



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## Generational differences in learning and development preferences at ABC apparel company, Sri Lanka

BANDARA, G.R.D.C.D. \*

*Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.*

International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2024, 13(01), 871–880

Publication history: Received on 11 August 2024; revised on 17 September 2024; accepted on 20 September 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.13.1.1767>

### Abstract

The present study investigates the variations in learning and development preferences among different generations at ABC Apparel Company, Sri Lanka, with a specific focus on Generation X, Y (Millennials), and Z. Employing qualitative approaches, including in-depth interviews, the study examines how each generation values and participates in learning activities using a sample of 18 employees (6 from each generation). The results indicate that Generation X places a higher importance on professional progression and job stability delivered through traditional educational techniques. In contrast, Millennials focus on personal growth, digital learning, and blended learning environments. Generation Z exhibits a pronounced propensity for technology-driven, self-paced learning to adjust to swift industry transformations. The observed discrepancies underscore the diverse motives and preferences among different generations, which has significant implications for the design of focused development initiatives. This research highlights the significance of matching learning opportunities with the specific requirements of other generations to improve employee engagement and productivity. The recommendations include the integration of flexible learning alternatives and resolving technology resistance to cater to the varied preferences of different generations. The present study enhances the comprehension of generational dynamics in the context of learning and offers practical insights for improving learning and development methods inside the organization.

**Keywords:** Generational Differences; Learning Preferences; Employee Development; Technology Adoption; Blended Learning

### 1. Introduction

The contemporary workplace is distinguished by a progressively intergenerational workforce, where employees from many age cohorts engage and collaborate systematically. In the realm of Learning and Development (L&D), these generational disparities present distinct difficulties and possibilities. Continual learning and staff development have become vital elements of human resource management as organizations aim to maintain competitiveness. Nevertheless, it is crucial to comprehend the perceptions and involvement of employees from different generations in learning opportunities to customize development programs most effectively. The present study aims to investigate the disparities of learning preferences, motivations, and problems among employees from Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z at ABC Apparel Company in Sri Lanka. The contemporary workplace is distinguished by a progressively intergenerational workforce, where employees from many age cohorts engage and collaborate systematically. In the realm of Learning and Development (L&D), these generational disparities present distinct difficulties and possibilities. Continual learning and staff development have become vital elements of human resource management as organizations aim to maintain competitiveness. Nevertheless, it is crucial to comprehend the perceptions and involvement of employees from different generations in learning opportunities in order to customize development programs most effectively. The present study aims to investigate the disparities of learning preferences,

\* Corresponding author: BANDARA, G.R.D.C.D

motivations, and problems among employees from Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z at ABC Apparel Company in Sri Lanka.

The notion of generational differences is based on the premise that persons who come of age within specific historical and social periods tend to exhibit comparable values, attitudes, and behaviours. These distinct generational groups, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, are frequently moulded by the specific events, technology, and socioeconomic circumstances that impacted their developmental years (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Each successive generation, therefore, possesses distinct perspectives on employment, education, and professional advancement. Research has demonstrated that Generation X, born from 1965 to 1980, places importance on self-reliance and independence, and favors learning approaches that enable people to manage both professional and personal responsibilities (Twenge, 2010). Conversely, Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) are commonly characterized as being knowledgeable about technology, collaborating, and enthusiastic about receiving quick feedback and chances for personal development through digital learning (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). According to Seemiller and Grace (2019), Generation Z, the most recent cohort to join the labour market (born from 1997 onwards), exhibit a greater inclination towards digital platforms, particularly mobile learning, and conveniently accessible resources.

Given the significance of the garment industry as a fundamental pillar of Sri Lanka's economy, it is crucial to comprehend the generational disparities within the sector. The garment sector in Sri Lanka makes a substantial contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and serves as a major source of employment, especially in export markets. A key factor in determining the competitiveness of firms in this industry, such as ABC Apparel Company, is their capacity to retain skilled personnel and consistently enhance their abilities to meet changing worldwide requirements (Kelegama, 2009). Nevertheless, conventional training programs, while proving successful in the past, may not adequately cater to the requirements of the contemporary heterogeneous workforce, especially since younger generations anticipate more individualized, adaptable, and technology-driven learning prospects (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). The disparity in learning preferences between generations is a significant obstacle for L&D professionals responsible for creating programs that accommodate a diverse audience of employees.

