

Generational difference on personality and organizational commitment in a case firm

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ABSTRACT

In the present workplace there is diversity among generations. It turns out to be essential to develop different management practices for each generation according to their uniqueness. The study was aimed at analysing differences that exist in personality and organizational commitment of the employees belonging to different generations working in the same workplace. The research instruments used were big five inventory for measuring personality traits and organizational commitment was assessed by three component models of Allen and Meyer. The results revealed that Generation X employees were high in conscientiousness, Generation Y in neuroticism and Generation X in commitment. Managers and human resource practitioners should focus on improving the organizational commitment of different employees.

Keywords: Generational diversity; Generation X; Generation Y; personality; organizational commitment

INTR ODUCTION

In the current working place diversity among generations exists among the human resource and these differences give challenges to the employers of the organizations to retain and manage their employees which belong to the different generations. Generational diversity is the differences among the generations where each generation has different historical events when they are brought up and experience the same event within the same time interval.

Diversity is of two types: surface level and deep level. Diversity which is visible is surface level and invisible is deep level. Surface level diversity can lead employees to perceive one another through stereotypes and assumptions. Age, race, ethnicity, gender etc are the surface level diversities. Personality, attitudes, values and leadership are some of the deep level diversities. Generational diversity exists when individuals start mingling with each other; they forget the surface level diversity after understanding each other's deep differences like personality, attitude, values and perception.

Generations are classified according to the generational cohort theory (Strauss and Howe 1991). It is evident that four generations are working together in today's workplace namely baby boomers (born year range from 1946-1964), Generation X (born year range from 1965 to 1980), Generation Y (born year range from 1981 to 1994) and Generation Z (born year range from 1995-2012) (Glass 2007).

The best strategy that managers could use to bring in employee productivity, corporate citizenship and innovation is to understand the generational diversity in the workplace (Kupperschmidt 2000). It is also helpful for both the employee and the employer for their well-being. The knowledge on diversity helps the employers to design a job, select suitable candidates for their organizations and assign appropriate tasks to them. This would reduce the generational conflict among the employees and enhance the team work. Generations X and Y occupy maximum positions in the present business organizations. Hence the present study investigated the diversity of personality and organizational commitment in Generations X and Y employees in a case firm.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and data collection

The study was conducted in a case firm located in Karur district, Tamil Nadu. The respondents were employees working in the various departments of the firm. The employees were classified into Generation X (1965-1980) and Generation Y (1981-1994) based on the year of birth (Salleh et al 2017). Fifty respondents were selected from each generation using purposive sampling method from various departments resulting in a sample size of 100.

Personality of the employees was assessed using the big five inventory (BFI) which was a self-report inventory with 44 items selected for its high reliability ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 and respondents were asked to rate short phrases on a five-point scale. BFI consisted of five psychological dimensions viz extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Based on the scores on the scale, employees were divided into low, medium and high levels and their characteristics (Table 1).

Organizational commitment of the employees was assessed using three component model of organizational commitment scale (Allen and Meyer 1990) which was also a self-report inventory with 24 items selected for its high reliability 0.87, 0.75 and 0.79 for affective, continuance and normative commitment respectively and respondents were asked to rate short phrases on a seven point scale. Scale consisted of three dimensions viz affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

Affective commitment is the positive emotional attachment of the employees to the organization and the employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organization. Continuance commitment is based on the costs associated with while leaving the organization. Employees with strong continuance commitment remain with the organization because they have to stay. Normative commitment refers to commitment based on a sense of obligation to the organization. Employees with strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to stay with the organization. Based on the scores on the scale, employees were divided into low, medium and high levels of commitment. Percentages and mean values were used to analyze the personality and commitments of the sample respondents.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Personality of generations

Personality traits of the generations were assessed using BFI (Figs 1, 2). The Cronbach alpha value for BFI scale was 0.964. This indicated that the scale had high reliability (Singh and Yu 2010, John et al 1991, 2008).

