Generational Differences in Work Values, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Culture: Inputs for Human Resource Development Plan

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Date Received: December 12, 2020; Date Revised: March 17, 2021

Abstract - *This study aims to assess the work values, employee engagement, and organizational culture differences when generations were considered. The research used descriptive and comparative research designs and employed an adopted questionnaire for data gathering among the 330 employees. The statistical analysis included the use of composite mean, ranking, t-test, and analysis of variance. Results showed the respondents placing high importance to work values while generally high on employee engagement and organizational culture. There were areas under employee engagement and organizational culture that reflected favorable but relatively low scores, which became the focus of discussions and recommendations. Only work values had significant differences when compared alongside generational cohorts while employee engagement and organizational behavior had no significant differences. The same findings were observed when the variables were compared alongside other demographic categories such as marital status and gender. Inputs for human resource development plan focusing on unique generational characteristics, work values, the possibility of engagement among employees, and attributes that can be used in creating a strong organizational culture were also provided for the benefit of Company M and as the output of the study*

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Generational Differences, Organizational culture, Work Values*

INTRODUCTION

There has been much interest in the study of generational differences. From differences in behavior, motivations, and other meaningful generational differences among individuals as well as to how these generational differences affect work today [1]. These generational differences play a role in analyzing work and work behaviors of employees and have been a popular discussion in academic publications [2], as well as on work itself. One of the common and more popular areas of focus for generational differences is workplace values [3] and employee engagement [4]. This is understandable as a person spends a considerably significant amount of time working or at the premises of work throughout his/her lifetime. Additionally, the workplace is a common ground where generational differences are likely to be pronounced, as multiple generations interact with one other while performing either similar or different jobs.

Having a multi-generational workplace has been a challenge for managers today [5]. Most workplaces have three generations of workers – Baby Boomers,

Generation X, and Generation Y [6]. But recently, members of Generation Z have also joined the workforce. Each generation is special for its unique abilities and competencies. Each of the generations brings something to the table, which are competencies that if harnessed can leverage an organization to succeed [7]. However, having a multi-generational workplace also poses concerns as these unique characteristics and differences can be detrimental to the organization. The difference in approaches and attitudes to work can result in intergenerational conflict that compromises organizational performance [5].

Aladwan, et al., [8] have defined values as the preferences and priorities which give significance and reason to a person. Values are the underlying basis for the behaviors that guide a person's decision-making and are intrinsic, ingrained, and tend to be stable frameworks of a person's perception. In retrospect, employee engagement for [4] "is personified by how positively an employee thinks about the organization, feels about the organization, and how proactive that employee is when it pertains to achieving

organizational goals." This finding is further explained by the three aspects of employee engagement, which are feeling, thinking, and doing. Engaged employees are critical and vital to a company's success; hence, employees directly influence productivity and assist in establishing or in some cases even diminishing a firm's competitive advantage.

A generation is defined as all of the people, regarded collectively, who were born and are living at about the same time [3] This term can also be described as the average period which is generally considered to be about a period of 30 years, during which children are born, grow up, become adults, and begin to have children of their own [5]. Gentile, et al., [9] have further defined generation as groups of individuals who were born during the same period and who have experienced similar cultural contexts which in turn create and define the culture of such period. Hence, a generation is an aggregate of all people born over roughly the same period and can identify themselves as part of a common location in history; hence, the idea of a common collective persona [10]. This is the reason a specific generation can be identified with shared core values that purvey behavior cues.

In this parlance, the concept of "generational cohort" is introduced. Its etymology, arguably coming from Ryder [11], states that a generational cohort is one of several demographic cohorts that channels more on age. This idea refers to people who are approximately within the same age and are defined by years of birth. Being defined by years of birth attributes to the critical events associated with that period that may or may not have created an impact on a person who still shares a common experience among people of that time [12]. This finding resulted in traits that vary across generations. Important events in history and social changes affect societies in general; thus, making it a point of reference or identification for people to talk about this period in a collective manner [6]. Chen and Lian [13] have agreed with this assertion that individuals born at a particular time are most likely to be influenced by the same set of significant historical events, which may be values, motivations, politics, entertainment, fashion, ideology, or movement. Ultimately, these events have become highly significant that it played a part in the key development stages of an individual which becomes evident in his/her maturity [14].

