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## Variation in Preferred Leadership Styles Across Generations

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ABSTRACT

**Introduction/Main Objectives**: This study investigated preferred leadership styles across Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. The autocratic, participative, and laissez-faire were identified as most prevalent styles; and were assessed to explore how the leadership styles across generations affect the role of leadership. **Background Problems:** Although leadership styles and perspectives have been investigated from divergent angles, the preferred leadership styles have not been explored adequately across generations. **Novelty:** This study endeavored at filling the gap in literature, and to provide direction to stakeholders, as regards the preference of each generation for a particular leadership style. **Research Methods**: An exploratory research design was used for this study and questionnaire items were adopted from the Globe Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project. The sample was obtained from adults over the age of eighteen from the Midwest USA and Canada. **Finding/Results**: The study confirmed the generally-accepted hypothesis that Baby Boomers tend to be workaholics and career driven. The study provides direction and motivation for further confirmatory and exploratory studies pertaining to preferred leadership styles vis-à-vis generation as well as demographic, geographic and cross-cultural variables. **Conclusion:** Generation X is highly focused on family, life, and work. The millennial generation has modern values and believe in treating everyone equally, though with a desire to be the center of attention for stealing the spotlight.

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## 1. Introduction

Many studies have investigated preferred leadership styles of managers across generations. Different leadership styles can affect the relationship that a manager has with his/ her subordinates. It is unlikely that we would only manage employees from our generation, so being able to adapt our leadership style would make us a stronger manager and more attractive to employers for hiring as well as for promotion. Understanding the leadership issues and challenges has its own significance for college graduates entering the workforce as well as for experienced managers for improving performance. Through this study, we explored whether there is a difference in preference of leadership styles across generations, and how can we apply this knowledge to manage and lead better. For the purpose of our study, the three leadership styles measured were Autocratic, Laissez-Faire, and Participative. These are most prevalent and common styles, practiced by today's workforce (Baumgartel, 1957). Democratic, autocratic, and transformational leadership styles positively impact the level of employee performance (Veliu Liridon, et al. 2017). Organizations should pay attention to the leadership style needs of their employees if those organizations wish to improve employee productivity (Olayisade, A., & Awolusi, O. D. 2021). We, therefore, explored what traits different generations share. Generations we surveyed were the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. We chose these specific generations because many of the participants are still alive and are there in the workforce. Another reason we chose these generations was because we expected each generation to provide us with multiple similarities and differences. Knowing what each generation has endured may impact the way they are able to lead or be led and how that affects preferred leadership styles in a workplace. Each generation broadened the spectrum of knowledge through our research questions.

**Research Questions**

Questions surrounding this topic and driving the research are ones that many managers ask themselves. These are:

- How do you properly manage someone that is out of your generation?
- What relationship style does each generation seem to prefer?
- Does serving in the Military have an effect on the type of leader someone may prefer?
- Does the level of education affect the type of leadership style that is preferred?

There is generational difference that could affect the way people like to be led (Yu & Miller 2005). That is why the organizations need to understand, and appreciate the people's preferences to be led, and comprehend which generation prefers what leadership style. The differences that we looked at were demographic questions that we came up on our own. This study is of paramount significance to learn how varying leadership styles across generations have a - connection into the workplace and as a lifestyle as a whole. Studying and researching what may have connected the distinctive style of leadership per generation is something we are trying to dissect. There is mixed evidence as to whether or not generational differences actually exist, and whether these differences have in reality an impact in the workplace (Rhodes, 1983). The studies have evinced that generational cohorts differ in such areas as their beliefs about the psychological contract between employees and employers, as well as their commitment to organizations (DeMeuse,

Berman, & Lester, 2001). This is important to think of because of the way people from different generations view the world as a whole. As we age, it is thought that older generation's leadership styles are more participative, democratic, or consultative than those of the younger people. However, there are studies, suggesting that younger leaders are more effective than their older counterparts (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). People in recent generations seem to differ to those in earlier generations, and also seem to hold different expectations regarding centrality of work, as they bring different attitudes and personalities to the workforce (Anderson, Heather J., et al., 2017).With this study, it should be clearer how the leadership styles across generations affect the role of leadership and how it affects individuals work ethics and styles.

