

## Similarities and Differences of Work Values Between Gen X And Gen Y in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** From the economic point of view, both the generation X and generation Y are the main income generator for a nation as long as they keep working in the formal labor force and keep paying their taxes. However, these two groups of working group might have a different accumulated work value due to the different life trajectories. The research aims to look for the differences and any similarities of work values between the generation X and generation Y. A modified version of Work Values Questionnaires (WVQ; Mantech, 1983) was employed in this study and it found that there was significant differences in terms of work values between the generation X and Y. To suggest, a different types of work values hold might lead to different implications for an organization specifically when dealing with staff recruitment, training and job assignments.

**Key words:** Work relationship, financial and work conditions, influence and advancement, autonomy and use of skills, Malaysia

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### INTRODUCTION

We know that generation Y (hereafter, Gen Y) workers represent the workforce of the future. However, the younger group of worker needs to aware that they are currently working in ageing society where more and more adult workers (hereafter, Gen X) are remaining in formal labor force participation. At the same time, adult workers need to adapt themselves in a more competitive and fast moving working environment compared to their past working environment. Before further discussion on this topic, we should first understand that there are changes in the work setting which is important for both these two generations. For example, the rise in flexi hour employment, share office workplace, online marketing and other new emerging working setting. Younger workers or Gen Y is open and adaptive to these settings but the work value perceptions of adult workers might not longer suitable for the world of work nowadays.

Robert and Jackson (2003) found that there are few common generational labels and they are: the baby boomers (born between 1945-1965), the Gen X (born between 1966-1980) and the Gen Y (born between 1980-1990). A previous study by Gopwani in 2004 found out that there is a significant difference of work values between baby boomers and Gen X where

there is a clash of generational cultures as the Gen X has started graduating from college making their transition to take over the baby boomers in the job market. So, the raising the question is, how about for Gen Y? When the Gen Y steps into the world of work, what will be the clashes or will there be any differences or similarities compared with Gen X?

The different demands and experiences of these two generations may well have different implications and provide different lessons as the younger generation tend to be university students that consist of full time students or those who work on a part-time basis while the older generation is those who are more likely to contain a greater proportion of experiences because they have engaged the work field for a long period of time. Thus, we planned to do comparison of work values, perceptions of the younger students which are Gen Y and the working adults in Gen X.

Next, Zytowski (1970) defined work values as 'a set of concepts which mediate between the person's affective orientation and classes of external objects offering similar satisfaction'. Work values are the values that individuals believe should be satisfied as a result of their participation in their work role, for example, financial prosperity like pay and benefits, altruism (principle of considering the welfare and happiness of others before

one's own; unselfishness), achievement and autonomy. The major underlying assumption of this theory is that work values are the primary variables that influence the occupation selection and the resulting satisfaction with and success in the selected occupation.

**Research objectives and significance of study:** As mentioned above, baby boomers are beginning to retire and young people are needed in the workforce (Chan *et al.*, 2010a). But, the work values are no longer exactly the same as the as the old generation due to the factors like the rise in non-standard employment, leadership, workplace health and safety and unions, technological advancement, increase on living level. Thus, it is likely that graduates either enter with work values that match the organization or that they will discover a poor fit between themselves and the organization and subsequently leave. At this moment, quite a lot of researches had been done to find out what are the skills and abilities that are required. But researchers have neglected the importance of the working values because there are rather few of them are doing research on this aspect. Thus, the main objective of this research is to investigate how similar or different of the importance of work values as perceived by both Gen X and Gen Y. The result of the research will help students, especially those who are going to graduate to be alert on whether they are lacking of those important work values. This also will give them a direction to be prepared psychologically before they face problems on work value at workplace.

