
Learning Agility on Multigenerational Employees

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Abstract

In an increasingly dynamic work environment, the ability to learn and adapt quickly, known as learning agility, has become essential. This study aims to explore the differences in learning agility among employees from the Baby Boomers, X, Y (Millennials), and Z generations. Using a library research approach, this study collects and analyzes relevant literature to identify the unique characteristics of each generation in the context of learning agility. The results indicate that each generation has different approaches and preferences toward learning and adaptation. Baby Boomers tend to be more comfortable with formal learning and direct experience, while Generation X demonstrates flexibility and the ability to learn independently. Millennials excel in technological adaptability and prefer interactive learning, whereas Generation Z favors collaborative and project-based learning. These findings highlight the importance for organizations to tailor their employee development strategies to meet the needs and preferences of each generation. By adopting a customized approach, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of learning and development, as well as improve employee performance and job satisfaction. Further research is needed to develop effective implementation strategies in a multigenerational work environment.

Keywords: Learning Agility, Multigenerational, Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z Generation

INTRODUCTION

In a constantly changing work environment, the ability to learn and adapt quickly has become increasingly important. The concept of learning agility, which refers to an individual's ability to learn from experience and apply that learning in new situations, has become a central focus in the management and human resource development literature. According to research by De Meuse et al. (2010), learning agility is an important predictor of leadership success and workplace performance. However, with the generational diversity in today's work environment, questions arise about how generational differences affect employees' learning agility.

The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, is known for its strong work ethic and commitment to career stability. Research by Lyons and

Kuron (2014) indicates that this generation tends to value direct experience and formal learning more highly. On the other hand, Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, is known for being more flexible and independent in their approach to learning. According to Twenge et al. (2010), this generation is more likely to seek work-life balance and value self-directed learning.

Millennials or Generation Y, born between 1981 and 1996, have grown up in the digital era and show a strong preference for technology in the learning process. Research by Ng et al. (2010) reveals that this generation tends to adapt more quickly to technological changes and prefers interactive and technology-based learning. Meanwhile, Generation Z, born after 1997, is beginning to enter the workforce with their own unique characteristics. A study by Seemiller and Grace (2016) shows that Generation Z prefers collaborative and project-based learning and tends to seek relevant and applicable learning.

These characteristic differences pose challenges for organizations in managing and facilitating learning agility among employees from various generations. Research by Smith and Nichols (2015) highlights that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective in developing learning agility in a multigenerational workplace. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to understand and tailor their employee development strategies to meet the needs and preferences of each generation.

In a rapidly changing world, transitions and developments become challenging as individuals face unknown situations where current routines and leadership become inadequate to address change. Individuals who are unable to let go of old behavior patterns and recognize differences are likely to fail. Millennials, as the largest productive workforce, play a significant role in facing the VUCA era. According to Sakar (2016), key factors for success in the VUCA era include a sound business foundation, innovation, quick response, flexibility, change management, diverse human resource management at both local and global levels, market intelligence, and strong collaboration with stakeholders. The challenge for organizations is to create agile leadership in the future to cope with change, foster intergenerational collaboration in work processes, fulfill roles, and share knowledge and information (Kornelsen, 2019). Millennials need to possess learning agility to meet organizational demands for agile human resources. Agility is related to facing difficulties with flexibility and the agility to identify available solutions. Learning agility is defined as the willingness and ability to learn from experiences and then apply what has been learned to achieve success in new situations. People with high agility extract the right lessons from their experiences and apply those lessons in new situations; they tend to continuously seek new challenges, actively seek feedback from others with the aim of growth and development, tend to self-reflect, and evaluate experiences to draw conclusions.

Learning agility is divided into four dimensions, namely: 1). People agility: the extent to which a person knows himself well, learns from experience, treats others constructively and is resilient under the pressure of change; 2). Results agility: the extent to which a person gets results under difficult conditions, inspires others, and builds others' confidence with his presence; 3). Mental agility: the extent to which an individual thinks about a problem from a new perspective

and is comfortable with ambiguity, complexity and explaining their thinking to others; 4) Change agility: the degree to which an individual is curious, passionate about ideas and engaged in skills development activities (Lombardo & Eichinger in De Rue, Ashford, & Myers, 2012)

Thus, this article aims to explore the differences in learning agility among employees from the Boomers, X, Y, and Z generations. By understanding these differences, organizations are expected to design more effective and inclusive development programs that not only enhance individual performance but also improve the overall organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Agility

Learning agility is the ability of an individual to learn from experiences and then apply that learning in new situations. According to De Meuse et al. (2017), learning agility encompasses four main dimensions: seeking new experiences, learning lessons from those experiences, applying learning in new contexts, and facing challenges with flexibility. Learning Agility involves the ability to use lessons from one experience and apply them to a different situation. Learning Agility includes experimentation, self-reflection, leveraging personal strengths, and connecting experiences from one challenge to another (De Meuse, 2017). Learning agility is considered one of the main predictors of success in leadership and career development in a dynamic work environment.

