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Are Work Attitudes of Generations Myth or Real? Evidence from the United States and Turkey

Sait Gurbuz¹ , Ihsan Aytekin² 

Abstract

Despite the increased attention paid to generational differences especially from practitioners and the popular press, systematic and empirical intergenerational research has been scarce, is largely North American centric, and lacks consistent results. The present study aimed to fill this gap by examining whether differences exist among generations in their key work and organizational attitudes, personal values, and work ethic values in the United States and Turkey. Survey data were gathered from 1019 employees (427 from the U.S. and 592 from Turkey). We found little evidence supporting substantive and significant generational differences or their association with key outcome variables. Furthermore, the U.S. originated classification of generations cannot be generalized to the Turkish business context.

Keywords

Generational differences, Work attitudes, Work ethics, Cohorts

Introduction

In recent years, there is a common belief that the three generational cohorts' (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) work attitudes and personal values are different. These differences pose challenges to practitioners in productively leading their human capital. As Westerman and Yamamura (2007), the investigation of intergenerational differences has been a critical area for human resource management research. Firms should adapt their cultures and work environments to new generations to increase their level of satisfaction and decrease their turnover intention. Therefore, the issue is also critically important to organizations that seek to attract and retain a younger, highly competent workforce (Benson & Brown, 2011). According to one study, nearly 60% of the human resource managers sampled reported that their companies experience intergenerational employee conflict due to generational discrepancies in beliefs and work attitudes (Burke, 2005). Some companies have tailored their workplace practices to the work preferences of the millennial generation (Generation Y). For example, eBay offers meditation therapies; Google provides onsite hairdressing and a laundry

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service; KPMG provides paid leave during the first year of employment; and other companies permit workers to perform volunteer service during work hours (Twenge, 2010). Such programs have been attractive to the younger generation.

There are two problems arising from the generational research that we focused on in this study. The first one is related to generalizability of generational research in the field. Despite an increase in interest in generational diversity, especially among practitioners and the popular press, systematic and empirical intergenerational research has been scarce (Costanza et al. 2012; Gurbuz, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2010). Most relevant research has compared Baby Boomers and Generation X (e.g., Twenge, 2010). However, Generation Y, the youngest generation, has received limited attention. Furthermore, the bulk of intergenerational research has been conducted in the West (Benson & Brown, 2011; Cagin, 2012), with limited research from other regions (Egri & Ralston, 2004). Countries such as Turkey might also be experiencing the effects of intergenerational differences in their workforces; however, it is possible that a common taxonomy or set of labels for the various generational cohorts might not be generalizable across cultures.

The second problem relates to the reliability of hypotheses that have suggested that there are generational differences. Most of the studies have rested on anecdotal information and popular press rather than systematic and empirical research (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). Some researchers have reported that generational differences are real and have an effect on the various variables (e.g. work values, employees' attitudes, and behaviors, etc.) to a specific degree (e.g. McGuire, Todnem & Hutchings, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). Some have reported that intergenerational cohorts are generally in harmony (e.g., Schamm, 2004) while others suggest that generational differences are more myth than reality (e.g., Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Costanza et al., 2012; Gurbuz, 2015). Costanza et al. (2012: p. 391) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis on the effect of generational differences in terms of work-related variables and they conclude that "... the inconsistent pattern of results does not support the hypothesis of systematic differences". Therefore, the question of "are there intergenerational differences?" has arisen from these contradictory results.

The present study aimed to determine if differences exist in key work and organizational attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment and citizenship behavior), personal values, and protestant work ethic (PWE) values between generations, both in the US and Turkey. We selected job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behavior, personal values, and protestant work ethic as outcome variables for two reasons. First, most of these variables are considered to be pivotal work attitudes and behaviors to gain long-term human-based organizational competitive advantage (Gurbuz & Yildirim, 2019; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Second, based on congruence theory, personal values and protestant work values might have a powerful impact on the implementation of management practices (Cagin,

2012; Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Our primary aim here is not to compare the Turkish and US generations, but to compare the differences between the generations of both countries within themselves, and thus to increase generalizability of the study. In doing so, the present study will extend multigenerational theory, empirically testing common beliefs and assumptions concerning generational cohorts and offer numerous recommendations to HRM practitioners for managing their multigenerational workforces. In this cross-cultural study, our primary focus is to examine workforce attitudes and values in three generational cohorts and to investigate whether there are substantial differences.

