A STUDY ON GENERATIONAL ATTITUDE & BEHAVIORAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN GEN Y

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ABSTRACT

Gen Y is the newest generation to enter workforce and so everyone's focus is on the latest generation and its problems due to generation gap. It is the first generation to grow-up as "digital natives" who always have option to access information through technology. There is lot of research done on Gen Y so called Millennial, to study their characteristics and needs at work place (Armour (2005), Sheahan (2005), Chip Espinoza, Mick Ukleja and Craig Rusch (2010)) and the generation differences at work place (Jennifer Abrams and Valerie von Frank (2013), Linda Gravett and Robin Throckmorton (2013).

The aim of this study was to provide employee engagement at work place within Gen Y who born between 1981 and 1998. The research is conducted to figure-out the expectations, behaviors and traits by people who fall under Gen Y. This study is interested to find if there are any differences within Gen Y group. Weng et al. (2008) states that there are characteristic differences in work ethics and if not understood and handled properly by organization/management may lead toteam conflicts, lack of productivity and miscommunication among the employees. A survey questionnaire using Google Forms was prepared and distributed to 139 people working in private sectors and received response from 116 people. Analysis and interpretation was done using frequency and percentage method. The result states that there is a difference in attitude and behaviors of people within Gen Y who born between 1981 and 1998. For the study purpose, the results are further classified into 1980s and 1990s to understand the sub-groups with Gen Y. This study will help any organization/manager to understand the generational differences in Gen Y which promotes effective team workand employee engagement in organization.

Keywords: gen Y, millennials, generational conflict, teamwork

INTRODUCTION

Generation diversity is the difference of opinion between two parties. It is must for any manager or organizations to understand the best ways to handle multi-generational work force which help to grow a successful team. Today's workforce is comprised with people from different generations all over the world. The following generation names and its age range are considered as global generation standard which may be defined differently based on country/region.

Baby Boomers: **1946 – 1964**

Generation X: **1965 – 1980**

Generation Y or Millennial: **1981 – 1998**

Post-Millennial/Generation Z: **After 1999**

Research says around 75% of millennials believe they will have two to five employers in lifetime. Gen Y give more importance to work-life balance than financial compensations. Around 45% of millennials interested to communicate via electronic media or social media rather than face-to-face or telephone conversation. Since rest of generation will retire by 2025, millennials will occupy 75% of the workplace. There are lot research works done to identify and confirm the generation gap between Baby Boomers, Gen x and Gen Y (Millennials) but in real-time experience there are characteristics and behavioral difference within Gen Y.

Even though generation Y looks different from other generation, they prefer teamwork where working together in a group to carry out a certain task. Research says, Gen Y prefer working in a teamwork because they believe they can gain more knowledge from the teamwork. This statement is supported by Martin (2005) where generation Y work better together rather than work alone. Collaborating and working as a team is preferred by generation Y (Helyer& Lee, 2012). Many theories have agreed that millennials tend to work in a team, but they also prefer to do by their own based on situations.

ABOUT GEN Y (aka MILLENNIAL)

Generation Y is the fastest growing generation in business and business leaders, HR advisors and team managers alike all want to know how to nurture this talent. Few characteristics to define Generation Y are given below:

- Tech/Web Savvy
- Family Orientated
- Ambitious
- Team Players
- Communicators
- Like to be loved

Team Engagement is an important component for many organizations which helps the organizations to deliver high performance. This research will help any organization and its management to understand and effectively handle multi-generational workforce which results with highly engaged team with happy employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to McCrindle (2002) there are three factors that classify a generation; age (1), conditions (2) and experiences (3). Age (1) differs from one generation to another and is a defining termto categorize a generation. Conditions (2) such as economic conditions, political events as well associal conditions (the external environment) are also defining the characteristics of a generation. Thelast is experiences (3) which are especially during the childhoodand adolescent period that influence a generation.

Jennifer Abrams & Valerie von Frank (2013) defines the generations and working with multiple generations at workplaces - communicate, collaborate and create community. Linda Gravett& Robin Throckmorton (2007) states how to manage conflicts across generations. Valerie M. Grubb (2006) states generation give &take.

Weng et al. (2008) states that there are characteristic differences in work ethics and if not understood and handled properly by organization/management may lead toteam conflicts, lack of productivity and miscommunication among the employees.

Ellis Kranenberg (2014), Work-Values Differences within Generation Y: Recommendations for HR Management in the Hospitality Industry. The study reveals that there is a significant

difference in characteristics and behaviors of people within Generation Y when it comes to work place. Research is limited to hospitality industry where the researcher identified the generational differences within Gen Y and suggested to do research in other industries.

OBJECTIVE

According to Ellis Kranenberg (2014), Work-Values Differences within Generation Y: Recommendations for HR Management in the Hospitality Industry. The study reveals that there is a significant difference in characteristics and behaviors of people within Generation Y when it comes to work place. Research is limited to hospitality industry where the researcher identified the generational differences within Gen Y and suggested to do research in other industries. The aim of this study was conduct research in IT industry:

- To provide employee engagement at workplace within Gen Y who born between 1981 and 1998
- To figure-out the expectations, behaviors and traits by people who fall under Gen Y
- To find if there are any differences within Gen Y group who belongs to IT industry

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling Method:

For this study, ten companies based in Chennai and Nagercoil were considered. Each company has around 500 employees and so the total population for the study is 5000. Using Simple Random Sampling (SRS), 800 employees were approached and received responses from 598 employees where only 555 responses are considered as valid.

Survey Questionnaire:

Online survey questionnaire was prepared using Google Forms and it was distributed to people through social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Whatsapp, Email etc. List of 15 questionnaires were sent to people from various companies with different educational background.

