

# Engagement

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## Engagement Across Generations: Navigating Employee Dynamics in Higher Education Post-COVID-19

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The study examines academic support staff engagement at a private university in Surabaya, Indonesia, from baby boomers to Gen Z. After COVID-19, managing multigenerational employees has been challenging. Older workers fear schedule and method changes. Online communication between academic support staff and lecturers is difficult. Different generations' ICT skills affect self-scheduling. The elderly have health and family responsibilities, while younger generations lack institutional commitment, causing exhaustion, monotony, and mental and physical health issues post-pandemic. We must address physical, social, and technological disparities and their effects on mental and physical health across generations.

**Objectives:** This study seeks to investigate the impact of generational disparities on employee engagement amidst considerable changes in work practices and increased health concerns.

**Methods:** An online survey of 375 employees yielded a 44.8% response. Based on Maslach and Leiter's Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption, the survey used a Likert scale. A structured methodology, consent, and Google Forms data collection ensured anonymity and confidentiality in the study. The study's goals and significance were also explained. One-way ANOVA was used to compare generational engagement and Cronbach's alpha for reliability.

**Results:** Gen Z engages least and Baby Boomers most. These differences show age cohorts' work motivations and expectations. Baby Boomers are more resilient and dedicated than Gen Z, requiring customized engagement. Low participation in Generation X and Millennials suggests different workplace preferences, job satisfaction, and work-life balance.

**Conclusions:** The findings show how life, technology, and workplace expectations affect generational work styles. Many boomers work hard and loyally. Resilience, role dedication, and institutional duty motivate them. Early workforce entry, inexperience, and hybrid work paradigm issues may explain Generation Z's low engagement. Lower Gen Z employee engagement suggests they need more inclusive and supportive engagement strategies like work flexibility, technological integration, and fast, professional advancement. For Generation X and Millennials, moderate engagement suggests work-life balance and meaning.

**Keywords:** Engagement Strategies, Multigenerational Workforce, Post-COVID-19 Work Environment, Higher Education Institutions.

### 1. Introduction

Supervising personnel from different generations in one organization has distinct difficulties, particularly in the uncertain post-pandemic COVID-19 work environment [1, 2]. Within higher education, academic support staff from all generations adjust to a novel situation in which physical and social limitations influence work practices. Offline work involving direct physical and social interaction is restricted, necessitating a shift towards online completion of tasks. This has resulted in modifications to work schedules and methodologies [3, 4, 5, 7].

The recent change has caused uncertainty and distress among the workforce, notably impacting the older demographic [6]. The presence of communication obstacles is apparent, as demonstrated by the issues experienced by academic support personnel when engaging with the lecturers they assist, which is now predominantly limited to online contact [4, 5]. Today, employees from different generations adapt to autonomously organizing their work schedules [8].

Competence in information and communication technology (ICT) has become essential in these transformations [9]. Nevertheless, there is a discernible disparity in the aptitude for communication and utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) among different age cohorts. Usually, institutions involve the collaboration of four different generations: Baby Boomers (born before 1960), Generation X (1960-1975), Millennials (1975-1995), and Generation Z (born after 1995) [11]. Generation Y and Z demonstrate a high level of skill in multitasking and effectively using information and communication technology (ICT), while Baby Boomers and Generation X exhibit lower proficiency in these domains [12]. The discrepancy in skills and capabilities might make it difficult for institutions to manage performance properly.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, employees from different generations face exhaustion, monotony, and apprehensions over their mental and physical well-being [13, 14, 15]. The elderly population, who frequently have several dependents, experience concerns about deteriorating health and growing familial responsibilities [16]. In contrast, the younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, demonstrate a lack of commitment towards their institutions and frequently pursue possibilities elsewhere [17]. To effectively manage the involvement of all four generations [18], it is necessary to consider the restricted physical and social gatherings, the unequal ICT capabilities among generations, and the loss of physical and mental health caused by the extended epidemic. To formulate suitable solutions, it is imperative to comprehensively analyze the variations in employee engagement levels [19].