A primary objective of this research is to tackle the limited comprehension regarding the experiences and appreciation of learning and development possibilities among various generations at ABC Apparel Company. Although the organization has made significant progress in introducing a range of training programs, these efforts may not yield the same level of effectiveness among all employee demographics. Initial findings indicate that older employees of Generation X may not readily interact with the company's modern e-learning modules compared to younger employees from Generation Z, who are more adept with digital platforms (Benson & Brown, 2011). Conversely, Millennials may prefer blended learning strategies that integrate conventional and digital techniques, providing both adaptability and opportunity for personal engagement (Schroth, 2019). Insufficient comprehension of these generational preferences poses a danger for ABC Apparel in terms of investing in learning solutions that do not effectively involve a substantial segment of its employees, therefore restricting the efficacy of its development initiatives.

Moreover, the issue is worsened by the tendency of the majority of organizations, like ABC Apparel, to use a uniform strategy for employee training. The assumption underlying this strategy is that all employees possess comparable learning needs and preferences, potentially leading to disengagement and diminished learning outcomes among specific generational cohorts. Evidence suggests that when learning methods are not aligned, it can result in decreased job satisfaction and diminished employee performance, as employees perceive a lack of connection with the training they are given (Hicks et al., 2007). Hence, it is crucial to assess the perceptions of all generations inside the organization regarding learning and development to enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately, performance.

To address this deficiency, the present study seeks to investigate the variations in learning preferences among generations within ABC Apparel Company. Through the administration of interviews with employees belonging to Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, this study aims to offer valuable insights into the distinct learning approaches valued by these cohorts, the factors that drive their participation in development activities, and the obstacles they encounter. The results will provide practical suggestions for learning and development professionals to create increasingly inclusive and efficient training programs that are in line with the varied requirements of their multigenerational workforce. Furthermore, the research will enhance the overall comprehension of generational dynamics in the organizational setting, namely in the garment industry of Sri Lanka, which has not been thoroughly examined in this aspect.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

In this study research questions are,

- To understand how different generations perceive and prioritize learning opportunities.
- To explore the learning methods preferred by each generation (e.g., formal training vs. digital learning).

## 1.2. Research Objectives

In this study research objectives are,

- How do Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z employees differ in their learning preferences?
- What are the most valued learning formats (e.g., workshops, online courses, mentorship) for each generation?

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## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Generational Differences

In recent years, there has been considerable focus on the distinct generational disparities in the workplace, including in the methods of each cohort towards learning and development. Extensive research has investigated how Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z interact with workplace training, technology, and personal and professional growth.

Typically, Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) is distinguished by a robust feeling of autonomy, self-sufficiency, and flexibility. According to Twenge (2010), individuals belonging to this generation place a high importance on practical learning approaches and are more inclined to participate in training programs that directly pertain to career progression or job stability. Generation X personnel generally prefer on-the-job training and experiential learning, since they actively seek to harmonize their professional development with their personal life obligations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Furthermore, it has been observed that they tend to actively pursue mentorship or coaching from seasoned colleagues, instead of participating in structured classroom environments (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010).

The millennial generation, born between 1981 and 1996, is commonly characterized as technologically adept and cooperative, having been raised during a period of fast technological progress (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Given their technological proficiency and inclination towards flexible, self-paced learning environments, they are more likely to adopt digital learning platforms such as e-learning and webinars (Schroth, 2019). Millennials highly appreciate feedback and ongoing education as integral components of their personal and professional development, anticipating chances to enhance their skills that correspond to their vocational advancement (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). This cohort finds blended learning methods, which include online and face-to-face components, especially appealing. These methods enable them to interact with material flexibly while yet maintaining the advantages of human contact (Gurău, 2012).

Generation Z, born in 1997 and onwards, has joined the workforce with a heightened inclination towards mobile learning and education integrated with technology. Due to their upbringing at a time when cell phones and on-demand digital content were prevalent, Generation Z anticipates that learning would be easily obtainable, with few obstacles to overcome (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). As a result of their inclination to multitask and their need for immediate, practical applications of learning, they typically favour micro-learning or bite-sized material that can be digested quickly and efficiently (Dolot, 2018). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that Generation Z highly values the personal relevance of learning materials and actively seeks development chances that closely match their objectives and interests (Singh, 2020).

