Capturing the Nature of Generations at Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Generation is considered as one factor of many that show 'what we are'. "Every generation of employees is unique, valuable, and special, in reality, each tends to view the other differently based on their own life experiences and expectations"(Angeline, 2011). Currently, originations are the place of employment for almost three generations (Baby boomers, generation X, and generation Y). And in organizations, workforce management is the major issue. To manage these workforces understanding their attitudes, work beliefs, characteristic and values are essential. The objective of the present study is a theoretical revision that aims to broaden the understanding of generations in the workplace on different variables to apprehend the nature and characteristics of existing generations. The findings of the work guide the managers and organizations on how to utilize different generation for the effectiveness and efficiency& for developing organizations and also eliminates the perception and misunderstandings of generations.

Keywords: *Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Attitude.*

INTRODUCTION

Generation is defined as "Aggregate of all people born over roughly the span of a phase of life who share a common location in history and, hence, a common collective persona" by (Drago, 2006) cited from Bill Strauss and Neil Howe.In short, they are defined by the birth years. Based on the period of birth years they share common consciousness and cultivate collective slogans, ideas, and experiences. Reeves & Oh(2008) opined that the differences among the generations explained as people born between 20 years of time period share collective group of characteristics that are based on the past historical event at the period, economic conditions and technical advances. This term of the generational difference came into popularity in 1960 when they tried to distinguish the baby boomers from their parents (previous generation). In psychometric view, the traits and personality factors remain steady for different generations.

As opined in literature "Every generation of employees is unique, valuable, and special, in reality, each tend to view the other differently based on their own life experiences and expectations"(Angeline, 2011). And a study by Yusoff & Kian(2013) confirmed that "generation cohorts have their own groups of characteristics, aspirations, and workplace expectations". Also according to Benson & Brown (2011) generations have different characteristics. It is seen that the new generations learn from the past of the older generation and be unique of that generation (Erickson, 2009). More over a generation is considered as one factor of many that show 'what we are'.

In the workplace we find many different types of personalities and attitudes. A study by Angeline(2011) cited from kupperschmidt (2000) describes generation as "identifiable group that shares birth, years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages". An organization development can be affected by the attitude towards the job. In most of the literature, the different generations that were considered for the survey were a baby boomer, generation X and generation Y are widely discussed. But as per the data mentioned by 'life couse associates', the Anglo- American history identified generations from 1433 (Howe, 1999).

The History of Various Generations

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The following table represents the history of different generations based on their born period starting from the Arthurians fro 1433-1460 to millennials generation.

Table1: Generations in History

Born Period	Generations Named
1433-1460	Arthurian
1461-1882	Humanist
1483-1511	Reformation
1512-1540	Reprisal
1541-1565	Elizabethan
1566-1587	Parlimentary
1588-1617	Puritan
1618-1647	Cavalier
1648-1673	Glorious
1674-1700	Enlightenment
1701-1723	Awakening
1724-1741	Liberty
1724-1766	Republican
1767-1791	Compromise
1792-1821	Transendental

1822-1842	Glided
1843-1859	Progressive
1860-1882	Missionary
1883-1900	Lost
1901-1924	G.I.
1925-1942	Silent
1943-1960	Boom
1961-1981	Genration X
1982-2004	Millennial

Evolution of Generations

Generally, the studies on generations concentrated on traditionalist. From then the idea of generations started.
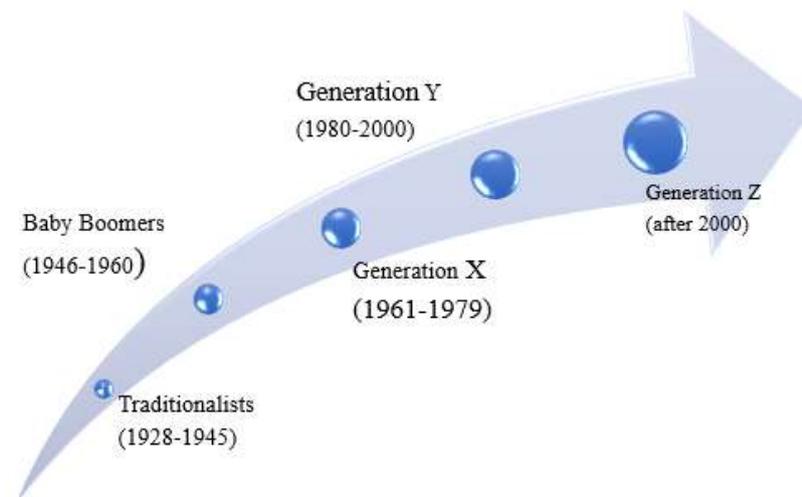
Figure1: Basic idea on Evolution of Generations

