

Competences and Commitments on Work Related Convictions of Software Professionals

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Abstract: The current research study evaluates the generational diversity that exist in the modern organizations and specifically the study focus on the generational differences between Gen-X and Y professionals who are employed in IT and ITES industry. The current research aimed to investigate the possibilities of generational differences towards work commitment between the Gen-X and Y cohorts. The 5 types of research commitment that were studied for the generational differences are organizational commitment, work group commitment, work involvement, professional commitment and job involvement. There are again sub sections in the organizational commitment and professional commitment such as normative commitment, continuance commitment and affective commitment. In total, nine factors were examined in this research. Data was collected from 250 respondents which was then analyzed by 2-tailed t-tests (pooled variances method) and from the results it was revealed that there is a significant difference found only in 3 out of 9 factors. It can be concluded that the generations show homogenous nature than heterogeneous in their work values and beliefs. In the research and practice areas, the current findings show a greater insight for HR managers so that the observed differences are attributable to other factors (career and stage of life) instead of being an exclusive and true 'generational divide'.

Key words: Software professionals, age cohort, Gen-X, generational difference, Gen-Y, work commitment

INTRODUCTION

India is gaining the top position in the world with the youngest workforce which enables the new-gen organizations work vibrantly. There is an increase in cross-generational working culture realized among the organizations as everyone works under the same roof. In spite of the differences in approach towards work, work-life balance, delegation, loyalty, motivation, accountability, authority, rewards systems, the older, not so, old and young generations work together to achieve the organizational goals set. Further, the economics, demographics and the culture intertwined between these generations add fuel to the fire.

A group of people who can be identified by when they were born and are bound by their age factor and significant life events at critical developmental stages which is further divided into 5-7 years such as first wave and the second one being core group followed by the last wave (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Contemporaries, the

terminology given to those who share the similar experience as their peers in economic turn-outs, cultural programs, landmark information, historical events and those who have enjoyed the music and theatrical performance during their formative years. Similarly, they also organize with their values and attitudes, specifically work-related topics which sounds similar whomever belongs to the same age group. Those who do not fall in this age group or cohort found conspicuously different from those of others. It is evident that at some instances, there may be intra-generational similarity as well as striking inter-generational diversity that requires consideration in managing the workplace diversity. A generational group is often defined as the cohort which consists of individuals who share similar social life experience or the historical events and its effects are relatively stable over the course of their lives. Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998) noted that these life experiences tend to differentiate from one generation to another. Kupperschmidt (2000) inferred that a "cohort

develops a personality that influences a person's feelings toward authority and organizations what they desire from work and how they plan to satisfy those desires". The following categories are identified by the researchers as generations:

Matures: They are born between 1920-40 and are 70-90 years old now	Boomers: They are born between 1940-60 and 50-70 years of age now
The Generation-X: They are born between 1960-80 and hence, are 30-50 years old now	The Generation-Y millennials: They are born between 1980-2000 and are more than 30 years of age

As per the CIA report (2008), it is found that India has a relatively higher younger population such that it contains 31.5% of the population falls between 0-14 years and 63.3% between 15-64 years where as those who are above 65 years contribute to a meager 5.2% of the population. This report is further supported by various other organizational reports as well. So, the difference found among these generations impact a lot on an individual's attitudes, learning styles, idiosyncrasies and characteristics and in turn the organizational functioning.

Literature review

Generation-X: According to Jurkiewicz and Brown (1998), individuals belong to Gen-X grew up with insecurity in various aspects such as financial, family and societal due to the increased diversity, change management and absence of customs and traditions. This resulted in the individualism than the expected collectivism. Kupperschmidt (2000) identified that these individuals were greatly influenced by seeing their parents laid off which made them cynical and untrusting. They feel pragmatic, alienated and cynicised due to the above scenarios (Sirias *et al.*, 2007). The Gen-X seems to be not-so-networking friendly and also have various doubts about (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007a, b). Patota *et al.* (2007) and Schwartz (2007) mentioned that the Gen-X employees mostly think clearly about the authoritative work style, where they researcher, i.e., corporations and how they are managing their work-life balance in order to proceed with the institutional breakup that include marriage and corporate downsizing which tends to affect either of the parents.