Prior research has demonstrated inconsistent findings concerning the relationship between age and employee engagement. Although some argue that younger generations exhibit lower levels of involvement than older generations, with variations in engagement patterns across different age groups [20, 21, 22, 23, 24], other research has shown no substantial disparities [25-27]. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this situation, with research revealing alterations in employee engagement because of factors such as remote work and evolving work conditions [28-31].

Within the Indonesian setting, research has examined employee engagement across different generations, considering the effects of remote work and anxiety associated with the pandemic [32-34]. Research conducted on the Millennial generation in Indonesia emphasizes their propensity to change jobs frequently and their struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance [35, 36]. Nevertheless, a thorough analysis of generational traits inside educational institutions remains to be accomplished. Additional investigation is necessary to enhance our comprehension of employee involvement levels after the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically with variations among different generations within higher education institutions in Indonesia. Emphasis should be placed on any modifications that occurred throughout this timeframe, particularly among the academic support personnel.

## 2. Literature Reviews

Employee engagement, which refers to the extent of employees' participation, Dedication, and allegiance to their firm, significantly differs among various generations in the workforce. Engaged employees exhibit elevated pride and drive, perceiving themselves as essential contributors to their organization's achievements. Kahn (37) outlines four key aspects of employee engagement: a perception of significance, security, accessibility, and interpersonal bonds. Meaningfulness pertains to the relevance and importance of employment, whereas safety incorporates the aspects of security and comfort. Availability refers to the mental state of being present and prepared, whereas connection relates to the interpersonal interactions with individuals and responsibilities. In addition to Kahn's paradigm, Maslach and Leiter [38] establish a connection between employee involvement and emotional weariness and depersonalization in the workplace. They propose three dimensions: Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption. Vigour covers vitality and elation, Dedication entails devotion and allegiance, and Absorption relates to focus and complete attentiveness. Ryan and Deci [39] provide additional details on the connection between engagement, satisfaction, and fulfilling fundamental needs for autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relationships.

Within the workplace, these participation characteristics are expressed in distinct ways among different generational groups. Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are frequently characterized as diligent and content with ongoing progress. The advent of television shaped their outlook, and they are typically referred to as an optimistic generation. They commonly have a high level of loyalty and show respect for the hierarchical structure inside the organization [48], along with a great dedication to work [54]. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, came of age during the initial stages of information technology. They were known for their strong inclination towards autonomy, independence, and healthy work-life balance. They can adjust, take charge of their duties, and prioritize positive professional connections [50].

Millennials, also known as Generation Y and born between 1980 and 1994, prioritize achieving a harmonious equilibrium between their professional and personal lives. They possess a high level of education and aspire to engage in work that holds significance and purpose. They focus on preserving their personal life and highly regard open and straightforward communication [66]. Generation Z, often known as the i-generation, refers to individuals born between 1995 and 2010. This generation is characterized by their strong internet connection, creativity, and emphasis on social activities. They are attracted to start-up environments, adept at multitasking, and have a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. Examining employee involvement by generation demonstrates varied levels of engagement among various cohorts [55, 56]. Discrepancies in values and objectives are responsible for these discrepancies [57, 58]. For example, Generation X prioritizes perks and flexible work schedules, but Baby Boomers place greater importance on success and positively impacting society [55]. Although Millennials share Gen X's appreciation for work-life balance, they tend to prioritize their lifestyle and are likelier to quit jobs that do not correspond with their objectives [60]. According to White (61), despite their differences, all generations have comparable motivators, such as sustainable work and promotion chances, and they have similar expectations of organizational leaders.

The engagement model proposed by Maslach and Leiter [38], which examines Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption, is commonly employed to analyze employee engagement among academic support personnel [42, 43]. Vigour pertains to the combination of vitality and tenacity [44], Dedication refers to a feeling of intense connection and pride [45], and

Absorption denotes focused attention and active engagement [46]. Metrics used to assess these aspects encompass physical prowess, zeal, professional satisfaction, engagement, focus, and integration within the work setting [47]. When analyzing levels of engagement among different generations, a notable discovery is that most employees exhibit passive involvement. The highest levels of active engagement are observed among Baby Boomers, while the lowest levels are found among Gen Y and Z [55, 56]. They propose the necessity of customized engagement tactics to cater to the distinct requirements and incentives of each generational group. Understanding the disparities in employee involvement across different generations is essential for formulating efficient management tactics. Organizations should acknowledge and accommodate each generation's varied values, objectives, and expectations to cultivate an efficient and harmonious work environment.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Participants

