

Decoding Emotional Intelligence in the Digital Era: A Comparative Study of Gen Y and Gen Z in the IT Landscape

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The current research studies the emotional intelligence of Generation Y and Generation Z workers in the IT industry & also analyses the relationship between emotional intelligence and work performance.

Theoretical framework: Organizations have seen a pattern of ongoing changes in the workplace for the past decade. Current management in organizations observes different workstyles that have promoted the thought of not only the common skills but to explore them further with regards to disparate domains. Therefore, the notion of emotional intelligence has become an essential element for achieving success in today's idea of professionalism. Presently, three generations that present at work are Generation X, Y & Z. All the three generations have their own unique characteristics and behaviours.

Design/methodology/approach: Both qualitative and quantitative data are presented in the study. A survey of the literature was interpreted and examined in relation to both generations.

Primary Data for the study was collected with the help of a standardized questionnaire. To examine the data gathered from the questionnaire, the z test was used at a 5% significance level.

Findings: Major findings reveal that Generation Z people are better than generation Y people in controlling their own emotions and those of their co-workers. However, it has been discovered that millennials are better able to control their emotions under stress. The analysis of the data also revealed a moderately favourable association between emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance, which suggests that those with higher EI tend to be more productive at work.

Research, Practical and Social Implications: The study will help the organizations to formulate appropriate policies for Gen Y and Gen Z employees and will help these generations to better manage their emotions

Originality/Value: No previous work is conducted on comparing the emotional intelligence of Gen Y and Gen Z.

Keywords: Generation Y, Generation Z, Emotional Intelligence, Organizations, Job performance.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have seen a pattern of ongoing changes in the workplace for the past decade. Current management in organizations observes different workstyles that have promoted the thought of not only the common skills but to explore them further with regards to disparate domains. Hence, the idea of emotional intelligence has become a crucial factor for success in the contemporary concept of professionalism. The study of feelings and emotions using the model of emotional intelligence has gained importance in personal and business outlooks. Emotional Intelligence is defined as a combination of interpersonal and emotional skills that influence a person's behaviour, reasoning, and relationships with others. (Macaleer & Shannon, 2002).

Anything that influences an individual's mind can also influence business decisions in positive or negative ways. Emotions play a vital role in determining people's perceptions and certain implications, like stress, burnout, anger or frustration can affect them adversely (Winardi et al., 2022). While cognitive intelligence deals with real information about people, time, events, and situations, emotional intelligence deals with the mutual correlations between these facets of life. The effect of emotional intelligence is perceived to not only influence the satisfaction of the people in their work but to have a better orientation to the commitment within the organization (Carmeli, 2003).

At present, the workforce consists mainly of three separate generations, namely Generation X (born between 1961 and 1979), Generation Y (born from 1980 to 2000), and Generation Z who are entering the current labor market. Through studies that distinguish the effects of career and generation, it has been observed empirically that there are varying work principles among different labor forces. (Twenge et al., 2010). The differences in beliefs and principles of each generation can cause conflict, miscommunication, and misunderstanding, therefore, reducing job satisfaction and performance (Macky et al., 2008). Therefore, emotional intelligence is of vital importance to fully understand the value of the work of Generations and their correlations to job performance. Thus the current study focuses on measuring the level of emotional intelligence of Generation Y and Z employees. It also aims to compare the emotional intelligence of these two generations. The research also studies the relationship between emotional intelligence and Job performance.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE:

The proximal roots of Emotional Intelligence can be traced back to Social Intelligence which is meant to understand and manage individuals to keep stable human relations. Garner who is pioneer in the field of Emotional Intelligence, identified the concept of interpersonal and intrapersonal Intelligence. (Altan et al., 2001). Gardner defined interpersonal intelligence as a person's ability to comprehend the intent, motives and desires of others. Intrapersonal intelligence, means a potential to understand oneself, wants abilities and fears of oneself. Salovey and Mayer conducted multiple studies in the field of Emotional Intelligence and formulated a definition for it as "ability to monitor and regulate one's own and other's feelings and to use feelings to guide thoughts and actions" (Mayer et al., 2008). Cognitive Intelligence is and was considered to be a very important parameter of success in life. But today it is not the only parameter of success, various attributes like problem solving, effective leadership, communication, interpersonal skills are too considered as crucial to get success in life. Thus cognitive intelligence along with Emotional Intelligence are considered important for success in life. (Wanberg and Banas, 2000). Some studies define emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, comprehend and manage emotions of oneself and others. (Cooper, Golden, & Dornheim, 1998)

