

# Generational Changes and Workplace Flexibility: Lessons from Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*The occupational flexibility of generational changes in Nigeria (Generations X and Y) is investigated in this study. The study's sample sizes were proportionately determined while the descriptive survey design approach was adopted. One hundred and seventy-nine (179) surveys were distributed and used for the study. To ascertain the association between the two variables on a five-point Likert scale, the analysis was conducted using a statistical technique called the Correlation Model. The tested hypothesis is that there is a Pearson Correlation =.228\*\* and a correlation of.002 at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) between workplace flexibility and Generation X and Y. This suggests that, at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc in Lagos, workplace flexibility and Generation X and Y have a substantial link. To put it another way, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Ultimately, the following suggestions were made: In order to increase commitment, businesses should take into account the psychological well-being of their employees by conveying to them that their welfare is important, regardless of their age within the firm. When implementing new technology and interacting with all generations, managers should be adaptable and transparent in their approach to work and organizational goals and objectives. To address the issues of several generations within an organization, it is important to foster a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and effective communication between Generation X and Generation Y among all employees.*

**Keywords:** Generation X, Generation Y, Nestle Foods, workplace flexibility, workplace.

## INTRODUCTION

**H**istorical occurrences and eras experienced by the same generation demonstrate that workers have similar views and work ideals toward their professions (Celikdemir & Katrinli, 2021). However, another point of view contends that workers in some organizations, regardless of age, have similar opinions on the value of labour (Yang & Guy, 2006). Moses, Ostreicher, and Ryan (2010) contend that in adjusting to the dynamic nature of the labour market, younger generations have embraced non-traditional job options including contract work, part-time work, and multi-career responsibil-

ities. Research indicates that Generation Y (Gen-Y) workers in the Asia Pacific area had the lowest employment tenures when compared to Generation X (Gen-X) workers, with an average job tenure ranging from 18 months to 4 years (Sheahan & Sheahan, 2005). Roebuck, Smith, and Had-daoui (2013), Gen-Y denotes a workforce that is difficult for an organization to retain since they will change occupations at least once every five years.

Flexible work schedules enable moms to continue working in positions requiring a high level of human capital when there is a high demand for family time, as demonstrated by earlier studies (Chung & Van der Horst, 2018; Fuller & Hirsh, 2018). Women may be more satisfied with work-life balance since this characteristic enables them to keep both. Thus, flexible work schedules may help advance gender justice in our cultures. However, because of ingrained cultural beliefs about gender norms and men's and women's roles in the workplace, flexible work schedules can mainstream gender roles at home and work (Lott & Chung, 2016). Men are expected to work longer hours and harder at their jobs, employ flexible scheduling to boost productivity, and obtain larger pay premiums. However, because of their heavier workloads, men may experience more work-family conflict. Women are not rewarded for having different expectations than males. Thus they are expected to take on more responsibilities within the home when working flexibly, which may also lead to a rise in work-family conflict (Lott & Chung, 2016).

Due to the diverse generational makeup of today's workforce, managers face new challenges and complications on a global scale. Just two decades ago, people in their sixties would have been thinking about retiring. That being said, a lot of people are staying in their existing jobs because of improved health, longer life expectancies, and the desire to make up for losses following the 2008 financial crisis. The younger generations are beginning to come in significant numbers, nevertheless. The current issue is brought on by the diverse range of demands, expectations, and age groups found in the modern workplace, despite decades of study on gender and racial diversity conducted by managers and HR professionals. It will affect output, cause friction, and lead to needless employee turnover if it is not well addressed (Smith, 2013). Businesses and employees have seen variations in the behaviours of these four generations in the workplace, despite the potential advantages of having a diverse workforce (Hansen & Leuty, 2021).

