Intellectual structure of multigenerational workforce and contextualizing work values across generations
a multistage analysis
Singh, Vibhav; Verma, Surabhi; Chaurasia, Sushil

Published in:
International Journal of Manpower

DOI:
10.1108/IJM-04-2019-0207

Publication date:
2021

Document version:
Accepted manuscript

Citation for published version (APA):

Go to publication entry in University of Southern Denmark's Research Portal

Terms of use
This work is brought to you by the University of Southern Denmark. Unless otherwise specified it has been shared according to the terms for self-archiving. If no other license is stated, these terms apply:

- You may download this work for personal use only.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying this open access version.

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details and we will investigate your claim. Please direct all enquiries to puresupport@bib.sdu.dk

Download date: 16. Nov. 2021
**Intellectual Structure of Multigenerational workforce and Contextualizing work values across generations: A multi stage analysis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal:</th>
<th>International Journal of Manpower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript ID</td>
<td>IJM-04-2019-0207.R2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Type:</td>
<td>Research Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords:</td>
<td>Employees behaviour, Human resource management, Older workers, Social psychology, Youth, Workplace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intellectual Structure of Multigenerational Workforce and Contextualizing Work Values across Generations: A Multistage Analysis

1. Introduction

With as many as four generations sharing one table, age-diversity in the modern workplace is a unique phenomenon that companies are experiencing for the first time (Glass, 2007). As per the World Economic Forum (2019), a considerable number of people above 60 years of age will constitute the labor force by the mid of this century, even as millennials continue to be the pacesetters (Twenge et al., 2010; Ashford and Brown, 2017). Nevertheless, around 58% of the HR professionals experience intergenerational conflict due to differing perceptions on varied factors like value-based, behavior-based, and identity-based factors (Urick et al., 2017). Organizations failing to create a congenial environment for their diverse workforce are likely to face recruitment and retention issues (Ashford and Brown, 2017). This makes it mandatory for the HR managers to establish an organizational culture with desired work values that leverages the multigenerational workforce capabilities (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007; Urick et al., 2017).

Studies have shown that a generation’s work behavior is influenced by the values and attitudes held by them (King, 2017). Practitioners suggest that generation-based work value differences are likely to impact most of the facets of people management like recruitment, career development, compensation and benefits, training and development, also leading to workplace conflicts (Parry and Urwin, 2011; Rai 2015). In such a dynamic context, which is consequential of generational differences, it is highly likely that no single working style can reap desirable outcomes (Urick et al., 2017).

In this backdrop, a nuanced understanding of generation-based work values will aid companies to restructure their employer brand when retaining and attracting a multi-generational workforce (Mičík M., Mičudová K., 2018). Therefore, it is beneficial to understand the intellectual structure of this branch, along with identifying the key shifts in the value system across generational cohorts. The present study contributes to the academia at two levels. Firstly, as predominant literature review papers (Parry and Urwin, 2011) on generational diversity are rooted in the qualitative approach, the present study offers a more objective lens in the form of a quantitative analysis through bibliometric methods. The intellectual structure of generational diversity research during the last two decades has been unraveled through Study 1. Furthermore, as work values often predict the workplace behavior, work attitudes and work performance, and are used further to understand the intergroup differences (Cogin, 2012), the second study contributes by exploring the similarities and differences in work value system and the shift therein. This would aid HR
practitioners in formulating sound HR policies impacting different facets of people management. Research studies (see Yang et al., 2018; Twenge et al., 2010) on work values demonstrate that empirical evidence on generational differences in work values is mixed. Also, these differences have been found to be inconsistent, with studies contradicting each other. As the preceding investigation demonstrated mixed evidence on generational differences in work values, a multi-level investigation integrating extant literature through bibliometric study and supplementing the same with a qualitative research can be a significant contribution in this area.

The structure of the article is as follows. The first section briefly explains the background of multigenerational workforce. The second section delves into the methodological approach of the entire paper – Study 1 & Study 2. The third section discusses the research methodology and the results of Study 1. The fourth section outlines the methodology of the qualitative Study 2. The fifth section critically discusses the results. The last section focuses on general discussion, implications for the academia and managers, and limitations of the research.

