

# PERSONALITY TRAITS AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT OF GEN X AND GEN Y EMPLOYEES

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**Abstract** *Today, workplaces have people of different generations working together. It becomes necessary that organisations practices should not be driven by need of one generation more than the other. This needs understanding of whether different generations working together in organisation have different personality traits. The aim of this research is to investigate whether differences in personality and organisational commitment exist in generation X & Y employees in private sectors organisation. The research design includes using the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaires by Cattell (1943) and the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire by Allen and Meyer (1990). The method includes examining cross-sectional differences in personality and organisational commitment with respect to generation X & Y. The results revealed there was significant difference in personality and organisational commitment between Gen X and Gen Y. Result also depicted that personality traits affect organisational commitment of Gen X employees, but personality traits do not affect organisational commitment of Gen Y employees. In case of Gen Y employees, organisational factors are more important to enhance organisational commitment such as working environment, culture, reward system, career growth among others. Managers and HR professionals may find the study useful to construct HR practices which can help in improving organisational commitment of employees.*

**Keywords:** *Personality, Organisational Commitment, Generation X & Y*

## INTRODUCTION

The new problem which is emerging in the workplace is that of employees from distinct generational diversity who are working together and often get into conflict. First time it's evident that four different generations are working together in the workplace, adding complexity in managing them. The challenge is to understand the different strengths & aspirations of different generations and complexity of similarities for adopting right management style and organisational practices. There is general agreement among corporate practitioners and researchers that workforce mainly in developed countries is aging and can be divided into four distinct groups (Crampton & Hodge, 2011; Kopperschmidt, 2000). These are Veterans (Born from 1925 to 1945), Baby Boomers (Born from 1946 to 1964), Generation X (Born from 1965 to 1979) and Generation Y (Born from 1980 to 2000) (Hart, 2006; Howe et al., 2000; Yu and Miller, 2003). There is a need to explore strategies and techniques for managing generational differences with the understanding that creating and establishing practices that serve along with other generations, the new breed of workers often termed as generation next. The younger generations have a strong belief of entitlement and they desire to work in a fun environment.

This is also due to the factor that younger generation strongly believes that happy workers are productive workers, which in turn will create successful organisations. With the current world characterized by downsizing, layoff and restructuring, keeping young generation happy and further engaged is a challenge for managers. In such situation managers need to be more focused and skillful in illustrating importance of human assets (Agrawal, 2011). Houlihan (2007) in his research concluded that managers need to identify generation group in which employees fit, understand strength and aspirations of each group and adapt their management style and key drivers for each generation. Eisner (2005) indicated that managing Generation Y is largely uncharted territory. Generations X and Y will grow up to be the major groups in the workforce. Whereas in another study (Tulgan & Martin, 2001) it was stated that Generation Y is similar to Generation X in that both are self-governing, techno-savvy, industrial mindset, hard-working and believe more in flexibility. However, not much research has been done on the Generations X and Y employees with respect to managing them for effective performance. The aim of present study is to investigate whether personality factors of Gen X and Gen Y employees' affect their Organisational commitment.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview of Generations

**Generation X:** Generation X, is born from 1965 to 1979 (McShane & Von Glinow 2000). This Generation often feels overlooked and less valued. Generation X witnessed significant changes within the family and in social systems. This was the time when major changes happened with globalisation spreading to almost all countries and observed fastest technological advancement. Gen-X employees come from environment where technology use became relatively permanent. They believe less in hierarchy and are more in entrepreneurial culture. This generation is more collaborative as compared to prior generation and believes less in formalization. (Burke 1994; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Hart, 2006; Hays, 1999; Loomis, 2000; Howe et al., 2000).

**Generation Y:** Generation Y, is born approximately between 1980 to 2000. With the advanced information tools, this generation is the most aware, and techno savvy generation in comparison to other 3 generations. There are similarities also in generations X and Y as both are less compliance focused to work as compared to Veteran and Baby Boom. Though both Generations X and Y believe there is more to life than work, it's more visible and is especially true for Generation Y. They are also known as the millennial, internet generation, net generation or trophy generation. Gen Y employees are more technology driven and less likely to see job security as an important factor in the workplace (Hart, 2006). Similarly, valuing skill development, enjoying the challenge of new opportunities, demanding more from the work environment and optimistic (Huntley, 2006; Smola and Sutton, 2002); displaying a high level of confidence, enjoying collective action and highly socialised (Hart, 2006; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Tulgan and Martin, 2001). However, Gen Y employees are given the impression to value having accountability and having contribution into decisions making and their actions (McCrinkle and Hooper, 2006).