#### **Literature review**

**Work values:** The influence of work values of an individual's occupational development has been well documented, since the 1950s. Perhaps one of the earliest measures was Ginzberg and his colleagues to study and relate different different types of work value with occupational choice and these followed by numerous similar studies that reaffirmed the above relationship likes researchers Allport *et al.* (1960), Miller (1974) and Super (1980). Instead of relating work value with occupational choice, Furnham and his colleagues in the year 2005 had suggested that there is a strong connection between work value and personalities among the working employees. Instead of working groups, Ben-Shem and Avi-Itzhak (1991) in another study extend their study to isreal undergraduates and they concluded that the Work Value Inventory (WVI) could be a valuable measurement assessing students' perceptions of work values among students. The extant literature of the perceptions of work value found that individuals' perceptions of work value

might relate to individuals' occupation choice and personalities. Although, a number of works-value studies have been conducted in various disciplines, very few studies have been conducted to study the work values among the Gen X and Y as well as making comparisons among the two groups of workers.

**Generation X and generation Y:** Much has been written about the different expectations of individuals in different generations. For example, many older workers aged sixty and above are more concerned about financial dependency (Chan *et al.*, 2010b). Galinsky in 2004 found that the generation Xers work hard as they think that work is important but not the only thing in lives where they strive to look for a balance between work and life.

Looking into the Gen Y, according to Howe in 2004, the generation Y has been model citizens. They are organized, work well in teams, volunteer and show promising leadership skills. The oldest members of generation Y are graduating from college and embarking on their careers, they are pressured to do well as in school and keep up with technology to compete for jobs. The generation Y is competing with the generation X who are probably as smart and as determined as them. At the same time, Gen Y is more concerned about reward and tend questioning about why managers and organizations make the decisions they make (Robert and Jackson, 2003). Multiculturalism in their schools has made them the most tolerant and open-minded of all generations. Loughlin and Barling in 1999 found that the work values of the generation Y may have been developed as it is now common for young people to work part-time in the paid labor market in the evenings, on weekends and/or during the holidays while still full-time students. The Frone's study suggests that to date, researchers have tended to underestimate the potential long-term influences of young people's early work experiences and research has only recently begun to explore the extent to which young workers are affected by the quality of their work experiences. No doubt, the job market will be very competitive as the generational differences are likely to continue to create challenges and conflict in organizations due to different work values.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Research design and sampling methodology:** This is a quantitative and explanatory type of study. The population in this study refers to generation X and generation Y in Malaysia and those Malaysians who was born between 1966-1980 (generation X) and those who was born 1980-1990 (generation Y) will be considered within the sampling frame. In the study, the

target population was the final year of degree students and currently working adults in Malaysia. The respondents of generation X are the working adults that was born between the year 1966-1980 that work in different types of industries and position. The respondent of generation Y is the final year with final semester students that born between the year 1981-1985 from one of the universities in Malaysia. From the survey, the generation Xs' perception of work values of their current workplace and job positions will be tested and analyzed and also the generation Ys' perception of work values oo their future workplace and job position.

Looking into the sampling methodology, the non-probability sampling is being used to select the range of interviews. The convenience sampling is the sampling method in the study. The target population of generation Y is easily available at school and the targeted population of generation X can be easily available in the public. A total of 200 questionnaires for generation X and 200 questionnaires for generation Y were distributed to the respondents by self-administered method. The total amount of answered questionnaires that collected back were 308 copies. The amount of answered generation X questionnaires collected back (responded) was 124 copies while the amount of answered generation Y questionnaires collected back (responded) was 184 copies.

**Measurement of instrument:** The generation X's questionnaire consists of three sections. The section A is the personal information. It has questions include gender, age, race, education level, current job title, gross monthly income and so on. Section B is the organizational commitment with questions asking about the affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Section C is the work values with the questions asking about the work relationship, influence and advancement and financial and work conditions. Then, the questionnaire for generation Y is only consists of two sections. Section A is the personal information with questions asking about the gender, age, race, course studying, CGPA, future planning after graduate, expected salary and so on. Then, section B is the work values with the questions asking about the work relationship, influence and advancement and financial and work conditions. Both set of questionnaire also request the respondents rank top 10 work values that are most important for them with 1 being the most important and 2 being the next important and so on and 10 being the least important.