2. Theoretical Background

Generation: A multilayered concept

Research works have categorized multigenerational workforce into four cohorts - Traditionalists, Baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (also known as Generation Me, Millennials, iGen) (Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015). Preceding investigations advocate the role of personal and social characteristics in influencing generational differences for work values (Parry and Urwin, 2011). The reason for such differences can be attributed to age, generation or cohorts’ effects. The social lens to understand the multigenerational theory (Karl Mannheim, 1951) views generation as a social mechanism through which beliefs and attitudes evolve over time. Viewing generation as a demographic category, generations as social identities represent a temporal succession that can operate as behavioral or perceptual frames in a typical organizational setting (Joshi et al., 2011). As an example, for all employees joining an organization in a given year, individuals adopt a cohort-based identity to categorize self with others joining the organization during the identical time interval (Joshi et al., 2010). Subsequently, they may acquire incumbency-based identity of relating self with the organizational hierarchy or role. Finally, they adopt an age-based identity as it helps them in associating with the age group with which they can share the memories of their formative years of life (Joshi et. al., 2011).

Work Values and the Self Determination Theory (SDT)

Multigenerational workforce differs on several dimensions like work values, work attitudes, communication styles, commitment to employers, and impact of technology (Wesner and Miller, 2008).
Though work values have been studied in depth, scholars are not unanimous on defining the construct (Twenge et al., 2010; Gursoy et al., 2008). Predominantly, researchers have investigated work values from the structural perspective by classifying them into different features of work (Yang et al., 2018). Prior research on generational differences on work values has been criticized for lacking in theoretical orientation necessary to decipher the root causes of the differences (Yang et al., 2018). Twenge et al. (2010) examined generational differences in relation to work values. Generation Z did not prefer altruistic values while baby boomers focused more on social values (friendship) and intrinsic values (challenging assignments). Extrinsic values in terms of status and money were preferred more by Generation Z in comparison to the baby boomers (Yang et al., 2018).

The self-determination model in a workplace puts forth that social context and individual differences shape the extrinsic and intrinsic motivators; this impacts employees’ work behavior and their health and wellness (Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). Furthermore, SDT proposes that different value orientations are connected to different work outcomes. Intrinsic values (e.g. personal growth and community contribution) positively impact work behavior in comparison to extrinsic work values (e.g. financial success) (Kasser, 2002; Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). Employees who prefer intrinsic work value are high on job satisfaction and low on turnover intentions (Kasser, 2002). The current study builds on SDT to argue that adopting social contexts influences the formation of generation-based work values (extrinsic/intrinsic), eventually impacting work behavior of the generational cohorts (Kasser, 2002).

3. Methodology for Study 1 and Study 2

Study 1 adopted the bibliometric approach to explore the intellectual structure of generational diversity at workplace. Co-word analysis was carried out for two periods, 2001-2009 and 2010-2018, to unravel the emerging themes in the two decades. However, comprehensive analysis was reportedly missing in this methodological approach (Harrison, 2013). Therefore, based on the gaps identified from Study 1, Study 2 was conducted adopting a qualitative approach to explore generation-based work values at the workplace. 32 in-depth interviews were conducted with employees from across the generations and the collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis to ascertain the major themes.

4. Study 1- Bibliometric test of multigenerational workforce’s intellectual structure

4.1. Bibliometric analysis

Bibliometrics analysis includes popular methods like co-authorship analysis, co-word analysis or key co-occurrence analysis (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). The rationale behind co-word analysis is the co-occurrence of keywords, and it calculates the number of articles in which two keywords appear in
conjunction (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). To help visualize the relations between keywords, co-word analysis assesses the strengths of the co-occurrence (Su and Lee, 2010). While qualitative literature review continues to be popular among human resource management researchers, bibliometric analysis has been adopted only by a few HR studies (See work Alles and Rodríguez, 2008).

4.2. Methodology

4.2.1. Data collection

Scopus is one of the highly reputed electronic databases containing publications from influential journals and the works of several prominent authors working on generational diversity (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). To retrieve the relevant research papers from Scopus, this study used ‘multigenerational workforce’ and ‘generational diversity at workplace’ as keywords. All documents pertaining to this research area that were published from 2001 to November 2018 were selected. In the initial search, 278 relevant documents were retrieved, which were further reduced to 109 documents by excluding book chapters, reviews, conference proceedings and papers published in non-English languages. Finally, 109 original academic papers and 4936 cited papers were selected. Figure 1 represents the annual number of academic papers published from 2001 to 2018. While the work in the area was initiated in the year 2001, it gained momentum only in the later part of the 2000s, peaking during 2016 and 2018.

