Generational Differences in values and attitudes within workplace

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this conceptual paper is to review the literature related to generational differences in values and attitudes within workplace. The psychology and business bodies of literature have adopted the cohort theory. studies have confirmed that there are five generational cohorts in the current workforce; Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z. In summary, there is a shortage in empirical and theoretical researches on generational differences, especially on the current generations (Y&Z). The stream of literature that does exist is somehow various. The two generations that have more similarities are traditionalists and boomers.

Introduction

Workforce nowadays is more diverse than ever, one of most important way to explain differences between employees is by generation (Mahmoud, Fuxman, Mohr, Reisel, Grigoriou, 2020). About 25% of the workforce is predicted to be over the age 55 by the year 2025, compares to only 12% in 1994 (Bass & Valdez, 2020). In some workplaces, 55 doesn't even manifest time for retirement. As the lifestyle has widely changed since the beginning of 21st century, more workers in their 60s, 70s and even 80s are deciding to stay at work either full or part time (Pophal, 2018). This has resulted in a new circumstance, five generations in the workplace. Understanding generational values and attitudes in the workplace can be strategically useful for the organization. Research shows that each generation has a unique characteristics, values and attitudes (Schroth, 2019). As diversity has grown in the multigenerational workforce, Advantages, opportunities, as well as challenges, potential difficulties have been also occurred to manage these differences (Mencl & Lester, 2015; Lopez, 2020).

Understanding generational differences is crucial to understand engagement, motivational issues and the expectations employees hold towards the work. Previous studies have claimed that differences in values and attitudes between workers can be explained by generational differences (Nielsen 2019, Dimock 2019, Fry and Parker2018, Coppola, Hatfield, Coombes & Nuerk, 2018). In other words, organizations need to keep in mind generational differences when they deal with employees. Traditionalists, Boomers, Gen X, Y and Z consider management and workplace differently based on their goals (Perilus, 2020). 58% of HR managers has reported conflict between younger and older workers, commonly because of differences in conceptions of work ethics, values and attitudes (Julie C., 2019). This emphasizes the need for HRM to be conscious of generational dissimilarities and avoid using the same policies to motivate and engage employees from different generations equally, which might not be effective, as they acquire different generational values and attitudes.

Literature review

Multigenerational workforce

This term refers to the current mix of different employees in the organization who are identified with the different generational cohorts (Hisel, 2020). A generation is the mutual set of ideas, behaviors, attitudes, values, and life experiences that influence work-life. It is an age group of people who identified through birth period, location, and significant life events (Lang, 2020). According to Lin (2018), Most of workplaces are consist of five generations: Traditionalists individuals born before 1946, Baby Boomers individuals born between 1946-1964, Generation X individuals born between 1965-1979, Generation Y individuals born between 1980 and 1997, Generation Z individuals born after 1997. Figure 1 shows the generational distribution in the workplace in 2000 and 2020. As we can see from Figure 1, the most presentative generation in the year 2000 was Boomers with 42%, then Gen X 28%, Traditionalists 24% and Gen Y 6%. A notable change can be seen in the generational distribution in the year 2020, Gen Y 35%, Gen X 33%, Boomers 18%, Traditionalists 3% and for the first time Gen Z 11%.

