

Bridging the Generational Gap: Trust Dynamics, Patterns & Turnover Intentions in a Fortune 500 Organization

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The study investigated differences in attitudes regarding trust, commitment, procedural justice, and turnover intention among employees from Generation X, Generation Y, and the Baby Boomer generation in a Fortune 500 company. The study identified differences in commitment levels between Generation X and Baby Boomers, despite no significant variations in attitudes across the generational cohorts. The study contributed to the academic discourse on intergenerational relationships within organizations, highlighting the importance of managing subtle differences in values, attitudes, aspirations, and perspectives across generations. The findings underscored the need for managers to proactively manage generational expectations and motivational stimuli to foster congenial work environments conducive to organizational success.

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Introduction

Organizations are currently experiencing a noticeable shift in staff demographics (Kee, Ching, & Ng, 2019; Rao, 2021). This transition has brought forth three distinct generational cohorts: Baby Boomers, born between 1945 and 1964; Generation X, spanning from 1965 to 1980; and Generation Y, also known as Millennials, born after 1980 (Bhatti, Juhari, & Umrani, 2018; Dokadia, Rai, & Chawla, 2015; Yu & Miller, 2005). Arsenault (2004) coined the term “tweeners” for individuals born on the cusp of two generations. Generations X and Y have shouldered significant organizational responsibilities, navigating businesses through a landscape charac-

terized by technological disruption and paradigm shifts (Twenge, 2010). Acknowledging subtle intergenerational differences in values, attitudes, aspirations, and perspectives is imperative for organizations (Chavadi, Sirothiya, & M.R., 2022; Dokadia, Rai, & Chawla, 2015; Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008).

As subsequent generations have entered the workforce, managers have faced the challenge of managing generational expectations, values, attitudes, and motivational stimuli (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012; Twenge, 2010). Failure to effectively manage intergenerational convergence may lead to conflicts that impede organizational progress (Giancola, 2006; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). These conflicts, stemming from generational differences, have been linked to financial setbacks, increased operational expenses, turnover, and underutilized capabilities (Biswas, 2015; Martinez-Buelvas & Jaramillo-Naranjo, 2019).

While prior studies have examined differences between Generation X and its predecessors, such as Baby Boomers and Traditionalists (Andrade & Westover, 2018; Hansen & Leuty, 2012), the emergence of Generation Y in the workforce has presented a unique imperative (Bansal, 2017; Kumar, 2023). Analyzing Generation Y, with its distinct characteristics, is crucial for managers aiming to cultivate conducive work environments (Bansal, 2017; Bhatti et al., 2018) for this emerging group (Chavadi et al., 2022; Dechawatanapaisal, 2019). Consequently, this research seeks to address this gap by examining the dynamics

among Generation Y, Baby Boomers, and Generation X.

Theoretical Framework

Significant historical events affected the collective consciousness of each generation thereby shaping their attitudes and conduct (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Multiple characteristics comprise generations: birth years, age, and significant historical occurrences (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). These components influence the personality, work values, and motivations of an individual. Furthermore, perceptions of authority, institutions, and family dynamics are impacted by generational cohorts (Banerjee, Srivastava, & Krishnamoorthy, 2022; Dokadia, Rai, & Chawla, 2015). Generational differences intensify with the passage of time, career advancement, and experience (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Macky et al., 2008). Moreover, conflict ensues when ideas from different generations intersect (Kalleberg & Marsden, 2019). Intergenerational conflicts may result from a failure to recognize and confront generational differences within an organization (Kee et al., 2019; Macky et al., 2008; McGuire, Todnam, & Hutchings, 2007).

Variations Between Generations

Every generation contributed distinct

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qualities and different viewpoints, but this heterogeneity also resulted in discord (Bhayana, Gupta, & Sharda, 2021; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Cultivating an environment that mitigates intergenerational conflict can effectively transmit knowledge from more experienced to less experienced cohorts (Bhatti et al., 2018; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). To nurture a harmonious work environment and address attitudinal disparities, organizational leaders must recognize generation characteristics (Bhayana, Gupta, & Sharda, 2021; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Older generations frequently placed a premium on job security, whereas newer generations actively pursued opportunities for career advancement and professional development (Bright, 2010). For effective leadership and cohesion, the organization leaders must acknowledge and honor these distinctions (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2021).

