

Bridging Generational Gaps: Reducing Conflict and Enhancing Collaboration in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the complexities inherent in managing generational diversity within contemporary workplaces, with a focus on identifying and mitigating sources of conflict while fostering intergenerational collaboration. By examining employees spanning The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, the study elucidates the influence of divergent values, expectations, and communication styles on workplace dynamics.

The findings suggest that, although managing generational diversity presents considerable challenges, it concurrently offers substantial opportunities for innovation and organizational growth when approached effectively. The study underscores the critical importance of tailored conflict resolution strategies, inclusive communication practices, and targeted training programs designed to bridge generational gaps.

This research provides valuable insights for entrepreneurs and business leaders, emphasizing the potential for enhanced productivity and employee satisfaction through improved intergenerational collaboration. It contributes to the broader discourse on workplace diversity and inclusion, offering practical recommendations for leveraging the strengths of multi-generational teams to drive business success.

Keywords: Generational cohorts, Intergenerational conflicts

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern workplace features a blend of multiple generations, each with distinct values, communication styles, work habits, and expectations. This diversity, while enriching, also presents challenges for organizational collaboration and productivity. The current study investigates the main sources of intergenerational conflict and proposes strategies to mitigate these issues, promoting a harmonious and effective work environment.

According to the concept of generational cohorts each employee generation—currently most represented by Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—has been shaped by unique socio-economic conditions, technological advancements, and cultural shifts, leading to varied attitudes, values, skills and work expectations. These differences can cause friction, misunderstandings, and reduced efficiency if not managed properly.

Key areas where generational differences manifest include communication styles, work-life balance expectations, technology adoption, career advancement aspirations, feedback preferences, work ethic perceptions, authority and hierarchy views, conflict resolution styles, learning and development approaches, and recognition and reward systems. These

disparities can lead to significant workplace conflicts, negatively impacting employee morale and productivity.

This study aims to provide a detailed examination of the causes of intergenerational conflicts in the workplace and propose effective strategies for resolution. By addressing these issues, organizations can bridge intergenerational gaps, reduce conflicts, and enhance collaboration among employees. The findings will benefit managers, HR professionals, and contribute to the broader discourse on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Research Question

How can organizations effectively address and resolve conflicts arising from generational differences to enhance collaboration and improve overall workplace productivity?

Research Object

The object of this research is the phenomenon of intergenerational conflict within the workplace.

Research Subject

The subject of this research includes the various sources of intergenerational conflict such as communication styles, work-life balance expectations, technology adoption, career advancement aspirations, feedback preferences, work ethic perceptions, authority and hierarchy views, conflict resolution styles, learning and development approaches, and recognition and reward systems.

Continuous ongoing changes in the external environment and changes in the organization's internal environment create the need for a new approach to the organizational management, also including a different approach to human resource management [32].

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out between April 1, 2024, and July 30, 2024, employing the literature analysis methodology as its basis. This literature review constitutes a segment of a broader investigation into effective conflict resolution within business environments. The primary objective of this study is to elucidate the principal causes of intergenerational conflicts by examining the distinct characteristics of generational cohorts and to propose strategies for organizations to effectively mitigate these conflicts.

3. GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

Current and Expected Generational Trends in the Workforce

The confluence of increased longevity and declining birth rates is precipitating a significant shift in the demographic composition of workforces globally, resulting in an older and more age-diverse workforce [1]. Population aging is a widespread phenomenon impacting nearly every developed

nation, characterized by a rising number and proportion of older individuals [2].

Between 2004 and 2019, employment growth was notably high among older individuals, with a 89.8% increase for those aged 55-64 and an 82.1% increase for those aged 65 and above. As a result, individuals aged 55 and over now comprise one-fifth of the total workforce. One significant outcome of increasing life expectancy is the extension of working years before retirement. This demographic transformation affects various aspects of society and the economy, including labor markets [2].

Future labor market projections indicate further changes. The labor force participation of individuals aged 16 to 24 is projected to decrease by 7.5% from 2020 to 2030, while the labor force participation of individuals aged 75 and older is expected to grow by 96.5% over the same period [3].