There is not enough research in developing countries in general and Nigeria in particular to give a comprehensive answer as to how increasing globalization impacts Generations X and Y groups in different countries most especially in Africa. Against this background the researcher investigated *Generation X and Generation Y on Workplace Flexibility* at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos. It is by analysing the differences within generational changes among employees in the workplace flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Conceptual Review—*Generation X***

Since many members of Generation X learned to be inventive, responsible, and self-sufficient as a result of having two working parents, they are perceived as independent. A large portion of this generation embraces a hands-off management style and prefers autonomy and flexible work schedules (Valentine, 2021). Compared to previous generations and especially Millennials, they tend to place a higher priority on work-life balance. Having grown up surrounded by technology, Generation X is unafraid to embrace the latest technological advancements, particularly mobile technologies that give them flexibility in their work. They frequently communicate by email, which some people find to be either direct or abrupt. When it comes to balancing their work and personal lives, Generation Xers tend to object to pointless in-person meetings. As Baby Boomers retire in greater numbers—many of whom were compelled to do so as a result of the coronavirus pandemic—Gen X emerges as the logical successor, possessing the experience and knowledge that the younger generation will require to sustainably support the success of businesses (Valentine, 2021).

### *Generation Y*

Nowadays, Generation Y (often called the millennial generation) accounts for around one-third of the US labour force, despite being regarded as being entitled, impatient, and demanding (Valentine, 2021). Relative peace and prosperity characterized the era in which millennials grew up. Although they did not grow up with smartphones in their pockets like Gen Z, their descendants, they did experience the digital revolution in their early and teenage years, from social media to the creation of Google Search. Since they are tech-savvy, older generations frequently turn to these generations for help troubleshooting issues when their technology breaks down. Although many Millennials were either in their early career years or had recently entered the workforce during the Great Recession, they were raised during a period of widespread affluence. Their career launches were frequently delayed or halted because there were few entry-level positions accessible to them when they joined the workforce. Millennials prioritize upward mobility, ongoing education, and regular workplace feedback more than previous generations did. More people anticipate increased work flexibility, work/life balance, and sustained remote work choices, especially in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Some would even choose these benefits over monetary compensation. They demand that the companies they work for have the same level of technological sophistication as they do and offer mobile-friendly technology solutions.

## **Generation X and Generation Y**

Parents who lived for work and made significant sacrifices for the firm reared Gen-Xers, who were born between 1965 and 1980 (Knowledgecity, 2022). Children were often left on their own to take care of themselves or with their siblings to complete designated “to-do” lists. Along with the emergence of the term mixed family, living in one became commonplace. Similarly, those born between 1981 and 2000 are referred to as Millennials or Generation Y. In the age of empowerment, when everyone triumphed and took home a trophy, they were reared by helicopter parents. Changes in fundamental beliefs and communication abilities, along with permissiveness, were noticeable. Their norm included computers, internet, networking, and a constant electronic connection in addition to an unmatched level of supervised schooling (Pahwa, 2022).

## **Workplace Flexibility**

Many scholars have declared that workplace flexibility programs help businesses cut costs, adjust to fluctuations in demand, and recruit and retain top talent (Possenriede, 2014). To better fit their desired, more personalized lifestyles and better balance paid employment with other activities in their lives, employees demand flexibility in terms of working hours and location (Possenriede, 2014). According to Morgan (2014), flexible employment typically consists of three elements: employees have the freedom to work whenever and wherever they choose, and outputs are prioritized over inputs. In today’s round-the-clock global economy, flexible work schedules give workers more autonomy and choice in juggling conflicting work and family obligations and finding a work-life balance.

Firms where employees work, as well as the workplace itself, can gain from flexible work arrangements. Additionally, they can improve productivity at work. Several studies have shown that employees of all ages and professional stages search for flexible work arrangements. In 2008, a Randstat survey found that among the top three benefits employees identify as contributing to “happiness at the workplace,” flexible work schedules were cited by more than four out of ten employees as being important, followed by competitive pay and health insurance. These ranks differed slightly by generational group. Flexible work schedules, for example, ranked fourth among Gen Y employees, third among Gen X employees, fourth among Baby Boomers, and third among Matures, according to the percentage of workers who stated that personal benefits are crucial for job satisfaction.

## Characteristics of Generation X and Generation Y in the Workplace

Cook (2015), Hammill (2005), and Wasserman (2007) state that the personal, lifestyle, and occupational characteristics of Generation X and Generation Y are as follows.