Focus of the Study

The study is a descriptive analytical nature based on the reviews of empirical researches, where the focus is to analyse the nature and different characteristics of different generations in the workplace. Therefore, the analysis seeks to find the various work related attitudes, personality, and different characteristic features regarding work.

The following are the various characteristics of different parameters that have been focused among of Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y

Figure 2: Characteristics of Various Generations

Nature of Three Generations & their Characteristics

The below part briefly explains the nature and characteristics of the three generation on the various parameters as mentioned above. And also describes the three generations nature in the workplace in general.

Baby Boomers

Lancaster(2004) , Twenge, et al.,(2010)and Benson & Brown (2011) referred boomers from 1946 to 1964. The evolution of this generation is after world war II(1943-1960). As cited by Kupperschmidt in Smola & Sutton (2002) 'Called Boomers because of the boom in their births between 1946 and 1964, this generation grew up embracing the psychology of entitlement, expecting the best from life'.

As mentioned by Lancaster (2004) the population of this generation was considered to be 80 million. They were influenced by the bomming birthrate. So they were called as baby boomers and also influenced by the'protests and human rights movements', 'water gate'. At that point of time, these generations were influenced by Vietnam War, protests which are widespread, the Civil Rights movements, and slayings of kings, leaders, Kennedy. At the same time competitively they grew up in the expanded units. They understood that life is a game. In India, it was the period under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. Many things like public works, nationalization of industries, social reforms took place and the public understood the value of educated and stated investing in education. It was the time where wars took place across the borders, Indian congress split into two, with Soviet Union's India signed for 20 years of friendship. Boomers were grown up in the environment where they just got independence from British rulers. This generation is highly influenced by family, and caste systems. Those who are capable of a move to other countries went for education in places like U.K, U.S (Erickson, 2009).

These boomers were not much job hoppers, because they were with the strong commitment to making a difference and are competitive enough, showed a lot of focus to make a change. This generation is the most independent generation, never liked to seek help from anybody.

 Boomers were concentrated on working hard than smart working. These boomers were more optimistic, view the systems in a different manner and move ahead Lancaster (2004).

Another study by Harvard states that boomers generation in the workplace would like to continue for two reasons. One is helping the new generation Y by supporting in the workplace and another reason is to have financial support. As this generation is the enthusiastic generation in the workplace, even at the retirement stage the enthusiasm to continue with work is growing.Reasearcher opines that they are ready for more challenging tasks and getting satisfaction with the monetary benefits(Hewlett, 2009).

Generation X

Angeline(2011) referred generation X as 'Lost generation' from 1965 to 1980. But Benson & Brown (2011) , Lancaster(2004) referred from 1965 to 1976, they are technogically savvy than boommers. Fernandez(2010)defined generation X from 1965 to 1977. In short, this generation evolved in between the Viet-Nam war period (1961-1980). Another researcher defined Gen X from 1965-1977(Twenge et al., 2010).

