

## Characteristics of Generation Z Piano Students From the Perspective of Piano Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the characteristics of Generation Z piano students from the perspective of piano teachers. The sample of the study consists of 40 piano teachers working in state conservatories with piano departments in Turkey. The data were collected with the "Teacher Opinion Form" consisting of 24 questions, which took its final form with expert opinions, and the findings were tabulated. As a result of the research, it has been determined that the majority of Generation Z piano students are generally impatient, have high self-confidence but low self-awareness in terms of personality traits. In terms of studying and learning characteristics, they experience great difficulties in their individual studies without support, they do not know their own learning methods, they have difficulty in managing their study time properly, and their professional curiosity is not high. When students are evaluated according to their emotional state, they are temperamental, have difficulty accepting criticism and lose their belief in success quickly. Piano students, according to their digital literacy, are hasty and play fast due to the habit of quick action/quick response habit acquired from the digital environment, and they quickly get bored with the works they are practicing as they are unable to balance between the regular flow of new information in the digital environment and the flow in real life. It is also among the results obtained that the students of Generation Z, who were born into technology, do not use this technology efficiently in terms of contribution to the piano lesson. In the light of these results obtained, suggestions regarding the piano education of Generation Z and future field studies were presented.

**Key words:** Generation Z, Piano Education, Piano Teachers, Piano Students

### INTRODUCTION

The group of people born in a certain year range is defined by the concept of generation. The Turkish Language Association (TDK, 2021) defines the word generation as "the community of people who were born in approximately the same years, shared the conditions of the same age, thus shared similar troubles and destinies, and were responsible for similar duties."

According to the generation theory, the distinctive features of the individual make him representative of a certain generation or group (Strauss & Howe 1991; Duse & Duse, 2016, p.691). Based on this, researchers have suggested that different generations have different characteristics. These characteristics are generally attributed to individuals of all generations, but it should not be forgotten that there may be different variables within each generation. In addition, generational development of each country follows a different course due to social and socio-cultural characteristics. Therefore, in generational studies, countries' own social characteristics should be considered (Ardıç & Altun, 2017, p.13).

### Generations and their Distinctive Features

The Silent Generation (1925-1945) is the generation that experienced the World War I and II and the Great Depression of 1929 and saw the atomic bomb. In this traditionalist generation, where respect for authority is very important, loyalty, hard work, and making sacrifices for the common interest are the defining features (Duse & Duse, 2016, p. 691). Famine, wars and great destructions caused this generation to lead a simple life by saving (Demirkaya et al., 2015, p. 188).

The Baby Boomer Generation (1946-1964) is the generation of post-war economic development. During this period, civil rights movements, women's liberation, the space program, the Cold War and the Vietnam War took place. Believing that they will change the world, this generation attaches great importance to youth, peace, freedom, health, personal happiness, and wealth (Clausing et al., 2003, p. 373).

Generation X (1964-1979), defined for the years 1965-1980 in some sources, also called "key around the neck-generation" after mothers started to work, became a generation that took more responsibility and risk and was more open to change (Duse & Duse, 2016, p.692). At the same time, it is a

generation that is also defined as the “Lost Generation” because they exist in a time of uncertainty in the world (Ardıç & Altun, 2017, p.15). The generation, which has a problem of adaptation to technology, but also has a lot of technological developments in its life processes, has witnessed many innovations in this respect (Savaş & Karataş, 2019, p.228).

Generation Y (1980-1994) are also called Millennials, Future Generations, www Generation, Digital Generation, Burst Copy, Net Generation, and Indigos (Demirkaya et al., 2015, p. 188). It is a generation that lives in a society driven by technology and can access information over the internet. Their self-esteem is quite high. They constantly question themselves and do not accept anything as it is (Duse & Duse, 2016, p. 692). Although its characteristics change according to the environment, social and economic conditions, it is a generation that has been exposed to intercultural interaction with the development and widespread use of the internet (Savaş & Karataş, 2019, p.228).