The study examined the degree of employee engagement among academic support staff at a private university in Surabaya, Indonesia. The study included individuals from different generations, namely Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z. This group of employees represents a diverse workforce that has adjusted to a hybrid work model, combining office and remote work, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study included an extensive online survey administered using Google Forms, specifically targeting 375 workers to assess their level of involvement using 32 indicators that cover three essential aspects: Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption. The survey was fully completed by 168 employees, which accounts for a response percentage of 44.8%. The respondents' ages ranged from 24 to 65 years, offering a comprehensive viewpoint across different generations. The breakdown consisted of 19 Baby Boomers (11.3%), 91 Gen X (54.2%), 45 Gen Y (26.8%), and 13 Gen Z personnel (7.7%). Significantly, the female respondents accounted for 52.8% of the total, providing valuable perspectives on the gender dynamics present in this diverse workforce spanning multiple generations. The study's extensive demographic coverage and high response rate yield a valuable dataset for comprehending how various generations interact with their employment in a swiftly changing professional environment following the epidemic.

#### 3.2. Questionnaires

According to Maslach and Leiter [38], the employee engagement questionnaire classifies questions into three dimensions: Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption. The Vigor dimension, designed to assess employee excitement and energy, consists of 12 items divided into three sub-scales. The mentioned factors consist of "possessing a fervour for work" (V1, comprising five elements), "striving for excellence in work" (V2, consisting of three elements), and "maintaining focus despite difficult circumstances" (V3, comprising four elements). The Dedication dimension aims to evaluate the level of commitment and persistence. It consists of ten items that are divided into four sub-scales: "have the responsibility" (D1, two items), "proud of the job done" (D2, three items), "feel challenged with things on task" (D3, three items), and "useful for others" (D4, two items). The Absorption dimension assesses focus and concentration using ten items divided into three sub-scales: "Difficulty in disengaging from work" (A1, three items), "Enjoyment of work; losing track of time" (A2, four items), and "Ability to concentrate on tasks" (A3, three items).

Participants were given explicit instructions to evaluate each item according to their own experiences during both the pandemic and post-pandemic periods, utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 1 (indicating strong disapproval) to 5 (indicating strong agreement). The alpha values ranging from 0.821 to 0.882 indicate that each dimension or indication block is reliable and legitimate, ensuring the reliability of all measurement items. The instrument's validity and reliability are consistent with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) [38], as demonstrated by including all measuring instruments in Table 2.

#### 3.3. Procedure

The research methodology employed in this study carried out both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, was meticulously structured and implemented in multiple phases. The study was situated within the university's implementation of a hybrid work paradigm, which combines both in-office work (WFO) and remote work (WFH) in response to the influence of the pandemic on work settings. Before starting the research, we got the methodology and ethics approval, ensuring that the study followed the required academic and ethical guidelines. The study sought the agreement of the university's head of academic support units to participate. The unit heads were notified privately about the research goals and the process for filling out the questionnaire. Following the acquisition of consent, the unit leaders effectively communicated the research aims and the questionnaire technique to their personnel, ensuring that the material was provided clearly and thoroughly to potential participants. The researchers subsequently disseminated the questionnaire to the staff via an online platform utilizing Google Forms. This approach enabled convenient participant access and optimized data collection. The questionnaire was intentionally created to ensure anonymity and preserve the confidentiality of responses. In addition, participants were obligated to sign a consent form confirming their voluntary involvement in the study. After finishing the questionnaire, participants were given a concise informational pamphlet. This booklet highlighted the cruciality of preserving and augmenting staff engagement, emphasizing its relevance for



strengthening institutional performance. The project aims to systematically collect extensive data on employee engagement in a hybrid work environment, providing valuable insights into the field.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