Generation X individuals are hardworking, feel a responsibility towards work and show loyalty. They feel responsible towards work even in absence of supervisor (Wey & Sutton, 2002). This generation type was unwilling to commit (Zemke et al., 2000). But Kian & Yusoff(2012) work itself is found as the motivating factor of generation X. As of US demographics considerations generation, X population was 46 million to be small compared to boomers who were 78 million and generation Y 70 million. They were considered as a most neglected generation. This study opines that generation X gaining more skills and knowledge and making a bench mark in the organizations. A survey by 'Center for Talent Innovation' reported that 37% of this generation leaving the organization for progress in the career. To retain this generation it sorted few options as giving more power and making them in charge, more options and path for career development, providing flexibility and providing scope to become intrapreneurs (Hewlett, 2014). Another Harvard business review also mentions that this generation to be the smallest generation and in a chart, it shows that majority if the workplace filled by the other generation than generation X (Meister & Willyerd, 2009).
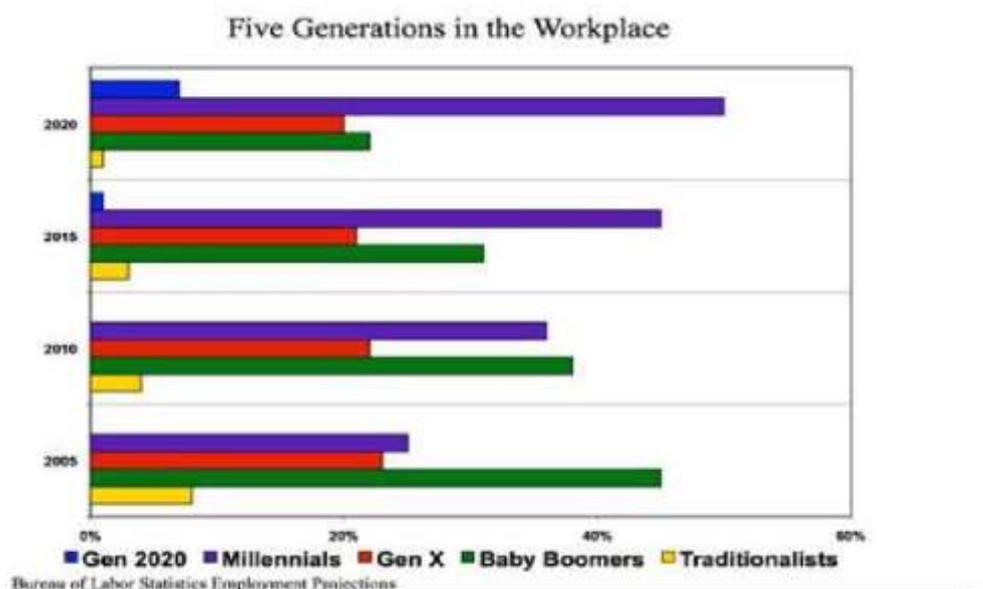
Source: Are You Ready to manage Five Generations of Workers? (2009)

Generation Y

Generation Y is also called as 'Millennia's', 'Gen Me', 'nGen', 'iGen', 'Next generation'. Sky, et al., (2009) defines generation Y by 'who they are outside of their career, not by their employment. Fernandez(2010) defined generation y from 1978 to 1990. This generation born in a 'wired world' and have typical characteristics (Wey & Sutton, 2002).Generation Y is defined as "Comprising primarily the children of the Baby Boomers and typically perceived as increasingly familiar with digital and electronic technology" cited from oxford dictionary by (DeLucia, 2015).

Crumpacker & M (2007) says that generation Y look at work differently than the other generations and they think differently, even have a frequent career change. He defined generation on the basis of birth rate and based on the event at that period. Defined generation Y from 1979-1994. Where as Angeline(2011) included millenials from 1981 to 2001. Cogin (2012) says that they define career success by work-life balance and flexibility. According to Wey& Sutton(2002) millennials are less loyal to organizations, shift jobs if they are not challenging and more 'me' oriented, with this they are called as 'GenMe'.

Generation Y are 'Culturally accepting and technologically savvy', prefer flexibility in work schedules, and positions and sustainable work life balance. They require feedback from supervisor and also acquire strength from the team. It was found that for millennial traditional benefits, salary and health insurance are most important, whereas training opportunities and intrinsic values are less important. It was also found that they prefer public sector as a career choice at work (Brown et al., 2009). As opined by Twenge, et al.,(2010) many researchers orated that Gen Me value extrinsic rewards and less value intrinsic rewards than the other generations.

Comparison of Generation X and Generation Y at the work place

As cited by Lancaster and Stillmanin Twenge, et al.,(2010)generation X and generation Y are of 'work to live' type, whereas boomers are of 'live to work' type. A research by Fernandez(2010)says that the present work place is with the new generation who are with high expectations. It is important to note how the work environment has changed overtime and realize that at the same time the new generation is entering the work place. Managing and engaging of the new generation is needed in a new era, as the workplace is going to be with generation X, Y, and Z. It was found that generation y is highly engaged than generation x, generation y feels that their career goals met and more committed and recommend their company. The generation y expressed little high belief in career development and teamwork. It is inferred that as work engagement of generation X is low they give less importance to work. And women are less engaged than men. The organization culture has an impact on generation on team work and career development. Both generation X and Y value 'work life balance'.

