

ANALYZING THE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS OF YOUNG EMPLOYEES WITH OLDER EMPLOYEES: EVIDENCE FROM THE BANKING SECTOR OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The study explores the perception of young employees regarding mutual learning, feedback, team work, and collaborative decision making style at work place with older employees. Empirical data were collected from private and public sector banks in Pakistan. The sample of 324 was used for statistical analysis. The results reveal that all concerned variables like mutual learning, feedback, team work and participative decision making impact the satisfaction level of young employees. The findings of the study have implications in understanding intergenerational differences at workplace. Moreover, this study will be helpful for employers in resolving the workplace problems related to relational diversity and to manage diversified work force in a more productive way.

Keywords: Older Employees, Young Employees, Mutual Learning, Team Work, Banking Sector

JEL Classification: Z 000

Introduction

According to Avery, McKay and Wilson (2007) challenges pertaining to age diversity are profound in contemporary organizations. Work force diversity has been imperative research agenda for the last couple of decades (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, George, 2014; Shultz & Wang, 2011; Truxillo,

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Cadiz, & Hammer, 2015; Wang & Shultz, 2010). According to De Lange et al. (2006) aging process comprises of all those changes that may occur in biological, physical, psychological and social functioning in each individual. In advanced countries of the world, the ratio of mature workforce is increasing due to two main reasons. First, greater life expectancy due to improved health facilities creates opportunities for longer expected life. Second, owing to effective birth control initiatives, there is declining trend in population growth resulting into escalating older work force composition (Kulik et al., 2014; Truxillo, Cadiz, & Hammer, 2015). At international level, especially in developed countries where population was controlled for the last couple of decades facing shortage of manpower. Hence, organizations are engrossed to retain and utilize the skill set of older work force. Therefore, effective HR policies are under discussion to integrate and engage older work force (Chand & Tung, 2014; Kulik et al., 2014). For example, organizations are offering them opportunities for training and development for skill enhancement (Kulik et al., 2014) and introducing intervention strategies to integrate young and older work force. At the same time, retaining the young talent is a big challenge for contemporary organizations (Streeter, 2007).

In contrast to developed countries, organizations in developing countries are facing diverse challenges in work force composition through the availability of younger workforce in abundance. According to some estimates, Pakistan has the 10th largest workforce population and 6th populous countries in the world with 1.92 annual population growth rate. The ratio of young employees in labor force is increasing and predicted to upsurge in the coming years. According to 2015 statistics 33 percent of population was under the age of 15 years ⁵. In Pakistan, several initiatives have been taken to better place young work force in employment market. For instance, Youth Development Program was designed to educate and sponsor talented young population through loan schemes and technical education. It is estimated that by the end of year 2050, the ageing population would be around 42 million ⁶.

In the context of work force diversity, aging work force productivity remains an imperative concern for researchers (Chand & Tung, 2014; Kulik et al., 2014; Truxillo, Cadiz, & Hammer, 2015). A distinctive stream of research highlights the significance of relational diversity/intergenerational diversity which is based on age differences/generations to explore the impact on productivity and performance at work place (Kremer & Thomson, 1998). In literature, it is evident that young and old generations have their own set of values and life perspective that is influencing their work place practices and culture (Avery, McKay & Wilson, 2007; McNamara, 2005). Moreover, this difference in intergenerational thinking is creating tensions among young and old employees (DiRomualdo, 2006) and has a significant impact on workplace productivity.

⁵ Pakistan Economic Survey, 2014-2015: Population, Labour Force and Employment available at http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_15/12_Population.pdf

⁶ CIA (2014). The World Fact Book: Pakistan, Retrieved from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html>

The Pakistani banking sector is a major contributor in economy. In particular, how old and young workers can complement and enhance skill-set with the introduction of team work consisting of young and old workers set the directions of research and extend further inquiry into relational diversity perspective. Based on literature, we put forward the following research question:

RQ: What is the young employees' level of satisfaction who are working with experienced employees in the banking sector of Pakistan?

Literature Review

Defining Generation

There are mixed opinions about the definition of the construct 'Generation' in HR literature (Joshi et al., 2010). Westerman and Yamamura (2006), define generation as a group of individuals with similar interests, preferences and past experiences. In today's working environment, this generation gap is more significant. According to Gursoy et al. (2008) every generation has their own set of values and shared life experiences that make them distinctive from others in terms of work place behavior. Glass (2007) identifies three distinctive generational groups and called it as Baby boomers (born during 1946-1964), Generation X (born during 1965-1980), and Millennials (born during 1981-2000). This research attempts to explore working relationship between Generation X and Millennials working in the banking sector.

