

## **MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE DIVERSITY VIA COMMUNICATION: A CATALYST FOR EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the relationship between communication and employee outcomes in Deposit Money Banks in South-South, Nigeria. The purpose was to examine the relationship between multigenerational communication and employee outcomes. The secondary data collection method was utilized. The data collected was based on extant literature and based on the data collected, the findings revealed that communication differences significantly impact employee work outcomes in diverse ways, therefore, based on the findings, the study concluded that there is a significant relationship between multigenerational communication and employee outcomes of deposit money banks in south-south, Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommended that organizations should adopt flexible communication strategies that accommodate the preferences of different age groups is essential. Providing a variety of communication channels, including face-to-face interactions, digital platforms, and traditional methods, allows employees to choose the mode of communication that best suits their needs and comfort levels.

**Keywords:** Multigenerational communication, Employee outcomes, Employee Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality

### **INTRODUCTION**

There was a time when organizations were solely made up of people with the same cultural, background, communication channel preference, and work values. But the same cannot be said for today's organizations, because organizations today are made up of different generations, who share striking similarities and differences working side by side to achieve organizational goals. These differences amongst employees sometimes may lead to conflicts when not managed properly but when harnessed could lead to a lot of favorable outcomes for employees. It is with Sunkuli (2017), posted that it is patient to understand how different generations approach work to ensure the effectiveness of each generation in the workplace. However, organizations that employ diverse workforce often support employees by creating an inclusive atmosphere, in which team respects one another's backgrounds and encourages equal input from all individuals.

A generation is a "group of individuals who share a similar worldview, resulting from exposure to common social and historical events occurring within the same times throughout their formative year" (crumpacker & crumpacker, 2007). However, it is not surprising to see people from different generations working together in today's organizations leading to what we call the multigenerational workforce. Multigenerational workforce diversity *is* defined as two or more generations working side by side (Cheeseman & Downey, 2012; Hansen & Leuty, 2012). With this in view, the study defined multigenerational workforce diversity management as the process of managing the differences and similarities of different generations working together within an organization to achieve corporate goals. One of the demographic changes occurring

in the workplace is the presence of four different generations working together (Chekwa, Chukwuanu, & Richardson, 2013).

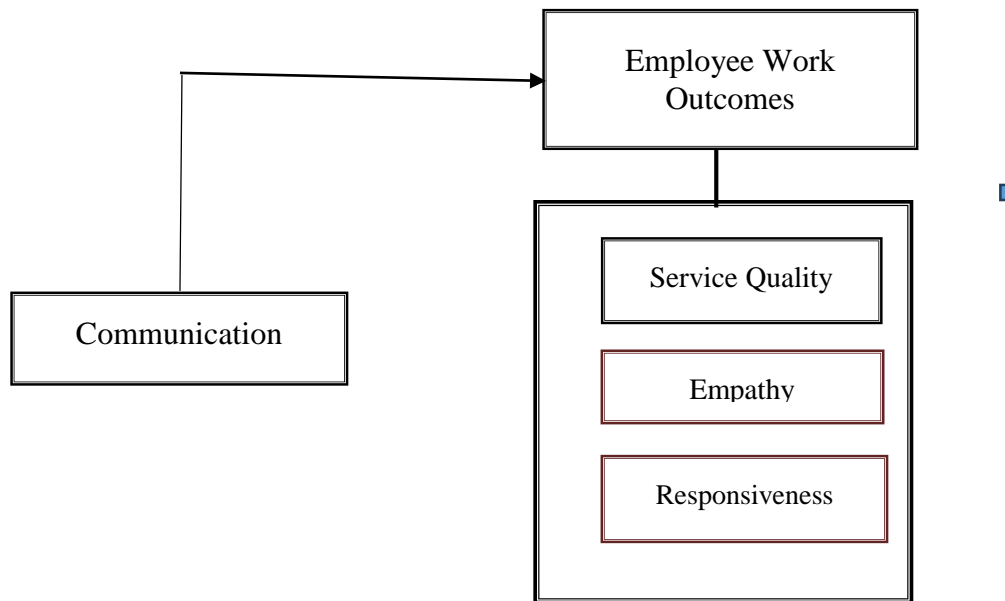
Employee outcomes reflect the extent to which employees have been valued and managed in the organization. Organizational efforts in the area of incentive schemes such as promotion, recognition, career development, and fringe benefits have been directed towards employee outcomes (employee commitment, employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior). These efforts may vary due to different perceptions of how employees should be managed in the organization, especially in the area of incentives. In the banking sector, just like in other sectors of the economy, employees are seen as critical factors in the growth and sustainability of firms. In the rapidly changing competitive work environment, organizations are increasingly faced with the need to get engaged in innovative work behaviors to get enduring competitive work advantage and deliver newly developed products. Changing surroundings, access of the people to the information, changing demands of the clients, new and advanced technology, and rapidly changing circumstances play an important role in today's expanding world. Rapidly changing hierarchical needs and demands of the customers and suppliers put a great deal of emphasis on employees' innovative work behavior nowadays (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003; Yukl, 2002). To meet this challenge, successful organizations, nowadays, prefer to hire innovative employees (Ramamoorthy, et al. 2005). Getz and Robinson (2003) reported that eighty percent of ideas in the organization are generated by innovative employees. In today's modern workplace, there is a dramatic shift in the composition of the workforce. A new generation is entering the workplace. Young professionals occupy a major portion of companies' human resources. This new generation called the Minellians or Generation Y is roughly twice the size of the older generation called the Generation X or baby boomers.

