

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE OF GENERATION X MANAGERS – THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

B Sudhakar

*School of Business, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dubai.
sudhakar@manipaldubai.com*

Sangeetha Vinod

*School of Business, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dubai.
sangeetha.vinod@manipaldubai.com*

Satish Sagadevan

*School of Business, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dubai.
satish.sagadevan@manipaldubai.com*

Abstract

“Generation X” is a phrase that has gained entry into modern management literature. Generation X managers are expected to shoulder leadership responsibilities to steer future organizations towards excellence. Emotional intelligence is a catalyst that equips Gen X managers with skills to turn challenges of generational differences into positives. However, not much research work has been carried out in the Indian context to study the characteristics and preferences of Generation X and the levels of their emotional intelligence. This study attempts to review the Gen X managers and their level of emotional intelligence subsequently enabling them to manage and lead multigenerational employees in the workplace. The researchers intend to showcase through this study that employees from different generations require different management strategies when it comes to recruiting, retaining and motivating employees and the greater onus is on the Gen X managers.

Keywords: *Generation X, emotional intelligence, multigenerational workplace*

Introduction

Generation X (Gen X) can be traced back to Douglas Coupland (1991) who wrote about late boomers and gave them the title ‘Generation X’. The usage of the term can also be attributed to media that popularized the phrase during the mid 1990s. Generation X, also known as ‘baby busters,’ have grown up in times of rapid changes. Hurt more by parental divorce, and having witnessed corporate downsizing firsthand, they tend to be independent, cynical and do not expect the security of long-term employment (2003). They began to project an image of a generation of people who were angry, cynical, frustrated and unmotivated, in a

nutshell, individual with poor level of emotional intelligence.

In recent years, emotional intelligence (EI) has become a major topic of interest in scientific and academic circles as well as in the public and private sector (Mortana et al., 2014: 97). On the contrary this philosophical and cultural background on the new notion of EI has become important in psychology (Akduman et al, 2014). “Emotional intelligence involves the capacity to accomplish faithful analysis about emotions and the capacity to employ feelings, emotions, and emotional knowledge to augment thought, incorporating particular expert-

ness and suggesting that this distinctive expertness may also be considered as constituting a united, general emotional intelligence” (Ljungholm, 2014: 128). Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence as: “The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those in others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships (Goleman, 1998: 16).

Daniel Goleman’s (1995) influential book “Emotional Intelligence” in which he claimed that EI can matter more than IQ and suggested a redefining of what it means to be smart. Goleman’s book argues that effective business leaders are distinguished not by their education, native intelligence (IQ) or subject knowledge, but by emotional intelligence, which in the context of the workplace includes characteristics like self-awareness and self-control; the ability to communicate and influence others; and facility at building bonds and creating group synergies (Goleman, 1995).

A review of the literature on Gen X revealed that there is no single accepted age range for individuals born after the Baby Boomers. According to Cannon, (1995) the label ‘Generation X’ is coined from the Canadian novelist Douglas Coupland’s 1991 novel Generation X while Strauss and Howe (1991) put Generation X birth years from 1961 to 1981. Tulgan (1995) reported that the age range of Gen X was from 1963 to 1981. According to Collins (2000) some researchers marked Generation X as people born between 1960 and 1979. Much of the literature, according to McShane and Von Glinow (2003), accepts that Generation X employees are those born between 1965 and 1975. For this study, the age range between 1965 and 1977 as identified by Cascio (2003) was considered.

It is not new that workplaces have generational differences, but the importance of these differences is recent thus posing inimitable challenges for organizations

worldwide. Today’s multigenerational workplaces require that organizations understand and value diversity at the workplace, where it’s not uncommon to find four or five generations, multiple languages, many ethnicities and races and differences in gender, religion, personalities and values (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque and Rowe, 2008). There’s also a more fundamental change to today’s displacements. In past generational changes, new workers tended to adjust their expectations and behavior to the realities of the organizations and workplace.

Today’s new generations expect the workplace to adjust to their likings and more often than not, this does happen. The co-worker’s experience contributes to this in a small way. Emotional intelligence improves the skills leaders need to understand the behavior of workers and motivation of co-workers with different values and to find the common ground that can build a cohesive, effective team to tackle the tasks at hand.

Notably, Generation Y and Baby Boomers - the two largest groups in today’s workforce have a massive gap between their abilities to self-manage. Advent of digital age with exposure to simulated video games, instantaneous internet gratification and such are some of the factors responsible for Generation Y’s lagging self-management skills. This added with adoring parents resulted in creation of a generation of self-indulgent young workers who cannot help but wear their emotions on their sleeves in tense situations. However, a deeper look reveals another explanation. Even within the same generation, older people (Gen X) have better EQ skills than the younger despite sharing the same generational influences. Self-management appears to increase with age. Also experience and maturity facilitate the mastery of one’s emotions.

