iGen Making its Way Towards the Workspaces—A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The organisations in the corporate world are bound to face numerous challenges on regular basis. Various generations are working in the organisations at the same time and this generational diversity poses an avoidable challenge for the organisations irrespective of the nature of the industry and location.

Purpose: The author aims to answer the following questions in the article: (a) whether iGen is significantly diverse from the other previous generational cohorts, (b) to determine the themes and contexts in which generational diversity and iGen have been studied, (c) to identify the gaps in the existing literature regarding the study of generational diversity and iGen and (d) to determine the future scope for the researchers to study regarding generational diversity and iGen.

Methodology: Scopus database has been used in this study and 60 articles have been picked out from the database of 791 articles for the review. TCCM framework has been utilised for this study.

Keywords

iGen, generational diversity, TCCM, Gen Z

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Introduction

Organisations in the current era consist of various generational cohorts positioned on a variety of job roles. At present, majority of the job positions are found to be taken by the employees belonging to the two generations, that is, Generation X and Millennials. These two generations have been profoundly studied by many researchers.

Generation X was named by a novelist Doug Coupland (Howe & Strauss, 1992). The individuals whose birth year lies between 1963 and 1981 are considered to be a part of Generation X (Fry, 2018). Generation Y or Millennials comprise the individuals whose birth years lies between 1981 and 1995 (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Akçay, 2022). The upcoming generation, Generation Z or iGen, is the population whose birth year lies between 1995 and 2012 (Pichler et al., 2021).

Gen X and Gen Y have already been studied profoundly (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021), while the literature is scarce about iGen. Neil Howe and William Strauss (1992) explained in their generational theory that individuals who took their birth in a particular time frame are considered to belong to the same generation. Individuals of a generation are found to have some similarities between themselves. However, their values and characteristics are different from other generations due to their differing experiences and exposures (Verlinden, n.d.). Generational diversity refers to the diversity that originates from the fact that many generations work simultaneously in an organisation. This article aims to study the generational diversity by reviewing the existing literature.

Contextual Background

Generations

A well-known sociologist named Karl Mannheim is credited for proposing the term 'Generation'. He recommended that generation is a bunch of individuals whose birth year lies in a range and who have shared and encountered similar situations and circumstances (Mannheim, 1993). On the basis of generational theory, researchers have stated that individuals have been grouped and classified as belonging to the same generation, if they have encountered similar experiences and events in the initial years after their birth and during the developmental stages of their lives (Jung et al., 2021; Ryder, 1965). Researchers emphasised that the labels of generation can be viewed as a component of individual's identity. The term 'Cohort' describes the generational group that shares the birth year and has faced identical historic events (Joshi et al., 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

iGen

Individuals who belong to the generational cohort of iGen are found to be born between 1995 and 2010. Occasionally, this generation is labelled by a number of titles, that is, Gen Z, 'Me', Generation and Digital Natives (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Pichler et al., 2021).

Several features of iGen are emphasised in the literature. Such characteristics suggest that iGen is a generation that grew up in an era where technology and the internet were commonplaces and easily available. Their entire lives they have been using technology for a variety of activities, including everyday tasks, communication and enjoyment. They frequently use internet-based educational tools for improving their skills. This encourages the development of individualistic work-related behavioural preferences and it contributes in their inclination towards more individualistic approach over social approach of working. They encounter difficulties when collaborating in groups within the companies (Pichler et al., 2021). This generation places a strong emphasis on accomplishments. iGen seems to be more accepting of diversity and inclusion than previous generations. However, there is an increased possibility that they may experience mental health issues (Pichler et al., 2021; Schroth, 2019). Researchers have found and stated that iGen has the need to feel appreciated and encouraged by organisations (Pichler et al., 2021). According to research, iGen is more likely to use organic items than plastic ones. Since they do not hurt the environment (Dangelico et al., 2010; Jain et al., 2006), their green consumption, behaviour and values are positively impacted by their awareness of issues, concern for the environment and green knowledge (Nguyen et al., 2022). iGen has the need to feel worthy for the organisations to motivate themselves to broaden their knowledge and skill inventory (Pichler et al., 2021).

