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PROACTIVE DECISION-MAKING OF GENERATION Z IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract

The objective of this research paper is to assess the proactive decision-making of Generation Z in Kazakhstan. A quantitative approach was used for data collection and analysis. Respondents were invited to participate in the survey on a voluntary basis. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a list of 19 statements, using a 6-point Likert-type scale. A total of 380 valid questionnaires were returned back. The results suggest that young people are low on taking initiative and not strong in systematic identification of alternatives, but are much better at systematic identification of objectives, using a decision radar, and striving for improvement. The implications of these findings are discussed in the paper.

Keywords

Generation Z, proactive decision-making, taking initiative, striving for improvement, identification of objectives, identification of information, search for alternatives, decision radar, Kazakhstan.

INTRODUCTION

In terms of decision-making, managers can be problem-avoiders, problem-solvers, and problem-seekers. Problem-avoider avoids a problem by not noticing it, by pretending that there is no problem. This is the worst type of manager because s/he does not do anything to solve the problem, allowing it to grow. Problem-solver is a better manager because s/he is not hiding from a problem, but acknowledges the problem and tries to solve it. However, once a problem has occurred, it may take a considerable amount of time and other resources to resolve it. From this point of view, a problem-seeker is the best type of manager. Problem-seeker actively seeks problems to prevent them and, in the meanwhile, explores opportunities. Problem-seeker is a proactive decision-maker who takes a proactive rather than passive and reactive approach to selecting between competing courses of action.

The objective of this research paper is to assess the proactive decision-making of Generation Z in Kazakhstan. The oldest in the Gen Z cohort will be 27 in 2024, while the youngest will turn 12. Kazakhstan is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) [1] and a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) [2]. The Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation have the longest continuous international border in the world of 7.591 kilometers [3]. It would be useful for political and business leaders in Russia to know how future political and business leaders in Kazakhstan approach the decision-making process and how they intend to select between competing courses of action.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Proactive decision-makers are future-oriented [4] and have a vision of a bright future [5; 6]. They know what they want to achieve. They have well-developed cognitive skills in the systematic identification of objectives. Proactive decision-makers constantly monitor the external environment to identify threats and opportunities. They take measures to prevent problems from occurring and use objectives to create decision opportunities [7]. They do not sit idle and wait, but take initiative in decision situations [8]. Unlike reactive and passive individuals, proactive decision-makers try to create more and better alternatives [6]. They actively search for information that helps them to evaluate alternatives [9]. Proactive decision-makers strive for improvement in decision situations [10]. Finally, proactive individuals formulate their decisions strategically, taking into account other decisions and proactively, rather than dealing with any challenge in life when it arises in isolation from other decisions and reactively [9]. Thus, a proactive decision-maker is defined as an individual who takes initiative, strives for improvement, systematically identifies objectives, systematically identifies alternatives, systematically searches for information, and uses a decision radar [9].

METHODOLOGY

The current research study is based on J.Siebert’s and R.Kunz’s [9] six-dimensional scale for proactive decision-making. The scale is designed to assess four proactive cognitive skills and two proactive personality traits of individuals in decision-making. Data were collected from students studying in Kazakhstan. The questionnaire was distributed among the students on a random basis. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 19 statements in the survey using 6-point Likert-type scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 =

slightly disagree, 4 = slightly agree, 5 = agree, 6 = strongly agree. The survey was conducted anonymously. A total of 380 questionnaires were collected from the respondents.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The age of the respondents varied from 17 to 26 years; the majority was 20 years old. Mostly third- and fourth-year students participated in the survey. See Table 1 with demographic data for more information.

Table 1

Demographic data

Gender	Survey number	Age	Survey number
Female	224	17 years	3
Male	155	18 years	25
No answer	1	19 years	83
Total	380	20 years	119
Year of Study		21 years	84
1st year bachelor	14	22 years	35
2nd year bachelor	82	23 years	19
3rd year bachelor	144	24 years	6
4th year bachelor	135	25 years	4
Master student	2	26 years	1
No answer	3	No answer	1
Total	380	Total	380

Source: compiled by the author.

Assessment results for “taking initiative” (INI) are summarized in Table 2. The results show that majority of respondents slightly agreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that they usually wait for something to happen rather than take the initiative themselves (19% + 27% + 16% = 62%) and they do not make decisions unless they really have to (21% + 28% + 13% = 62%). Almost half of the respondents slightly agreed, agreed, and strongly agreed that they tend to adapt to given circumstances rather than changing them (24% + 18% + 4% = 46%). Note that all three questionnaire statements in Table 2 describe reactive rather than proactive decision-making.