The combination of Generation Y with Generation X and the older generations in the workplace creates real challenges for HR as their characteristics are markedly different. The attitude and characteristics of the new generation Y set them apart from the other generations and thus create new challenges for the Human Resource Managers. Organizations are faced with the challenge of a diversified workforce, employees in an organization are cut across four different generations which makes them different from each other due to their different upbringings. Nicholas, (2011) notes that organizations are faced with the challenges of identifying and understanding the various expectations of the different generation cohorts in the workplace. The management needs to understand the various ways of approaching work for each generation to ensure the effectiveness of each generation present in the workplace. The notable differences found across this generation are the work value, communication and motivation, individual expectation and values correlated directly with their performance at work (DelCampo, Haggerty, & Knippel, 2017).

The new generations entering the workplace have to get along with the already generations that got into the workforce earlier. They encounter already established work formulas, work values, culture, and communication channels among other work practices. This makes it difficult for them to come and fit in in the workplace since they carry different ideologies that they are

comfortable working with. More often, because of these differences, there are conflicts in the workplace between the different generations. The organization should create an inclusive environment at work that will accommodate each generation's cohorts that form part of its workforce. Team spirit and unity among the generations' cohorts should be fostered to utilize the various strengths found in these groups for the benefit of organizational performance.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** Conceptual framework of the relationship between managing multigenerational workforce diversity via communication: a catalyst for employee outcomes

**Source:** Researcher conceptualization

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept of communication

Communication according to Ince and Gul (2011) communication is the exchange of ideas, emotions, and opinions through letters, words, and symbols among two or more people. Consequently, But Ikoromasoma, Tamunomiebi, and Dedea (2023) defined communication as the exchange of information clearly and honestly from one party called the encoder(sender) to another party called the decoder(receiver) through the use of signs, symbols, and words to be understood. Communication enables employees to feel valuable to an organization which may improve loyalty and productivity. Ikoromasoma et al. 2023). According, the absence of effective communication within an organization causes a lot of problems and some of these problems are less committed employees, increased employee turnover, reduced loyalty, and poor morale. Broom,

Communication could be internal or external; communication is internal According to Vercic et al. (2012) when it involves the “exchange of information and ideas amongst employees or members of an organization to build trusting and open relationships and to create

understanding”. Whereas, Ikoromasoma et al. (2023) see external communication as the exchange of information by an organization to those outside the organization. This means that when organizations communicate with their customers, investors, partners, and communities they are said to be utilizing external communication. Whichever form the organization decides to utilize depends on the situation therein. That is, organizations utilize internal communication forms when they want to exchange or share information with their employees or when employees want to share information with another employee. However, they utilize the external when they want to share or exchange information with those outside the organization such as their external stakeholders; customers, and suppliers. Whichever form organizations use it; it is imperative to note that communication is a vital aspect of every organization.

Organizations are made up of different generations that make up the diverse workforce and these generations communicate differently which is most likely to result in conflict due to communication gap that may emerge due to these differences. With this in view, Reitman (2013) posited that each generation communicates differently and organizations will need to learn how to connect with their diverse workforce in ways that honor generational preferences. Therefore, Recognizing, understanding, and respecting the communication differences of the four generations is essential to effectively lead a multi-generational workforce (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Throckmorton (2007) these differences may impact the way people act in teams, and often miscommunication can lead to team members working concurrently but not collaboratively. Nevertheless, whether one speaks of written or spoken communication; verbal or nonverbal communication; face-to-face or digital communication, the process of communication involves humans making meaning together (Stewart, 2002b). Huggins (2010) claims that miscommunications and misunderstandings are causing significant problems in recruitment, talent management, team interactions, customer relations, and organizational dynamics, and at the core of these issues is the fact that leaders are now faced with a multigenerational workplace, one that does not think the same way. Therefore, the management of organizations must pay considerable attention to harnessing these communication differences amongst the different generations that make up their workforce to enable them to perform effectively and efficiently.

