UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE: ARE THE GENERATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT OR SIMILAR?

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Abstract

The paper assesses how the generations differ, if they in fact do, and the impact of their biographical profiles, in terms of six critical factors that define the organisational context. These organisational dimensions include extrinsic values/rewards, an interesting and motivating work environment, a flexible and efficient work environment, workplace fun, learning and diversity and, constant growth and advancement in the workplace. The population comprises of all staff in a local municipal department consisting of 300 employees from which a sample of 93 employees was drawn using cluster sampling. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The psychometric properties (validity and reliability) of the questionnaires were statistically determined using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha respectively. The results of the study reflect that generational differences exist in terms of an interesting and motivating work environment, a flexibile and efficient work environment and, opportunities for learning and diversity. Furthermore, between the generations, biographical impacts also exist relating to gender, position, tenure and education in terms of the organisational dimensions except for workplace fun where no significant biographical differences were noted amongst the generations, implying that all generations irrespective of biographical profiles crave for workplace fun. Hence, the generations are significantly different in some respects and similar in others. Based on the results of the study, recommendations are made to ensure that generational differences are effectively accommodated to ensure optimal cohesion amongst the various generations and the skillful integration of their strengths that will optimise the realisation of organisational goals.

Keywords: Millennials, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, Generation Ys, Biographical Impacts, Workplace Fun

1. INTRODUCTION

The workplace is a mix of various generations of employees whose experiences in their respective times have moulded them into individuals with characteristics that define their generation. Currently Baby Boomers and Generation X employees make up a substantial part of the workforce with the most recent addition being millennials (Kowske, Rasch & Wiley, 2010). According to Luttrell and McLean (2013), by 2020 the millennial generation will comprise 40% of professionals in the world. This new generation of employees possess a significantly diverse set of values, attitudes and expectations from generations of workers who preceded them and are perceived as adopting a different approach to the workforce and the corporate world (Harris-Boundy & Flatt, 2010).

Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) were trained in a linear fashion, educated through lectures, recognised for their career prioritization, place more value on personal relationships amongst fellow workers, put much more time and effort into their work, prefer to focus on one task at a time, are competitive and, desire commitment and job security from their employers (Calvert, 2010; Cekada, 2012; EBSCO Corporate Learning Watch, 2013). Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1980) were educated through the use of cases or modules, undertook research by using indexes in books to locate the required information, had a structured learning environment (Warren, 2012), possess distinctive traits such as being individualistic, risk-tolerant, self-reliant, flexible and creative, technologically savvy, strong multi-taskers, entrepreneurial, content with diversity and place value on work-life balance (EBSCO Corporate Learning Watch, 2013; Gentry, Griggs, Deal, Mondore and Cox, 2011; Salahuddin, 2010). Generation Ys (born between 1980 and 2002), also known as millennials, Echo Boomers, the Baby-on-board Generation, the Entitled Generation, the Net Generation, Screenagers, Facebookers, the MySpace Generation and Generation Nexters to name a few, possess a high level of technological competencies (Ng & Gossett, 2013), conducted research within a networked structure using the iPad rather than the blackboard (Warren, 2012), do not care to read books and hence, became known as the 'digital natives' (Ford, Jenkins & Oliver, 2011-2012; Jones & Shao, 2011; Warren, 2012), desire flexibility as a part

of their learning or work environment and have easy access to limitless information (Warren, 2012).

Chang (2011) highlights that millennials in South Africa are a much more different group of individuals than their counterparts worldwide. Due to the impact of globalisation and international effects, millennials in South Africa tend to be self-confident, optimistic, hopeful, autonomous, persistent, goal oriented, motivated by success, lifestyle-centric, different but inclusive, international, civic and mindful of the community and, business-minded (Martins & Martins, 2012). The majority of these children represent South Africa's first Black generation to have profited from the political transformation in the country and are often branded as 'Model C' children (Smith, 2010a), are very family focused and crave a lot of attention, face problematic employment market defined by rising levels of unemployment, thereby creating a group of annoyed and cynical millennials and having experienced racial integration, they are culturally incorporated and favour diversity (Bannon, Ford & Meltzer, 2011; Martins & Martins, 2012, Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

It is well documented that each generation has its own values, needs and expectations (Gentry et al., 2011; Harris-Boundy & Flatt, 2010; Kowske et al., 2010; Lyons, Ng & Schweitzer, 2014; Ng & Gossett, 2013; Warren, 2012) that need to be understood in order to ensure their harmonious and successful integration within the organisation. Hence, it is the aim of this study to assess how the generations differ, if they in fact do, and the impact of their biographical profiles, in terms of six critical factors that define the organisational context. These factors include extrinsic values/rewards, an interesting and motivating work environment, a flexible and efficient work environment, workplace fun, learning and diversity and, constant growth and advancement in the workplace.

1.1. Extrinsic values/rewards

Extrinsic values refer to the visible rewards that are external to the individual such as income, promotional opportunities and status (Twenge, 2010). Organisations in today's 21st century are largely adopting the total reward compensation model that incorporates the entire reward components, namely, monetary value (base salary, variable pay, stock), benefits (health care, retirement savings, paid vacation) and intangible rewards (employee learning and development opportunities, quality of work-life, a nurturing work environment and other employee benefits and privileges) (Huybers, 2011). In their study, D'Netto & Ahmed (2012) found that almost 60% of Generation Y individuals mentioned high income, good health and benefit plans and other forms of compensation as motivational job characteristics. Nimon (2010) indicates that the new cohort of millennial employees' higher education attainment levels causes them to search for lucrative jobs and hold much higher expectations in relation to salaries and advancement opportunities in the workplace than any of the earlier generations (Nimon, 2010). .

