpreted in a job environment and those which considering their negative effects can be minimised.

3. Material and method

To achieve the aim of the study we made primary research. The primary questionnaire survey was based on the pilot research experience and methodology (N=42) of Héder-Rima (2019) the original idea of which is from a Rogatko (2017) survey of the similar field.

247 university students took part in the survey which is discussed in this study, after the right filter and selection we could analyse 236 questionnaires. The survey was created with the help of comfortable sample which means that only those students took part in it who were open to fill in a questionnaire and were available in the survey period. The students examined make up only a tiny part (only 6%) of the stratum (4200 people) but the verification of the applicability of the method could be interpreted even with this proportions. Out of the people who responded 79 were men and 157 were women. 230 respondents could be classified in Generation Z. The people questioned are all students of the University of Debrecen, Faculty of Economics. According to their education level there were students who take part in higher-level vocational training, in BSc and in MSc trainings who study in seven different majors (at MSc: management and organisation major; BSc: business administration and management, international economy and business, economy and rural development, agricultural IT and policy administration, rural development agricultural engineer; higher-level vocational training: finance and accountancy major. Out of the people questioned:

- First-year student: 149 students in BSc training,; 33 students in higher-level vocational training; 17 students in MSc training
- Second-year student: 2 in MSc training
- Third-year student: 35 in BSc training

The questions were conducted personally and were done on a voluntary and anonymous basis. The data acquisition was made with the help of paper questionnaire where the questionnaire besides the general identification data (time of birth, gender, place of residence, education level) was divided into two professional units. In the first part, the students could mark on a 5-grade Likert-scale how important and exciting they consider their everyday life as well as how important

for them to have an interesting and exciting everyday life. In the second part of the questionnaire they were free to describe those general activities (Maximum 10) which appear in their everyday lives and in connection with that they needed to mark what feelings are evoked by each activity. For the definition of the feelings Csíkszentmihályi's (2010) 8-channel model served as a basis which means that they could choose from 8 separate feelings. Based on the pilot test experiences (Héder-Rima, 2019) further developing the earlier questionnaire the explanations of the different feelings could be found at the bottom of the questionnaire in order that the students could interpret and identify them more precisely. By each activity they could mark in minutes the average time they spent with the realisation of that activity. The examination is not representative so the consequences drawn from the results can be specifically interpreted for the participating sample.

4. Results and their evaluation

During the examinations we wanted to find answers to how much the people questioned considered their own lives enjoyable and what their opinions are, how important it is that the weekdays should be enjoyable and interesting (Figure 2). Based on the results, on the whole, students evaluate both their everyday lives and their expectations rather positively however, we can identify a difference in level.

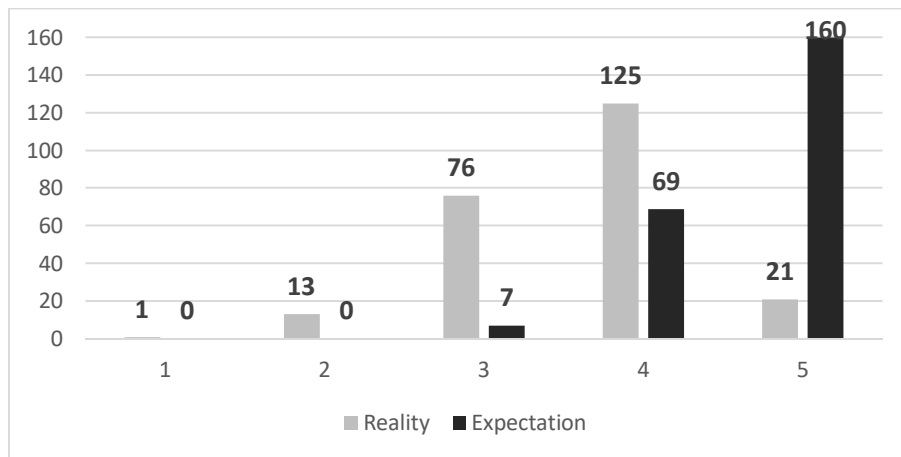


Figure 2: How experience appears at students' everyday life (person)