Although the target demographic for this study does not include Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), their learning preferences are frequently compared to those of younger generations. On the whole, Baby Boomers tend to favour formal educational settings, such as organized training programs or sessions held in a classroom (Cekada, 2012). While Millennials and Generation Z typically prioritize flexibility, Baby Boomers tend to place a higher importance on stability and predictability in their learning experiences. They prefer material that is closely linked to professional knowledge and organizational loyalty (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

A comprehensive grasp of these generational disparities is crucial for customising efficient learning and development approaches. Organisations that do not acknowledge these preferences may have difficulties in involving staff, leading to decreased involvement in training programmes and diminished overall performance (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). By customising learning opportunities to suit the distinct requirements of each generation, organisations may optimise the effectiveness of their development programs and enhance employee happiness.

## 2.2. Learning Preferences and Approaches

Extensive research has consistently shown that different generational cohorts have distinct approaches to learning, which are shaped by their backgrounds and experiences. A comprehensive understanding of these preferences is crucial as learning and development (L&D) plays a vital role in both individual growth and organizational success. Among the most prominent distinctions are the learning modes. While Generation X often values pragmatic, experiential training that can be immediately implemented in their professional responsibilities (Twenge, 2010), Millennials and Generation Z tend to prefer adaptable, technology-driven learning settings. Millennials, specifically, derive advantages from blended learning, which integrates digital resources with in-person teaching, enabling them to assimilate knowledge at their preferred speed while concurrently appreciating interpersonal engagement (Schroth, 2019).

In the context of a highly digitalized society, Generation Z demonstrates a pronounced inclination towards mobile learning and micro-learning. These are brief and concentrated learning experiences that enable individuals to interact with material while simultaneously managing other obligations (Dolot, 2018). The focus of this generation on digital learning corresponds to their capacity to accomplish many tasks simultaneously and their requirement for prompt feedback (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). E-learning applications and video tutorials are digital platforms that offer students on-demand learning tailored to their fast-paced, technology-driven lifestyles. Therefore, organizations seeking to involve this generation must adopt creative and adaptable training strategies that specifically address their preferences.

Conversely, Generation X tends to appreciate acquiring knowledge that is immediately relevant to professional achievements. Typically, their motivation stems from the practical opportunities to use skills that improve their performance in their present jobs or equip them for leadership positions (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Employees from Generation X frequently value mentorship programs that enable them to utilize the expertise and advice of more seasoned professionals, therefore facilitating informal learning through practical experience (Deal et al., 2010).

## 2.3. Motivation for Learning

Motivation constitutes a crucial element among the disparities in learning across generations. Among Generation X, the main incentive for participating in learning and development activities is frequently linked to employment stability and professional progression. Given their experience of economic instability, this group of individuals typically pursues changes that will improve their abilities and maintain their competitiveness in the employment market (Twenge, 2010). This group places great importance on professional development that results in promotions or lateral career progress. They are generally motivated by the aspiration for stability and long-term career opportunities (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Conversely, Millennials are mostly driven by a desire for personal satisfaction and access to possibilities for personal development. They perceive learning as a fundamental aspect of their personality and professional path, frequently pursuing ongoing growth that corresponds with their long-term objectives (Ng et al., 2010). Millennials typically show a preference for companies that have well-defined career trajectories and development initiatives that enable them to acquire a diverse set of skills (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Feedback loops and regularly available opportunities for upskilling are crucial for this generation since they perceive these as means to improve both professional achievement and personal contentment.

Generation Z is likewise driven by the prospect of acquiring skills, but they tend to prioritize immediacy and relevance to a greater extent. In contrast to earlier generations, Generation Z actively pursues growth possibilities that closely correspond to their present employment positions or personal interests, anticipating concrete results from their learning endeavours (Dolot, 2018). Individualized learning trajectories and interactive, immediate feedback are crucial for this demographic (Singh, 2020).