The quality of your relationship with coworkers, subordinates & superiors at work depends largely on how emotionally stable you are. Emotions play a vital role in regulating any relationship. Thus if employees have high EI, they share cordial relationships with other employees and perform better in teams and are effective in leadership activities or managerial roles. (Malterer, Glass, & Newman, 2008).

As compared to people who are low on Emotional Intelligence, people with high emotional intelligence are able to overcome any kind of trauma and crises gracefully. Thus they are also able to perform well in teams and thus are more productive. (Njoroge & Yazdanifard, 2014). People with High EI, worry less, are less prone to stress and thus do not indulge in workplace conflicts, which ensures a harmonious work environment suitable for optimum work performance. (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007). With highly stressful work environments,

having employees with EI can ensure less turnover, less absenteeism and high productivity at work. (Dias, R., Teixeira, N., Machova, V., Pardal, P., Horak, J., & Vochozka, M.2020)

Studies suggest that your IQ and aptitudes contribute only 20% to success of your life while 80% contribution is of your EQ. Various researches in the area of emotional intelligence have found that High EI can assure better quality of life, happiness and stress free life leading to success on the career front. (Petrides, Pita, & Kokkinaki, 2007). Researchers also found a positive correlation between High EI and job satisfaction & job performance. Also people with high EI are more optimistic and thus display better retention at work. Many researchers support the argument that higher emotional intelligence can ensure higher possibility of success in various aspects of life. (Goleman, 1995).

GENERATION Y AND GENERATION Z:

The term generation denotes a group of people of a society with the same historical time. These are those individuals who are born within the same historical time and have shared the same experiences and witnessed similar events. (Mannheim, 1952). It is because these people go through similar environmental situations they tend to share values and attitudes. (Martin & Tulgan, 2001, Rahul Mohare, et al. 2023). In India, the three generations which are working in the workplaces today are Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. Many studies suggest that these three generations are very different from each other in terms of behavior, values and attitudes. (Glass,2007, A. Shrivastava., et.al. 2022). In spite of these differences these three generations need to work together towards a common goal in the workplace, thus many researchers over the last ten years have been researching the differences in these three generations and are also trying to find ways these generations can be managed effectively at the workplace. (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Lancaster and Stillman (2004), suggest that the most effective way of managing the differences of these three generations is by recognizing their strengths and optimizing them. Though past studies have focused on understanding these differences. Very few studies have tried to understand the role of emotional intelligence. Thus the current study attempts to study the role of emotional intelligence when it comes to performance of Generation Y & Z.

GENERATION-Y

Generation Y also known as Millennials, Net-Generation is occupying the largest population of the workforce.(Sessa et al., 2007). Technology plays a vital role in the lives of these generation.(Kagalkar, S., Agashe, A., Paralkar, T. A., Deogaonkar, A., & Bhutda, P, 2023). Many studies have found that as compared to the previous generations, the characteristics and behaviors of generation Y are very different. This Generation is highly educated and mobile. This generation is willing to move across borders for better career opportunities and a better life. (Jeffries & Hunte, 2004). According to Howe and Strauss (2009), seven traits that characterize Generation Y are team oriented, achievement oriented, pressured to do well, confident, conventional and sheltered.