Views Toward	Generation X (1965 – 1980)	Generation Y (1981 – 2000)
Fundamental principles	skepticism, good times, casualness	Self-assurance, realism, intense enjoyment, and social
Family	Kids with latchkeys	Combined households
Education	A route to take there	A staggering cost
Dealing with money	cautious, traditional, and frugal	Make money to spend
Work ethic and values	Get rid of the work, be independent, desire structure and guidance, and be doubtful	Next up, multitasking, perseverance, entrepreneurship, tolerance, and goal-orientation
Work is ...	A contract, a challenging task	A method to a goal, satisfaction
Interactive styles	Entrepreneur	Participative
Communication	Straightforward, instantaneous	Voice mail and email
Feedback and Reward	I apologize for interrupting, but how are you? Liberation is the ultimate prize.	Meaningful employment, whenever I want it, at the touch of a button
Ideal Leaders	Coordinating doers	Empowering collaborators
Work and Family	Balanced	Balanced
Special Interests	Most likely to be proficient in multitasking	is extraordinarily upbeat. "This is something we can accomplish." There are instances when this makes it harder to succeed at work.

*Source: Cook (2015); Hammill (2005); and Wasserman (2007) Personal, lifestyle and workplace characteristics of Generation X and Generation Y*

Just a small portion of the traits that have been researched and documented by different writers are included in the table. Not every member of a generation will share with members of that generation all of the numerous qualities listed in this or the following table. Nonetheless, Jiří (2016) notes that these instances illustrate broad trends in the dynamics between and among friends, family, and coworkers. People who were born at one end of the range or the other could notice similarities with the previous or next generation in some areas (Hammill, 2005).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Mannheim's Cohort Theory

Karl Mannheim first proposed cohort theory in 1928 under the title *The Problem of Generations* (Okros, 2020). According to cohort theory, a cohort's members may come to have common beliefs and values as a result of growing up, going through particular expe-

riences, and going through emotional stages. The three generations that are thought to make up the bulk of the current workforce are Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (Trujillo, 2020). Since employees bring their values and attitudes to the workplace, HR practitioners typically group employees into cohorts based on their generation. Numerous studies have shown that values and characteristics change between generations (Magni & Manzoni, 2020).

These variations across generations are explained by cohort theory. Important historical events and societal shifts have an impact on people's values, attitudes, beliefs, and inclinations. These occurrences could include upsetting situations such as recessions, drastic changes in the distribution of resources, conflicts, and past events. Because of this, people who are born in a particular period are impacted by a similar set of noteworthy historical events throughout a critical juncture in their lives. According to cohort theory, the common influences and experiences of that generation define these distinctions rather than the age of the members exclusively.

It is also assumed that these impacts will be proportional throughout time (Stevanin, 2019). It is important to acknowledge that generational concepts originate from a Western milieu (Weiss & Zhang, 2020). For instance, the US population went through the Civil Rights movement within a particular period and had certain long-term effects. Consequently, a generation raised in a different geographic area may have different experiences, be impacted in various ways, and as a result, view the world differently than their counterparts in the West. It is, therefore, not applicable to other regions of the world, regardless of the findings of generational research. Furthermore, generational theory affirms that people who belong to a particular generation will experience and be impacted by life events in a comparable way (Jones, Murray & Tapp, 2018). Generational theory argues that social events, rather than biological processes, define changes throughout generations, even though values, goals, and beliefs are essentially a consequence of age and maturity. The most compelling evidence for cohort effects, however, comes from a linear research that analyzed and compared the life experiences of successive cohorts over time (Strittmatter, Sunde & Zegners, 2020). Individual values and views are still taken into consideration. Researchers who looked at workplace-related factors in order to study generational variations have embraced the cohort viewpoint (Trujillo, 2020).

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

The empirical research in this study has suggested that Generation X and Generation Y or Millennials have significant roles they play to ensure workplace flexibility.