## 2.4. Barriers to Learning

Although differences exist in generational preferences and motives, obstacles to learning also vary considerably among different cohorts. Primary obstacles faced by Generation X include time limitations resulting from family obligations or external engagements. This cohort frequently manages several responsibilities and may struggle to engage in extensive or inflexible training programs (Twenge, 2010). Furthermore, some Generation X employees may encounter technological obstacles, since they may have little knowledge of developing digital learning platforms. This lack of familiarity can hinder their ability to actively participate in e-learning or mobile applications (Benson & Brown, 2011).

While millennials are known for their adaptability, they may encounter obstacles in the shape of excessive information overload. Their proclivity for multitasking can occasionally result in burnout or disinterest if educational programs are too rigorous or not adequately customized to their interests (Schroth, 2019). Moreover, the issue of work-life balance

might generate conflict, since this particular generation highly emphasizes adaptability and may oppose educational programmes that encroach on their time (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

The Generation Z cohort, albeit very receptive to digital learning, may encounter challenges related to distraction and diminished concentration owing to the inherent characteristics of short-form material and the incessant influx of information on the internet (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). Furthermore, learners belonging to Generation Z may encounter obstacles associated with the restricted availability of customized material, especially if the learning and development processes of the organization are not tailored to accommodate individual learning preferences (Singh, 2020).

## 2.5. Organizational Approach to Learning

A comprehensive grasp of these generational preferences and obstacles is crucial for organizations aiming to maximize the effectiveness of their learning and development initiatives. Evidence indicates that a uniform method of employee training is prone to be unsuccessful, especially in the context of a workforce consisting of individuals from many generations (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Instead, organizations should implement adaptive learning approaches that specifically address the requirements of each generation. This entails providing flexible, personalized, and technology-driven learning opportunities for Millennials and Generation Z while offering practical, experiential learning for Generation X (Cekada, 2012). Through strategic investment in customized learning solutions, organizations may enhance employee engagement, retention, and performance across all age demographics.

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## 3. Methodology

This study implements a qualitative methodology to investigate the varied learning and development preferences of employees from three different generations (Generation X, Y, and Z) at ABC Apparel Company. A qualitative approach is suitable for investigating the profound and intricate nature of human experiences, viewpoints, and motives, especially about how employees participate in learning opportunities in the organizational setting (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenological methodology is employed in this study to capture the lived experiences of employees from various generations with their preferences for learning and development. The objective is to ascertain patterns, disparities, and similarities among the three generational cohorts, investigating their perceptions and involvement with chances for learning within the company. The study comprised a total of 18 participants, with 6 employees being questioned from each of the three distinct generations: Generation X, Y, and Z. The selection of participants was purposeful, taking into consideration their generational classification and their present employment level within the organization. Considering the company's workforce of around 1,000 individuals, the chosen sample is representative of each generational group, therefore guaranteeing a diverse array of viewpoints. A sample size of this magnitude is adequate for qualitative research, facilitating a thorough investigation of individual experiences and ensuring thematic saturation (Guest et al., 2006). The primary data collecting approach used was semi-structured interviews. This methodology facilitates adaptability in investigating particular subjects while also empowering participants to present their distinct experiences and perspectives. The interview guide was created based on predominant themes found in the literature, such as learning motives, preferred learning approaches, technology integration in learning, and obstacles to involvement in development programs. Interviews duration ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and were carried out either face-to-face or through online platforms, based on the participants' preferences and availability. Analysis of the interview data was conducted using thematic analysis, following the criteria established by Braun and Clarke (2006). The selection of this approach was based on its adaptability and capacity to detect, examine, and document recurring patterns (themes) in qualitative data. The procedure entailed becoming acquainted with the material by repeatedly reading transcripts, extracting initial codes, and subsequently categorizing the codes into more comprehensive themes according to the study questions and the literature evaluation.

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## 4. Results

### 4.1. Learning Priorities across Generations

Learning priorities subject elucidates the values that employees from various generations place on learning opportunities and the factors that motivate their participation in development activities. Each generation has distinct motives that correspond to their life phases, professional aspirations, and job experiences.

#### 4.1.1. Career Advancement

To many participants, learning is considered an essential route to professional progression. Generation Y (Millennials) have placed significant emphasis on the need to obtain new skills to achieve promotions and advance in their careers.

One interviewee from the Millennial generation stated, *"I always prefer to get new learning opportunities because they can make a huge impact on my career development."* This is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the Millennials' high aspiration for professional advancement and their inclination to pursue ongoing educational growth to stay competitive (Ng et al., 2010).