Many researchers report poor communication and other organizational issues that can lead to conflict between generationally diverse employees (Arsenault, 2004). But the disparities today are deeper and more complex, making it harder for workers of various ages to communicate (Kersten, 2002). People communicate based on their generational backgrounds and each generation has different attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits, and means by which they are motivated (Hayes, 2013). This shows that the generational differences amongst generations in an organization can impact the organization because different generational cohorts communicate using different styles that are born out of their respective preferences. This sums up the fact that each generation has a certain communication style that needs to be considered when managing a diversified workforce (Aker, 2009). Accordingly, these communication styles may vary according to generations (Holtsnider & Jaffe, 2012). Also, varied perspectives can drive improvements to organizational processes through increased communication and coordination. Diverse workplaces commonly encourage open communication and diverse communication styles can encourage more opportunities for collaboration, asking questions,

and providing input. And it is essential for building trust between employees. In an organization where there is effective communication, there is performance. Wrench, (2013) stated that an organization that invests in developing a culture of communication experiences improved productivity and innovation.

### **Concept of Service Quality**

Service quality is a broad concept and trying to give a complete definition would only be a waste of time considering different customers perceive what is quality from different perspectives this has led to the numerous measures and definitions of service quality without a single consensus (Eshghi et al., 2008). Huang (2009) defined service quality as the overall impression of consumers on a service. Accordingly, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gramler (2009) state that service quality is a customer's perception of the service component of a product, and is also an important determinant in achieving customer satisfaction. Similarly, service quality is considered as an evaluation of the expected service and what is received (Saleem & Raja, 2014). According to Malik et al. (2012), service quality is an opinion about what consumers feel about the whole given by the company to customers. Service quality is "an attitude or general judgment of customers concerning the supremacy of a service" (Koozehchian et al., 2011). Additionally, Ikoromasoma and Echendu (2024) see service quality as "the perceived perception of service rendered as opposed to actual expectations". The idea of service quality was proposed in the 1980s when the organization understood that only quality product maintains a competitive edge (Boshoff & Gray, 2004). According to Tsoukatos and Mastroianni (2010), customers compare actual services with their expectations, which are shaped by prior experience, memories, and or word of mouth. Tjiptono and Chandra (2012) define service quality as a measure of how well the level of service provided is in line with customer expectations. According to Wijaya (2011), the quality of service is a measure of how well the level of service provided can meet customer expectations, with the maximum level of service provided to provide customer satisfaction.

### **Empathy**

Customers are unique and special and their needs must be understood by the organization. Thus, by understanding customer's needs, organizations must strive to put themselves in the shoes of their customers and show personal interest in providing solutions to the problems they are faced with. Empathy is generally conceptualized and measured as a multidimensional construct within service quality, using measures from the SERVQUAL model (Galeeva, 2016; Parasumaran et al., 1988; Umasuthan et al., 2017). Therefore, According to Khanh Duy (2021), Empathy relates to individualized attention and care to each customer, making the best effort to see and acknowledge their viewpoint. According to Cavana et al. (2007), empathy is the ability of employees to pay attention to consumers individually, including sensitivity to consumer needs. According to Kashif et al. (2015), empathy is a level of care that is extended to customers. Cited in Choudhury et al. (2020) Empathy is "a person's ability to sense another's thoughts feelings, and experiences, to share another's emotional experience, and to react to the observed experiences of another person" (Wieseke et al., 2012). Ananth et al. (2011) referred to empathy as giving individual attention; convenient operating hours; giving personal attention; best interest at heart and understanding customers' specific needs.

Empathy is the key to any positive relationship, serving as a mechanism to foster connectedness (Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2012) with customers and organizations alike. This connectedness leads to the continuous use of banking services by its customers (Van Iwaarden et al., 2003; Lo et al., 2010; Nupur 2010; Santhiyavalli, 2011; Shanka, 2012; Devi & Ramburuth, 2012). Empathy is an important psychological phenomenon, and in the service marketing literature, it is a key factor for successful interactions between customers and frontline employees (FLEs) (Davis et al., 2017). Empathy helps in building positive emotions toward the brand (Lee et al., 2011). Employees' ability to understand customer emotions, and expectations, and respond accordingly in coordination with appropriate interactive behaviors increases loyalty towards the brand (Jones & Shandiz, 2015). Ilyas (2013) and Rajalakshmi (2016) found that empathy is one of the most significant factors considered by customers while assessing service quality. Empathy helps in bringing customer satisfaction (Lau et al., 2013; Hamzah et al., 2017). Ganguli and Roy (2011) claim that a positive correlation does exist between empathy and customer satisfaction. He also realized that without empathy customers will remain dissatisfied with service quality. Empathic employees can provide personalized assistance to customers (Wieseke et al., 2012) resulting in higher customer satisfaction. The empathetic employee develops a long-lasting relationship between customers and the brand (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015; Itani & Inyang, 2015). According to Karatepe (2011), there is a positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction. He noted that customer loyalty could be easily captured through empathy.