Lyons, Ng and Schweitzer (2010), however, mentions that despite their prioritised need for high salaries, millennials are still in search of something

additional in reward for their diligent efforts, than just a salary. Believing that life has more to offer than just a big pay cheque (Twenge, 2010), Generation Ys expect to be compensated with good health and benefit plans from their organisation, which could comprise of medical cover, dental and vision care, cell phones, tickets to events, funded holidays, wellness and fitness programs, laundry services, subsidised utilities/housing, training and development, ample paid leave, retirement savings plans and social security (Battistolo, 2012; Seppanen, 2012). Millennials also seek job security.

1.2. An interesting and motivating work environment

Millennials desire an interesting and motivating work environment in order to make their work exciting (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010) which often includes the provision of a challenging job and involvement in decision-making. Lyons et al. (2010) mention that this new generation of employees has very little patience for any kind of work that does not challenge them. They do not hesitate to ask their employers challenging questions (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011) and believe in a democratic style of leadership which allows everyone the opportunity to share their good ideas, and by so doing, recogising the significance and the value that each shared idea carries (Broom, 2010). Mencl and Lester (2014) place emphasis on giving millennial employees the continuous opportunity to participate in decision-making related to their work so as to greatly empower them and make their work assignments increasingly challenging and motivating.

1.3. Flexible and efficient work arrangements

Today's millennials are constantly searching work engagements that simultaneously provide flexibility and efficiency in order to support their demanding and busy lifestyles (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). In this regard, two main issues of relevance to millennials include the successful integration of technology into the work environment and work-life balance. Millennials have grown up in a world of technology, have had exposure to enriched high-tech information and perceive it as a way of living and as a part of who they are, rather than earlier generations who utilised technology as a device to fulfill a particular task (Cahill & Sedrak, 2011).

Several researchers reflect that the millennial generation prioritises the availability of work-life balance and see it as a core workplace motivator (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Robbins, 2013). Kapoor and Solomon (2011) maintain that millennials place great significance on their leisure time and although they do enjoy their job, they do not want it to take over their lives unlike Baby Boomers who are categorised by their desire to live to work. Therefore, Smith (2010b), recommends flexible work schedules as an approach that organisations could implement, which include flexi-time, telecommuting, options to work from home, part-time employment, job-sharing hours, special vacation times, relaxation and recreation activities, family and education leave (Parker & Citera, 2010).

1.4. Workplace fun

The integration of fun and enjoyable activities into the millennials' work environment can provide them with a renewed motivation towards their work, thereby making it more meaningful, interesting and flexible.

Several researchers have concluded that Generations Ys search for meaningful work and rewarding work assignments and are less accepting of work that does not challenge them (Coulter & Faulkner, 2014; Park & Gursoy, 2012; Smith and Galbraith (2012). According to Lyons et al. (2010), more and more millennials desire to be employed by organisations that are not just interested in profit making. Hence, they search for interesting and fulfilling opportunities to grow in their careers, which will further empower them to carry out highly influential work projects and eventually make a positive contribution to the entire growth and success of the organisation (Huybers, 2011; Lyons et al., 2010).

Sharma (2012) emphasises that the millennial generation displays eagerness to give their time to various types of services for the benefit of the public and, place more importance on moral and charitable corporate responsibilities to their society (Michailides & Lipsett, 2013). McGlone, Spain and McGlone (2011) mention that millennials choose to carry out voluntary work for numerous reasons such as selflessness, inspiration from friends and family members, as well as the need for self-development and to fill up their curriculum vitae.

In addition, for numerous millennials, a fun and enjoyable workplace stand out as one of the major factors when choosing an employer, even before diversity and work-life balance (Thompson, 2011). Hence, millennials may view workplace fun as a prerequisite instead of a benefit (Choi et al., 2013). Thompson (2011) mentions that for millennials, the term 'enjoyable' means that the work environment is not merely one of fun but one that equally provides support, values its employees and continuously encourages them. Researchers indicate that the element of fun and innovativeness in the workplace was linked to definite advantages such as greater zeal from workers, team cohesiveness, worker satisfaction, personal resourcefulness, and companionships in the workplace, organisational social responsibility, decreased stress levels (Becker, 2012) and retention (Everett, 2011).

1.5. Learning and diversity

The millennial generation being constantly willing to learn favours teamwork and collaboration, a climate of diversity and the opportunity to learn from more experienced professionals and mentors. Dannar (2013) indicates that the millennial generation yearns for warm relationships within their work environment and place great significance on collaboration and teamwork as they find working in a group to be much more exciting than working individually (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Their good teamwork abilities fostered through group-based school projects, become valuable tools that contribute greatly towards higher levels of productivity, a reduction in employee turnover and

future organisational growth and success (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012; Cahill & Sedrak, 2011).

According to Hendricks and Cope (2013), generational diversity created by attracting millennials and retaining Baby Boomers and Generation Xers results in the sharing of mutual principles and provides an opportunity for teaching and training within the workplace (Hendricks & Cope, 2013). Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) maintain that the millennial generation is increasingly open-minded and tolerant towards the concept of diversity in comparison to earlier generations and Lyons et al. (2010) believe that workplace diversity is a key determinant for millennials' employer of choice. Bannon et al. (2011) indicate that for millennials, diversity is part of life, and entering a work environment that does not support diversity would be startling to them.

According to Thorpe (2013), Generation Y individuals yearn to learn from more experienced professionals and their co-workers in the work environment. Schullery (2013) outlines a two-way mentoring program whereby millennials, being technologically savvy, can be teamed up with a much more skilled professional in the work environment to share technological proficiency in exchange for support and guidance towards career development and success within the workplace context. These types of mentoring affiliations develop mutual respect between generations and enhance the diverse set of talents carried by each generation (Houck, 2011). The mentoring programs make millennials increasingly knowledgeable and aware of the numerous opportunities available to them in the workplace leading to enriched job decisions (D'Netto and Ahmed, 2012) and unlocks communication routes and mutual respect leading to better rapport between the generations (Houck, 2012) and productive mentoring (Mohr, Moreno-Walton, Mills, Brunett, & Promes, 2011). Today's millennial generation no longer places limitations on the number of mentors they can have (Thorpe, 2013) and in this regard Houck (2012) mentions that technology supports a team-based approach to mentoring combined with ease of access to more than one mentor.