Baby Boomer Generation

The Baby Boomer generation refers to individuals born between 1946 and 1964. This generation is known for its strong work ethic, high commitment to work, and tendency to value career stability (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). They often prefer formal learning and direct experience-based learning and have high loyalty to the organizations they work for.

Generation X

Generation X includes individuals born between 1965 and 1980. This generation is known for being more independent and flexible in their approach to work and learning. Twenge et al. (2010) note that Generation X tends to seek a balance between work and personal life and values learning that can be done independently and tailored to personal needs.

Generation Y (Millennials)

Generation Y or Millennials, are those born between 1981 and 1996. This generation grew up in the digital era and shows a strong preference for technology in the learning process (Ng et al., 2010). Millennials are known for quickly adapting to technological changes and prefer interactive and technology-based learning. They also tend to seek meaning and purpose in the work they do.

Generation Z

Generation Z includes individuals born after 1997. This generation is just beginning to enter the workforce and is known for its unique characteristics, including a preference for collaborative and project-based learning (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Generation Z prefers relevant and applicable learning and shows the ability to quickly adapt to changes in the work environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a library research approach to explore the differences in learning agility among employees from the Boomers, X, Y, and Z generations. Library research was chosen as it allows the researcher to gather and analyze information from various existing sources, including books, journal articles, research reports, and other electronic sources.

Research Steps

1. Data Collection

The first step in this research is to identify and collect literature relevant to the topic of learning agility and generational characteristics in the workplace. These sources include academic journal articles, books, industry reports, and other credible publications. Literature searches are conducted through academic databases such as JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar, using keywords such as "learning agility," "generational differences," "Baby Boomers," "Generation X," "Millennials," and "Generation Z."

2. Criteria Selection

The literature selected for analysis must meet certain criteria, including relevance to the research topic, source quality, and author credibility.

3. Data Analysis

Data collected from various sources are qualitatively analyzed to identify key themes related to learning agility and generational differences. This analysis includes a critical assessment of previous research findings and identifying gaps in the existing literature.

4. Synthesised of Finding

Findings from the literature analysis are synthesized to provide a comprehensive overview of how each generation may differ in terms of learning agility. This synthesis also includes a discussion of the implications of these findings for management practices and human resource development in organizations.

By using the library research approach, this study aims to provide deep and comprehensive insights into the differences in learning agility among different generations, as well as to offer a strong foundation for further research in the future.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the literature analysis conducted, several significant differences in learning agility were found among the Boomers, X, Y, and Z generations:

Baby Boomer Generation

This generation tends to have learning agility focused more on direct experience and formal learning. They are more comfortable with structure and stability and often demonstrate high resilience and commitment when facing new challenges. According to Lyons and Kuron (2014), Baby Boomers tend to be more comfortable with formal learning and direct experience. They show high commitment to work and prefer clear structures in the learning process. A study by Johnson et al. (2015) indicates that Baby Boomers are more comfortable with experience-based learning and tend to rely on knowledge gained from previous work experience. They prefer clear structures in the learning process and demonstrate high loyalty to organizations.

According to research by Smith (2017), Baby Boomers often show resilience in facing change, even though they may require more time to adapt to new technology compared to younger generations. Research by Suryani (2018) shows that Baby Boomers in Indonesia tend to be more comfortable with experience-based learning and prefer clear structures in the learning process. They demonstrate high loyalty to organizations and rely more on knowledge gained from previous work experience. A study by Prasetyo (2019) found that although Baby Boomers may require more time to adapt to new technology, they still show resilience in facing change.

X Generation

Generation X demonstrates learning agility characterized by flexibility and the ability to learn independently. They tend to be more adaptive to change, although they also value a balance between work and personal life. Twenge et al. (2010) note that Generation X has the ability to learn independently and is more flexible in facing change. They tend to value a balance between work and personal life, which influences how they approach learning and self-development. Brown and Lee (2018) found that Generation X has the ability to learn independently and is more flexible in facing change. They tend to seek a balance between work and personal life, which influences how they approach learning and self-development.

This generation also shows the ability to adapt to technology, although they are more selective in choosing tools and platforms used for learning (Harris, 2019). According to research by Wibowo (2020), Generation X in Indonesia has the ability to learn independently and is more flexible in facing change. They tend to seek a balance between work and personal life, which influences how they approach learning and self-development. This generation also shows the ability to adapt to technology, although they are more selective in choosing tools and platforms used for learning (Santoso, 2021).

Y Generation (Millennials)

Millennials demonstrate high learning agility in the context of technology. They quickly adapt to new tools and platforms and prefer interactive and technology-based learning. This generation also tends to seek meaning and purpose in their work. Ng et al. (2010) found that Millennials demonstrate high adaptability to technology and prefer interactive learning. They seek meaning in work and adapt more quickly to new tools and platforms that support learning. According to research by Nguyen et al. (2020), Millennials demonstrate high adaptability to technology and prefer interactive and technology-based learning. They tend to seek meaning and purpose in their work, which drives them to continue learning and growing. Another study by Patel (2021) reveals that Millennials are more open to change and quickly adapt to new tools and platforms that support learning.

