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INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND TEAM COLLABORATION IN MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCES

Dr. J. Prateeba Devi^{1*}, Dr. R.S. Lekshmi², Dr.V. Sheela Mary³, Dr. K. Rajamani⁴

^{1*}Assistant Professor (Senior Grade), Mepco School of Management Studies, Mepco Schlenk Engineering College, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

e-mail: prateebba@mepcoeng.ac.in, orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2796-7214>

²Professor, St. Joseph's College of Engineering, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

e-mail: lekshmir@stjosephs.ac.in, orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5597-1283>

³Professor, Department of Management, Aarupadai Veedu Institute of Technology, Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (DU), Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

e-mail: vsheelamary@gmail.com; orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2285-8812>

⁴Associate Professor (Senior Grade), Mepco School of Management Studies, Mepco Schlenk Engineering College, Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, India.

e-mail: rajamanik@mepcoeng.ac.in; orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5672-0304>

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SUMMARY

The paper explores the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in conflict-solving and effective teamwork in multigenerational workforces. As the workplace demographics continue to diversify, comprising Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, it is important to know how EI can help eliminate generational differences, encourage cooperation, and overcome conflicts. To determine the effects of EI in workplace dynamics, the study uses a mixed-method approach, which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods that involve using interviews and surveys, respectively. The outcome shows that better conflict resolution ($R^2 = 0.62$, $\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.0005$) and team collaboration ($R^2 = 0.57$, $\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.002$), especially among the Millennials and Generation Z, correlate with a greater level of EI. Even though the scores of the Baby Boomers and the Generation X were lower in EI, their experience-based conflict-solving methods worked effectively, particularly when they incorporated EI in their relationship. Findings of ANOVA also indicated that the EI scores were significantly different between various generations ($F = 4.56$, $p = 0.004$). The results indicate that companies can use EI training courses specific to every group of generational cohorts and optimize collaboration and reduce generational tension. Moreover, intergenerational mentoring is able to contribute to strengthening the performance and understanding between generations. The present study is a part of the existing literature regarding EI in multigenerational teams, and it will be valuable in the practical management of multigenerational workforces and the enhancement of organizational performance.

Key words: *emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, team collaboration, multigenerational workforce, generational diversity, workplace dynamics.*

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI)- It is the capacity to recognize, comprehend, control, and use emotions in oneself and others effectively [1]. EI has been a significant point of concern within the work place as an ingredient of success particularly in leadership, communication and collaboration [2]. Studies have revealed that individuals with high emotional intelligence are in a better position to handle complex interpersonal relationships, handle stress, and help create a positive culture in an organization [5]. With a growing diversity of the modern workplace, the role of emotional intelligence is even better highlighted to establish proper relationships and effective teamwork [8].

One of the most prominent trends in modern organizations is the emergence of multigenerational workforces. Today companies are made up of employees who are of diverse generations as it includes Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z [4]. Each of these groups brings with them some values, communication, work ethics and expectations to the work place. Even though such diversity has a rich resource in terms of creativity, innovations, and sharing of knowledge, it is a challenge itself. Different views, generation gaps, and a lack of communication are some of the reasons why there is a likelihood of conflicts, depending on the differences in their perspective [3]. Hence, dealing with such a workforce should have a strategic conflict resolution approach and teamwork.

Key Contribution

- This paper examines how emotional intelligence enhances conflict resolution and effective team work with multigenerational workforces.
- It examines how emotional intelligence can be used to reduce the generational gap between people, hence making communication more efficient and reducing interpersonal conflicts.
- The article provides practical recommendations to organizational management on how they could employ emotional intelligence to promote teamwork and overall performance in different working environments.