Figure 1
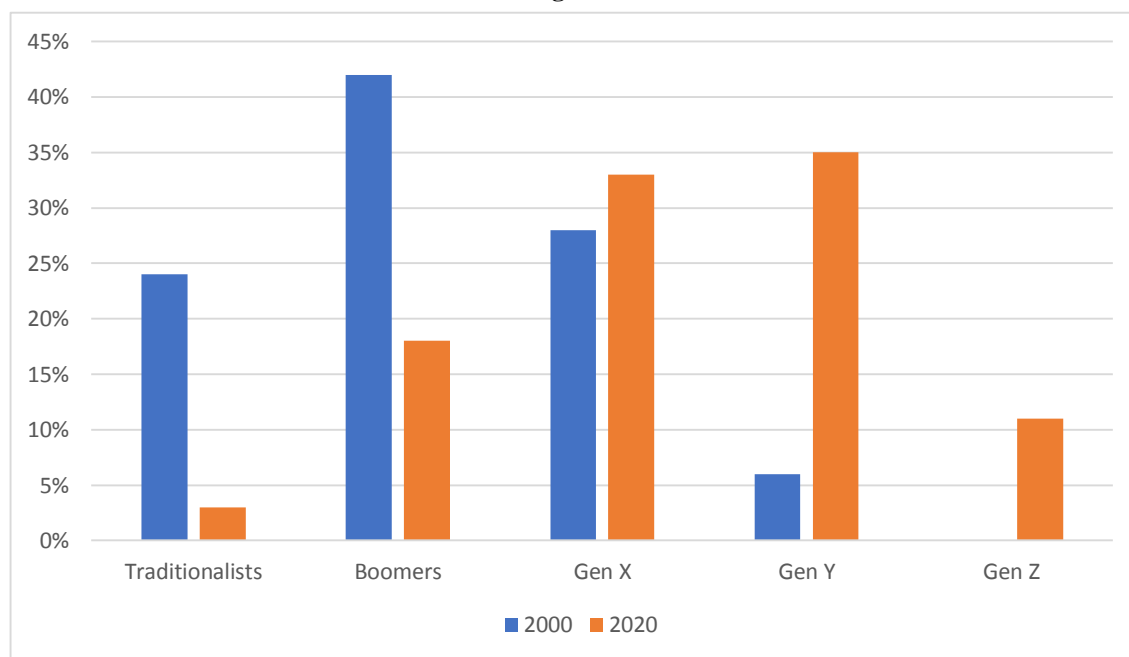
Generational Distribution in the Workplace in 2000 and 2020
Note. Figure 1 designed by the researcher, compile from the literature (Fry, 2020; Okros, 2020), copyright 2020 by https://www.statista.com.

Cohort theory

Cohort theory was first posed by Karl Mannheim in 1928 as The Problem of Generations (Okros, 2020). As stated by cohort theory, growing up and experiencing specific events, emotional progression, can lead to the figuration of common values and opinions among the members that make up each cohort. It is believed that Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, are the three generations that make up the majority of the present workforce (Trujillo, 2020). HR professionals usually classify employees into their generational cohorts, as they present their values and attitudes into the work environment. Many studies have demonstrated that traits and values vary across the generations (Magni and Manzoni, 2020; Eberz, 2020). Cohort theory explains these differences across generations. Values, attitudes, beliefs, and inclinations of individuals are affected by important past events and social changes in society. These events might comprise distressing cases like economic downturns, tremendous shifts in resources' allocation, wars and historical experiences. therefore, individuals born during a certain time are influenced by the same series of significant historical events over a key developmental point of their lives. Cohort theory stipulates that these differences are not specified wholly by member's age, but rather by the shared influences and experiences of that generation. Furthermore, these effects are presumed to be proportionate over time (Stevanin, 2019).

However, we should note that generational principles are developed from a Western environment (Weiss & Zhang, 2020). For example, the population in the US experienced

the Civil Rights movement in a specific time period with unique long-term outcomes. Therefore, a generation located in a different geographic region might have different experiences and will be influenced differently and therefore will perhaps have different outlooks than their Western equivalent. Thus, whatever generational studies find, it's not transferable to other parts of the world. Additionally, generational theory confirm that individuals classified in a definite generation will experience life events similarly and would be influenced by these events equally (Jones et al, 2018). Even though values, altitudes and beliefs are basically a function of age and maturity, generational theory argue that changes across generations are defined by social events rather than biological processes. However, the best evidence of cohort effects comes from a linear study that raised data from consecutive cohorts over time, to analysis and compare their life experiences across the generations (Strittmatter, Sunde & Zegners, 2020). This does not ignore the influence of individual beliefs or values. Researchers examined generational differences through some variables related to the workplace have adopted the cohort perspectives (Trujillo, 2020).

Generational Values

A generation generally shares common viewpoints and values, those viewpoints and values can be changed as new generations come along. That refers to the different look every generation has to the world. Regardless which generation you belong to, you'll have different values depend on the experiences your generation has (Marcie, 2019). Managers and researchers have advocated that every generation is signalized by an exclusive set of values, features and skills (Deschens, 2020). Hence, hiring workers from divers' generations creates equally unique challenges and opportunities. particularly, specialists and HR managers today need to think more carefully about multigenerational issues regarding employees' perceived management practices so as to build a good work relationship. This has

become even more important as there are few studies investigating this relationship amongst employees from different generations (Karianne, G., 2019).