Figure 1: Annual Number of Published Original Academic Papers from 2001 to 2018.

4.2.2. Data analysis

For the decomposition of networks, Pajek and VOSviewer tools were used to create and visualize the bibliometric networks (Waltman et al., 2010). To understand the evolution and development of the research topic, this study was divided into two periods: 2001-2009 and 2010-2018. From the selected articles, keywords were bracketed using content analysis to ascertain the research trends.

4.2.3. Results
Co-word analysis

Co-word analysis is grounded in the incidence of co-occurrence of selected keywords, which means identifying the number of research works in which two keywords appear together (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). Co-word analysis is generally utilized to unravel the phenomenon’s network of research areas and trends in a particular field of study (Van Eck and Waltman, 2014). Nevertheless, co-word analysis has its own limitation in relation to stability as the terms evolve or change over a time period. During 2001-2009, 13 articles were printed in varied journals, resulting into 36 diverse keywords. During 2010 to 2018, an exponential increase was observed, with 95 articles yielding 483 keywords. However, selection was restricted to only those keywords that occurred at least twice. This led to the finalization of 66 keywords for higher level analysis. Two visualized co-word networks in the two timeframes are represented in Figures 2 and 3, which depict varied fields of research motivation. In the period of 2001-2009, generational diversity at workplace displayed a single dominant research interest, i.e., communication. Two sub-themes under communication were communication pattern and technology adoption in communication. The second major area of research during 2001-2009 defined generations through the identification of generational characteristics. For the period 2010-2018, four research interests emerged (Figure 3). The first area of focus was retaining and engaging millennials through leadership, second, impact of generational differences on organizational variables, third, generational differences in work values, and fourth, generational diversity in education and nursing. Aggregate information for thematic evolution of research efforts related to generational diversity at workplace during the periods 2001–2009 and 2010–2018 is summarized in Table 1.

Figure 2: Visualized co-word network in generational diversity at workplace, 2001–2009.
Figure 3: Visualized co-word network and density diagram in generational diversity at workplace, 2010-2018.
Table 1: Generational diversity at workplace research thematic evolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication style, interpersonal communication</td>
<td>2001-2009 2010-2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology adoption in communication</td>
<td>Email, Instant Messaging, Voicemail Concurrent Management, virtual exchange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational Characteristics</td>
<td>Biological Birth year, age, Age-range</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sociological Occupation, work values, attitude, Communication, age-stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaining and Engaging</td>
<td>Millennial through Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial through Leadership</td>
<td>Impact of generational differences on organizational variables Job satisfaction, work satisfaction, leadership, technology, work-life balance, recruitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generational differences on organizational variables</td>
<td>Altruistic values, social values, intrinsic values Extrinsic values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational differences in work values.</td>
<td>Nurse Nursing, education, higher education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.4. Discussion

Results of the cluster analysis put forth the thematic trends in research on generational diversity at workplace during 2000-2009 and 2010-2018. In the first sub-period of 2000-2009, communication as a
concept emerged as the dominant area of interest in generational diversity research. Researchers delved into understanding the structural differences in communication patterns across the generations (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007; Glass, 2007; Gursoy et al, 2008; Wesner and Miller, 2008). The second theme that the academia addressed was the identification of distinguishing features of each generation. Generational characteristics could be further divided into two sub-themes – biological and sociological. Many preceding studies have supported the currently identified themes (Glass, 2007; Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007; Wesner and Miller, 2008).

In the second sub-period of 2010-2018, four themes were identified. The first theme encompasses retaining and engaging millennials through leadership. In the view of economic volatility and voluntary/involuntary attrition, the role of HR is accentuated, which is to engage and retain this diverse workforce (Deal et al 2010; Chaudhuri & Ghosh 2012). Reverse mentoring as a social exchange tool can help the older generation at the leadership level to understand the value system and competencies of the millennials (Chaudhuri & Ghosh 2012). Leaders need to take cognizance of the individual dreams and help them attain their aspirations to engage the millennials (Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015; Maier et al. 2015; Greatwood, 2016; Lanier et al., 2017).