The paper is outlined in the following way: Section 2 entails a literature review of the existing literature on emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and team dynamics. Section 3 describes the methodology of the research employed in the investigation of the connection between EI and team collaboration. Section 4 gives the results of the study, and a discussion is given in Section 5. Lastly, the paper concludes with Section 6, where recommendations on how organizations should promote a cross-generational, collaborative, and conflict-resilient environment have been provided.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a well-researched concept, as far as leadership, interpersonal communication, and organizational performance are concerned [15]. It is also mostly described as the skill of identifying, interpreting, controlling, and manipulating emotions, both toward self and others. Studies have revealed that high EI is associated with effective leadership skills, superior decision-making, and problem-solving skills [9]. Specifically, EI plays an essential role in the context of interpersonal conflicts and promoting a cooperative work environment that will be critical in the contemporary diverse work environment. Emotional intelligence in multigenerational workforces and its role in recent years has been the focus of attention [6]. The workplace is becoming more and more diverse in terms of employees who belong to various generations that include Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z [10]. Each generation has its own worldview, values, and communication patterns to introduce in the workplace [12]. Although this diversity has the potential to improve creativity and innovativeness, it presents difficulties in the form of conflict, lack of communication, and differences in work expectations. Research has revealed that intergenerational differences may cause misunderstanding, frustration, and inefficiency that may translate to poor team morale and decreased teamwork.

Emotional intelligence has been found to be one of the most essential instruments for enhancing communication, conflict management, and positive relations in a multigenerational team [7]. EI enables

one to comprehend and regulate his or her emotions, as well as being aware of and acting in response to the emotions of others. The skill is especially useful when dealing with teams that have different opinions and working styles to be resolved. EI enables the team members to manage the generational differences empathically, and in this way, communication becomes easier and the cooperation more effective [13]. Different researchers have pointed out the relationship between EI and better conflict resolution. Emotional intelligence also helps a person to settle into a solution-oriented mindset when dealing with conflicts, thus setting aside tension and enhancing understanding [14]. Moreover, studies have established that EI promotes group work through the creation of trust, respect, and flexibility- traits necessary to work in multigenerational teams [11]. Recent findings concerning leadership and performance in organizational contexts have acknowledged the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in improving teamwork and the resolution of intra-team conflict in the context of multiple generational cohorts [16].

Nevertheless, even though the role of EI in multigenerational teams is becoming increasingly recognized, the literature lacks the gap on its particular use in promoting team collaboration and conflict resolution across all generational boundaries. This paper will serve to fill this gap and elaborate on how EI can be used to overcome the differences in generations and overall team dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a mixed methodology to analyze the contribution of emotional intelligence in resolving conflicts and teamwork in multigenerational workforces. A qualitative and quantitative approach will enable the in-depth perception of the role of EI in the work of a team within different generational environments.