The generation Xs' perception of work values of their current workplace and job positions will be tested and

analyzed and also the generation Ys' perception of work values of their future workplace and job position. To measure the work values of both generation X and generation Y, the level of frequencies was used in adopting the work values. A five point ordinal scale measurement was used to test the level of frequencies in adopting the work values in the questionnaire. The five point scale measurement was set in two different phrases to get the respondents' work values, the generation X practices of work values in their current jobs and the generation Y likelihood of adopting the work values in their future jobs. To measure the work values of generation X, the five measurement scale are:

- I never adopt it to guide my job-related decisions actions and behaviours
- I seldom adopt it to guide my job-related decisions, actions and behaviours
- Sometimes I adopt it to guide my job-related decisions, actions and behaviours
- I often adopt it to guide my job-related decisions actions and behaviours
- I always adapt it to guide my job-related decisions actions and behaviours

To measure the work values of generation Y, the five measurement scale are:

- I definitely will not adopt it to guide my future job-related decisions, actions and behaviours
- I may not adopt it to guide my future job-related decisions, actions and behaviours
- I may adopt it to guide my future job-related decisions, actions and behaviours
- Most probably I will adopt it to guide my future job-related decisions, actions and behaviours
- I definitely will adopt it to guide my future job-related decisions, actions and behaviours

The total numbers of 308 respondent details are keyed into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) one by one and then, the individual data will be analyzed on a group basis. Frequency analysis is used to make the interpretation work easier. In this research study, factor analysis was employed the identify the domains for work value among the Gen Y and X. Independence sample t-test was used to identify the differences of work values by gender, age group and ethnicity.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Research results of generation y study:** There are 184 respondents from Gen Y category and of the 184, 36% of them are male and 64% are female. Among the students

responded to this survey, there are 2.7% of 20 years old students who were born in 1986, 39.7% of 21 years old students who were born on 1985, 32.1% of 22 years old students who were born on 1984, 20.7% of 23 years old students who were born on 1983, 2.7% of 24 years old students who were born on 1982 and 2.2 % of students who were born on 1981. In terms of the academic performance, most of them are second class lower honors holders (60.9%, 112 respondents), followed by second upper class (37.5%, 69 respondents). Only two respondents (1.1%) are first class honors holders and one respondent (0.5%) is the third class honors holder. When being as about the future direction, 159 of them (86.4%) decided to look for a job after the graduation. The 16 of them (8.7%) plan to have further study, 7 of them (3.8%) plan to be self employed and 2 of them (1.1%) will be engaged in their family business. In terms of types of industry, 53 of them (28.8%) interested to enter the accountancy field after their graduation. The 33 of them (17.9%) interested to enter the marketing field. The 32 of them (17.4%) interested in the sales. The 11 of them (6%) interested in each field of retailing and hotel. The 10 of them (5.4%) interested to enter the field of research and accountancy. The 9 of them (4.9%) are interested to enter each field of tourism and entertainment. The 7 of them (3.8%) interested in the investment field. The 4 of them (2.2%) interested in the advertising field and them rest of 5 people have interest in others field.

**Research results of generation X study:** There were total 124 respondents from the generation X that composed of 53 males and 71 females. The average age of both the males and females were 28 years old. The results show that most of the respondents were well educated. There were 38 diploma holders (male 20 and female 18) followed by 30 certificate holders (male 9 and 21 females) and 31 respondents studied till secondary school (female 18 and male 13). There were 17 degree holders (male 8 and female 9), four advanced diploma holders of females and one male respondent held a master. Only three respondents studied up to primary school education (male 2 and female 1). In terms of types of industry, There were 27 retailing companies, 21 education companies, 18 restaurant and catering companies, 12 banking and finance companies, 12 tourism companies, 10 manufacturing companies, five computers and IT companies, four investments institutes companies, three marketing companies and 1 health care companies. There were 11 respondents picked their classification of company others. The term 'others' was classified as brokerage firms (2), salon services or hair dressing (4), advertising company (2), auto shop (2) and transportation (1). When looking into their job category,