## 2.   Literature Review

Leadership plays pivotal role in business as well as society. It allows us to be able to maximize performance while maintaining an operating staff. Different leadership styles have a bearing on the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization (Jain, and Luhar, 2021). The leadership styles significantly influence employee productivity albeit different leadership styles have varying effects on employee productivity, and varying leadership styles can co-exist within the same organization (Olayisade, & Awolusi, 2021). With the right leadership, we are able to conduct relationships through the employees while maintaining a business atmosphere. Using our research questions as our guide, we reviewed the literature to investigate preferred leadership styles across generations. Leadership style is the pattern of behaviors engaged in by the leader when

dealing with employees (Bhatti, 2012). The three distinct types of leadership styles we have studied are Autocratic, Laissez-faire and Participative leadership.

### 2.1. Autocratic Leadership Style

One can describe an autocratic leader as a leader that seeks and receives only minimal advice from the subordinates (Rotemberg, Saloner 1993). This is a leader who takes pride in the choices he or she is making. A leader who is not open for ideas from his/ her subordinates makes it easy for them to keep control on how they want things to be accomplished. Such a leader is ultimately in charge of all divisions, although subordinates perform any and all assigned tasks (Hasibuan, 2017). You make most decisions on your own discretion. Recent Studies have shown that Millennials tend to respond to an autocratic leader with less enthusiasm, as compared to a more participative leader (Gursoy & Maier & Chi, 2008). An autocratic leader isn't the most popular type of leadership style in the workforce because an employee can experience higher job-related tension. (Bhatti, 2012) People experiencing job related tension may have an issue with having high job satisfaction. The less stressed out you are about work the more progression you would make towards reaching your goals.

### 2.2. Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

In case of Laissez-Faire style of leadership, the manager lets his/ her employees make decisions for themselves. Laissez-Faire leaders do not usually prefer interfering in decision making process. Empowering your employees for decision – making can signal to them that they are more vital to the organization (Chaudhry, 2012). When Laissez-Faire leaders make their own

decisions, they must understand that they are liable for the decisions that are made. Some decisions are better left to deal with by the managers. The managers would furnish the employees with the proper information necessary to complete the task. They don't care about how the job gets done, they just want the job to be done to the best of the employees' abilities. Allowing employees to be able to do things the way they want can enhance their productivity. (Chaudhry, 2012). Advantage with using the Laissez-Faire style of leadership is that it essentially can give each employee his/ her own satisfying freedom while completing a task. Laissez-faire leadership style champions a non-interference approach, allows thorough freedom to the workers, and has no prescriptive or pre-determined way of attaining goals (Bhatti, 2012). However, if the right conditions do not prevail, laissez-faire leadership can be ineffective and perhaps destructive; and this avoidant style of leadership can be a root cause of work stress (Skogstad, Hetland, et al., 2014).

## 2.3.    Participative Leadership Style

Participative leadership, also called Democratic has the meaning in its name. This style invites everyone to be a part of the fun in assisting a manager, struggling with the tough decisions. The manager keeps everyone involved and informed in decision-making, but in the end has the final say, and uses the information shared by his/ her team to make a choice. "Democratic leadership can produce high quality and high quantity work for extended periods of time. Many employees like the trust they receive and respond with cooperation, team spirit, and high morale" (Khan, 2015). The participative leaders are liked all around, as they take care of their employees, they encourage them to be creative and create goals for themselves

rather than conforming to the norms of the workforce. "This style also helps develop employees' skills. Team members feel a part of something larger and meaningful, and so are motivated to by more than just a financial reward" (Amanchukwu, 2015).

Advantages of using this style of leadership include making the team self-sufficient, with everyone having equal rights, being highly motivated, and generating lots of ideas. Disadvantages and misuses all come into play when time is a constraint, they are not able to solicit input from others for arriving at a decision on the spot. Another disadvantage is when a team member cannot provide high quality input. It is generally, the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, and they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members" (Khan, 2015). The research shows that participative leaders have the most effective teams when it comes to producing quality output. A participative leadership style has a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment (Arief, F., & Sulastri, S., 2021). The participative leadership takes more time and effort due to the employee involvement. Disagreements leading to the final decision may lead to followers resenting their leader as conflict can occur (Belyh, 2019).

