

Generational Differences in Work Values of Indian Employees

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to provide an insight into differences in work values and person organization fit of baby boomers, Gen X and Y in India. The generational differences in work values were studied using MANOVA. Significant differences in work values were observed between Generation Y and older generations. The differences in work values of Generation Y and older generations provides input into designing organization systems and structures more suitable for younger generations.

Key words: Generation Y, work values, multigenerational workforce, MANOVA, baby boomers

INTRODUCTION

By 2025 about 25% of the world's skilled workers will be Indians. These young employees are going to drive and impact the country and organizations' strategy in years to come. Over the last two decades, newspaper articles, reports, magazines and books have discussed how generational differences are posing challenges for managers and organizations globally. Often, these discussions on generational differences focus on the dominant stereotypes that are associated with the Western countries. Numerous books offer advice and suggestions on how to engage and manage multiple generations in the workforce. The findings of studies on generational issues in the U.S. and the UK contexts proved to be ambivalent (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Damato and Herzfeldt, 2008; Real *et al.*, 2010). Employees today need to interact across multiple cultures to deliver goods and services in order to create value for organizations. Thus, managing diversity and building an inclusive culture has become the mantra for organizations across the world. And generation has become one such important source of diversity in the workplace.

Theoretical background

Generation theory: Generation theory was proposed by Mannheim in 1952. According to this theory, "belonging to the same generations or age group endows the individuals sharing in [it] with a common location in the social and historical process and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experiences, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience and a characteristic type of historically relevant action." A generation is defined by its years of birth and most generations span around 20-25 years.

Based on the generation theory, Strauss *et al.* (1991) suggest that since people belonging to a particular generation share a particular set of social and economic conditions during their formative years, they may share a common generational persona and may be similar in their traits, thinking, values and beliefs.

Objectives: Generational differences in work values, expectations and behaviors have been extensively studied and documented in Western countries including US, UK, Australia and New Zealand. However, the social and economic conditions that shape a generations' value system in India are different from other countries. These key historical and social life events influence the way each generation thinks, acts and lives their lives (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola and Sutton, 2002). The purpose of this study is to address the generational differences in work values in India. The three objectives are to:

- Reveal the underlying dimensions of Indian work values
- Identify the generational differences in ranking of importance of work values in India
- Determine whether there are differences in the work values of the three generations of Indian workforce

Generational differences in work values: Schwartz (1999) defines values as "desirable states, objects, goals or behaviors transcending specific situations and applied as normative standards to judge and choose among alternative modes of behavior". Work values have a more specific connotation. Super (1973) defines work values as the end values such as satisfaction, quality or reward individuals seek from their research. Work values affect

choices, attitudes and goals (Connor and Becker, 1975; Roe and Ester, 1999) and are closely connected to motivation (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004; Latham and Pinder, 2005). They are an important consideration at the workplace since they predict choices and actions (Rokeach, 1973), direct behavior (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004) and affect a number of organization outcomes such as judgement and decision making, work effort, satisfaction, commitment and performance (Connor and Becker, 1975; Frieze *et al.*, 2006; Meglino and Ravlin, 1998; Meyer *et al.*, 1998; Shapira and Griffith 1990; Judge and Bretz, 1992). This research uses the work values as classified by Lyons *et al.* (2010).

Generational differences in work values have been studied in various countries as described. However, Schwartz (1999) examined work values in a cross-cultural study of 49 countries and found different value profiles to emerge. This suggests that work values are affected by cultural context. Hence, the strength and direction of predicted relations may differ in an Indian setting. According to the generational theory the critical events during our formative events will affect our work values. Since the different generations in India were influenced by dramatically different critical events during their formative years, it is proposed that:

- H₁: There will be significant differences in the work values of different generations of employees in India

Intrinsic work values: Intrinsic values are associated with finding meaning and interest in work. Various studies have documented significant differences amongst the generations on Intrinsic work values. Specifically, Generation X and Y placed greater importance on learning and pride in work knowledge and skills than baby boomers (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Damato and Herzfeldt, 2008; Real *et al.*, 2010). However, in other studies, Baby Boomers were found to be significantly more concerned about learning opportunities than Generation X (Jurkiewicz, 2000; Chen and Choi, 2008).