This study looks into four major generational cohorts: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, alongside underlying descriptions of these generations which may or may not make key differences in their work values, employee engagement, and the levels of organizational culture.

Baby Boomers are those born from 1944 to 1964. They perceive work as an extension of their self-interests and a means to eventually provide for a more prolific lifestyle. They are often regarded as workaholics and upholds respect towards authority and place sincere importance on the hierarchy established in the workplace. Boomers are said to be extremely loyal and have an embedded trust in authority that values positive relationships with their seniors or supervisors. They place high regard on seniority to a fault that to them, this is more to be considered than just merit. A basic expectation for them is that their loyalty to the company leads to rewards such as promotions which, more than merit itself, is based largely on seniority.

Generation X, otherwise known as Baby Busters or the Lost Generation, are those born from 1965 to 1979. If Boomers were more accepting of group dynamics and team play, Gen X-ers are more self-reliant and me-oriented. Although they value their jobs, they see it more as something that provides the means to enjoy their life. They prefer the balance between professional and personal time and hold their life outside of work with higher regard than work itself. Other differences that Gen X-ers have to Boomers are being more open to change and preferring organizations that promote skills development. If Boomers excelled more due to the tenure-based promise of promotion and recognition, Gen X-ers lean more towards the increase in personal time and opportunities to advance their knowledge and resources. Ledimo [15] have expressed that Gen X-ers are less likely to sacrifice their life for the company and to look for ways to become a part of a more informal work environment with flexible working arrangements.

Generation Y or more popularly known as Millennials or Nexters are born from 1980 to 1994. This generation shares the optimism about the future with its predecessor but differs in its view of collaboration and its belief in collective action, which the Gen X-ers do not share. Lyons and Kuron [2] have supposed that Millennials still have distrust towards central authority despite their optimism. Millennials are great collaborators but, at the same time, are

independent, self-confident, and self-expressive. They are more tech-savvy and can adapt to most technological advancements today as they grew up at the turn of the internet age; hence, making Millennials comfortable with lesser face to face communication. One of the negative results of these characteristics is that Millennials have a common misconception of being lazy. However, Sallahudin [16] has challenged this by explaining that Millennials are more hardworking than Gen X-ers. Proof of this is their belief that working hard and working smart go hand in hand and that goal setting leads to the achievement of their goals. Millennials are entrepreneurial and are always in search of meaningful work. They value work-life balance, prioritize their family, and give significance to their leisure time similarly to their career development. Thus, Millennials are considered life-long learners who value mentoring and training and who allow themselves to learn from successful people they identify themselves with [17].

Finally, Generation Z, born from 1995 to 2015, is in a way the same as Millenials. Being born and growing up in the current environment, they are comfortable with technologies that are fairly recent for older generations to appreciate. Those who fall under Gen Z are said to be more racially and culturally diverse as they are more willing to accept and immerse themselves with foreign culture and norms. Some if not most members of Gen Z are from less traditional or nuclear family backgrounds. This generation is more open and more understanding of families with single parents and same-sex parents. Furthermore, they have more friends from various ethnic, religious, and racial groups, unlike the Boomers and Gen X-ers. Members of Gen Z are said to be more risk-averse and are less confident in the current economic or political system [16]. This is a generation that is more willing to air their concerns and be more critical and vocal about their personal opinion and their observed issues. Like Millennials, they are also inclined to entrepreneurialism. Using devices that can access the internet, they also spend most of their time online.