The researches have proved and maintained difference between management and leadership. As a leader, you have to be able to take a group of people and help them achieve a common goal. In contrast management is seen as being in charge and authoritative (Hughes & Pride, 2013; as cited by Bertsch et al, 2017). As a manager you have to see what needs to be done and expect your subordinates to complete that task. As a leader, you get voluntary cooperation from subordinates to complete your task. In a

leadership role you are not seen as the head of a project like a manager would be, but you are seen as the "heart" of a project instead. (Naylor, 1999, as cited by Bertsch et al, 2017).

When it comes to Generations intermingling in the workforce, they would tend to have their differences as well as their similarities. It can be hard for people of different generations to agree on values that have changed throughout the years. However, the idea of generations is now pervasive; and is used to explain a myriad patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that we observe day -to-day, especially in the workplace (Rudolph, Cort W., et al., 2021). Recent studies have solidified the generations to be in specific years. Starting with the veterans who were born between 1922and 1943. Baby Boomers were born during the years from 1944 till1964. The baby boomer population accounts for the majority of the leaders in today's workforce. Generation X, 1965-1985 and Generation Y from 1985-2000, otherwise known as the millennial generation. The baby boomer generation has been considered to be the largest of generations until recent years. Each generation has been closely examined in past research by social scientists.

## 2.4.    Baby Boomer Generation

The Baby Boomers were born during the period from 1945 till 1964. The Baby Boom Generation gets its name because during this time there was a dramatically high increase in birth rate during the period from the end of WWII and the Great Depression. Economic hardship led to a decline in fertility at this time. One of the hardships that caused this was the state of the economic climate. Because times were difficult most people put off having a family until they could better afford it. Another reason was because of the war that was going on at the time. Many men were sent off to fight in the war which made it more difficult to start a family since many husbands were not at home. Once the war had ended and the men returned, this is when the boom happened. It increased the economy as well as optimism. With these things happening fertility rose to above average, and many people began to start their families which made up for the loss in fertility during the war (Greenwood, Seshadri, & Vanderbroucke, 2005).

The Baby Boom Generation is known to value individuation, self-expression, and optimism. The majority of the Generation has proven to be workaholics and career driven. Baby Boomers are not known to be the greatest generation considering they are known to be self-centered, but they also possess good attributes such as family orientation, and view health and wellness as an important aspect of the life. Baby Boomers have indicated the strongest work engagement (Kismono, G., & Hanggarawati, U.B., 2022). What challenges are the Boomers facing in the current workforce? A big misconception is that Baby Boomers were not as relevant during the technology spike in the work field, and so many members of this generation are uninformed and lack knowledge when it comes to computing skills and operations. Baby Boomers have been labelled as inexperienced users of modern technologies, though they themselves witnessed technological changes occurring during their lifetime (Kumar, 2008). The Baby boomers have certainly been more open to new media and technologies than the generations, prior to them. It is a challenge to bridge the gap from generation to generation. Having younger more knowledgeable generations helping and critiquing the baby boomers with their technology expertise would help the boomers and could function as a mentor to

them. Mentoring is a good tactic for employer to use or tech classes when dealing with this generation. There are multiple similarities with the silent generation and the Baby Boom generation both prefer to be treated equally in the workforce, which requires a leadership style that encourages involvement and is consensual. Baby Boomers have been supportive of the participative style of leadership, and enjoy getting involved in the decision-making process. Because the silent generation and Baby boomers have such a high respect for authority when dealing with business organizations, traditional hierarchy-based leadership styles in the world force should be used on when working with this generation (Al-Asfor, 2014).

## 2.5.    Generation X

Generation X consists of those who were born between 1965 and 1984. They are also referred as 'baby busters', due to the drop-off or 'bust' in birth following the Baby Boomer generation after World War II (Yu, 2005). Generation X is also known as the "lost "generation, probably due to loss of established societal norms and values. Gen X members were the first to experience a steep rise in divorce and daycares. This generation has a "what's in it for me' attitude' but they are also arguably one of the most knowledgeable and educated generations, 29% obtaining a bachelor's degree which is 6% more than the baby boomers (WJSchroer,2015). The work characteristics of this generational groups are a critical issue for their leaders. Xers in the workplace tend to emphasis on personal satisfaction rather than working hard. They tend to look for opportunities to improve their own working skills rather than the groups, this making them more loyal to their profession rather than their own employer (Yu, 2005) They are

more individualistic, independent, and self-motivated. They have an extreme need for autonomy and flexibility in their own lifestyles and jobs, this means that there is less need for leadership. They are technically savvy in some ways but not as impressive as generation Y. Gen X grew up with rapidly changing technology and the availability of massive amounts of added information (Yu, 2005). Xers tend to need self-achievement from their jobs, and they do not want their work to impact negatively on their quality of life. As a result, they are less devoted to their own jobs, and hence less job involvement occurs. Having a more traditional hierarchical workplace is not recommended, there is a shift as many Baby boomers are beginning to enter retirement, and the Gen X would be taking over the positions. Generation X members prefer a leadership style that is fair, straightforward, and competent (BridgeWorks, 2017).