As more generational cohorts simultaneously occupy job markets, intergenerational interactions among employees are becoming increasingly common and diverse. Concurrently, academic studies and popular media have widely disseminated the concept of generational cohorts, which posits that significant historical events create distinct eras, embedding unique characteristics in each generation. Consequently, employees may perceive themselves as distinct from colleagues of different generational cohorts, form in-groups with those they identify with, and harbor negative perceptions of others, potentially impeding effective collaboration [4].

The Concept of Generational Cohorts in the Workforce

The concept of employee generations is rooted in generational cohort theory, which posits that each cohort is distinct due to shared birth years, life experiences, and significant social and historical events, such as wars, economic fluctuations, disasters, and technological advancements that shape life and work [5].

Karl Mannheim (1952) was the pioneering modern scholar to explore the development of generational values, defining a 'generation' not merely as a cohort grouped by birth years but as a collective of contemporaries who share a history and a set of formative experiences. Mannheim argued that active recognition of these shared experiences is necessary for the formation of a generation. In contrast, Twenge (2023) contends that individuals belong to a generation regardless of their recognition of it [28].

Strauss and Howe (1991) further developed Mannheim's ideas. Their framework gained influence in popular culture and raised interest in academic circles, despite criticism for its determinism and methodological approach. These theories have highlighted that demographic changes are accompanied by shifts in employees' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the workplace.

Still, significant differences are noted between equivalent generations in different geographical contexts due to varying life experiences, such as those in the U.S., Western Europe, Eastern countries, or post-Soviet countries.[6] Twenge (2023) [10] argues that technological advancements are the primary driver of generational differences, directly or indirectly, which also explains the faster turnover of generations as the pace of technological change accelerates [10].

In the workforce, generational categorizations are increasingly used to describe differences between older and younger colleagues and to inform HR strategies. Twenge argues that these differences are objective and not merely stereotypical. However, she cautions that generational differences, like all group differences, are based on averages and may not apply to every individual. Assuming any individual embodies the traits of their generational cohort risks perpetuating stereotypes.

The names of generational cohorts—such as Boomers, or Gen Z—have evolved through a combination of academic research,

media influence, and popular usage. Authors differ in defining the years for each generation, as there is no exact science or official consensus on the birth years that delineate each generation. Transitions around the birth year cutoffs often occur gradually rather than abruptly. This article adopts Twenge's (2023) perspective of generational birth year cutoffs, based on her current and extensive research.

Generational Profiles in the Current Workforce

The Silent Generation, also known as Traditionalists or Veterans, includes individuals born between 1925 and 1945. They grew up during the Great Depression and World War II, which fostered traits like caution, discipline, and a strong emphasis on hard work and loyalty. They typically followed a traditional career model with steady promotions, minimal job changes, and long-term employment with the same organization [7]. While this generation has largely exited the workforce, significant pioneering research on leadership and workplace attitudes was conducted during their peak years, highlighting their distinctive work-related values and behaviors.

The Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, emerged in the post-World War II era marked by a surge in birth rates. Entering a favorable job market with low unemployment, Boomers generally experienced linear, upward career trajectories. They witnessed significant workforce shifts, including increased female participation, prompting new workplace practices for gender equality, work-life balance, and family-friendly policies. While many Boomers adhered to traditional career paths, they often navigated job changes due to economic fluctuations. Today, they are characterized as workaholics, driven by personal and professional development, and face aging and health challenges as they approach retirement [5].

Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979, is currently the middle generation transitioning to an older one, sandwiched between Boomers and Millennials, they less often draw attention in comparison with the younger generations. Gen X, bridging analog and digital worlds, demonstrates adaptability, resilience and independence. They value individualism and high self-esteem, aspiring for career success and material benefits. Their pragmatic approach and stable mental health contribute to a balanced, effective work ethic, though they remain skeptical of authority and traditional hierarchies. [10]

Unlike their predecessors, Gen Xers prioritize self, work-life balance, meaningful work. [7].

Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994) have been the subject of considerable attention from both practitioners and academics, resulting in extensive literature on their characteristics and work behaviors [8]. Millennials grew up during a period of significant focus on children's education and family support, resulting in a generation characterized by confidence, drive, and technological proficiency. They entered the workforce amidst the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and the rise of the gig economy, which has been characterized by an increase in part-time and temporary jobs. Millennials are characterized by frequent job and career transitions and place a high value on career advancement, social interaction, and job prestige, often prioritizing these factors over benefits and supportive supervision [7].

Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2012 and sometimes referred to as iGen, has only recently begun to enter the workforce. Gen Z has brought an unprecedented focus on

diversity in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation. Gen Z is characterized by a concern for authenticity, engagement with free speech issues, challenging gender norms, and grappling with mental health challenges. As they comprise most of the young adult demographic in the 2020s, Gen Z commands significant attention [10]. This generation is noted for its high value on fair pay and ethical workplace practices [9]. Jayatissa (2023) highlights that Gen Z has been continuously exposed to technological innovations, including the widespread use of smartphones and high-speed internet, which has shaped their interactions and behaviors. The full impact of these technological advancements on their work-related behaviors is still being explored as this generation continues to integrate into the labor market. [30]

Generation Alpha (or Polars), born after 2013, has yet to enter the workforce, but it is essential for current and future employees to anticipate and prepare for the implications this emerging cohort may bring.

Technological advancements have not only influenced generational characteristics but have also enhanced the depth and precision of generational studies. Historically, literature on generational cohorts often relied on anecdotal evidence or limited-scale surveys to describe the events and demographic factors shaping each group. In contrast, contemporary research leverages Big Data to construct a more nuanced and definitive understanding of generational dynamics. By utilizing extensive national surveys conducted over multiple decades, researchers can now access historical perspectives, monitor generational changes over time, and make comparative analyses between different age cohorts. [10]. Thus, it is imperative for scholars and practitioners to base their understanding of generational differences on robust, real-time data.

A common misconception about generational cohorts is the assumption that their characteristics are fixed and stable. It is crucial to integrate insights from lifespan development theory, especially in the context of an aging workforce, to examine age-related changes within each generational cohort [11]. While earlier developmental theories emphasized the significance of formative experiences in early life, contemporary research recognizes that adult development is a continuous process. Significant technological and historical events during adulthood can alter generational attributes over time. For example, the advent of social media has transformed communication patterns across all age groups.

The popular adages such as “60 is the new 40” suggest that middle-aged and older adults today may perceive themselves as younger and approach aging with a more positive outlook and different behaviors compared to previous generations. Nonetheless, societal perceptions of aging and older adults remain predominantly negative and pessimistic.

In conclusion, scholars need to consider the interplay between generational attributes and the processes of adult development and aging. Practitioners should stay informed about the latest evidence to apply scientific findings effectively in practice.

4. CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE

In professional settings, incorporating diverse perspectives and exceptional skills generally leads to improved organizational success. However, conflicts can arise from clashing personalities and generational differences, impacting the overall workplace atmosphere and effectiveness. [31]

Generational conflicts stem from differences in values, communication styles, work habits, and technical skills. Older generations value traditional work ethics, direct communication, and hierarchical systems, while younger generations prioritize flexibility, digital communication, and egalitarian leadership.

These disputes can cause dissatisfaction, stress, and reduced morale, leading to decreased productivity and job satisfaction. Misunderstandings can result in employees feeling isolated and unacknowledged. Unresolved conflicts may escalate to professional misconduct, such as harassment or discrimination, undermining a respectful workplace.

The organizational impact includes higher absenteeism, turnover, and reduced staff cohesion, alongside financial losses from decreased efficiency and potential legal issues. To avoid these consequences, management must embrace generational differences, fostering a culture of respect and continuous learning, while efficiently handling conflicts to ensure creativity and success.

Due to the lack of a universally accepted definition of conflict, the authors of the study present three viewpoints.

