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## GEN Z SELF-PORTRAIT: VITALITY, ACTIVISM, BELONGING, HAPPINESS, SELF-IMAGE, AND MEDIA USAGE HABITS

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### ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study examined the self-perception of adolescents and young people aged 17-21 – how they perceived their personal characteristics, self-image, vitality, belonging to a local and global (glocal) society, happiness index and activity, media usage habits in general and smartphones in particular – in other words, it sought to produce a sketch of their character.
Background	Different age groups are influenced by various factors that shape them, including living environment, technological developments, experiences, common issues, events of glocal significance, and more. People belonging to Gen Z were born at the end of the previous century and the beginning of the 21st century (up to 2010). This generation was born into the digital technological age and is the first one born into the environment defined by smartphones, and social media. Its members are referred to as “digital natives” because they were born after the widespread adoption of digital technology in the Western world. They entered an environment characterized by the widespread daily use of smartphones, the Internet, and technology in general.
Methodology	This was a quantitative study based on a sample of 418 Israeli adolescents and young people aged 17-21. The following questionnaires were administered anonymously and disseminated online to an audience of youths aged 17-21 across Israel: A demographic questionnaire; Self-esteem; Vitality; Belonging vs. alienation; Social-emotional aspects; Usage habits in digital environments; Usage habits of learning on a smartphone; Open questions.

**The full paper has been published as the following and is being presented at this conference:**

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Contribution	The current study tried to define clusters to characterize adolescents and youth aged 17-21.
Findings	Results show that study participants had high self-esteem and vitality, felt belonging, happy, and satisfied with their life, and perceived themselves as active and enterprising at an average level or above. The study identified two clusters. Participants in Cluster 1 were characterized by higher parameter averages than those in Cluster 2 on the self-image, vitality, belonging, happiness, and activism scales. Participants in Cluster 1 felt that using a smartphone made life easier, helped them solve everyday problems, made everyday conduct easier, and allowed them to express themselves, keep up to date with what is happening with their friends, disseminate information conveniently, be involved in social life, and establish relationships with those around them. They thought that it was easy to collaborate with others and to plan activities and events.
Recommendations for Practitioners	When examining cluster correlations with data in relation to other variables, it is apparent that participants in Cluster 1 had more options to reach out for help, report more weekly hours spent talking and meeting with friends and feel that using a smartphone makes everyday life easier and facilitates their day-to-day conduct than did participants in Cluster 2. The smartphone allows them to express themselves, keep updated regarding what is happening with their friends and disseminate information easily, helps them be involved in social life and establish connections with those around them. They find it easy to communicate and cooperate with others and to plan activities and events. By contrast, participants in Cluster 2 felt that the smartphone complicates things for them and creates problems in their daily lives. They feel that the use of social networks burdens them and that the smartphone prevents them from being more involved in their social life, and from establishing relationships with those around them. They felt that communication by smartphone creates more problems in understanding messages.
Recommendations for Researchers	One of the challenges of this generation is forming an independent identity and self-regulation in a digital, global, across-the-border era that offers a variety of possibilities and communities. They must examine the connection between the digital and personal spaces, to be able to enjoy virtual communities and a sense of togetherness, and at the same time maintain privacy, autonomy, and individuality. Many studies point to the blurring of boundaries between the private-personal and the public, at numerous problems in social networks, including social problems, shaming, and exclusion from various groups and activities. The fear of shaming and the desire to keep up with everything that is happening create a state of mental stress, and adolescents often feel that they urgently need to check their smartphones. Sharing with others can help them deal with negative content and experiences and avoid the dangers lurking in their web surfing. Yet sharing, especially with friends, often causes intimate content to become public and leads to shaming and invasion of privacy.
Impact on Society	Gen Z was born into an environment where smartphones, the Internet, and technology in general, are widely used in everyday routine, and they make extensive use of technological means in all areas of life. One of the characteristics of this generation is “globalization.” The present study showed that about 84% of participants felt to a moderate degree or higher that they were citizens of the world.

**Future Research** The findings of this study revealed a significant difference in self-image between males and females. An attempt was made to explain the findings in light of previous studies, but the need arose for studies on the self-image of young people of Gen Z that would shed light on the subject.

**Keywords** information and communication technology (ICT), smartphones, teenagers, young adults, generation Z, cluster analysis

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Zilka's research aims to explain the phenomenon of understanding the younger generation in all aspects relating to global changes following digital developments, in a digital age that crosses all boundaries.