

## **WORK FORCE GENERATION AND ITS IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE: A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW.**

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### **Abstract**

In today's work organization, the kind of workforce generation has metamorphosed from one generation to another which managers faced with the task of harmonizing workplace friction occasioned by multi-generation workforce, each with different perspectives and traits toward achieving organizational goal and objectives and its great impact on the performance of the organization. Consequently, organizations around the world and Nigeria especially the public ones inclusive comprised of four different generations of employees i.e. Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y otherwise known as Millennial who can bring out the best or worst of the organization depending on how well the managers can manage the talent mix among them. Thus, it becomes imperative for managers to develop knowledge on how to address the differences in motivations, working styles, communication pattern and technological preferences of multigenerational workforce in the twenty first century organizations. This task cannot be ignored by organization that aimed to achieve harmonious working environment and progress in the current global economy. In light of this reality, the paper examined impact of generational workforce in the organizations through extensive review of literatures on concept generational workforce, dynamics of multigenerational workforce and the strategies on how to integrate the multigenerational differences to bring about many benefits such as workplace productivity, creativity and innovation, talent attraction, reduced turnover and increased competitive advantage as well as to reduce tension in organizations. The paper therefore concludes that managers of organization should take into cognizance the evolution of this generational workforce and manage them effectively to enhance perform.

**Keywords:** Workforce, workforce-generation, integration, creativity, organization, performance

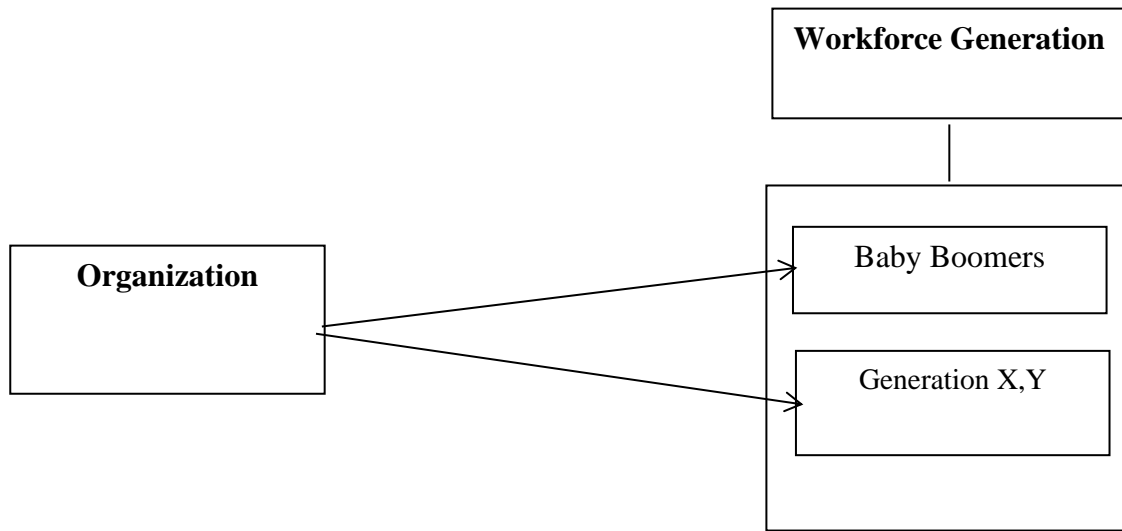
### **Introduction**

The organization is the life wire that circle the existence of the living and non-living organism that makes up the organization (Uhuru, 2020). The existence of this organization over the years has experienced diverse transformation of leadership, structure configuration, and manpower evolution in skill and competency over the years. Organization depicts the social entity comprising of individuals whose efforts are consciously coordinated and managed to meet a need or to pursue collective goals. Hence, every organization has a management structure that regulates relationships between employees and work activities, subdivides and assigned roles as well as responsibilities and authority to carry out different task. In Nigeria, organizations that are set up, financed and controlled by the government Parastatals (i.e.