Interpersonal conflict refers to the perception of incompatibility between individuals, where there is a sense that the goals or interests of the parties involved cannot be realized at the same time. This concept underscores the subjective aspect of conflict and is consistent with recent studies that emphasize perception as a crucial factor in the development of interpersonal disagreements [12].

Interpersonal conflict is a dynamic process that occurs when persons interact and perceive opposing goals, aims, and values. They employ different strategies to communicate their unhappiness and exert influence over each other. This term encompasses the continuous and developing characteristics of conflict encounters [13].

Interpersonal conflict is a socially constructed experience that occurs when individuals in a relationship perceive a difference in their interaction, leading to negative emotional reactions and efforts to change the situation. This concept incorporates the social and emotional aspects of conflict, acknowledging its constructed and emotive elements [14].

Conflicts are an inherent part of human interaction and have been thoroughly examined by prominent sociologists, politicians, and other professionals in the field of conflict. Efficient conflict resolution is a demanding pursuit, not only in corporate settings but also in various other circumstances. However, to attain maximum success, it is essential to understand the fundamental elements that cause disagreements. Conflicts inside firms are complex, involving various dimensions such as economic, industrial, and socio-psychological factors. They have a substantial impact on the overall efficiency of a company's operations. Conflicts in companies are inevitable as they stem from human interactions influenced by divergent interests and ideals, sometimes accompanied by strong emotions [15].

Generational conflict in the workplace arises from the diverse values, work habits, communication styles, and technology competency of individuals from different age cohorts, leading to friction and misunderstandings. These disagreements have the potential to affect teamwork, productivity, and the overall culture of the organization. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these tensions is crucial for cultivating a harmonious and productive work environment.

Younger cohorts, namely Millennials and Generation Z, possess innate familiarity with digital platforms and demonstrate proficiency in using contemporary technology and social media. This can lead to conflicts with older colleagues who may exhibit

a preference for conventional approaches and a slower pace of adopting new technologies.

Differences in communication preferences between generations, such as the choice between face-to-face and digital communication, can result in misunderstandings and inefficiencies. For example, Baby Boomers may have a preference for face-to-face meetings or phone conversations, whereas Millennials and Generation Z tend to gravitate towards emails, instant messaging, or video chats. Each generational group holds distinct expectations with regards to job security, career advancement, and feedback. Baby Boomers may anticipate lengthier periods of employment and formal evaluations, while Millennials frequently need prompt feedback and swift progression in their careers. Senior personnel may exhibit a higher level of resistance towards organizational changes and innovations, as they tend to prioritize stability and established practices. Conversely, younger employees are likely to be more receptive and eager when it comes to embracing change and taking on new challenges. Comprehending and resolving intergenerational disputes in the workplace is essential for sustaining a happy and efficient organizational atmosphere. Companies may effectively manage conflict and harness the different strengths of their staff by acknowledging and valuing the distinct qualities and contributions of each generation. This method not only improves the productivity of the organization but also promotes a work culture that is more inclusive and collaborative [16].

Lewis Coser (1913-2003), a distinguished German-born American sociologist and historian, is widely recognized as one of the foundational figures in conflict theory. Coser's contributions to sociology are particularly notable for his critical stance against scholars who overlook the significance of conflict in social analysis. He vehemently opposes the pervasive belief that social conflicts are inherently abnormal or detrimental to societal progress.

Lewis Coser argues that conflict is a fundamental aspect of social interaction, challenging the view that it is solely disruptive. He suggests that conflict can enhance social cohesion and progress by addressing underlying tensions and fostering dialogue. Coser distinguishes between its effects in closed versus open social systems: in rigid, hierarchical systems, conflict tends to be destructive due to limited adaptability, while in more open, flexible systems, it can promote adaptability and resilience, thus contributing to societal dynamism. His work provides a nuanced perspective on how conflict can play a constructive role in social life [17].

