

The connect between emotional intelligence and multi-generations

Dr. Usha S

Assistant Professor
School of Commerce and Management Studies
Jain (deemed to be) University
Bengaluru

Ms. Sinchita S

MBA – HR
Christ (Deemed to be) University
Kengeri.

ABSTRACT

With strong multi-generational employees at work, organizations often find it difficult to cater to the generational differences of thoughts, perceptions, values and beliefs. The transition of work from traditional industries to clouds and big data, has made unimaginable changes in the lives at work. Thus, measuring emotional intelligence levels of these generations enable companies to gauge their attitude, thinking and behavior at work. It is proved that unlike other measures of intelligence, EI can be improved and enhanced overtime. And since, the importance and benefits of co-existence cannot be ignored, several scholarly studies have been carried out in this context by industrial and organizational psychologists who intend to bridge this gap of generations at workplace thereby making them more productive. Through this study, we intend to critically analyze the Emotional Intelligence of four different generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials and, Gen Z) and how they are different from each other as also how the work environment is affected. The sample for the study shall constitute 50 respondents from each group (total of 200 respondents). Data shall be analyzed using Correlation analysis.

Key Words: *Emotional Intelligence, Generations, EI, Multi-generations, Workplace*

Overview

In order to better understand the effects of emotion on the human mind and why intuitions and logic are constantly at war, Goleman (1995) in his book *“Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ”* suggests one to look at how the human brain evolved over time. It has been observed that the ‘emotional centres’ evolved from its primitive roots of functions like breathing and body’s metabolic reactions and movements. This evolution clearly indicates why humans relate their feelings to rational thoughts. The interconnection between the two is so strong that, the emotional centres have direct influence on the working of the entire brain, including thoughts. Emotions hold so much power that they can impact the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) levels in people. And that is the reason why humans fail to think ‘straight’ at times of difficulty despite their high intellectual capabilities. This proves that emotions have a mind of their own making them completely independent of the rational mind. In support of the above, Dr. Antonio Damasio, a neurologist at the University of Iowa argues that, feelings are indispensable while making rational decisions and that the emotional brain is equally involved in logical decisions as the thinking brain (Damasio, A. (2008)) Thus, our brains are not guided only by intelligence (IQ) but also emotions (EQ) which are complementary to each other.

INTRODUCTION:

It all goes back in time when Plato, an Athenian Philosopher, stated that all learning has an emotional base. While the early generations failed to realize the importance of emotional intelligence, growing research about EI have opened new dimensions. In the early years of testing intelligence, multiple tests were designed in European and American countries that assured to test a person’s cognitive ability effectively. But the concept of emotional intelligence came into light only in the year 1990, when Peter Salovey and John D Mayor defined the term emotional intelligence as *“a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action (Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D.,1990).* Emotional intelligence, in its simplest form means understanding and regulating the emotions in self and others. Many scholars believe that the notion of intelligence should not only include traditional

personalities and cognitive capabilities but must be expanded to include emotional intelligence as well. Researchers have been exploring various measures and tests to understand the EI levels in individuals, such as the Bar-on Model (EQ-i) by Reuven Bar-on, Emotional and Social Competence Inventory by Daniel Goleman, Schutte self-report emotional intelligence test and various others. These tests help measure the EI levels in individuals. What's interesting is that, unlike Intelligence Quotient (IQ), EQ can be improved and enhanced. Past studies have shown that training and development improves EI levels (Raquel Gilar-Corbi et al., 2019). This result of the study indicated that training program resulted in improvements in various dimensions of EI of senior managers.

Various scholars have highlighted that the understanding, perception, stimuli-response significantly differ from each generation. This measure of EQ and IQ finds itself to be a critical measure if the organization intends to achieve their goals with the multi-generations at work.

MULTI-GENERATION

In the year 1991, when the Indian industries went global, diversity was one of the very first terms that gained importance. Only later did the corporate companies realized its value and how it could help them succeed. As it can be understood, employees with different gender, race, religion, geographical background, and other attributes result in a diverse workforce. Though it looks simple, the concept of 'generational' diversity is less considered. Generationally diverse employees can offer diverse views that could benefit the organization one could not imagine.

The term 'generation' refers to a group of people who share common work or life experiences (Hansen and Leuty, 2012). These groups have their own set of beliefs, different lifestyle qualities and different ideologies. However, one cannot ignore the common stimulus or experiences of these generation as a result of living together. For instance, a parent and a child, representing two different generations, might experience few things together but they differ in the way they perceive the same situation.