Federal, State or Local) charged with the goal of providing essential services to the members of the public. Those who work in public organizations are referred to as civil servants – government workers whose primary aim is to serve the public interest in an engaging way, good work life, balance, and opportunity to develop professionally. However, in recent times these organizations are faced with numerous challenges (i.e. corruption, decaying facilities, improper use of resources and waste, nepotism, abuse and misuse of power and authority, etc.) which led to operational inefficiency that push the government to go into privatizing some of the public organizations.

Management in work organization requires being strategically focusing and applying behavioral techniques to build commitment and attain the best performance from the workforce. It also requires specialized skills that take time to learn or to be skilled at competitive corporate environment. Workforce generation involves the era of industrial revolution of employees with specific skills and competencies to meet the work attributes of that era (Uhuru, 2020). This is so important in dealing with different generations of employees i.e. Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y otherwise known as Millennial – that coexisted in contemporary workplaces and can bring out the best or worst of the organization depending on how well a manager can effectively manage the talent mix in the organization. Correspondingly, Glass (2007) noted that one outstanding challenge in today corporate organization is the management of a workforce that has notable variations in perspective and goals due to generational differences. Additionally, Hughes (2011) observed that a multigenerational workforce is essential to the growth of an organization however; the generational differences must be addressed in an effort to recruit, retain, motivate and build work teams containing best talent in an organization.

This paper argues that the problems that encapsulate organizations arise from poor management of the workforce generation of employees. This shows a failed attempt on the part of the managers to associate hard work with success and to commensurate people's efforts with the quality of work life they enjoy whilst committing their energies physical, psychological and mental to the development of such enterprise or institution they work for. This is because managers can make the difference between success and failure. A manager directs the affairs of any organization and in most times is able to see a prospective vision that others within the organization can barely see or even see at all. Therefore, this study examines the effect of generational workforce in organizations. The role of a good manager is indispensable in organization that involves defining and directing of team towards corporate vision and communicating it to people as well as motivating, inspiring and empowering them to contribute to achieving organizational success. The objective of the study is to; examine the relationship between workforce generations and its effect on the organizations and to investigate the strategies on how to integrate workforce generation on organizational performance.



### Conceptual Framework relationship between organization and workforce generations

Source: Researcher's Desktop Review

#### Concept of workforce generation

Workforce generation refers to a group of people who are of similar age and entered the workforce at a similar time, who may share similar experiences, attitudes, and values related to work (Uhuru, 2020). For example, the baby boomer generation refers to those born between the mid-1940 and mid-1960 that are now approaching retirement age. Similarly, the millennial generation refers to people born between mid-1990 who are currently entering the workforce or establishing their careers in the labor market. The workforce generation can have an impact in the dynamics and culture of the organization, as well as on the trends and shifts in the labor market (Uhuru, 2020). A manager must set strict principles of conduct and responsibility, high standards of performance. Workforce generation is a group of people who are currently in the workforce or who entering the workforce at a similar time period. It is typically used to describe the different generations that make up the workforce in the organization. Each workforce generation has unique characteristics and experiences that influences their attitudes and behaviors in the in the workplace. For example baby boomers are often described as being tech-savvy and socially conscious. These generational differences can create both opportunities and challenges for employers as they attract and retain a diverse and skilled workforce.

Uhuru (2020) opined that understanding the features and preferences of each workforce generation can help managers or employers to create a more inclusive and effective workforce culture that meets the needs of all employees. It can also help individuals to navigate their career paths and communicate effectively with colleagues in the workplace. It becomes difficult to get leaders to develop management styles that are opposite their preferred styles. The key to success is for managers to have the range of skills that allow them to use the appropriate management styles according to the situation or assign tasks to the leaders based upon their preferred styles. In the world of business, managers of corporations, such as chief executive officers, general managers and senior managers, often faced with many challenges and problems, i.e. poor planning, difficult people, lack of teamwork, poor work quality and etc (Ford, 2009).