The U.S. and Turkey were sampled for a couple of reasons. The terminology of generational cohorts comes from the U.S. and most multigenerational research has been conducted in this country. However, recent intergenerational studies have indicated that the U.S. centric generational taxonomy is controversial in terms of generalizability to other cultural contexts is (e.g., Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Gurbuz, 2015). Turkey, on the other hand, is under-represented in the intergenerational literature. The US is considered to dominate the global economy (Barnet & Cavanaugh, 1994) and is viewed as a benchmark for modernization in Turkey. The U.S. and Turkey dramatically differ on the historical, cultural, and economic fronts. The present study provides a good test of intergenerational differences between these contrasting locations.

In the introduction section of the study, we made out a brief summary of the subjects, the gap in the literature, the purpose, and the importance of the study. Next, we explained the multigenerational theory and generational cohorts before developing the hypotheses of the study. The method section contains information about data collection, measurement tools and analysis techniques used. Then, we provide findings in the result section. Finally, we discussed the results in terms of theoretical and practical implications with the study limitations in the discussion section.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Multigenerational Theory

According to generational cohort theory, “a group of people or cohorts who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of critical factors” is defined as a generation (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). Thus, a group of people who encompass similar social, historical, economic, and political events during their childhood is regarded as a generational cohort (see Mannheim, 1952 for a comprehensive review). These common life experiences generally persist during subsequent years among those in a cohort (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Generational cohort theory posits that individuals that mature during the same time period possess a similar set of belief and

preferences, consecutively those preferences affect their work and organizational attitudes and behaviors (Inglehart, 1997).

Despite the lack of consensus among scholars and practitioners concerning specific names/labels and precise birth years that define generations, the four generations which are often addressed in cohort research are: (a) Traditional generation (born before 1945); (b) Boomer generation (born between 1945 and 1965); (c) X Generation (born between 1966 and 1978); (d) Y Generation (born between 1979 and 1990) (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012). As most traditionalists have retired, the present study focused on the three other generational cohorts that are expected to simultaneously be in the workforce. In generational studies, four generations are subject to research.

Baby Boomers

This cohort (also known as Boomers) includes those born between the Second World War and 1965. Baby boomers reached adulthood during a time of unprecedented prosperity, affluence, optimism, and opportunity (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Boomers are characteristically hard working, prioritizing material gain and personal development via their careers (Smola & Sutton, 2002). This generation has a strong sense of business ethics and are loyal to their companies.

In exchange, they expect a good salary, prestige, job guarantee, and career opportunities (Hirsch & Shanley, 1996). Boomers are known for their team work orientation and optimism (Hess & Jepsen, 2009), and put the job at the center of their lives (Smola & Sutton, 2002). In short, they expect the best from life.

Generation X

This cohort (also known as GenXers) includes those born between 1966 and 1979. Compared to Boomers, GenXers tend to value self-employment more than company loyalty (McGuire et al., 2007). In addition, they are more concerned with autonomy and independence, as well as work-life balance. They tend to view work from an action-orientated perspective (Jorgensen, 2003). Instead of valuing money and status, GenXers are encouraged by intrinsic factors such as leisure time, autonomy, and personal freedom (Twenge, 2010). Compared to Boomers, they have weaker work ethic values and desire an informal work environment (Twenge, 2010). GenXers prefer flexible, stimulating, challenging, and interesting jobs. They are described as self-reliant, individualistic, entrepreneurial, risk taking, and comfortable with diversity and change (Egri & Ralston, 2004; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998).

Generation Y

Generation Y is the youngest generation (labeled as GenYers, GenMe, or Millennials) in the workplace. Those in this cohort were born after the late 1970s, although there is a lack of

consensus concerning when this generation begins and ends (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Because GenYers are highly individualistic and self-focused, they have been labeled GenMe. GenYers are typically considered to be technology driven. They think that long-term employment in an organization is improbable; consequently, the probability that their careers will be characterized by a high turnover pattern is high, especially when compared to prior generations (Kim, Knight, & Crutsinger, 2009). This cohort is considered to be collaborative, team-oriented, and results-oriented, preferring to work for managers that value their input (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). They value professional development and prefer to self-manage their careers (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). According to Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), GenYers value a work-life balance and give priority to family and friend relationships. In addition, they seek flexibility and are characterized as independent, self-assured, and self-sufficient (Martin, 2005).