Halim, Aziz, and Inn (2021) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the link between work values congruence and organizational commitment, focusing on a compari-

son of the work values required by Gen X and Gen Y personnel in the Accounting and Finance sector in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The work value inventory (WVI), work value congruence scale (VCS), and organizational commitment questionnaire were among the survey tools employed in this quantitative study. The study was motivated by the realization of the importance of workplace diversity in fostering an ideal work environment and organizational effectiveness (OCQ). Work value congruence and organizational commitment had a substantial positive association ( $r = 0.617$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), according to a Pearson correlation study of 169 respondents. Furthermore, six characteristics of desired work values—management, prestige, kind of supervisor, lifestyle, financial rewards, and diversity of tasks—were shown to differ substantially between Gen Y and Gen X based on a *t*-test study. Whereas Gen Y showed greater mean scores in economic rewards and diversity of tasks, Gen X showed higher mean scores in management, prestige, character of supervisor, and lifestyle within these dimensions. The study highlights a notable difference in the values that Gen X and Gen Y seek from their jobs, and that a substantial correlation exists between congruence in work values and organizational commitment. The ramifications imply that in order to maintain successful cooperation and consistently high standards of work performance, employers must be cautious and vigilant in monitoring the job behaviour of both generations.

The focus of Meier and Crocker's (2010) study is on members of Generation Y who are entering the workforce and have prior job experience. Utilizing modern tools like Facebook to gather data, the study investigates what motivates and demotivates this generation at work.

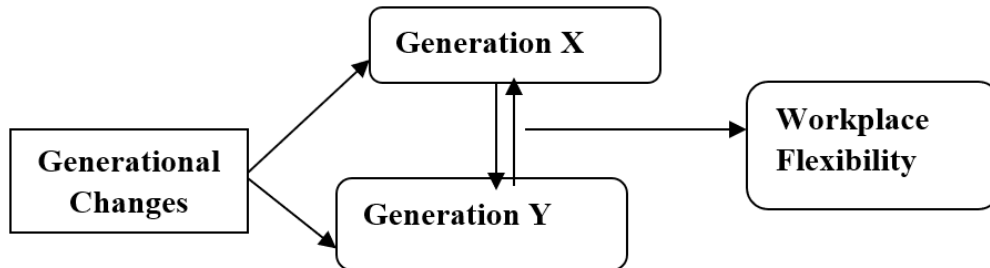
The significance of a diverse workforce in offering a range of answers to organizational difficulties is emphasized in Jiri's (2016) contribution. Using primary and secondary methodologies, the research done in the Czech Republic on four generations (Gen Z, Baby Boomers, X, Y, and Z) found strong dependencies on age-related characteristics. The research emphasizes how generational disparities affect corporate hiring practices, team building, motivation, change management, and overall productivity and service performance. The results highlight the need for companies to embrace diversity in order to gain a competitive edge and other benefits. They also provide insight into how employees in the chosen enterprises relate to one another in terms of collaboration styles and preferences for supervisors. The study uses statistical techniques, such as Pearson's chi-square test, to confirm or refute its hypotheses.

### **Hypothesis stating**

This paper seeks to investigate if there is a significant relationship between Generation X and Generation Y on workplace flexibility at Nestle Foods, Lagos.

## Conceptual Framework

### Conceptual framework on Generation X and Generation Y on Workplace Flexibility



## METHODOLOGY

An outline, strategy, or system utilized to produce solutions to research problems is called a research design (Neuman, 2017). This research's main goal is to find out how generational changes relate to workplace flexibility using a case study of Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc in Lagos. The descriptive survey research design was used in this study. This is so because descriptive research provides information on the characteristics and state of the problem as it was at the time the study was conducted. Since the descriptive technique captures reality as it is, it was employed (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2015).

The study's population is the whole population from whom its sample was taken. A complete collection of people that share certain observable traits is referred to as a population (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2015). The number of employees at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos, served as the basis for the target population utilized in the study. Two thousand three hundred and twenty (2320) workers at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos, were the study's population (MarketScreener, 2022). The two hundred and thirty-seven workers of Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos, were the targeted population of this study (237). The company's workers and representatives from the top, medium, and lower management levels and contract members of staff comprised the research respondents.