**Generation Z (1995-2005)**

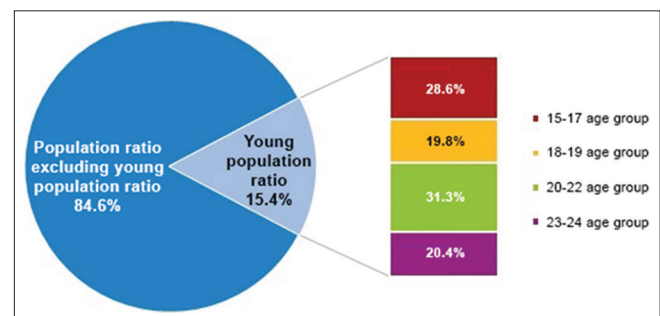
Although the years differ according to the researchers, the generation born mostly between the 1990s and the mid-2000s is called Generation Z (Şahin, 2018). According to Prensky (2001), although it cannot be said physically that the brain structures of the new generation are different, it can be said that their thinking structures differ. As a result of this, Prensky used the definition of “Digital Natives” for the new generation of students (Savaş & Karataş, 2019, p.229). In addition to these definitions, definitions such as Gamer Generation, Zappers, Human (Homo Zappiens), and Grasshopper Mind are also used for this generation (Carstens & Beck, 2005; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Papert, 1994; Pedró, 2006; Prensky, 2001; Veen, 2007). The sine qua non of Generation Z, born into technology, is the internet. The basic contact form is instant messaging. For this reason, this generation, which expects speed in everything, is intolerant of waiting. The generational comparison table (Table 1) below was created by Mohr and Mohr (2017, p. 86) in the light of the analysis of the generations and the data obtained.

Generation Z in Turkey develops in parallel with the youth of the whole world with the effect of globalization and has the opportunity to benefit from the opportunities of the “Information Age” simultaneously with the world. According to studies, Turkey, which is among the countries that use social media the most, raises a generation that is much more dominant in the world when compared to previous generations (Ardıç & Altun, 2017, p. 18). Figure 1 shows the youth population percentage data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) for 2021 according to Turkey’s address-based population registration system.

**Characteristics of Generation Z Students**

Generation Z carries the quick action/quick response habit acquired from the digital environment to the real world as well. Therefore, students of this generation access information faster and interact with their environment at the speed of a game (Şahin, 2009, p. 159). Generation Z students, like previous generations, prefer to access information from the internet rather than from printed sources because written text and sequential reading are boring for them (Puiu, 2017). While they generally prefer multimedia materials such as pictures, sound, animation, and video to obtain information, visuality and entertainment are at the forefront as much as speed in accessing information (Karabulut, 2015, p.17).

Generation Z students do not see computers as technology like the previous generation. They prefer the internet



**Figure 1.** Youth population percentage data of Turkey (TUIK, 2021)

**Table 1.** Comparison of Recent Generations (Mohr & Mohr, 2017)

Perspective	Gen X—Busters	Gen Y—Millennials	Gen Z—Digital Natives
Birth Years	1965-1980	1981-1994	1995-2010
Life Paradigm	Relate to me	Life is a cafeteria	Make a difference
View of Authority	Ignore them	Choose them	Work with them
View of Relationships	Central, caring	24/7	Collaboration, resolution
Value System	Media	Shop Around	Open-minded
View of Career	Irritant	Place to serve	Place to solve problems
View of Technology	Enjoy it	Employ it	Live it
View of Future	Hopeless	Optimistic	Solve it!

to television and accept virtuality as real. This generation of students, who prefer to apply instead of knowing, learn more through trial and error and want to perform multitasking. Being constantly connected to the internet causes them to experience latency intolerance (Pospisil & McMahon, 2005; Şahin, 2010; Brown, 2000). In this regard, Bilgiç et al. (2011, p. 260) explains the learning characteristics of the Z generation as follows:

- They want to access information quickly
- They prefer graphics over text
- Rather than reading an article in a linear fashion, they prefer to read it randomly in capsule form
- They prefer games over serious work
- Their cognitive structures are parallel, not sequential
- They want to do many things at the same time
- They want to learn by exploring