1.6. Constant growth and advancement in the workplace

Millennials have high career aspirations which determine their employment preferences (Ismail & Lu, 2014). Hence, when assessing issues of millennials' growth and advancement important aspects include continuous learning, training and development opportunities, career advancement or development and, immediate feedback and recognition.

The new cohort of millennial employees greatly value a work environment that is defined by sufficient possibilities to be innovative and create new concepts, combined with multiple opportunities to learn, develop and grow. In this regard, researchers emphasize the importance of training and development as a tool to improving millennials' knowledge, self-realisation (Kibui & Kanyiri, 2014), work performance and growth (Verma, 2013). Being characterised as 'continuous learners' in search for life-long learning, e-learning opportunities can

enhance millennials' passion for technology and increase retention rates in the workplace (Brack, 2012). Mencl and Lester (2014) reiterate that the millennial generation attributes much more value to an organisation that encourages and promotes a continuous learning environment, in contrast to the older generations and, are increasingly driven by a fast-tracked career (Kuhl, 2014). Furthermore, whilst the Baby Boomer generation has a preference for feedback once a year, Generation Xers and the millennial generation desire frequent and instantaneous feedback and continuous encouragement from their work environment (Melnychuk, 2013; Rajani, 2012; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Farrell and Hurt (2014) point out that millennial employees desire to be given feedback all the way through an entire project in order to make certain that the much sought after improvement is taking place.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research approach

The research methodology has been designed to undertake a quantitative, cross-sectional study to assess how the generations differ, if they in fact do, and the impact of their biographical profiles, in terms of six critical factors that define the organisational context. These factors include extrinsic values/rewards, an interesting and motivating work environment, a flexible and efficient work environment, workplace fun, learning and diversity and, constant growth and advancement in the workplace.

2.2. Respondents

The populations comprised of all staff in a local municipal department consisting of 300 employees from which a sample of 93 employees was drawn using cluster sampling. Although the desired sample size was not achieved, the adequacy of the sample was determined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.705) and the Bartlett's Test of Spherecity (1728.680, p = 0.000) which respectively indicated suitability and significance. The results indicate that the normality and homoscedasticity preconditions are satisfied. The composition of the sample may be described in terms of age, gender, position, tenure and education. The majority of participants in the organisation are 45 years and above (34.4%), male (60.2%) participants, being at employee level (61.3%), with a tenure of 11 years and more (46.2%) and having a diploma (33.3%) followed by a degree (28%). Generations were determined based on age. Those participants who are 21 to 32 years were regarded as Generation Ys and made up 34.4% of the sample, those between 33 to 44 years were labelled as Generation Xers and comprised of 31.2% of the sample and those who are 45 years and older were referred to as Baby Boomers and constituted 34.4% of the sample. Evidently, the various generations are almost equally represented.

2.3. Measuring Instrument

Data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of two sections relating to the objectives of this study. Section A related to the biographical information (age, gender, position, tenure and education) and was collected using a nominal scale with pre-coded option categories. The generations were classified using the age of respondents. Section B comprised of 34 items which assess employee perceptions of the six organisational dimensions of external values/rewards (6 items), an interesting and motivating work environment (5 items), learning and diversity (5 items), flexible and efficient work arrangements (5 items), workplace fun (6 items) and constant growth and advancement in the workplace (7 items) and, the extent to which the various generations view these organisational dimensions differently. A 1 to 5 point Likert scale is used ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). In-house pretesting was adopted to assess the suitability of the instrument. Pilot testing was also undertaken by administering the questionnaire to 9 employees (3 employees from each generation) in the target population using the same protocols as would be used in the final administration. The feedback from the pilot testing confirmed that the questionnaire was appropriate in terms of relevance, wording and construction.

3. MEASURES

The validity of the questionnaire was assessed using Factor Analysis. A principal component analysis was used to extract initial factors and an iterated principal factor analysis was performed using SPSS with an Orthogonal Varimax Rotation. Only items with loadings >0.5 were considered to be significant. Furthermore, when items were significantly loaded on more than one factor, only that with the highest value was selected. In terms of the anticipated dimensions of the study, 6 factors with latent latent roots greater than unity were extracted from the factor loading matrix (Table 1).

Table 1. Factor Analysis - Validity of the instrument

Organisational dimensions perceived by the various generations			
Factor	*Eigenvalue*	*% of Total Variance*	*Dimension/Label*
1	6.621	19.47	Workplace fun
2	5.476	16.11	Constant growth and advancement in the workplace
3	2.925	8.60	Extrinsic value/rewards
4	2.592	7.62	Flexible and efficient work environment
5	2.305	6.78	Learning and diversity
6	2.075	6.10	An interesting and motivating work environment

The overall reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (Alpha = 0.930). This alpha coefficient indicates a very high level of internal consistency of the items and, hence, a high degree of reliability. The

reliabilities of the respective organisational dimensions were also assessed (Table 2).

Table 2. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha: Reliability of the Instrument

Overall Reliability and Reliabilities per organisational dimension	
Dimension	*Cronbach's Alpha*
Extrinsic values/rewards	0.580
An interesting and motivating work environment	0.859
Learning and diversity	0.717
Flexible and efficient work environment	0.675
Workplace fun	0.881
Constant growth and advancement in the workplace	0.876
Overall Questionnaire	0.930

Table 2 indicates that the reliabilities for the various organisational dimensions range from moderate (0.580) to very high level (0.881) with the overall reliability reflecting a very high level of inter-item consistency (0.930).

3.1. Administration of the measuring instrument

The questionnaires were administered personally by the researchers with the assistance of a designated employee who was aware of the work setting over a two day period and, therefore, allowed opportunity for building rapport and clarification.