On Work Values and Generational Cohorts

Values are characterized as a person's own moral and social beliefs that he/she consults with when faced by moral dilemmas and circumstances that require to make a decision [18]. Values are integral and unique to each individual that makes every person the same and different from one another. Two people may share the same values but the way these values

are interpreted would create differences between them [19]. These values usually begin at home, are learned from the child's parents, guardian, or the rest of the family who have a moral ascendancy to the child [20]. As the child grows and is exposed to his environment, the values which have been instilled in him/her can either be reinforced or reevaluated. These same values are perpetuated and form the set of core values that a person would always have [21].

The same can be said about work values, as it is considered simply as specific expressions of basic values in the work setting. The values that a person has nurtured and cultivated as he/she grows up is not transitioned to values that he/she would believe in when it comes to work [22]. Cemalcilar, et al.,[23] have noted that work values are a set of durable beliefs an employee has about work. This does not cover the personal needs, the types of a job the employees have an option to choose from, or their environmental preferences. More so, values guide an employee's behavior towards work, helps him/her reflect on the available choices and goals. Work values can be beliefs about relative attractiveness which is derived from different job characteristics such as pay or salary, autonomy, and working conditions. Alternatively, it can be the result that an accomplished job provides like fulfillment and prestige. Elmas-Atay [24] has explained that a work value is a type of ideal, purpose, or goal that can be carried out at work and can even be an outcome derived from work. As Wohrman, et al., [25], Yang, et al., [26], and Zupan, et al., [27] have previously mentioned, work values offer a cognitive perspective over a variety of needs, employee necessities, and even small goals linked to an employee's job, including financial security, intellectual stimulation, social communication, the position earned by the employees, self-respect, and respect among peers, and self-actualization.

On Employee Engagement and Generational cohorts

As aforementioned, generations are different from each other because of the collective experiences shared by members of a certain generation which cannot be associated with other generations due to the timing and significance of events. These generational attitudes and beliefs form values among the members of the generational cohort. However, these attitudes and beliefs are not absolute only for one generation as observed that some attributes from the two cohorts are

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the same. There are probabilities of differences in work values among employees coming from different generational cohorts. Additionally, it is a possibility that due to the intrinsic differences among people, there would be differences in how engaged employees are with the company, and with the jobs they are currently holding. Guglielmi, et al., [28] and Edward and Crowley-Henry [29] have provided their insight as to what employee engagement is; that is a measurable degree of positive and negative emotional attachment that employees develop during their stay with the organization. This attachment profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work. Engaged workers increase an organization's value, which in return assists the company is operating more effectively and efficiently. These employees are those who are fully involved in and are enthusiastic about their work; thus, they will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests [30].

Engaged employees are vital to a company's success. As a result, employees directly influence productivity and assist in establishing or diminishing a firm's competitive advantage against others. From the employer perspective, engaged employees tend to be more productive and the company to be more profitable, which leads to stronger customer relationships and higher employee retention than less-engaged employees[31]. Therefore, identifying the key drivers of engagement is essential. Questions relative to what/who motivates the employees to work harder and what conditions motivates them to work harder can assist management in determining the drivers of employee engagement.

On Organizational Culture and Generational Differences

All human organizations create an identity of its own, and this identity not only defines who they are but also espouses the collective persona of the organization [32]. The culture that is predominant in children's surroundings, including the family and their beliefs, values, and perception, influence their growth and development immediately after birth [33]. The community and the environment further nurture the children as persons. As they meet other people with their own set of beliefs, values, and perception, the children enhance his/her instilled understanding and adapt on the concurrent and collective notion of the group that they join in [34]. This fundamental transition lays the groundwork in organizational culture, which covers from the transference of the prevalent culture at home to the prevailing collective that these children belong to. The more the group stays together and creates bonds, the firmer the established culture becomes. Moreover, relative to familial relationships, as children grow older, they tend to observe the way things are done and may seem absolute but oblivious to the ideas of how decisions are made from one organization, in this case, a family, and how different these decisions are from other families dealing with the same situation [35].