The study employed stratified random sampling, which produced a sample that was typical of a homogenous group after a sample was taken using the stratified sampling approach. Because the population is a stratified sample and the respondents were picked at random from each stratum. The selection process was stratified.



**Sample size**

Cadre	Target population	Sample size	% of sample population
Top mgt level	25	17	9.1
Middle mgt level	73	57	30.5
Lower mgt level	124	102	54.5
Contract staff	15	11	5.9
Total	237	187	100

*Source: Data is From Nestle Foods Nigeria, 2022.*

The sample size for this research study covered one hundred and eighty-seven (187) participants and this covers all the employees' of Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos.

A self-administered questionnaire was utilized as a data collection tool to uncover the relationship between Generation X and Generation Y on workplace flexibility. The respondents were given a week to complete the surveys, after which it were collected from them. As well as the measurement scales, the questionnaires include demographic and other information on workplace flexibility, Generation X and Generation Y. To help the re-researcher obtain responses systematically and to save a great deal of time and money, questionnaire was selected as the method of data collection. Assisting in addressing the study topics, the questionnaires are anticipated to extract significant and pertinent data.

Access to the instrument was provided to specialists in order to verify the legality of its face and substance. To put it another way, before the questionnaire is utilized in the study, expert judgment will be sought in order to confirm its validity. The internal consistency of the research instrument was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient, yielding a reliability coefficient above the 0.70 criteria.

## RESULTS

The paper used tables and percentage methods for presentation, scoring and analysis of data. SPSS 2.0 was used to analyse the formulated objectives. The hypotheses were analyzed using correlation model of statistical tool of a significant level at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) which was tested for significance. This model was expected to measure any discrepancy that may exist between observed and expected frequencies.

- **Ho:** There is no significant relationship between Generation X on Workplace Flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos.

Here, we are testing if there is a significant relationship between Generation X on Workplace Flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos.

**Table 1: Summary of Pearson Correlation results showing the relationship between Gen X on workplace flexibility at Nestlé Foods**

Correlations			
		Generation X	Workplace flexibility
Generation X	Pearson correlation	1	.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	179	179
Workplace flexibility	Pearson correlation	.228**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	179	179

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

## INTERPRETATION

The aforementioned hypothesis table displays the Pearson Correlation =.228\*\* for Generation X, indicating a significant relationship at the 0.01 (2-tailed) level and .002 Workplace Flexibility. This suggests that there is a significant correlation between Gen Z and workplace flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc in Lagos. Put otherwise, the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between Generation Y on Workplace Flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos.

Here, we are testing if there is a significant relationship between Generation Y on Workplace Flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos.

**Table 2: Summary of Pearson correlation results showing the relationship between Gen Y on workplace flexibility at Nestlé Foods**

Correlations			
		Generation Y	Workplace flexibility
Generation Y	Pearson Correlation	1	.253**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	179	179

<b>Correlations</b>			
		<b>Generation Y</b>	<b>Workplace flexibility</b>
Workplace Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	.253**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	179	179

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

### **Interpretation**

The preceding hypothesis table demonstrates that the Workplace Flexibility is .001 and the Pearson Correlation = .253\*\* for Generation Y is significant at the 0.01 (2-tailed) level of correlation. This suggests that there is a significant relationship between Gen Z and workplace flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc in Lagos. Put otherwise, the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

### **DISCUSSION**

According to the result from the first hypothesis, the relationship between workplace flexibility and Generation X's Pearson correlation = .002 is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). This suggests that Gen Z and workplace flexibility at Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos, have a substantial link. Put differently, this meant that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was approved.

The investigation carried out by Dorie and Loranger (2020) is fully supported by this result. Though the service may not be as intense as it was for previous generations, Generation X still wants to offer flawless results. There will be less individual attention for clients as they enter the store. Since they have been exposed to a wider range of environments, Generation X is thought to have received a higher standard of education than previous generations. Generation Xers are independent, have high aspirations, and believe that independence is the best kind of reward. Already endowed with benefits like materials, this age weighs the worth of possessions before clinging to them (Jones, Murray & Tapp, 2018). This generation can work from any place and has traits like being at work when needed and utilizing technology for everyday business operations (at home, office etc.). In managerial or staff responsibilities, Generation X is no more advanced than previous generations when it comes to service and interpersonal communication. Services can be rendered in a way that allows the client to get the items without help. To understand the expectations and their place within the company, they require guidance (Dorie & Loranger, 2020).