Table 2

Frequency of answers on «taking initiative» (INI)

Statements	Mean (SD)	Frequency of answers						
		NA	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"	"6"
1. I usually wait for something to happen rather than taking the initiative myself	4,00 (1,44)	0 0%	16 4%	53 14%	74 19%	72 19%	103 27%	62 16%
2. I tend to adapt to given circumstances rather than changing them	3,38 (1,31)	0 0%	25 7%	84 22%	94 25%	91 24%	69 18%	17 4%
3. I do not make decisions unless I really have to	3,98 (1,35)	5 1%	14 4%	45 12%	80 21%	81 21%	107 28%	48 13%

Source: compiled by the author.

Assessment results for “striving for improvement” (IMP) are summarized in Table 3. The results show that more than half of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they are constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve their life (35% + 21% = 56%) and are always looking for better ways to do things (37% + 15% = 52%). Around half of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they continually try to improve their current situation (29% + 19% = 48%).

Table 3

Frequency of answers on «striving for improvement» (IMP)

Statements	Mean (SD)	Frequency of answers						
		NA	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"	"6"
1. I am always looking for better ways to do things	4,38 (1,20)	7 2%	8 2%	26 7%	42 11%	97 26%	142 37%	58 15%
2. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life	4,46 (1,26)	2 1%	12 3%	20 5%	42 11%	93 24%	132 35%	79 21%
3. I continually try to improve my current situation	4,36 (1,23)	3 1%	9 2%	21 6%	53 14%	109 29%	112 29%	73 19%

Source: compiled by the author.

Assessment results for “systematic identification of objectives” (OBJ) are summarized in Table 4. The results show that more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they engage in systematic reflection for important decisions on what they wish to achieve (41% + 21% = 62%), they are in general aware of their objectives in a decision situation (35% + 22% = 57%), and they try to be clear about them before choosing (34% + 20% = 54%).

Table 4

Frequency of answers on «systematic identification of objectives» (OBJ)

Statements	Mean (SD)	Frequency of answers						
		NA	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"	"6"
1. I try to be clear about my objectives before choosing	4,45 (1,27)	10 3%	14 4%	16 4%	44 12%	89 23%	131 34%	76 20%
2. In general, I am aware of my objectives in a decision situation	4,53 (1,19)	2 1%	8 2%	17 4%	37 10%	102 27%	132 35%	82 22%
3. For important decisions, I engage in systematic reflection, what I wish to achieve	4,58 (1,18)	1 0%	9 2%	17 4%	33 9%	86 23%	154 41%	80 21%

Source: compiled by the author.

Assessment results for “systematic identification of information” (INF) are summarized in Table 5. The results show that more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they seek actively information to improve decision-making (37% + 19% = 56%). A bit less than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they systematically collect the decision-relevant information (34% + 15% = 49%) and double check information sources before making decisions (29% + 18% = 47%).

Table 5

Frequency of answers on «systematic identification of information» (INF)

Statements	Mean (SD)	Frequency of answers						
		NA	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"	"6"
1. I seek actively information to improve my decision making	4,45 (1,23)	1 0%	10 3%	18 5%	50 13%	87 23%	141 37%	73 19%
2. I systematically collect the decision-relevant information	4,27 (1,27)	4 1%	13 3%	28 7%	46 12%	103 27%	128 34%	58 15%
3. I double check my information sources to be sure to have the right facts before making decisions	4,24 (1,34)	2 1%	15 4%	33 9%	47 12%	103 27%	112 29%	68 18%

Source: compiled by the author.

Assessment results for “systematic search for alternatives” (ALT) are summarized in Table 6. The results show that only a bit more than one third of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they excel at identifying opportunities (29% + 8% = 37%) and they systematically use their objectives to create alternatives (29% + 7% = 36%). Less than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are good at finding ways to achieve their objectives (31% + 14% = 45%).

Table 6

Frequency of answers on «systematic search for alternatives» (ALT)

Statements	Mean (SD)	Frequency of answers						
		NA	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"	"6"
1. I excel at identifying opportunities	4,09 (1,14)	7 2%	11 3%	20 5%	69 18%	130 34%	112 29%	31 8%
2. I systematically use my objectives to create alternatives	4,11 (1,07)	7 2%	7 2%	24 6%	54 14%	152 40%	109 29%	27 7%
3. I am good at finding ways to achieve my objectives	4,34 (1,13)	10 3%	6 2%	19 5%	47 12%	126 33%	117 31%	55 14%

Source: compiled by the author.

Assessment results for “using a decision radar” (RAD) are summarized in Table 7. The results show that more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they thoroughly consider how best to carry out a decision (36% + 22% = 58%), thoroughly think about when they make which decision (34% + 22% = 56%), consider future events in their current decisions (38% + 17% = 55%), and are very aware of their thinking process in a decision situation (35% + 16% = 51%).