The study carefully evaluated the reliability and validity of the chosen questionnaires using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, a widely acknowledged statistical measure for assessing the internal consistency of survey instruments. This methodology guarantees that the questionnaires are dependable and accurate in measuring the constructs they are designed to evaluate. In order to analyze the data further, the study utilized one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) [67] as a statistical technique to investigate the variation within various generational groups and compare it to the variation between these groups. The main purpose of employing One-way ANOVA was to detect any significant disparities in employee engagement among different generational cohorts. This method is especially advantageous for comprehending the variations in employee engagement levels among different groups in the organizational context, such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. All statistical analyses, including the calculation of Cronbach's alpha and the implementation of One-way ANOVA, were performed using IBM® SPSS® Statistics version 23.

## 4. Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants, as outlined in Table 1, indicate an evenly balanced gender distribution, with an equal number of male and female individuals participating in the research. Approximately 44% of the sample comprises married individuals with two to three dependents. Subsequently, there is a cohort of 23.8% who are married individuals without any dependents, while 14.3% are married individuals with a single child. The remaining 6% are married individuals with four or more children considered dependents.

Concerning their positions inside the organization, a substantial proportion of the respondents (79.2%) occupied the post of section heads. In comparison, only 10.1% of individuals serve as administrative personnel, while a smaller percentage hold unit chiefs' and field officers' positions. Regarding the primary source of family income, the majority (63.1%) reported depending on a single company, while 35.7% indicated a shared income between husband and wife. Merely 1.2% indicated that sources or enterprises other than their own were their main source of income.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Population (n = 168)**

| Variables                        | Characteristics                   | n (%)       | Employee Engagement<br>Mean ± Std | Sig.  |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Gender                           | Male                              | 81 (48.2%)  | 4.23 ± 0.45                       | 0.57  |
|                                  | Female                            | 87 (52.8%)  | 4.10 ± 0.41                       |       |
| Marital status and family burden | Single                            | 40 (23.8%)  | 4.01 ± 0.40                       | 0.03* |
|                                  | Married without the family burden | 20 (11.9%)  | 4.22 ± 0.48                       |       |
|                                  | Married with one family burden    | 24 (14.3%)  | 4.07 ± 0.49                       |       |
|                                  | Married with 2-3 family burden    | 74 (44.0%)  | 4.22 ± 0.40                       |       |
|                                  | Married with > 3 family burdens   | 10 (6.0%)   | 4.40 ± 0.41                       |       |
| Position                         | Head of the unit                  | 12 (7.1%)   | 4.53 ± 0.39                       | 0.01* |
|                                  | Head of division                  | 133 (79.2%) | 4.13 ± 0.44                       |       |
|                                  | Administration staff              | 17 (10.1%)  | 4.09 ± 0.23                       |       |
|                                  | Field officer                     | 6 (3.6%)    | 4.33 ± 0.51                       |       |
| The main source of income        | Only from one income              | 106 (63.1%) | 4.15 ± 0.45                       | 0.35  |
|                                  | Husband and wife's income         | 60 (35.7%)  | 4.16 ± 0.39                       |       |
|                                  | Other income                      | 2 (1.2%)    | 4.61 ± 0.56                       |       |

Further examination using the independent sample t-test and ANOVA demonstrated noteworthy disparities in employee involvement depending on marital status, number of dependents, and job position. Education staff who are married and have four or more children had notably higher levels of engagement in comparison to those with different marital statuses. Unit heads exhibited the highest level of engagement among all roles when seen from a positional standpoint. Notably, the study revealed no substantial disparities in employee involvement based on gender or the primary source of income. The employee engagement construct consists of 32 question items, which are divided into three dimensions: Vigor (12 items), Dedication (10 things), and Absorption (10 items). The validity and reliability of these items were thoroughly tested, as outlined in Table 2. The validity test findings revealed that all question items were legitimate. Each of the three dimensions showed a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of over 0.7, suggesting strong reliability. The Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption coefficients were 0.856, 0.882, and 0.824, respectively. The mean score for each item varied from 3.39 to 4.68, with the greatest mean observed in the Vigor dimension, followed by Dedication and then Absorption. The coefficient of variation, the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean of the item scores, exhibited minimal variability, ranging from 11% to 30%.