Source: Own examination, 2019; N=236 people

A significant part of the respondents feel that although their current lives are rather interesting and enjoyable this can be enhanced and they think that it is essential in terms of weekdays to be enjoyable and interesting. While the average of their evaluation on the current weekdays* is 3.64, the average on the expected weekdays** is 4.64, the variance is low in both cases (0.73* and 0.53** which points at the conclusion that the respondents' opinion was homogeneous for the question. We can assume that the students' expectations will not change greatly and suddenly

so when the student becomes an employee they would represent similar value judgement. We can conclude that as long as the organisations try to react to these needs of future employees and they can provide the interesting and exciting weekdays for them then they have a better chance to attract and retain the target group. The research also included to reveal those areas which appear in the form of an average everyday activity in the case of the people participated in the research and clearly support or block the flow experience for them. By summarizing the results based on the 236 questionnaires 1707 activities were named which can be grouped around different tags (e.g. sport, housework, eating/cooking etc.). As a general experience we can say that although the students were allowed to name 10 activities only 64 of them took this possibility. Generally, similar activities were named and only few students mentioned unique activities. These results can refer to the facts that the students participated in the survey either live in a very similar way or they have little unique features so on the average they do the same activities.

The majority of the described activities (1340) assure rather positive feelings for the students and the proportion of those activities which create negative feelings is less (367).

Based on the results of Figure 3., most of the activities (636) which the students do in their weekdays contain tasks where the level of difficulty is not too high but the individual skills connected to it are there in an outstanding degree in terms of the students thus by doing these activities brings the state of relaxation for the students in which they feel confident. These are followed mostly by those activities (312) which either provide the flow feeling or support the experience of interest phase (305). At that time both the difficulty level of the task and the skills needed to solve them are high.

Although negative feelings appear at a smaller scale in the weekdays of the students based on the received answers we can say that they peak mostly in terms of boredom (199). At this time the difficulty level of the task to be completed is minimal though the existing skills are higher so it does not create a challenge but rather boredom to the task. The activities with the second highest negative feeling can be put into the group of apathy (80) where the difficulty level of the task, as well as the necessary skills are present only at a low level. By detailing the results we can draw up and highlight those specific activities which appear most often in the students' answers and which support the most the creation of flow in the case of the examined students (Figure 4).

Based on the results students experience the most positive feelings while studying for gaining knowledge, watching films and TV, doing different sports. After these the highest score was given to the different personal relations (relationship, family, friends) and the use of different social media (Facebook, Instagram, chat etc.) while eating, cooking browsing) also caused highly-positive feelings.

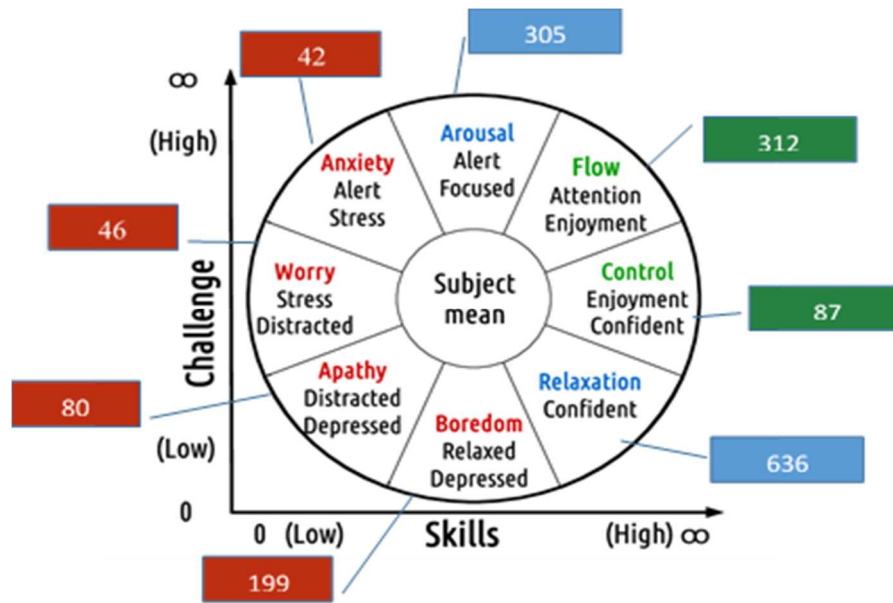


Figure 3: Introducing the types of activities done by students by the feelings connected to them

Source: Own examination, 2019; N=1707 activities

The activities which cause the most negative feelings according to the respondents are shown in Figure 5.