Shaw (2005), the primary problems faced by many managers are insufficient of time, unwillingness to communicate, inadequate and or poor communication skills and the style of leadership. Similarly, Weber, et al., (2001) cited that leadership failure in organizations occurs more frequently than one might imagine for a variety of reasons, such as poor selection process, lack of leadership vision. Organizations are equally experiencing the changing landscape of work as workplace demographics now span four generations, meaning that 20-year-old new hires can find themselves working side-by-side with colleagues who are older than they are by 50 years (or even more) which has posed serious challenge for government managers. Also, the differences of the new multigenerational workforce have frustrated many organizational leaders. Consequently, managers cannot use single (mono) leadership style for workers with different generations, perspectives and traits. Otherwise, it will result in intergenerational conflict that may leads to workplace friction, counter-productive behavior and low productivity.

Therefore, it is important to examine the strategies on how to integrate multigenerational differences to bring about many benefits in Nigerian public organizations. More so, it has been argued that Nigerian public organizations are filled with a lot of ageing workers who periodically falsify their age and still protest for government to raise the retirement age from 65 to 70 in order to remain in the workforce longer than expected and yet there is a growing shortage of skilled talent. There is a growing concern that in public organizations in Nigeria, people are retiring from service almost on a daily basis and yet there are no new jobs being created. A simple mathematical explanation can be brought in here that as there are spaces at the top for people to move into as older people retire, there should be an equal number of spaces at the bottom for fresh talents to occupy and start a budding government career. It is also noteworthy to say here that in recent times, majority of the government agencies and parastatals do not place adverts for new employments yet people are retiring. Thus, it is imperative to find out the consequences of aging and declining workforce in Nigerian public organizations and how these organizations in recent times are almost not having fresh talents in their workforce mix any longer.

There are various types or forms of Workforce generations in the Nigerian organization workspace Veterans (or Traditionalists) Workforce generations include people born in or before 1945 (often referred to as matures). They make up few if any of the current civil servant workforces in Nigeria. Some remain in leadership positions and they generally have a life time of working experience. They believe in life-time employment, generally with one employer and value hierarchies (Stanley, 2010). The veterans worked hard and believe that hard work will produce rewards. They tended to be uncomfortable with change and tend to favour command and control management/leadership styles. Their core values are law and order, respect for authority, duty, honour, dedication and sacrifice (Calhoun & Strasser 2005). While this group is not fully represented in the current civil servant workforce the legacy of their influence is still evident through policies and customs practiced within the public organizations (Irvine 2010).

Baby Boomers (live to work) Workforce generations were born after the Second World War (between 1946 and 1964) and were raised in an era of relative optimism, opportunity and progress. Boomers generally grew up in a time where people had secure jobs, access to good education and postwar prosperity. They questioned the status quo, embraced the big picture and interpersonal communication. Their core values are optimism, personal growth, health and wellness and involvement (Duchscher & Cowan 2004, Weingarten 2009). Baby Boomers are evident across the spectrum of the civil servant workforce, with many approaching retirements. A significant feature of the Baby Boomers is that work

has been central to their lives and their work ethic is strong. These groups of people are currently at the helm of affairs, the top management level of agencies, parastatals and departments in the current workforce. They are the current heads of departments, permanent secretaries, executive secretaries, chief executive officers, etc of their various organizations in Nigerian.

Generation X (work to live) Workforce generations appeared after the Baby Boomers, being born between 1965 and 1980 into a time of rapid change, with changing social and economic factors impacting on their education and development. They grew up into an environment of two career families, rising divorce rates, downsizing and the dawn of the age of rapid developments in technology and communication. Generation X focused on personal growth, aggressively questioning the status quo and authority and they recognized that job security was a thing of the past. Their core values focused on thinking globally, balance, technological literacy, having fun, travel, independence, diversity and informality (Gursory, Maier and Chi, 2008; Weingarten 2009). Generation X do not place so much emphasis on work and feel work should not be too serious or formal; in fact, work should be fun (Irvine 2010).