5. CAUSES OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICTS AND THEIR RESOLUTIONS

1. Cause of Conflict [18]: Communication Styles

Generational conflicts often arise from differing communication preferences. Older generations value face-to-face interaction, while younger generations prefer digital methods like texting and emails. This can lead to misunderstandings, with older individuals seeing digital communication as impersonal, and younger individuals finding face-to-face interactions inconvenient. These differences are further evolving into technological preferences. For instance, Millennials prefer emails for formal communication, while Gen Z favors instant messaging like Slack. This divergence can cause misunderstandings and delays due to differing expectations on communication speed and formality.

Solution [18]: Bridging Communication Preferences

To reduce these conflicts, organizations can:

- 1) **Promote Awareness:** Educate about the value and limits of different communication methods.
- 2) **Encourage Hybrid Approaches:** Balance face-to-face and digital communication.
- 3) **Establish Protocols:** Create clear guidelines for preferred communication modes.
- 4) **Leverage Technology:** Use tools that combine personal interaction and digital convenience.
- 5) **Foster Collaboration:** Encourage intergenerational projects to build mutual respect and understanding.

Implementing these strategies can ease communication-related conflicts and foster a harmonious work environment [18].

2. Cause of Conflict [19]: Work-Life Balance Expectations

Intergenerational workplace conflict often arises from differing views on work-life balance. Older generations value job security, stability, and a traditional work ethic, favoring structured schedules. Younger generations prioritize flexibility, remote work, and personal fulfillment, reflecting societal changes and technological advancements. For example, a Gen X manager expects long hours in the office as a sign of dedication, while a Gen Z employee values flexible work hours and remote options, leading to conflicts over perceived commitment. These differing expectations can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and decreased morale.

Solution [19]: Reconciling Work-Life Balance Expectations

Organizations can address these conflicts by:

- 1) **Promoting Mutual Understanding:** Facilitate open dialogues to build empathy and reduce stereotypes.
- 2) **Implementing Flexible Policies:** Offer remote work, flexible hours, and compressed workweeks to cater to diverse needs.
- 3) **Fostering Results-Oriented Culture:** Focus on outcomes rather than hours worked, aligning with flexible preferences.
- 4) **Providing Training and Support:** Offer programs for time management and stress relief to support work-life balance.
- 5) **Encouraging Cross-Generational Mentoring:** Pair older and younger employees to share perspectives and bridge divides.

These strategies can harmonize work-life balance expectations, reducing conflicts and enhancing workplace harmony [19].

3. Cause of Conflict [20]: Technology Adoption

Intergenerational conflict in the workplace often arises from differing comfort levels with new technologies. Younger employees, or digital natives, adapt quickly to technological advancements. In contrast, older employees, with less early exposure, may struggle to keep up, leading to frustration and tension. For example, in a project group, Boomers might prefer in-person meetings and printed documents, while Millennials expertly use collaborative tools like Google Docs and virtual meetings. This proficiency gap can hinder collaboration and productivity, creating misunderstandings and undervaluing contributions.

Solution [20]: Bridging the Technology Proficiency Gap

Organizations can address these conflicts by:

- 1) **Training Programs:** Offer ongoing, tailored training to enhance technological skills for all age groups.

- 2) **Culture of Learning:** Promote continuous learning and professional development, recognizing efforts to improve tech skills.
- 3) **Intergenerational Collaboration:** Implement mentorship programs for reciprocal learning between younger and older employees.
- 4) **User-Friendly Technologies:** Invest in intuitive technologies with clear instructions and support resources.
- 5) **Inclusive Planning:** Involve diverse age groups in planning new technological initiatives to ensure all perspectives are considered.
- 6) **Open Communication:** Create forums for employees to discuss concerns and suggest improvements in technology use.

These strategies can bridge the technology gap, fostering a collaborative and harmonious workplace [20].

4. Cause of Conflict [21]: Career Advancement

Intergenerational workplace conflict often arises from differing career expectations. Younger employees are driven by modern career narratives that emphasize mobility and continuous learning, seeking rapid career progression, frequent promotions, and skill development. While Millennials still prioritize career advancement through formal education and promotions, valuing stability, Gen Z values diverse experiences and entrepreneurial opportunities, aiming for rapid growth and flexibility, resulting in differing career expectations and pursuits. Conversely, older employees value stability, long-term tenure, and incremental growth, influenced by traditional career models rewarding loyalty and gradual advancement. These conflicting expectations can lead to perceived unfairness, frustration, and tension, affecting team morale and collaboration.