Many researchers have noted that the primary source of puzzlement exists in the birth year when it comes to assigning labels of the generational cohort (Prund, 2021). It is demonstrated in Table 1 how various authors employed varying years while labelling the generations.

Generational Diversity

Generational diversity refers to the diversity based on the birth-year identifiable groups that is termed as generations in the organisations. It is those rare times in the history that the workspaces have a rising mix of independent generational groups working simultaneously in the organisations (Ballone, 2007; Haynes, 2011).

According to generational theory, each generation has distinctive expectations, experiences and history that reflect generations' lifestyles and attitudes (Strauss &

Table 1. Generation Labels and Birth Year Range Utilised by Distinct Researchers.

Source/ Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y/ Millennials	iGen
De Toro et al. (2019)	1955–1969	1970–1981	1982–1992	1992–onwards
Gabrielova and Buchko (2021)	1946–1963	1963–1981	1981–1996	1996–onwards
Ganguli et al. (2022)	1945–1965	1965–1979	1980–1995	1995–onwards

Howe, 1991). Each generation bring their own unique flavour and bunch of characteristics and values into the organisation (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

At present, one of the crucial challenges faced by the organisations and the workplaces is generational diversity (Prund, 2021). However, diversity in terms of generations is essential for the organisations to face highly competitive, dynamic and ambiguous scenarios in the marketplace and the industry (Amayah & Gedro, 2014).

Age diverseness is said to impact various organisational HR procedures including management of disputes, personnel training, development of the career paths and workforce retention, channels of knowledge sharing and remuneration policies (Williams, 2016). iGen behaves, feels and functions differently from the previous generations (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Methodology

This study aimed to explore the concept of generational diversity in the workplace keeping iGen under the lens. In order to study the existing themes and to determine the unexplored areas, it was recommended to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) and theory, context, characteristics and methodology (TCCM) framework has been selected. It has been highlighted that the change in context brings the change in other aspects of the similar research topic, especially related to human resource (Zehetner et al., 2022) which makes TCCM even more efficient for an SLR study. The database selected for this study was Scopus, since it sizably covers the publications across a variety of disciplines.

Stage 1: Acquisition

The acquisition process initiated with using the Google Scholar in order to obtain a good keyword combination. 'Generation Z' and 'Generational Diversity' were typed one after the other to explore the other keywords which are widely used interchangeably for these words. The search string used in the search of documents on the Scopus has been mentioned in Table 2 (Eldridge, 2023; Woodward et al., 2015). The search produced 791 articles.

Table 2. Search String.

Database	Search String Keywords
Scopus	'Generational Diversity' OR 'Intergenerational differences' OR 'Generational Differences' OR 'Intergenerational Diversity' OR 'Generation in the workplace' OR 'Gen Z' OR 'GENERATION Z' OR 'iGen' OR 'Homelanders' OR 'Digital Natives' OR 'Gen Zers' OR 'Zoomers' OR 'iGeneration' OR 'centennials' OR 'post-millennials' AND 'Diversity' OR 'Inclusion' OR 'Equity'

Stage 2: Selection of the Articles

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the selection of the articles included document type and language. The details about the inclusion and exclusion criteria have also been given in Table 3. To keep the scope of this study wide we have not put any constraints on the years of the published articles. We came down to 215 articles after the selection of the articles stage.

Stage 3: Purification and Screening

In this stage of purification and screening, the articles are extracted on the basis of relevance for the study. The articles were screened in detail and selected the ones which are relevant considering the objectives of this research study. After the extraction of the outliers, 59 articles which were found to be relevant.

Discussion

This study focussed on 59 articles for the analysis purpose using TCCM framework. The descriptive analysis followed by the TCCM framework analysis has been discussed. The description for the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the research article is given in Table 3. The articles were selected on the basis of the language, type of document, publishing stage and suitability.

On the Basis of Time

The descriptive analysis shows us that the trend of research on the topics related to iGen and generational diversity has been increasing exponentially with time. The published articles range from 2014 to 2023 (till the month of July). The number of articles has been increasing to highest, that is, 11 articles in 2022 which can be seen clearly in Figure 1.

