

Motivation & Attitude of Generation Y in India: An Exploratory Study

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There is evidence in the literature that generation Y is different from the previous generations. This generation is going to be the largest pool of workforce by 2020. The purpose of the study is to understand the Generation Y attitudes and motivation towards their work and life. Data were obtained from 115 postgraduate students through an open-ended questionnaire for capturing the mindset of Generation Y. This study is among the few which explore the attitude, expectations and preferences of Generation Y through qualitative method. A better understanding of the Generation Y' attitude, expectations and preferences will be helpful for the employers to create job offerings and work environments that are more likely to engage and retain Generation Y workforce.

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Introduction

Generational cohorts include individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical developmental periods (Schaie, 1965). Each generation is influenced by broad forces (i.e., parents, peers, media, critical economic and social events, and popular culture) that create common value systems distinguishing them from people who grew up at different times (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). The youngest generation in today's workforce is Generation Y. The group of young individuals born between the years of 1980 and 1999 is commonly known as Generation Y (Jennings, 2000). Generation Y has a variety of names such as Nexters, N-Genres, Echo Boomers, and Millennials etc. (Glass, 2007). This large pool of new workers comes with a mindset that is very different from that of the earlier generations (Parry, Professor Stefan Strohmeier, Guillot-Soulez & Soulez, 2014). One of the most important reasons why we need to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of Gen Y in India is the notion of the 'demographic dividend'. Gen Y would form close to 75% of the global workforce by

the year 2025 (Catalyst, 2015). According to the Economic Survey (2013-14), India will become the youngest country by 2021, with 64% of its population in the working age group of 20-35. Leaders are finding it challenging to manage the Gen Y effectively (Sharkawi, Mohamad & Roslin, 2016) and if they lack interest or are not maturing in their jobs, they will change organizations (Dulin, 2008). Thus, recruitment and retention of “generation Y” employees will be a vital factor of the staffing policies and strategies in the forthcoming years (Mitsakis & Talampekos, 2014).

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With youth becoming part of the organizations, there is a need to work with, engage and manage Generation Y employees differently from what is required to manage previous generation employees (Huntley, 2006; Wey Smola & Sutton, 2002a). Most workplaces have multi generations of workforce. Each generation is characterized by unique abilities and competencies, and leveraging them is a key to an organization’s success (Millar, Vicki Culpin, Hernaus & Pološki Vokic, 2014; Rentz, 2015; Vicki Culpin, Carla Millar, Kai Peters, Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015a). Generational difference in approaches and attitudes to work can result in intergenerational conflict that can compromise organizational performance (McGuire, Todnem By & Hutchings,

2007). Thus, there is a requirement to understand the attitude and motivation of generation Y employees and also need to find the ways to manage intergenerational conflict and generational differences. Understanding this generation helps businesses develop policies to suit the needs of generation Y, which results in an inclusive workplace that celebrates harmonious work environment. This understanding also improves productivity and innovation in young employees, who will soon fill managerial positions (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). This large pool of talent will not only strengthen India’s economic status but it also would be able to supply human capital to the developed nations in future. Therefore, the characteristics of generation Y will be common around the world. Thus, the study on generation Y can provide important guidelines for employers around the globe.

Most of the studies on generational differences, and generation Y in particular, have been done in Western countries; there is need to examine the influence of national culture (Yi, Ribbens, Fu, & Cheng, 2015) and its impact on generational characteristics. Hence, in order to foster generational synergy in the workplace, it is important for Indian managers to understand the variations in value structures of the different generations. Gen Y is increasing its presence at workplaces across the world and limited research has been done to study their motivations, needs, and expectations at work in Indian context (Khera & Malik, 2017). Thus, to fill the above gap the present study aims to examine the atti-

tude and motivation of generation Y towards their work-life through an open-ended questionnaire survey.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to achieve following objectives:

1. To examine the motivating factors for generation Y.
2. To understand the work preferences of generation Y.
3. To understand the attitude of generation Y towards their work-life.