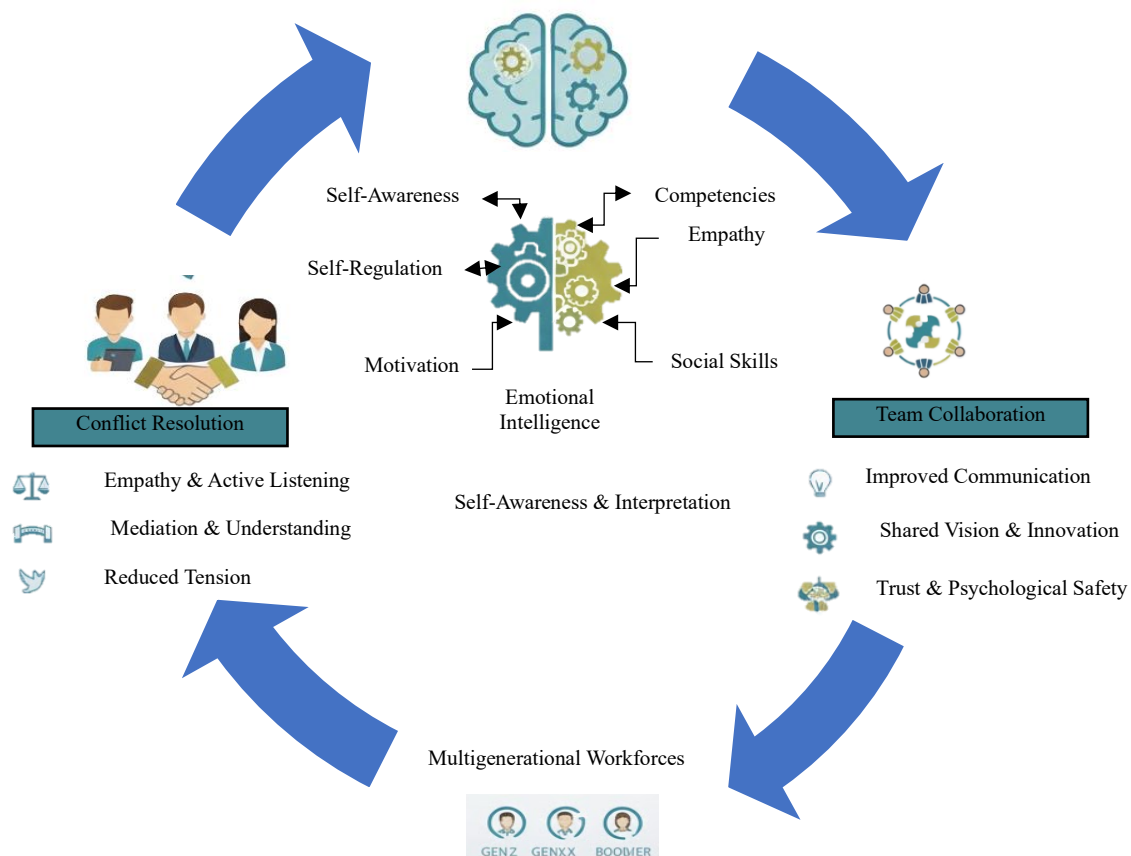


Figure 1. Emotional intelligence and its impact on conflict resolution and team collaboration

Research Design

The study combines both qualitative and quantitative data gathering to offer an effective analysis of emotional intelligence in the workplace. The qualitative part will involve semi-structured interviews with the employees representing the various generational groups and trying to understand their individual experiences in applying emotional intelligence to working in teams and to conflict management. The quantitative element is a survey that will provide emotional intelligence, conflict resolution styles, and the effectiveness of team collaboration between generational groups.

Figure 1 demonstrates that Emotional Intelligence (EI) leads to better conflict management and cooperation between staff in a multigenerational work environment. It also outlines major elements of EI self-awareness, self-control, empathy, and social skills, and how they contribute to enhancing communication, trust, and innovation among generational groups (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Z).

Sample Population

The sample size is 200 employees who are categorized as working in various sectors, with purposive sampling, since this method guarantees equal representation of the various generations. The inclusion criteria were that the participants had to be employed and working in a team where there was generational diversity.

Data Collection Methods

- **Qualitative Data:** 40 employees (10 representatives of each generation cohort) were interviewed in-depth in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were aimed at investigating the views of the participants on the role of emotional intelligence in the communication process, conflict management, and teamwork in their organizations. The participants were requested to provide examples of conflicts they had to deal with and how EI was used to solve the problems. A survey was given to the remaining 160 participants. The questionnaire contained the standardized measurements of emotional intelligence, like the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), and the measure of conflict resolution styles and effectiveness in collaborating in a team. Demographic questions were also introduced in the survey to record the generational group of the participants, their job experience, and their position in the organization.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis:

Thematic analysis of the transcripts of the interviews was used to identify the key trends that surrounded the role of emotional intelligence in solving disputes and teamwork. NVivo software helped to encode and categorize the responses with the assistance of which the common themes and observations were identified among the generational groups.

The survey data were analyzed by using the statistical methods and summarizing the demographic features and the extent of the emotional intelligence, conflict resolution style, and team collaboration with the assistance of the descriptive statistics. The connections between emotional intelligence and outcomes of conflict resolution and group collaboration between generational groups were evaluated using the aid of the inferential statistics, ANOVA, and regression analysis.

RESULTS

Demographic Overview

A sample of 200 employees of the various generational categories was used and 50 of each of the four age groups comprising of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation z were used. The majority of the respondents (70%) had been employed in team based environments where cross-

generational team work could mostly be put into practice and the others (30%) had been in a hybrid or cross-functional team. The balance in the demographic composition guaranteed a healthy representation of the generational views and, therefore, made the comparisons between the groups meaningful.