Solution [21]: Harmonizing Career Expectations

Organizations can reduce these conflicts by:

- 1) **Transparent Frameworks:** Establish clear career development pathways and promotion criteria.
- 2) **Customized Planning:** Conduct individualized career planning to align with employees' aspirations.
- 3) **Mentorship Programs:** Facilitate mentorship for knowledge transfer and career guidance across generations.
- 4) **Flexible Opportunities:** Offer varied advancement options catering to both rapid and steady career growth.
- 5) **Recognition Systems:** Develop systems recognizing both rapid achievements and sustained contributions.
- 6) **Intergenerational Dialogue:** Promote open communication through focus groups and feedback sessions.

Implementing these strategies helps harmonize career expectations, reducing conflicts and enhancing organizational cohesion [21].

5. Cause of Conflict [22]: Feedback Preferences

Intergenerational conflict in the workplace often arises from differing feedback preferences. Younger employees prefer continuous feedback, valuing real-time insights for immediate improvement and recognition. Within younger generations, Millennials often prefer more structured feedback sessions with actionable steps, while Gen Z seeks continuous, immediate feedback through digital channels. In contrast, older employees favor periodic reviews, such as annual or semi-annual evaluations, which offer structured, reflective assessments of performance. This divergence can lead to dissatisfaction, with younger employees feeling neglected without frequent feedback, and older employees feeling micromanaged by continuous feedback.

Solution [22]: Integrating Diverse Feedback Preferences

To address this conflict, organizations can:

- 1) **Hybrid Feedback Systems:** Combine continuous feedback with periodic reviews, catering to both preferences.
- 2) **Personalized Feedback Plans:** Tailor feedback delivery to individual preferences discussed during performance planning.
- 3) **Manager Training:** Train managers to effectively deliver both real-time and formal feedback.
- 4) **Feedback Culture:** Promote a culture that values both types of feedback, encouraging open communication.
- 5) **Technology Utilization:** Use performance management software to support both feedback mechanisms.
- 6) **Peer Feedback:** Encourage peer feedback to provide diverse perspectives and bridge generational gaps.

By implementing these strategies, organizations can balance feedback preferences, reducing conflict and enhancing workplace harmony [22].

6. Cause of Conflict [23]: Work Ethic Perceptions

Intergenerational conflicts in the workplace often arise from differing perceptions of work ethic. Older employees typically value dedication, punctuality, and a structured approach, viewing these as indicators of professionalism. In contrast, younger employees prioritize work-life balance, flexibility, and outcomes over processes. For example, Gen X may view taking sick days as a sign of weakness or lack of dedication, while Gen Z see them as essential for well-being and extend them to mental health issues as well. This disparity can lead to older employees perceiving younger ones as lax, while younger employees see their seniors as overly rigid. Such mutual misunderstandings can create tension and hinder collaboration.

Solution [23]: Bridging Work Ethic Perception Gaps

To mitigate conflicts from differing work ethic perceptions, organizations can:

- 1) **Promote Mutual Understanding:** Facilitate workshops and discussions to highlight the strengths of different work ethics.
- 2) **Encourage Intergenerational Collaboration:** Form mixed-age teams to foster appreciation of various work styles.
- 3) **Flexible Work Policies:** Develop policies that balance structure with flexibility.
- 4) **Managerial Training:** Train managers to value diverse work ethics and mediate conflicts effectively.
- 5) **Performance-Based Metrics:** Focus on outcomes and results rather than processes.
- 6) **Open Communication Channels:** Establish clear communication to address work ethic concerns and expectations.

Implementing these strategies can bridge gaps in work ethic perceptions, reducing conflict and fostering a cohesive, productive workplace [23].