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is an umbrella term that captures a

broad collection of individual skills and dispositions, usually referred to as soft skills or inter and intra-personal skills, that are outside the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence, and technical or professional skills. Most of the authors on the topic note that in order to be a well-adjusted, fully functioning member of society (or family member, spouse, employee, etc.), one must possess both traditional intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (dubbed EQ). Mayer and Salovey (1993), described four abilities that contribute to emotional Intelligence: 1. Perception: it involves accurate verbal and non-verbal expression and appraisal of emotion. 2. Assimilation: it involves generation of emotion to assist in problem-solving. 3. Understanding: it involves acquisition of emotion knowledge designed to promote intellectual and emotional growth. 4. Management of emotion: it involves regulation of emotion in the self and in others.

One of the most important management challenge is to manage generation X and Y together. With the generational differences in work life, organizations and leaders must have some idea of how to relate to different generations. So, the researches defining specific differences between these generations are important to overcome this challenge.

Generation is defined as people that are grouped within certain range of ages, location they live and significant life events they experienced at critical developmental stages (Kupperschmidt 2000). There are many generations like the silents (1925-1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), generation X (1965-1976), generation Y (1977-1994), generation Z born after 1995. Each generation has its own unique combination of experiences, expertise, prospective and expectations. It is believed that their similarities in terms of work values, attitudes, preferences, expectations, perceptions and behaviors

are fettered from same or hemophilic historical, economic and social experiences (Smola & Sutton 2002: Zemke ,2000). Presently our paper is related to only generation X & Y.

Generation X refers to as lost generation that are born between 1966-1976 and reaching their age of 36 to 46 years old as of year 2012 (William 2008; Tay 2011). These people learn from their elders to follow company rules and regulations to secure their jobs (Dougan, Thomas and Chirstina, 2008).

The following are the few characteristics of Generation X:

- Expect to work hard and be paid well
- Used to working with technology
- Prefer cash and salary to options
- Expect immediate and ongoing feedback
- Comfortable giving feedback to others
- Work in multicultural settings
- Want some fun in the workplace
- Want the promise of future promotions
- Concerned with maintaining a fulfilling
 - Skeptical of long-term commitments
- Personal life
 - More loyal to their profession than to their employer
 - Not opposed to switching jobs for more Money

Generation Y is well known as millennials who are born in between 1977 to 1994(William, 2008; Tay 2011). These people are perceived to be more cooperative and optimistic than their elders as most of them have high educational background.

The following are the characteristics of Generation Y:

- Expect close and frequent contact with supervisor
- Want to give input
- Need to see how work makes a difference
- Want state-of-the-art technology
- Expect full disclosure
- Do not expect to stay in a job too long

Need of the study

An extensive study on the outstanding performers by Moss (1929) revealed that their success depended not on their deep and profound knowledge which challenged the brains of average people but on the simple and more commonplace qualities which pleased the understanding of the common people, and aroused in their hearts a feeling of sympathy. The decade from 1990 to 2000 witnessed the importance of emotional intelligence for leadership and organizational effectiveness. Underlying this development many researchers as established by Goleman (1995) concluded that people with high emotional intelligence were more likely to achieve workplace success than people with low emotional intelligence. “Emotional Intelligence,” according to Mayer and Salovey (1993), “is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own emotions and others’ emotions to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions.”

A study by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants identified that ‘emotional intelligence skills’ were extremely important for the success of accounting profession. Professional accounting practices, claimed Michael and Grover (2003), had placed little emphasis on behavioral issues such as emotional intelligence although human behavior underlined most of what was written and taught about professional accounting. Thus the current study aims at filling this research gap by considering the below hypotheses:

H1 : Gen X managers have significant influence on Emotional Intelligence.

H2 : The differences in the levels of various dimensions of Emotional Intelligence have impact on Gen X managers.

Methodology

The descriptive research design is adopted for this research. The researchers contacted the respondents (Gen X managers) personally with well-prepared sequentially arranged questions. The questionnaire is prepared based on the previous studies aligned with the objectives of the study. Data for the research study was collected from 243 Gen X managers. The respondents were born between 1965 and 1977. The respondents were in four hierarchical levels. The levels were Assistant Managers, Deputy Managers, Managers and Senior Managers. There were representations from six management functions. The management functions were Finance, General Administration, Human Resource, Logistics, Marketing and Operations. “The sampling technique used for this study is judgement sampling. The research instrument utilized is “Developing Emotional Intelligence’ instrument by Weisinger to measure the emotional intelligence of the respondents. The instrument comprised 45 items with five point responses ranging from ‘Very Low Ability’ (1 point) to ‘Very High Ability’ (5 points). Hence, minimum and maximum scores were 45 and 225 respectively.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EI