Generation Y Workforce generations is also known as the nexters or internet Gen and Millennial. They have grown up in a world with massive amounts of information at their fingertips and were born between 1981 and 1999. They are generally technology savvy and masters of mobile phones, the internet and video games. They prefer to be tech-savvy, employ multitasking and are keen to participate or collaborate in decisions as much as possible. Their core values are optimism, civic duty, confidence, team-work, modesty, achievement, morality, street smart and diversity (Duchscher & Cowan 2004, Calhoun & Strasser 2005). They are a product of their times, they are more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse than any of the previous generational groups and according to Weingarten (2009) older generations are commonly surprised at the range of positive social habits they exhibit. Significantly, Generation Y is so wedded to the notion of belonging to a group that employers who neglect this feature find little success in motivating them (Irvine 2010).

Generation Z Workforce generation is referred to the demographic cohort born roughly between the mid-1990 and 2010. They are also referred as the post-Millennial or Zoomers. They are the technology age influenced. Generation z has significant impact on the society and culture especially the workforce market and the political arena.

### **Empirical relationship between Workforce generation and its impact on Organizations**

Studies revealed that to meet the demands of a rapidly changing competitive business environment, associated with an ageing population and skills shortage, it is vital that public organizations are able to attract, retain and motivate workers of all generations (Hatcher, Bleich, Connolly, Davis, O'Neil-Hewlett and Stokley-Hill, 2006; Kogan 2007). Therefore, managers are drive to establish a climate that would encourage workers retention encountering the staffing crisis in organizations and an issue that occupies many manager's in the organization. However, in spite of significant efforts to keep staff in place, national and international trends show a retention crisis remains evident both in developed and developing countries (Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2011). Thus, it is suggested that when dealing with multiple generations a range of solutions could be employed to face the challenge of retaining workers in the workforce. This is because each generational group has their own unique experiences, values, gender

issues, tensions, problems and approaches to team working (Gursory et al. 2008). As such, it may be useful to consider strategies that recognize and address issues of retention and attraction for all generations within an organization. With different generations in the workforce at all organizational levels it is important for leaders to understand the generational differences and their similarities, to tap into their diversity, creativity and energy.

While having a mix of generations in the workplace is nothing new, traditionally the different age groups were separated by a clear chain of command with the older workers as supervisors and managers, while the younger workers were apprentices and juniors. The new reality is one of a flatter organizational structure where teams of diverse ages work together and where younger apprentices are less afraid to argue their point, make demands and voice their opinions (Weston 2001). The impact of a variety of multigenerational groups working together is that misunderstandings regarding values, work ethics, communication styles and approaches to problem solving may be common and lead to conflict (Ulrich 2001, Calhoun & Strasser 2005), disharmony or an unproductive workforce.

The result of these misunderstandings and work ethic differences are likely to be costly to organizations as they can result in increased absenteeism, interpersonal conflict, low quality patient care (Weingarten 2009), communication breakdown and a lack of staff motivation. It is suggested that when generational groups collide, staff satisfaction and customer care plummets (Weingarten 2009). With this reality leaders and managers within contemporary organizational environments need to apply leadership insights and management strategies to support and foster an understanding of different generational needs.

### **Methodology**

This paper employed the use of review of extant relevant literature to explain the place of workforce generation and its impacts in contemporary work organizations. The focus was to identify the links and impact between workforce generation and organizational performance particular respects to the management of the organization leaders that direct the affairs of these multi-faceted levels of employees who have been specialized into generations. The study therefore intends to establish a positive link between the subject matters of the paper. This is done in line with the objectives of the study.

### **Exploring the Nexus between workforce generation and Organizational impact**

In light of the foregoing, there is need for us to examine the link between leadership style and multigenerational workforce in Nigerian public organization. Therefore, attempt is made here to examine the kind of organizations that each generation of workforce can responds to or can work with effectively in the business world. Veterans A veteran workforce is not likely to yield to an autocratic style because they feel that there are much of the same age with their leader and that; he cannot boss them around; they are not small boys that can be push. Hence, a leader of set of veterans might consider using democratic or laissez-faire leadership styles. In using democratic style, he wants to gather their own input on the current work procedure by increasing their decision making and greater employee's participation. In some ways, such a leader sees them as equals; who have equally serve their time and paid their 'dues' on the job because such employees would have spent and be spent on their physical, psychological and mental energy.