The work values and beliefs of Generation Y are also very different from Generation X. (Glass, 2007). Generation X individuals are skeptical and are very cautious in taking decisions , they believe in individualism. But this is not the case with generation Y, they are optimistic about the future and they believe in collective efforts. Thus they prefer working in teams. (Salahuddin, 2010). It is because this generation did not face any challenges on the economic, social and personal front. There was economic prosperity when they were born. Consequently, the current generation values convenience and prioritizes working intelligently instead of working hard. However, this inclination towards convenience should not be misconstrued as laziness, as this generation is known for being diligent and having high work standards (Bhadade P, Patil K, Tolani K, 2020). This generation of individuals are also called digital natives, as they were born in the era of technological development (Smola & Sutton, 2002). They can not live without laptops, computers, smartphones and the internet. This generation uses technology in all their daily activities like work, entertainment and even socializing. (Martin, 2005). Thus this generation does not find any difficulty in adapting to new technologies and are also referred to as “first adapters”. (Glass, 2007). Generation Y individuals desire to have regular feedback at work. They prefer that their supervisors provide them frequent feedback on their performance. (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). This generation likes to work in teams as they prefer a collective approach. (Martin, 2005). If we summarize the characteristics of Generation Y, they are found to be optimistic, confident, tech-savvy individuals who like to work in teams and prefer constant and regular feedback on their performance at work.

GENERATION Z

Generation Z, synonymously called as I-Generation, Baby Boomers and The Internet Generation (Alfred R. Petrosky and Edward H. Hernandez, 2014) is born between 2000-2013. Out of all the present generations, Generation Z is the most technologically urbane generation. (Prensky, 2001).

Generation Z individuals spend more than 25% of their time on Social Media. Thus if you wish to grab the attention of Generation Z, smart use of social media tools. As for Generation Z, “Smart is the new cool” (Gorrell, 2008). Technology plays a central role in their lives and this is reason why Generation Z are also called Gen Tech, Gen WII and Digital Natives. They are dependent on digital devices for every aspect of their life. It is hard for this generation to even think about living without technology and social media. For some Digital Native, social media and their mobile phones hold emotional value in their lives.(Palley, 2012).

Thus this generation has very high social needs, they like social recognition and acknowledgment for every activity they perform.(Tolani K, Sao Ruchi, 2020). Thus micro celebrities influence the lives of this generation to a great extent.

Generation Z as employees depict very unique traits and characteristics, thus many studies are conducted recently to understand this generation.(Alex Williams, 2015). At work, Generation Z employees can't function appropriately without Flexibility, Autonomy and Transparency.Lack of these factors can lead to low productivity and engagement issues.(Bascha, 2011). This generation prefers informal communication even at work. (Brue Tulgan & Rainmaker Inc., 2013). As they are born in the era of rapid technological upgradation, they are used to getting all the information at their fingertips, thus even at work they prefer getting any information fast and easily, which is forcing organizations to adopt more sophisticated ERP systems. (Institute for Emerging Issues, 2012). Also this generation likes individual accountability for all the tasks they perform and their preference for group performance evaluation and group incentives is less. (Dan Schawbel, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this project is to:

1. Study the emotional intelligence levels of Generation Y and Generation Z employees in the IT industry.
2. Compare the emotional intelligence levels of Generation Y and Generation Z employees in the IT industry.
3. Study the relationship between emotional intelligence and work performance.

Both qualitative and quantitative data are presented in the study. A survey of the literature was interpreted and examined in relation to both generations.

Primary Data for the study was collected with the help of a standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire was formulated using five-point Likert scale and the parameters used for devising the questionnaire are:

- Self-management.
- Self-awareness.
- Social awareness.
- Relationship management.

DATA ANALYSIS

To examine the data gathered from the questionnaire, the z test was used at a 5% significance level. (Mankar, V., Vichoray, C., Somani, N., & Deogaonkar, A., 2023). The specific hypotheses were developed in accordance with the objectives. They are listed below:

1. Emotional intelligence of both the generations, i.e. Generation Y and Z were compared and analyzed. The hypothesis rendered was:

Null hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the Emotional Intelligence of Generation Z and Generation Y.

Alternative hypothesis: Emotional Intelligence in Generation Z is significantly more than in Generation

Y.