Generation Z students are also very fast in terms of speaking, learning and thinking. Compared to previous generations, this generation has higher IQ, self-confidence, and ability to run multiple tasks simultaneously. Therefore, the educational methods of previous generations are insufficient for this generation's students. In the study prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) on the 21<sup>st</sup> century student profile, the problem of not considering the individual differences of students in education was encountered (MEB, 2011). However, Generation Z students need and design personalized learning experiences in line with their individual needs and preferences in order to receive information (Arabacı & Polat, 2013; Lorenzo & Dziuban, 2006; Prensky, 2004; Veen, 2007). This shows that different and individual education models should be developed for Generation Z students (Oyman et al., 2013). Educational models should be developed according to the needs of the modern age student, especially technology should facilitate and encourage individual learning (Dereli, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the learning model of the new age will be individualized learning. From this point of view, in the present study, the profile of the Generation Z student has been a matter of curiosity in the piano education process, which is the most basic element of instrument education from past to present, and it is aimed to examine the characteristics of these students reflected in the piano lesson within the framework of certain categories.

The problem statement of the research in line with the determined purpose is as follows:

“What are the opinions of piano teachers on the characteristics of Generation Z piano students?”

Within the framework of this problem statement, answers to the following sub-problems were sought:

1. What are the personality traits of Generation Z piano students?
2. What are the study and learning characteristics of Generation Z piano students?
3. What are the emotional states of Generation Z piano students?
4. What are the digital literacy characteristics of Generation Z piano students?

## METHOD

### Research Model

This study, which aims to determine the opinions of piano teachers on the characteristics of Generation Z piano students, is in the survey model, which is one of the quantitative research methods. The screening model is “research in which the views of the participants on a subject or event or their characteristics such as interests, skills, abilities, and attitudes are determined” (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010, p. 231).

### Universe and Sample

According to Karasar (1998), the universe is the set of elements for which the results of the research are desired to be generalized. The sample, on the other hand, is the group selected from the universe elements with various techniques to represent the universe and examined (Maxwell, 1996). The universe of this research consists of piano teachers working in state conservatories with piano departments in Turkey, and the sample consists of 40 piano teachers working in the aforementioned conservatories on a voluntary basis. The demographic characteristics of the teachers participating in the research are given in Table 2.

### Data Collection Tools

“Teacher Opinion Form” was prepared by the researcher in order to determine the opinions of piano teachers on the characteristics of Generation Z piano students. While creating the general framework of the form, the opinions of three academicians who are experts in their fields were consulted. Experts were asked to evaluate the questions in terms of their suitability and clarity for the purpose of the research, and to offer suggestions for any change, correction, adding or removing questions when they deem necessary. In line with expert opinions, the questions were revised and rearranged. In order to evaluate the clarity of the questions, a pilot interview was conducted with three

**Table 2.** The demographic characteristics of the participating teachers

	<i>f</i>	%
University		
Hacettepe University	7	17.5
İstanbul University	4	10.0
Mersin University	5	12.5
Zonguldak University	2	5.0
Çukurova University	3	7.5
Anadolu University	3	7.5
Bursa Uludağ University	3	7.5
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	6	15.0
Akdeniz University	3	7.5
Dokuz Eylül University	4	10.0
Total	40	100
Distribution by age		
30-40	12	30
41 and above	28	70
Total	40	100

teachers, and then the interview form was given its final form.

In the interview form, six questions were formed for each of the four sub-problems determined in the light of the problem statement. Therefore, the form contains a total of 24 questions. The questions in the prepared form are in the form of a five-point Likert scale and consist of “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Undecided”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” options. At the end of the form, the teachers were asked whether they would like to add an opinion on the subject of the research, and 11 of 40 teachers expressed their additional opinions on the subject. The opinions of the teachers were not categorized, and all opinions were conveyed as they were written.

**Data Analysis**

The developed “Teacher Opinion Form” was converted into Google Documents and sent to piano teachers. While some of the conservatories, where the piano teachers who make up the sample of this study, cover all of primary, secondary and undergraduate education, some of them are only undergraduate education institutions; thus, in order to avoid any confusion, the teachers were asked to evaluate only undergraduate students between the ages of 18-21 while answering the questions.