Work Attitudes and Generations

Job satisfaction is one of the key work outcomes in the organizational behavior literature. According to Lock (1976: p.1304) it is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”. A substantial body of research shows that job satisfaction predicts organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, perceived stress, withdrawal behaviors (i.e. absenteeism, voluntary turnover, and tardiness) (Gurbuz & Yildirim, 2019). Organizational commitment is defined as a psychological bond identifying an individual’s affiliation to an institution, which in turn, affect someone’s decision to stay in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1993). Previous studies have reported that organizational commitment correlated with turnover, motivation and involvement, absenteeism, and OCB (Choi, Oh, & Colbert, 2015; Gurbuz, 2009). The third variable OCB is defined as “discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006, p. 3). A similar pattern of relationships has been detected for OCB and these same outcomes (see LePine, Erez, & Johnson, 2002).

The theoretical rationale that explains generational differences in work attitudes is that life experiences, including important life events, have a powerful effect on an individual’s future values and attitudes (McMullin et al., 2007). Daboval (1998) reported that Boomers’ level of organizational commitment is significantly higher than that of GenXers’. In their study on Taiwanese manufacturing firms, Yu and Miller (2005) observed that GenXers gave more importance to job satisfaction and were more loyal to their occupation than Boomers. Jorgensen’s (2003) findings from Australia is consistent with Yu and Miller (2005) result, indicating that this cohort were more inclined to quit their job if they were not satisfied with it (in this case, a defense job) than Boomers. Smola and Sutton (2002) observed that GenXers were less committed to their companies than Baby

boomers. On the other hand, Ferrer, Travaglione, and Firms (2003) did not observe a difference between GenXers and the older generations in terms of their level of affective commitment, although GenX employees exhibited lower continuance commitment and stronger turnover intentions.

In contrast, Wallace (2006) studied lawyers and observed that work effort, and rewards were more related to Boomers' loyalty to their organization, whereas having supportive colleagues was more related to with GenXers' loyalty. In a study that included 2776 Australian workers Benson and Brown (2011) reported that the relationship between organizational commitment and generational cohorts was not significant, which is consistent with Wallace's (2006) findings. A study by Lub et al. (2012) that included 359 hotel employees in the Netherlands reported that GenYers have a significantly lower level of commitment and higher turnover intentions than GenXers.

Research investigating intergenerational differences in OCB is scarce. Raineri, Paille, and Morin (2012) studied 704 Quebec public service employees and reported that Boomers were engaging more OCBs than GenXers do. In a similar vein, Twenge et al. (2008) reported that the younger generations had a lower motivation for altruistic rewards.

On the other hand, some studies have reported that the impact of generational differences on employees' attitudes and behaviours is very slight, and even conflicting. Based on these limited and unclear data, it cannot be claimed that there will be different attitudes and behaviors among different generations (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Constanza et al., 2012; Gurbuz, 2015).

Although the evidence to date is somewhat mixed in this literature, it seems reasonable to surmise that the work attitudes of the older generations (e.g., Boomers) will be higher than the younger generations (e.g., Generation Y). Thus we hypothesized that:

H1: Boomers will have a higher level of job satisfaction than GenXers and GenYers (H1a), a higher level of commitment than GenXers and GenYers (H1b), and a higher level of OCB than GenXers and GenYers (H1c).

H2: GenXers will have a higher level of job satisfaction than GenYers (H2a), a higher level of commitment than GenYers (H2b), and a higher level of OCB than GenYers (H2c).