Previous Researches

The extant literature shows that generation Y is different from previous generation employees (Huntley, 2006; Smola & Sutton, 2002), it has different work-related characteristics (Connor, Shaw, Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). They value autonomy, leisure and work-life balance (Callanan & Greenhaus, 2008; Macky, Gardner, Forsyth, Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010a; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007) and see work as less central to their lives when compared with Baby Boomers and Generation X (Macky, Gardner, Forsyth, Dries, et al., 2008). Employees of generation Y also seem to demonstrate more individualistic behaviors and self-reliance within the working context (Jones et al., 2006). Within this generation and this particular cohort “new” career patterns such as the boundary less career (Tams & Arthur, 2010) are evolving (Lyons & Kuron,

2014). They prefer to work for the company which is good at CSR (Aguirre et al., 2009). Employees of this generation consider work-life balance options as an important indicator of a person’s job quality, job performance, job satisfaction and commitment, and a precursor of ethical decision-making individuals (Smith, 2010). They will, however, if forced, select their family and friends over work (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). Gen Y professional couples are grappling with dual-career issues early in their relationships (Clarke, 2015). However, it has been argued that while members of Generation Y will seek a work-life balance, their concern for career success will actually draw them into working increasingly long hours and experiencing unsatisfactory relationships between their personal and work lives (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Constant learning and developing at work; interesting, challenging, and varied tasks; social relations and supervisor’s behavior; reciprocal flexibility concerning timetables and working hours; and a good work-life balance are important factors for them (Vicki Culpin, Carla Millar, Kai Peters, Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015b). Generation Y placed greater importance on learning, and pride in work knowledge and skills, (Smola & Sutton, 2002b). Members of Generation

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Y crave for prestige and status in their jobs. They are frequently characterized as ambitious and impatient, and have been reported to expect immediate rewards, including praise, promotion and pay (Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008). Generation Y are likely to place greater emphasis on social work value (Altimier, 2006; Wong, Gardiner, Lang & Coulon, 2008). When compared to older generations, generation Y is more effective in some arenas, like multitasking, responding to visual stimulation, and filtering information. However, they are less adept in terms of face-to-face interaction and deciphering nonverbal cues (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

A recent research on Indian generation Y professionals suggests that they have strong desire to climb the corporate ladder and have a strong need to be associated with a firm which visibly enhances self-definition (a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action). Strong brand names attract Gen-Y, reflecting their career choices. This set is very analytical and appreciates transparency and unambiguity. They love to express themselves at work and to have a fun-filled, cheerful and open work culture. Their orientation to achievement is much higher than their orientation to money. Engaging learning and development programs and getting hands on experience on everything under the hood of their area of interest to enhance their competency motivates them. A single study by Singh, Bhandarker, Rai, and Jain (2011) on the personal value preference

for Generation Y in India found that values related to personal growth and social factors are particularly influential in the way people perceive the characteristics of their workplace.

Generational Theory

Generational theory was proposed by (Mannheim, 1952). According to this theory "belonging to the same generations or age group endows the individuals sharing in it with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experiences, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action." Therefore, a generation is defined by both its years of birth and a particular set of shared social and economic conditions during their formative years. Two important elements thus contribute to the term 'generation'. First, a common location in historical time and, second, a 'distinct consciousness of that historical position shaped by the events and experiences of that time' (Strauss & Howe, 1991). These two aspects give rise to a common generational persona which makes people belonging to a generation similar in their traits, thinking, values, and beliefs. Generational theory assumes that we can generalize cohort differences to the mean cohort level of each generation, which allows us to better understand and make predictions about the tendencies of prototypical individuals (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010b). While, the influential work on generational theory by Strauss & Howe (1991)

has been validated in Anglo-American countries, recent research has extended this study in many other non Anglo-American countries. Generational theory was proven to be valid in collectivistic societies such as Taiwan, Japan, China and Malaysia which are culturally closer to India. (Hofstede, 1980). This gives credence to the applicability of generational theory in India. Very few studies on generational theory exist in the Indian context.

P-O Fit Theory

Kristof (1996) undertook an integrative review of conceptualizations, measurements and implications of Person – Organization fit (P–O fit), and defines P–O fit as the “compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs or they share similar fundamental characteristics or both.” The basic premise of P–O fit is that the relationship between a person and their work environment influences their attitudes, behavior and other person-level outcomes (Westerman & Vanka, 2005). The fit between individuals and organizations has been shown to be an important factor influencing the reasons why people are attracted to, are selected by, and stay with organizations (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987). Thus, P-O fit theory was adopted to explain the necessity of understanding generation Y attributes for a good P-O fit in the organizations. P–O value fit is related to organizationally relevant outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and turnover (Cooper-Thomas, Van