### Personality

Personality is defined of an individual's of what he or she preferred or typical way of behaving, thinking and feeling (Saville et al., 1984). Therefore, while an individual's core values are likely to influence behavior in the workplace in the organisations, the actual behavior of an individual is more likely to have been influenced by personality (Yu and Miller, 2003). Earlier researchers have highlighted the understanding personality differences of generational employees in the workplace. They have demonstrated in their research that individual differences in personality have impact on job performance (Barrick et al., 2002; Tett and Burnett, 2003;

Smola and Sutton, 2002) and job satisfaction (Avery et al., 1989). It has also been stated in previous research that for maintaining a high-performing and satisfied workforce; organizations need to consider the key generational differences and accordingly the personality preferences (Jurkievicz and Brown, 1998; Kupperschmidt, 2000). Few literatures are available in *personality* differences across generations. Wong et al., (2008) examined the differences in personality and motivational drivers across Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Some of these searches were not supportive of the generational stereotypes. Exclusively, few meaningful differences were found between the three generations. Kupperschmid (2000) in his study suggested that generational difference in workplace exit in the feeling towards work which employees have and their aspiration from being in workplace. Later Smola and Sutton (2002) suggested why and how employees work, their goals & aspirations for their work life, personality and feelings towards authority also result from social context in which generational group develops. Based on the above literature, researchers have formulated hypotheses that:

**H1: Personality traits will significantly differ between Gen Y and Gen X employees.**

### Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is one of the most important organisational concepts that have been widely studied. Researchers have included it in studies since it is an important factor in employee's performance and organisational effectiveness (Gangai & Agrawal, 2015; Mahakud & Gangai, 2015). *Organisational commitment* has been defined as "willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation, and a strong desire to keep up membership in the organisation" and a strong belief in organisational values and goals (Mowday, Porter, & Steers 1982). Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a model that identified three dimensions of commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. The difference among three can be understood as in affective commitment, employees remain in an organisation because they want to, whereas in continuance commitment employees remain with the organisation because they need to. Strong normative commitment is different as with this type of commitment, employees remain with organisation because they feel they ought to do so. Organisational commitment is generally confined to as the degree to which an employee is loyal to their organisation. Another study found that organisational commitment has a significant relationship with turnover, productivity and satisfaction (Mathieu & Hamel, 1989). Lub et al., (2012) in their study explored generational differences in the psychological contract and work outcomes of employees working in hospitality industry. Their research

found no generational differences for work atmosphere, salary and task descriptions though Generation X placed high value on work-life balance, autonomy and job security and for generation Y, significantly lower commitment and higher turnover intention was evident. D'Amato & Herzfeldt (2008) in their study among the relationships of learning, organisational commitment and talent retention across managerial generations though the results revealed that younger generations are less willing to remain in the same organisation and have a lower organisational commitment. In a similar study, Cennamo & Gardner (2008) found the differences between three generational groups in the workforce (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) in their work values, job satisfaction, affective organisational commitment and intentions to leave. According to their study, it was evident that the values like status and freedom to work is more important for younger generation than the older group. Farr-Wharton, Brunetto & Shacklock (2012) found out that affective commitment is highly significant for Generation X and Baby Boomers. The nurses' using their perceptions of empowerment and affective commitment suggested, it is more important to Baby Boomers and Generation X than to Generation Y. The study has drawn hypothesis number two based upon the above literature.

**H2: Organisational Commitment will significantly differ between Gen Y and Gen X employees.**

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Participants

A total of 160 samples were collected for the study in which 80 participants consist of Gen-X ('Date of Birth: '1965-1979') and 80 participants consists of Gen-Y (Date of Birth: '1980-2000') employees with different level of management roles in private service sector organisation from Delhi & NCR region. The sample was collected through use of purposive sampling techniques. The method of data collection was fully monitored by the researcher. The purpose of the study was based on descriptive design. The study has been conducted in cross-sectional level. The research setting was field setting. The participants' perception of the research activity is completed in the actual routine mode.

### Measures

The questionnaire for Cattell's 16 personality Factors (PFs) was administered to each participant (Cattell, 1943; 1957; 1973; 1978) and organisational commitment were assessed by using the three-dimensional scale originally developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). This consists of 24 items in which each of affective, continuance and normative organisational commitment scale comprises of eight items. Meyer & Allen

(1991) & Meyer et al. (1993) evaluated internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's alphas) for affective commitment (0.82), continuance commitment (0.74) and normative commitment (0.83). Responses were made on a 5-point Likert-type scale and were averaged to yield composite commitment scores for each respondent.