The second theme focuses on generational diversity in education and nursing. Higher education demands leaders who are able to guide the millennials in realizing their individual aspirations by building a positive work environment (Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015). Therefore, higher education institutions need to address the intergenerational difference while planning the ways to enhance HR practices (Kleinhans et al., 2015). In the nursing context, Generation Y nurses pursue prospects for career mapping, goal setting and formal mentorship by role models and peers to actualize their professional aspirations (Lynch et al. 2015).

The third theme explores the impact of generational differences on organizational variables. Haeger and Lingham (2014) argue that as face-to-face communication is not related to job satisfaction, people across generations are comfortable with virtual exchanges. It breaks the popular notion about usage of technology. However, since the baby boomers treat work and life as separate entities, they may not be inclined to adopt technology to expedite the work. The millennials prefer technology to balance work and life at work so that they can attain higher levels of job and life satisfaction (Saber, 2013).

The fourth theme deals with the identification of generational differences in work values. King et al (2017) found that individual’s collective memories at their formation stage influences their work values. In their seminal work, Twenge et al (2010) examined generational differences in work values. Yang et al. (2018) discussed that millennials preferred both extrinsic and intrinsic work values, followed by the Generation X.
and baby boomers. Also, Generation Y believes in social values, trusting more in building and maintaining meaningful relationships in comparison to baby boomers and Generation X (King et al., 2017).

Figure 4: Keyword co-occurrences of generational diversity workplace temporality.

According to Cogin (2012), the congruency theory suggests that work values constitute one of the key variables that can impact HRM practices like recruitment, selection and retention strategies. However, Figure 4 depicts the existing keywords as staggered across the timeline of 2010-2018. It is evident that 2015 onwards, research focused upon millennials and work values (keywords like millennials, Generation Y, Values, and Work Value) enjoyed higher visibility. However, keywords that appeared 2015 onwards received fewer citations, indicating future research avenues.

Research studies comprising the fourth theme fell short on several aspects, which indicated the need for an in-depth analysis of work values. For instance, empirical evidence on generational differences in work values is mixed. Also, differences are found to be inconsistent, with studies contradicting each other. Most of the studies are situated in a generation’s birth years to examine work values despite taking Karl Mannheim’s framework. Further, due to the limitation of the methodology, the shift in the value system was not apparent in the first study. In addition, this in-depth analysis will form the base for HR practitioners to design customized HR practices for different generations. Lastly, research in work values has often focused on identifying generational differences in work values, whereas the examination of work values
convergence across generations is an under-explored terrain. Therefore, instead of examining possible explanations, authors have conducted a follow-up qualitative study, as per Harssion (2013).

5. Study Two – A qualitative exploration

Study 2 aims to understand the key shifts (and convergence) that have taken place in the value system across generational cohorts. Hite et al., 2015, stated that values are a kind of belief situated inside the individual’s belief system, guiding one about the do’s and don’ts. This makes values strong predictors of work attitudes and work behavior and if left unaddressed, form fertile ground for the germination of conflicts (Cogin, 2012). Therefore, Study 2 investigated the following research questions a) What are the most important work values of the three generational cohorts? b) What are the key shifts that have taken place in the value system across generational cohorts? c) Is there value convergence across the generational cohorts?

5.1. Methodology

Data collection was performed in two stages (pilot study and actual study). Qualitative interviews were conducted by a trained team of researchers. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the existence of the concept. Three focused group discussions were conducted across the older, middle-aged, and younger generations. Each group comprised of 8 to 9 members who were subject matter experts. The second phase involved data collection for the actual study.