Vianen & Anderson, 2004; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Westerman & Cyr, 2004). Most organizations are run by Baby Boomers and generation X employees (Rigoni & Adkins, 2015). Generation X generally prefers not to be looked at as a group, because its members are extremely individualistic, self-reliant and entrepreneurial. Generation X is technologically savvy, goal-oriented, philanthropic, and cynical toward institutions. Usually, they are the most influential members of any organization, and the values and culture of the organization are set by them (Schein & Mueller, 1992). This could lead to a mismatch between the values of generation Y employees and the values that organizations possess and communicate (Miller, Hodge, Brandt, & Schneider, 2013). Macky, Gardner, Forsyth, Cennamo & Gardner (2008b) suggested that older generations report higher levels of P–O fit than generation Y employees do. The differences in working styles of different generations may eventually contribute to a misfit between the expectations of generation Y and the reality of the workplace run by Baby Boomers and generation X. Generation Y employees have greater expectations than the older generations, and are also more likely to leave jobs when their expectations are not met (Wong et al., 2008). Researches also show that when compared to older generations,

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Generation Y employees have significantly lower commitment and higher turnover intention (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010). Discrepancy between an individual's work values and workplace norms may result in decreased job satisfaction, withdrawal from work through absenteeism and tardiness, and an increase in employees' intention to leave (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Schneider, 1987; Zoghbi-Manrique de Lara, 2008). Therefore, there is a requirement to understand the generation Y profile and design organizational practices and policies accordingly for a good fit.

Method

Sample: The data were collected from the post graduate level students of a reputed technical institute through an open ended questionnaire in Mumbai city. Total 150 questionnaires were distributed and 115 were found usable for the study. The sample consists of both males and females. 33 were females and 82 males. About 15 percent respondents were not having any work experience, rest had 2-3 years of work experience. All the respondents were belonging to generation Y; the average age of the respondents was 24 years. Analysis of the answers of open ended questions was done using content analysis technique. An open-ended survey was conducted that allowed a wide sample of paragliding attendees to describe their flow experience dimensions in their own words.

Data collection: Data were obtained from 115 postgraduate students through an open-ended questionnaire for capturing the mindset of generation Y, who will enter the workforce after one or two years. Seven questions were prepared while considering three main themes for the study. Main themes are mentioned below:

1. Their attitude towards their work and life?
2. Motivating factors for generation Y?
3. What are their expectations?

Sampling: Purposive sampling was used for selecting the sample.

Data analysis: Data were analyzed using the systematic technique to capture the mindset of prospective employees. A content analytic technique was used in this study. According to Chen, Wigand & Nilan (1999) the advantages of using content analytic techniques are the ability to inductively categorize contextual and situational factors, to enable respondents to describe their experiences in their own words rather than to reply to forced choice questionnaire items. All content analytic schemes were coded by two researchers independently, so the coding reliability was ensured. The inductive content analysis process, open coding, creating categories and abstraction were followed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Results & Discussion

The study aims to identify the attitude and motivating factors of genera-

tion Y in the Indian context. The analysis of the open-ended questions suggests various motivating factors, expectations towards life, work preferences and measurement of success of generation Y. Analysis suggests that most motivating factors for generation Y are interesting work, good working conditions, good salary and bright future prospects. The extant literature is less consistent about generation Y's salary expectations. Some researchers suggest that they consider salary less important than other attributes, such as a fulfilling private life (Eisner, 2005), while others suggest that it is an important dimension (Hite & McDonald, 2012). Our study identified that salary is very much an important factor to motivate this generational employees. Other motivating factors like job security, stability, achievements, appreciation, challenges and responsibilities are also important in motivating this generation.

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It has been identified that mainly they measure success in terms of happiness, satisfaction, and achieving work-life balance. Analysis suggests that they prefer family over work and have strong desire to maintain their work-life balance. Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge & Ogden (2007) also argued that employers should take their desire for a work-life balance into account, that generation Y "value their non-work time, and while they want to enjoy work, they do not want it to dominate their lives; rather they want it

to fund their lifestyle." Social status, achievements and self-growth are the other measurement of success for them. Our findings suggest that they prefer open, flexible, and supportive work environment. They desire autonomy at the workplace. Previous studies also support our findings that generation Y expect freedom and flexibility to do their work in their own way and at their own pace (Hite & McDonald, 2012).

