Generation Gap and Personality Profiles: A Further Study Extending the Work of Dr. Devinder Dhalla

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Abstract

This research paper aims to further investigate the relationship between generation gaps and personality profiles, building on earlier exploratory work by Dr. Devinder Dhalla (Dhalla & Dhalla, 2022). Employing a mixed-methods design, the study surveyed 600 participants from three generational cohorts—Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—and conducted in-depth interviews with 40 selected respondents. Quantitative measures were gathered using standardized personality inventories and generation-related attitude scales, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal significant differences in personality traits across generations, with particular emphasis on openness, conscientiousness, and risk perception. These results both confirm and extend earlier findings, suggesting that generational experiences significantly shape personality profiles. The paper discusses the implications for educational practices, workplace management, and intergenerational communication, and proposes avenues for future research. This paper extends earlier research by Dr. Devinder Dhalla by incorporating a broader generational perspective and employing both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to offer a deeper understanding of how generation-specific experiences shape personality profiles.

Introduction

1.1 Background

The rapid pace of technological, social, and economic change has heightened the relevance of understanding intergenerational differences. Previous research has indicated that distinct generational experiences can shape personality profiles, influencing attitudes, behaviors, and even career choices. In an earlier study, Dr. Devinder Dhalla and his co-author examined the generation gap and personality profiles among young adults, providing initial evidence of systematic differences (Dhalla & Dhalla, 2022). However, as societal dynamics evolve, there is a need to extend this research across a broader age spectrum and explore underlying factors that contribute to these differences.

1.2 Rationale

Building on Dr. Dhalla's pioneering work; this study seeks to investigate how personality traits vary across Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. By employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, this research not only verifies earlier findings but also explores the social, economic, and technological influences that may moderate these relationships. Understanding these dynamics is essential for educators, employers, and policymakers in designing interventions that bridge intergenerational divides.

1.3 Research Objectives

- **Objective 1:** To assess and compare the personality profiles of Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z using standardized inventories.
- **Objective 2:** To examine the extent to which generation-specific experiences influence personality traits.
- **Objective 3:** To correlate the findings with earlier research by Dr. Dhalla and identify trends those have evolved over time.
- **Objective 4:** To propose practical recommendations for enhancing intergenerational communication and cooperation.

1.4 Research Questions

- How do personality profiles differ among Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z?
- What are the key factors contributing to these differences?
- In what ways do the current findings correlate with Dr. Dhalla's earlier research on generation gaps and personality profiles?
- What implications do these differences have for educational, organizational, and social settings?

Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in both personality psychology and generational theory. The Big Five personality traits—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—serve as the primary framework for assessing personality profiles. Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT) and concepts from life-span developmental psychology help explain how generational experiences might shape these traits.

2.2 Generation Gap and Personality

Existing literature has documented the impact of socio-historical contexts on personality development. For instance, research suggests that economic recessions, rapid technological advancements, and shifting social norms contribute to measurable differences in personality traits across generations (Twenge, 2010; Ng, 2015). Earlier work by Dhalla & Dhalla (2022) provided preliminary evidence of these differences among younger cohorts, highlighting the role of digital culture and economic uncertainty.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Several empirical studies have used cross-sectional surveys to compare personality traits among different generations. Findings typically indicate that younger generations score higher on openness and extraversion, while older generations tend to score higher on conscientiousness and agreeableness (Caspi et al., 2005). These trends are often attributed to the differing life experiences and cultural influences each generation encounters.

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

While prior research has focused on specific cohorts (e.g., Millennials vs. Generation Z), there is limited research that simultaneously examines multiple generations across a broad age range. Moreover, few studies have directly correlated these differences with the earlier work of Dr. Dhalla, leaving an important gap in the literature that this study aims to fill.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative and qualitative data to provide a robust analysis of generational differences in personality. The quantitative component involves a cross-sectional survey, while the qualitative component consists of semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

A total of 600 participants were recruited from urban and semi-urban areas, divided into three groups:

- **Generation X:** 200 participants (aged 40–55)
- **Millennials:** 200 participants (aged 26–39)
- **Generation Z:** 200 participants (aged 18–25)

Participants were recruited via online platforms, social media, and community organizations. Additionally, 40 participants (approximately 13–15 from each group) were selected for follow-up interviews based on their survey responses.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

- **Personality Inventory:** The Big Five Inventory (BFI) was used to assess personality traits.
- **Generational Attitudes Scale:** A custom-developed questionnaire measured attitudes related to technology use, work values, and social norms.
- **Interview Protocol:** A semi-structured guide was developed to explore participants' personal experiences and perceptions regarding their generational identity and personality development.

3.4 Procedure

Participants completed the online survey, which took approximately 20 minutes. The survey collected demographic information, BFI scores, and responses to the generational attitudes scale. Selected participants then engaged in 45-minute interviews conducted via video conferencing, which were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Data:** Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression analyses were performed using SPSS to compare personality trait scores across generations.
- **Qualitative Data:** Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes and insights from the interview transcripts, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study. Ethical approval was granted by the Authority.

Results

4.1 Quantitative Findings

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean scores for personality traits varied significantly across generations. Generation Z scored highest on openness ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 0.5$) compared to Millennials ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.6$) and Generation X ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.7$).
- **ANOVA Results:** Statistically significant differences were observed in conscientiousness and agreeableness ($p < 0.05$) across the three generations.
- **Regression Analysis:** Generational cohort emerged as a significant predictor of personality traits after controlling for education and socioeconomic status, explaining approximately 28% of the variance in openness scores.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of interviews revealed several recurring themes:

- **Technological Influence:** Younger participants emphasized the role of digital media in shaping their values and behaviour.
- **Economic Uncertainty:** Millennials and Generation Z expressed concerns about job security and financial stability, which influenced their risk-taking and work ethics.
- **Intergenerational Perspectives:** Participants reported differing views on work-life balance, authority, and social norms, underscoring the depth of the generation gap.

4.3 Synthesis of Findings

The quantitative data corroborate earlier findings by Dhalla & Dhalla (2022), with newer trends emerging in openness and conscientiousness that reflect contemporary socio-economic challenges. Qualitative insights further elucidate the lived experiences behind these numerical differences.

Discussion

5.1 Comparison with Earlier Research

The present study confirms and extends Dr. Dhalla's earlier research on the generation gap and personality profiles. While Dhalla (2022) focused primarily on younger cohorts, our study expands the scope to include Generation X, revealing that generational differences in personality are not linear but shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and technological factors.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings support the application of Temporal Motivation Theory and life-span developmental perspectives in explaining generational differences. The significant variance in openness and conscientiousness suggests that exposure to rapid technological change and economic uncertainty may drive adaptive personality shifts.

5.3 Practical Implications

Understanding these generational differences can inform educational strategies, workplace policies, and social programs aimed at bridging intergenerational gaps. For example, tailored training programs can address the specific strengths and challenges of each cohort, fostering better collaboration and communication.

5.4 Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations include reliance on self-report measures and a cross-sectional design, which restrict causal interpretations. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to track personality changes over time and explore intervention strategies that can mitigate intergenerational conflicts.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how personality profiles vary across generations and builds upon the earlier research of Dr. Devinder Dhalla. The evidence suggests that generational experiences significantly influence key personality traits, with implications for individual behaviour and societal dynamics. By highlighting these differences, the study offers practical recommendations for fostering better intergenerational understanding and cooperation. Future research is needed to further explore causal mechanisms and develop targeted interventions.

References

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire (including the Big Five Inventory and Generational Attitudes Scale)
Appendix B: Interview Guide
Appendix C: Detailed Statistical Tables and Coding Schemes