### Procedure

For the survey, informed consent was taken from each respondent. This was followed by informal discussion, explanation and rapport formation. After that participants were administered with 16 PFs which consisted of 105 items and organisational commitment scale which consisted of 24 items. Average time taken by participants was 60 minutes and authors helped them whenever there were doubts. 30 % of respondents were online.

### Data Analysis

For the study between Gen X and Gen Y for Personality factors and organisational commitment, data analysis has been done by using SPSS 16.0. Analysis done on both descriptive and inferential statistics using Mean, SD, 't' test.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The overview of Table-3.1 depicts that personality traits and organisational commitment of Gen X & Gen Y employees. The present table highlights mean scores, standard deviation, t-test and p value. The Cattell 16 personality factors that were taken into consideration for the study and statistical investigation in which the mean and standard deviation of personality factors like Warmth, Reasoning, Dominance, Liveliness and Abstractedness is higher in the case of Gen Y than Gen X and the mean and standard deviation score of personality factors like Rule boundness, Self-reliance, Emotional Stability(C), is high in the case of Gen X than Gen Y. We can rightly say that Gen X employees are more rules bound and self-reliant than Gen Y. The above mentioned personality traits were found to have highly significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y employees. The other personality factors such as Social Boldness (H), Sensitivity(I), Privatness (N), Apprehension(O), Openness to change(Q1), Perfectionism(Q3), Tension(Q4) were not found to have significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y employees. Gen Y employees are highly social, confident and very sensitive in nature than Gen X. The hypothesis-H1 of the study, "*Personality traits will significantly differ between Gen Y and Gen X employees*" is accepted and rejected the null hypothesis. The results show that most of the personality factors are highly significant and few personality factors are close to a significant level.

Score of organisational commitment of Gen X and Gen Y employees is depicted in Table-3.1 that shows highly significant difference between Gen X and Gen Y employees. Sub factors of commitment such as affective commitment (AC) ( $t= 11.92$ ,  $df 58$  at  $\alpha$  level  $0.01$  and  $\alpha 0.05$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) between Gen X ( $67.66\pm4.98$ ) and Gen Y ( $58.33\pm2.84$ ); Continuance Commitment (CC) ( $t= 6.59$ ,  $df 58$  at  $\alpha$  level  $0.01$  and  $\alpha 0.05$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) between Gen X ( $68.91\pm10.79$ ) and Gen Y ( $58.04\pm6.89$ ); Normative Commitment (NC) ( $t= 9.03$ ,

$df 58$  at  $\alpha$  level  $0.01$  and  $\alpha 0.05$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) between Gen X ( $70.50\pm7.50$ ) and Gen Y ( $60.37\pm4.36$ ) are highly significant. The mean and standard deviation score of organisational commitment indicates that the level of organisational commitment is more in case of Gen X ( $67.66\pm4.98$ ) than Gen Y ( $58.83\pm2.81$ ) employees. The hypothesis H2: *Organisational Commitment will significantly differ between Gen Y and Gen X employees* of the study is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 3.1: Personality Traits and Organisational Commitment of Gen Y and Gen X Employees**

Personality Traits of Gen Y and Gen X Employees					
Personality Traits	Categories	Mean	SD	t	P-value
Warmth (A)	Gen Y	5.33	2.03	2.32*	0.028
	Gen X	4.55	1.80		
Reasoning (B)	Gen Y	5.25	1.53	1.92*	0.048
	Gen X	4.71	1.49		
Emotional Stability (C )	Gen Y	4.26	.918	3.71*	0.000
	Gen X	5.20	1.71		
Dominance (E)	Gen Y	5.65	1.89	2.85*	0.005
	Gen X	4.65	1.94		
Liveliness (F)	Gen Y	5.45	2.02	2.19*	0.030
	Gen X	4.68	1.79		
Rule boundness (G)	Gen Y	4.98	1.59	2.10*	0.038
	Gen X	5.60	1.61		
Abstractedness(M)	Gen Y	6.40	1.73	2.68*	0.008
	Gen X	5.51	1.86		
Self-reliance (Q2)	Gen Y	4.66	1.52	2.08*	0.039
	Gen X	5.31	1.87		
Organisational Commitment of Gen X and Gen Y Employees					
Affective Commitment	Gen Y	58.33	2.84	11.92*	0.000
	Gen X	67.66	4.98		
Continuance Commitment	Gen Y	58.04	6.89	6.59*	0.000
	Gen X	68.91	10.79		
Normative Commitment	Gen Y	60.37	4.36	9.03*	0.000
	Gen X	70.50	7.50		
Total Organisational Commitment	Gen Y	58.83	2.81	11.92*	0.000
	Gen X	67.66	4.98		
* $\geq 0.05$ and $0.01$ level of significance ( $\alpha 0.05=1.98$ and $\alpha 0.012.61$ at $df=148$ ) (N=160)					