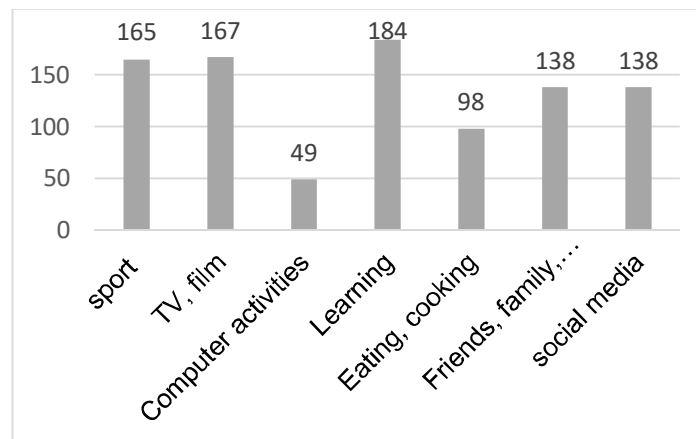


Figure 4: The activities that support most the creation of students' flow experience

Source: own examination, 2019, N=1340 activities

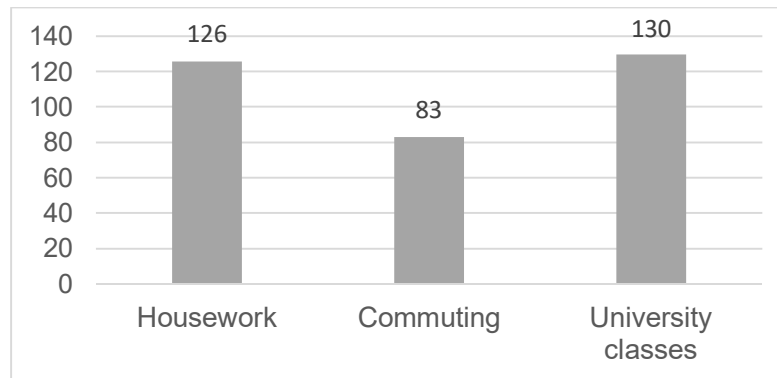


Figure 5: The activities that block the most the creation of students' flow experience
Source: own examination, 2019, N=367 activities

The most adverse feelings for students are caused by attending university classes, doing different kinds of housework (cleaning, washing, ironing, doing the washing-up etc.) and the commuting between the university and their residence besides that but in a lesser proportion there are other factors such as shopping; morning preparation; exams; writing tests but in a smaller degree internet usage and watching TV.

5. Conclusions and suggestions

The completed examination highlights that the everyday activities done by the students can be put into categories according to which cause them good and bad feelings and also these activities can often be interpreted in a workplace environment, too. Consequently, it is possible that the information gathered this way can be used by the organisations with the help of different HR functions for a conscious effort – attracting employees – that is to provide the right experiences in terms of the potential employees.

Based on the primary research results we can say that the majority of the participants consider in a general way their everyday lives interesting and exciting but in their expectations a need for a more interesting and exciting everyday life also appears which matches the global and international survey results available in the literature that is the expectation for an experience-based job appears in terms of the latest generation. If this employee need can be assured in a corporate environment by the employers then they can be attractive for the target group which from the HR side can be supported by HR branding and the retention of employees concerned can be more successful which put retention management more to the front. Based on the results of the examination Csíkszentmihályi's (2010) 8-channel model of flow can be interpreted from a job organisation point and with its help we can identify those activities which rather support or rather block the creation of flow experience in terms of the students as the layer of potential employees. We can state that the activities given by the respondents can be identified in a workplace environment,