Primary Data:

Google Forms, by default record the responses from people, this can be downloaded in MS Excel format for analysis and interpretations. The analysis is done using Frequency Percentage Distribution method where the clustered stacked bar charts is used for graphical representation.

Research Question:

Do Gen Y have a generational difference in work ethics and values, also how it impacts the teamwork and team engagement at workplace?

Hypothesis:

The Research Question and the hypotheses were developed to understand the generational differences within Gen Y at workplace.

H_0: There is a difference of opinion on work ethics& work-life balance between members within Generation Y

H_a: There is no difference of opinion on work ethics& work-life balance between members within Generation Y

ANALYSIS& INTERPRETATIONS

Frequency Percentage Distribution method is used to analyze the collected data, Table (1) shows the detailed information. Out of 800 distribution, 598 responses are received where 555 responses are considered as valid that comes under Gen Y age group and 43 responses are considered as invalid since the respondents' born year is before 1980. As per table (1), 70 male (95.7%) and 41 female (36.9%) respondents are involved in this study.

Table (1) (Source: Primary Data)

Variables	Numbers	Range	Percentage
Data Collected	598		
Valid Responses	555	Born 1981 – 1998	92.8%
Invalid Responses	43	Born Before 1980	7.2%
Gender			
Male	350		63.1
Female	205		36.9

List of 15 questions were added under work ethics and work-life balance. Below chart reveals that there is a difference in behavior of people at workplace within Gen Y. For this study, it was further classified to understand the generational difference among people born 1980s and 1990s.
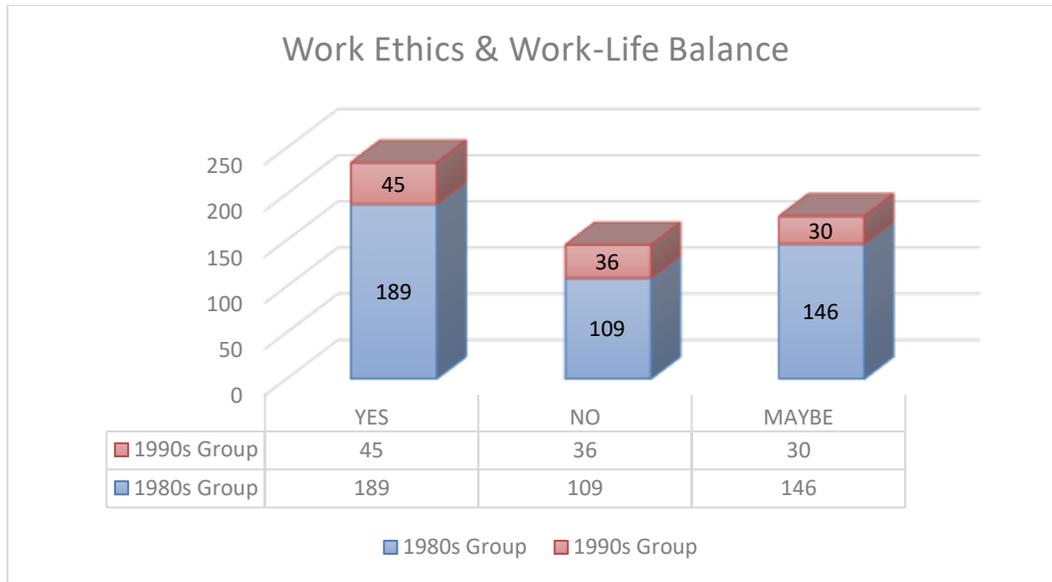
(Source: Primary Data)

Chi-Square Test:

Chi-square method is used to test the hypothesis.

Table (2) (Source: Primary Data)

ORIGINAL VALUE (O)				
Age Groups / Satisfaction Level	YES	NO	MAYBE	TOTAL
1980s Group	189	109	146	444
1990s Group	45	36	30	111
TOTAL	234	145	176	555

Table (3) (Source: Primary Data)

EXPECTED VALUE (E)				
Age Groups / Satisfaction Level	YES	NO	MAYBE	TOTAL
1980s Group	187.2	116	140.8	444
1990s Group	46.8	29	35.2	111
TOTAL	234	145	176	555

Table (4) (Source: Primary Data)

O_i	E_i	$O_i - E_i$	$(O_i - E_i)$	$\chi^2 = (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$
189	187.2	1.8	3.24	0.017308
109	116	-7	49	0.422414
146	140.8	5.2	27.04	0.192045
45	46.8	-1.8	3.24	0.069231
36	29	7	49	1.689655
30	35.2	-5.2	27.04	0.768182
Sum			X^2	**3.16**

Chi-Square Value is $\chi^2 = \Sigma [(O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i] = 3.16$

Degree of Freedom (dof) = (row-1)*(Column-1) = (2-1)*(3-1) = 2

$P(\chi^2 > 3.16) = 0.21$

Since the P-value (0.21) is greater than the significance level (0.05), we accept the null hypothesis. Hence the results concluded that there is a significant difference in work ethics & work-life balance between members within Generation Y.

LIMITATIONS

- Research was conducted with only companies based in Northern and Southern city based in Tamil Nadu
- Sample size can be increased to understand with better results

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to identify the attitude and behavioral differences within Gen Y to build an effective team. From this study, it is found that majority of people work in IT industry belongs to Gen Y and there is significant difference in attitude and behavior within the group due to generational impact. Below are the answers for the research question:

- People who born during early 1980s spent lot of his life with Gen X and their behavior and attitude will be little different from people who born in 1990s.

- Organization and management can give importance to generation difference at workplace to achieve employee engagement, especially within Gen Y who born between 1981 and 1998.

- This study will help the managers to figure-out the expectations, behaviors and traits by people who fall under Gen Y.

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