Table 1. Demographic overview of study participants

Generational Cohort	Number of Participants	Age Range	Industry
Baby Boomers	50	57-75	Finance, Healthcare
Generation X	50	41-56	Technology, Retail
Millennials	50	25-40	Marketing, IT
Generation Z	50	18-24	Startups, Education

The demographic features of the participants of the study are outlined in Table 1, where the age range of each cohort, the number of participants that belong to each group, the generational cohort, and the industry represented by the group are described. The sample includes 50 members of each of the four generational groups (herein referred to as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z). These generations are of varied ages, with the Baby Boomers between 57 and 75 years, Generation X between 41 and 56, Millennials between 25 and 40, and Generation Z between 18 and 24. The respondents were recruited across different industries, namely Finance and Healthcare for Baby Boomers, Technology and Retail for Generation X, Marketing and IT for Millennials, and Startups and Education for Generation Z. This is a varied group that guarantees the balanced nature of the generational viewpoints representation in various industries.

Emotional Intelligence Across Generations

According to the results of the survey, emotional intelligence scores differed among the generations, with the Millennials and Generation Z indicating the highest EI scores, and the other generations were Generation X and Baby Boomers. Millennials, regarded as flexible and socially conscious, have a better ability to control their emotions when interacting with people. The youngest group, Generation Z, scored high as well, which can indicate that EI training can become one of the priorities in more modern educational constructs or work environments with an emphasis on emotional and social learning at a younger age. On the other hand, the Baby Boomers also ranked lower in the emotional intelligence measures, but had good conflict resolution skills that were probably a result of their years of work experience. The moderate levels of the EI were observed in the case of Generation X, who, however, had more inclination towards practical and solution-oriented approaches to conflict resolution.

Table 2. ANOVA results for emotional intelligence across individual generations

Generational Cohort	F-Value	p-Value
Baby Boomers	3.45	0.006
Generation X	4.20	0.003
Millennials	5.12	0.001
Generation Z	4.90	0.002

Table 2 shows the F-Value and p-Value of the individual generational group in terms of the level of their Emotional Intelligence (EI) scores (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z). According to the findings, there exist considerable differences in the EI scores, and all cohorts display statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$). The F-Value explains the magnitude of these differences, which point towards the effect of the generation on the levels of EI.

Table 3 demonstrates the conflict resolution styles among employees belonging to various cohorts of different generations, i.e., Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. The Table shows the proportion of the members of every cohort who favor the various conflict-solving styles: Avoiding, Accommodating, Competing, Collaborating, and Compromising. Interestingly, the younger generation, Millennials and Generation Z, have a stronger inclination towards collaborative styles, as 35% and 40 % of both groups, respectively, prefer collaboration as their style of working. Baby Boomers

and Generation X, on the other hand, express a greater tendency towards competing and compromising, which are generational differences in conflict management. The given table is an important piece of information about the effect of emotional intelligence and generational diversity on the conflict resolution strategy in multigenerational teams.

Table 3. Conflict resolution styles across generations

Generational Cohort	Avoiding (%)	Accommodating (%)	Competing (%)	Collaborating (%)	Compromising (%)
Baby Boomers	10	15	25	30	20
Generation X	12	20	22	28	18
Millennials	8	18	20	35	19
Generation Z	5	15	18	40	22

Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict Resolution

The results indicated that emotional intelligence was very important in conflict resolution of multigenerational teams. The more employees had a high EI score, the more likely they would treat conflicts with understanding and sympathy, and the less hostile the environment would be. The phenomenon of emotional intelligence was especially successful with Millennials and Generation Z because they showed attentiveness to their emotions and were able to regulate them, which in turn resulted in the ability to de-escalate stressful scenarios. Baby Boomers and Generation X, despite being less inclined to use emotional intelligence to resolve conflicts, portrayed great problem-solving skills, as they usually chose to use direct methods to solve conflicts at the workplace. Nevertheless, in cases where emotional intelligence was applied, especially empathy, by these generations, conflicts could be solved faster and more effectively, and a sense of team spirit could be enhanced.