3.2. Statistical analysis

Descriptive (means, standard deviations) and inferential (Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA) statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Hypothesis 1

Employees varying in biographical profiles (age/generation, gender, position, tenure, education)

differ significantly in their perceptions of the key dimensions of the study that determine the integration and management of millennials in the workplace (extrinsic values/rewards, an interesting and motivating work environment, a flexible and efficient work environment, workplace fun, learning and diversity and constant growth and development in the workplace) respectively (Table 3 to Table 12).

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA Test: Dimensions of the Study and Age/Generation

Dimensions	*Chi-Square*	*Df*	*p*
Extrinsic Values/Rewards	3.096	2	0.213
An Interesting and Motivating Work Environment	18.556	2	0.000*
Flexible and Efficient Work Environment	8.744	2	0.013**
Workplace Fun	2.770	2	0.250
Learning and Diversity	6.304	2	0.043**
Constant Growth and Advancement in the Workplace	2.546	2	0.280

*Note: * p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05*

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Anova test in Table 3 indicate significant differences in the perceptions of employees from the different generations regarding an interesting and motivating work environment at the 1% level of significance. In addition, employees from the different generations differ significantly in their perceptions of a flexible and efficient work environment and, learning and diversity at the 5% level of significance respectively. No other significant differences were noted amongst employees from the different generations with regards to extrinsic values or rewards, workplace fun and constant growth and advancement in the workplace. Hence, hypothesis 1 may only be partially accepted in terms of differences based on age/generation. In order to understand where these differences lie, mean analyses were conducted (Table 4).

Table 4. Multiple comparisons and Mean Analyses for dimensions based on Generation

Multiple Comparisons					
Dependent Variable	*(I) Age*	*(J) Age*	*Mean difference (I-J)*	*Std. Error*	*p*
An interesting and motivating work environment	Baby Boomers	Generation Y	0.850	0.19068	0.000*
		Generation X	0.680	0.19555	0.003*
Flexible and efficient work environment	Generation Y	Generation X	0.488	0.19189	0.044*
Learning and diversity	Baby Boomers	Generation Y	0.450	0.18105	0.050*
Dimensions	*N*	*Generation*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	
An Interesting and Motivating Work Environment	32	Generation Y	3.113	0.89434	
	29	Generation X	3.283	0.61532	
	32	Baby Boomers	3.963	0.73966	
Flexible and efficient work environment	32	Generation Y	3.438	0.72100	
	29	Generation X	2.950	0.69668	
	32	Baby Boomers	3.066	0.81740	
Learning and diversity	32	Generation Y	3.479	0.87554	
	29	Generation X	3.603	0.59828	
	32	Baby Boomers	3.929	0.65785	

With regards to generation, Table 4 indicates that Baby Boomers are significantly different from Generation Y and Generations Xers in that the former were more convinced that the organisation is an interesting and motivating work environment.

The mean analyses also reflect that employees in Generation Y are least convinced that their work environment is interesting and motivating. With regards to having a flexible and efficient work environment, employees from Generation Y were

more convinced than all other employees, especially Generation Xers, that they have a flexible and efficient work environment. With regards to learning and diversity, Baby Boomers believed that they experience learning and diversity in their workplace. All other employees, especially Generation Ys expected a greater degree of learning and diversity.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA Test: Dimensions of the study based on generation and gender

Dimension	Gender					
	Male			Female		
	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	p
Extrinsic Values or Rewards	6.322	2	0.042**	1.447	2	0.485
An interesting and Motivating Work Environment	11.285	2	0.004*	8.612	2	0.013**
Flexible and Efficient Work Environment	0.510	2	0.775	14.689	2	0.001*
Workplace Fun	5.477	2	0.065	4.459	2	0.108
Learning and Diversity	1.182	2	0.554	5.736	2	0.057
Constant Growth and Advancement in the Workplace	0.497	2	0.780	6.488	2	0.039**

*Note: * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$*

Table 5 indicates that there is a significant difference in the extent to which males from the various generations (Generations Ys, Generation Xers, Baby Boomers) believe that they work in an interesting and motivating work environment, at the 1% level of significance. Furthermore, there is a significant difference in extrinsic values or rewards between Generation Ys, Generation Xers and Baby boomers amongst the males at the 5% level of significance.

Table 5 also indicates that females from Generation Ys, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers differ significantly in the extent to which they believe they work in a flexible and efficient work environment, at the 1% level of significance. In addition, there is a significant difference in the extent to which females from the various generations (Generation Ys, Generation Xers, Baby Boomers) believe that they work in an interesting and motivating work environment and have constant growth and advancement in the workplace, at the 5% level of significance.

No other significant differences were noted. Hence, hypothesis 1 may only be partially accepted in terms of gender across the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers). In order to assess exactly where the aforementioned significant differences lie, mean rankings were compared (Table 6).

Table 6. Kruskal-Wallis Test: Key dimensions of the study – Gender across the Generations

Dimension	Generation	Gender			
		Male		Female	
		N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank
Extrinsic Values or Rewards	Generation Y	16	26.84		
	Generation X	19	22.50		
	Baby Boomers	21	35.19		
An interesting and Motivating Work Environment	Generation Y	16	20.94	16	17.19
	Generation X	19	24.74	10	13.50
	Baby Boomers	21	37.67	11	26.64
Flexible and Efficient Work Environment	Generation Y			16	26.56
	Generation X			10	11.70
	Baby Boomers			11	14.64
Constant Growth and Advancement in the Workplace	Generation Y			16	24.16
	Generation X			10	15.60
	Baby Boomers			11	14.59

From Table 6 it is evident that male Baby Boomers are most convinced that their organisation provides extrinsic values and rewards whilst male Generation Xers are most unhappy in this regard. Furthermore, male Baby Boomers are also most convinced that the organisation provides an interesting and motivating work environment whilst Generations Ys display distinct unhappiness in this regard. Likewise, female Baby Boomers were more convinced than female Generation Ys and Xers respectively that their organisation provides an interesting and motivating work environment. Evidently, female Generation Xers were least satisfied with their work environment in terms of being interesting and motivating. It is also evident that females in all Generation categories are less convinced than their male counterpart in each generation that their work environment is interesting and motivating.