Research by Nugroho and Putri (2021) shows that Millennials in Indonesia demonstrate high adaptability to technology and prefer interactive and technology-based learning. They tend to seek meaning and purpose in their work, which drives them to continue learning and growing. Another study by Lestari (2022) reveals that Millennials are more open to change and quickly adapt to new tools and platforms that support learning. Change agility in millennial employees that is quite high describes someone who strives to innovate and change quickly, enjoys trying new things, easily accepts change and can anticipate future consequences and millennial generation has a fairly high results agility. Results agility is related to the ability to build high performance, have a strong drive or motivation in completing tasks, and can achieve goals regardless of existing obstacles (De Meuse, Dai & Hallenbeck, 2017).

Z Generation

Generation Z demonstrates strong learning agility in collaborative and project-based learning contexts. They prefer relevant and applicable learning and have the ability to quickly adapt to changes in the work environment. Seemiller and Grace (2016) reveal that Generation Z prefers collaborative and project-based learning. They demonstrate the ability to quickly adapt to change and prefer relevant and applicable learning. Research by Kim and Park (2022) shows that Generation Z prefers collaborative and project-based learning. They demonstrate the ability to quickly adapt to change and prefer relevant and applicable learning. This generation also has a tendency to seek quick feedback and prefers to use technology as the main tool in the learning process (Garcia, 2023). According to research by Rahmawati and Hidayat (2023), Generation Z in Indonesia prefers collaborative and project-based learning. They demonstrate the ability to quickly adapt to change and prefer relevant and applicable learning. This generation also has a tendency to seek quick feedback and prefers to use technology as the main tool in the learning process (Yusuf, 2023).

From the literature reviewed, it is evident that each generation has different approaches and preferences in terms of learning agility. These differences are influenced by social, technological, and economic factors that shape the life experiences of each generation.

Table. 1
The Mandatory Differences of Learning Agility
on Multigenerational Employees

Generation	Baby Boomer	X	Y Millennial	Z
Learning Agility	This generation demonstrates a strong preference for structured and experience-based learning. They exhibit high resilience and loyalty to their organizations, although they may require more time to adapt to new technologies compared to younger generations. Their commitment to formal learning and reliance on past experiences make them valuable assets in stable environments.	Characterized by their flexibility and independence, Generation X is adept at learning independently and adapting to change. They value a balance between work and personal life, which influences their approach to learning and development. Their selective adoption of technology allows them to integrate new tools effectively while maintaining personal and professional equilibrium	Known for their high adaptability to technology, Millennials thrive in environments that offer interactive and technology-based learning. They seek meaning and purpose in their work, driving them to continually learn and grow. Their openness to change and rapid adaptation to new platforms make them well-suited for dynamic and innovative workplaces	This generation excels in collaborative and project-based learning environments. They prefer relevant and applicable learning experiences and quickly adapt to changes in the work environment. Their inclination towards seeking quick feedback and utilizing technology as a primary learning tool positions them as agile learners in a fast-paced world.

Source : Data Processed (2025)

Overall, the differences in learning agility among these generations highlight the need for organizations to tailor their development strategies to accommodate diverse generational preferences. By understanding and leveraging these unique characteristics, organizations can enhance employee engagement, performance, and satisfaction across all generational cohorts.

IMPLICATION RESEARCH

The implications of these findings suggest that organizations need to consider generational differences when designing employee development programs. Approaches tailored to the needs and preferences of each generation can enhance the effectiveness of learning and development, as well as improve employee performance and job satisfaction. Further research is needed to explore how development strategies can be effectively implemented in a multigenerational work environment.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the distinct learning agility characteristics of the Baby Boomer, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z cohorts, shaped by their unique social, technological, and economic contexts. Baby Boomers exhibit a strong preference for structured and experience-based learning, demonstrating resilience and loyalty to their organizations. However, they may require more time to adapt to new technologies compared to younger generations. Generation X, characterized by their flexibility and independence, excels in self-directed learning and adapting to change while maintaining a balance between work and personal life. Their selective adoption of technology allows them to effectively integrate new tools while preserving equilibrium.

Millennials stand out for their high adaptability to technology, thriving in environments that offer interactive and technology-based learning. They seek meaning and purpose in their work, which drives continuous learning and growth. Their openness to change and rapid adaptation to new platforms make them ideal for dynamic and innovative workplaces. Meanwhile, Generation Z excels in collaborative and project-based learning environments, preferring relevant and applicable learning experiences. Their inclination towards seeking quick feedback and utilizing technology as a primary learning tool positions them as agile learners in a fast-paced world.

The findings underscore the importance for organizations to tailor their development strategies to accommodate the diverse preferences of each generation. By understanding and leveraging these unique characteristics, organizations can enhance employee engagement, performance, and satisfaction across all generational cohorts. This approach not only fosters a more inclusive and effective learning environment but also ensures that organizations remain agile and responsive to the evolving demands of the modern workforce. Further research is warranted to explore the implementation of these strategies in a multigenerational work environment.

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