Traditionalists values include a belief in obedience, rules and authority. They prefer to follow the logic, allegiance and own an explicated sense of correct and wrong. Assigns of Traditionalists might involve discipline, using historical experience as a method for planning the future, a detest for conflict and alertness to details. Work styles involve matchmaking and symmetry, the capability to lookup technological improvement and working in a hierarchical organization. Baby Boomers linked with values such as, confidence and teamworking, they were raised up with a sense of prerogative, where they expected the best from life. With reference to workplace values, Boomers frequently rate highly the opportunity to obtain new skills, personal advancement and innovation at work. It is also proposed that they prefer extraneous rewards and success measures like career progression (Klopotan, Alksic & Vinkovic, 2020). Boomers are willing to put themselves in tough challenges for a material wealth, living for the present days. It is also argued that Baby Boomers appreciate guiding, they are particularly interested in rating the situation. They believe that following a hierarchal structure is the best for the organization, which makes it complicated for them to adapt to a more flexible work environment (Kane, 2019). on the other hand, generation X are known to be more obliged to their personal career goals than to a certain institution, they take a fancy to organizations that enhance skills development, efficiency, and work-life balance through status and length of service. Additionally, Generation X responds very well to feedback, progression opportunities and challenges. Individuals from this generation prefer flexible work timetables, independence, pleasant work and personal development. They advocate the idea that managers should give instructions relating to the task, then allow employees to work independently. (Akdogan, Polat & Akdogan, 2020).

Generation Y is different, socially and culturally, they are motivated to succeed, besides needing their effort to have meaning and direction. They comfortably ask authority regarding administration decisions if they feel unreasonable. Generation Y is recognized by economic growth, depends on technological development in connections over the Internet, social networks, and globalization (Yinghui, De Leon & Palaoag, 2020). The generation following Millennials is Generation Z, it has been also known as the sharing Generation and Gen Edge. Being a digital native, make them bring both their expectations and technological experience to the workplace. They have experienced notable rise in higher education rates. their college registration rates surpass those of older generations, which makes them the most educated generation but the least experienced one (Venessa Hughes,2020). Dissimilar the previous generations, Generation Z members are not perfect listeners, they lack the interpersonal skills. They prefer using the world wide web to Communicate with others, because of their interest to the new technology, individuals of Generation Z can typically be located where the advantages of being hooked up to the internet. (Kirchmayer & Fratricová, 2020).

Eyoun et al. (2020) used generational differences as a moderator to examine the relationship between performance appraisal (PA) and psychological contract (PC) from the perspective of hotel managers. The results indicated that the positive relationship between management PA and PC was significantly stronger for Generation Y than for Baby Boomers and Generation X. Eyoun recommended a set of HRM practices related to design a better performance appraisal system for various PC and values in workplace. At the same context, Magni & Manzoni (2020) utilized the theoretical framework of the psychological contract to study the generational differences in the workplace to understand how Millennials and non- Millennials vary in their values and anticipations at workplace. They found that Millennial mostly expect more than their non- Millennial workmates, even though the importance ranking of the various dimensions is mainly similar over generations. Stevanin et al. (2019), a study of Italian and Finnish nurses to recognize the differences related to generations in their conceptions and opinions about workplace-related dimensions of nursing and their managers' leadership styles. Found that generational differences existed between nurses of diver's generations and should be considered in leading multigenerational nurses' workforce. Yourston (2016) investigated the role of generational differences in manager's career type, advancement and perception of career success. It found that generation is reliable means for grouping individuals. Also, the career types and progression are affected by a generational grouping. Finally, it gives a method to view differences towards career success from a generational perspective. Gomez (2020), also tried to explore the relationship between leader-member exchange, organizational commitment, using generations as a moderator. It revealed that leader-member exchange and organizational commitment were positively correlated, and this relationship does not vary between generations.

Generational attitudes

psychologists refer to the attitude as a set of behaviors, emotions and beliefs toward a specifice object, event or person. Attitudes are mostly the result of upbringing or experience, that can have a powerful impact on behavior (Kendra,2020). however, attitudes are constant, they also can change over time. Nurain, (2015) studied the connection between organizational ethical climate and organizational citizenship behavior with deviance behavior between various generations at work. The two generational cohorts studied were generation X and generation Y. Some of the notable behavior of generation X is that they do not like power structures while they like to dress casually. It established that employees from the generation X cohorts were more likely to be involve in workplace deviance behavior than millennial. Similarly, Nurain, Khulida and Tan (2016) carried another study on whether workplace deviance behavior influences generation perception, and it revealed similar results showing that employees from the generation X cohorts were more likely to be involve in workplace deviance behavior than millennial.