It can be inferred from Fig 1 that in extraversion trait 72 per cent of the employees were at medium followed by high (16%) and low (12%) level. In agreeableness 56 per cent were at medium followed by high (40%) and low (4%) level. On the other hand in conscientiousness 52 per cent of the employees were at high followed by medium (42%) and low (6%) level. In neuroticism, 58 per cent had low and the remaining

Table 1. Characteristics of big five factors

Personality trait	Level		
	Low	Medium	High
Extraversion	Reserved, timid and quiet	Moderate in enthusiasm and activity	Outgoing, gregarious, assertive and sociable
Agreeableness	Cold, disagreeable and antagonistic	Usually warm and trusting but sometimes stubborn	Cooperative, warm and trusting
Conscientiousness	Easily distracted, disorganized and unreliable	Moderately well organized	Responsible, organized, dependable and persistent
Neuroticism	Calm, self-confident and secure	Usually calm and stable but sometimes experiencing feelings of guilt	Nervous, anxious, depressed and insecure
Openness to experience	Practical and traditional	They seek a balance between the old and new	Imaginative and Insightful

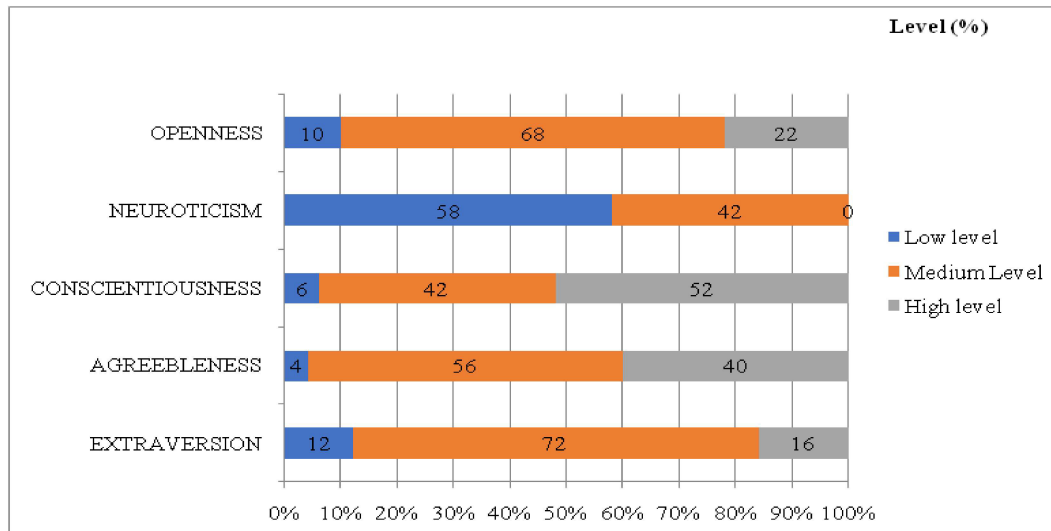


Fig 1. Personality of the Generation X

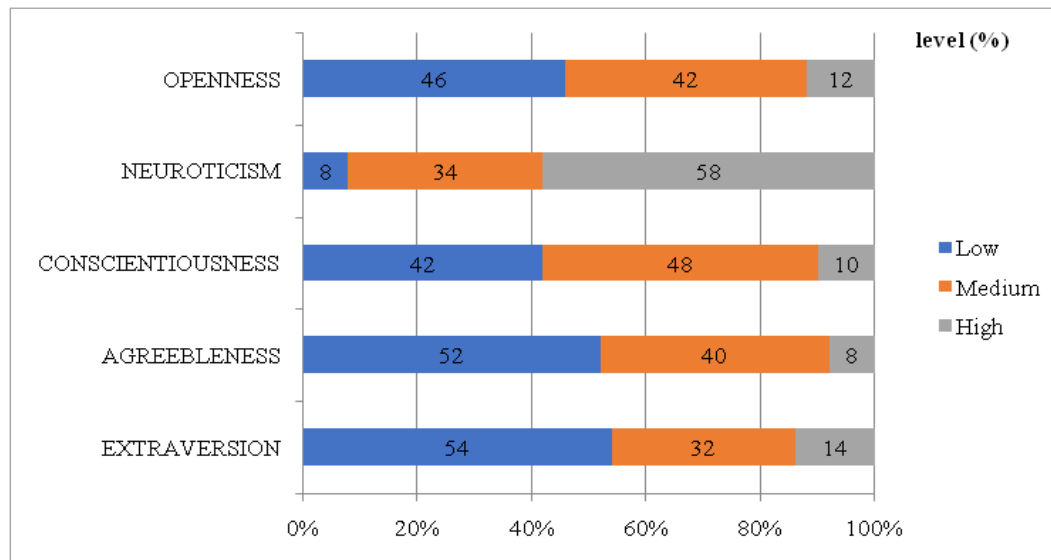


Fig 2. Personality of the Generation Y

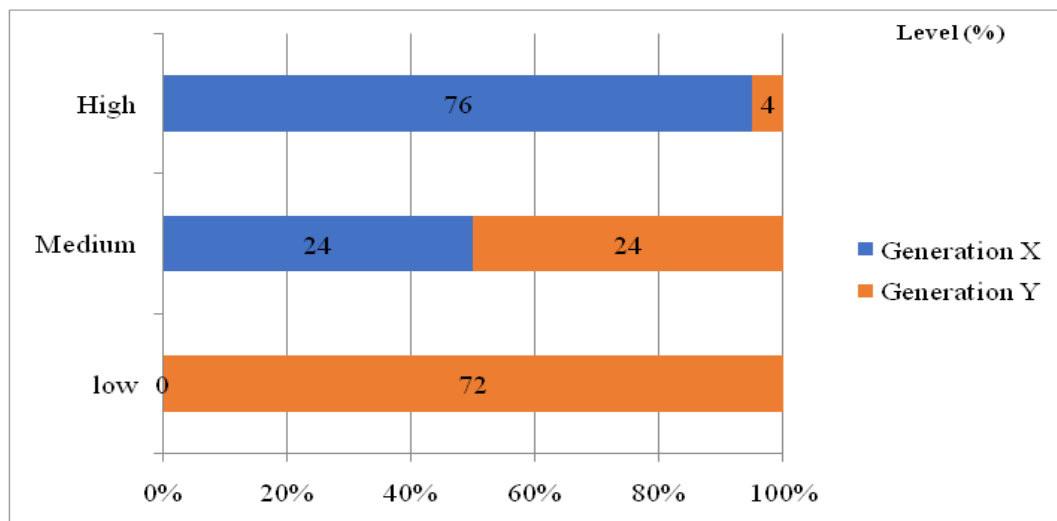


Fig 3. Organizational commitment of Generations X and Y

medium level. In openness to experience 68, 22 and 10 per cent employees had medium, high and low level respectively.

Fig 2 indicates that under extraversion trait 54, 32 and 14 per cent, under agreeableness 52, 40 and 8 per cent, under conscientiousness 42, 48 and 10 per cent under neuroticism 8, 34 and 58 per cent and under openness to experience 46, 42 and 12 per cent employees had low, medium and high levels respectively.

As per the results majority of Generation X employees were high in conscientiousness and Generation Y employees in neuroticism. This indicates that Generation Y employees were emotionally unstable means depressed and nervous in a certain situation and Generation X were organized, hardworking and committed.

Organizational commitment of generations

Organizational commitment of the Generations was assessed using three component model (Fig 3). The Cronbach alpha value for organizational commitment scale was 0.891. This indicates that the scale had high reliability (Namasivayam and Zhao 2017, Seršia 2000).