Z-test: Two samples for Means

	Generation Z	Generation Y
Mean	16.69230769	14.46153846
Known Variance	17.73077	4.435897
Observations	13	13
z	1.708347133	
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.043785975	
z critical value one tail	1.644853627	

From the above table, as the p-value is less than the 0.05 hence failed to accept the null hypothesis. This, in turn, means that emotional intelligence in generation Z employees is more than in generation Y employees.

2. Job performance of both generations was compared. The hypothesis formulated was:

Null hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the job performance of Generation Z and Generation Y.

Alternative hypothesis: Generation Z has better job performance than Generation Y.

Z-test: Two samples for Means

	Generation Z	Generation Y
Mean	13.4	10.6
Known Variance	2.3	5.3
Observations	5	5
z	2.271099896	
P(Z<=z) one-tail	0.011570466	
z critical value one tail	1.644853627	

From the above table, as the p-value is less than the 0.05 hence failed to accept the null hypothesis. This, in turn, means that the job performance of generation Z employees is more than generation Y employees.

2. The relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance was also investigated. The related hypothesis was also given as follows:

Null hypothesis: There is no significant relation between job performance and higher emotional intelligence.

Alternative hypothesis: Higher job performance is related to higher emotional intelligence.

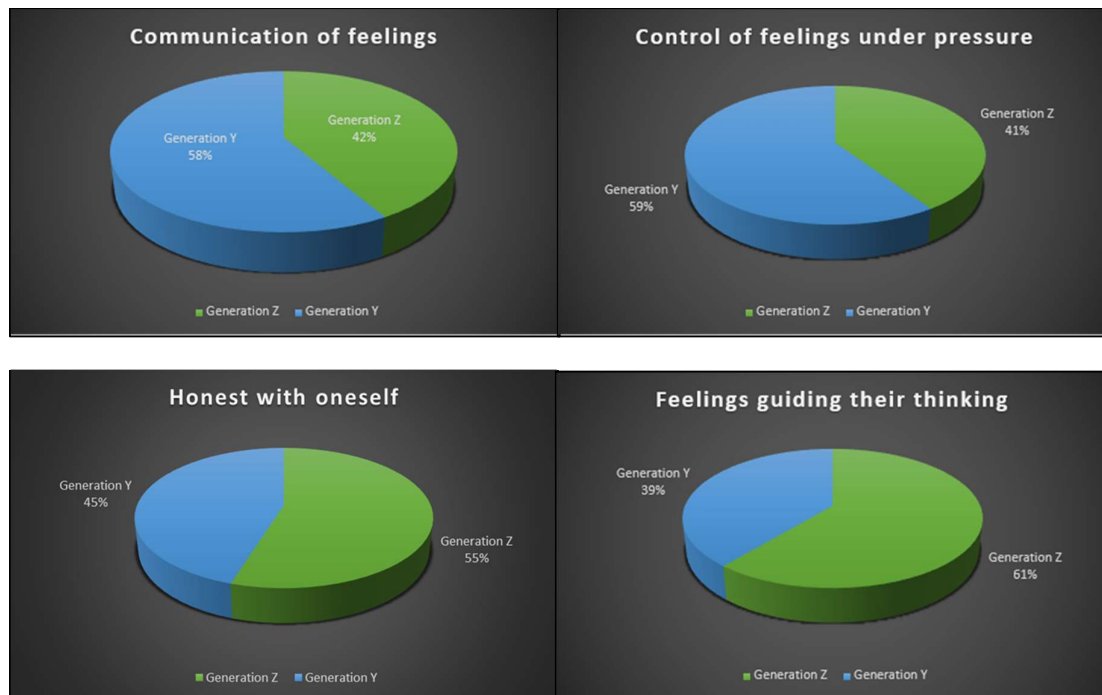
Correlation analysis:

	Emotional Intelligence	Job performance
Emotional Intelligence	1.00	
Job performance	0.662913	1.00