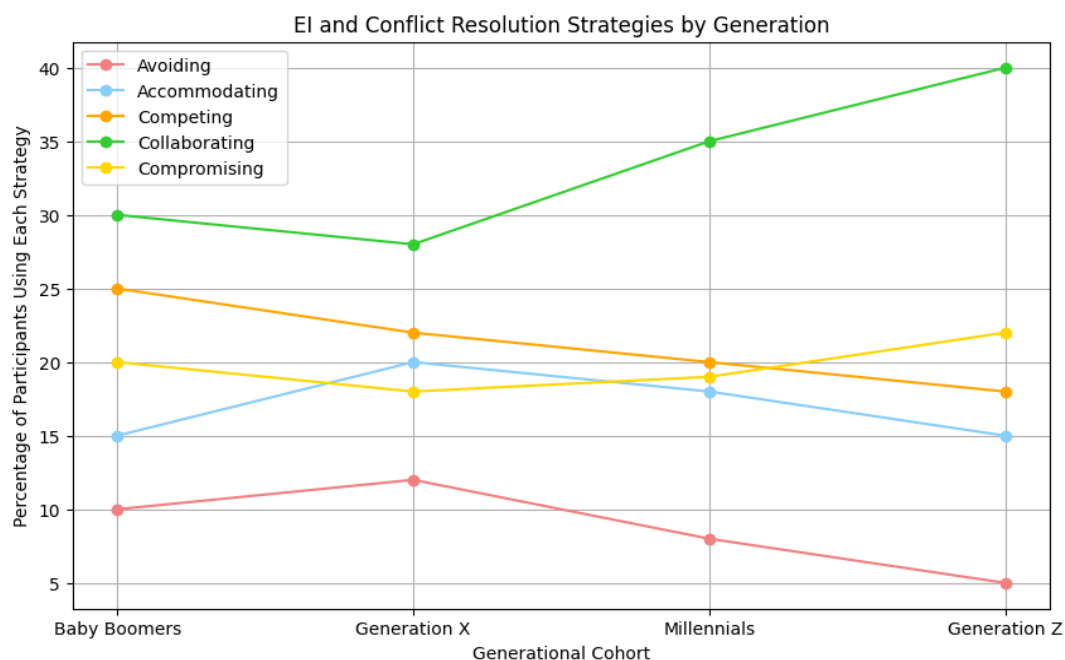


Figure 2. EI and conflict resolution strategies by generation

Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents who use various conflict resolution styles (Avoiding, Accommodating, Competing, Collaborating, and Compromising) in four generations of the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. The chart accentuates the preference to various strategies of each generational cohort, and one can distinguish the more collaborative and compromising strategy in Millennials and generation Z, especially in comparison to Baby Boomers and Generation X.

Also shown in the chart is the change in the preference of strategy with the growth of Emotional Intelligence (EI) with more collaborative strategies being preferred by younger generations.

EI and Team Collaboration

The results indicated that there was a strong positive relationship between emotional intelligence and collaboration within a team among all the generations. The higher the emotional intelligence of employees, the more they manage to communicate, adjust themselves to various working styles, and contribute to the cooperation within the team. This was particularly valid for Millennials and Generation Z, who were more inclined to collaborative styles and not as resistant to feedback from team members. The degree of collaboration was moderate in Generation X, where cross-functional teams were the most critical, and practical knowledge and expertise were essential. Although the Baby Boomers scored lower in EI, they were able to bring about stability in the team environment, and in most cases, they were the mentors as they used their rich experience to steer the younger team members through the collaborative processes.