It can be inferred from Fig 3 that 76 per cent of employees from Generation X had high level; both Generations X and Y had equal (24%) medium level and Generation Y had low level (72%) of commitment with the organization. This indicates that Generation X had higher level as compared to Generation Y.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge on generational diversity could be utilized for managing the employees of different generations in an organization. The case firm under study consisted of Generation X and Y employees. They were in the middle level management. Therefore under human resource management emphasis needs to be on recruitment, retention, executive development, carrier planning and employee welfare.

The recruitment strategy of making a candidate should be adopted for Generation X. This should be adopted for higher positions at the middle and the upper management levels. This would motivate the Generation X employees and make them perform well. In some cases buying a

candidate could be adopted for certain positions with challenging assignments. This could bring in new talents of Generation X to the organization. Some of the Generation Y employees might seek new employment. Psychometric test, group discussion and behavioral interview combined with situational interview should be adopted for selecting the Generation Y candidates for the new positions.

Generations X and Y must be trained for higher positions. They would be the top level managers in the future. So they must be trained in required knowledge, skill and ability for the higher positions. Personality development and leadership training should be given to them. This would enable them to move along the carrier ladder. Generation Y employees should be given training on emotional intelligence as they were high in neuroticism.

Retention strategies should be adapted to Generation Y as they were not committed to the organization. They might switch over to other jobs as per their personal requirements. Their motives must be identified for retention as their personality factors were not contributing to their commitment. Supportive work environment, carrier growth, work life balance and recognition for their performance would help in retaining them. Hardworking, responsible, supportive and persistent (conscientiousness and agreeableness traits) Generation X employees should be rewarded for their performance. They won't quit the organization as they were committed.

Employee-friendly measures were vital for retaining Generations X and Y. Mentoring should be done for Generation Y for settling their issues in the organization. Flexi-time could be adopted for Generation X and Y employees if possible.

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