Table 6 also reflects that female Generation Ys are most happy with their work environment being flexible and efficient and providing opportunities for constant growth and advancement although female Baby Boomers and Generation Xers were not as satisfied with these.

Table 7 indicates that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of Senior Managers from the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers) regarding the extent of learning and diversity in the organisation, at the 5% level of significance. Furthermore, employees from the various generations (Generation Y, Generations X, Baby Boomers) differ significantly in the extent to which they believe their work environment is interesting and motivating, at the 5% level of significance. No other significant differences were noted. Hence, Hypothesis 1 may be partially accepted in terms of position amongst the various generations. In order to determine exactly where these significant differences lie, mean rankings were assessed Table 8).

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA Test: Dimensions of the study based on generation and position

Dimension	Position														
	Senior Level Manager			Middle Level Manager			Lower Level Manager			Employee			Other		
	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df		Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	p
Extrinsic values or rewards	0.047	1	0.828	0.063	2	0.969	0.682	2	0.711	1.615	2	0.446	0.200	1	0.655
An interesting and motivating work environment	2.794	1	0.095	4.776	2	0.092	2.218	2	0.330	6.711	2	0.035**	0.200	1	0.655
A flexible and efficient work environment	2.311	1	0.128	3.052	2	0.217	4.873	2	0.087	3.460	2	0.177	1.800	1	0.180
Workplace Fun	0.012	1	0.914	1.706	2	0.426	0.561	2	0.756	3.362	2	0.186	1.800	1	0.180
Learning and diversity	5.369	1	0.020**	1.817	2	0.403	2.192	2	0.334	1.791	2	0.408	0.889	1	0.346
Growth and advancement in the workplace	0.112	1	0.737	2.799	2	0.247	3.544	2	0.170	1.935	2	0.380	1.800	1	0.180

*Note: * $p \leq 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$*

Table 8. Kruskal-Wallis Test: Key dimensions of the study – Position across the Generations

Dimension	Generation*	Senior Level Manager		Employee	
		N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank
An interesting and motivating work environment	Generation Y			16	25.31
	Generation X			16	38.06
	Baby Boomers			25	25.56
Learning and diversity	Generation X	4	2.88		
	Baby Boomers	6	7.25		

*Note: * There were no Generation Ys in Senior Level Management*

Table 8 indicates that whilst Generation X employees were extremely happy with their work environment being interesting and motivating; however, both Baby Boomers and Generations Ys did not share the same view as the former. Furthermore, as expected there were no Generation Ys at senior management level. However, Senior Level Baby Boomers were happier with learning and diversity in their work environment than Senior Level Generation Xers although the level of satisfaction in both generations was quite low.

Table 9. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA Test: Dimensions of the study based on generation and tenure

Dimension	Tenure														
	Less than 1 year			2 to 5 years			6 to 10 years			11 to 20 years			More than 20 years		
	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	P	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	p
Extrinsic values or rewards	1.684	2	0.431	1.743	2	0.418	4.375	2	0.112	0.548	2	0.760	1.567	1	0.211
An interesting and motivating work environment	5.494	2	0.064	0.550	2	0.760	3.752	2	0.153	10.266	2	0.006	0.395	1	0.529
A flexible and efficient work environment	3.813	2	0.149	1.296	2	0.523	4.383	2	0.112	0.524	2	0.770	0.335	1	0.563
Workplace Fun	1.814	2	0.404	2.374	2	0.305	2.832	2	0.243	1.834	2	0.400	0.002	1	0.962
Learning and diversity	1.204	2	0.548	2.407	2	0.300	2.104	2	0.349	7.165	2	0.028**	2.236	1	0.135
Growth and advancement in the workplace	3.276	2	0.194	1.378	2	0.502	1.175	2	0.556	0.064	2	0.968	2.103	1	0.147

*Note: * $p \leq 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$*

Table 9 indicates that employees with a tenure of 11 to 20 years in the organisation across the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers) differ significantly in their views of learning and diversity in the organisation. No other significant differences were noted. Hence, Hypothesis 2 may only be partially accepted in terms of tenure across the generations. In order to determine exactly where these significant differences lie, mean rankings were assessed Table 10).

Table 10. Kruskal-Wallis Test: Key dimensions of the study – Tenure across the Generations

Dimension	Generation	11 to 20 years	
		N	Mean Rank
Learning and diversity	Generation X	10	7.40
	Baby Boomers	11	26.19

*Note: * There were no Generation Ys with 11 to 20 years in the organisation*

Table 10 reflects that in the absence of Generations Y with 11 to 20 years of experience in the organisation, 11 to 20 year tenured Baby Boomers are more convinced that learning and diversity occurs in the organisation than Generation Xers with the same amount of experience in the organisation.