Protestant Work Ethic Values and Generations

Protestant Work Ethic Values (PWE) are defined as a preference for hard work, avoidance of leisure, independence from others, and asceticism (Furnham, 1990). Although the term PWE was first used in Weber (1958) for protestant culture, it is now used to describe individuals that perceive work at the core of their lives, regardless of religious affiliation

(Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002). PWE values can influence generational work-related preferences, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, earlier research indicated that employees with high PWE values scores gave more importance to the intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic ones (Furnham, 1990). Understanding the PWE values of multiple generations can help organizations design workplace environments that enhance employee motivation and productivity. The present study is based on Blau and Ryan's (1997) PWE operationalization (i.e. hard-working, non-leisure, independence, and asceticism), which is firmly grounded in Weber's theory (1958) and derived from Furnham's (1990) initial study.

Although there is a cliché stating younger generations (GenXers and GenYers) are inclined to work to live and the older generation (Baby Boomers) is more likely to live to work, relevant empirical and systematic research on this issue is limited. Smola and Sutton (2002) reported that the younger generations desire to get ahead more quickly than Boomers do, and do not think that work should be as central to their lives as Boomer do. They suggested that GenXers like to work hard to maximize their individual goals. In addition, they reported that between 1974 and 1999, work ethic values of younger generations were in decline, while that the value of leisure was on the rise. Using a time-lag method, Twenge (2010) observed that GenYers gave more importance to leisure than Boomers and GenXers. They also observed that GenXers value leisure to a significantly greater degree than Boomers. Compared with Boomers, GenXers, and to a greater extent GenYers, place more value on money, prestige, and status. Additionally, they reported that GenYers are significantly less likely to value an intrinsically rewarding job, as compared to GenXers and Boomers. Consistent with these findings, Cogin (2012) reported that the hard working value exhibited a downward trend among GenXers and GenYers. She additionally reported that the most important work value among Boomers is hard work, versus asceticism among GenXers and leisure among GenYers. Although evidence is still mixed, popular conceptions and most prior studies suggest that younger generations do not place value on work ethics. Hence, we hypothesize that:

H3: Boomers will have a higher PWE hard working dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3a), a lower PWE non-leisure dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3b), a higher PWE independent dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3c), and a lower PWE asceticism dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3d).

H4: GenXers will have a higher PWE hard working dimension score than GenYers (H4a), a lower PWE non-leisure dimension score than GenYers (H4b), a higher PWE independent dimension score than GenYers (H4c), and a lower PWE asceticism dimension score than GenYers (H4d).

Personal Values and Generations

Personal values are also likely to differ between generational cohorts. Schwartz (1994, p.29) defined individual values as, “desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance that serve

as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity". Using 97 samples from 44 countries, 10 universal values were identified and four types of second-order values were classified: "openness to change (self-direction, stimulation); conservation (conformity, security, tradition); self-enhancement (achievement, hedonism, power); self-transcendence (benevolence, universalism)" (Schwartz, 1994, p.4). As the relevant literature is limited, only some values (tradition, security, conformity, hedonism, and power) will be examined in the present study.

Life-stage theory reveals that as individuals mature they become more collectivistic, conservative, and self-transcendent (Erikson, 1997); however, a longitudinal research suggests something different. Inglehart (1997) showed that value preferences remain relatively stable throughout the human life cycle. Egri and Ralston (2004) noted that in the US Boomers had significantly higher conservation value scores (e.g. conformity, security, and tradition) than GenXers, whereas GenXers had higher self-enhancement values scores than Boomers. Chinese researchers reported that the Republic Generation (born between 1930 and 1950) had the highest conservation value scores, whereas the Cultural Revolution Generation (born between the early 1960s and the late 1960s) had the highest self-enhancement value scores. Egri and Ralston's (2004, p.211) findings are primarily in agreement with Inglehart's (1997) theory of intergenerational values, which proposes that "generational cohorts that grow up during times of socioeconomic security internalize postmodernist values (e.g. individualism, interpersonal trust, tolerance of diversity, and self-transcendence)". Thus, we hypothesize that:

H5: Boomers will have a higher conservation value score (i.e. conformity, security, and tradition) than GenXers and GenYers.

H6: GenXers will have a higher conservation value score than GenYers.

H7: GenYers will have a higher self-enhancement value score (i.e. hedonism, and power) than Boomers and GenXers.

H8: GenXers will have higher self-enhancement value score than Boomers.