	Levels						Total
	Low	%	Medium	%	High	%	
Respondents	52	21.39	156	64.21	35	14.40	243

Analysis and discussions

Frequency distribution, as given in Table 1, shows that Gen X managers had medium level of EI. Moreover, percentage analysis also showed the same result. 14.4% of the respondents were with high EI, 64.2% of the respondents were with medium EI and 21.4% of the respondents were with low EI. The number of respondents with medium level of EI - 156 respondents - is close to the expected number 165. However, it could not be concluded that the EI of Gen X managers is medium as these findings were not statistically validated. In order to statistically validate the findings it was hypothesized that 'The levels of EI of Gen X managers are different.'

NH: Gen X managers have same level of EI.

AH: Gen X managers do not have same level of EI.

Chi square test was applied to test the hypothesis. The actual value of their EI, result of chi square test, is: $\chi^2_o = 5.331$. But the expected value (Table value) is: $\chi^2_e = 5.991$ for 2 df at 5% level. Chi square value (5.331) in this case was found to be less than the table value at 5% level of significance. Since $\chi^2_o < \chi^2_e$, it is inferred that Gen X managers have same level of EI and the null hypothesis is accepted. So Gen X managers have medium level of EI. In a mean difference, that is., 1) 68% at 1 α level, 2) 95% at 2 α level and 3) 99% at 3 α level, majority of the observations are in the middle. The responses fell into normal distribution. Since majority of the observations in this study was in the middle and the null hypothesis was accepted, it is affirmatively concluded that Gen X managers had medium level of EI.

Relationship among the dimensions of EI

According to Gibbs (1995), executives derailed because of emotional problems such as poor working relations, too authoritarian, too ambitious and conflict with the top management. This list of negative qualities of Gen X is an area of concern for the business world of today and that of the next decade. Hence, a study was initiated to find the differences in relationship among the dimensions of EI attribute. EI attribute has five dimensions. They are: Self Awareness, Managing Emotions, Self Motivation, Relating Well and Emotional Mentoring. Self awareness is being aware of one's feelings and behaviours as well as others' perceptions of one. Managing Emotions means understanding one's emotions and using that understanding to turn situations to one's advantage. Self-motivation encompasses using one's emotional system to catalyze the whole process and keep it going. Relating Well relates to exchange of information about one's feelings, thoughts and ideas. And Emotional Mentoring includes helping others manage their emotions, solve their problems and conflicts and communicate effectively.

TABLE 2. EI DIMENSIONS WITH REFERENCE TO LEVELS

Dimensions	Levels						Total
	Low	%	Medium	%	High	%	
Self Awareness	40	16.46	155	63.79	48	19.75	243
Managing Emotions	48	19.75	155	63.79	40	16.46	243
Self Motivation	42	17.28	163	67.07	38	15.69	243
Relating Well	46	18.93	163	67.08	34	14.09	243
Emotional Mentoring	43	17.69	162	66.67	38	15.64	243

Frequency and percentage details, as given in Table 2, show that there were differences in the levels of EI dimensions among Gen X managers. It was found, on the bases of frequency distribution and percentage analysis, that there were differences in the levels among the dimensions. These differences had to be statistically validated. Hence, a hypothesis was formulated to test the differences.

H: There are differences in the levels of various dimensions of EI among Gen X managers.

NH: The levels of EI of Gen X managers with reference to various dimensions are the same.

AH: The levels of EI of Gen X managers with reference to various dimensions are not the same.

ANOVA test was applied to verify the significance in mean differences among the dimensions. From the analysis of the result of ANOVA test, as provided in Table 3, it is concluded that the presence of various dimensions of EI among the respondents was different.

A significant F-value showed that the means were not equal. Though it was known that the means of the dimensions were not equal, it was not distinctively known means of which dimensions were significantly different from the means of which other dimensions.

TABLE 3. VARIANCE AMONG EI DIMENSIONS

Dimension	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Result
EI						
Between Groups	125834.12	4	31458.53	1031.45	0.000	<0.05- Null hypothesis is rejected
Within Groups	36903.97	1210	30.49			
Total	162738.10	1214				

Hence, Post-Hoc analysis was conducted to find out the dimensions of EI that had the highest and lowest presence among the dimensions in Gen X managers. This was done as the lowest and highest presence of any dimension of EI would influence EI negatively and positively respectively.

in Table 5, it is found that Self Motivation had significantly the lowest level of presence in Gen X managers among the other dimensions, namely, Managing Emotions, Self Motivation, Relating Well and Emotional Mentoring.