On the Basis of Place

Our study shows that a large number of articles have not mentioned the country which was focussed in their study. However, the United States of America turned out to be the country where many researches focussing on either generational diversity or iGen or both have been conducted ($n = 7$). The detailed description about the studies taking place in numerous countries has been given in Figure 2.

On the Basis of the Industry

Our study indicates that a large number of studies were conducted in education sector or industry ($n = 17$). Following the trend and to ensure that the studies can be generalised, researchers have conducted their research considering multiple

Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

| Specification	Inclusion	Reason	Exclusion	Reason
Semantic	English	It is considered as universally accepted language and majority of journals favour it	Other languages	The translation accuracy can be weak and translating the exact meaning can be a tough and laborious
Time	All included	To study the trend of the importance of the subject over the years	None	–
Document type	Article	To thoroughly cover the topic and subject area	Book, book series and conference proceedings	Book and book series do not proceed via anonymous peer review which makes them less reliable. Conference proceedings will submit to a journal for publishing
Publishing stage	Final	It ensures reliability of the documents	Article in press	They may undergo more changes which may have significant impact on their results
Access	All open access	To ensure all the articles are included which exists on Scopus	None	–
Suitableness	Articles which cover generational diversity and Gen Z (iGen)	To ensure the relevant articles are included to achieve research objective	Articles which are completely unrelated to this study	Articles which do not emphasise iGen and generational diversity. The articles which are not related to the study
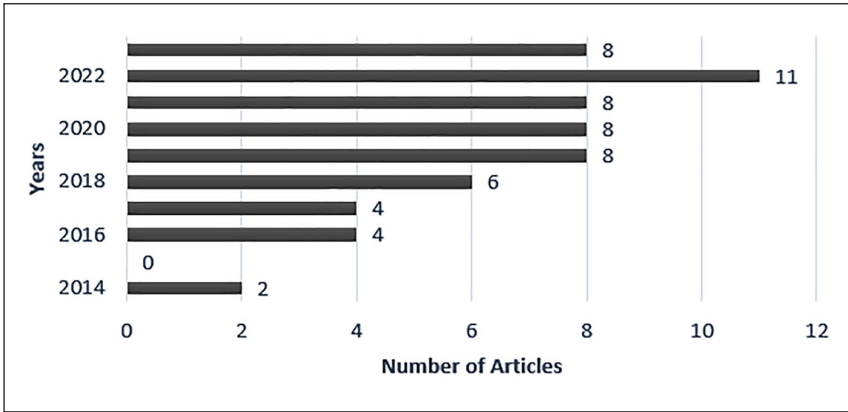
Figure 1. Year-wise publications.
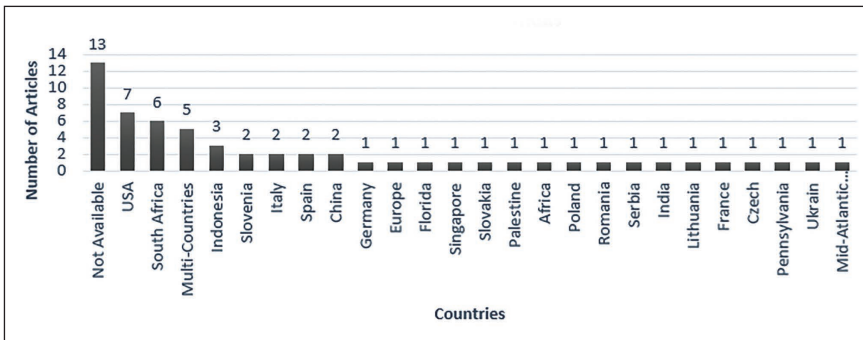
Figure 2. Country-wise publications.

industries ($n = 13$). The details about the studies conducted in various industries over time have been depicted in Figure 3.