The variations in participation levels among the four generations were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA test (Table 3). The results revealed that Gen Z demonstrated the least amount of employee engagement, which was notably lower than that of Gen X. Gen Y's engagement was marginally higher than that of Gen Z but still significantly lower than both Gen X and Baby Boomers, with Baby Boomers displaying the highest levels of engagement.

**Table 2. Statistical Descriptive of Employee Engagement Scale**

| Dimension                         | Indicators                                        | Items (score scale 1-5)                                                     | Mean | Std. |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| Vigor, Cronbachs Alpha=0.856      | Have a passion for work.                          | Enthusiasm when starting/going to work                                      | 4.18 | 0.81 |
|                                   |                                                   | Easy to collect energy while working                                        | 3.83 | 0.77 |
|                                   |                                                   | Enthusiasm to do the given task                                             | 4.20 | 0.79 |
|                                   |                                                   | Not quickly tired in completing work                                        | 3.82 | 0.86 |
|                                   |                                                   | Trying to maintain enthusiasm in completing work                            | 4.45 | 0.62 |
|                                   | Try your best at work.                            | Try your best to get the job done                                           | 4.68 | 0.50 |
|                                   |                                                   | Seriously solve work-related problems                                       | 4.64 | 0.53 |
|                                   |                                                   | Always try to maintain the quality of work                                  | 4.54 | 0.61 |
|                                   | Stay on task even under challenging circumstances | Do not complain about work despite having difficulties                      | 3.80 | 0.75 |
|                                   |                                                   | Trying various alternatives when facing difficulties at work                | 4.52 | 0.58 |
|                                   |                                                   | Choose to persist so that the work is completed even though it is difficult | 4.57 | 0.57 |
|                                   |                                                   | Do not leave work to others, even if it is difficult                        | 4.22 | 0.74 |
| Dedication, Cronbachs Alpha=0.882 | Have responsibility                               | Feeling uncomfortable when leaving the task/responsibility                  | 4.55 | 0.76 |
|                                   |                                                   | When given a responsibility, be responsible for completing it               | 4.53 | 0.62 |
|                                   | Proud of the job done                             | Proud of the work/tasks assigned                                            | 4.10 | 0.79 |
|                                   |                                                   | Take pride in achieving a performance that can inspire others               | 4.24 | 0.72 |
|                                   |                                                   | The work done is appreciated by others                                      | 4.17 | 0.80 |
|                                   | Feel challenged with things on task               | Assigned tasks/jobs, providing challenges to complete                       | 4.29 | 0.79 |
|                                   |                                                   | The assigned job is a challenge to be conquered                             | 4.27 | 0.73 |
|                                   | Useful for others                                 | There is always something new in the job that makes it challenging          | 4.46 | 0.64 |
|                                   |                                                   | Through this work, it feels like a good influence on others                 | 4.02 | 0.79 |
|                                   |                                                   | This work can provide benefits to others                                    | 4.14 | 0.74 |
| Absorption, Cronbachs Alpha=0.824 | Find it difficult to get away from work           | Willing to spend much time to get the job done                              | 4.08 | 0.82 |
|                                   |                                                   | It is hard to stop when doing work                                          | 3.71 | 0.79 |
|                                   |                                                   | It is hard not to think about the work to be done                           | 4.04 | 0.81 |
|                                   |                                                   | When working, time flies so fast                                            | 3.85 | 0.93 |
|                                   | Enjoy work; forget the time                       | Often, they do not realize work time is almost over when at work            | 4.08 | 0.89 |
|                                   |                                                   | Get carried away when doing work                                            | 4.15 | 0.80 |
|                                   |                                                   | Happy with the work that must be done at work                               | 4.26 | 0.80 |
|                                   | Concentrate on doing the task                     | Do not let personal matters affect your mind at work                        | 4.37 | 0.86 |
|                                   |                                                   | Do not think about anything else outside of work when working               | 3.39 | 1.02 |
|                                   |                                                   | Minor problems at work do not interfere with work concentration             | 3.52 | 0.85 |