Pei Ying (2020) investigated the generational differences in attitude, reaction and perception at workplace. It theorized that Generation X and Y vary on their need for validation. It

concluded that need for validation would be a significant variable for explaining generational differences observed at workplace. Eberz, (2020) examined the HRM practices that organizations have adopted as a response to possible generational differences. it showed that, particularly when it comes to motivation, work-life balance, preferred leader qualities and careers, generational differences are apparent. Besides, it seems that organizations have already started to take measures to adjust to the different needs of a multigenerational workforce. Dorie and Loranger (2020), tried to enhance the understanding of employees at shopping multi-channel behaviour in terms of different generational custom and types. There were significant differences found among generations.

Discussion

The multigenerational workforce in the organization remains to be one of the issues of concern in the organization due to their extensive difference in almost all aspects in the organization (Trujillo, 2020). The differences in generation is one of the main issues occurring in current organizations that has eventually led to workplace deviance behavior. The varying culture, ethics, values and characteristics across the generational cohorts have highly influenced employees' deviance behavior. This can be attributed to variation in birth time of the generational cohorts, different social, economic, cultural contexts and values. These differences have brought a lot of conflicts among members of the different generations at work and the failure of settling these conflicts, lead to deviance behavior being exhibited among the conflicting employees. Generation differences is prevalent in several workplace behavior, they opined that the organizations need to address these differences in order to control work deviance behavior in the organization (Okros, 2020).

Employees from different generations operate together nowadays at workplace, all with abilities, skills and characteristics. Employers are required to be aware how exactly to clarify, manage and react to the differences, so as to keep the organization efficient and come up with a stimulating environment for both managers and employees (Akdogan, et.al. 2020). It is very important for managers and HRM to gain knowledge about each generation to successfully manage and operate particular elements of the modern workplace. Employers are seeking for those employees who add value to their organization. The required skills set includes analytical, technical, interpersonal, teamworking, ethics, communication and multicultural awareness. The various abilities and skills can be used as a collection to make the organization functional and effective. Whereas generation Y and Z have the skills that lead to global technological acceptance, the old generations have customer service skills (Catsouphes & Costa, 2020). Generations can work together beneficial, provide each other their knowledge and improve new techniques.

Gen Y and Z have the advantage to experience several cultures from Gen X, Boomers and Traditionalists (Strittmatter, et.al 2020). In the current working environment diversity is so important, due to the ideas, solutions and suggestions that each culture can provide to the organization. Every employee can be valued and

contribute to the organization's strategies and goals. Studies have confirmed that Traditionalists are task oriented, team players and have a respect for authority (Hisel, 2020). they believe in following directions and hierarchical society, they have the desire to be loyal and work for the same organization until retirement, even their work life comes before entertainment. (Carter, 2020).

Baby Boomers are dedicated to enterprises that can make difference and change the world. Furthermore, they are career oriented. Although change can make employees feel hesitation, Baby Boomers feel that the work-ethics of younger generations may cause feelings of instability between the employees. Boomers are considered to be motivated by prestige and hard-working. they want to obtain their due before making career changes. They like to be with people and have a concern in working over family life. The managerial field has confirmed a connection between working and the concern of Boomers. Despite being the most representative generation, most of them will be leaving the working environment within a short period of time, which makes more positions available for the younger generations (Kane, 2019).

Generation X has the desire to produce perfect outputs, even though the service will not be as intense as with older generations. As customers enter the store, they will notice less personal attention. Generation X is considered to be educated better than the past generations and has been more open to a varied environment. Members of generation X are self-reliant, they have the aim to become successful, and feel that the greatest reward is freedom. This generation already possesses rewards such as materials, they consider the value before holding onto any possession (jones et, al, 2018). Being at work when needed, using technology in daily business functions are some of the characters of this generation. When it comes to service and communication with others, generation X are not higher than the older generations in managing or employee roles. When providing the services, they may be placed where the client obtains the stuff without needing assistance. Direction is needed for them to know the expectations and their position in the organization (De Leon & Palaoag, 2020).

Because of their concern with technology members of generation Y can be found where the technology can be widely used. They prefer using E-mail or text messages to communicate with others more than traditional meetings. Based on the fast path of the modern organizations, this generation are interested in knowing what their role and benefits are for now? they consider spending much time to plan the future is somehow unnecessary as they might not be there to enjoy that moment. (Lopez, 2020). Members of generation Y are conductor for changing technology. Finally, members of generation Z are joining the workforce and will shortly represent almost 30% of the world population, some estimations signify that in the next few years they will make up to 25% of the global workforce (Karianne, 2019). Companies that manage to understand, motivate and drive Gen Z, will guarantee their success inclusion within multigenerational workforce and gain the benefits they provide to the work environment. (Marcie, 2019).

