

Analysis of Generation Mix at Workplace

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Abstract

Generational issues were not widely discussed by managers in the past. As competition became the guiding principle, managing age diversity (generation mix) is a complex process of any organisation today. The main objective of this study is to make a comparative analysis of various work related factors among different categories of generation mix. The study has been conducted among the journalists of a leading Malayalam newspaper in Kerala. A Sample of 60 was selected for the study. The study reveals that the approach of each generation towards work is different. There are various issues of differences as well as similarities among different generations on work. The present study reveals that there is a noticeable similarity between 'Generation X and Baby Boomers'. The 'Traditionalists' find it difficult to accept the young supervisors while comparing with other categories. Strategies on handling these issue may be possible only by taking into consider the age of the employees.

Introduction

Managing age diversity (generation mix) is a complex process of any organisation. This is due to the divergent approaches of the employees towards work. The intensity of this is quite visible in today's organisation as competition becomes the guiding principle of organisations.

Generational issues were not widely discussed by managers in the past. However, today it has become an issue of concern to many organizations (Southard et.al 2004). Meller (2004) reports that

ageing profile of the workplace is one of the most challenging issues today.

Literature Review

The following literature signifies the relevance of studying age diversity at workplace. Bell et.al (2007) classifies the categories of generation mix as those in their mid 40's as 'Baby Boomers' and employees in their early 40's the Generation X. The new generation entering the workplace, in their early 20s or younger, is generally called Generation

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Y. Those belonging to the upper age groups (50 and above) are the 'Traditionalists'. According to him the characteristics of each of the generation is distinct at work place. The discussions on age diversity in the workplace seem to be highly relevant for the revelations of profile. The approach of each generation towards work is different (Carolyn 2004). There are issues of differences as well as similarities among different generations on work. The work conflict between the younger generations and old are widely discussed by Reddick (2006).

Attitude towards work is different among different generations (Dolliver, 1996). This difference is very much high especially with generation X and baby boomers. Studies by Diromualdo (2006) relate to intergenerational conflict. The younger generation understands the generational difference better and there is a positive intergenerational working relationship between them. However there are also differences over working hours, lack of respect for the other generations, communication break-up etc.

Different generations have its own set of values/ethics. Organizations have to be more responsive to *diversity* in the work force to keep both older workers and younger workers happy (Smith, 2005). Contradicting to this view, Jennifer Deal (2007) argues that there is no difference in values among generations. If at all some differences are seen, it is not because of age but because of situational factors.

Among the various work related issues of generations, the 'Baby Boomers' that reach up to the age of 40 years and

above, face many challenges in work and family-related obligations that include young children and aging parents, job vulnerability (Clark et.al, 2000). They find it difficult to maintain work life balance. Within the framework of an overlapping generation model, Escriche (2007) considered the importance of 'job-priority' and '**family-priority**' preferences.

Niemiec (2000) in her article reinforces the differences among various generations by stating that the younger workers may be unwilling to work overtime. By discussing the various distinctive characteristics Tyler (2007) says the basic qualities of generation Y is multi tasking and they have got high team-orientation.

The various work related policies, incentives and recognitions to employees, welfare policies etc is designed as per what appeals to the particular generation (Southard et.al, 2004). The concern for economic security is strong among generation X (Hogarty et.al,1996).

In short the above literatures highlights a number of work related issues between different generations. The present study pursues the discussion on the same lines by collecting empirical evidence. The study has been conducted among the journalists of a leading Malayalam newspaper in Kerala. Though number of studies pertaining to generation mix can be found in the literature related to various cross section of employees, research among journalists have not been much noticed. The main objective of this

study is to make a comparative analysis of various work related factors among different categories of generation mix.

The following work related factors are considered for the study (Box 1).