A study by Yusoff & Kian(2013)discovered that substantial differences in extrinsic factors and intrinsic factors of both generations. High motivation on work for generation X and moderate motivation from 'achievement', 'recognition', 'promotion', low satisfaction on pay. Whereas generation Y less motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors.

In a study by Wey& Sutton (2002) compared the findings with the study in 1974 on work values and found deline in work values as the generations grow. It can be understood that event in life and socialization matters for the change in values. Millennials Seek more work life balance, a different life style & more associated with self and self centered.

A study by Lub et al.,(2011) was performed on workers from hospitality industry taking 20 hotels under the category of 4stat hotels from Netherland and found generation X seeking 'work-life balance', 'job security' and 'autonomy'. While generation Y is valuing the challenges and development, giving importance for responsibility and variation. And opined generation Y have the low commitment and higher 'turnover intension'.

A study was conducted on employees of the hospitality industry to find the generation gap and found that generation X was against to 'authority' while boomers have a high opinion on 'authority'. Generation X required respect, immediate promotion and high pay, willing to do teamwork and shows high spirit at work (Gursoy et al., 2008).

Generation X	Generation Y
• Skeptical • Independent • Aware Of Diversity And Think Globally • Require Work Balance • Informal • Want Fun At Work • Techno-literates • Job Security • Shows Immediately Gratification • Thrill Seekers • Pragmatic • Believes In Them	• Realistic, Pragmatic • Appreciate Diversity And Collaborative • Optimistic • Believe In Strong Morals And Serving The Community • Aware Of Diversity • Achievement Focused • Confident In The Things • High Self Esteemed. • Self-reliant

Figure 2: Considerations and importance of Generation X and Generation Y

Work Values

Values are defined as 'what people believe to be fundamentally right or wrong'(Wey & Sutton, 2002).Generation x and generation y have different values related to work than the traditionalist and baby boomers (Hansen & Leuty, 2012).In a study by Cogin (2012) found that 'anti-leisure', 'asceticism', and 'hard work' are the generational differences in work ethics. The study by (Twenge et al., 2010) revealed that over the years of generations the leisure values steadily increased and decreased the work centrality. Generation X gave more importance to the money and status, and generation Y preferred these things more than boomers. Another study by (Beutell, 2008) opined that generation X expected job autonomy and generation Y expected flexibility than autonomy.In a contrary study by Kicheva(2017) found that values of difference exist in organizations and their preferences results in the success of the business.

The results concluded that there exists no significant difference in the characteristics and value of different generations in Bulgaria compared to the generation of other parts of the world.

Leadership Style

Researches proved that there exists a difference in the leadership style among the generations. A study by Yu& Miller(2005) opined that boomers and generation X shows different leadership styles. The research was conducted through the sample from the manufacturing industry. Generation X choose 'participative decision-making' style where would involve others and preferred independence and autonomy, the type of leadership is 'relationship-oriented leadership style'. Whereas boomers required supervision from their superiors and directed by them, they suggested 'task-oriented leadership style'. As cited byAl-Asfour & Lettau(2014) from Zemke et al (2000) the leadership style of millennials is a 'polite relationship with authority'. This generation prefers teamwork and managerial style who can bind people and like collective actions.

Work Attitude

In the phenomenon of psychology, attitude is given a great importance and it is constantly growing and over years' researchers were done in the different field in respective of attitude. It is defined as "Attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (Srivastav & Das, 2015, p.102).