On the other hand, he uses laissez-faire by leaving them to take their own decisions on the job because of their high level of skill, experience and training over the years involve in career and personal growth and development. Baby Boomers Baby boomers, at this point their career they feel they have seen a lot on the job and as a result they had a lot of working experience; they also known that they are the next in line or very close to taking over management of positions. Of a truth, they have spent their lives on the job but here loyalty and commitment is brought to question particularly with respect to the leader that they have. In some ways, they are hard to control because they feel that they are not like slave to be tossed here and there. Therefore, leading such a group of people required high level of diplomacy because to get the job done they and the leader have to be on the same page for meaningful success to be achieved. If not well manage decent could set in as employees we feel that rather than comply with the directives of the leaders they can as well make their own decision.

Generation X for Gen X employee, they are currently middle-class employees within the Nigerian workforce. This group of employees and concerned with sustaining their families that they have set out. At this stage of life most of the employees in this workforce have children in tertiary institutions or secondary schools and the focus of employees within this bracket is to keep the education of their children growing and to sustain the general wellbeing of their families. At this point, dedication and commitment to the job is of talk notch whether real or faked the reason for this is that these employees feel that they can no longer afford to be changing jobs and cannot afford to throw themselves in to the labor market because age is no longer on their side, societal expectation of them is that they are supposed to be role models for younger would be employees. A manager for such a set of employees has to understand the dynamics of good working conditions, quality of work life and proper direction. He has to institute framework that will keep the institution of employees at top level. Such a leader has to be able to combine effectively the requirements of the job and the characteristics of the employees and can use a combination of democratic and lassie-faire leadership styles. It's charisma as a leader goes a long was in influencing the expected wok outcomes. This will draw followers to his leading naturally because they will deal a high level of obligation to work together with the leader to ensure that positive results are generates in the interest of the organization. This means that his natural ability to command followership plays a vital role in achieving organizational goals.

Generation Y For Generation Y employees, democratic leadership style may not be formally used as employees within this generation think that they know what is expected on them and out of useful exorbitant may wish to be actively involved in decision making in the organization but in terms of achieving organization goals such employees may not be entrusted with responsibility of making business and organizational decision that has serious implications for the organization.

Hence, to some degree they may be part under an autocratic leadership style in order to checkmate their excess and to ensure that their work is targeted at positive organization outcomes. A combination of democratic and autocratic styles many be used on such group of workforce, they could be given the opportunity to express their potentials, participate in organization decision making contribute to work process but within stringent defined work procedures. A comical example can be painted here; "young children can be given opportunity to watch any kind of cartoon but within a specified time as instructed by the parents that is when bed time cartoon is over is. This shows that the parents are being democratic by given the children opportunity of choosing what to watch but being autocratic by choosing what time to stop watching the cartoon. For any organization, the internet and bull in Information

Communication Technology is vital resource that can never be overlooked. As such, most companies if not all actually desired these days to have internet presence. Thus, leading a group of people that are technology savvy requires that the leader must be as literate as the employees he led. So that his leadership quality will not be question. Again, leading such a group of people means that such employees could easily challenge the leader if he makes an organization move or procedure that is divergent to the one they have come across with on the internet particularly social network. Comments such as ‘you are too old’ ‘you are not in town’ ‘that can’t work ooo’ might be paraded by this generation because they carry themselves with the impression that they know as much as the leader knows or even more. They tell him he uses outdated ideas, concept and terminological expect for a strict organizational procedure or a good condition of serious, loyalty and commitment is in distance as this generation of employees can afford to change jobs just because their unfavorably disposed to a particular leader.