Attitudinal Characteristics

Trust which is fundamental to all relationships, resulted from knowledge and experience (Mutha & Srivastava, 2021; Robinson, 1996). Trust affects individuals' perceptions of their own trustworthiness and the propensity to trust others (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). Trust in managers is contingent upon how subordinates perceive the managers' competence, benevolence, and ethical behavior (Robinson, 1996). Benevolence, a leader's authentic desire to prioritize the follower's welfare, is critical in establishing and maintaining trust (Serva, Fuller, & Mayer, 2005). Credibility and consistency in one's conduct reinforce trust

(Abdullah & Al-Abrow, 2023). Ferres, Travaglione, and Firms (2003) illuminated the intricate relationship that existed between trust and other crucial factors, including turnover intention, procedural justice, and organizational commitment. Moreover, elevated trust levels are strongly correlated with increased organizational commitment (Benson & Brown, 2011).

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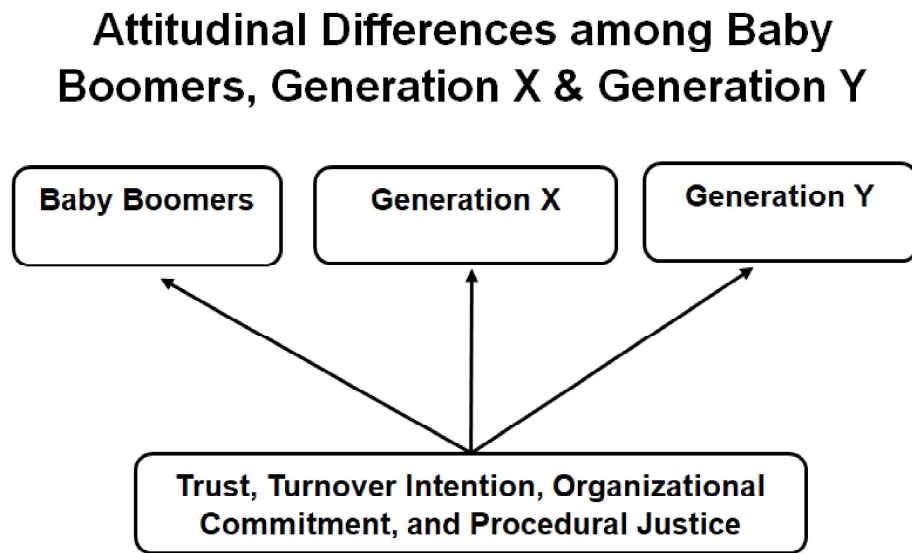
Organizational Commitment. Organizational commitment, which operates as both a benefit and a drawback, exerts a significant impact on employee engagement, loyalty, and the responsible management of company resources (Chigeda, Ndofirepi, & Steyn, 2022; Meyer, Allen, & Allen, 1997). The congruence between individual principles and organizational goals fostered commitment (Ferres et al., 2003). Identification, participation, and allegiance comprised organizational commitment (Chigeda, Ndofirepi, & Steyn, 2022; Cook & Wall, 1980). Identification is the pride in the organization and the assimilation of its objectives and principles (Chakraborty & Biswas, 2021). Conversely, the second component constituted gratification obtained from job-related duties (Andrade & Westover, 2018; Siengthai & Pila-Ngarm, 2016). Organizational commitment influences performance (Benson & Brown, 2011; Chigeda, Ndofirepi, & Steyn, 2022). Interestingly, indiscriminate dedication, commonly called "blind" dedication, resulted in adverse consequences for an

institution (Reichers, 1985). This commitment type had the potential to impede innovation and restrict change management capacity (Hirschi & Spurk, 2021).

Procedural Justice. Employee attitudes strongly predict equity perceptions in organizations. Procedural justice influenced employee loyalty (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). Individuals evaluated procedural justice based on the decision-making procedures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This entailed that decisions are based on accurate information, benefit all parties involved, and adhered to moral and ethical standards (Colquitt et al., 2013). In addition, when explanations are perceived as sincere and rationally communicated, procedural justice perceptions increased (McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992). Invariably, heightened procedural justice perceptions increased confidence in the organizational leadership.

Turnover Intention. The turnover intention had detrimental organizational consequences (Antony, Arulandu, & Parayitam, 2023; Chavadi et al., 2022). Besides imposing a financial burden on organizations (Chavadi et al., 2022). Turnover also undermined employee morale, influenced the organizational culture and eroded implicit knowledge (Biswas, 2015; Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Employee attrition also had both financial and non-financial ramifications (Antony et al., 2023; Benson & Brown, 2011). Feyerherm and Vick (2005) delineated costs associated with training, recruitment, separation, and provisional replacement. Similarly, Lancaster and Stillman (2002) emphasized the intangible expenses, which included declining productivity and knowledge. These intangible costs surpassed the tangible ones by a significant margin (Benson & Brown, 2011). Fig. 1 illustrated the current study's theoretical foundation.