### **Responsiveness**

The process in which service providers react quickly to resolve customer problems positively within a given time is called responsiveness. In the same vein, it is the ability of employees to provide services quickly and responsively (Cavana et al., 2007). Responsibility is the behavior of employees in the organization to act on time and convey information following consumer needs (Holweg, 2005; Pitafi et al., 2019). According to Kashif et al. (2015), responsiveness is the accuracy of the company in handling customer complaints. According to Yousuf (2017), responsiveness shows how efficiently a company handles customer questions and provides solutions to their problems. Munusamy et al. (2010) state that responsiveness is the desire of employees or staff to help customers and provide good service and responses. Responsiveness is the readiness and willingness of the company to provide services at certain moments to customers (Arsanam & Yousapronpaiboon, 2014).

Customers highly appreciate providing service promptly; this aspect should be understood by good service providers (Iqbal et al., 2010). Saad Andaleeb & Conway (2006) state that responsiveness has a positive effect on consumer satisfaction. This means that the higher the responsiveness which consists of the willingness and speed of employees in providing services to customers without having to be asked by customers, customer satisfaction will increase (Ngaliman et al., 2019). This follows the view of Robert and Wowor (2011) that responsiveness can create satisfaction for customers and repeat transactions.

### **Empirical Reviews**



Qasim (2017) investigated the effect of workforce diversity on employee job performance: The empirical assessment of the education sector, Jalalabad, Afghanistan. The purpose was to determine the effect of workforce diversity on employee job performance. The population of the study consisted of 260 employees and students of selected higher institutions in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. Data were collected with the use of a questionnaire and data collected were analysed regression analysis and SPSS 20.0 and Microsoft Excel. The findings revealed that workforce diversity has a significant effect on employee's job performance. Based on these findings, the study concluded that there is a positive and strong relationship between workforce diversity and employee job performance.

Watson (2018) explored generational differences in communication styles and work values among teachers in South Texas. The aim was to identify if there is a difference in communication style across generations. A quantitative research design was adopted with a cross-sectional survey approach. The population consisted of teachers of selected campuses in Urban/suburban school districts in South Texas city. Data were collected via the framework of message sensitivity and work value questionnaires. Data collected were analyzed with a multinomial logical regression tool and SPSS 20.0. The findings revealed that differences do exist in communication styles amongst different generations but not in all situations. Therefore, the study concluded that organizations should develop strategies to synchronize these differences to their benefits.

Sunkuli (2017) investigated the effect of multigenerational workforce diversity on organizational performance: A case study of the National Hospital Insurance Fund. The aim was to examine the effect of work value, communication, and cultural differences on multigenerational workforce and organizational performance. The study adopted the descriptive research design and the population of the study consisted of 80 employees of the NHIF. Data was collected via the use of a questionnaire and data collected were analyzed with inferential and descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between work values, communication, and cultural differences in employee performance. therefore, the study concluded that work value, communication style, and cultural differences all affect performance.

Mwangi (2014) investigated the effect of a multigenerational workforce on employee productivity: A case study of Kenya Electricity Generation Company. The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of a multigenerational workforce on employee productivity. A case study research design was adopted and the population of the study consisted of 2049 employees of Kengen. The questionnaire was used for data collection and data collected were analyzed with one-way ANOVA and SPSS 20.0. The study findings revealed that there is a significant effect between multigenerational workforce on employee productivity. Based on these findings, the study concluded that multigenerational differences play a critical role in employee productivity.

## **METHODS**

The study adopted the secondary data collection method and data were collected from the relevant empirical and non-empirical articles, journals, newspapers, and government sources. Data collected were intensively revived to gather the needed information for this study to

identify and proffer solution on the relationship between managing multigenerational workforce diversity via communication: a catalyst for employee outcomes

### CONCLUSION

Based on the Literature review, communication significantly impacts employee work outcomes in diverse ways, spanning productivity, job satisfaction, collaboration, and overall organizational effectiveness. Through an exploration of various dimensions of communication disparities across generations, it becomes evident that acknowledging and addressing these differences is essential for fostering a harmonious and productive work environment.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Work organizations should adopt flexible communication strategies that accommodate the preferences of different age groups is essential. Providing a variety of communication channels, including face-to-face interactions, digital platforms, and traditional methods, allows employees to choose the mode of communication that best suits their needs and comfort levels

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