32 interviews were carried out across the three generations in the manufacturing sector. While there were ten participants each who were old and middle-aged, 12 were from the younger generation. Sample inclusion criteria comprised of (a) those who were working with the given organization for at least two or more years (b) generational classification - older generation (1955-1965), middle-aged generation (1966-1977), younger generation (1980-1990). Samples were drawn using purposive sampling, with the rationale of collating rich and multiple layers of data. The sampling method allowed researchers to reach participants with relevant experiences, and assisted in revealing significant insights. All meetings were arranged at the participants’ offices or at cafes, with interactions typically lasting for 50-60 mins. All interviews were planned to start with variations of three open-ended questions on understanding the important generational work values, identifying the key shifts that had taken place in the value system across generations and lastly, on the participants’ understanding of value convergence across the generational cohorts. Although the objective of the interviews was to emphasize upon generational work values and its convergence and divergence, the participants making layered comments and comparison with other generations helped the researcher in ensuring reliability and validity by maintaining rigor and quality through the triangulation process.
All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The coded excerpts were thematically analyzed using the methodological approach of Clarke and Braun (2006). This study adopted both inductive and theoretical strands to analyze the data. Therefore, the themes identified were based on data and theoretical assumptions. The steps followed during data analysis include 1) familiarization with data 2) generation of initial codes 3) searching for themes and 4) defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For reliability and validity, the current investigation utilized a team-based approach of qualitative data collection, analysis, and coding (Marks, 2015). The approach contributing to better reliability includes: a) designing a comprehensive audit trail for sampling, standardized interview protocol for using questions for interview, and a robust coding methodology to deliver a “replicable method of inquiry”, b) developing a qualitative research team and (c) ensuring that data was coded in coding pairs for enhanced inter-rater reliability that permits many voices but “tempers the biases ( and idiosyncrasies) of any single member” (Marks, 2015, p. 499-502). For analyzing the data, the investigation team was divided into multiple coding pairs. Members of each pair independently open coded each interview and then collectively reviewed (line-by-line) their open codes through the check and balance system to resolve any discrepancies.

5.2. Results

The preceding investigation categorized work value sets into intrinsic work values, extrinsic work values, social work values and prestige values (Twenge et. al., 2010). Intrinsic work values focus on the process of work and contributes to a sense of personal growth, whereas extrinsic work values are conservation values that focus on the outcome of the work. Intrinsic work value includes non-monetary rewards, exciting work, flexibility, and career growth opportunities, whereas job security and income stimulate extrinsic work value. Prestige values encompass an assessment of self with others for a sense of achievement and career advancement. The present study builds on these findings and attempts to delineate the convergence and divergence of work values across the three generations as earlier studies have generally compared the older and younger generations only. The results of Study 2 indicate that work values differ across the generations. However, there is a shared space where certain values like offering respect and work commitment are common. This value convergence positively impacts the intergenerational relationships. Lastly, the shift in value system has resulted in deteriorating work values as the generations progress (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Work values divergence and convergence across generations
**Value Shift**

**Older generation** - Younger generation does not have the same set of value system, which we had or have. They are much more materialistic in nature (Alpayi).

**Middle-aged Generation** - Younger generation develop an unsympathetic attitude towards others. They have to move ahead. They may miss the personal touch and respect (Nadir).

**Younger Generation** - What values are relevant in today's world and then choose to retain those that would benefit us and ignore the rest (Neha).

**Older generation** - For me, I would say that the biggest value is the honesty of approach in serving your clients (Sarthak).

You may have intelligence or knowledge... I feel that when values like respect and discipline are there, then there is likelihood that the one will be able to achieve proper balance (Saurab).

**Middle-aged Generation** - We are disciplined, hardworking and punctual. We are honest to our job and society. Our generation has vision, and works to achieve things for our family, country, and friends.

**Younger Generation** - I accept that we don’t respect our parents that much. With time, values have deteriorated. I don’t want to comment on that (Anuli).

**Older generation** - We are all interested in completing the task (Vijay).

**Middle-aged Generation** - Our ability to work towards goals binds us and at the same time all the generation believes in respect.

**Younger Generation** - The main thing is to respect people. Only, the way this is done may be different, otherwise.

**Work Values**

- Work commitment
- Workplace communication

**Value Convergence**
5.2.1 Values system of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials

Results indicated generational differences in the work values. This is in consonance with dominant research studies that advocate differences of generations in their value system (Yang et al. 2018). In this study, baby boomers voiced that integrity, sincerity, and work commitment are the central work values that form the foundation of their work behavior. This is understandable as their generation was socialized in a joint family set up that is traditionally believed to uphold stability, cooperation and conformity even at the cost of individual independence. Along similar lines, Hoole and Bonnema (2015) found that baby boomers, in comparison to their counterparts, are highly engaged with their work and prefer to be staffed upon meaningful work. In addition, they staunchly uphold honesty and commitment, which is reflected in their decisions.

In the present study, the middle-aged participants argued that the older generation was born and socialized in a less competitive era, due to which they could give more attention to social values and build higher work ethic and discipline. In line with this finding, Twenge et al (2010) stated that baby boomers have stronger work ethics in comparison to Generation X (middle-aged generation) and Generation Me (millennials). In agreement with this, the present study reported that offering respect and discipline are the other two work values that the baby boomers uphold, showing greater respect to age and to a person’s knowledge in comparison to the millennials.