Fig1: Theoretical base of the study (Source: Authors' conceptualization)



Gaps in Research & Objective

This study examines the differences in attitudes among ‘Baby Boomers,’ ‘Generation X,’ and ‘Generation Y,’ focusing on trust, organizational commitment, procedural justice, and turnover intention (Bright, 2010; Ferres et al., 2003; Shultz & Adams, 2012). Empirical research examining generational variations in these attitudinal dimensions is inadequate (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Only a few scholars had examined the way Generation Y manifested these distinctions in comparison to Baby Boomers and Generation X (Arsenault, 2004; Ferres, Travaglione, & Firms, 2003; Bansal, 2017; Kumar, 2023).

Prior research by Ferres et al. (2003) concentrated exclusively on Generation X and elder cohorts. Their study revealed a significant discrepancy in the intention to remain committed between Generation X and elder generations. Moreover, in contrast to Generation X, preceding generations exhibited a greater preoccupation with procedural justice (Benson & Brown, 2011). The emergence of Generation Y into the labor force prompted a comparison in these attitudinal dimensions (Kumar, 2023; Sinha & Pandey, 2021).

There is limited empirical evidence on age-related differences in trust, organizational commitment, procedural justice, and turnover intention (Biswas, 2015; McGuire et al., 2007). Nevertheless, such distinctions might exist. Generational differences resulted from varied interpersonal feelings, beliefs, attitudes,

and tendencies (Abdullah & Al-Abrow, 2023; Bhatti et al., 2018).

Research Methodology

The current research focused on turnover intention, organizational commitment, trust, and procedural justice (Kalleberg & Marsden, 2019; Mutha & Srivastava, 2021). The researchers used the General Attitudes section of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ) (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) to measure turnover intention. Participants responded on a seven-point scale. Afterward, the researchers compared turnover intention scores among the three generational cohorts. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc analyses measured attitudinal differences among generations.

Indicators of Quantity

The questionnaire included items from Cook and Wall’s (1980) “Interpersonal Trust at Work Survey” for evaluating trust. The levels of organizational commitment were measured by Allen and Meyer’s (1990) Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment Scale. The researchers calculated the average score of procedural fairness by using the ‘Index of Procedural fairness’ (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). The “Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire” (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979) was used to evaluate turnover intention, along with the “Intention to Turnover Scale.”

Collection of Data

The researchers employed non-probabilistic convenience and stratified sampling to select participants from manufacturing and services sectors (Coyne, 1997; Creswell, 2017). The survey administration varied depending on computer access.

Demographics Each participant provided gender, birthplace, occupation, educational attainment, employment status, and ethnic background, among other general demographic details. Birth year-based participants' assignment to their generational cohorts followed. The sur-

vey design placed emphasis on ensuring the participant anonymity, which is consistent with the guidelines (Creswell, 2017). The numbered surveys were decoupled from the individual respondents. Potential participants were identified through designated contacts within organizations. The data collection spanned three months.

Results & Findings

Table 1 provided the number of observations, means, and standard deviations for the variables and scale reliabilities. Scale reliability, as shown in Table 1, ranged from 0.63 to 0.74.

Table 1 Observations, Mean & Standard Deviation

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability
Trust	145	42.33	13.05	.7361
Commitment	140	95.55	16.25	.6524
Procedural Justice	140	45.97	10.00	.6311
Turnover	139	14.99	4.63	.6633

To assess the existence of statistical differences in attitudinal dimensions (trust, organizational commitment, procedural justice, and turnover intention), a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each dimension. The data were analyzed using Stata 15 (Fisher, Zwahlen, Egger, & Higgins, 2022). The Bonferroni post hoc test ascertained sig-

nificant differences in means (Armstrong, 2014). F-ratio values for trust, organizational commitment, procedural justice, and turnover intention are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 Analysis of Variance

Scale	F-Ratio
Trust	2.63*
Organizational Commitment	0.38*
Procedural Justice	0.22*
Turnover Intention	1.28*

*p < .10 **p < .05 ***p < .01 ****p < .01

Trust: No statistically significant generational differences were observed in trust means (F=0.38, p=0.6863). Bonferroni-adjusted p-values were utilized to control for error rate, revealing no significant differences in the means.

Organizational Commitment: Before transformation, no statistically significant generational differences were found in organizational commitment

means ($F=2.15$, $p=0.1203$). Due to a positively skewed distribution, organizational commitment was logarithmically transformed. Post-transformation, the analysis indicated a near-significance for Baby Boomers and Generation X ($F=2.63$, $p=0.0758$), while Generation Y displayed a higher average score.