Defining Young and Older Employees

The age bracket of older employees by definition is 40 to 75 (Kooij et al., 2008; Warr, 2000). According to Avery, McKay and Wilson (2007), employees older than 55 years of age are considered as old workers. Similarly, literature is not agreed on the universal definition of young employees. The age bracket for young employees has been defined based on cultural context. Brown and Larson (2002) define age bracket of young employees up to mid-30s. Similarly, in the study conducted by Dalen, Henkens and Schippers (2010) they categorize employees under age of 35 as young employees. Therefore, keeping in view the purpose of the study we also take young employees up to 35 years of age.

Stereotypic attitudes towards Old and Young workers

Old worker productivity remains in question. Researchers have tried to answer this question to know whether productivity is related with age or not? (Dalen, Henkens & Schippers, 2010). The older worker productivity and performance at work place is often viewed from stereotypic lens and considered as less productive and uncooperative as compared to young workers (Chand & Tung, 2014; Dalen, Henkens & Schippers, 2010; Kulik & Cregan, 2016; Truxillo, Cadiz & Hammer, 2015). The same stereotypes exist for young workers, for instance on their commitment and loyalty towards organization.

There are mixed findings in terms of age diversity and productivity relationship. Wegee and Colleagues (2008) found negative association between performance and relational or age diversity in routine tasks and positive correlation in complex tasks formation (cited in Truxillo, Cadiz & Hammer, 2015). Apart from generational discrimination, affecting productivity of old workers and young workers, 'generativity' is another salient intervening variable that determine the effectiveness of older employees. Generativity is defined as an ability and willingness of senior leader to educate, develop and guide young employees at work place (Truxillo, Cadiz & Hammer, 2015)

Young and Older employees Working Relationships

In the global competitive business world, team based structure is popular. The organizations make teams of diverse group especially fresh and experienced employees are grouped together. The basic idea of mixed teams is to bring diversified thinking and experiences into team work (Kearney et al., 2009). However, these differences in attitude and life experiences among generations may also affect quality communication and result into conflict. It is argued that quality of working relationship is dependent on age related behavior (Josef & Rene, 2010). For instance, older workers are relatively less adaptable to changing culture and more likely to resist change. Young employees are more dependent in decision making and prefer participative decision making style (Guthrie, 2012).

Avery, McKay and Wilson (2007) opined job engagement act as antecedent of job performance and productivity rather than job attitudes. In this regard, satisfaction of co-workers particularly among different age groups is critical for the engagement of employees. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people relate themselves to group having similar interests and preferences. In this context, people align themselves in similar age groups hence display biases in terms of supporting behavior, resource allocation, and knowledge dissemination at work place (cited in Avery, McKay & Wilson; 2007). Thus group affiliation and resource dependency present challenges to organizations to develop system that promote a knowledge sharing culture among different age groups workforce. Similarly, Gratton, and Scott (2017) found relational diversity as an important predictor engagement which in turn determine the performance and productivity of an individual.

Another source of potential conflict between young and older employees is difference in values, preferences, and dissimilarities (Bova & Kroth, 2001). Communication in team work influence overall organizational productivity (Wok & Hashim, 2013) hence communication problems among younger and older employees are obvious (McCann & Giles, 2002). According to Jablin (1987), junior employees feel satisfaction when their seniors support, communicate, involve them in decision making. On the other hand, young employees also seek support and develop effective working relationship with seniors based on theoretical assumptions of interaction theory. According to interaction theory, networking activities particularly effective working relationship with co-workers is essential for career progression and accomplishment of professional goals (Singh, Kumra & Vinnicombe, 1998 cited in Kiaye & Singh, 2013). Hence, drawing on the interaction theory we propose

The following hypotheses for empirical test:

H1: Young employees are more satisfied with their older counterparts.

H2: Young employees are satisfied with their older counterparts in terms of working experience.

H3: Young employees are satisfied in terms of working relationships with older employees

H3.1: Young employees are satisfied in terms of mutual learning

H3.2: Young employees are satisfied with regard to participative decision making.

H3.3: Young employees are satisfied with regard to receiving feedback.

H4: There are positive relationships with regard to communication, mutual learning, collaborative decision making and feedback.