Box 1: Work Related Factors

Valuing present job	Family constraints in work
Challenges in job	Efficiency with computers
Attitude towards work	Learning new technology
Interest in overtime	Accepting younger supervisors
Work-life balance	Working in groups
Working in shift policies	Accepting new work-
Handling many tasks	

Methodology

A Sample of 60 was selected for the study. The selection was based on the judgment of the researchers. Snowball sampling method was used to identify the respondents. The data was collected through a well-defined questionnaire with a three-point scale, where three is rated as 'agree', one as 'disagree' and two is considered as 'neutral'. A pilot study was initiated to test the validity of the questionnaire. The reliability of the data was also tested through alpha test and

correlation. Alpha value is more than 0.6 and the correlation values shows positive correlation among the factors considered for the study and the values are either at .01 or .05 percent significant level. Secondary sources were used to identify the related variables considered for the study. The generation mix is comprised of 'Generation Y' (20-29 age groups), 'Generation X' (30-39), 'Baby Boomers' (40-49) and 'Traditionalists' (50 and above).

Findings

The profile of the respondents shows that 70 % is male and their average age is 38 years. Among the total respondents the age category of 30-39 (33.3 %) and 40-49 (40.0 %) dominates (table 1).

The categorization of age groups according to generation mix is given in the table 2. The age group of 20-29 belongs to the 'Generation X' (16.70 %) and followed by 'Generation Y' (33.3%) in the age group of 30-39. The 'Baby Boomers' belong to the age group of 40-49 (40.0 %) and finally the 'Traditionalists' in the 50 and above age category (10.0 %). The 'Baby Boomers' dominate among categories followed by 'Generation Y' (table 2).

Simple 't' reveals that the entire factors related to work is statistically significant at .05 ($p < .05$) (table 3). The mean value (of attitude) of these factors according to the category of generation mix is given in the table 4. It reveals that in the case of 'Generation Y' the mean value of the factors such as attitude towards work, interest in overtime, family

constraints in work are less than two (1.8, 1.6 and 1.8 respectively). With respect to 'Generation X', the mean value is less than two with respect to family constraints at work (1.2) and handling many task (1.7). The mean value of work balance is below two among the 'Baby Boomers'. Finally, the attitude of 'Traditionalists' is found low with respect to interest in overtime, working in groups and handling many tasks.

The mean values of all the factors are 1.5. The pattern of responses is given in the radar chart (figure 1). Based on the mean values the radar chart measures (distance) the position of each factor from the center. Each point in the radar chart represents each factor and measured at different points. It is clear from the chart that the baby boomers dominates with respect to all the work related factors.

Based on the mean value of the factors related to work a SWOT analysis is performed to separate the most related and least related factors under each category of generation mix (table 5). The categories are basically 'high, neutral and low'. The mean values of all those factors above two are included in the category of 'high' and below two in the category of 'low'. Those factors which have got mean value of 'two' is considered as 'neutral'.

It is evident from the SWOT analysis that the response towards the number of work related factors is more with both 'Generation X and Baby Boomers'. It is significant to note that with 'Generation Y' the attitude towards work is low and

valuing job was also found neutral. However these are very much found among the other categories of generation mix. The 'Traditionalists' are not much well versed with handling more jobs at a time. At the same time their interest in the application of new technology and computers is very impressive. The 'Traditionalists' also find it difficult to accept the young supervisors while comparing with other categories.

The problem of maintaining work-life balance is mainly pointed out by the baby boomers. Except the traditionalist, all other categories have no problems with 'over time'. The traditionalists are also finding it difficult to work in groups. The mean value of overall response is graphically represented with line diagram (figure 2). The graph indicates that the overall response of the 'Traditionalists' on work related factors are below than the other categories.

ANOVA is applied to test the significant difference on the rating of work related factors among the categories of generation mix (table 6). The 'p' value is less than the significant value at .05 in all the cases except for factors such as 'valuing jobs, 'accepting new work policies' and 'handling many task'. The responses of all these work related factors are different among the categories of generation mix.