In the arithmetic mean, the score ranges were determined as  $(5-1)/5=0.80$  (Tekin, 1996) by using the Interval Width= Array Width/Number of Groups formula for the interval in the Likert-type five-point rating scale and presented in Table 3.

**FINDINGS**

1. Findings and Comments on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sub-Problem

In this sub-problem, there are the findings of six questions directed to teachers in order to determine the personality traits of Generation Z piano students. The findings are shown in Table 4.

The views of the teachers on the personality traits of the Generation Z piano students are shown in Table 4. Accordingly, teachers have the opinion that Generation Z piano students have high self-confidence. Again, a very high percentage of teachers stated that students are generally impatient. Teachers who think that students are creative and imaginative students are also in the majority. While the average score for students’ ability to be goal-oriented and able to cope with difficulties decreases, teachers who have negative opinions about students’ self-awareness are more

**Table 3.** Common Score Ranges for the Teacher Interview Form

Interview Form	Common Score Range
Strongly Agree	4.20-5.00
Agree	3.40-4.19
Undecided	2.60-3.39
Disagree	1.80-2.59
Strongly Disagree	1.00-1.79

common. These findings suggest that although Generation Z piano students show high self-confidence, they sometimes have problems in the face of difficulties and their awareness level is not directly proportional to their self-confidence.

2. Findings and Comments on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sub-Problem

In this sub-problem, six questions were asked about the studying and learning characteristics of Generation Z piano students, and the average of the answers given by the teachers is shown in Table 5.

In Table 5, the findings of the teachers’ views on the studying and learning characteristics of Generation Z piano students are given. Accordingly, it has been determined that the majority of Generation Z piano students are students who have difficulties in individual study and need support. When the findings are examined, it is seen that the students learn quickly but are not aware of their own learning methods. This situation is in parallel with the low self-awareness seen in the findings of the previous sub-problem. In addition, according to the findings, it can be said that the students do

**Table 4.** Teachers’ opinions on the personality traits of Generation Z piano students

Personality traits of Generation Z piano students	The mean of the teachers’ opinions
Generally impatient	4.12
Able to cope with difficulties	3.27
High self-awareness (Aware of weaknesses and strengths)	2.72
Goal-oriented	3.72
Creative and imaginative	4.07
Self-confident	4.45

**Table 5.** Teachers’ opinions on the studying and learning characteristics of Generation Z piano students

Studying and learning characteristics of Generation Z piano students	The mean of the teachers’ opinions
Having difficulties in self-study (needing support)	4.10
Quick learner	3.75
Knowing how to learn (aware of their own learning method)	2.47
High level of professional curiosity	2.45
Loves to study	2.40
Managing study time properly	2.05

**Table 6.** Teachers’ opinions on the emotional states of Generation Z piano students

Emotional states of Generation Z piano students	The mean of the teachers’ opinions
High motivation for the course	2.75
Difficulty accepting criticism	4.05
Managing stressful situations well	2.42
High professional anxiety	3.60
Emotions fluctuating/Temperamental	4.27
Losing faith in success quickly	3.97



not show the level expected by the teachers in terms of professional curiosity, studying and managing their study time properly.

### 3. Findings and Comments on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sub-Problem

In the third sub-problem of the study, the opinions of teachers on the emotional states of Generation Z piano students were questioned. The obtained results are given in Table 6.

The views of the teachers on the emotional states of Generation Z piano students are shown in Table 6. The findings reveal that Generation Z piano students are highly temperamental students who experience fluctuating emotions. Again, according to the findings, the majority of students have difficulty in accepting criticism. The fact that students quickly lose their belief in success can be explained by their

impatient personality traits. It is also among the findings that students with high professional anxiety have low course motivation and cannot manage stress well.

### 4. Findings and Comments on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sub-Problem

Teachers' views on the digital literacy of Generation Z piano students were examined in the 4<sup>th</sup> sub-problem of the study, and the findings are presented in Table 7.