Upon conducting a more detailed examination of the engagement construct, specifically examining the dimensions of Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption, it was found that Vigor, which is characterized by high energy, resilience, a strong work ethic, and perseverance in the face of challenges, did not show any significant differences among the four generations (as shown in Table 3). Across different generations, several indicators, such as 'exhibiting exceptional effort in the workplace' (V2) and 'maintaining focus and productivity even in difficult situations' (V3), displayed commonalities within the Vigor framework. The concept of 'Trying the best at work' (V2) encompassed actions such as striving for excellence in job performance (V21), resolving work-related challenges (V22), and upholding high standards of work quality (V23). The measurement of 'Staying on task even under hard conditions' (V3) involved assessing behaviours such as attempting different approaches when encountering work obstacles (V32), demonstrating perseverance in completing tasks despite difficulties (V33), and not delegating work to others even when it is arduous (V34). Nevertheless, the measure of 'having a passion for work' (V1) was shown to be highest among those from the Baby Boomer generation and lowest among those from Generation Z. This conclusion is supported by observations related to factors such as the level of enthusiasm displayed while commencing work (V11), the ability to acquire energy while working (V12) rapidly, the enthusiasm exhibited towards assigned tasks (V13), and the ability to sustain work without tiring fast (V14).

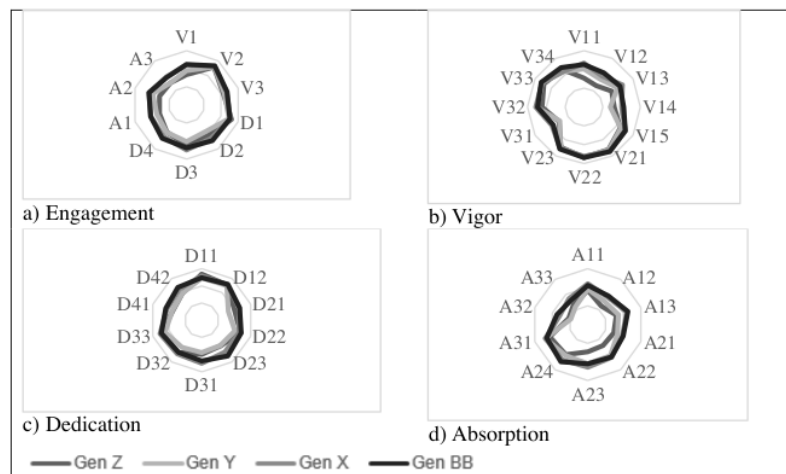
**Table 3. Vigor, Dedication, Absorption and Engagement Difference Across Generations**

| Generation |           | Engagement          |       | Vigor               |      | Dedication             |       | Absorption          |       |
|------------|-----------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|------|------------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| (i)        | (j)       | Mean<br>diff. (i-j) | Sig.  | Mean<br>diff. (i-j) | Sig. | Mean<br>diff.<br>(i-j) | Sig.  | Mean<br>diff. (i-j) | Sig.  |
| Gen Z      | Gen Y     | -0.06               | 0.97  | -0.11               | 0.84 | 0.17                   | 0.70  | -0.22               | 0.52  |
|            | Gen X     | -0.34               | 0.03* | -0.30               | 0.07 | -0.19                  | 0.56  | -0.53               | 0.00* |
|            | Baby Boom | -0.36               | 0.07  | -0.33               | 0.13 | -0.22                  | 0.61  | -0.53               | 0.02* |
| Gen Y      | Gen Z     | 0.06                | 0.97  | 0.11                | 0.84 | -0.17                  | 0.70  | 0.22                | 0.52  |
|            | Gen X     | -0.28               | 0.00* | -0.19               | 0.06 | -0.36                  | 0.00* | -0.31               | 0.00* |
|            | Baby Boom | -0.30               | 0.04* | -0.22               | 0.22 | -0.39                  | 0.03* | -0.31               | 0.10  |
| Gen X      | Gen Z     | 0.34                | 0.03* | 0.30                | 0.07 | 0.19                   | 0.56  | 0.53                | 0.00* |
|            | Gen Y     | 0.28                | 0.00* | 0.19                | 0.06 | 0.36                   | 0.00* | 0.31                | 0.00* |
|            | Baby Boom | -0.02               | 1.00  | -0.03               | 0.99 | -0.03                  | 0.99  | 0.00                | 1.00  |
| Baby Boom  | Gen Z     | 0.36                | 0.07  | 0.33                | 0.13 | 0.22                   | 0.61  | 0.53                | 0.02* |
|            | Gen Y     | 0.30                | 0.04* | 0.22                | 0.22 | 0.39                   | 0.03* | 0.31                | 0.10  |
|            | Gen X     | 0.02                | 1.00  | 0.03                | 0.99 | 0.03                   | 0.99  | -0.00               | 1.00  |