Discussion

There is a noticeable similarity between 'Generation X and Baby Boomers'. The response on most of the work related aspects are same among the two

categories. The poor attitude towards work among 'Generation Y' is unique when compared with other age categories in the generation mix. This reflects that the positive attitude towards work among youngsters is low which is a matter of grave concern. Rating of working in shift and efficiency with computers are high among all categories of generation mix. This is very encouraging because even the upper age groups are able to compete with the present generation in work.

Another matter of concern is the problem of maintaining work-life balance, especially with the 'Baby Boomers'. This means that the concern for family is high among the age group of 40-50 years. It is again noticeable that 'family constraints in work' is high among this group. The 'Traditionalists' have a passive attitude towards their interest in over time, working in groups and handling many tasks. Strategies on handling this may be possible only by taking into consider their age.

Conclusion

This study concludes with a note that there are differences in the attitude among journalists belonging to different generations. The implication of this study can be analysed only by taking into account their work performance. The same may be researched further.

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Table 1: Personal Profile

Category	No of Respondents
Gender	
Male	42 (70.0)
Female	18 (30.0)
Age	
20-29	10 (16.7)
30-39	20 (33.3)
40-49	24 (40.0)
50 and Above	6 (10.0)
Average Age	38
Average Experience (in years)	11 years

Table 2: Generation Mix

Type	Age Groups	No of Respondents	% to the total
Generation Y	20-29	10	16.7
Generation X	30-39	20	33.3
Baby Boomers	40-49	24	40
Traditionalists	50 and above	6	10

Table 3: One-Sample

	Test Value				
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				Lowe	Uppe
Interest in	22.41	.00	2.083	1.897	2.269
Preference for job	18.07	.00	1.966	1.748	2.184
Family constraints in	20.84	.00	1.900	1.717	2.082
Working in	28.84	.00	2.283	2.124	2.441
Challenges in	30.17	.00	2.400	2.240	2.559
Accepting younger	26.64	.00	2.366	2.188	2.544
Work-life	27.68	.00	2.066	1.917	2.216
Attitude towards	30.49	.00	2.450	2.289	2.610
Working in	28.82	.00	2.516	2.342	2.691
Learning new	25.58	.00	2.300	2.120	2.479
Valuing present	31.52	.00	2.183	2.044	2.321
Efficiency with	30.17	.00	2.400	2.240	2.559
Accepting new work-	28.16	.00	2.200	2.043	2.356
Handling many	19.97	.00	1.916	1.724	2.108

Table 4: Mean value of Factors Related to Work

Factors	Generation Y	GenerationX	Baby Boomers	Traditionalist
Valuing present job	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.5
Challenges in job	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.0
Attitude towards work	1.8	2.3	2.8	2.5
Interest in overtime	1.6	2.0	2.5	1.5
Work-life balance	2.4	2.4	1.7	2.0
Working in shift	2.2	2.3	2.8	2.5
Family constraints in work	1.8	1.2	2.5	2.0
Efficiency with computers	2.2	2.2	2.5	2.2
Learning new technology	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.3
Accepting younger supervisors	2.2	2.2	2.7	2.0
Working in groups	2.4	2.2	2.5	1.5
Accepting new work-policies	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.0
Handling many tasks	2.0	1.7	2.2	1.5

Table 5: SWOT Analysis

	High	Neutral	Low
Generation Y	Work-life balance Working in shift Efficiency with computers Accepting younger supervisors Working in groups	Valuing present job Challenges in job Learning new technology Accepting new work-policies Handling many tasks	Attitude towards work
Generation X	Valuing present job Challenges in job Attitude towards work Work-life balance Working in shift Efficiency with computers Learning new technology Accepting younger supervisors Working in groups Accepting new work-policies	Interest in overtime	Family constraints in work Handling many tasks
Baby Boomers	Valuing present job Challenges in job Attitude towards work Interest in overtime Working in shift Family constraints in work Efficiency with computers Accepting younger supervisors Working in groups Accepting new work-policies	-	Work-life balance
Traditionalist	Valuing present job Attitude towards work Working in shift Efficiency with computers Learning new technology	Challenges in job Work-life balance Family constraints in work Accepting younger supervisors Accepting new work-policies	Interest in overtime Working in groups Handling many tasks