7. Cause of Conflict [24]: Authority and Hierarchy

Workplace conflicts often stem from generational differences in views on authority and hierarchy. Older generations value traditional hierarchical structures with clear lines of authority and respect for seniority, reflecting their experiences of stability and order. In contrast, younger generations prefer flat hierarchies, open communication, and collaborative decision-making, aligning with modern practices and values of transparency and equal opportunity. For instance, while a Millennial still might seek senior management approval for a new project, while a Gen Z colleague pitches directly in a team meeting, causing conflict over perceived disregard for hierarchical processes. This

divergence can lead to power struggles, with older employees feeling challenged and younger ones seeing older colleagues as obstructive, ultimately disrupting organizational effectiveness.

Solution [24]: Harmonizing Views on Authority and Hierarchy

Organizations can mitigate these conflicts by:

- 1) **Fostering Dialogue and Education:** Facilitate workshops to bridge gaps and reduce misconceptions.
- 2) **Implementing Hybrid Structures:** Combine clear reporting lines with cross-functional teams and collaborative decision-making.
- 3) **Encouraging Inclusive Leadership:** Train leaders to balance traditional authority with inclusive practices.
- 4) **Promoting Transparency:** Ensure clear communication about decision-making processes.
- 5) **Adopting Flexible Role Definitions:** Offer both structured and autonomous work roles.
- 6) **Encouraging Cross-Generational Mentorship:** Facilitate programs for mutual respect and understanding.

By adopting these strategies, organizations can harmonize generational differences, reduce power struggles, and foster a more cohesive work environment [24].

8. Cause of Conflict [25]: Conflict Resolution Styles

Workplace conflicts frequently arise from generational differences in conflict resolution styles. Older employees, such as those from Generation X, typically prefer formal, structured processes, valuing clear protocols and hierarchical intervention. Conversely, younger employees, such as Millennials, favor informal, open discussions, prioritizing direct communication and collaborative problem-solving. This divergence can intensify disputes, as formal methods may seem bureaucratic to younger employees, while informal approaches might appear unstructured to older employees.

Solution [25]: Integrating Conflict Resolution Styles

To address these differences, organizations can:

- 1) **Develop a Hybrid Framework:** Create a conflict resolution system that combines formal procedures with informal discussion methods.
- 2) **Provide Training:** Offer training on various conflict resolution techniques and the benefits of both formal and informal approaches.
- 3) **Encourage Open Communication:** Foster a culture that supports open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.
- 4) **Establish Clear Protocols:** Define and communicate when formal or informal methods are appropriate.
- 5) **Utilize Mediators:** Employ neutral mediators to help integrate different resolution styles effectively.
- 6) **Promote Collaboration:** Engage in team-building activities that enhance understanding and respect for diverse conflict resolution styles.

Implementing these strategies can harmonize conflict resolution approaches, reducing disputes and fostering a more effective and cooperative work environment [25].

9. Cause of Conflict [26]: Learning and Development Preferences

Conflicts in training often arise from generational differences in learning styles. Younger employees typically prefer digital methods, such as e-learning and online modules, valuing flexibility and interactivity. Millennials prefer more structured training sessions, valuing detailed guidance, while Gen Z favors on-demand, digital learning platforms and bite-sized content. In

contrast, older employees favor traditional methods like in-person workshops and printed materials, reflecting their comfort with established practices. This divergence can lead to tension, as digital methods may seem impersonal to older employees, while traditional methods may appear outdated to younger employees.

Solution [26]: Integrating Learning Preferences

To address these differences, organizations can:

- 1) **Adopt a Blended Approach:** Combine digital and traditional methods in training programs to accommodate diverse preferences.
- 2) **Offer Multiple Formats:** Provide various learning options, including e-learning, webinars, and face-to-face sessions.
- 3) **Customize Learning Paths:** Allow employees to choose learning methods that suit their individual styles.
- 4) **Train on Digital Tools:** Provide support and training for older employees to enhance their digital skills.
- 5) **Gather Feedback:** Regularly collect feedback to adapt and improve training programs.
- 6) **Facilitate Knowledge Sharing:** Encourage intergenerational collaboration to bridge gaps in learning preferences.