Generation-Y: Jennings (2000) inferred that the Gen-Y managers are potential enough craving for high salaries with flexible work arrangements when compared to their counterparts of previous generations. According to

Table 1: Generation X and Y

Gen-X	Gen-Y
Accept diversity	Celebrate diversity
Pragmatic/practical	Optimistic/realistic
Self-reliant/individualistic	Self-inventive/individualistic
Reject rules	Rewrite the rules
Killer life-living on the edge	Killer lifestyle-pursuing luxury
Mistrust institutions	Irrelevance of institution
PC	Internet
Use technology	Assume technology
Multitask	Multitask fast
Latch-key kids	Nurtured
Friend = not family	Friends = family

Table 2: Pooled variances methods

Work commitments	t* values	Pr> t
H ₁ : Work involvement (means: Gen-X = 20.33; Gen-Y = 20.46)	-2.140	0.827
H ₂ : Job involvement (means: Gen-X = 32.12; Gen-Y = 34.38)	-2.488	0.031**
H ₃ : Work group commitment (means: Gen-X = 16.18; Gen-Y = 16.81)	-1.774	0.075
H _{4a} : Affective commitment (organizational) (means: Gen-X = 24.14; Gen-Y = 24.99)	-1.124	0.260
H _{4b} : Continuance commitment (organizational) (means: Gen-X = 23.95; Gen-Y = 22.89)	1.446	0.147
H _{4c} : Normative commitment (organizational) (means: Gen-X = 21.55; Gen-Y = 23.27)	-2.174	0.030**
H _{4d} : Affective commitment (professional) (means: Gen-X = 33.72; Gen-Y = 33.59)	0.242	0.806
H _{4e} : Continuance commitment (professional) (means: Gen-X = 27.97; Gen-Y = 26.35)	2.003	-0.046**
H ₅ : Normative commitment (professional) (means: Gen-X = 18.03; Gen-Y = 18.58)	-0.752	0.451

**Significant at p<0.05 (critical value = -1.96<t*<1.96; df = 379)

Johnson and Lopes (2008), Gen-X employee's strongest trait or their viewpoint is said to be work-life balance. They also added that the Gen-Y employees are likely to switch jobs, since, they are assumed to be disloyal or more independent. Ryan (2000) said that millennial generation is the first generation to be born in the world with 24 h connectivity to the wired world and found to be socially active, since, 1960s. Further, in addition to the above, Gen-Y employees raise their voices for providing opinions, blatant and vocal who care characterized by an extraordinary work appetite (Table 1 and 2).

Being recently highlighted a lot, Gen-Y employees are branded in terms of their sense of outspokenness, unwillingness towards criticism, entitlement and sophistication in terms of technological applications. In the year 2007, in its May 28th issue, Fortune deemed the Gen-Y as the most high maintenance with potential high-performance generation in the history due to its members who enter the workplace with loads of information combined with great technological skills and higher expectations of themselves and others compared to their predecessors. Time (July 16, 2007 issue) described Gen-Y members as the ones who look for work-life balance that means a lot for them.

It is important to discuss about the generational labels while discussing about the changing workforce as there is a need rise here to understand the people who are ready for change and the people who are resisting for the change to happen. Once, this is found, the question raises on how to create workplace that bridges the both. The approach towards work, learning and the relations differ with each generation. Gen-Y thinks a bunch of whiners form Gen-X and on the contrary, Gen-X perspective towards Gen-Y employees seems to be arrogant and entitled. In total, these baby boomers are viewed as workaholics who are self-absorbed.

Linda Gravett and Robin Throckmorton observed a lot of tension hovers around the use of technology and work ethics among the generations. Their research confirmed that 32% of Gen-X believe that Gen-Y lacks a good work ethic which is considered as a problem. In parallel, 13% of Gen-Y reiterate that a difference in work ethics across the generations causes friction and they firmly believe that they too have a work ethic as compared to Gen-X who are alleging unnecessarily. In 2007, a study was conducted for CareerBuilder.com which revealed that the respondents approximately 50% answered the preferred communication mode of Gen-Y as IMs, blogs and text messages instead of phone or face to face methods that is common and much practiced by the previous generation, i.e., Gen-X. Gen-X feels abrupt towards the technological communication and easily misunderstand it.

Thus, the current research aims at exploring the possible differences among the generations by investigating work values and beliefs. This poses a serious research question: "Are there generational differences in work commitment"?

Work commitment constructs: Various researchers have defined work commitment as different facets of employee attitudes and psychological attachments within the realm of work (Hackett *et al.*, 2001; Blau *et al.*, 1993; Randall and Cote, 2002). The research commitments theory has several constructs defined within with each construct is differentiated by the focus of commitment such as work, job, organization, profession, supervisor and team (Reichers, 1985; Mowday *et al.*, 1982). The current study examined generational differences for the five types of commitment.