Generation X and the millennials agreed that baby boomers are more respect-oriented. Dutta (Generation X) shared ‘As the oldies are more respect focused…may be because they weren’t born in the time period where success was whole sum game’. Lastly, baby boomers felt that their generation is less materialistic and immensely valued interpersonal relationships as it had a positive impact on workplace communication. In the present study, Generation X eloquently asserted that the dominant work values for their generation were work centrality and commitment to the organization. Furthermore, Generation X argued that another delineating work value of their cohorts is their ability to take a stand at the workplace on ethics and company’s well-being issues. They stretch this value at the societal level and were found to be conscious about their duty to the society. Lastly, they claimed to be more honest and transparent, as echoed in the openness of their communications and readiness to share information. Ashok (Generation X) stated that ‘We are disciplined, hardworking and punctual. We are honest to our job and society. Our generation has vision, and works to achieve things for our family, country, and friends.’

Older generation concurred that Generation X value system resembled theirs as they, too, value respect, are committed to work and attach importance to interpersonal relationships. Ramesh (Older generation) stated that ‘Generation X tried to preserve our value system’. Interestingly, millennials participating in the present
study agreed that their work values are highly influenced by the Western culture. However, there is a noticeable decrease in the intensity of respect offered to the older generation, though the value still exists. Filial piety is a feature of Asian culture, but the younger generation expressed their dissatisfaction with such expectations.

Millennials believed that they held a high level of integrity and ethics. This gives them self-reliance in their approach to carry out work. Arjun (millennial) shared ‘discourse is changing in India... the whole movement of India against corruption resonates the value system of our generation... we detest corruption and unethical work behavior’. Researchers argue that millennials are ambitious and ingenious and must flourish in a competitive ecosphere. Their attitude gets demonstrated in the diverse communication modes they adopt. However, the baby boomers feel that the younger generation is not as ethical as expected (Smola and Sutton, 2002).

5.2.2 Value shift over the period

All the three generations concurred that the value system has changed over the decades with significant deterioration in it. The chief reason for the same is the context in which the current generation has/is being socialized. Deterioration in value system is evident from the finding that the organizational commitment level has decreased. This low commitment has resulted into casual behavior at workplace. Older generation alleged that millennials do not reciprocate their efforts, making it difficult to understand them. Contemporary generations are found to be more materialistic in comparison to their predecessors. Generation X finds the millennials to be more materialistic as they had to struggle less than the other generations.

Hite el al. (2015) also concur that work values have diminished with generations and millennials exhibit inadequate work ethics and work centrality in comparison to the baby boomers. Several theorists have also reiterated that the level of offering respect has plummeted distressingly in the case of millennials, which negatively impacts the communication effectiveness (Weber, 2017). For millennials, values are context-dependent, whereas for the older generation, values were independent of the context. Millennials adhere to values that are beneficial for them, as opined by Ishita (younger generation).

5.2.3 Area of Convergence in Value system

Despite the decline in the value system, all the three generations believed that they do share common ground. Generations, in general, value and work towards attaining organizational goals and objectives. Yang et al. (2018) reported that though there are generational differences in value system, there are similarities as well. For instance, job security was a common work value shared across the generations.
Another value where generations are seen to converge is in offering respect. This is a norm that has been passed down from generations. Seeta states, ‘

respect is one factor that all of us have in them. We are similar when it comes to offering respect.’ An aggregate summary of multi-level (across generations) analysis of work values is illustrated in Figure 4.