Analysis on the basis of TCCM Framework

TCCM categorises the research arena into four dimensions: theory, context, characteristic and methodology (Chauhan et al., 2021; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019). This section highlights the theme which had been used to explore about the topic. It also showcases mainly in which context this topic has been studied, the characteristics such as the variables used and methodology adopted by researchers to achieve the objectives. This section also consists of the dimensions for the future research which will contribute in expanding the boundaries of the literature of the topic.
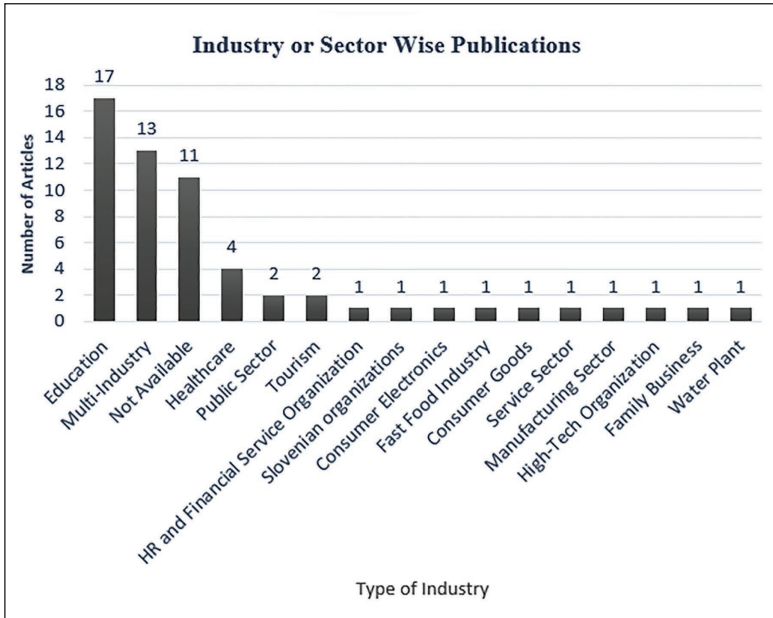
Figure 3. On the basis if industry: Industry or Sector-wise publications.

Theories

Theory is the first aspect which is studied while following the TCCM framework. It was discovered that various theories have been considered by the researchers depending upon the scope and context of the research study. However, theory of generations is anchored in the majority of the articles. Other theoretical arenas adopted by the researchers are social exchange theory, theory of plant behaviour and self-determination theory. The details about the theories that have been used in the various articles have been showcased in the supplementary material.

Theory of Generations.

The seminal work conducted by Mannheim (1952) indicates that generations are categorised on the basis of the common time of birth. Generational cohort theory also describes that the generations who are exposed to identical events and experiences will have identical set of characteristics and behavioural patterns (Inglehart, 1997).

Context

The sample of this research study indicates that the research was conducted in the developing countries and the developed countries regarding generational diversity, iGen or both. The research on these topics was were majorly conducted in the European continent ($n = 17$). However, on the country level, majority of the

research studies were conducted focussing the population of USA ($n = 7$). Researchers have also focussed in conducting studies in the multi-countries (i.e. 5%) with the aim of generalising the results. The geographical context found to be missing from a significant number of studies ($n = 13$).

The results of this research study indicates that various industries and sectors have been focussed by the researchers like healthcare, public sector, manufacturing sector and family business. for conducting the research regarding the topic. It was found that education sector has been focussed the most for conducting the research ($n = 17$). About 22% of the sample studies have been conducted keeping multiple industries and sectors as the centre of attention.

The following themes were reflected in the research articles: intergenerational difference, generational diversity, sustainable human resource management, financial behaviour and tourism. The details about the contextual factors that have been focussed in the various articles has been showcased in the supplementary material.

Characteristics

Antecedent

The sample has been analysed and some of the recurring antecedents which were independent in nature came out to be demographic characteristics like age (Kaminska & Borzillo, 2018; Williams, 2016), gender, education (Nnambooze & Parumasur, 2016), social media marketing activities (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022) and intergenerational perspective (Abu Daqar et al., 2020). The details about other antecedents are given in the supplementary material. iGen values have not been considered as antecedents yet which may impact their behaviour and actions in the workspaces. It may be considered for the further research studies.

Consequence

Our analysis indicated that some of the recurring outcomes among the sample of this study are values, behaviour (Qi et al., 2021; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022), job satisfaction (Bachus et al., 2022; Jelenko, 2020; Tan & Chin, 2023), diversity, individualism and technology (Pichler et al., 2021). However, there are some of the consequences like ethical behaviour (Klopotan et al., 2020) and financial behaviour (Abu Daqar et al., 2020). which are context and industry dependent. The details about the remaining dependent variables are given in the supplementary material. Some of the outcomes like attitudes are unexplored in the literature of iGen related generational diversity.