The Generation X cohort, whilst acknowledging the importance of professional progress, prioritizes the enduring advantages of personal growth, especially in the context of leadership positions. According to one member from Generation X, *"I think that learning helps me to get ready for future senior job roles"* These findings align with prior research indicating that employees from Generation X frequently pursue learning opportunities to attain leadership roles and guarantee job security (Twenge, 2010).

#### 4.1.2. Job Security

Particularly for Generation X, job stability is a major driving force. Participants from this group frequently associated learning with the need to sustain their relevance in the professional environment. A member from Generation X expressed, *"This is a rapidly changing industry and if I can't learn new things there is a risk of becoming obsolete."* This attitude is seen in the study conducted by Parry and Urwin (2011), which indicates that employees from Generation X are driven to acquire skills that safeguard them against economic volatility and unemployment.

The issue of job security was not as significant for Generation Z, but they did acknowledge the need to acquire knowledge to effectively adjust to swift technological advancements and the evolving work environment. According to one employee from Generation Z, they acquire new knowledge to avoid being left behind by emerging advances in technology.

#### 4.1.3. Personal Development

Personal growth and self-improvement were emphasized by all age groups, however the younger generations, namely Millennials and Generation Z, accorded greater importance to acquiring knowledge for personal development. As one participant from Generation Z expressed, *"I am always eager to acquire new skills, even if they are not directly relevant to my profession; mostly, they contribute to my personal growth."* This reflects the conclusions in the literature that Generation Z perceives learning as a method of enhancing personal development and achieving lifelong progress, transcending just job performance (Dolot, 2018).

Millennials also expressed similar views, often presenting education as a means to attain both success in their careers and personal satisfaction. As Ng et al. (2010) elucidate, Millennials frequently pursue educational prospects that not only augment their professional trajectories but also correspond with their principles and passions.

#### 4.1.4. Learning for Adaptation

The imperative to adjust to workplace changes, namely technological progress, was another crucial focus, particularly for Generation Z. As one member from Generation Z pointed out, *"Technology is in a perpetual state of evolution, and I must continue to acquire knowledge to remain current."* This aligns with the conclusions drawn by Singh (2020), indicating that Generation Z puts great emphasis on acquiring abilities that enable them to stay up-to-date with swift advancements in technology and industrial trends.

Generation X likewise articulated the necessity of acquiring knowledge to maintain competitiveness, but they framed it primarily with adjusting to shifts in the industry and guaranteeing long-term professional viability. According to one participant, *"I have had to acquire knowledge of new systems and tools over the course of my career in order to stay competitive in the industrial sector."* This demonstrates their track record in successfully managing major changes in the workplace throughout the years and their practical attitude to acquiring knowledge for ongoing job security.

## 4.2. Preferred Learning Methods

The examination of favored learning approaches among different generations uncovers explicit preferences that are shaped by the specific experiences and expectations of Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z. Every each generation exhibits unique tendencies towards various learning styles, influenced by their exposure to technology, occupational environment, and career phases.

#### *4.2.1. Formal Learning Approaches*

Generation X places the highest importance on formal learning approaches, such as classroom-based training or certification programs. A significant number of Generation X participants in the study indicated a predilection for structured and conventional learning paradigms, frequently highlighting the reliability and comprehensiveness of these approaches. One participant from Generation X expressed a preference for formal training sessions due to their higher level of organization and predictability. This inclination corresponds to statistical evidence suggesting that Generation X values organized educational settings that offer explicit goals and results (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Nevertheless, although formal education remains valued, Generation X is increasingly embracing digital and informal education approaches, especially as they strive to manage their learning alongside other work and personal responsibilities.

#### *4.2.2. E-learning platforms*

E-learning platforms, webinars, and mobile learning are widely preferred kinds of digital learning among both Millennials and Generation Z. The preference for digital learning among millennials is often driven by its convenience, flexibility, and capacity to suit hectic schedules. One participant from the Millennial generation expressed enjoyment in using e-learning platforms due to the flexibility to access the material at any time, including outside of regular working hours. The literature extensively documents the preference for digital approaches among Millennials, who are particularly noted for their appreciation of flexibility and independence in their learning (Schroth, 2019).