Education and learning continues to remain one of the most important priorities for the average Indian. The Indian Generation Y have greater opportunities for education than their ancestors and also have more say in their career choices than previous generations. Thus it is proposed that:

- H₂: Generation Y will rank Intrinsic values higher than generation X and baby boomers

Instrumental and prestige work values: Instrumental work values refer to materialistic attributes people may achieve from their jobs. In most studies on generational differences in extrinsic work values, Generation X and Y rated extrinsic values such as economic returns, status, prestige achievement and advancement opportunities significantly higher than baby boomers (Chen and Choi, 2008; Cennamo and Gardner 2008; Wong *et al.*, 2008; Twenge and Campbell, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2010). Generation Y have frequently been characterized as “ambitious and impatient” and have been reported to expect immediate rewards including “praise, promotion and pay” (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2010).

Baby boomers in India entered the workplace in a time of scarce opportunities and poor economy. Their focus was entirely on the financial aspect of the job. Things gradually improved for Generation X but financial viability continued to be an important consideration while choosing careers. This trend has started changing with Indian Generation Y exploring more adventurous career options, engaging in more entrepreneurial ventures and looking for jobs that satisfy their intrinsic desires instead of just focusing on the extrinsic rewards. Thus, it is proposed that:

- H₃: Baby Boomers will rank extrinsic values higher than Generation X and Generation Y

Social work values: Social work values are interpersonal and related to the need to belong. Hence, they include aspects like meaningful relationships with colleagues and workplace fun. According to various studies, Gen X and Y are likely to place larger emphasis on social work values than Baby Boomers (Altimier, 2006; Wong *et al.*, 2008; Lamm and Meeks, 2009; Real *et al.*, 2010; Ng *et al.*, 2010).

Generation Y in India are more sociable than older generations that were more reserved in their approach towards people. With growth in mobile phone and social media usage, Generation Y members remain connected with their peers at all times. The social norms have undergone changes and Generation Y in India are more open and may prefer “fun” in their workplace. Thus it is proposed that:

- H₄: Generation Y will rank social values higher than Generation X and baby boomers

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data was collected from a total of 800 members of various organizations across India. After deleting the

outliers, 779 responses remained. The members were identified using snowball sampling technique and the questionnaire took about 15 min to complete. Work values were measured using Lyons and Kuron (2014) Work Values Survey (LWVS). This survey comprise of 25 items on a 5-point Likert response format. This instrument was chosen because it reconciles previous theory while reflecting the recent developments in the field of work values and has been validated in a large Canadian sample (Lyons *et al.*, 2010). Based on review of recent generation-related literature (Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Laird *et al.*, 2015), this study adopts Smola and Sutton’s (2002) generation classifications (i.e., Baby Boomers, 1946-1964; Generation X, 1965-1977 and Generation Y, born after 1977) for the following discussion and analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the participants, 176 were baby boomers, 272 were Generation X and 331 were Generation Y. The biggest proportion of the sample worked with Industry (58.2%) while 24% worked in government offices and 17% were in Education Industry. About 73% of the respondents were male and majority of the respondents were married (46%). To ensure the validity of the LWVS in the Indian context, the underlying structure was analyzed using EFA and CFA. Data was randomly divided into two sub samples which was deemed large enough for separate analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). Data from the first sample (N = 388) was analyzed using EFA. Principal component analysis using Promax rotation was performed to explore the underlying dimensions of these 15 work values. The correlation Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measuring of sample adequacy (0.88) and Bartlett’s test for sphericity (sig. 0.000) supported the use of factor analysis. The factor analysis resulted in a four dimension-solution with 34.545% of variance explained by the components. Items with loadings <0.35 and cross

loadings >0.2 were omitted. Based on the commonality within item groupings the four dimensions were labeled as: intrinsic, extrinsic, prestige and social. The four dimensions reported Cronbach’s α scores (Nunnally, 1978), ranging from 0.615-0.78 which were deemed “adequate” (Table 1).