6. General discussion

Results indicate that work values differ across the generations with an emphasis on intrinsic work values. Importantly, work values have seemingly devolved and deteriorated, with older generation displaying more robust ethics in comparison to the millennials. However, all the three generations eloquently asserted that the dominant work values like offering respect and being committed towards work are common amongst them. Work values impact employees’ productivity through enhanced job satisfaction (Gursoy et al., 2008). Studies have shown that job satisfaction can impact employee productivity (Böckerman and Ilmakunnas, 2012). Employees who are low on job satisfaction are more likely to show a higher rate of absenteeism, negatively impacting their productivity (Böckerman and Ilmakunnas, 2012). Therefore, it is important for the organization to manage generational cohorts’ characteristics as it will impact job satisfaction and productivity. In the present study, a generation’s social context was found to influence the formation of work values, which in turn influenced work commitment of employees. The same has been supported by other studies (see Böckerman and Ilmakunnas, 2012). Work commitment is a predictor of employee’s productivity. Therefore, companies need to understand and manage generational characteristics and work values as it will impact work commitment and employee productivity. Furthermore, as viewed from the lens of the self-determination theory, the social context including generational characteristics, socialization, and collective memories together influence the formation of values of work across generations. These work values can be broadly demarcated into extrinsic and intrinsic values, which then influence the work behavior (Deci et al., 2016). The present study extends the SDT and argues that the impact of work values is not limited to the individual level but extends to the organizational level as well, that is, HR functions (recruitment and retention strategies).

Figure 6 weaves the findings of both the studies to propose a relationship between resultant constructs from Studies 1 and 2. The model proposes that formation of work values is a gradual process, which is influenced by constructs like generational characteristics, socialization, and collective memory.

Figure 6: Integrated model for multigenerational workforce
The three constructs (Collective memory, Socialization, Generational characteristics) are overlapping and interconnected. It is believed that employees acquire certain beliefs and values during the socialization occurring at the workplace. This socialization takes place at two levels - primary and secondary (Cazden, 2017). During the simultaneous primary and secondary socialization, people start forming collective memories (Singh, 2013). For instance, Study 1 reported that the collective memories in which generations located their cohorts were family values, financial circumstances, educational and employment opportunities, the economy, and societal values. The distinct collective memories of a generation provide a shared field to help format unique generational characteristics (King et al., 2017). In line with this finding, extant research works also indicate that generational characteristics influence the formation of work values.
(Yang et al. 2018). As per Study 2, participants shared that their socialization did impact the value formation. For instance, generational cohorts shared that the older generation was born and socialized in a less competitive era due to which they could give more attention to social values and build an orientation towards practicing higher work ethics. Thus, this study proposes that:

**Proposition 1:** Socialization in conjunction with collective memories forms the base of generational characteristics, which leads to the formation of generation-based work values.

Moving forward, Study 2 reports that the three generations vary significantly with respect to their work values. Generations predominantly possess intrinsic values in comparison to extrinsic values. Study 2 further illustrated that the relationship between work values and behavior is influenced by the value convergence and shift in value system. Furthermore, it was argued by the participants that work values have diminished over the period, with the millennials displaying weaker work ethics in comparison to the baby boomers. Research also supports that values have diminished over the period (Campbell et al., 2017). Generations propose that despite the degeneration in their work value system there are certain work values that are common across the generation, which may vary in their intensity across the generations. The work values identified through both the Studies 1 & 2 can be bracketed under the umbrella terminology of intrinsic work values. Researches show that intrinsic work values tend to impact work behavior like work engagement and job satisfaction (Twenge et al, 2010; Yang et al, 2018). Study 2 echoed that generations preferring intrinsic values were more committed to work and were more efficient at workplace communication.

Thus, this study proposes that:

**Proposition 2:** A higher level of intrinsic work values is likely to influence the work behavior

Participants across the generations advocated that value convergence (or shared values) enhances the generational communication and positively impacts their work behavior. Participants across the generational cohorts voiced that offering respect and work commitment was a common value with differing intensities. Millennials and Generation X voiced that being respectful to the baby boomers can get the work done easily. Therefore, Study 2 argued that there is a shared space of values amongst the generations. Study 1 showed that work values (intrinsic values) impact work behavior (work commitment and workplace communication). Gursoy et al. (2008) stated that work values tend to influence job satisfaction. Baby boomers display higher work centrality and work intensification, and their job dissatisfaction level is low in comparison to Generation X (Brown 2012). McCann and Giles (2006), through detailed research, demonstrated that when Generation X and millennials offered respect and deference at the workplace, communication was more effective as baby boomers value respect. Study 1 showed that at the organizational level, work values impact recruitment and redesigning the organizational system. Twenge et
al (2010), in their study on generational differences in work values, pointed out that recruitment and training practices need to be aligned to the work values of generations in order to meet the desired level of effectiveness. Chen and Choi (2008) stated that generational differences in work values for baby boomers and millennials has a vital influence on HR practices like recruitment and retention strategies. For instance, young managers take a longer turnaround time to fill vacant positions (Lyon et al., 2005).