The impact of personality on organisational commitment of Gen X & Y is depicted in the Table-3.2. The results have revealed that in the case of Gen Y employees personality traits have no significant impact on organisational commitment. Here, we can draw inference in management theory that Gen Y employees are influenced more by organisational factors such as work life balance, work environment, supportive organisational culture (Wall and Ajjala,2004),

transformational leadership in the organisation, incentives, rewards (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Swoboda, 1999), better career growth etc. that also facilitates Organisational commitment level of Gen Y employees in the organisation. Few past researches also supported that Generation Y is known to place high importance on autonomy and work-life balance (Smola and Sutton, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000). The

younger groups may tend to seek out work opportunities that supply freedom and autonomy and may be prepared to leave the organisation if these needs are not met. Lub et al (2012) found significantly lower commitment and higher turnover intention for generation Y.

On the contrary, the Gen X employees are more committed to the organisation and their personality built value systems in their life. The results shows (Table 3.2) for Gen X employees few personality factors have significant impact on organisational commitment such as *Emotional Stability(C)* impacts on normative commitment ( $\beta=-.437, t=2.801, P<0.01$ ); *Dominance(E)* impacts on continuance

commitment ( $\beta=.292, t=2.056, P<0.01$ ); *Vigilance(L)* impacts on Total Organisational Commitment ( $\beta=.352, t=2.135, P<0.05$ ) and *Apprehension(O)* impacts on normative commitment ( $\beta=.521, t=3.777, P<0.01$ ). Likewise, *warmth(A)* impacts on normative Commitment ( $\beta=.252, t=1.757, P<0.10$ ), *Emotional Stability(C)* impacts on continuance commitment ( $\beta=.287, t=1.784, P<0.10$ ); *Vigilance(L)* impacts on continuance commitment ( $\beta=.287, t=1.901, P<0.10$ ); and *Apprehension(O)* impacts on continuance commitment ( $\beta=-.261, t=-1.837, P<0.10$ ) at  $\alpha$  level of 90%. Apart from the above mentioned personality factors, the other personality traits were not having significant impacts on any dimension of Organisational commitment.

**Table 3.2: Regression Analysis: Personality Traits Impact on Organisational Commitment of Gen Y and Gen X Employees (N=160)**

P R E D I C T O R S	Generation	AC		CC		NC		Total OC	
	Gen Y	R=0.547 R <sup>2</sup> =0,299 $\Delta R=-0.038$		R=0.364 R <sup>2</sup> =0,133 $\Delta R=-0.190$		R=0.401 R <sup>2</sup> =0,160 $\Delta R=-0.152$		R=0.392 R <sup>2</sup> =0, 153 $\Delta R=-0.162$	
	Gen X	R=0.508 R <sup>2</sup> =258 $\Delta R=-0,019$		R=0.596 R <sup>2</sup> =355 $\Delta R=0,115$		R=0.626 R <sup>2</sup> =392 $\Delta R=0,166$		R=0.484 R <sup>2</sup> =234 $\Delta R=-0,05$	
		$\beta$	T	$\beta$	T	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
A	Gen Y	-.149	-.287	-.416	-.721	-.180	-.317	-.486	-.852
	Gen X	-.044	-.276	.021	.140	.252	1.757*	.118	.729
B	Gen Y	.003	.018	-.060	-.349	-.051	-.306	-.073	-.435
	Gen X	.057	.372	-.221	-1.551	.198	1.433	-.028	-.183
C	Gen Y	-.153	-1.009	-.101	-.598	.077	.460	-.102	-.610
	Gen X	-.096	-.554	.287	1.784*	-.437	-2.801***	-.066	-.374
E	Gen Y	.117	.859	-.119	-.786	-.197	-1.328	-.152	-1.017
	Gen X	-.125	-.817	.292	2.056***	-.108	-.783	.088	.566
F	Gen Y	.359	1.262	.096	.303	-.394	-1.268	.014	.046
	Gen X	.240	1.584	-.020	-.144	.052	.379	.143	.929
G	Gen Y	-.219	-1.440	.124	.736	-.156	-.937	-.064	-.383
	Gen X	.065	.402	.107	.708	-.035	-.236	.095	.578
H	Gen Y	.115	.237	.248	.460	.521	.985	.511	.962
	Gen X	.101	.605	.093	.601	-.055	-.364	.095	.560
I	Gen Y	.016	.108	.143	.886	.087	.552	.166	1.044
	Gen X	.118	.761	.116	.796	.001	.007	.149	.939
L	Gen Y	-.159	-1.159	.141	.924	-.067	-.446	.018	.120
	Gen X	.174	1.074	.287	1.901*	.099	.675	.352	2.135**
M	Gen Y	.168	1.172	-.024	-.150	-.122	-.779	-.017	-.107
	Gen X	-.127	-.704	.212	1.257	-.058	-.352	.054	.293
N	Gen Y	.075	.492	-.064	-.381	.140	.843	.049	.291
	Gen X	.041	.256	.160	1.063	.033	.229	.154	.942