As per literature work, attitudes were predicted with 'job satisfaction, organization commitment, organization performance, employee engagement'. Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller(2012) describes these as the 'discrete job attitudes'.Elci & Erturk,(2007) opined organization commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intensions are 'work-related attitudes'. It was found work related attitudes are influenced by the quality culture. Thus job satisfaction, organization commitment, and turnover intensions can be influenced by the quality of culture. Wey& Sutton (2002) reported that generation X shows more of 'idealistic attitude' towards the work. A study by Kaifi, et al.,(2012) opined that generation Y preferred job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Among them, male has high job satisfaction than female and female showed high organization commitment than male. This generation has 'entrepreneurial thinking' and is most independent generation, they express things creatively and unlike micromanagement (Martin, 2005).Another research byCostanza, et al.,(2012)states that the commitment of generation X and baby boomers is moderate. It was observed that there is a decline in the commitment as the younger generations are evolving. The research opined that boomers showed general and continuous commitment in the workplace, though which they exhibited high job satisfaction and low turnover. Where the next generation X showed these traits lower than boomers, whereas for generation Y job satisfaction and commitment was low. Another report by SHRM (Generation, 2006)stated that there is no much significant difference in the level of job satisfaction in the generations. It mentioned that boomers exhibited 90%, generation X 88% and generation Y 86% of job satisfaction. The overall employees' satisfaction was rated as 88%. They also reported on career development importance as generation Y indicated career development, job-specific training and career advancement opportunities are more important. The other generations rate importance of career development as less than millennia's. A Harvard business reviewBresman & Rao(2017) opined that professionals of generation X and generation Y are less interested in taking higher responsibility and more interested in mentoring and coaching.

Psychological Traits

In the work environment, the psychological traits have a great influence. Every generation has their own psychological traits. Millennials are the techy generation. They prefer to be with social media and upgraded with Facebook or Myspace page, messenger. These technologies have a great influence on the workplace. This

generation employee has high self-esteem about them, anxious and is more if the external locus of control. They seek social approval for the work they do and get depressed easily (Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

Other characteristics as mentioned by (Hannay & Fretwell, 2011) are as follows,

- *Personal interaction:* As known generation x and y are comfortable with the technology utilization and preferred communication in a digital way than face-to-face or personal interaction, but boomers like the face-to-face communication and also values the digital way of communication.
- *Technology:* The technology advancement is growing rapidly day by day. The generation X is familiar with it and generation Y is much more familiar and are born and brought up in the digital era. To the boomers, it is a new advancement compared to their period and is unaware of few of workplace technologies.
- *Need for attention:* Generation x and millennials have a similarity for the constant feedback. These generations show immediate gratification and immediate communication. The generation Y are known for their high maintenance and emotional neediness. Boomers are not much interested in their feedback to form their supervisor immediately and they are fewer attention seekers.
- *Loyalty:* The level of loyalty has been gradually decreased over the generations. Boomers are much loyal to work place and used to value their superiors. Whereas generation X and millennials value those who recognize their skills. These both generations neither expected nor showed loyalty in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Researchers believe that generations share characteristics in common and across the globe. It can be true to some extent since for the new generation the world is in their hands in the form of internet and social media, where they can access to any place globally. This new generation is so called tech savvy generation. But for the other generation, the socio and economic conditions were different compared to now. As per the definition, generation is considered as a group of people who share common experiences. The experiences may vary as an individual but may be same as a whole in the society. These common experiences form the behaviours and the beliefs of the individuals.

As of literature baby boomers were considered the most loyal generation in the work place as they exhibited more commitment and job satisfaction. And they are more of task oriented, enthusiastic and preferred job security & monetary benefits.

Generation X considered job security is most essential and mostly in India generation X preferred government job where the job security is high. Generation X believes in them and independent. This generation is a most misunderstood generation, who do not depend on others for any help. The attitude of this generation is considered as skeptical. They wanted work life balance and tend to be informal. The work habits of this generation to be like have fun at work, they rely on themselves, informal and the approach towards work is practical. This generation was considered as techno-literates, who show immediately gratification. These people are thrill seekers, pragmatic, they are not scared of any kind of failures as they grew up in such environment and self-reliant.

The generation Y is globally considered as who was brought up in the new era of high communication technology and after the cold war. This generation has more exposure to different cultures supported by

technology and nature of diversity. Millennial are more confident in the things, an event they involve, optimistic in view, highly self-esteemed. Generation Y is considered to be more independent. They look for diversity and prefer collaboration. They seek freedom at work, instead of orders. Gen Y is very pragmatic while solving problems, realistic. They are believed as a most optimistic generation, believe in morals and involve in serving the community. They are more focused on achievement and seek challenging works and are self-assured.

It should be remembered that understanding the nature and characteristics of generations help the organizations development. It will be helpful for analysing the employees in retention, promotion or even in the appraisal. This also helps when organizations evaluate employees in the period of mergers as whom to retain as each generation employee is special and unique in their own way. Understanding generations can guide practitioners to focus on particular generations in particular level and position in the organization. So executives and HR's can take right employee at right time. This kind of understanding also eliminates the perceptions of the generations.

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