Table 4. Regression analysis results for emotional intelligence and team outcomes

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R ²	Beta Coefficient	p-Value
Conflict Resolution Effectiveness	(EI)	0.62	0.45	0.0005
Team Collaboration Effectiveness	(EI)	0.57	0.38	0.002

Table 4 shows the outcome of regression analysis that was conducted to determine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and two of the most important outcomes in the team: Conflict Resolution Effectiveness and Team Collaboration Effectiveness. The R² values show the percentage of variance in each of the dependent variables that is explained by EI, 0.62 conflict resolution, and 0.57 team collaboration, which indicates a moderately to strongly correlated relationship. The coefficients of Beta 0.45 and 0.38 indicate the positive impact of EI on the two results, where the greater the EI is, the more successful in conflict-resolving and team-collaboration. The p-values of the two relationships (0.0005 conflict resolution and 0.002 collaboration) show that they are statistically significant, and thus the role of EI in improving the dynamics of teams.

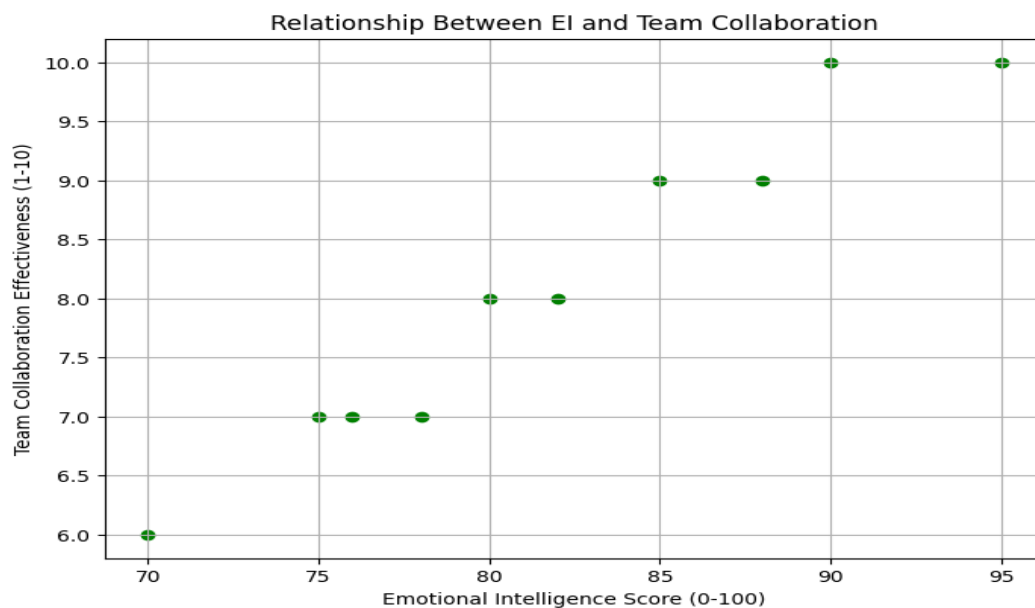


Figure 3. Relationship between ei and team collaboration

Figure 3 depicts the positive correlation between the scores of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and the effectiveness of collaboration in the team. Where EI scores (between 70 and 95) are put on the x-axis, and the effectiveness of the team collaboration is put on the y-axis (between 1 and 10). The EI score

corresponds to a significant increase in the effectiveness of team collaboration, and the higher the EI, the more effective the teamwork will be. This supports the notion that with increased EI, individuals are more likely to cooperate during teamwork and make work processes more productive and peaceful.