These strategies can harmonize learning preferences, improving training effectiveness and employee satisfaction [26].

10. Cause of Conflict [27]: Recognition and Rewards Expectations

Conflicts often arise from differing expectations regarding recognition and rewards. Younger employees typically desire immediate and frequent recognition, valuing timely feedback and acknowledgment. In contrast, older employees prefer long-term rewards, such as promotions and sustained recognition, as a reward for loyalty and experience. This preference extends to benefits, for instance, Millennials still lean towards material benefits like salary increases and bonuses, while Gen Z favors flexible perks such as wellness stipends and tech allowances. This divergence can lead to dissatisfaction, with younger employees feeling overlooked and older employees finding immediate rewards insufficient and creating challenges in designing corporate benefits packages.

Solution [27]: Aligning Recognition and Rewards

To address these conflicts, organizations can:

- 1) **Create a Balanced Program:** Develop a recognition system that includes both immediate feedback and long-term rewards.
- 2) **Personalize Rewards:** Tailor recognition to individual preferences, acknowledging diverse values.
- 3) **Implement a Mixed Reward System:** Offer a combination of frequent, small rewards and substantial long-term incentives.
- 4) **Gather Feedback:** Regularly assess and adapt the recognition program based on employee input.
- 5) **Encourage Dialogue:** Foster open communication about recognition preferences during performance reviews.
- 6) **Promote a Recognition Culture:** Build a workplace culture that values both immediate and long-term achievements.

These strategies can help reconcile different expectations, improving employee satisfaction and organizational cohesion [27].

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights significant sources of intergenerational conflict and provides insights into potential resolutions. Our findings underscore that differing communication styles, work-life balance expectations, technology adoption, career advancement aspirations, feedback preferences, work ethic perceptions, authority and hierarchy views, conflict resolution styles, learning and development approaches, and recognition and reward expectations are primary areas where generational disparities manifest.

1. **Communication Styles:** Misunderstandings and frustration arise from varying preferences for face-to-face versus digital communication. Implementing hybrid communication strategies can mitigate these conflicts.
2. **Work-Life Balance Expectations:** Conflicts over scheduling and workload can be reduced by promoting flexible work policies that cater to the diverse needs of different generations.
3. **Technology Adoption:** Addressing disparities in technology proficiency through comprehensive training programs and promoting a culture of lifelong learning can alleviate tension and improve collaboration.
4. **Career Advancement:** Establishing transparent career development frameworks and fostering mentorship programs can harmonize career expectations and reduce perceived unfairness.
5. **Feedback Preferences:** Implementing a balanced feedback system that incorporates both continuous and periodic reviews can address generational dissatisfaction and enhance performance.
6. **Work Ethic Perceptions:** Encouraging open dialogues to build mutual understanding of different work ethics can help bridge generational divides and foster a cohesive work environment.
7. **Authority and Hierarchy:** Adopting hybrid organizational structures that integrate both traditional and egalitarian elements can alleviate power struggles and enhance cooperation.
8. **Conflict Resolution Styles:** Promoting flexible conflict resolution methods that incorporate both formal processes and open discussions can address disputes more effectively.
9. **Learning and Development:** Tailoring training programs to accommodate both digital and traditional learning preferences can reduce tension in training environments.
10. **Recognition and Rewards:** Developing recognition systems that balance immediate recognition with long-term rewards can cater to diverse generational expectations and reduce conflict.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and integrating generational differences to foster a more inclusive and productive workplace. By implementing targeted strategies to address these areas of conflict, organizations can enhance collaboration, boost employee morale, and improve overall operational effectiveness.

In the future, organizations must continuously monitor the evolution of both current and emerging generational cohorts in the workplace. As the presently younger generations, such as Millennials and Generation Z, age and new cohorts like Generation Alpha enter the workforce, it is crucial to adapt to these demographic shifts and their peculiar characteristics.

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