Procedural Justice: There were no statistically significant generational differences in means for procedural justice ($F=0.22$, $p=0.8048$). Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test further confirmed no significant differences.

Turnover Intention: No statistically significant generational differences were found in turnover intention means ($F=1.28$, $p=0.2820$). Post hoc comparisons using the Bonferroni test corroborated the absence of significant differences in means.

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The researchers found no statistically significant difference in the attitudes towards trust, organizational commitment, procedural justice, and turnover intention among Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Similarly, Bonferroni-adjusted p-values also indicated no statistically significant differences in the means of trust, procedural justice, and turnover

intention. However, following the shift, organizational commitment became statistically significant for Baby Boomers and Generation X, but Generation Y had a higher average score.

Discussion

Upon juxtaposing the findings with prior research, discernible variations in attitudinal dimensions across generational cohorts were revealed. Notably, while acknowledging parallels among Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y, in line with Bright (2010) and Wong et al. (2008), this study provided a nuanced perspective, indicating no statistically significant distinctions among these groups. This departure from previous research findings accentuated the inherent discrepancies in attitudes prevailing among generations.

Our examination of generational differences resonated with earlier studies (Kalleberg & Marsden, 2019; Martinez-Buelvas & Jaramillo-Naranjo, 2019), underscoring the role of life experiences in shaping values and attitudes, as posited by Abdullah & Al-Abrow (2023). Building upon this foundation, this study expanded the discourse by highlighting disparities in workloads and job security, shedding light on evolving workplace dynamics and their impact on generational experiences, echoing the insights of Chavadi et al. (2022) and Bennett et al. (2012).

While this investigation corroborated existing notions of dynamism in generational disparities (Bright, 2010; Wong et

al., 2008), it offered a valuable contribution by elucidating the evolution of these traits over time and presenting a dynamic perspective on generational shifts. This assertion further substantiated Yu and Miller's (2005) hypothesis regarding the inconsistency of age disparities across industries, accentuating the need to consider industry-specific variations in future studies. Ultimately, this study enriched the scholarly discourse by introducing novel perspectives, challenging conventional assumptions, and broadening the discourse on generational dynamics. A thorough exploration of the factors influencing generational disparities, buttressed by empirical evidence, holds the promise of yielding deeper insights into this multifaceted phenomenon.

Research Implications

The present study identified research perspectives in the intergenerational dynamic's domain within modern work settings. Although our data did not demonstrate significant differences between generations in terms of turnover intention, commitment, trust, and justice, it is important to further investigate the intricacies of these interactions.

By examining commitment patterns among Generation X and Baby Boomers, future research could offer insights on workplace relationships among different age groups. Additionally, the current study encouraged future researchers to explore intergenerational relationships. Researchers could employ a longitudinal

approach to examine generational attitudes towards turnover intention, commitment, trust, and justice with shifts in organizational policies, economic conditions, and social disruptions.

Managerial Implications

The current study stressed understanding generational attitudes and behaviors in the contemporary workforce. Organizations might benefit from fostering an inclusive and collaborative work environment. The impact of Generation X and Baby Boomers on commitment patterns underscored mentorship programs and activities to promote knowledge sharing. Employing specific strategies to enhance trust, perceived fairness, and dedication among different age groups improved the overall organizational environment.

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The study highlighted flexible management systems that considered diverse generational wants and expectations. Adopting continuous learning initiatives is crucial for top management to address generational gaps by customizing managerial strategies to match the evolving needs of the workforce. The current research makes a valuable contribution to the interactions between different generations. The study also offered guidance for effectively managing and utilizing the diverse employees' skills and talents.

Conclusion

This study significantly contributed to the expanding body of knowledge by examining turnover intention, procedural justice, trust, and organizational commitment among Generation Y, Baby Boomers, and Generation X. Our findings revealed no statistically significant distinctions among these generational groups, underscoring the complexity of generational dynamics in the workplace. To fully understand these dynamics, it was necessary to look at work attitudes and values in depth, as collaborative environments turned out to be key to improving group effectiveness and reducing the chance of intergenerational conflicts. Moving forward, future research should explore nuanced factors impacting these dynamics, such as technological integration, cultural influences, and sustainability initiatives. Additionally, longitudinal studies would offer valuable insights into the temporal constancy of observed attitudes. Moreover, expanding research across various industries and including Generation Z in the discourse was essential for a more comprehensive understanding of intergenerational dynamics in contemporary organizations. Recognizing these limitations and delving into emerging research fields enhanced the depth and breadth of knowledge in this area.

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