In Table 7, the findings of the teachers' opinions on the digital literacy of the Generation Z piano students are given. Teachers highly think that Generation Z piano students play hastily and fast due to the quick action/quick response habit they have acquired from the digital environment. On the other hand, the number of teachers who think that students get bored quickly with the works they study by not being able to balance between the regular flow of new information in

**Table 7.** Teachers' views on the digital literacy of Generation Z piano students

Digital literacy of Generation Z piano students	The mean of the teachers' opinions
Apart from working on a printed note, they also work on a digital note (telephone, tablet, etc., technological devices)	3.77
Dominant visual memory	3.65
Using technology effectively in terms of contribution to the lesson (listening to/watching the works, research, learning different techniques, etc.)	3.47
They are unable to balance between the regular flow of new information in the digital environment and the flow in real life, thus they quickly get bored with the works they work on.	3.97
Hasty, fast-playing player due to the fast action/fast response habit acquired from the digital environment.	4.12
Influenced by the random access feature of the digital environment, working without following a certain verification order (Mixed, without considering the page or chapter order, etc.)	3.92

**Table 8.** Additional personal opinions and percentages of participating teachers (n=11)

Additional opinions of teachers	%
1. They want to do and play everything instantly. When this does not happen, their motivation quickly fades.	7.69
2. They are too hasty. They don't care much about what they do. Although their awareness is high, this awareness is more external, not to themselves.	7.69
3. They want to accomplish too many things at once and find it difficult to focus on a single point. At the slightest failure, they lose their faith and give up. They want everything to develop according to their wishes.	7.69
4. They are distracted because they experience too much data and information flow. They have difficulty internalizing information.	7.69
5. Unfortunately, there are students who cannot/do not persistently make a habit of studying regularly and always learning something new.	7.69
6. I think that they are impatient in every aspect (including accessing information) because they have grown up by consuming (information, fast food, relationships - all types-, TV series, songs, etc.) in general and the flow of life is faster than before. However, success rates are very low, as music education, especially the instrument, requires much longer patience, discipline and motivation.	7.69
7. Young people are unplanned and find it difficult to develop a strategy at work.	7.69
8. Because they have difficulty in using their focus for a long time, their working quality cannot be long-term. They are confused and unable to see or think about details. They are impatient because they do not prefer to control themselves, which can prevent them from mastering and internalizing the work they are working on.	7.69
9. They are impatient, hasty. They think for the moment. Their digital use is very practical and they are skilled at it.	7.69
10. They have a hard time focusing and working on one thing. That is why it is very difficult to keep their attention in the desired place for a long time.	7.69
11. I have a high number of students who are creative, practical, know how to access information easily, but prefer the illusion of the digital world to real experience. I see a tendency to choose the one that is close to themselves rather than the reference of the information obtained. Those who direct their talent well usually cannot do digital marketing.	7.69

the digital environment and the flow in real life is also high. It can be seen as a natural reaction that students who show signs of impatience at a very high rate are quickly bored with the works by not being able to establish a digital and real-life balance. In addition, the fact that the works are studied without following a certain verification order is a digital literacy feature that teachers mostly agree upon. It has been determined that Generation Z students continue their studies from digital notes with the help of technological devices as well as printed notes, and it has been determined that their visual memory is relatively higher, according to the opinions of the teachers. Getting support from technology in subjects such as listening/watching the works, researching, learning different techniques has the lowest average score. It can be said that it is a surprising finding that Generation Z students, who are intertwined with technology, do not use this technology at a higher rate in terms of contribution to the piano lesson.

In addition to all these findings, personal opinions of 11 teachers are given in Table 8.

In the additional opinions of the teachers participating in the research, it was seen that the most emphasis was placed on the impatience and haste of Generation Z piano students. Teachers stated that students have problems in focusing, they think instantly, they experience low motivation because they want to achieve everything quickly, and they prefer the illusion of the digital world to real experience. These views are parallel to the data obtained in the findings of the research.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this research, which aims to determine the opinions of piano teachers on the characteristics of Generation Z piano students, are as follows:

- All of the teachers (n=40) stated that Generation Z piano students have high self-confidence, and the vast majority (n=35) stated that they are generally impatient. This result is similar to the studies of Ardiç and Altun (2017) and Şahin (2009). Again, according to the majority of teachers (n=31), students are goal-oriented, creative and imaginative but they do not have high self-awareness. The low level of awareness among students who do not have problems with self-confidence has led to the idea that they may have difficulties in their professional positions in the future.
- The most striking result regarding the studying and learning characteristics of Generation Z piano students is the opinion of almost all teachers (n=37) that students experience difficulties in their individual studies without support. This situation reveals that Generation Z needs an education system that will primarily enable them to understand how they learn to learn in piano education. Oyman et al. (2013) and Dereli (2019) also mentioned the necessity of the same issue in their studies. Twenty-eight teachers stated that students learn quickly. This result has been a feature specified for Generation Z in Seymen's (2017, p. 472) study. The findings revealed that teachers offer more views that students do not know their own learning methods and how they learn. The result obtained explains why students experience difficulties in their individual studies. It will not be possible for the student who is far from himself and his studying method to have a high level of professional curiosity and enjoy studying and manage the studying time properly. The results of these data clearly illustrate the situation.
- The vast majority (n=35) of the teachers who participated in the research stated that Generation Z piano students experienced fluctuations in their emotions and had a changeable mood. Generation Z is not a generation that accepts authority without questioning just as previous generations (Sadullah, 2010, p. 7). This situation was also reflected in the research, and as a result of the findings, it was determined that the majority of the students had difficulty in accepting criticism. Growing up in the shadow of fast technology and easy knowledge, this generation acts hastily in every job. Generation Z, who wants everything, everywhere and immediately, also wants to achieve success very quickly in the education process, and when this does not happen, they lose their belief in success (Taş et al., 2017, p.1040). Other results determined according to the findings were that the professional anxiety levels of the students were partially high, while their lesson motivation and stress management were low.
- In the research, it has been determined that the digital literacy of Generation Z piano students are in the foreground. The vast majority of teachers (n=35) agree on a hasty, fast-playing Generation Z student profile due to the quick action/quick response habit they have acquired from the digital environment. Likewise, 34 teachers stated that students could not balance between the flow of information in the digital environment and the flow in real life, and they quickly got bored with the works they studied. In addition, being influenced by the random access feature of the digital environment, the fact that the works are studied without following a certain verification order is a digital literacy feature that teachers mostly agree upon. This is directly related to the research of Puiu (2017), Bilgiç and others (2011), and Prensky (2001). Pedro (2006, p.11) mentioned in his research that Generation Z students generally prefer non-print, digital resources. In his study, 29 teachers stated that their students also benefited from digital notes in addition to printed notes. This is similar to the related finding of the present research. The digital world has relatively increased the visibility of Generation Z. For this generation, speed and visibility are at the forefront in accessing information (Prensky, 2001; Şahin, 2009, Karabulut, 2015). In the study, more than half of the teachers (n=28) stated that students have high visual memory. Finally, in the research, it was concluded that Generation Z, who was born into technology, did not use this technology very effectively in terms of contribution to the lesson. Şahin (2018), in his study on Generation Z students in the art history lessons of faculty of fine arts, determined that the students could not use the internet efficiently even though they were online for a long time. According to the results of the research, most of the

students do not benefit from virtual libraries and online databases. The data obtained in the present research are in parallel with the findings of this study.

In this research, the views that the teachers wanted to add were also included. Impatience, focusing on a problem, the desire to achieve everything immediately and the resulting loss of belief and motivation, and the inability to balance between the digital world and the real world are found to be the mostly emphasized issues.

Every generation in the world has different characteristics, and these differences are inevitably reflected in education. The difference in the thinking structures of the new generation, which is called Generation Z, is clearly seen in one-to-one trainings such as piano training. For this reason, how the characteristics of Generation Z students are reflected in the piano lesson directly affects the education process. In the light of all this information and the findings of the research, following suggestions can be given:

- Creating personalized learning experiences that will enable students to learn from the beginning their own learning characteristics and how they should study,
- Ensuring that piano teachers are informed about the distinctive features of Generation Z so that students can enjoy the educational process more and increase their professional curiosity level,
- A similar study can be carried out, this time to question the views of Generation Z piano students on the education of previous generations.

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