Research Methods

Sampling Procedure

The data were collected from employees working in both private and public sector banks of age up to 35 years. The five banks selected for data collection were representative in terms of diversified workforce based on age groups. The total sample size was around 350, out of which 324 completed questionnaires were returned used for data analysis, yielding a response rate of 92.6%.

Measures / Survey Instrument

The survey instrument developed by Wok and Hashim (2013) was adapted for this study. Dependent variable of Satisfaction was measured by eight items scale. Independent variables: team work was assessed using 8 items scale, mutual learning was measured by 5 items scale, feedback was measured by 5 items, mutual learning was measured with 5 items scale and participative decision making was measured with 5 items. All variables were measured through 5 points Likert scale. Internal consistency of the variables was checked using Cronbach Alpha. The alpha scores ranged from 0.812 to 0.896 which is considered well above the acceptable level.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out in SPSS version 19. For demographic profile, frequency tables were used and independent sample t-test was run for each item scale. Correlation matrix and multiple regressions were run to check the strength of relationship among research variables and explained variance respectively.

Research Findings

Demographics

Out of the total respondents, 184(56.8%) were male and female respondents were 140(43.2%) as shown in Table 1. With regard to response rate, out of total, response rate from Public sector was 39.8% and from four Private sector banks was 60.2%. In terms of experience, 34.6% of the respondents had experience of 2-3 years and 42% had between 4-5 years.

Table 1

Demographic details

Demographic Variables	Banks=5		Demographics	Banks=5	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Respondents	324	100%			
			Bank Type		
Gender			Public	129	39.8
Male	184	56.8	Private	195	60.2
Female	140	43.2	Experience		
Age Brackets			≤ 1 year	43	13.3
Less than or equal to 25 years	82	25.3	2– 3 years	112	34.6
26-30 years	123	38.0	4-5 years	136	42.0
31-35 years	119	36.7	6-10 years	33	10.2
Education Level			Income Range		
Up to Matriculation	9	2.8	Less than Rs. 25,000	88	27.2
Intermediate Level	27	8.3	Rs. 26,001 – 50,000	144	44.4
Bachelors Level	104	32.1	Rs. 50,001 – 100,000	81	25.0
Masters or Above	184	56.8	Above Rs. 100,000	11	3.4

Overall Satisfaction of Young Employees

The estimations regarding satisfaction level of younger employees are given in Table 2. According to the results, younger employees are satisfied on the dimension of learning experience (73.2%, $t=67.622$, $p=0.000$) and receiving support (69.8, $t=59.324$, $p=0.000$) respectively. Hence, H1 is statistically significant and supported.

Table 2
Satisfaction Level of Young Employees

Satisfaction Level	Agreement Level (%) ^a					Overall (%)	M	SD	t ^b	p
	1	2	3	4	5					
I am satisfied for guidance and support	3.1	17.9	21.9	40.7	16.4	69.8	3.49	1.060	59.324	0.000
I am satisfied with knowledge sharing of old workers.	2.5	17.0	18.8	47.2	14.5	70.8	3.54	1.014	62.870	0.000
I am satisfied with old worker contributions	1.9	16.0	21.0	49.4	11.7	70.6	3.53	0.958	66.314	0.000
I am satisfied on receiving guidance in terms of improving performance.	2.5	17.9	16.0	48.1	15.4	71.2	3.56	1.032	62.145	0.000
I am satisfied from learning experience	3.4	11.4	15.4	55.2	14.5	73.2	3.66	0.974	67.622	0.000
I am satisfied in terms of learning tolerance	3.1	14.8	14.2	50.0	17.9	73.0	3.65	1.035	63.457	0.000
Total						70.7	3.53	1.038	61.538	0.000

Notes: ^a On 5 points Likert scale from Strongly Disagree =1 to Strongly Agree =5; ^b Test value of 4.0 with df=323

Teamwork experience

The younger employees reported varied experiences in terms of teamwork dimensions as given in Table 3. The respondents gave higher rating regarding suggestions by older worker (73.8%, with t value =67.918 and p=0.000), and giving assistance in decision making” (73% with t value =67.988 and p=0.000). The respondents gave low rating to older employees listening ability (64.8% with t value =53.019 and p=0.000). Therefore, H2 is substantiated.