it was found that there were 60 respondents belonged to sales (female 38 and male 2) which was the highest job functions collected from the survey. There were 20 respondents belonged to the administrative job category (female 15 and male 5), 16 respondents in the education category (female 11 and male 5), 11 male respondents in the technical category, 11 respondents were professional category (female 7 and male 4) and six male respondents in the managerial category. Lastly, the average gross monthly income of the respondents was RM2, 366.94. In terms of length of employment, The data collected shows the longest of years been employed in the work force was 22 years while the shortest of years been employed in the work force was 2 years. A high number of 21 respondents had been in the work force for four years. There were only two respondents been in the work force for 9 years and 20 years (one respondent in each year). Other significant numbers of years were three years in the work force (18 respondents), 6 year in the work force (16 respondents), 5 years in the work force (15 respondents) and 7 years in the work force (14 respondents).

**Factor analysis of work value:** The factorability of the 43 work value items was examined and few criteria for the factorability of a correlation were used. Firstly, 36 of the 43 items correlated at least 0.3 with at least one other item, suggesting reasonable factorability. Secondly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was 0.78 which is above the recommended value of 0.6 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at  $p < 0.01$  as well as the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix were all over 0.5, thus, supporting the inclusion of each item in the factor analysis. Given these overall indicators, factor analysis was conducted with all 43 items. Confirmatory factor analysis was applied because the primary aim was to identify and compute composite scores for the factors underlying with the work value. During several steps, a total of 17 items were removed because they did not lead to a simple gene structure and failed to see a minimum criteria of delivering a primary factor loading of 0.5 or no cross-loading of 0.5 or above. As per set, four factors were identified with a total variance of 58%. Internal consistency for each of the scales was examined using cronbach's alpha were strong 0.91 for work relationship (11 items), 0.87 for financial and work conditions (6 items), 0.88 for influence and advancement (7 items) and 0.82 for autonomy and use of skills (3 items). Sixteen of the 43 items was eliminated; yet the original factor structure proposed by Furnham and coauthors in 2005 was held. Skewness and Kurtosis analyses for each composite score were performed (within the range of -1.96 to +1.96)

Table 1: Dimensions of work values, modified version of WVQ; Mantech in 1983

Factor label and statement	Factor loading			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Factor 1: work relationship</b>				
Relationship with work colleagues	0.711			
Relationship with subordinates	0.502			
Harmony (among all groups in your organization)	0.663			
Trust (been trusted by all people you work with)	0.631			
Opportunity to meet people and interact with them	0.585			
Feedback concerning the results of your work	0.676			
The opportunity to work in teams	0.688			
Honesty and integrity	0.619			
Ethical behaviors at work	0.616			
Time competence and punctuality	0.668			
Willingness to work hard (walk extra mile)	0.647			
<b>Factor 2: financial and work conditions</b>				
Work conditions (comfortable, clean, modern)		0.689		
Job security (as permanent a job as possible)		0.584		
Human resources backup (selection and appraisal)		0.565		
Physically safe conditions at work		0.713		
Resources (provided with all necessary equipment)		0.627		
Training opportunities		0.698		
<b>Factor 3: influence and advancement</b>				
Influence within the organization as a whole			0.640	
Influence in the workgroup/team			0.704	
Participation in decision making			0.722	
Job status (to be recognized)			0.500	
Achievement at work			0.550	
Opportunity for personal growth and advancement			0.597	
Being respected for your skills and input			0.560	
<b>Factor 4: autonomy and use of skills</b>				
Autonomy and personal freedom				0.511
A chance to use your skills and abilities				0.565
Job interest (to do work which is interesting to you)				0.561
Variance explained (%)	17.195	15.581	16.123	9.589
Cronbach's coefficient	0.919	0.875	0.880	0.827
Total variance explained (%)				58.488

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.78; Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at  $p < 0.01$

and there was no infringement of the assumptions of normalcy. Hence, the data were well suited for parametric statistical analyses (Table 1).