O	Gen Y	.065	.454	-.086	-.543	-.134	-.862	-.113	-.723
	Gen X	-.202	-1.326	-.261	-1.837*	.521	3.777***	-.037	-.238
Q1	Gen Y	-.097	-.654	-.044	-.264	-.102	-.628	-.125	-.766
	Gen X	.107	.699	.007	.049	-.212	-1.535	-.043	-.277
Q2	Gen Y	-.279	-.624	-.236	-.474	-.294	-.601	-.449	-.914
	Gen X	.007	.041	-.207	-1.355	-.066	-.445	-.178	-1.071
Q3	Gen Y	.465	1.046	.225	.456	.242	.497	.486	.994
	Gen X	.246	1.571	-.116	-.798	.130	.921	.116	.732
Q4	Gen Y	.158	1.045	.198	1.177	-.138	-.830	.151	.907
	Gen X	.172	1.161	.035	.250	-.158	-1.177	.040	.264
*** P< 0.01, ** P<0.05, *P<0.10									
(Note : A- Warmth, B- Reasoning, C-Emotional Stability, E-Dominance, F- Liveliness, G-Rule boundness, H-Social Boldness, I-Sensitivity, L-Vigilance, M-Abstractedness, N-Privateness,O-Apprehension,Q1-Openness to change, Q2-Self-reliance,Q3-Perfectionism, Q4-Tension, AC-Affective Commitment, CC-Continuance Commitment NC-Normative Commitment, TOC- Total Organisational Commitment)									

## IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The study highlights that personality factor of Gen Y employees' is not significantly impacting their organisational commitment in the organisation. Researchers opine that since Gen Y employees are more prone and may be influenced by organisational factors such as work environment, supportive culture, career growth, rewards & recognitions, leadership in the organisation, work life-balance from the employers, their organisational commitment may be having higher association with these Organisational factors rather than their individual factors like personality traits. In the case of Gen X, they built up their own personality and give high importance to their core value systems and this influences their commitment level in the organisation. As a result, this study emphasizes the importance for managers and HR professionals to attend to individual differences, irrespective of generations but need to give special attention to Gen Y employees. The concluding implication of the present study is to draw attention of HR practitioners, management professionals and employers in designing the organisational strategy & HR practices. It will help them to motivate both generations of employees according to their needs and expectations for better performance in the organisation.

The present study only focused into generational differences of personality and organisational commitment and uses cross-sectional data. Since generational differences are studied through age and date of birth, the differences which are evident in this research can also be attributed to age group. But since generational difference means different age groups that are working together in the organisations, hence authors have considered it as generational differences. Further, we can explore this issue, very interestingly to undertake a longitudinal study to assess personality impacts on organisational commitment of the different generations.

## CONCLUSION

This paper explores the need to understand differences in generation and accordingly design and create environment which are significant for employees working in the organisation. By understanding differences and similarities in personality traits and Organisational commitment of Gen X and Gen Y employees, human resource professionals, psychologists and managers can develop suitable policies and practices. Understanding differences between generation X and Y at work, would help in improving performance by motivating employees according to their diverse needs. Also organisations would have understanding of the influences of the external factors on the employees of different generations working together. Gen Y employees may prefer a psychological contract with the organisation which emphasises freedom, status and social involvement whereas for generation X personality is more closely associated with organisational commitment and their values and attitudes are more focused towards self-reliance. Therefore there is a greater probability that Generation X employees would stay and be committed to the organisations.

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