Table 3
Perception of Teamwork

Teamwork	Agreement Level (%) ^a					Overall (%)	M	SD	t ^b	p
	1	2	3	4	5					
Older employees are comfortable working with people of different ages.	7.1	16.4	10.2	45.7	20.7	71.2	3.56	1.190	53.908	0.000
Older employees give priority to team objectives	5.9	20.7	25.9	32.7	14.8	66.0	3.30	1.129	52.587	0.000
Older employees share their knowledge freely	2.5	16.7	15.1	49.1	16.7	72.2	3.61	1.028	63.187	0.000
Older employees openly listen to others	5.9	21	28.7	31.8	12.7	64.8	3.24	1.101	53.019	0.000
Older employees give helpful suggestions	2.5	13.3	13.3	54.6	16.4	73.8	3.69	0.978	67.918	0.000
Older employees encourage participative decision making.	2.8	14.8	16	47.2	19.1	73.0	3.65	1.037	63.355	0.000
Total						69.6	3.48	1.086	57.969	0.000

Notes: ^a On 5 points Likert scale from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree; ^b Test value of 4.0, df=323

Results for Participative Decision Making, Mutual Learning and Feedback

As shown in Table 4, In general, young employees reported satisfaction while working with older employees. This relationship covered three dimensions such as feedback, learning and participative decision. The estimations confirm positive relationship on these three dimensions hence H3 is supported.

Mutual learning

With regard to mutual learning, the respondents seem to be agreed to gaining new knowledge from their older colleagues (76 %, with t value =73.749 and p=0.000) while rate low time management skills (68.40% with t value =56.833 and p=0.000) but both have significant results. Hence, H3.1 is proved.

Participative decision making Style

In team work, participative decision making style is an important aspect. On this dimension, the younger employees feels that experienced colleagues encourage them to take decisions or involve them in decision making process (70.4%, $t=57.976$, $p=0.00$). Young employees perceive that older employees often solicit ideas in decision making (67.2 per cent, $t=57.893$, $p=0.000$) Thus, H3.2 is also proved.

Receiving Feedback

It is evident from the results that older employees give feedback to their young colleagues or subordinates. The results indicate that they often receive suggestions (71.2%, with t value =63.192 and $p=0.000$) and give sincere feedback (70.8%, with t value =58.161 and $p=0.000$). Moreover, senior employee compliments (70%, with t value =58.836 and $p=0.000$) and appreciate efforts of young employees (68.2%, with t value =54.863 and $p=0.000$). All relationships were statistically significant, therefore, H3.3 is substantiated.

Table 4

Collaborative Decision Making, Learning Experience and Feedback

Working relationship with senior employees	Level of Agreement (%) ^a					Overall (%)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> ^b	<i>p</i>
	1	2	3	4	5					
<i>Mutual Learning</i>										
I learn from experiences of old workers	4.0	12.7	11.4	47.8	24.1	75.0	3.75	1.079	62.593	0.000
We learn new skills from each other.	2.8	10.2	13.9	50.0	23.1	76.2	3.81	0.997	68.740	0.000
We learn new knowledge from each other.	2.2	7.1	18.8	48.5	23.5	76.8	3.84	.937	73.749	0.000
I learn time management from older employees.	4.6	17.9	22.8	40.1	14.5	68.4	3.42	1.083	56.833	0.000
Total						73.7	3.69	1.021	65.279	0.000
<i>Participative Style of decision making</i>										

(Table Continued...)

Older employees encourage taking decision	3.7	17.6	19.8	40.4	18.5	70.4	3.52	1.094	57.976	0.000
Older employees offer ideas	3.1	21.6	23.5	39.8	12.0	67.2	3.36	1.045	57.893	0.000
Older employees helps in selecting alternatives for decision making.	2.5	15.1	28.4	37.7	16.4	70.0	3.50	1.015	62.102	0.000
Older employees assist in prioritizing alternatives.	3.4	21.6	26.9	35.5	12.7	66.4	3.32	1.054	56.756	0.000
Total						68.6	3.43	1.040	59.425	0.000
<i>Feedback</i>										
I get feedback	4.0	12.7	11.4	47.8	24.1	70.8	3.54	1.097	58.161	0.000
I receive suggestions for growth and development.	2.8	10.2	13.9	50	23.1	71.2	3.56	1.014	63.192	0.000
I receive sincere remarks work improvement.	2.2	15.1	19.1	46.3	17.3	70.6	3.53	1.009	62.942	0.000
I receive appreciation for contributions in helping older workers.	2.2	7.1	18.8	48.5	23.5	68.2	3.41	1.119	54.863	0.000
I receive compliments for achievements.	4.6	17.9	22.8	40.1	14.5	70.0	3.50	1.072	58.836	0.000
Total						70.2	3.51	1.062	59.599	0.000