The Dedication dimension of employee involvement exhibited diverse patterns across different generations. The level of commitment exhibited by Generation Z was determined to be comparable to that of the other three generations. Nevertheless, Generation Y exhibited notably lower Dedication levels than Generation X and the Baby Boomers. There was no notable disparity in the levels of commitment between Gen X and Baby Boomers. Upon closer analysis of Dedication, as depicted in Figure 1, several areas of divergence were observed. The disparity was notably evident in the 'Proud of the job done' (D2) metric, encompassing factors such as satisfaction with the allotted work/tasks (D21) and perception of recognition from others for the completed work (D23).

On the other hand, we noticed parallels in the level of Dedication across different generations in the 'Have responsibility' (D1) category. This was determined by assessing factors such as feeling uneasy when leaving a task or responsibility (D11) and taking responsibility for completing a particular task or obligation (D12). Similarities were also observed in the 'Feel challenged by things on task' (D3) indicator, evaluated through items such as perceiving the assigned job as a conquerable problem (D32) and discovering new obstacles inside the job (D33).

Gen Z displayed notably lower levels on the Absorption dimension than Gen X and Baby Boomers. Gen Y exhibited a notably lower level of Absorption compared to Gen X. A thorough examination of Figure 1 revealed that this disparity in Absorption between generations is apparent in the 'Find it challenging to get away from work' (A1) indicator, which includes factors such as struggling to stop working (A12) and facing difficulties in not thinking about work (A13). The indicator 'Enjoy work, forget the time' (A2), which includes items such as being aware that work time is nearly finished (A22) and becoming absorbed in work (A23), showed variability. Similarly, the indicator 'Concentrate on doing the task' (A3), which includes items such as not allowing thoughts about anything unrelated to work (A32), also exhibited variation. Meanwhile, the absorption patterns of Baby Boomers were distinct from those of Gen X and Y, whereas the absorption levels of Gen Y and Z did not exhibit a notable disparity.



**Figure 1. Differences in (a) Engagement, (b) Vigor, (c) Dedication, (d) Absorption across Generations**



## 5. Discussion

The study's comprehensive examination of employee engagement among various generations reveals fascinating observations regarding the distinct attitudes and behaviours of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Gen Y), and Generation Z. This investigation is crucial for understanding the complex dynamics of a workforce of multiple generations. It emphasizes the impact of generational diversity on aspects such as enthusiasm for work, satisfaction with job duties, involvement in work activities, and overall commitment.

The study's findings demonstrate a range of excitement, vitality, and endurance among different generations. Remarkably, Baby Boomers demonstrate an exceptional enthusiasm for work, likely due to their strong work ethic and profound loyalty. In contrast to Gen Z's perspective, although they start work enthusiastically, maintaining high levels of energy and focus throughout the day seems more difficult for them. The disparity in work enthusiasm among generations can be ascribed to divergent job expectations and life experiences.

An essential facet of the study involves investigating the phenomenon of job satisfaction. Older generations, namely Baby Boomers and Gen X, frequently exhibit a profound sense of satisfaction in their work, potentially due to their longer periods of employment and a stronger emotional attachment to their roles. In contrast, Millennials and Gen Z necessitate increased external acknowledgement and admiration to cultivate comparable levels of job satisfaction.