## 2.6.    Generation Y

Generation Y, also known as the "millennial" generation, is the youngest generation in the workforce today. Born from 1985-2000, they are the most technically literate, educated, and ethnically diverse. This generation tends to seek intellectual challenge, a burning desire to succeed, career advancement and professional development. It strives to be effective, efficient for achieving success (Eisner, 2005). Leaders in this generation tend to use technology as their main communication tool. Gen Y is technically literate; it is continually wired, plugged in, and connected to digitally streaming information, entertainment, and contacts (Eisner, 2005). These leaders emphasize positivity, and use technology communications to keep everyone informed about their jobs on a regular everyday basis (Martin, 2005). The millennial generation is a

softer, more caring generation. They like to keep the workplace fun and like to be let known that they are doing excellent work. They like to hear positive feedback and do not like to be lied too. A leader can be trusted by his millennial employees if he/ she is honest and caring for his/ her employees. The millennial employees like to be the center of attention. A good leader should focus on telling them they have done excellent work in front of other employees to make them feel important (Martin, 2005).

## 2.7. Gender Preferred Leadership

One of the demographics studied was whether or not gender had an effect on the type of leadership style that is preferred. Recent studies suggest that the mean score of previous tests showed that gender was insignificant or there was no sexual difference (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). While other studies suggest that males prefer a laissez-faire style of leadership while women prefer a more transactional leadership style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Although studies found that there were some differences, they were still trivial matters on a larger scale (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Empirical evidence suggests that there may be a difference in transformational and transactional leadership styles by gender in different fields (Miranda, 2019).

## 2.8. Preferred Leadership for College Athletes

College athletes are continually under stress of balancing school and athletics while trying to be the best they can be both in the classroom as well as on the field. Having some student-athletes in your group would lead to some questions as to which leadership style a student-athlete would prefer. Recent studies show that an athlete

prefers his/ her leaders to act in a more autocratic type of way (Chelladurai, 2007). An autocratic leader in sports is preferred because the athletes are used to only having one main coach in charge. The head coach leads in an autocratic way to get the best out of his/ her athletes both on and off the field (Chelladurai, 2007). The autocratic behavior is found when looking at how much a coach emphasizes the authority towards the team (Lindberg, 2008).

## 2.9. Level of Education and Leadership

The level of education is pivotal when a company is looking for a new leadership position. Does the level of education someone has have an effect on the leadership style they prefer? Studies show that people today are more educated than recent years which makes it harder for managers to apply an autocratic leadership style (Mosadegh & Yarmohammadian, 2006). This might suggest that people with a higher education level may prefer a participative or Laissez-Faire leader. The level of education also affects the overall job satisfaction one experiences when working (Mahmoud, 2008).

This information is important to us because it gives us a basis on where to start looking and what questions to ask. Recent research shows that the best way to manage people is to keep everyone happy. Learning about the generations' specific qualities is going to help us when it comes to making decisions from organizational as well as individualistic standpoints. Organizations should endeavor to understand how to manage youthful, inexperienced employees, as well as the unique characteristics of the generation, which is shaped by their experiences (Schroth, H., 2019). We are able

to develop strategies for managing our employees based on past studies. Being able to figure out what past research has found gives us an overall basis on what the median is for each generation.

## 3.    Method, Data, and Analysis

Researchers should pay close attention to research design topics such as scaling, instrumentation, sample design, level of measurement, and unit of analysis (these are only a few of the key issues to research designs, For further information about measurement, design and analysis, refer to a good quality research methods text such as Malhotra (2007) or Zikmund and Babin (2007). In this regard, we followed an exploratory research design as we sought to explore relationships between the variables described in the literature review. Exploratory research designs work better when there is a problem that needs to be better defined, which is the case in our study (Bertsch, 2009; Tande, Lamon, Harstad, Bertsch, & Ondracek, 2013; Serdar, Ceyhan, et al., 2021), as we explored the preferred leadership style across the generations: Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y (Millennials).