Providing autonomy in the work to make their choice of when and where to work is critical (Weyland, 2011). Self growth opportunities and utilizing their potential is very important for them. Plew (2013) also suggested that generation Y employees look for jobs that provide opportunities to use their abilities. They have desire of feeling valued in the organization. They indicated the need to be influential in their workplace. They seek a participative leader who respects their views, listen to them, and is flexible in accepting their opinions (Beck & Wade, 2004). Analysis also suggests that generation Y employees want to do work of their choice which helps them in excelling their potential. They always want to get appreciation for what work they do. They place great importance in having meaning in their work, desiring to make the world a better place (Hurst & Good, 2009). Spiro (2006) found that generation Y want to "make an important impact immediately on projects they are involved with" and are "looking for immediate gratification and an opportunity to excel." They prefer to work collaboratively on team-based kinds of projects and assignments after assigning the work and developing the

details, in addition, for the most part they need to have constant positive feedback and evaluation of their individual progress in the workplace (Miller et al., 2013). The other researchers also suggested that generation Y wants to be employed with companies where managers recognize and reward their contributions (Glass, 2007). These generational employees need job security and stability. They have more social orientation and like to work on teams. Thus, previous study suggests that

organizations must focus on creating a fun and exciting atmosphere at work (Rai, 2012) and provide opportunity to collaborate through text messaging, instant messaging and blogging with their peers (Skiba & Barton, 2006). Some respondents mentioned that they want to be a role model for others and want to bring smile on others face. Table 1 shows the life expectations, measurement of success, work preferences and motivating factors of generation Y.

Table 1 Expectations, Measurement of Success, Work Preferences & Motivators of Generation Y

Generation Y expectations from their life	Measurement of success	Preferred working environment	Things to be important in job	Motivating factors
Power work	Happiness	Open	Autonomy	Interesting
Money conditions	Satisfaction	Friendly	Recognition	Good working
Peace	Work-life balance	Nurturing	Flexibility	Good salary
Luxurious life	Achievements	Good organizational culture	Challenges	Bright future prospects
Adventure	High position	Sharing of knowledge	Appreciation	Job autonomy
Societal contribution	Fulfilling dreams	Good relation with colleagues	Supervisor support	Appreciation
Chance for growth	Self-growth	Motivating	Meaningful work	Challenges
Satisfaction	Become role model for others	Less stressful	Choice of work	Job security
Work-life balance	Social status	Innovative	Teamwork	Responsibility
Success	self-satisfaction	Supportive	Feeling Valued	Stability

It can be drawn from the above table that findings of the study are in line with various motivational theories like Maslow's need hierarchy theory/ Alderfer's ERG theory, Herzberg two factor theory and Vroom's expectancy theory. Respondents show the need for money, job security, teamwork and personal growth which are in line with

Maslow's theory. They also show the expectations about getting rewards and appreciation for what they do for the organization. This is in line with Vroom's expectancy theory. Desire for good working conditions, work-life balance and money are related with Herzberg's two factors hygiene and motivators. Thus, it has been suggested that managers should

take care of all the above motivating factors for managing their employees and getting organizational success through increased performance.

Conclusion

A better understanding of the generation Y's attitude, expectations and preferences will be helpful for the employers to create job offerings and work environments that are more likely to engage and retain the workforce. It is suggested that organizations can change their human resource policies to adapt to the new workforce in order to draw in and retain the most talented college graduates (Ferri-Reed, 2010). Organization should give freedom to these employees as previous research also suggested that when they feel a certain freedom, generation Y is more creative in thought and innovative in action (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012). This study provides results for the Generation Y, which can be compared to results from other generational cohorts as they progress through their lifecycle. This study is among a few which analyses the attitude, expectations and preferences of generation Y through qualitative exploration. A clear understanding of the generation Y in the Indian context will help professionals deal with such conflicts. It is recommended that organizations must be prepared to use generational diversity as an opportunity to benefit the business in the long

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term. This study provides insight into the generational theory and P–O fit. One of the main limitations of this study is that the data was self-reported and collected at a single point in time. A few limitations should be noted to put the findings into the context. First, the data were self-reported, which may give rise to social desirability and response set biases. Only a few students had some work experience. Therefore, they may have unrealistic expectations of the workplace, their employers, and of themselves. It is suggested further that research is needed to identify which factors impact the attitudes, expectations, and preferences of generation Y. Future studies may empirically examine the findings of this study on a large sample of generation Y.

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