The study also examines the way different generations interact with their employment. Baby Boomers frequently encounter difficulties while attempting to detach themselves from professional responsibilities, highlighting their strong devotion and Dedication. The younger generations typically embrace a more equitable approach, placing importance on achieving a harmonious work-life balance, facilitating their ability to detach from work.

Another crucial discovery pertains to the disparity in concentration levels among different generations. Experienced personnel typically demonstrate an enhanced capacity to concentrate intensely on work assignments, possibly developed from years of practice. This capability differs from younger generations, who may encounter more diversions or emphasize multitasking more.

The study uncovers notable differences between generations in terms of their levels of participation (as seen in Table 4), which are categorized as active engagement, passive engagement, and active disengagement. Significantly, Baby Boomers exhibit the highest level of active engagement at 36.8%, with Gen X trailing behind. This indicates that seasoned employees gain more satisfaction and involvement from their positions than their younger peers. Conversely, Generation Y and Generation Z, comprising fewer than 10% of the workforce who are actively involved, seek work environments that are more dynamic and focused on advancement. The prevalence of actively disengaged employees is highest among Baby Boomers and Gen Z, suggesting possible discrepancies between their aspirations and the conditions of their workplaces.

These observations emphasize the intricacy of employee involvement in the contemporary and varied workforce. They stress the importance of companies creating engagement strategies specifically designed to meet each generational group's distinct needs and goals. By comprehending and resolving these disparities, organizations can foster a peaceful and efficient workplace where everyone feels appreciated, comprehended, and driven, improving overall organizational performance and employee contentment.

**Table 4. Engagement level across generation**

| Generation      | Actively Disengaged<br>n (%) | Passive Engaged<br>n (%) | Actively Engaged<br>n (%) |
|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gen Z           | 2 (15.4%)                    | 10 (76.9%)               | 1 (7.7%)                  |
| Gen Y           | 5 (11.1%)                    | 36 (80.0%)               | 4 (8.9%)                  |
| Gen X           | 3 (3.3%)                     | 62 (68.1%)               | 26 (28.6%)                |
| Baby Boomer     | 3 (15.8%)                    | 9 (47.4%)                | 7 (36.8%)                 |
| All Generations | 13 (7.7%)                    | 117 (69.7%)              | 38 (22.6%)                |

## 6. Conclusion

This comprehensive study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of employee engagement within higher education institutions in the post-COVID-19 era, with a particular focus on the generational cohorts of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Gen Y), and Generation Z. The findings present a nuanced picture of how each generation engages with their work environment, influenced by distinct life experiences, technological familiarity, and workplace expectations. The research finds that Baby Boomers, traditionally defined by their strong work ethic and loyalty, display the highest levels of involvement. This high engagement can be linked to their resilience, devotion to their roles, and obligation towards their institution. Generation Z shows the lowest engagement levels on the other end of the scale, presumably due to their embryonic entry into the workforce, lesser working experience, and the problems created by the hybrid work paradigm. This lower engagement among Gen Z employees highlights a need for more inclusive and supportive engagement tactics that resonate with their values and expectations, such as work flexibility, technological integration, and possibilities for quick, professional progress. The moderate engagement levels reported by Generation X and



Millennials reflect a balancing act between professional aspirations and personal life, suggestive of their emphasis on work-life balance and a desire for meaningful employment. This understanding is vital for higher education institutions to establish an environment that resonates with the expectations of these generations.

Moreover, the study underscores the necessity of recognizing the variety within the workforce and the need for individualized approaches to employee engagement. It highlights that more than a one-size-fits-all strategy is needed to satisfy the specific demands and motivational drives of distinct generational groups. Institutions that identify and cater to these various demands are likelier to establish a harmonious and productive work environment. Going forward, our research opens the door to deeper inquiries into the complicated landscape of multigenerational employee engagement. Future research should utilize qualitative approaches to delve deeper into the personal narratives and experiences of employees from different generational cohorts. This approach would offer a better, more nuanced knowledge of the elements impacting involvement. Additionally, longitudinal research tracking engagement trends over time and comparative studies across different cultural and geographical contexts provide a broader view. Research could significantly contribute to developing successful engagement strategies that increase institutional performance and personal well-being in the shifting world of higher education.

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