The selected sample was based on convenience as is common and acceptable for exploratory research studies (Zikmund and Babin, 2007; Hair, et al., 2003; Malhotra, 2007). In determining the sample size, we employed a 3:1 ratio of observations to survey items, which is supported by literature (see, for example, Hair, et al., 2003; Malhotra, 2007; Zikmund and Babin, 2007). The instrument that we used to conduct this survey was adopted from the Globe Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) project that was led by House, et al. (2004). The specific parts that we adopted from that survey were the parts that measured autocratic, participative, and laissez faire leadership styles. Along with this, we created demographic questions that separate survey takers into appropriate generations, gender, and education level.

The sample that we obtained is from adults over the age of eighteen from the Midwest USA and Canada. To distribute our survey, we made an online survey using google forms and posted it across the social media platforms. The survey does not have any identifiable features to threaten anonymity. We employed a 3:1 ratio of respondents to the survey, meaning we needed three surveys returned for every construct question asked. Since we had twelve construct questions we needed 36 respondents from each generation to be able to get sufficient data on each generation to process the results. With there being three generations looked at, we need to have at least 108 surveys returned.

Our survey consists of six demographic questions:
- What Sex do you identify with?
- What Generation do you belong to?
- What is the highest level of education you have received?
- Are you currently or have you ever served in the military?
- Are you currently or have you ever been a student athlete?
- What is the level of your employment?

Knowing the sex is a key factor in this survey as sex diversity is a major political topic throughout the workforce. The increase in women leading as managers is constant with the new push for workplace diversity (Stelter, 2002). We can also use this to look at if men and women from the same generations have different leadership

attributes. The second question helped us identify what generation the respondent belongs to and help determine types of leadership styles across generations. Our third question was important to the survey to discover if distinct levels of education can affect the employee job satisfaction (Mahmoud, (2008). The next question we feel was important because of the training and stress that military personnel must endure through their career if it can affect the way they may manage a team themselves and how they preferred to be led (Wong, Bliese, & McGurk, 2003). Finding out if a respondent has been a student athlete would serve a similar purpose to the military status question with athletes working together as a team and dealing with problems in different settings. The level of employment is pivotal as if they have been a manager they know how they like to manage. If not, a manger they may only know one style of leadership, the one they are led by. All the demographic questions were incorporated in the survey for differentiating each and every response, in order to analyze the research questions from the standpoints of generational perspectives

## 4.   Result and Discussion

Our sample yielded 115 completed surveys. All surveys returned were completed by eighteen and older adults with the most falling into the Millennial Generation. Out of our respondents, fifty-five were female, 56 were male, and one respondent preferring not to answer. After all the data were entered into spreadsheet, we then had to scrub the data to prepare for analysis. We then needed to use reverse scoring where necessary. With the data ready to evaluate, we found the average, standard deviation, upward bounds, lower bounds, and removed any outliers from the data set. Then we performed one tailed t-tests to evaluate if there was a significant difference at $p<0.05$ (Rabinowitz & Fawcett 2013).

### 4.1. Baby Boomer vs. Generation X

When comparing Baby Boomers to Generation X, we discovered that there is no significant difference when it comes to their preference toward autocratic leadership. On the other hand, we did find that Generation X (m=4.19) had a significant preference of the participative leadership more than the Baby Boomers did (m=3.09) at $p<0.05$. Along with this we found that Baby Boomers (m=3.21) preferred the Laissez-Faire leadership style more than Generation X (3.00) at $p<0.05$ (refer to Table 1). Despite the literature on generational differences, generation X's significant preference of the participative leadership is a finding that signals support for participative decision- making, concern for employees, participative communication, and feedback for leading effectively (Valenti, A., 2019).

### 4.2. Baby Boomers vs. Millennials

Table 1 also included the comparison of preferred leadership styles between the Baby Boomers and Millennials. We found that Millennials (m=2.25) had a significant preference of autocratic leadership style compared the Baby Boomers (m=1.56) at $p<0.001$. In contrast we found no significant differences in their preference toward the participative leadership style when comparing these two generations. When looking at the Laissez-Faire leadership style we found a significant difference in preference over the Millennials (m=2.90) at $p<0.001$.