Table 11. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA Test: Dimensions of the study based on generation and education

Dimension	Education											
	Grade 12			*Diploma*			*Degree*			*Post-graduate Degree*		
	Chi-square	Df	P	Chi-square	Df	p	Chi-square	df	p	Chi-square	df	p
Extrinsic values or rewards	0.142	2	0.931	6.860	2	0.032**	0.972	2	0.615	2.914	2	0.233
An interesting and motivating work environment	1.502	2	0.472	2.458	2	0.293	11.195	2	0.004*	8.312	2	0.016**
A flexible and efficient work environment	4.430	2	0.109	4.739	2	0.094	0.335	2	0.846	2.938	2	0.230
Workplace Fun	2.711	2	0.258	4.034	2	0.133	4.334	2	0.115	2.187	2	0.335
Learning and diversity	1.703	2	0.427	0.004	2	0.998	3.485	2	0.175	7.118	2	0.028**
Growth and advancement in the workplace	3.447	2	0.178	1.649	2	0.438	1.130	2	0.568	1.356	2	0.508

*Note: * p ≤ 0.01, ** p < 0.05*

Table 11 indicates that employees with a diploma across the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers) differ significantly in their views of extrinsic values or rewards, at the 5% level of significance. Furthermore, employees with a degree from the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers) differ significantly in the extent to which they believe their work environment is interesting and motivating, at the 1% level of significance. A significant difference also exists amongst employees with a post-graduate degree from the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers) regarding the extent to which their work environment is an interesting and motivating one and provides for learning and diversity, at the 5% level of significance respectively. No other significant differences were noted. Hence, hypothesis 1 may only be partially accepted in terms of education levels across the various generations. In order to determine exactly where the significant differences lie, mean rankings were assessed (Table 12).

Table 12. Kruskal-Wallis Test: Key dimensions of the study – Education across the Generations

Dimension	Generation	Education					
		Diploma		*Degree*		*Post-graduate Degree*	
		N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank	N	Mean Rank
Extrinsic values or rewards	Generation Y	17	15.15				
	Generation X	9	12.44				
	Baby Boomers	5	25.30				
An interesting and motivating work environment	Generation Y			8	9.31	4	5.63
	Generation X			10	10.90	8	8.19
	Baby Boomers			8	20.94	7	14.57
Learning and diversity	Generation Y					4	6.50
	Generation X					8	7.94
	Baby Boomers					7	14.36

Table 12 indicates that Baby Boomer employees with a diploma were extremely happy with extrinsic values or rewards offered by their organisation; however, both Generation Ys and Generation Xers did not share the same view as the former. Furthermore, Baby Boomer employees with a degree were most convinced that the organisation provides and interesting and motivating work environment, whilst Generation Ys and Generation Xers displayed distinct unhappiness in this regard. Table 12 also reflects that Baby Boomer employees with a post-graduate-Degree are most happy with their environment being interesting and motivating and providing opportunities for learning and diversity, although it is evident that Generation Ys and Generation Xers were the least satisfied with these.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The differences amongst the generations will be discussed in terms of the six critical factors that may define the organisational context.

5.1. Extrinsic values/rewards

From the results, it is evident that there is no significant difference in perceptions of employees from the different generations regarding extrinsic values/rewards thereby indicating that all generations value extrinsic rewards to the same important extent. However, the results do reflect that male Baby Boomers and Baby Boomers with a diploma were most convinced that their organisation provided extrinsic values and rewards whilst Generation Xers were most unhappy in this regard. Tolbize (2008) mentions that Baby Boomers in general attach great importance to health and wellness and are in search of job security**.** These findings are similar to those of Widger, Pye, Cranley, Wilson-Keates, Squires and Tourangeau (2007) who found that Baby Boomers displayed significantly greater satisfaction with extrinsic rewards than both Generation Xers and Generation Ys and, that suitable compensation served as one of the motivating factors for Baby Boomers in the workplace. Yu and Miller (2005) pointed out that money and recognition are strong motivators for Baby Boomers. Likewise, Parry and Urwin (2011) revealed that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers in general equally

valued a high income and a steady and secure future as the most significant motivational influences.

5.2. An interesting and motivating work environment

The results reflect that the different generations held varying opinions about their organisation being an interesting and motivating work environment. Baby Boomers were the most convinced that their organisation provided them with an interesting and motivating work environment, whilst Generation X and especially Generation Ys were the least convinced in this regard. Earle (2003, p. 246) indicates that organisations have discovered that Baby Boomer employees are eager to work in a "less traditional but more hectic work setting", as long as they are allowed more flexibility and freedom which will enable them to attain a balance between their individual and work lives. However, in the current study Generation Ys were least convinced that their work environment is interesting and motivating. Researchers point out that millennials attach more significance on work that is rewarding and meaningful and, therefore, have no tolerance or patience for work that is not challenging (Lyons et al., 2010; Park & Gursoy, 2012).

Furthermore, females from Generation Y, Generation X and Baby Boomers differ significantly in the extent to which they believe that they work in an interesting and motivating work environment. Deeper analyses reflect that male and female Baby Boomers were more convinced than male and female Generation Ys and Xers respectively that their organisation provided an interesting and motivating work environment. Male Generation Ys and female Generation Xers were least satisfied with their work environment being interesting and motivating. The results also revealed that females in all Generation categories were less convinced than their male counterparts in each generation that their work environment was interesting and motivating. Therefore, Parry and Urwin (2009) discovered that Generation Ys and Generation Xers in general value challenging opportunities and taking the lead on innovative job assignments.

In addition, in the current study it was found that Baby Boomer employees with a degree were most convinced that the organisation provided an interesting and motivating work environment, whilst Generation Ys and Generation Xers displayed distinct unhappiness in this regard. In relation to these findings, Keepnews, Brewer, Kovner & Shin (2010) found that Baby Boomers listed autonomy as the most significant factor regarding job satisfaction. However, Yu and Miller (2005) also found that Generation Xers displayed a great desire for autonomy and flexibility in their personal and work lives. Additionally, De Hauw and De Vos (2010) allude that Generation Ys place great significance on freedom-related work principles, such as, flexibility and autonomy in comparison to previous generations. Evidently, although all generations value autonomy and flexibility, they differ in the perceptions of how much autonomy and flexibility signifies an interesting and motivating work environment.