Given their upbringing with digital technology, Generation Z extends this inclination by demonstrating an even higher dependence on mobile learning applications and readily available digital content. One employee belonging to Generation Z expressed, "I primarily engage in my learning activities using my mobile device—it is more convenient to use applications while I am on the move." According to Singh (2020), Generation Z is commonly classified as "digital natives," which means they favor digital learning as their primary means of acquiring new knowledge and skills.

#### *4.2.3. On-the-job training*

On-the-job training is a favored learning approach among all age groups, especially due to its practical implementation. Generation X and Millennials place great emphasis on the need of practical experience in consolidating newly acquired proficiency. A participant from Generation X stated, "I learn most effectively through practical experience." The practical application of acquired knowledge in the workplace has consistently proven to be more enduring than theoretical understanding. This viewpoint is well supported by research indicating that Generation X, namely, prioritizes practical and experiential learning over theoretical methods (Twenge, 2010).

Furthermore, millennials value on-the-job training because it enables people to acquire knowledge in real time, which corresponds to their inclination for instant feedback and ongoing learning (Ng et al., 2010). Furthermore, Generation Z also places importance on experiential learning but frequently perceives it as a supplement to digital techniques rather than an independent strategy.

#### *4.2.4. Blended Learning*

There is a growing preference among all generations for blended learning, which integrates both digital and in-person training. The flexibility provided by blended learning is particularly valued by Millennials and Generation Z. One participant from Generation Z indicated that blended learning is most effective for them as it allows them to seamlessly integrate online learning with in-person sessions as needed. The implementation of blended learning enables individuals to leverage the advantages of both digital ease and face-to-face engagement (Singh, 2020).

### **4.3. Technology and Learning**

The topic of Technology and Learning explores the diverse approaches of successive generations towards the integration of technology in their educational experiences, emphasizing the varying levels of ease, opposition, and inclinations towards digital innovations. Divergences in technological exposure, work practices, and workplace expectations between generations significantly influence attitudes towards digital learning.

#### *4.3.1. Technological Comfort*

Generation Z, frequently referred to as "digital natives" because of their continuous exposure to the internet, mobile devices, and social media, exhibits the greatest level of technological comfort to date. One Generation Z participant expressed, "Having been immersed in technology throughout my entire life, I find digital learning platforms

exceptionally user-friendly." This advanced degree of technology competence enables individuals to readily adopt diverse digital learning resources, whether for personal growth or professional instruction. Scholarly literature substantiates this finding, demonstrating that Generation Z is the most adept technology generation, and they anticipate technology to have a crucial part in their education and professional development (Singh, 2020).

#### 4.3.2. *Technology Resistance*

The Generation X cohort is particularly prone to experiencing technology resistance, since they may harbour reservations or doubts regarding the complete use of digital learning platforms. One participant from Generation X expressed, "I occasionally experience frustration when acquiring knowledge about new digital tools, and I have a preference for training conducted in person." The resistance could be attributed to a predilection for in-person contacts and a hesitancy to allocate time towards acquiring knowledge on how to adapt to unfamiliar technologies (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Scholarly research suggests that Generation X is more at ease with traditional learning approaches and may encounter a period of adjustment while embracing new digital technologies.

#### 4.3.3. *Mobile Learning*

Millennials and Generation Z, in particular, highly value the adaptability and convenience of mobile learning facilitated by gadgets such as smartphones and tablets. One employee from Generation Z expressed, "I use my phone for all purposes, including acquiring knowledge it is convenient and allows me to do it while on the move." Singh (2020) emphasizes that Generation Z's dependence on mobile devices for instructional purposes is connected to their anticipation of instant access to knowledge and the flexibility to learn at their preferred speed.

Similarly, Millennials perceive mobile learning as a crucial instrument for effectively managing their professional growth with demanding work and personal commitments. A participant from the Millennial generation expressed, "Mobile learning is highly advantageous as it allows me to conveniently incorporate learning sessions into my daily commute or in the intervals between meetings." Evidence from a study indicates that Millennials place a high value on learning that is readily available and enables them to efficiently manage their time (Ng et al., 2010).