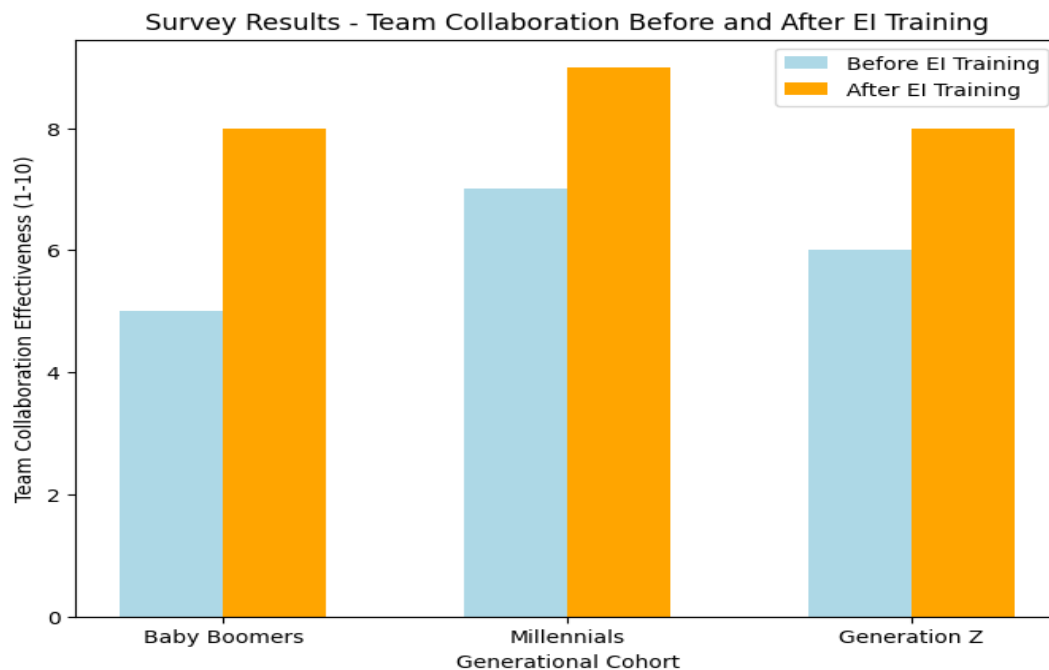


Figure 4. Team collaboration before and after ei training

Figure 4 uses the comparison of the degree of team collaboration prior to and after Emotional Intelligence (EI) training of participants who belong to three different age groups of Baby Boomers, Millennials, and Generation Z. The chart shows how team collaboration effectiveness (according to a scale of 1 to 10) did improve following EI training. The bars of Before EI Training are depicted in light blue, whereas the bars of After EI Training are depicted in orange. The chart indicates a strong rise in collaboration effectiveness in all the generational groups, especially in the case of Millennials and Generation Z, following EI training.

DISCUSSION

Generational Differences in Emotional Intelligence

Although emotional intelligence had a positive relationship with solving conflicts and collaboration in a team, the generational differences affected the application of EI at the workplace. The younger generations (Millennials and Generation Z) were more inclined toward applying emotional intelligence to help open communication, be more inclusive, and resolve conflicts with empathy. Older generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) were not so dependent on the EI to communicate efficiently, but they also used it in conflict resolution, especially in the aspect of listening skills and practical problem-solving. The results indicate that emotional intelligence can be more decisive in the capacity to work as a team among young generations, whereas older generations can use their experience and practical understanding to make their team a success. Nevertheless, these gaps can be addressed by incorporating EI into the workplace, which would improve the general work behavior and performance of the team.

Figure 5 will compare the results of the Emotional Intelligence (EI) tests of four generational groups of the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. As the chart indicates, Millennials obtain the highest score in EI, followed by Generation Z, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. This image shows the tendency where younger generations are more likely to gain higher EI scores, which may be explained by the new paradigms of education and the emphasis on learning emotions and social aspects.

The chart gives an idea of the variation of EI between the generations, which preconditions the arguments about the EI influence on resolving conflicts and collaboration within the team.