Various experts have divided the generations into six different groups. These groups are classified with the people born between the years 1925-1945 as the Veterans, Baby Boomers from 1946-1964, Generation X from 1965-1979, Generation Y also known as 'The Millennials', born between 1980 and 1995, Generation Z from 1996-2010, and the Alpha Gen, born after 2010. With Baby Boomer workers plummeting and the millennials workers increasing, there could be a generational conflict on the rise. Thus, the need to understand the multigenerational workforce attitudes becomes extremely important.

FACTORS AFFECTING MULTI-GENERATIONS AT WORKPLACE:

Quite obviously, with change in time comes changes in the workplace. To be precise, change in technology, practices, processes and even people affect the way of work. Likewise, changes in the emotions at work is also obvious.

Today, companies strive to maintain a competitive edge by have efficient teams with committed employees. Career commitment of employees have continued to be one of the most important work-related attitudes. Commitment of employees measure the extent to which an employee is devoted to the organization and its work culture. Similar to Career commitment, a strong work value and job satisfaction also plays a role in the multi-generational workforce. Various studies state that generational differences create a clash of work-values leading to conflicts. Thus, managers play an important role in avoiding conflicts by ensuring effective communication, work-life balance and technology know-how. Also, to ensure a good employee retention rate, a company must take strategic decisions to keep employees motivated and engaged so that they choose to work in the same company for a considerable period of time. Measuring Job satisfaction is found to be a strong predictor of employee retention and the levels of satisfaction varies significantly with diversified generations (Sara Clay, 2012). Job satisfaction indicates the how satisfied an employee is with the organization's process, procedures people and other factors that affect his working at the organization.

This paper aims to understand the career commitment, work-value and job satisfaction of employees along with EI levels of the diverse generations at the workplace.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The organisations are challenged not only by the generational differences, but also in the ways and means of using them to the organization's advantage. There seems to exist one bottom line for all the generations; the need to be recognised and respected. In the everchanging workforce scenario, employers are continuously seeking a source of motivation. In today's workplace, where it's not uncommon to find four or five generations, multiple languages, many ethnicities and races and differences in gender, religion, personalities and values (Garden Swartz, Cher Bosque, Rowe, 2008). EI is a very significant force in a workplace with multi generations as it takes care of improving productivity of employees, their job satisfaction and morale. There is also a major difference in terms of the perception of the workplace among multi generations. It is in this context that there exists an imperative need to understand the connect between the EI levels and the multi generations coexisting in a common workplace.

3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The organisations today are confronted with handling of multi generation employees who are highly interactive, leading to a diversified work environment. The study aims to analyse the significant connect between EI levels of multi generation workforce and their career commitment, work values and job satisfaction.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Holly Louise Watson. (2010), in his master thesis titled "The multigenerational workforce: Strategies for managing four generations" scrutinises various methods suggested by psychologists, sociologists and business executives to exploit the skills of different sets of generations. He concludes by recommending the ways of developing an integrated manpower which would ultimately lead to the viability and progress of the organizations.

Marron, M. B. (2015) in his article "New Generations require changes beyond the digital", study the several generations, their strengths and problems. The study identifies the problems of Gen Z in comparison with Gen Y and assesses that Gen Z has issues with social interactions and

conflict resolution. He suggests that Mentoring is extremely important for this generation to overpower social problems. He also ascertains that they are more tolerant of racial, sexual and generational diversity and are less likely to subscribe to gender roles. He concludes that Gen Zs are great learners, capable of learning anything, anywhere and anytime.

Gulbeniz Akduman and etal., (2015) in their study on emotional intelligence on generations analysed the EI on three generations. The study was intended to ascertain if any significant difference existed in the levels of emotional intelligence between the three generations, the baby boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. They used the Kruskal- Wallis H test for data analysis. The authors statistically proved that there does not exist any significant difference among the three generations with reference to levels of emotional intelligence.

Jiri Bejtkovsky (2016) in his study on “The Current Generations: The Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z in the context of Human Capital Management of the 21st Century in Selected Corporations in the Czech Republic” carried out a primary research on 182 HR professionals employed in selected Czech Republic. The author used Mc Nemar’s Symmetry test to analyse the data. The study brought out the differences in the understanding of the professionals and the staff with reference to specific qualities associated with each generation.

Ruta Ciutiene, etal., (2019) in their study on “Project managers of different generations: how to deal with emotional intelligence issues” aim to analyse the way emotional intelligence is expressed by the project managers belonging to several generations and to ascertain the strategies for the emotional intelligence development. A model of the emotional intelligence was developed for the project managers belonging to different generations on the basis of theoretical analysis of EI. They used Kendall Rank Correlation Coefficient for their data analysis.