too. For generating positive feelings the development within the organisation – which from an HR view can be supported by human resource development and career management – furthermore, providing free-time and sports activities – which is most connected to the area of maintaining health – providing information through possible educational films/series, integrating social media in the work process can also be interpreted as highly advantageous opportunities. Moreover, an outstanding performance can be the strive to achieve the balance between work and private life where employees can spend enough time on their relations outside the work, too or providing different team-building activities where the common cooking or the introduction of eating together as well as by making it playful the different computer programs can also mean good alternatives. Besides providing a wide-scale of these factors it can be an alternative to minimise those factors in the job environment which can cause negative feelings, anxiety, impatience, apathy or boredom. Based on the survey results it could be recommended to develop the classic education methods in the job environment and change them according to changing needs since based on the examination although students prefer learning and gaining knowledge attending the lessons scored less. It could be necessary to find those possible development alternatives which provide the acquisition of the really necessary knowledge in a practical way. Furthermore, minimising and omitting all activities which can be connected to the classic housework (e.g. providing a dishwasher). It is also important for the company to be flexible in order to decrease the inconveniences of commuting which can be done with alternative working hour systems or distance work or flexible working hours.

6. Summary

This study, connected to students' flow activities calls for further research. It is important for companies to know clear the exact needs and preferences of future employees. It is sure that the central role of experiences appears more and more as a specific employee need in today's labour market. To reveal the needs of future employees can be a key in terms of the successful operation of companies. The surveys done among future employees help to create the work organisation, job planning and job environment by taking into consideration the needs they expect. Employee experiences define the connection to the organisation and also the performance, too thus the conscious formation of the area can be interpreted as a strategic question. By examining the individual needs the jobs can be personalised and the work groups synchronised. Based on the present research we can say that the students participating in the survey formulated those areas which support or block them in experiencing the perfect experience along well-distinguished activities. Based on the results we can note that there is an outstanding need for providing sports activities, acquiring knowledge which can be done more successfully by film or social media or in a playful way different from the classic education methods. From the point of view of healthy living and team-building it could be significant if the organisation provides eating possibilities, as well as providing the right balance of work and private life where enough time remains to

maintain personal relationships. In terms of work organisation it is important to minimise commuting which blocks the flow experience significantly or optimise the time spent with this by providing beneficial activities.

7. Acknowledgements



SUPPORTED BY THE ÚNKP-19-3 NEW NATIONAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM OF THE
MINISTRY OF HUMAN CAPACITIES”

References

1. AON Magyarország Kft. (2018a) Magyarország első, átfogó munkavállalói élmény kutatása. <http://hr.aonhewitt.hu/dolgoznielmeny/letoltheto-anyagok/hazai-kutatasok/> [2019.03.06.]
2. Csíkszentmihályi, M (2010) Flow. Az áramlat. A tökéletes élmény pszichológiája, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest
3. Csíkszentmihályi, M., Massimini, F. & Carli, M. (1987). The monitoring of optimal experience: A tool for psychiatric rehabilitation, *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, Vol. 175, 545–549
4. Dajnoki, K (2014a) HR sajátosságok feltárása vezetői mélyinterjúk alapján megváltozott munkaképességű személyeket foglalkoztató szervezeteknél *KÖZÉP-EURÓPAI KÖZLEMÉNYEK*. VII. évfolyam : No. 26-27. pp. 185-195., 11 p.
5. Dajnoki, K (2014b) "Aki keres az talál" – Fogyatékos emberek által betöltött munkakörök feltárása *ACTA SCIENTIARUM SOCIALIUM* 40 pp. 101-110., 10 p.
6. Dajnoki K. (2015) Ösztönzés és teljesítményértékelés gyakorlata fogyatékos, illetve megváltozott munkaképességű személyeket foglalkoztató észak-alföldi szervezeteknél *Taylor: Gazdálkodás- és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: A virtuális Intézet Közép-Európa Kutatására közleményei* VII. évf: (1-2. szám No18-19) pp. 219-227
7. Dajnoki, K., Pierog, A. & Vörös, Péter (2015) Képzési-fejlesztési lehetőségek eredményességének megítélése megváltozott munkaképességű személyeket foglalkoztató szervezeteknél. *Acta Scientiarum Socialium*: 43 pp. 57-66., 10 p.
8. Dajnoki, K. & Kun, A. (2016) Frissdiplomások foglalkoztatásának jellemzői az agrárgazdaságban *GAZDÁLKODÁS* 60. évf. : IV. szám pp. 289-304., 16 p.
9. Deloitte (2017) Rewriting the rules for the digital age. 2017 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/human-capital/hc-2017-global-human-capital-trends-us.pdf> [2017.09.27.]
10. Ellis, G. D., Voelkl, J. E. & Morris, C. (1994) Measurement and analysis issues with explanation of variance in daily experience using the flow model, *Journal of Leisure Research*, Vol. 26, pp.337–356
11. Gergely É. & Pierog A. (2018) A tehetség megtartásának lehetőségei a karrierigények tükrében. In: *International Journal of Engineering and Management Sciences/Műszaki és Menedzsment Tudományi Közlemények* Vol. 3: No3, pp.31-43
12. Harrington, B. (2019) Maximizing the Employee Experience: How Changing Workforce Dynamics are Impacting Today's Workplace. <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/publications/researchreports/Maximizing%20the%20Employee%20Experience%20White%20Paper.pdf>