Table 6: ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Interest in overtime	Between Groups	8.683	3	2.894	7.401	.000
	Within Groups	21.900	56	.391		
	Total	30.583	59			
Family constraints in work	Between Groups	18.600	3	6.200	32.148	.000
	Within Groups	10.800	56	.193		
	Total	29.400	59			
Working in groups	Between Groups	5.083	3	1.694	5.549	.002
	Within Groups	17.100	56	.305		
	Total	22.183	59			
Challenges in job	Between Groups	4.267	3	1.422	4.392	.008
	Within Groups	18.133	56	.324		
	Total	22.400	59			
Accepting younger supervisors	Between Groups	3.800	3	1.267	2.939	.041
	Within Groups	24.133	56	.431		
	Total	27.933	59			
Work-life balance	Between Groups	7.200	3	2.400	10.723	.000
	Within Groups	12.533	56	.224		
	Total	19.733	59			
Working in shift	Between Groups	4.350	3	1.450	3.588	.019
	Within Groups	22.633	56	.404		
	Total	26.983	59			
Learning new technology	Between Groups	4.067	3	1.356	3.094	.034
	Within Groups	24.533	56	.438		
	Total	28.600	59			
Valuing present job	Between Groups	.950	3	.317	1.106	.354
	Within Groups	16.033	56	.286		
	Total	16.983	59			
Accept new work-policies	Between Groups	1.067	3	.356	.970	.414
	Within Groups	20.533	56	.367		
	Total	21.600	59			
Handling many tasks	Between Groups	3.550	3	1.183	2.282	.089
	Within Groups	29.033	56	.518		
	Total	32.583	59			
Attitude towards work	Between Groups	8.217	3	2.739	10.481	.000
	Within Groups	14.633	56	.261		
	Total	22.850	59			
Efficiency with computers	Between Groups	3.600	3	1.200	3.574	.019
	Within Groups	18.800	56	.336		
	Total	22.400	59			

Figure 1: Radar Chart

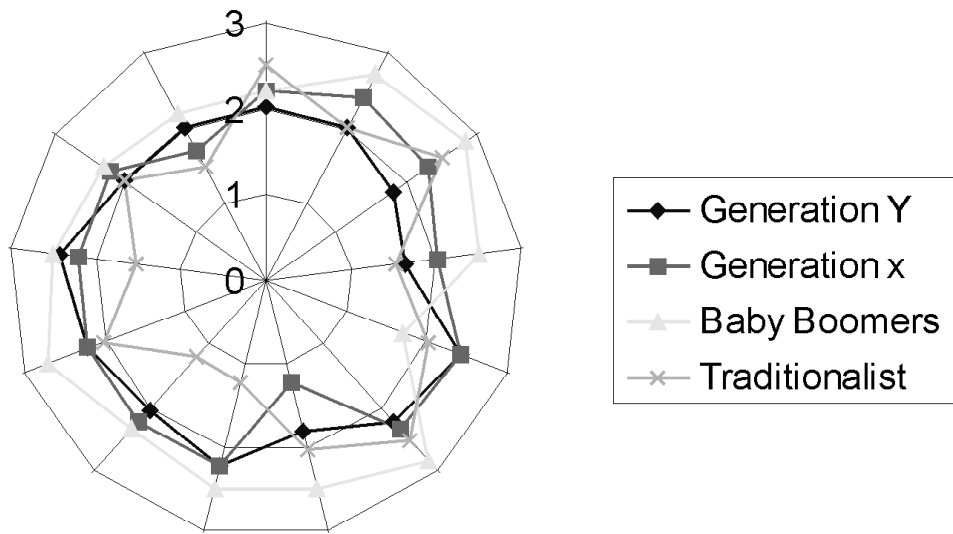


Figure 2: Overall attitude towards work