According to the results of the second test hypothesis, the relationship between

Workplace Flexibility and Generation Y is .001 at the 2-tailed significance level and has a Pearson Correlation of .253\*\*. This suggests that there is a substantial correlation between Nestle Foods Nigeria Plc, Lagos, and Generation Y regarding workplace flexibility. Put differently, this meant that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was approved.

As such, the present study's results are broadly consistent with those of Malik and Khera's (2014) investigation, which offered an understanding of the work characteristics discussed in the literature regarding this generation and how organizations can best adjust to capitalize on the aspirations and zeal of this new cohort. In order to identify some broad variables on which work traits of Generation Y have been observed, a descriptive and conceptual approach was used for the research in this paper. Brand sensitivity, employment flexibility, job stability, money, social media, technology, and work are among the factors that have been highlighted. By identifying this generation as a high maintenance workforce who demands more than just the benefit package, the authors would be able to validate their hypothesis that they have distinct work characteristics from previous generations. This paper's managerial implications relate to educating employers about the rapidly expanding sector of the labour force in order to successfully manage and engage this generation. When it comes to modern organizations, human resources are the most valuable asset. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the work habits and goals of Generation Y employees is essential. This is especially true in India, where, according to the US Census Bureau (2011), Gen Y accounts for 25% of the world's population.

## CONCLUSION

One of the key difficulties of managing workforces within organizations is the shift in generational makeup. Research studies have demonstrated that age heterogeneity can impact performance ratings, team turnover, organizational commitment, and social integration in addition to the fact that distinct generational groups have distinct value systems.

Numerous issues for organizations are brought up by this study. First and foremost, when it comes to workplace concerns, organizations should be more aware of generational disparities and shifts. Put differently, every generation has a distinct set of values and perspective that characterizes their way of approaching life and work. It is, therefore, necessary to recognize the unique qualities and characteristics of each generational group in order to foster peaceful relationships amongst them.

Second, office layouts and organizational structures need to be carefully considered to prevent the emergence of challenges related to generational differences in the workplace, including communication breakdowns, stereotyping, and working styles. In order

to create common experiences, exposures, and values, it is best to promote generational mixing whenever possible. It is also possible to plan events and social gatherings that will encourage interaction and connections between employees of different generations.

The achievement of successful workplace changes and the ability of both younger and older generations to support and enhance the efforts of current employees in building a solid and viable future for the entire organization depend on all of these factors. Furthermore, an organization can better understand how to drive employees toward rapid acceptance and utilization by having a better grasp of how technological advancements and workplace flexibility effect the workforce across different generations. Additionally, by fostering a sense of unity among employees, workplace growth and flexibility can help an organization overcome an issue between generations.

The last point is that since technology is constantly evolving, workplace flexibility across all generations—Gen X and Gen Y—is essential for organizations to be able to adapt to the changes brought about by technological innovation. Additionally, attaining organizational performance depends on an organization’s capacity to quickly guarantee that its heterogeneous workforce—which includes Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers—adapts to technological advancement.

It is recommended that the organization’s management promote candid communication about the importance of their work, which is indispensable to them, among staff members from various generational groups. Moreso, to improve the degree of commitment, employers should consider the psychological well-being of their staff by instilling in them a sense that their well-being matters, regardless of how old or young they are. Also, managers should be flexible and open in their approach to work and organisational goals and objectives when dealing with all generations during the introduction of new technology. It is further recommended that the management should endeavour to be proactive always about technology which could serve as a competitive advantage to them in the manufacturing industry. In addition, team spirit, collaboration, and good communication system among different generations (Generation X and Generation Y) should be encouraged among all employees because it would assist in solving multi-generational challenges in an organization.

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