Furthermore, the current study reflects that Baby Boomer employees with a degree and post-graduate degree are most happy with their environment being interesting and motivating and provides opportunities for learning and diversity, although it is evident that Generation Ys and Generation Xers were the least satisfied with these. In support of these findings, Parry and Urwin (2009) emphasise that Baby Boomer employees generally search for authority in order to facilitate decision-making; hence, if their work is challenging, they are more inclined to be engaged within their organisation. However, Egri and Ralston (2004) also point out that Generation Xers also attach great value to individual autonomy and work that is challenging which allows for a balance between personal and work life. Additionally, Generation Xers desire opportunities to learn in the workplace to allow for promotions or prospective jobs elsewhere (Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008). On the other hand, Wesner and Miller (2008) point out that Generation Ys are in search of work that is challenging and rewarding within organisations, which will in turn make them feel productive and part of their organisation's success as a whole. Furthermore, Duchscher and Cowin (2004) found out that Generation Ys were of the belief that education and lifelong learning were crucial success factors and hence, work that did not stimulate learning must be avoided (Duchscher & Cowin, 2004).

5.3. A flexible and efficient work environment

The different generations had different thoughts as to whether their work environment is flexible and efficient. Generation Y employees were the most convinced that the organisation provided them with a flexible and efficient work environment, whilst Generation X were the least convinced in this regard. Spiro (2006) points out that the present-day young employees are mostly concerned in making sure that their work caters for both their families and individual lives. Hence, money is important to them but is preceded by their need to sustain a work-life balance (Spiro, 2006).

Comparative analyses also reveal that female Generation Ys were most happy with their work environment being flexible and efficient and providing opportunities for constant growth and advancement, although female Baby Boomers and Generation Xers were not satisfied with these. De Hauw and De Vos (2010) state that Generation Ys generally have great expectations in relation to work-life balance. Therefore, Generation Ys seek work contracts from organisations that place emphasis on a better balance between work goals and personal goals (Carver & Candela, 2008; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Furthermore, Thompson (2011) points out that if organisations fail to make provision for up-to-date technology, the result could be the loss of expansions in possible productivity, as well as the loss of millennial employees.

5.4. Workplace fun

From the results, it is evident that there is no significant difference in perceptions of employees from the different generations regarding workplace fun, thereby implying that all employees, irrespective of generation, yearn for workplace fun. However, contrary to these findings, Lamm and

Meeks (2009, p. 616) point out that "Baby Boomers are go-getters who possess a strong-minded nature; hence, their concerns in relation to the content of work and material gain disputes the perception of workplace fun". However, Everett (2011) found that Generation Xers prefer a balance between work and fun; hence, they have a tendency to value fun, informality and innovation.

5.5. Learning and diversity

The results reflect that the different generations held varying opinions about their organisation in terms of learning and diversity. Baby Boomers were most convinced that their organisation supports learning and diversity (promotes/encourages teamwork, makes it easy for individuals from diverse backgrounds to fit in and be accepted, provides them with the opportunity to learn from more experienced professionals and a mentor for support and guidance towards career development and success, and develops and advances employees irrespective of gender, race, religious, or cultural background) followed by Generation Xers and then millennials. Marcinkus Murphy (2012) indicates that with the debut of millennials into the 21st century workplace, the concept of reverse mentoring is becoming increasingly prevalent with the pairing of young, junior and older, senior employees who learn from each other, generally with the former learning job-related skills and competencies and the latter benefitting in terms of technological know-how. Furthermore, it was found in the current study that Senior Level Baby Boomers with 11-20 years of experience in the organisation were happier with learning and diversity in their work environment than Senior Level Generation Xers with the same years of tenure, even though the satisfaction level in both generations was quite low. Research indicates that Baby Boomers attach great importance to lifelong learning, teamwork and group dialogues as they view it as a way to enhance their performance (Jorgensen, 2003; Sherman, 2006).

Baby Boomers were also convinced that they experienced learning and diversity in their workplace, whilst Generation Xers and especially Generation Y employees expected a greater degree of learning and diversity. Duchscher and Cowin (2004) support this finding by pointing out that Generation Xers and Generation Ys have worked and played within a gender, racial, cultural and religious unprejudiced environment; hence, not only are they open-minded, but also remarkably tolerant of diversity. Furthermore, in relation to learning, Bova and Kroth (2001) mentioned that for Generation X employees, it is important that both work and the work environment support continuous learning; hence, the enablement of learning for Generation X employees remains a major area of focus for organisations. Similarly, Raines (2002) alludes that Generation Ys yearn for opportunities to learn; hence, they want to be allocated to jobs or assignments that they can learn from.

5.6. Constant growth and advancement in the workplace

From the results, it is evident that there is no significant difference in perceptions of employees from the different generations regarding constant growth and advancement in the workplace. In support of these findings, Rajani (2012) found out that whilst all generations need feedback and recognition, Generation Ys may desire frequent and instantaneous feedback in the work environment. It must be noted that in the current study, females Generation Ys were happier with growth and advancement in the organisation than female Generation Xers and Baby Boomers. Brunetto, Far-Wharton and Shacklock (2012) point out that Generation Ys rank training and development opportunities higher than Baby Boomers. In addition, Generation Ys indicated career development through additional training to be very important to them (78.9%) and, that regular training will motivate their retention (89.6%) (McCrindle, 2006).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, recommendations are made on how each of the dimensions can be strategically managed in order to successfully integrate and manage millennials with the other generations in the workplace so as to create a harmonious workforce working towards optimally attaining organisational goals.

6.1. Extrinsic values/rewards

Since all employees, irrespective of generation, equally value extrinsic values/rewards it is important to ensure that compensation packages are competitive in order to ensure attraction and retention of the workforce.

The total compensation package can be structured for each generation differently to meet their respective prioritised needs, for example, whilst all may desire a strong base salary package, Baby Boomers may desire good health and retirement savings plans, Generation Xers may need funded holidays, ample paid leave and social security and Generations Ys may favour cell phones, laundry services, availability high-technology and work opportunities with diverse teams and constant training opportunities.

Male Baby Boomers and Baby Boomers with a diploma were most satisfied with extrinsic values/rewards. Ironically, this group also holds a wealth of experience in the organisation and since the millennial generation yearns for the opportunity to learn from more experienced professionals and mentors, Baby Boomers can be encouraged to fulfill this role by the organisation trading off some added attractive benefits such as a paid vacation.