There are also congruence and differences in the view of culture, specifically organizational. Apopalakula and Kummoon [36], Wang, et al., [37], and Caraballo [38] have suggested that an organization's culture works more as a common belief among people which they have learned together as a group. These are results of how they have adapted to external problems or conflicts that they as a unit have witnessed and weathered through together. This mindset, methodology, and practice become the foundation of the group's assumed correct way of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and reacting towards problems handed down to new members. This interpretation of organizational culture validates the interpretation of Schein [39] that organizational culture is a common pattern of assumptions among group members that are learned through the process of solving problems relative to external adaptation and internal integration. This interpretation also states that organizational culture has worked smoothly for it to be considered valid. Therefore, it can be passed on to new members of the group.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall goal of the research was to determine if differences exist in respondents' work values, employee engagement, and levels of organizational culture if their generations were to be taken into consideration. Specifically, the research worked on the following objectives: to determine the respondents' work values through Lyon's work value indices, which are instrumental, cognitive, social/altruistic, and prestige; to assess the respondents' level of employee engagement using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale categories of Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption; to measure the level of the organizational culture of the respondents using the Denison Organizational Culture Survey's four categorical traits, which are Involvement, Consistency, Adaptability, and Mission; to identify if differences existed in the employees' work values,

employee engagement, and organizational culture when they are grouped according to their generational cohorts. As a follow-through, the same was done to identify differences if grouped according to gender and marital status. Lastly, the results gathered by this study served as data for the inputs of a human resource development plan for the organization.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research used a qualitative research design. The research was descriptive and comparative, and compared data gathering results with one another using generational cohorts as the independent variable while work values and employee engagement as dependent variables. The data gathering results were further analyzed by considering other demographic elements such as gender, marital status, and the industry as intervening variables and by comparing them to the results of work values and employee engagement.

Participants of the Study

The research participants were employees of Company M, a family-owned corporation in Lipa City, Batangas. As a multi-industry corporation, Company M is engaged in a variety of industries from coffee farming, livestock management, animal health, all the way to the electrical supply and electric construction. This company has a total of 385 employees, 330 of which were hired directly by the company, and 55 were hired through agencies. The latter is composed of the security personnel, farm laborers, and other staff members who are either not yet regularized or is only considered a flier. With this, only the 330 employees were used as the population basis of the research.

Instrument

In comparing generational cohorts with work values, employee engagement, and corporate culture, the research employed a survey questionnaire divided into four parts. The first part covered the profile of the respondent, including the age, gender, and marital status. The second part measured the respondents' work values as adopted from Lyon's Work Value Survey [40]. The third part assessed employee engagement using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. The fourth part measured the corporate culture using the Denison Organizational Culture Survey, which was adopted for this study.

Data Gathering Procedure

Employees of company M were asked to answer the survey questionnaire. However, given the situation concerning the COVID-19 pandemic at the time the paper was written that resulted in tighter restrictions of the company, along with the removal of invalid questionnaires, the researcher only gathered 180 valid questionnaires. These collected questionnaires still fell under a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error using Raosoft.Sample Size Calculator.

Data Analysis

All the data gathered were tallied, encoded, and analyze using the following statistical analysis included the use of composite mean, ranking, t-test, and analysis of variance

Ethical Consideration

Before the conduct of the research, the researcher solicited Company M's approval first. Part of the agreement with the board members of Company M was withholding the actual name of the company. Additionally, the respondents also received formal letters discussing the study, assuring their identities would remain anonymous, informing them that the result would be treated objectively and with the utmost confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic of the Respondents

Generational Cohort	F	%
Baby Boomer	9	5.00
Generation X	38	21.11
Generation Y	84	46.67
Generation Z	49	27.22
Gender		
Male	92	51.11
Female	88	48.89
Marital Status		
Married	90	50
Unmarried	90	50

Out of the 180 respondents who participated in the survey, 47 percent or 84 respondents were part of Generation Y or the Millennials; 27 percent or 49 respondents were part of Generation Z; 21 percent or 38 respondents were part of Generation X. Only 15 percent or 9 respondents were part of the Baby Boomers Generation. Most of the respondents were males, composing 51 percent, who are either married or unmarried, composing 50 percent each. The number of male respondents compared to female counterparts was not overwhelming as there were only four respondents who separated the two gender groups. The sub-question *division* was initially included in the questionnaire. However, the

researcher had to remove this as the respondents expressed no desire to answer the survey if they were to indicate the division or the specific department they are currently under.