Machova R etal., (2020) in their pilot study on the Generations and Emotional Intelligence brought about two aspects of emotional intelligence. They checked the presence of EI and its measurement in sixteen different steps. They used Pearson’s Chi Square Test for data analysis. The results of the analysis showed that there exists a relationship between age group and

perceptions of the importance of emotional intelligence. The study also indicated the level of emotional intelligence is actually influenced by age group.

Cresnar R and Nedelko Z (2020) in their research article, “Understanding future leaders: how personal values of generations Y and Z tailored to leadership in industry 4.0” studied the two-fold challenges for the organizations. One, the personal value systems of the potential future leaders and the other the value systems needed in the Industry 4.0 work place. They used independent sample ‘t’ test and correlation analysis for data analysis. The authors concluded that the Industry 4.0 workplace require a more benevolent, universally oriented and generally self-transcended leaders.

5. RESEARCH GAP

The literature review reveals that several studies have been undertaken in understanding the EI of the several generations. The role EI has to play with the different generations, the connect of EI to the multi generations still needs to be assessed.

This study aims to understand the connect between varying Emotional intelligence levels of the different generations. Understanding the connect between Emotions and generations can help us understand why people perceive and behave the way they do. In order to understand the connect, only four generations, Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X(1965-1979), Millennials (1980-1995), Gen Z (1996-2010) have been considered for the study.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research gap gives rise to the following questions, which this study seeks to answer.

- (i) Are the EI levels different for different generations?
- (ii) Is there any connect between the levels of EI and the career commitments of multi generations manpower?

(iii) Is there any significance between EI and work values of multi generations employees?

(iv) Does EI have anything to do with Job satisfaction of multi generation workforce?

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7(a) Sampling Technique

The data is collected from the four different generations i.e. Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Generation Y/Millennials (1980-1995) and, Generation Z (1996-2010). A total of 200 responses, 50 respondents each representing the generations, were collected. The eligibility for being a sample for this study was the EI test and the generation to which they belonged to and whether they were currently employed.

7(b) Variables for study

The study aims at understanding the connect between emotional intelligence of multi generation employees and their career commitment, work values and job satisfaction. Thus, the variables for the study are the EI levels of Multi-generation work force, career commitment, work values and job satisfaction. EI is the independent variable and career commitment, work values and job satisfaction are the dependant variables.

7(c) Data Collection

Data for the study has been collected using pre designed, structured and reliability tested questionnaires. The survey included respondents spread across the four generations. The details of questionnaire used for data collection are provided in the table given below:

Sl. No.	Variable of the study	Scale	Author	Cronbach Alpha
1.	El Levels	33 item scale SSEIT (Schutte Self report Emotional Intelligence Test)	Nicholas & Schutte (1998)	0.9
2.	Career Commitment	17 item scale	Colara Relli & Bishop (1990)	0.8
3.	Work Value	22 item scale	Elizur (1984)	0.8
4.	Job Satisfaction	10 item scale	Developed by Authors of study	0.76

The data for the study was collected from multi generation respondents who were currently employed, by questionnaires through google forms, which was circulated using E-mails, LinkedIn, WhatsApp etc.

8. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are mentioned below:

1. To understand the Emotional Intelligence (EI) scores of multi generations at work place
2. To study the connect between EI and career commitment of multi generation employees
3. To analyse the connect between EI and the work values of multi generation workforce
4. To determine the connect between EI and Job satisfaction of multi generation employees

9. HYPOTHESIS

H₁ . The EI scores of the 'Gen X' is the highest among the three generations.

H₂ – There exists a positive connect between EI levels and career commitment of multi generation employees.

H₃ - There is a significant connect between EI levels and the work values of multi generation workforce.

H₄– There is a connect between EI levels and Job satisfaction of multi generation employees.

10. DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Questionnaires were sent out to 250 respondents. Of them, only 230 responded and 30 of the responses did not fit into the requirements of the study. Hence data relating to a total of 200 respondents, 50 respondents representing each generation, was taken up for analysis.

The data collected for the ‘baby boomer’ generation (1946 – 1964) seemed inappropriate for the study, as most of the respondents had retired from service. They hardly had any interaction with other generation employees due to the bureaucratic style of management and hence was found irrelevant. Therefore, they were dropped from the study. Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z are now considered for the study. The data collected was analysed using simple averages and regression analysis.