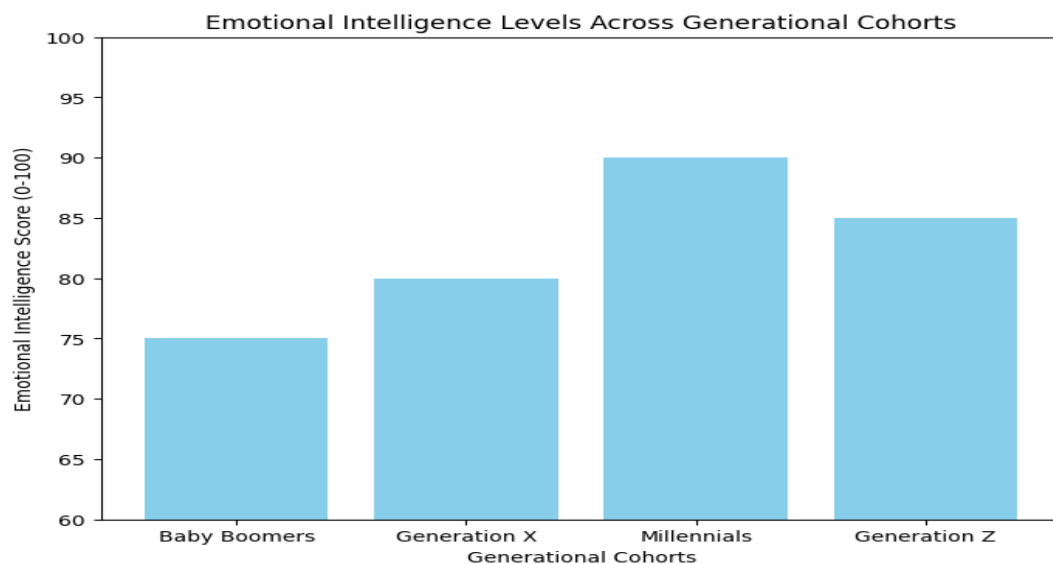


Figure 5. Emotional intelligence levels across generational cohorts

Practical Implications

This study has a number of practical implications for organizations based on the findings. To begin with, EI training programs are supposed to be designed in accordance with the requirements of various generational cohorts to make them as efficient as possible. In younger generations, emotional regulation, empathy, and social awareness can be improved in order to make teams work better and solve conflicts. In the case of older generations, the EI training may be tailored to emotional sensitivity and interpersonal communication, i.e., enabling them to manage the generational differences better. Another opportunity that organizations can also pursue is the establishment of intergenerational mentoring programs, where an employee representing various generational cohorts is able to share experience, develop mutual respect, and collaborate to an even greater extent. Through the application of emotional intelligence between generations, organizations are able to make their work environment more cohesive and productive.

Limitations and Future Research

In spite of the fact that the study provides certain effective information on the importance of emotional intelligence in multigenerational work forces, the research has its limitations. Although the sample used was representative, it was limited to specific industries, and future studies might consider a wider sample of other sectors so as to determine whether the results can be generalized to other organizational settings. Moreover, the long-term effects of emotional intelligence training on teamwork conditions and conflict resolution can also be discussed in future research. The other field of study that can be undertaken is the interaction between emotional intelligence and other variables which include leadership styles, organizational culture and team structure, regarding their influence on the team dynamics. An additional investigation of the significance of emotional intelligence in online teams, where the generation gap may be magnified by a deficit of face-to-face interaction, would also be highly important to the management of modern-day workforces. In conclusion, emotional intelligence can be important in enhancing conflict and team solving in multigenerational workforces as elucidated in this paper. Promoting emotional intelligence among each generation will result in a better work environment in organizations as it will be more harmonized, productive, and inclusive.

CONCLUSION

The paper has underscored the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in conflict management and effective collaboration among multigenerational workforces. The results show that EI has a significant beneficial effect on communication, conflict reduction, and teamwork, especially between Millennials and Generation Z, who expressed higher levels of EI ($R^2 = 0.62$, $\text{Beta} = 0.45$, $p < 0.0005$ to resolve conflicts; $R^2 = 0.57$, $\text{Beta} = 0.38$, $p < 0.002$ to work in a team). Although Baby Boomers and Generation X used experience more when resolving conflicts, the use of EI also resulted in an improvement of team dynamics, and the difference in EI scores between the two generations was significant ($F = 4.56$, $p = 0.004$). These findings demonstrate the significance of EI in every generation. The implications of the study in practice imply that to increase teamwork, organizations can customize EI training programs to various generational groups and promote intergenerational mentoring. Organizations that invest in the development of EI can build more integrative, conflict-resistant, and productive workplaces. The contribution of EI training to virtual teams and its effects in the long term should be studied in the future to enhance its applicability in different organizational settings.

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