13. Héder-Rima M. (2019) A munkával kapcsolatos élmények tudatos alakítása, mint a munkavállalói elégedettség karbantartásának egy lehetséges aspektusa. In: Szerk.: Szentés B. *A karbantartás az idő és a tudás szorításában*. Pannon Egyetem, Veszprém, Alföldi Nyomda pp.143-153
14. IBM Corporation (2016a) The Employee Experience Index. A new global measure of a human workplace and its impact. https://www.globoforce.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The_Employee_Experience_Index.pdf [2019.04.05.]
15. Jacob, M. (2017) Why the Millions We Spend on Employee Engagement Buy Us So Little. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2017/03/why-the-millions-we-spend-on-employee-engagement-buy-us-so-little>. [2019.02.11.]
16. Juhász Cs. & Terjék L. (2014) Elvárások vizsgálata az Y generációnál. In: *A Virtuális Intézet Közép-Európa Kutatására Közleményei VI/2:25* pp. 221-226. 6p
17. Korn Ferry (2018) Future of work. The talent shift. Survey, <https://futureofwork.kornferry.com/> [2019.04.11.]
18. KSH – Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (2018) Munkaerőpiaci helyzetkép, 2014-2018. <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/munkerohelyz/munkerohelyz17.pdf> [2019.03.02]
19. Massimini F. & Carli M. (1988) The systematic assessment of flow in daily experience. In: Csikszentmihalyi M. – Csikszentmihalyi I.S. (Eds). *Optimal experience. Psychological studies of flow in consciousness*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 266-281
20. Poór J., Kovács Á., Kolbe T. & Csapó I. (2018) Szakemberhiány és munkaerőmegtartás a kulcsmunkakörökben 2018. http://bkik.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Munkaer%C3%B6hi%C3%A1ny-kutat%C3%A1si-jelent%C3%A9s-2018_v02.pdf [2019.03.02]
21. PWC PricewaterhouseCoopers Magyarország Kft. (2017) Munkavállalói élmény és munkavállalói preferenciák. https://www.pwc.com/hu/hu/szolgalattasok/people_and_organisation/evp/evp_kiadvany_final.pdf [2019.01.26]
22. Pierog, A., Vörös, P. & Dajnoki, K. (2015) Civil szervezetek szerepe a foglalkoztatásban és képzésben – Egy sikeres debreceni együttműködés *ACTA SCIENTIARUM SOCIALIUM* : 43 pp. 47-56., 10 p.
23. Pyöria, P., Ojala, S., Saari, T. & Jarvinen, K-M (2017) The Millennial Generation. A New Breed of Labour? <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2158244017697158> [2018.05.22]
24. Rogatko, T. P. (2009) The influence of flow on positive affect in college students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10(2), 133-148.
25. Skinner, H., Sarpong, D. & White, G. (2018) Meeting the needs of the Millennials and Generation Z: gamification in tourism through geocaching. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, Vol. 4 Issue: 1, pp. 93-104.
26. Szondi R. & Gergely É. (2019) Karriertervezés és megtartás – nagyvállalatok gyakorlata az IT szektorban. In: *Taylor: Gazdálkodás- és szervezéstudományi folyóirat: a virtuális intézet közép-európa kutatására közleményei XI*. (No.. 35) pp. 107-115.
27. Töröcsik M., Szűcs K. & Hehl, D. (2014) How generations think: research on generation Z. In *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio*, 1; pp.23-45.