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## 5. Discussion

The results of this study shed light on the variations in learning and development preferences among different generations at ABC Apparel Company. The pursuit of professional growth is a prominent focus among all age groups, while the reasons behind it differ. Millennials attach great importance to acquiring knowledge for quick advancement in their careers, whereas Generation X sees learning as a strategic investment for assuming leadership positions and ensuring work stability in the long run. Generation Z comprehensively approaches learning, integrating not just professional goals but also personal growth. This reflects their overarching aspiration for ongoing development beyond job-specific skills, in line with studies that describe Generation Z as enthusiastic about both personal and professional enrichment (Dolot, 2018).

Job security is a greater preoccupation for Generation X, who frequently view education as a strategy to stay pertinent in swiftly evolving sectors. This is of lesser importance for Millennials and Generation Z, who prioritize adaptability in response to technological progress. Generation Z's personal development objectives, however, indicate their strong desire for continuous learning, setting them apart from past generations who fundamentally view learning as a task focused on work advancement.

The distinction between generations becomes more evident when considering their preferred learning methods. The preference for traditional formal learning and organized environments such as certification programs is prevalent among Generation X, but Millennials and Generation Z exhibit a pronounced inclination towards e-learning platforms and mobile learning. Millennials prefer the adaptability and ease of use of digital learning to suit their hectic schedules, whereas Generation Z, being natives of the digital age, more heavily depend on mobile devices for their educational requirements (Singh, 2020).

On-the-job training in the workplace is much appreciated by individuals of all age groups since it allows for immediate use and strengthening of skills. Blended learning is increasingly being adopted as a favoured approach, providing adaptability and interactivity that accommodate the learning preferences of both individuals native to digital platforms and those who appreciate face-to-face connection.

The convergence of technology and education underscores the disparity in comfort levels between different generations. Generation Z demonstrates exceptional proficiency in using digital learning software, whereas Generation



X displays a certain reluctance towards technology, favoring face-to-face learning opportunities wherever feasible. This disparity implies that companies need to customize their learning and development methods in order to guarantee the involvement and support of all generations.

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## 6. Conclusion

Finally, the study reveals clear age disparities in learning preferences, approaches, and attitudes towards technology in educational settings. The primary motivations of Millennials and Generation Z are career progression and personal growth, whereas Generation X places greater emphasis on employment stability and high-level positions of leadership. The technological proficiency of younger cohorts, namely Generation Z, is influencing the trajectory of education, characterized by a dominant inclination towards digital, mobile, and adaptable learning platforms. Nevertheless, the reluctance demonstrated by Generation X towards technology implies that enterprises must strike a harmonious equilibrium between digital technologies and conventional approaches to cater to the varied requirements of their employees.

To successfully cultivate a culture of learning across different generations, businesses should adopt a combination of formal, digital, and blended learning approaches. While the younger cohorts readily adopt technology-driven learning, Generation X continues to choose more organized and formal methodologies. It is crucial to acknowledge these disparities and offer a diverse range of learning opportunities to improve employee development and promote organizational progress.

### *Recommendations*

To mitigate generational disparities in learning and development preferences, organizations should implement a comprehensive strategy in their L&D initiatives. First and foremost, it is essential to develop customized learning programs that incorporate both formal and informal approaches. This entails providing Generation X with structured, classroom-style courses in conjunction with growing digital platforms to integrate conventional and contemporary learning methods. Utilizing blended learning strategies, which involve amalgamating online courses with in-person workshops, can effectively meet the needs of Millennials and Generation Z by offering the desired flexibility while nevertheless integrating the personal interaction that Generation X highly values. Moreover, it is crucial to allocate resources towards mobile-friendly systems that facilitate on-demand, self-paced learning, especially for Generation Z, who anticipate instant access to educational materials. Effectively tackling technology resistance among Generation X requires the implementation of focused training and support programs aimed at facilitating their adjustment to emerging technologies. Potential interventions may involve providing mentorship or coaching on digital technologies to facilitate their adaptation to technology-driven learning environments. Finally, it is crucial to consistently assess the efficacy of educational programs across different age groups. Systematic evaluations and constructive criticism should direct modifications to guarantee that the material stays pertinent, captivating, and efficient, so improving total employee involvement and growth. The implementation of this comprehensive strategy guarantees that the learning opportunities are tailored to meet the varied requirements of various generational cohorts within the organization.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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