Mediating, Moderating and Control Variables

Mediating variables are responsible to describe the relationship between antecedents and consequences (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Some of the mediating variables utilised by the researchers are brand equity (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022), perceived space, lived space (Kangwa et al., 2021), overconfidence (Tsai et al., 2018) and so on. The details of the remaining existing mediating variables are given in

the supplementary material. Demographic variables can be used to mediate the relationship between iGen characteristics and their impact in workspaces.

Moderating variables refer to the variables which dominates the direction and intensity of the relationship between antecedents and consequences (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Some of the moderating variables discussed are brand awareness (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022), environmental factors (Urick et al., 2016) and self-efficacy of environmental protection (Zhao & An, 2023). The details are given in the supplementary material. Variables like demographic and behavioural have a scope to be studied as moderating variables.

The interconnection between generational diversity focussing iGen and the workspaces can be influenced by the control variables. Researchers highlighted some of the control variables like demographic factors such as age (Klopotan et al., 2020), gender (Figà-Talamanca et al., 2022; Qi et al., 2021; Rahadi et al., 2021), nationality and religion (Roman-Calderon et al., 2019; Tan & Chin, 2023). These factors may have a notable impact on shaping the value system, personality and behavioural patterns of iGen.

Methodology

The results reflect that majority of the studies were conducted with the quantitative approach ($n = 29$). Followed by the research studies which were conducted with the qualitative approach ($n = 20$). Some of the researchers also adopted mixed approach to enhance the accuracy level of the outcomes obtained.

Researchers utilised the primary or the secondary data sources or both to gather the data for their research study. Methods like survey, focus groups and systematic literature review were seen to be used by the researchers. Survey and interview methods were found to be most used methods during the data gathering process.

Probability and non-probability sampling techniques both were adopted by the researchers. The analysis indicates that the sampling techniques like purposive, snowball, nested sampling and stratified sampling were utilised in the sample articles. The details about the various sampling and research designs have been showcased in the supplementary material.

Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis, the conclusion can be made that there is still scope to study generational diversity by adding iGen to the mix of demographic population of the organisations. Studies on iGen and generational diversity exist in the literature but there is an evident gap in combining these two constructs and studying them in the organisational setting.

Implications

iGen is expected to enter the workspaces soon. Some of them have already joined the organisations and a majority of them will soon be a part of the organisations

(Pichler et al., 2021; Schroth, 2019). Generational diversity implies that all the generations are unique. Their exposure and their surrounding contribute towards their value system, priorities and their perception towards the organisations. It is essential for the organisations to understand this generation to fascinate, charm, satisfy and keep their iGen employees. Many researchers have been studying about generational cohorts from a long time. The generations are found to be similar in some aspects but unique in another. The various facets of previous generations have been studied in great detail (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). This article adds another generational cohort, that is, iGen to the mix in order to broaden the scope of generation-based studies. Studying this generational cohort is important because this generation will take a majority of positions in the workspaces soon (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). It is expected that they will impact the organisations and the world. It is important to study the iGen because the future of the society will be in the hands of this generation.

Limitations

While we tried making this review study meaningful and relevant for the researchers but it was not free from a few shortcomings: (a) only TCCM framework has been used for this SLR, (b) the database utilised in the acquisition stage was limited to Scopus, (c) limited and most occurred in articles keywords were used in the acquisition stage (Table 2), (d) the inclusion and exclusion criteria put constraints on the sample.

Future Scope

The study aimed at locating the research gaps and the scope for further research. Some of the limitations of this review study opened the paths for the future researchers. (a) Other methods like bibliometric analysis can be used to further identify the gaps which might have left due to the scope and limitations of TTCM. (b) Other databases like WOS and EBSCO can be used for the future research. (c) More keywords can be added to the keyword combination. (d) The inclusion and exclusion criteria pave the way for further research. They may have a substantial impact on the conclusion. (e) After a span of time, the need for a review study crops up due to the additional contribution of the researchers in the field.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online.

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