Table 7

Frequency of answers on «using a decision radar» (RAD)

Statements	Mean (SD)	Frequency of answers						
		NA	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"	"6"
1. I thoroughly think about when I make which decision	4,48 (1,26)	4 1%	11 3%	21 6%	39 10%	93 24%	130 34%	82 22%
2. I consider future events in my current decisions	4,32 (1,38)	4 1%	23 6%	24 6%	39 10%	81 21%	143 38%	66 17%
3. I am very aware of my thinking process in a decision situation	4,36 (1,19)	2 1%	6 2%	31 8%	36 9%	112 29%	134 35%	59 16%
4. I thoroughly consider how best to carry out a decision	4,58 (1,14)	5 1%	6 2%	16 4%	33 9%	101 27%	137 36%	82 22%

Source: compiled by the author.

Table 8 summarizes and Figure 1 visually depicts average scores for each dimension of proactive decision-making for Gen Z in Kazakhstan. These scores indicate that young people are low in “taking initiative” (INI) - average score

is 3.79 and are not strong in “systematic identification of alternatives” (ALT) - average score is 4.18. They are much better at “systematic identification of objectives” (OBJ) - average score is 4.52, “using a decision radar” (RAD) - average score is 4.43, and “striving for improvement” (IMP) - average score is 4.40.

Table 8

Average scores on proactive decision-making (PDM) dimensions

Dimensions of Proactive Decision-Making (PDM)	Mean	SD
Taking initiative (INI)	3.79	1.39
Striving for improvement (IMP)	4.40	1.23
Systematic identification of objectives (OBJ)	4.52	1.21
Systematic search for information (INF)	4.32	1.28
Systematic identification of alternatives (ALT)	4.18	1.12
Using a decision radar (RAD)	4.43	1.25

Source: compiled by the author.

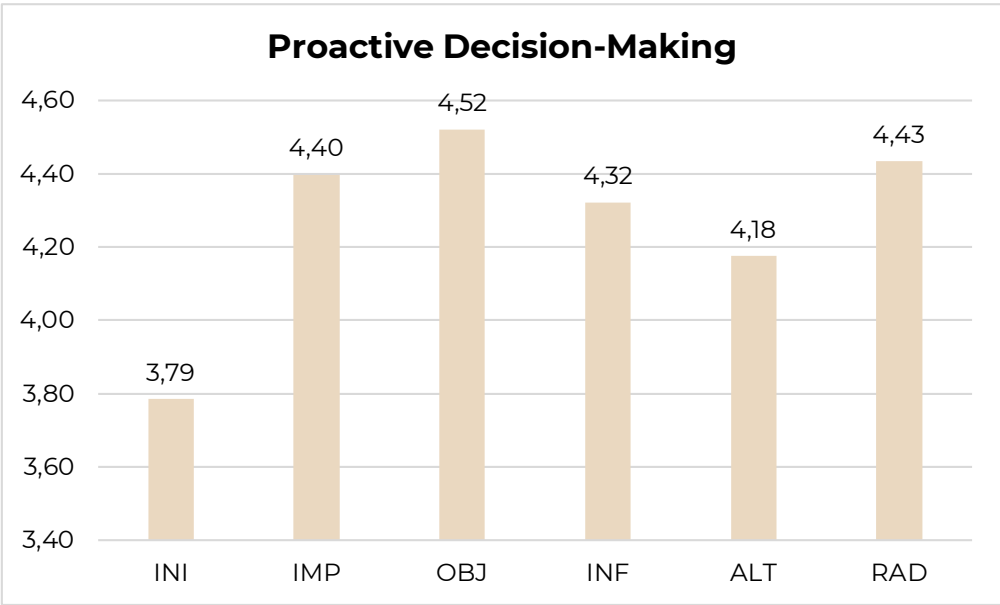


Fig. 1. Average scores on proactive decision-making (PDM) dimensions.
Source: compiled by the author.

DISCUSSION

Proactive decision-making involves constant monitoring of the external environment to identify potential opportunities and threats, linking them with existing goals and objectives, gathering and analyzing available information, generating alternatives, and formulating strategies on how to address them long before they arise. Proactive decision-making is often considered better than passive and reactive decision-making for several reasons. It provides a strategic advantage because it allows one to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate risks before they fully materialize. Proactive decisions give more control over situations. By anticipating potential issues and taking action beforehand, it

becomes possible to influence outcomes more effectively. It is usually easier and less costly in terms of time and money to address problems before they arise rather than deal with them when they have already taken place. Being proactive in decision-making often leads to promoting stability in the long run. By thinking ahead and anticipating possible outcomes, one can develop more durable solutions that endure challenges in the future. Responding to emergencies or unforeseen situations can cause extreme stress. Making decisions in advance helps to lower the chances of being negatively surprised, ultimately decreasing stress and creating a more stable work atmosphere.