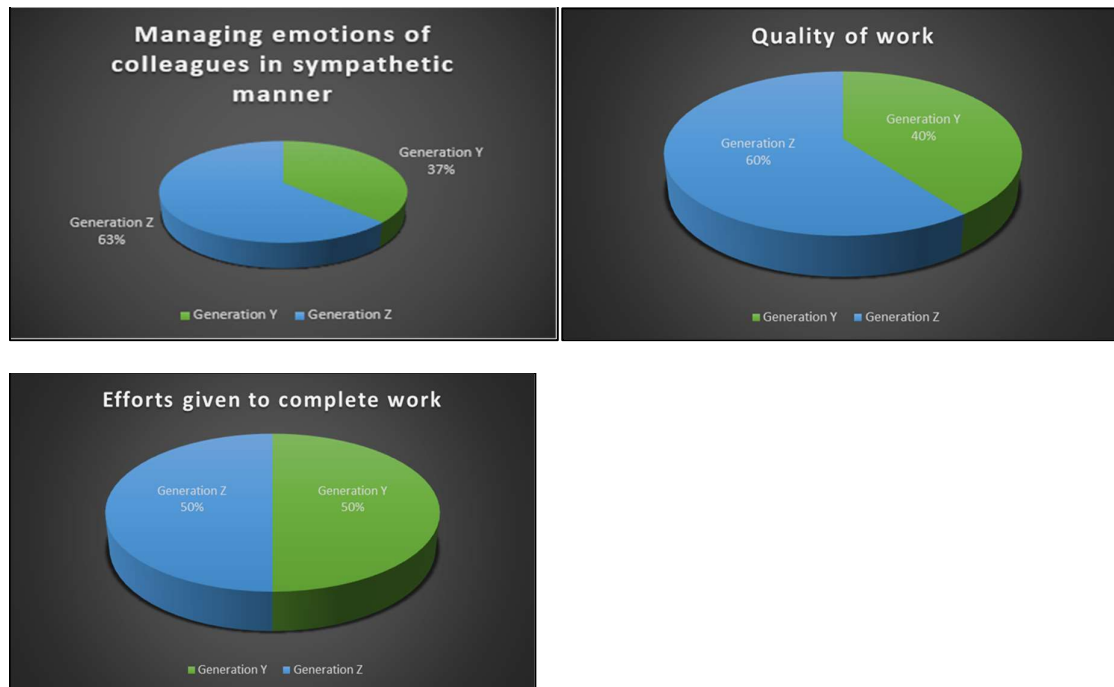
From the above table, the correlation coefficient was found to be 0.66. Hence, there is a moderate positive relationship between emotional intelligence and job performance.

The figures are stated below to get a better understanding about the levels of EI, job performance, and their relationship in millennials and zoomers.

1. Emotional intelligence infographics:



2. Job performance Infographics:



FINDINGS

After interpreting the data, it was found that:

1. Generation Z people are better than generation Y people in controlling their own emotions and those of their co-workers. However, it has been discovered that millennials are better able to control their emotions under stress.
2. It has been discovered that generation Z has much higher emotional intelligence (EI) than generation Y.
3. Employees from generation Z are seen to accomplish their jobs noticeably better than those from generation Y.
4. The analysis of the data also revealed a moderately favourable association between emotional intelligence (EI) and job performance, which suggests that those with higher EI tend to be more productive at work.

CONCLUSION

In our research, we have focused on Generation Y and Generation Z and their level of emotional intelligence. This result was further used to understand the relativity of job performance with emotional intelligence. During this research, four parameters were addressed, mainly, Self-awareness, self-motivation, social awareness, and relationship management. From our findings, we can say that Generation Z is not only aware of their feelings but are capable of assessing their fellow worker's sentiments. Generation Y, on the other hand, have a grip on their feelings when under pressure but still are behind generation Z when it comes to job performance. Since the Emotional Intelligence level in an individual can affect their job rendition, this could be one of the possible reasons for generation Y to have a shortfall in organizations.

FURTHER SCOPE OF RESEARCH/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is conducted on Generation Y & Z employees of the IT sector of Nagpur City thus the results of the

study cannot be generalized and further research can be conducted in other regions of the country. Also the study measures the emotional intelligence level of employees and compares it with employee performance thus further studies can be done considering other parameters like self-efficacy, resilience, personality which can affect employee performance.

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