6.2. An interesting and motivating work environment

Significant generational differences were noted whereby Baby Boomers (males more than females, employee level, with degrees and post-graduate degrees) were more convinced that their work environment is interesting and motivating than Generation Ys and Generation Xers perhaps because they have earned authority over their years of experience. It is recommended that the organisation should ensure that Baby Boomers be accorded the

additional challenge and responsibility of mentoring Generation Ys since they have context-based experience.

Generation Ys and Xers (especially the former) determine their choice of employer based on how meaningful and challenging their work is and have little patience for any kind of work that does not challenge them and will be willing to leave in search of greater stimulation in tasks. Therefore, it is recommended that the organisation provides employees, especially millennials, with meaningful and challenging work opportunities in order to ensure that they are continuously engaged, that they gain additional knowledge and skills and avoid poor work performance. This can be simply achieved by ensuring their involvement in decision-making on issues that relate to their work and, creating excitement and challenge in their work.

6.3. A flexible and efficient work environment

The results reflect significant generational differences in terms of the flexibility and efficiency of their work environment with Generation Ys (especially females) being most pleased with this dimension and Generation Xers being least happy. It is important for the organisation to uphold this view of millennials as work-life balance is one of the most challenging areas and providing up-to-date technology can enable them to accomplish work tasks with great flexibility and efficiency. Also, it is recommended that strategies be formulated to enhance greater work-life balance for Generation Xers and Baby Boomers particularly since the former has been found to place a tremendous amount of value on work-life balance (Gentry et al., 2011) and their happiness in this regards influences the sharing of information and ideas and hence, the growth and development of millennials. These strategies can include the provision of a variety of work-life balance opportunities for all, for example, flexible work schedules or flexi-time, options to work from home, telecommuting, part-time employment, special vacation times, family and education leave. Such an initiative will assist in empowering the organisation to retain the best and talented individuals who, in turn, will make a practical and meaningful contribution, not only to their organisation but also to the entire community and society in general.

6.4. Workplace fun

The results indicate that there are no biographical or generational impacts on workplace fun, thereby implying that all employees irrespective of generation are pining for workplace fun. Hence, not only are the millennial generation searching for a work environment that supports and encourages fun, but this element has become a driving force for all employees. Therefore, it is recommended that the organisation provides employees with a variety of fun activities and events within the work environment such as public celebrations of work accomplishments, entertainment and team building exercises, recognition of employees' birthdays, marriages and work anniversaries, productivity tournaments and personal growth opportunities. Such activities will increase the motivation of

millennials and all other employees, making their work more stimulating, exciting and meaningful.

6.5. Learning and diversity

The results reflect significant generational differences in terms of the learning and diversity with Baby Boomers expressing greater satisfaction than their generational counterparts. In fact, the results indicate that as employees get older they are increasingly convinced that the organisation provides learning and diversity thereby reflecting that millennials have the greatest need/demand for learning and diversity but are least convinced that it is being satisfied. It is therefore, recommended that the organisation increasingly adopts team-based work activities and collaborative work structures that ensure generational diversity.

Millennials were not as convinced as Baby Boomers that the organisation provides learning and diversity. This may be due to Baby Boomers not having the same intense need for learning and diversity as millennials and are, therefore, happy with the current situation. Evidently, more needs to be done in terms of learning and diversity in order to satisfy millennials. Hence, mentoring should also focus on various aspects to develop millennials holistically, for example, it should focus on enhancing career development, creating interest and motivation in the work environment, behavioural input, enhancing networks for interaction, empowering millennials, making them feel that they fit in and are contributing to organisational goals so as to enhance their retention.

6.6. Constant growth and advancement in the workplace

No significant differences were noted amongst the generations regarding constant growth and advancement in the workplace, thereby implying that all employees, irrespective of generation, need constant growth and advancement to an equal extent. It is therefore, recommended that the organisation should make education and training opportunities available to all employees and should focus on various aspects in developing the individual as a whole, for example, leadership and management development, coaching from highly skilled personnel and on-the-job development as well as training and work assignments.

Regular and timeous, if not instantaneous, feedback based on performance as well as continuous acknowledgement, appreciation and encouragement be given to all employees especially millennials who thrive on prompt, clear-cut and accurate feedback to ensure continuous improvement in their urgency for accelerated growth and development.

Evidence also suggests that the introduction of mentor/mentee relationships within organisations allows employees the opportunities to gain knowledge and experience from superiors who are more experienced in the field (Farrell & Hurt, 2014); hence, it is recommended that organisations offer mentoring to their employees through the reverse mentoring model or two-way mentoring where millennials gain knowledge from older workers and, in turn, older workers gain knowledge from

millennials. This will increase the support and cultivation of expanded learning amongst generations in the workplace.

It is also evident that whilst the various generations have displayed some generational differences as documented above, they are similar in many aspects which make their cohesion even more possible especially if understand and effectively managed. Certainly, generational differences were noted in terms of how they define an interesting and motivating work environment, a flexible and efficient work environment and constant growth and advancement in the workplace. However, the various generations (Generation Ys, Generation Xers, Baby Boomers) desire and value extrinsic values/rewards, workplace fun and constant growth and advancement in the workplace to the same extent. Therefore, no organisation can go wrong in making these dimensions their basic priorities in the workplace, especially in the 21st century work environment defined by generational transformation.

6.7. Recommendations for future research

In the current study, only public sector employees were assessed. Future studies can include the private sector in order to enable comparisons. Therefore, future studies can go on to look at managers'/employers' views on working with the three generations in the workplace and can undertake the study from a leadership perspective. This could be done by means of in-depth interviews. Future studies can also attempt to attain a larger sample size so that sample sizes per generation are bigger, thus allowing for a wider variation of responses from participants.

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