Table 2: Work Values Summary

Work Values Categories	WM	VI	Rank
Instrumental	3.59	Very Important	1st
Prestige	2.93	Important	4th
Cognitive	3.44	Important	2nd
Social Altruistic	3.33	Important	3rd
Composite mean	3.40	Important	

Table 2 shows a summary of all four Work Value Indices. According to the respondents, instrumental indices are highly important for them with factors such as benefits, job security, and salary as the topmost. Though still considered important, prestige has the lowest mean among all the other work value categories. The ability to provide significant impact, the authority to organize and lead the work of other members, the prestige that comes along with the job, and the ability to influence others have the least appeal to respondents, although these remain to be important. As Brouwer and Veldkamp [18] have previously highlighted, work values are the desirable and multi-situational goals, which vary in importance from people to people. Basing on the results, the values of salary, feedback, and benefits govern the values of the employees of Company M.

Table 3: Employee Engagement Summary

Employee Engagement Categories	WM	VI	Rank
Vigor	3.06	Agree	2
Dedication	3.29	Agree	1
Absorption	2.88	Agree	3
Employee Engagement	3.07	Agree	

Table 3 shows a summary of all of the three employment engagement categories. The respondents rank Dedication the highest in the categories while absorption is the least. The entire idea of engagement is the employees' willingness to be more immersed in an organization [41]. Their beliefs or their personal values that later on matches that of the organization may have influenced this idea of engagement [42]. Alternatively, this may have also stemmed from the culture of the organization [43].

Dedication, one of its categories under the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale goes beyond basic employee engagement. Even with lower scores on absorption, it does not imply a lack of it with the employees.

Engaged employees are consistently fully committed and motivated to contribute to achieving the goals of the organization. But as they do so, they also target to achieve their self-satisfaction and the feeling of worth which should be reciprocated by the organization itself [28].

Table 4: Organizational Culture Summary

Organizational Culture Categories	WM	VI	Rank
Involvement	3.01	Agree	1.5
Consistency	2.95	Agree	3
Adaption	2.89	Agree	4
Mission	3.01	Agree	1.5
Composite Mean	2.96	Agree	

Table 3 shows a summary of all of the four organizational culture trait categories under the Denison Organizational Culture survey. Result surmises that the respondents have a high level of organizational culture. Involvement and mission traits are the highest-rated categories. As evi2denced by how related the answers are per category, the respondents described how involved they are with the organization and how clear the mission, vision, and goals of the organization are to them. The bottom two traits are consistency and adaptation. Under consistency, the main challenges based on the answers of the respondents are working and being on the same page as other departments in the organization. On the other hand, adaptability's main challenges are being critical of the needs of the clients and being adaptive to new and improved ways of doing work.

Table 5: Significant Difference on the responses when grouped according to Generational Cohorts

Categories	F-Value	p-value	Interpretation
Work Values	10.004	0.000	Significant
Employee Engagement	1.414	0.240	Not Significant
Org. Culture	1.634	0.183	Not Significant

Results of the ANOVA test done to compare Work Values, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Culture show that among the three variables, only the category Work Values has significant differences when grouped according to generational cohorts. On the other hand, the categories Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture show no significant difference. Statistically, there is no significant difference between the Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers ($p = .483$). This implies that Baby Boomers and Generation X members share semblances on their

work values, which is quite different from members of Generation Y and Generation Z. These findings are congruent with Ahmad Reza et al., [10]. who have stated that Baby Boomers like Gen X-ers have a particular inclination to loyalty and the concept of waiting their turn that is not always applicable to Generation Y and Generation Z [6]. Baby Boomers and Generation X tend to work more independently or colloquially to mind their own business, which is different from the younger Generation Y and Generation Z who favor collaboration and teamwork [9].