Thus, this study proposes that:

Proposition 3: A higher level of shared space increases the display of positive work behavior and organizational outcome.

The current investigation supported that understanding generation-specific work values may empower practitioners to improve working conditions, job structure and social atmosphere, along with developing motivational strategies, compensation packages, and human resource policies. Organizations can recognize and value differences, so that employees from all generations can work toward common goals. Understanding generational differences can also be utilized by practitioners to stimulate innovation, improve productivity, and develop good corporate citizens (Lyon et al., 2005).

7. Implications

7.1 Implication for researchers and managers

Organizations face challenges with a new generation entering the workforce and the older generation leaving, even as multiple global events unfold. Understanding the work value of different generations, its convergence and divergence, and its impact on their work behavior, therefore, becomes critical. Usage of bibliometric analysis to understand the intellectual structure of generational diversity at workplace is a novel attempt and can be bracketed as a pertinent contribution to the field. It provides varied lines of inquiry to the researchers through the discussion of evolution of literature on generational diversity at workplace. This research provided validation to the self-determination theory that propagates social context as an enabler for formation of work values, further explicating how these values act as a motivator of workplace behavior. The study extended the SDT to argue that work values are also the predictors of organizational outcomes. Future studies need to understand workplace bottlenecks that lead to employee frustration, predicting negative work behavior and outcomes. In addition, future studies should investigate the regional effect in our integrated generational cohort model- to sample different regions. Furthermore, researchers should test the proposed model from a quantitative approach to buttress the findings.
Organizations must align work values with practices that can retain the brightest and the best of workforce. Managers need to reassess their HR policies and practices to address specific needs of the generational cohorts to motivate, attract and retain the workforce. Furthermore, HR managers, while formulating policies, need to emphasize generational phenomena at the workplace; this includes an in-depth grasp of work values. Companies and policymakers who possess a nuanced understanding of generation-based work values are in a better position to devise flexible HR policies. For instance, HR managers can draw insights on how rewards and recognition need to be customized as per the generation-based work values. From the policymakers’ perspective of SDT, generations have their own psychological needs stemming from their values. Therefore, policies need to be evaluated on the basis of whether they allow the cohorts to initiate their cohort-specific behavior freely. Work orientation as a work value is a shared space across generations, and HR policymakers need to highlight ‘meaningfulness of work’ while devising retention strategies.

8. Limitations

The bibliometric study utilized a single source to collect the data (SCOPUS), which indicates the possibility of omitting publications from the other databases. Future studies must target other databases to ensure more exhaustive data collection. Since multigenerational workforce area is relatively nascent in HR research, similar longitudinal studies need to be carried out to report new phenomena and concerns about the topic. Another limitation of the study is the research design, as the data has been collected largely from metropolitan cities in India. Hence, the regional and country effect in the findings may be addressed by future studies collating a more diverse dataset to validate the proposed model. Also, bibliometric analysis has its own set of drawbacks; for instance, descriptions of clusters as conceptual foundations of the multigenerational workforce research might be biased. In addition, typifying of keywords into themes as a contemporary research technique may be bias-ridden. Although the data has been adequately analyzed and interpreted to explore the patterns, the coding process can be further improved by putting in additional rigor. The study is grounded in secondary and qualitative data, restricting the generalization of the findings. Hence, future studies need to investigate varied relationships in the model with a quantitative analysis method to offer robust empirical evidence.

References


Dear Reviewer,

Hope you are doing well in these testing times. Thanks for positively considering and reviewing our work on manuscript IJM-04-2019-0207 entitled “Intellectual Structure of Multigenerational workforce and Contextualizing work values across generations: A multi stage analysis.”.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to reviewers who have given such an insightful comment to improve our manuscript significantly. We tried our best to address all your comments. Please see below the changes we have made.

Reviewer 1

Q1. I am happy with the revised version of the paper. However, some of the references are missing from the list at the end of paper. These should be checked and corrected.

*Thanks to the reviewer for your valuable input. Sincere apologies for missing in-text citation in the reference list. We revised the reference section in the manuscript. As expected, we have limited the number of references to 50. We have also ensured that number of words including references meets journal requirement. Hope the revised addition meets the expectations of the reviewers.*

Answer to Question 01

Revised…Reference