### 4.3. Generation X vs. Millennials

Looking at the results for the comparison between Generation X and Millennials, our analysis shows that Millennials (m=2.25) prefer the Autocratic leadership style more than Generation X (m=1.57) at p<0.001. In addition to this we found that Generation X (m=4.19) preferred the Participative leadership style more than the Millennials (m=3.89) at p<0.05. We did not find a significant difference in the preference in Laissez-Faire leadership style (please refer to Table 1).

### 4.4. Leadership Style within Each Generation

When comparing the Leadership style preference within each generation, we found a significant difference between each leadership style in each generation at p<0.001 (please refer to Table 2).

### 4.5. Male vs. Female

We found that when comparing male and females that males (m=2.12) favored the autocratic leadership style more than females (1.76) at p<0.005. When comparing males and females we found no significant difference when it comes to their preference of participative and Laissez-Faire leadership styles (please refer to Table 3).

### 4.6. Collegiate Athlete vs. Non-Collegiate Athlete

When comparing whether the survey taker was a collegiate athlete or not we only found one significant difference. Collegiate athletes (m= 2.24) preferred the autocratic leadership style compared to non-collegiate athletes (m=1.85) at p<0.005. When looking at their comparison of preference in the participative and Laissez-faire leadership style we found no significant difference (please refer to Table 4).

### 4.7. Entry Level vs. Intermediate Level

When analyzing the preferred leadership style between entry level and intermediate level employees, we found one significant difference. We found that entry level employees (m=2.32) preferred the autocratic leadership style compared to intermediate level employees (m=1.71) at p<0.001. When looking at the participative and Laissez-Faire we found no significant difference (Please refer to Table 5).

### 4.8. Entry Level vs. Management Level

When comparing the entry level employees to the management level employees we found no significant difference in their preference in autocratic, participative, or Laissez-Faire leadership style (please refer to table 5).

### 4.9. Intermediate Level vs. Management Level

We found two significant differences when comparing the preferred leadership style between intermediate level employees and management level employees. First, we found that the management level (m=2.02) favored the autocratic leadership style more than the intermediate level employees (m=1.71) at p<0.05. In addition to this we found that the management level (m=3.01) preferred the Laissez-Faire leadership style over the intermediate level employees (m=2.88) at p<0.05. When comparing their preference of the participative leadership style we saw no significant difference (please refer to Table 5).

### 4.10. High School Diploma vs. College Diploma

When comparing education levels, we found one significant difference between people that had a High School Diploma and people with a College Diploma. We saw that individuals with a High School Diploma (m=2.22) preferred an autocratic leadership style when compared to individuals with a College Diploma (m=1.89) at p<0.05. We found no significant difference in their preference of participative or Laissez-Faire leadership styles (please refer to Table 6).

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Before beginning our research, we searched for the underlying questions that we wanted to be answered. Our research provided us with answers on how to better manage future employees. The questions surrounding this topic and driving the research are ones that many managers ask themselves.

- How do you properly manage someone that is out of your generation?
- What are the differences in values, morals, and cultural norms between Generations?
- How can you make sure that everyone on your team is comfortable so that you can get the most out of each employee?
- Are there any trends in how generations can be managed?

After analysis and review of our survey results, we concluded on preferred leadership styles per generations. Beginning with the Baby Boomer generation, our results confirm that this generation prefers a participative leadership style with significant correlation (p<0.05). The Baby Boom generation in fact does not enjoy an autocratic leadership style. Next, Generation X is also a generation that enjoys a participative leadership style but different from the Baby Boomers, does not prefer an autocratic leadership style. Lastly, the Millennial generation enjoys a participative leadership style and also enjoys autocratic approach to leadership. Our second question was answered upon much research. The Baby Boomers generation is known to value individuation, self-expression, and optimism. The majority of the Baby Boomers generation have proven to be workaholics and career based driven. Baby Boomers are not known to be the greatest generation considering they are known to be self-centered, but they possess good attributes such as family orientation, and view health and wellness as important aspect of their life. Generation X is very focused on family, life, and work. The "what's in it for me" attitude can characterize this skeptical generation. A positive about Gen X is that they are arguably one of the most knowledgeable and educated generations, 29% obtaining a bachelor's degree which is 6% more than the previous cohort (Schroer, 2015). The millennial generation has modern values and treat everyone equally. This generation tends to use technology as their main communication tool. The millennial generation is a softer, more caring generation. They like to hear positive feedback and do not like to be lied too. A millennial also likes to be the center of attention and steal the spotlight.