Notes: α On 5 points Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree; b Test value of 4.0, $df=323$

4.5 Relationships of young employees' satisfaction with teamwork, participative decision making feedback and learning,

In Table 5 it is evident that explanatory power of independent variables ($R^2=0.722$ with adjusted R^2 of 0.718) explaining variance in dependent variable i.e. satisfaction. The results indicate that 71.8 per cent of the variation in satisfaction is accounted for by these predictors. Overall model was significant with $F=206.814$ and $p<0.001$ respectively. Similarly coefficients of feedback, participative decision making, and mutual learning were ($\beta=0.302$, $p<0.001$), ($\beta=0.109$, $p<0.001$) and ($\beta=0.367$, $p<0.001$). The highest β score was of feedback (0.367) and lowest of participative decision making ($\beta=0.109$).

For public sector banks, the model was significant ($F=102.330$, $p=0.000$) with contribution made by different predictors having $R^2=0.785$ and adjusted R^2 of 0.777). This suggests that mutual learning, team work, feedback and participative decision making together explains 77.7 per cent of

variation in satisfaction of older employees. As per results standardized coefficients of participative decision making ($\beta=0.178$, $p<0.001$), team work is ($\beta=0.301$, $p<0.001$), feedback ($\beta=0.176$, $p<0.01$) and learning ($\beta=0.380$, $p<0.001$) are supporting our assumptions.

The results related to private sector banks show model significance with $F=105.752$ and $p=0.000$. The total contribution made by different predictors with $R^2=0.701$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.695$) suggest that mutual learning, feedback, team work and participative decision making together explains 69.5 per cent of variation in satisfaction of older employees. Standardized coefficient of predictors i.e. team work ($\beta=0.174$, $p<0.01$), feedback ($\beta=0.371$, $p<0.001$), mutual learning ($\beta=0.329$, $p<0.001$), and collaborative decision making ($\beta=0.124$, $p<0.05$) support our hypotheses.

Table 5

Model summary of Working Relationship with senior employees

Variables	Total Results		Public Bank		Private Bank	
	β	t	β	T	β	t
(Constant)		-0.707		-1.642		0.344
Team Work	0.237	5.756***	0.301	4.727***	0.174	3.076**
Mutual Learning	0.367	8.921***	0.380	6.026***	0.329	5.806***
Participative Style of Decision Making	0.109	2.634***	0.178	2.684***	0.124	2.173*
Giving Feedback	0.302	7.077***	0.176	2.464**	0.371	6.388***
R^2	0.722		0.785		0.701	
Adjusted R^2	0.718		0.777		0.695	
F	206.814***		102.330***		105.752***	

Dependent Variable: Overall Satisfaction

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Discussion

Findings of this study confirm our assumptions of good working relationship between young and old workers. Furthermore, the young employees give respect to their seniors working in teams consistent with our cultural values. The findings of the study are in consistent with the Gursoy et al. (2008) who found that young employees prefer team work. In general, these results are consistent with

the cultural values of Pakistan. In terms of learning experience, results are consistent with the assumptions of greater knowledge and experience of older workers (IImakunnas & IImakunnas, 2014). The young employees who feel reluctant to integrate with older employees have lesser opportunities to learn and progress in their career. Similarly, in public sector organizations this misperception and discomfort level is high with regard to older workers. This is due to the fact that they feel a threat to their job as young employees are considered more equipped with latest tools and knowledge. In contrary, young employees learn from experiences of their older colleagues and generally feel comfortable working with them.. In this context of productive relational diversity, Pitts and Wise, (2010) also suggest policy makers to incorporate work force diversity perspective while implementing HR policies and practices.

Conclusion

This study has certain limitations. First, it has focused on only the banking sector and that, within a specific geographical area. Second, as compared to the four private sector banks, data from only one public bank was gathered, so these results do not represent whole banking sector. For future research, it is suggested to include more banks and from different cities, both urban and rural for comprehensive analysis. Moreover, in future, researchers can approach older employees to examine their perceptions about working relationships with younger employees. Furthermore, in future research the impact of teams consisting of young and older workers can be ascertained on teams and organizational productivity.

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