Table 6: Significant Difference on the responses when grouped according to Gender

Categories	F-Value	p-value	Interpretation
Work Values	3.128	0.011	Significant
Employee Engagement	0.541	0.560	Not Significant
Org. Culture	0.010	0.540	Not Significant

Results of an independent-samples t-test show no significant differences in Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture. There are, however, significant differences in Work Values when grouped according to gender. Looking into descriptive statistics, the mean score for the male is 3.33 with a standard deviation of 0.40 while the mean score for the female is 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.32. These results suggest that female respondents have different work values compared to their male counterparts. One can argue that females may prioritize their families more than their male counterparts, especially with their maternal instincts [23]. Furthermore, this difference is also related to the female's intrinsic and extrinsic work values [2].

Table 7: Significant Difference on the responses when grouped according to Marital Status

Categories	F-Value	p-value	Interpretation
Work Values	1.946	0.000	Significant
Employee Engagement	0.001	0.988	Not Significant
Org. Culture	1.233	0.548	Not Significant

Results of an independent-samples t-test show no significant differences in Employee Engagement and Organizational Culture. There are, however, significant differences in Work Values when grouped according to the respondents' marital status. Married respondents have a mean of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.37 while unmarried respondents have a mean of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.31 respondents. These results suggest that married respondents have a different take on work values as compared to their unmarried counterparts. Married respondents tend to focus on having a more work-life balance, unlike the others who may put a priority on building their careers at an early age [8]. In retrospect, one can also say that married respondents may have a higher regard for work values as compared to non-married respondents in consideration of having a family to take care of [19]. Unmarried employees, especially the younger ones, may ultimately have different work values for the mindset that they only have themselves to take care of and that they could move to another job if they wanted to, which remains to be a luxury that employees who are married or have a family could not afford.

Table 8 specifically shows the elements of Work Values that the respondents classified with High and Low Importance. It is noteworthy that Generations Y and Z have the more common attributes in work values and has significant differences on the answers of Generation X and Baby Boomers. This is a factor that can be considered by the company's human resource department as the go aboout their human resource development plan. Lastly, this input may contribute to the easier identification of the positive attributes relative to the organizational culture building of each generational cohort.

Table 8: Inputs for Human Resource Development Plan: Ranking of Work Value Elements

High Importance	Low Importance
Salary	Recognition
Benefits	Hours of Work
Job Security	Work-Life Balance
	Freedom to make work
Continous Learning	Decisions
Work that is interesting and	
Engaging	Work that provides variety
Opportunity Advancement	Challenging Assignments
Feedback	Social Interaction
Influence	Authority

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In assessing the respondents' work values, results show that factors such as salary, benefits, and job security ranked as the most important. In terms of employee engagement, results generally show a high engagement among the respondents, specifically showing dedication as the highest category while

absorption is the lowest. Looking at the organizational culture scores, results suggest that the respondents agreed on a high level of organizational culture. It showed that employee engagement and organizational culture scores held no significant differences when the responses were grouped according to generational cohorts. The same did not apply to work values as this was the only category where the variable had significant differences among generational cohorts. Likewise, when factoring in other demographic profiles such as marital status and gender, only work values had significant differences while employee engagement and organizational culture had no significant difference.

With the results it is therefore recommended for the organization to focus on the following areas: first is to cultivate work values across generational differences, second is to maintain the engagement among employees especially during times of crisis, third is to address deficiencies in collaborative work with other departments to strengthen organizational culture and lastly is for the organization to welcome changes on how work is done

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