Based on the discussion, Table 1 shows the generational differences in workplace related to values and attitudes.

generational differences in workplace related to values and attitudes

Table 1

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Work-ethics	Hard working	Workaholic	work as hard as needed.	Thinking before working.	Energized working.
Attitudes towards authority/rules	They value conformity, classify authority as one of their top values, top-down management approach	comparatively still uncomfortably interact with authority, classify authority as one of their top values	interact well with their superiors, comfortable with authorities, not impressed with titles or intimidated by them.	They believe in logic; respect must be earned	They need their managers to trust them
Work/life balance	Sacrifice their personal life for work	Sacrifice their personal life for work	Value work/life balance	Value work/life balance	Value work/life balance
Anticipations related to respect	More weight given to their opinions, deference and Special treatment	More weight given to their opinions, deference and Special treatment	They want to be held in esteem, listened to, They expect deference	They like being held in esteem, listened to, expect no deference	They expect their smart working to be appreciated
Supervision and feedback	Attitudes closer to boomers	Consider continuous feedback to be insulted	Continuous	Continuous and immediate	Continuous and immediate
	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
favorite method for learning new skills	Discussion groups, on job, Feedback and peer interaction, classroom instruction-live, one to one coaching.	Discussion groups, on job, Feedback and peer interaction, classroom instruction-live, one to one coaching.	assessment, one to one coaching, feedback and peer interaction, discussion groups.	Creativity, assessment, one to one coaching, feedback and peer interaction.	Creativity, assessment, one to one coaching, feedback and peer interaction.
loyalty to the organization	Looking for staying with one organization for working life, considered to be the most loyal employees.	They appreciate loyalty and commitment, would stay with one organization for working life.	Loyal to people more than organization, would stay with one organization for working life.	loyal and Committed when dedicate to product, cause or an idea.	loyal and Committed when dedicate to product, cause or an idea.
Perceived aspects of success	Willingness to learn new skills getting along with people, meet deadlines speak clearly and concisely.	Organizational skills, willingness to learn new skills, Getting along with people, using computers, meet deadlines,	Speaking clearly and concisely, meet deadlines willingness to learn new skills, getting along with people	Speaking clearly and concisely, meet deadlines willingness to learn new skills, getting along with people	smart solutions, learning new skills, getting along with people.
Preferred development areas	Team building, skills in expertise areas, Computer training.	Leadership, Computer training, skills in expertise areas.	Leadership, Computer training, skills in expertise areas.	decision making, problem solving.	decision making, problem solving.
Preferred leadership qualities	Reliable, Listens well, Trust.	Reliable, listens well, Trust.	Trusted, credible, listens well	Devoted, listens well, dependable.	Listens well dependable devoted.

Note. Table 1 designed by the researcher and compile from the literature (Fry & Parker, 2018; Cogin, 2019; Perilus, 2020).

Conclusion

It can be said that, failure to recognize generational differences in the workplace might result in negative organizational consequences such, ineffective communications, intergenerational conflict, negative attitudes towards workmates, decrease in moral, productivity and citizenship behaviour. Knowing how employees interact at workplace would be beneficial for managers and HR specialists. For any business being profitable means that profits ought to exceed costs, nevertheless, labor costs considered to be one of the massive costs. If the responsible managers knew the suitable qualities and requirements for the available positions, the proper person would be chosen. New employees need to work with others to produce outputs or offer services to clients. When managers interview new candidates, they need to keep an open mindset, as having a fixed mindset may constrain the extension of talent in the organization. Keeping only employees from old generations will constrain companies' ability to compete in today's market. Members of the new generations have the technical skills that support and maintain the organization up to date in the local and global market.

Managers are responsible for enforcing organization's policies in order to create a team atmosphere, that makes the generations work together and achieve the success. today's market is completely differed, processes of the beginning era of Traditionalists and Baby Boomers cannot be used anymore. Looking into the future demands of costumers and workforce is the only way for organizations to survive. Each employee within the organization should learn from others, be acceptive to change and keep an open mind. Additionally, cohort theory has been criticized by studies based on the assumption that not every individual in particular generation is affected by the culture, people, historical events, economy of that period of time equally. It

has been already stated that the current generational cohort literature is adopt from Western experiences and cannot be generally applicable to other regions of the global. Therefore, future research should include qualitative research that would further the cohort theory and establish if individuals belonging to the same cohort do in fact share these historical events and are influenced by them in the same way. shed light should be on the basic premise of the cohort theory that shared historical experiences shape a generation.

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