TABLE 4. DIFFERENCES IN THE LEVELS OF EI DIMENSIONS- HIGHEST

Dimension	Group	M.D	Sig.	Result
Self Awareness	Managing Emotions	12.10*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant
	Self Motivation	19.45*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant
	Relating Well	8.71*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant
	Emotional Mentoring	13.40*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

From the Post-Hoc analysis, as presented in Table 4, it is found that Self Awareness had significantly the highest level of presence in Gen X managers among the other dimensions namely, Managing Emotions, Self Motivation, Relating Well and Emotional Mentoring. Though differences existed in other dimensions, they were not significant.

Correlation among the dimensions of EI

A study on the correlation among the dimensions of EI would help us understand how significantly the dimensions are related with one another. Interrelationship among the dimensions would display the strength of the instrument and the data that were collected for the purpose of the study.

TABLE 5. DIFFERENCES IN THE LEVELS OF EI DIMENSIONS -LOWEST

Dimension	Group	M.D	Sig.	Result
Self Motivation	Self Awareness	-19.45*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant
	Managing Emotions	-7.34*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant
	Relating Well	-28.16*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant
	Emotional Mentoring	-6.04*	0.000	< 0.05- difference is significant

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

From the Post-Hoc analysis, as presented

Hence, Correlation analysis was conducted to find the relationships among the dimensions of EI.

The information provided in Table 6 gives the correlation among the dimensions of EI under study. It is found that Self Awareness was positively significantly correlated with Managing Emotions, Self Motivation, Relating Well and Emotional Mentoring. Managing Emotions was positively significantly correlated with Self Awareness, Self Motivation, Relating Well and Emotional Mentoring. Self Motivation was positively significantly correlated with Self Awareness, Managing Emotions, Relating Well and Emotional Mentoring. Relating Well was positively significantly correlated with Self Awareness, Managing Emotions, Self Motivation and Emotional Mentoring. And Emotional Mentoring was positively significantly correlated with Self Awareness, Managing Emotions, Self Motivation and Relating Well. From the findings of the research study, it can be safely concluded that all the dimensions of EI were strongly interrelated with one another.

Coefficients among the Dimensions of EI

A typical use for canonical coefficient in the experimental context is to take two sets of variables and see what is common among the two sets. By seeing how the dimensions of EI are related to each other, insights can be gained into what dimensions were common among them and how much variance severed.

TABLE 6. CORRELATION AMONG THE DIMENSIONS OF EI

Dimensions	Self Awareness	Managing Emotions	Self Motivation	Relating Well	Emotional Mentoring
Self Awareness	1				
Managing Emotions	0.639** (0.000)	1			
Self Motivation	0.719** (0.000)	0.626** (0.000)	1		
Relating Well	0.689** (0.000)	0.596** (0.000)	0.650** (0.000)	1	
Emotional Mentoring	0.542** (0.000)	0.552** (0.000)	0.581** (0.000)	0.725** (0.000)	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

TABLE 7. CANONICAL COEFFICIENTS FOR EI

Dimensions	Self Awareness	Managing Emotions	Self Motivation	Relating Well	Emotional Mentoring
Self Awareness	0.006	-0.145	0.177	-0.005	-0.085
Managing Emotions	-0.081	0.173	-0.002	0.179	-0.106
Self Motivation	-0.021	-0.160	-0.280	-0.071	0.077
Relating Well	-0.103	0.092	-0.070	-0.024	-0.051
Emotional Mentoring	0.004	-0.004	0.176	0.095	0.302

The results presented in Table 7 give the canonical coefficients among the dimensions of EI. From the information the following relationship is established. EI = 0.006 (Self Awareness) -0.081(Managing Emotions) -0.021 (Self Motivation) -0.103 (Relating Well) +0.004 (Emotional Mentoring). From the analysis it is found that Self Awareness (0.006) had a maximum influence on Gen X managers among all the dimensions of EI. Superior performers intentionally sought out feedback on their emotions; they wanted to listen to how others perceived them as they wanted to be aware of their emotions. That was one of the reasons, found Nilsen and Campbell (1993), that people who were self-aware, high self awareness, made better performers. The finding of the present study is in agreement with the previous research studies that different dimensions of EI influence EI.

Conclusion

It was found from the analysis of the data that Gen X managers had medium level of EI. There were significant differences in the presence of the dimensions of EI among Gen X managers. All the five dimensions of EI were positively significantly correlated with one another. Gen X managers were found to be high in ‘Self

Awareness’ and low in ‘Self Motivation’ of EI dimensions. ‘Self Awareness’ had the maximum influence on their EI among all the dimensions. This study aimed to analyze the emotional intelligence according to generations, and as a result, it is proved that emotional intelligence does not differ between generation X. Every generation has different values and frame of mind, and the researchers advocate to the corporates that employees from different generations require different management strategies when it comes to recruiting, retaining and motivating employees and the greater onus is on the Gen X managers.

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