### **Strategies on Integrating workforce generation and its impact on the Organizations**

The focus of this study was to emphasize that employees from different generations require different management strategies in order to manage them effectively for the efficiency of the organization. In light of this, the following strategies can be employed by leaders or managers to integrate multigenerational differences toward building sustainable and more engage employees who are happier, more willing to collaborate, better supported in completing their work and more effective in delivering on their mission. Investing on Multi-generation Workforce Government leaders or `managers should invest in developing generationally diverse talent pool to harvest the benefits of the multi-generational workforce. For example, the slower- than- expected exit of baby boomers and entrance of millennial (also known as Generation Y) presents an immense and urgent opportunity, which public organizations can leverage the best of both generations and what they bring to the table while they are in the workforce at the same time. Boomers, for instance, can contribute by providing institutional knowledge while benefiting from the innovation, energy, and technical aptitude of Generation Y.

**Promoting Integrated Workforce** An integrated workforce also has the power to realize new efficiencies in the public organization. Collaborating and learning from and between generations can generate new ideas and create new solutions for solving mission challenges. Numerous companies, from manufacturing to servicing, are pairing upper management with younger employees, a practice known as “reverse mentoring”. The younger employees are teaching their “mentees” about social media, technology, and workplace trends. The benefit is consensual: the senior leadership learns about new tools and the younger employees are engaged to the point where many companies have experienced reduced turnover. Public organizations in Nigeria could benefit from similar models and achieve comparable success.

**Career Development** Leaders should allow intergenerational dialogue and collaboration as prerequisite for organizational success. This can be achieved by encouraging senior staff to develop younger employees, as well as employing effective means of preserving institutional knowledge. Also, managers should consider career development programs that will encourage formal forum for knowledge transfer between generations in Nigerian public organizations. This in effect will not only increase the likelihood of the transfer of valuable institutional knowledge across



generations, but opportunities for Millennial to show older counterparts how to work differently, leveraging technology and collaboration at every turn.

4. Talent Management Strategies Management strategies such as cross-generational talent development should be encouraged by rewarding team-based work, as well as making mentorship a performance expectation. This will also provide platform for effective performance management system so that managers and supervisors can actively groom their young people and help them to succeed.

**Enhancing Technological Know-how** Technologies are becoming popular in every work organization as tool for fostering collaboration and generating knowledge sharing among workers. Evidences have revealed that basic technologies such as email, wikis and teleconferences are increasing in public organizations most especially at Federal organizations this can be used as tools to spur and integrate multigenerational differences. It is important to note that technologies that are offered to the workforce, rather than forced upon them, receive greater acceptance across generations.

**Effective Methods of Evaluation:** To effectively manage a multigenerational workforce, an organization should assess and evaluate that workforce and how the organization supports its employees. By performing such evaluation, the organization can better understand the talent it possesses and its future needs so that it develops the right programs to support talent and deploy it more effectively. Additionally, in a changing workforce, the organization should constantly evaluate its workforce programs so that it can determine if the programs are effective and whether the cost of investment in those programs has a positive impact on the organization ability to accomplish its mission.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the discussion so far, it can be deduced that in an organization where managers have to do more with less and get the most out of their workforce, it is essential that all the generations existing in the workplace work together. Therefore, it become very important for managers to understand each generational group and differences in order to grasp what it is that drives or motivates each of the different generations to contribute effectively to organizational success. It also important to note that to successfully deal with impending workers shortage and how to attract and retain skilled workers across generational spectrum in the organizations, good management style should be exercised. In addition, for managers to transform multi-generational workforce into a more cohesive workforce, it is crucial to focus time and resources to the strategies which matter most. The strategies highlighted in this study i.e. investing on multi-generational workforce, promoting integrated workforce, career development, talent management strategies, enhancing technological know-how and effective methods of evaluation are key areas for leaders and managers in public organizations to focus on in order to reduce tension and harmonize differences in present multi-generational workforce. The paper recommends that the performance of organization should be based on the principles used at every generation of workforce that surfaces in the workplace considering the global and competitive challenges business face. The paper also recommends that managers of organizations should take cognizance of the generation z with its internet and artificial intelligent components to cope with contemporary businesses.

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