10 (a). The respondents had 33 questions to be answered in the questionnaire for ascertaining EI levels and it included reverse scoring for a few questions. Data was analysed by calculating the average EI levels of multi generation employees. The details of analysis are provided below:

GENERATION	AGE	MEAN EI SCORES(N=50)
X	1965 - 1979	129
Y	1980 - 1995	129.868
Z	1996 - 2010	131.12

It is found from the above analysis that Gen Z exhibits the highest average EI scores, indicating higher levels of emotions and responses to given situations as compared to Gen X and Gen Y.

The alternate hypothesis (H_1) that the EI scores of the 'Gen X' is the highest among the three generations is rejected.

10 (b). The data for ascertaining the connect between the EI levels and the career commitment was analysed using Regression Analysis. The results are as follows:

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	SE of estimate
1(Gen X)	0.561	0.314	0.312	5.15
2 (Gen Y)	0.712	0.506	0.397	6.54
3 (Gen Z)	0.612	0.374	0.341	5.62

The findings indicate that Gen Y and Gen Z exhibits a positive and significant association between EI levels and career commitment. Gen X also exhibit a positive but moderate association between the independent variable and the dependant variable. Hence the alternate hypotheses (H_2) that there exists a positive connect between EI levels and career commitment of multi generation employees is accepted.

10 (c). The data for determining the connect between the EI levels and Work values was also analysed using Regression analysis. The results are as follows:

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	SE of estimate
1(Gen X)	0.560	0.313	0.312	5.151
2 (Gen Y)	0.551	0.303	0.306	5.068
3 (Gen Z)	0.545	0.297	0.302	5.012

The results of the regression analysis indicate that all the three generations exhibit a positive and moderate association of EI levels and work values. So, the alternate hypotheses (H₃) that there is a significant connect between EI levels and the work values of multi generation is accepted.

10 (d) The data for ascertaining the connect between EI levels of multi generation employees and their Job satisfaction was analysed using Regression Analysis and the results were as follows:

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	SE of estimate
1(Gen X)	0.612	0.374	0.341	5.62
2 (Gen Y)	0.314	0.116	0.093	0.11
3 (Gen Z)	0.578	0.334	0.171	0.20

The findings of regression analysis show that Gen X and Gen Z exhibit positive association between EI levels and job satisfaction. Gen Y shows a positive but not so strong association between the two variables. Therefore, the alternate hypotheses (H₄) that there is a connect between EI levels and Job satisfaction of multi generation employees is accepted.

11. DISCUSSION

The need to understand the generational differences has become extremely important today, since companies have a diverse group of employees working for them. The main intention is to ensure that they have a competitive edge over the others. The synergy that exists between the older employees and their acumen with the younger employees and their tech savvy generation works wonders. Thus, having a collaborating multi-generational workforce helps them gain an edge over their competitors.

This paper aimed at studying the varying EI levels of the diverse generations at work along with their career commitment, work value and job satisfaction. It was observed that Generation Z

expressed a higher EI than Generation X and Generation Y. But it is to be noted that the differences in the EI levels of the generations had a very small variation. Though each generation faced different things and different values, their characteristics might rub off on each other as a result of Indian Family values of living together.

The study also understood that all the three generations, X, Y and, Z have a positive association with career commitment. Baby Boomers and Generation X, being one of the oldest generations were committed to their work considering their needs of having a safe job, bearing family expenses and post retirement plans. They believed that being committed to their work, would help them fulfil their needs. In contrast, the needs of the millennials are different. They are committed to their work as they wish to see themselves at top positions with a high income. They are risk takers and are ready to move from one company to ensure a positive growth in their career.

A measure of Job satisfaction not only indicates the employee's work satisfaction but also various other factors that make his experience in the organization beyond his expectations. The data reveals that there exists a positive association of EI levels and Job satisfaction with all the three generations. It could be concluded that a person with a high emotional intelligence maybe more satisfied than others because of his ability to regulate his emotions as well as the others, thereby making him capable of dealing with all kinds of people.

12. LIMITATION OF STUDY

The study is restricted to analysing the connect between EI levels and career commitment, work value and Job satisfaction of multi generation employees in a work place. There are many other factors also that are influenced by the EI levels, which have not been considered in this study. EI levels are not the only ones that influence these variables. There could be some other factors also which could connect to the dependant variables of the study.

13. CONCLUSION

To tackle the ideologies of the different generations in competitive corporate environment is probably an erroneous, yet an important task for the HR managers. It is now being considered as a diversity challenge in today's times. Based on this, companies are investing huge amounts of time and money in order to bridge the generational variances at work. Thus, a greater understanding of the differences and ways to tackle them is critical.

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