This research study has assessed proactive decision-making of Generation Z in Kazakhstan using multidimensional scale of Siebert and Kunz [9]. The scale is designed to assess two proactive personality traits and four proactive cognitive skills of individuals in decision-making. The two proactive personality traits include "taking initiative" and "striving for improvement". The four proactive cognitive skills include "systematic identification of objectives", "systematic identification of alternatives", "systematic search for information", and "using a decision radar".

The results of the study revealed that, on average, young people in Kazakhstan are low on "taking initiative". They prefer to wait rather than to take the initiative themselves. The results of the study indicated that, on average, young people in Kazakhstan are not strong in "systematic identification of alternatives". Only a bit more than one-third of the respondents identify opportunities and systematically use their objectives to create alternatives.

At the same time, the results of the study show that, on average, young people in Kazakhstan are much better at "systematic identification of objectives". More than half of them know what they want to achieve before choosing between alternatives. Young people in Kazakhstan, on average, are also good in "using a decision radar". More than half of them thoroughly think when they have to make a decision and take into consideration future events. They are also, on average, fine in "striving for improvement". Around half of them try to improve their life or their situation.

The results of the study produced contradictory results regarding "systematic identification of information". On the one hand, young people in Kazakhstan, on average, actively seek information to improve their decision-making. On the other hand, they may not necessarily double-check their information sources to be sure that they have the right facts before making decisions.

CONCLUSION

The results of the current study investigated the proactive decision-making of Generation Z in Kazakhstan. The oldest in the Gen Z cohort will be 27 in 2024, while the youngest will turn 12. Generation Z will inherit the reins of power from previous generations soon. Thus, we can think about Generation Z as the future political and business leaders of Kazakhstan.

Understanding the decision-making processes of political and business leaders in Kazakhstan is crucial for their counterparts in Russia. Kazakhstan shares a long border with Russia, making it a key neighbor and influencing Russia's geopolitical dynamics in Central Asia. Russia and Kazakhstan have extensive economic, political, and strategic ties. Both countries engage in trade and investment, contributing to their mutual economic development. Understanding how decisions are made in Kazakhstan helps Russian businesses assess risks, identify opportunities, and form effective partnerships with Kazakh counterparts. Kazakhstan holds significant influence in Central Asia, a region of strategic importance to Russia. The two countries cooperate closely on security

issues, including counterterrorism and regional stability, to address common challenges and threats. Political and business decisions made in Kazakhstan can impact regional dynamics, including security, trade, and economic cooperation. Understanding these decisions allows Russia to maintain its influence and interests in the broader Central Asian region. Russia and Kazakhstan collaborate on various international platforms, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

The results of this study show that the future leaders of Kazakhstan want to improve their position. They know what they want and are ready to collect the information necessary for making a decision. However, they do not always verify the reliability of their sources of information. Russia's future leaders should be ready to help their counterparts from Kazakhstan collect and verify information that is used for decision-making.

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CHINESE ALFALFA MARKET: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUSSIAN PRODUCERS

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Abstract

At present, China and Russia are increasing co-operation in various areas, including agriculture. There is a great demand for alfalfa in China. However, due to natural-geographical (limited area for cultivation) and socio-political conditions, China cannot achieve self-sufficiency. Currently, the Chinese alfalfa import market is dominated by the USA and Spain, while Russian alfalfa is just beginning to appear on the market. This article introduces the prospects for Russian alfalfa exports to China and offers some recommendations for Russian companies. China and Russia have strategic opportunities for comprehensive co-operation and have great potential for cooperation in agriculture. There is a high demand for high quality alfalfa in China. However, due to natural geographical and socio-political conditions, China has limited area for alfalfa cultivation and poor soil conditions. Local alfalfa production also lacks advantages in terms of quality and price. Currently, the Chinese alfalfa import market is dominated by the United States and Spain, while Russia is just beginning to supply alfalfa to the Chinese market. This article analyses the demand for alfalfa in China, its production characteristics, import methods and the reasons for the absolute dominance of alfalfa from the USA in the Chinese market. The article also presents the prospects of Russian alfalfa exports to China and offers some recommendations for Russian companies to improve quality, reduce transportation costs, create a brand name, establish an effective industry association for quality after-sales service and access to market information.

Keywords

Alfalfa, agriculture, China, Russia, international trade, livestock.