Work involvement: According to various researchers such as Kane (1977) and Kanungo (1982 a, b), work involvement seems to be a normative belief when it comes

to value of work in an individual's life. This terminology refers how far an employee regard work in comparison with other such activities as a source of fulfillment in search of their intrinsic needs:

- H₁: Gen-X employees has higher work involvement than Gen-Y employees

Job Involvement: According to Frone and Major (1988), job involvement is "the degree to which a job is central to an individual's self-concept or sense of identity". Further, according to Lodahl and Kejner (1965), job involvement represents "a cognitive state of psychological identification with the job":

- H₂: Gen-X employees has higher job involvement than Gen-Y employees

Work group commitment: Morrow (1993), Randall and Cote (2002) defined Work group commitment as an "individual's identification and sense of cohesiveness with other members of their work group":

- H₃: Gen-X employees has higher work group attachment than Gen-Y

Organizational commitment: The current study employed the three component view of organizational commitment framed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Continuance commitment affective commitment and normative commitment are the three components in which the continuance commitment refers to "an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization". Since, they need to be attached to the employer, employees are in primary link with the organization, i.e., continuance commitment. The affective commitment means "an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organization". Those employees who is attached with the organization stay with the organization as they want to do so. Finally, normative commitment reflects "a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization":

- H_{4a}: Gen-X employees has a higher affective commitment to organization than Gen-Y
- H_{4b}: Gen-X employees has a higher continuance commitment to organization than Gen-Y
- H_{4c}: Gen-X employees has a higher normative commitment to organization than Gen-Y

Professional commitment: Professional commitment has the same dimensions as organizational commitment:

- H_{5a} : Gen-X employees has a higher affective commitment to profession than Gen-Y
- H_{5b} : Gen-X employees has a higher continuance commitment to profession than Gen-Y
- H_{5c} : Gen-X employees has a higher normative commitment to profession than Gen-Y

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A structured questionnaire was administered among the 250 respondents working in Software industry. In this study, population, equal number of Gen-X and Y respondents participated. Both males and females constitute equal % of respondents, i.e., 50-50% in both the cases were males and females, respectively. With a pre-validated scale, the work commitment constructs were measured. Kanungo (1982a) developed a scale which consists of job involvement 10 items and work involvement 6 items. Randall and Cote (2002)'s scale was used to measure work group commitment 6-items. An 18-item scale that was developed by Meyer *et al.* (1993) was used to measure the organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the results of 2-tailed t-tests (pooled variances method). Of the 9 factors examined, only 3 factors were significant between the 2 Generations ($p < 0.05$). H_{5b} was supported from which it can be inferred that continuance commitment to the profession is significantly higher for Gen-X than Gen-Y. In contract to the hypothesis, for involvement (H_2) and normative commitment to the organization (H_{4c}), the means were significantly higher for the Gen-Y group of employees than for the Gen-X group.

From the study results, it can be inferred that software professionals from both Gen-X and Y generations seems to be homogeneous in terms of value of work, commitment towards the organization and profession in spite of the contraries. The three work commitment differences identified in the study along with their possible sources:

- H_2 : Gen-X employees has higher job involvement than Gen-Y employees

The hypothesis is rejected by which it is inferred that Gen-Y employees are more involved in their jobs than Gen-X employees. From the above, it is to be noted that

Gen-Y Software professionals consider their jobs as a central aspect of their self-concept to a greater extent compared to their counterparts. The above finding is contrary to the expectations based on the typical profiles of these two generations. This may be due to the possible reason in the perspectives of their life-stage, i.e., Gen-Y employee may prioritize job in the higher ranking compared to marriage and children that may occur later in life. It is inevitable that Gen-Y employees exhibit high job involved due to the delayed marriage and parenthood:

- H_{4c} : Gen-X employees has a higher normative commitment to organization than Gen-Y

The above hypothesis is rejected by which it is understood that Gen-Y employees exhibit higher normative commitment to their organizations compared to X-Gen employees and also feel that they ought to remain with their organization. Normative commitment places emphasis on the employee's beliefs concerning obligations towards their employer. This difference may be due to the differences in their career stage and tenure. Organizations spend enormous amount of resources in recruitment, training, orienting and motivating the Gen-Y entrant. Understanding the same, Gen-Y employee reciprocates by demonstrating higher normative commitment towards the organization. Additionally, Gen-Y employees are in earlier stages of their career and they may have utilized education benefits for advanced degrees more recently. But on the other hand, Gen-X employees feels that their reciprocal obligations to the organization have already been fulfilled in the past years. Hence, Gen-Y employees possess the psychological contract over a long period of time which was already void for Gen-X employees who are ready to make a move.

Schambach and Blanton (2001) concluded his research on psychological contracts that those beliefs that exist with regards to the reciprocal obligations will change based on the time once an individual starting thinking that his/her obligations have been fulfilled. Thus, it is obvious that the Gen-Y employees feel higher responsibility in reciprocal obligations than their counterparts, i.e., Gen-Xers who may have received these benefits decades ago. Due to, the recent benefits and subsequent higher indebtedness towards the sponsoring organization, a bias is created towards higher normative commitment to organization for Gen-Y employees. Another issue that may have played a role in Gen-Y employee's framing of obligations toward their organization is the 'salary difference' between them and their Gen-X counterparts.