This study has the potential to be used for future research agendas including research that examines divergent factors, including contextual, situational, or dispositional environments that affect the preference for a particular leadership style. Exploratory researches may be conducted, using mixed method (quantitative as well as qualitative) to investigate the divergent issues about "how the preferred leadership styles across

generations affect the role of leadership, and how it affects individuals' work ethic and styles". Further confirmatory and exploratory studies pertaining to preferred leadership styles vis-à-vis demographic, geographic as well as cross cultural variables would go a long way in providing interesting insights and meaningful direction for leaders as well as followers. Positive and negative effects of cultural differences can be explored and provide a roadmap for future research ((Stahl, & Tung,2015). Further, researchers may also investigate how personal values and preferred leadership styles across generations simultaneously influence sustainable development in the working and behavior of organizations (Nedelko, & Potocan, 2021). Issues and challenges, pertaining to millennials as managers, managing Generation Z, or generational differences in the workplace are likely to attract the attention of the researchers in the years ahead (Gabrielova, & Buchko, 2021). This study can be extended by using other methodologies of qualitative exploratory research as well as further data collection tools, for exploring leadership styles from divergent angles.

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# Appendices

Table 1: Generation Comparison

| Generation Comparison | Autocratic | Participative | Laissez-Faire |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baby Boomers (n=21) | m= 1.56 | m= 3.90 | m= 3.21 |
| Generation X (n=23) | m= 1.57 | m= 4.19 | m= 3.00 |
| Millennials (n=70) | m= 2.25 | m= 3.89 | m= 2.90 |
| Baby Boomers vs. Generation X | Insignificant | p<0.05 | p<0.05 |
| Baby Boomers vs. Millennials | p<0.001 | Insignificant | p<0.001 |
| Generation X vs. Millennials | p<0.001 | p<0.05 | Insignificant |

Table 2: Leadership Style within Generations

| Leadership Style Comparison | Baby Boomers | Generation X | Millennials |
|---|---|---|---|
| Autocratic vs. Participative | p<0.001 | p<0.001 | p<0.001 |
| Autotcratic vs. Laissez-Faire | p<0.001 | p<0.001 | p<0.001 |
| Participative vs. Laissez-Faire | p<0.001 | p<0.001 | p<0.001 |

Table 3: Gender Comparison

| Sex Comparison | Autocratic | Participative | Laissez-Faire |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male (n=56) | m= 2.12 | m= 3.91 | m= 3.01 |
| Female (n=55) | m= 1.76 | m= 4.00 | m= 2.92 |
| Male vs. Female | p<0.005 | Insignificant | Insignificant |

Table 4: Collegiate Athlete Comparison

| Collegiate Athlete Comparison | Autocratic | Participative | Laissez-Faire |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes (n=39) | m= 2.24 | m= 3.90 | m= 3.00 |
| No (n=75) | m= 1.86 | m= 3.97 | m= 2.96 |
| Yes vs. No | p<0.005 | Insignificant | Insignificant |

Table 5: Level of Employment Comparison

| Level of Employment Comparison | Autocratic | Participative | Laissez-Faire |
|---|---|---|---|
| Entry Level (n=35) | m= 2.32 | m= 3.95 | m= 2.97 |
| Intermediate Level (n=38) | m= 1.71 | m= 4.03 | m= 2.88 |
| Management Level (n=37) | m= 2.02 | m= 3.86 | m= 3.10 |
| Entry Level vs. Intermediate Level | p<0.001 | Insignificant | Insignificant |
| Entry Level vs. Top Level | Insignificant | Insignificant | Insignificant |
| Intermediate Level vs. Management Level | p<0.05 | Insignificant | p<0.05 |

Table 6: Education Level Comparison

| Education Level Comparison | Autocratic | Participative | Laissez-Faire |
|---|---|---|---|
| High School Diploma (n=38) | m= 2.22 | m= 3.84 | m= 2.94 |
| College Diploma (n=74) | m= 1.89 | m= 4.00 | m= 3.00 |
| High School vs. College | p<0.05 | Insignificant | Insignificant |