#### Similarities and differences of work value dimensions:

Table 2 showed the similarities and differences of work values of Gen X and Gen Y. For generation Y, this study, found that there is a significant difference of "work relationship" by sex mean score for male = 45.49; mean score for female = 43.41;  $t = 3.474$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) where male respondents have perceived higher mean score than female respondents in work relationship. A similar pattern was observed for "influence and advancement" (mean score for male = 27.93 mean score for female = 26.17;  $t = 4.367$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and "autonomy and use of skills" work value (mean score for male = 12.97 mean score for female = 11.7;  $t = 5.633$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). A closer look at the four different types of work values by sex in generation X might find that male respondents have perceived higher mean score than female respondents in the study. However, t-test showed that there is no significant do different of work values by sex.

To answer the main objective of the study Table 2 showed that of the four dimensions of work value, there are a significant difference of "work relationship", "financial and work conditions" and influence and advancement" by generation where the older group (generation X) was generally obtained a higher mean score than the generation Y. This means that both generations are upholding a different work value in the workplace. A closer look at Table 2 might find that the older group or so called the generation Y have scored a higher mean score in the three domains except for autonomy and use of skills. Compared with younger workers, older workers will spend more efforts in building up the good relationship, trust and harmony with their colleagues. They will also always ensure that their working conditions are clean, in order and treat their work as a proxy of financial security. Gen X workers were more prevalent in participation in decision making influence in workgroup being respected for their special skills and inputs.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations for the work values dimensions (generation X and generation Y)

	Generation X				
	Male (n = 53)		Female (n = 71)		
Demensions	M	SD	M	SD	t-test
Work relationship	46.30	6.04	45.93	5.50	NS
Financial and work conditions	24.77	3.43	24.49	2.69	NS
Influence and advancement	28.81	3.41	28.35	3.99	NS
Autonomy and use of skills	12.85	1.92	12.38	1.76	NS
	Generation Y				
	Male (n = 116)		Female (n = 67)		
Demensions	M	SD	M	SD	t test
Work relationship	45.49	3.62	43.41	4.38	t = 3.474 p = 0.01
Financial and work conditions	24.07	2.52	23.74	2.14	NS
Influence and advancement	27.93	2.41	26.17	2.73	t = 4.367 p = 0.01
Autonomy and use of skills	12.97	1.13	11.97	1.22	t = 5.633 p = 0.01
	Generation X (n = 124)		Generation Y (n = 182)		
Demensions	M	SD	M	SD	t test
Work relationship	46.09	5.72	44.17	4.23	t = 3.385 p = 0.01
Financial and work conditions	24.61	3.02	23.86	2.29	t = 2.490 p = 0.01
Influence and advancement	28.55	3.75	26.81	2.75	t = 4.693 p = 0.01
Autonomy and use of skills	12.58	1.84	12.33	1.28	NS

## CONCLUSION

To recap, the work value in this study refers to work attitudes towards jobs. This study, found that there were significant differences in terms of work values between the generations; where this could be explained by the differences of life trajectories and work experiences hold by the respondents. However, the significant within the generation provides more insight information about work values where there were significant differences work value by sex in generation Y but, this difference will slowly be faded out by the times in generation X as this study failed to identify any significant differences of work value by sex in generation X. In terms of managerial implications, it is important to recognize and formalize the differences of

work value between the generation in the workplace as this is helpful whenever the organization plans to involve both Gen X and Gen Y workers during the dialog session, training or even job placement. By doing this, both Gen X and Gen Y workers are able to learn and adopt the differences work value from each others and eventually form up a harmonious organization culture that contribute to job commitment.

On a final note, this research was clearly based on the two generations from year 1966-1990 and thus the results did not represent the Malaysian workers in general. Others segments such as older worker aged 60 and above, who may have different work values should be investigated. Also, additional studies comparing the working value by urban and rural area might produce interesting findings.

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