Janairo (2000) concluded that due to, the paucity of good software professionals in early 2000's, many organizations in fact, the public sector offered higher salaries to new hires thus creating salary compression (and sometimes salary inversion) between more senior employees and new hires. This led to drastic changes among the different generation employees such as Gen-Y employees started exhibiting higher organizational commitment and Gen-X employees exhibited reduced loyalty due to perceived salary inequities:

- H_{5b} : Gen-X employees has a higher continuance commitment to profession than Gen-Y

The above hypothesis is supported which infers that continuance commitment to the profession is significantly higher for Gen-X when compared to the Gen-Y employees. The essential difference in values and attitudes between the two groups may be the possible reason for this for example, as tenure increases, the costs of leaving may also escalate. For example, it may involve the forfeiture/reduction of retirement benefits. The cost of relocation in terms of social and financial can also increase as individuals and their families become more invested in their communities. Lee *et al.* (2001) noted that during their career progression, software professionals build, develop and maintain competencies that are rather difficult to transfer to another career path. Due to, the reason that there are less chances of Return on Investment (ROI) in changing profession which would be hard for Gen-X employees, they feel obliged to stay in the software profession and possess a higher continuance commitment to the profession compared to Gen-Y employees. Ralston *et al.* (1999) firmly believed that the software career accommodates a diversity of career orientations and hence continuing in the profession may not be as restrictive in terms of options as some other professions.

CONCLUSION

The current study results show that there is no coherent pattern of difference found in Gen-X and Y Software professionals in terms of work commitment which has further implications towards research and practice. Further, it leads to new horizons such as, "Is age related to work values? Is there any relationship between the concepts of age-cohort generation and work values"? The current study results inferred that generation difference, societal changes and historical events makes no prediction when it comes to work values. In study values theory, the future researchers are recommended

that 'generation' is to be considered only when it act as a moderator for the incorporation of effects of other influencers too.

The classification of 'generation' needs to be revised as it is too broad to cover and doesn't apply in the classical theoretical models. So, it becomes a need to remodel for the much narrower generation bands. Alternatively, one can connect an historical event to an individual's life stages or career through which it can be understood that historical events play a major role in shaping an individual's attitudes, values and learning styles. This would compensate for the overdue importance given to generation. The results provide valuable and updated insights for practicing managers who need to rethink the approach towards generational differences as the consequences in accepting the traditionally accepted stereotypes would be detrimental to the organization and suggests appropriate human resource strategies for software professionals. For HR managers, the study results was an eye-opener who tend to assume an overly simplistic view of the generational differences due to text books and popular press articles.

Oz (2001) experienced the highest turn-around rate among the software in spite of them being considered as critical organizational resource. It becomes critical to identify the factors that affect software professionals in terms of professional and organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) confirmed that in spite of ups and downs, a committed employee stays. Oz (2001) found that there is a positive relationship exists between employee values, organizational and professional commitment. Morrow and Wirth (1989) envisaged that in addition to the tasks, Professional commitment is felt from the one who does involve in various activities that adds value to their professional life. For example, conferences, attending seminars, attending refresher courses, memberships of professional associations, workshops, participation in various training programs, subscription to technical and popular journals, etc. IT industry requires regular updates to withstand the competition and one must learn to update themselves. Being, a dynamic industry, IT organizations bring change now and then among its employees to improve their organizational and professional commitment of their software professionals. Zemke *et al.* (1999) added that those managers in the human resource may discount the Gen-Y employee's potential commitment when they hold generation based stereotypes in their organization. They tend to loss any opportunities through which they can make up between these employees initial predisposition for expressing the commitment through training and socialization.

Such managers should try different options such as control-based HR management strategies than commitment-based strategies which would obviously will not work among these kinds of professionals. This will also result in future perceptions about being injustice, creation of divisiveness within the organizations, etc. There are many studies available in proving the link that exist between the organizational fairness and affective commitment perceptions according to the study conducted by Meyer *et al.* (1993). Gen-X and Y employees who think they are treated not equally results in feeling of inequity which leads to the scenario where conflict arises between the two generational groups. Further, software industry professionals only were included in this study in which specifically the HR Managers who are 'Generationally savvy' are to be included in the future. They need to restructure their strategies on popular stereotypical generational differences so that a fresh understanding of the two generations can be created at the work place. Gen-X and Y employees have more in common than the expectations set earlier. From the results, it is clear that Gen-Y employees are truly committed to the organization as like their counterparts. The current study adds to the emerging evidence that these differences are attributable to other factors (career and stage of life) instead of being an exclusive and true 'generational divide'.

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