CFA was used to examine the goodness of fit of the four-factor structure derived from the EFA, using data from the second subsample (N = 391). CFA results indicated that the 15 item, four factor model fit the data adequately (CMIN/df = 2.08; Root mean square error of Approximation = 0.053; CFI = 0.935) with all items loading above 0.7 on their work values, thus confirming the content validity of the four factor solution.

Frequency analysis was performed on the 15 work values to determine the ranking order of work values from all three categories of participants: Baby Boomers, Generation X and Y. Although, there were differences in rankings of work value among members of different generations, there were also similarities. Work life balance, Job security and Salary consistently ranked among the top five work values, cutting across generational lines. This importance on work life balance may be attributed to India being a collectivistic culture which places great emphasis on family. Further, India has high unemployment rates and lower salary levels which make job security and salary important work related values (Table 2).

As shown in Table 2 While Generation Y and Generation X both ranked Intrinsic Values to be most important, baby boomers ranked extrinsic work values to be their first priority at work. Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 were thus supported. This is also in agreement with findings in other countries where Generation X and Y rated intrinsic values higher than Baby Boomers (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Damato and Herzfeldt, 2008; Real *et al.*, 2010; Silva *et al.*, 2015). Due to the shift to knowledge based economies,

Table 1: Exploratory factor analysis (N = 388)

Factors	Mean	SD	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Prestige	Social	Communalities
Continuously learn	3.54	1.16	0.727				0.509
Challenge	3.40	1.07	0.561				0.417
Recognition	3.48	1.10	0.401				0.418
Feedback	3.33	1.08	0.395				0.306
Use abilities	3.34	1.04	0.395				0.318
Job Security	3.70	1.18		0.723			0.509
Hours of Work	3.47	1.09		0.474			0.286
Salary	3.76	1.03		0.473			0.225
Freedom	3.31	1.06		0.468			0.339
Influence	3.16	1.06			0.694		0.525
Achievement	3.35	1.08			0.585		0.447
Advancement	3.53	1.07			0.487		0.366
Variety	3.15	1.11			0.381		0.295
Fun	3.32	1.16				0.740	0.616
Co-workers	3.43	1.04				0.432	0.258
Eigenvalue			5.255	1.521	1.183	1.029	
Percentage of variance			23.162	4.520	2.998	2.201	
Cronbach’s α			0.728	0.618	0.654	0.615	

Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Promax

Table 2: Rankings of work values for three generations of Indian workforce

Generation Y (n = 331)			Generation X (n = 272)			Baby Boomers (n = 176)		
Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD
Intrinsic	3.6024	0.73575	Intrinsic	3.3904	0.6958	Extrinsic	3.3330	0.6750
Social	3.5317	0.90941	Extrinsic	3.3787	0.8036	Prestige	3.3182	0.7826
Prestige	3.4736	0.71553	Social	3.3169	0.6990	Intrinsic	3.2727	0.6896
Extrinsic	3.4375	0.71997	Prestige	3.2335	0.7144	Social	3.1548	0.6994

The value of each work value ranged from 1 = Not at all important to 5 = Absolutely essential

employees are placing greater value on learning and development as a source of their competitive advantage and as a source of their marketability due to decreased job security. Baby boomers rated extrinsic values to be most important followed by prestige values. This trend is unique to the Indian context. The generational differences in extrinsic work values may be attributed to the differences in the economic conditions at the time of entering the labour market. The extrinsic and prestige values may be a signal of perceived employees' worth to the organization (Kuvaas, 2006).

Generation Y workers rated "Social" values higher than other two generations which means that they place greater value on meaningful relationships with colleagues and workplace fun. This supported hypothesis 4 and also supported findings by several other studies which found that Generation Y place a higher value on social values than Generation X and baby boomers (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Altimier, 2006; Wong *et al.*, 2008; Lamm and Meeks, 2009; Real *et al.*, 2010; Ng *et al.*, 2010; Twenge and Campbell, 2008). The educational system trains Generation Y for team work from an early age and thus they are expected to value interpersonal relations more than Baby Boomers, who are often portrayed as workaholics with strong work ethics and "win-at-all-cost" perspective (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Lamm and Meeks, 2009). Hence social work values and work place fun are less important for Baby Boomers.

In accordance with Cramer and Bock (1966), in order to a help protect against inflating the Type 1 error rate in the follow-up ANOVAs and post-hoc comparisons, a MANOVA was first performed on the means. Pearson correlations were performed between all of the dependent variables in order to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be correlated with each other in the moderate range (i.e., 0.20-0.60; Meyer *et al.*, 2005). As can be seen in Table 3, a meaningful pattern of correlations was observed amongst most of the dependent variables, suggesting the appropriateness of a MANOVA. Additionally, the Box's M value of 39.855 was associated with a $p < 0.06$ which was interpreted as non-significant based on Huberty and Petoskey (2000)'s guideline (i.e., $p < 0.005$). Thus, the covariance matrices between the groups were assumed to be equal for the purposes of the MANOVA (Table 3).

Table 3: Pearson correlations, means and standard deviations associated with the work values sub scales

Variables	Cognitive	Instrumental	Prestige	Social	Mean	SD
Intrinsic	1				3.4539	0.72351
Extrinsic	0.517**	1			3.3718	0.7041
Prestige	0.607**	0.452**	1		3.3177	0.72372
Social	0.431**	0.337**	0.371**	1	3.3703	0.89658

N = 779**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Since gender and marital status may have an effect on work values, a between subjects Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to test the hypothesis that there would be one or more mean differences between members of different generations (Generation Y, Generation X and baby boomers) and work values scores. There were no significant main effects or interaction effects for gender and marital status. A statistically significant MANOVA effect was obtained for generation, Pillai's trace = 0.053, $F(8,1548) = 5.285$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, a statistical difference in work values was found between different generations which supported hypothesis 1. The multivariate effect size was estimated at 0.027 which implies that 2.7% of the variance in the canonically derived dependent variable was accounted for by generation group.

Prior to conducting a series of follow-up ANOVAs, the homogeneity of variance assumption was tested for all four work values subscales. The homogeneity of variance assumption was considered satisfied using Levene's F test. A series of one-way ANOVA's on each of the four dependent variables was conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. As can be seen in Table 4, the ANOVA associated with all four work values were statistically significant with effect sizes (partial η^2) ranging from 0.008-0.036 (Table 4).

Finally, a series of post-hoc analyses (Fisher's LSD) were performed to examine individual mean difference comparisons across all three generations and all four work values subscales. The results revealed that all post-hoc mean comparisons between Generation Y and other generations were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, there were no statistically significant differences between the work values preferences of Generation X and baby boomers. This is an interesting finding, since it suggests that the work values of Generation X and Baby boomers are the same but differences exist between Generation Y and older

Table 4: Results of generational differences in work values as measured by the Lyons work values survey

Work values	F	Mean baby boomers	SD	Mean Generation X	SD	Mean Generation Y	SD
Intrinsic	13.99*	3.27	0.689	3.39	0.695	3.60	0.735
Extrinsic	3.10*	3.33	0.675	3.37	0.803	3.44	0.720
Prestige	14.46*	3.32	0.728	3.23	0.714	3.47	0.715
Social	9.538*	3.15	0.699	3.31	0.699	3.53	0.909

*p < 0.01; df (between groups) = 2; df (within groups) = 776

Table 5: Summary of hypothesized relationships and results

Hypothesis	Description	Support
H ₁	There will be significant differences in the work values of different generations of employees in India	Yes
H ₂	Generation Y will rank Intrinsic values higher than Generation X and baby boomers	Yes
H ₃	Baby Boomers will rank extrinsic values higher than Generation X and Generation Y	Yes
H ₄	Generation Y will rank social values higher than Generation X and baby boomers	Yes

generations. Hence, organizations that have been managing baby boomers and Generation X may need to make considerable changes in their managerial style to suit the changing needs of Generation Y (Table 5, Fig. 1).

CONCLUSION

The differences in work values of Generation Y and other generations as documented by this study, suggests that managers must be prepared to deal with a new breed of workers with their need for intrinsic rewards and affiliative and cooperative workplace. By understanding the specific drivers of a generational cohort, human resources professionals, career counselors and managers can develop policies aimed at improving communication, satisfaction, commitment and retention and advance organizational knowledge management and productivity. This study provides companies and managers a deeper understanding of generational differences in India. In addition, it serves as a base for more comprehensive research in this area.

LIMITATIONS

One of the key limitations of the present study is the use of cross-sectional data in studying generational differences. Since individuals were allocated into groups according to their age, it is difficult to ascertain whether the differences between the generation groups can be attributed to age effects or true generational differences.

IMPLICATIONS

As seen from the results, generational differences in work values exist between Generation Y and older generations (Fig. 1). These differences may have an impact on workplace interactions between employees and managers, employees and customers and employees and employees. If managers and coworkers do not understand

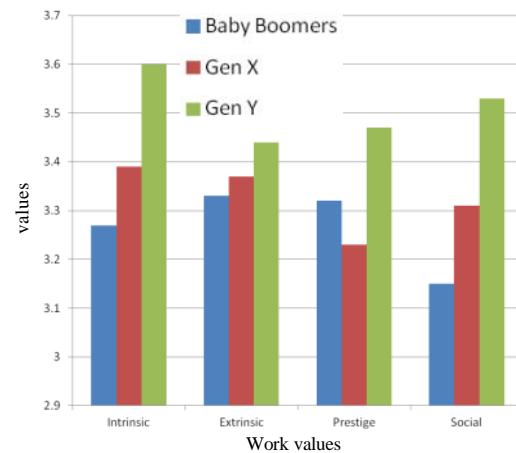


Fig. 1: Generational differences in work values

each other's generational differences, these interactions could result in workplace conflict, decreased satisfaction and productivity. With 58% of human resource professionals reporting conflict among employees as a result of generational differences, this study provides an understanding of the differences in an Indian context which will help professionals deal effectively with such conflicts (Society for Human Resource Management, 2004). Further, Schein (1992) postulates that the most influential members of the organization determine the culture of the organization. This could lead to a misfit between the values of Generation Y employees and the values that organizations possess and communicate (Miller and Yu, 2003). These discrepancies between an individual's work values and workplace norms may result in decreased job satisfaction and withdrawal from work through absenteeism and tardiness and increase an employees' intention to leave (Schneider *et al.*, 1995; Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1995; Kristof, 1996; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Werbel and Gilliland, 1999; Cable and Edwards, 2004; Manrique, 2008). Most western studies characterize Generation Y as "impatient" and focused on monetary rewards. However, this study shows that Indian Generation Y place the greatest value on Intrinsic rewards

and Social values. Younger Indian employees may thus prefer to work with an organization that emphasizes learning, provides challenging jobs that utilizes their unique abilities and also provides recognition and regular feedback. Further, a “fun” workplace which emphasizes relationships amongst colleagues is preferred by Generation Y employees. Thus the recruitment and retention strategies must be tailored to suit the diverse needs of different generations of employees. Most of the generational gaps can be addressed by offering intergenerational training and mentoring programs. Reverse mentoring may prove a useful strategy in opening a dialogue among members of different generations and promote understanding of each others’ value system. This study suggests that the successful management of a multigenerational workforce begins with understanding and appreciating the differences of each generation of employees. This would lead to a positive work environment which allows every employee to focus on their unique strengths and abilities (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008).

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