Cross-Cultural Differences in Generations

Popular press literature about the birth years for generational cohorts (e.g. Boomers, GenX, and GenY) have been determined by social, historical, and economic events in the US (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). The terminology of and labeling of generational cohorts are rooted in the US, and not surprisingly, as most multigenerational research originated in the U.S., it then spread to other parts of the world. As all countries have a unique culture, society, economy, and history, the widespread use the U.S.-centric generational classification should be questioned. For example, the U.S. and Turkey have radically different cultures. In general, the U.S. culture tends to assign less value to collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity, whereas Turkish culture tends to assign higher value to collectivism,

power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and femininity (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Additionally, in the U.S. Boomers were born after the Second World War and up to the mid-1960s, but Turkey did not experience a similar increase in the birth rate (baby boom) between 1945 and 1965; hence, generational differences are more prevalent in the US than in Turkey. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H9: Generational differences will be more prevalent in the U.S. than in Turkey.

In sum, the present study aimed to determine if differences exist in key work and organizational attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and citizenship behavior), personal values, and PWE values between generations, both in the U.S. and Turkey. Based on the research hypotheses and multigenerational theory, our research model is depicted in Figure 1.

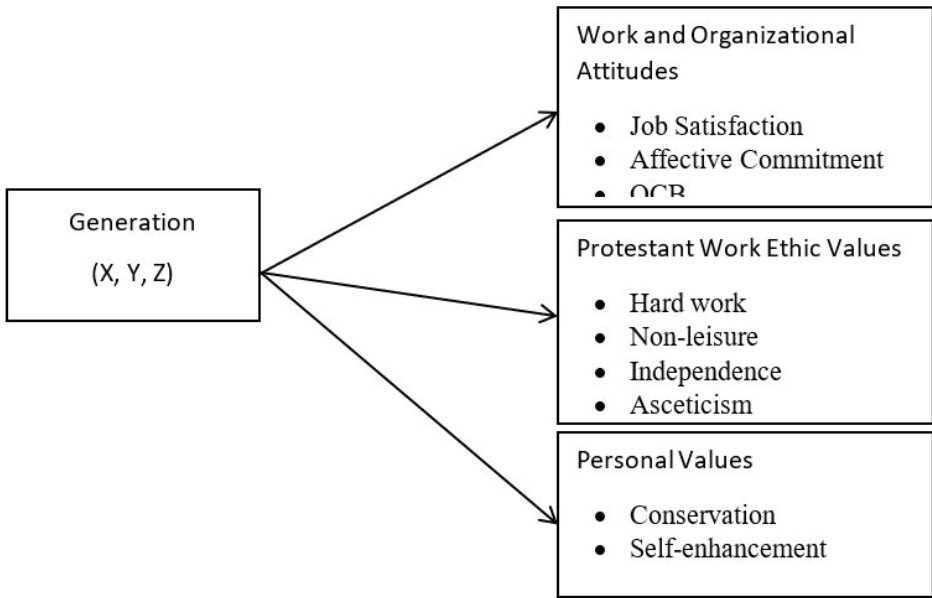


Figure 1. Research Model

Method

Samples and Data Collection

A total of 1019 individuals (427 from the U.S. and 592 from Turkey) voluntarily participated in our study. To ensure sampling equivalence, individuals working in similar organizations in

the US and Turkey were recruited. During the data collection process, the questionnaires were delivered to the participants with a brief explanation about the general purpose of the study and confidentiality of responses. Participants were assured that their responses were confidential and participation in the study was purely voluntary. To ensure anonymity during the data collection process, we asked participants not to write their names on the questionnaire.

US participants were recruited through 2 northeastern college alumni databases, part-time MBA programs, and personal connections to a variety of industries located in western New York State. The US participants anonymously completed the study questionnaire in person or online via a web-based survey portal. US participants were employed in a variety of industries (26% education, 24.4% technology, 21.3% public sector, 15.5% health service, and 12.9% other). Mean age of the US participants was 40.68 ± 12.98 years. Over 55% of the U.S. sample were female.

The Turkish participants were accessed with the help of MBA students that was performed as a part of their course requirements. More specifically, MBA students were asked to collect data in Ankara over the course of 4 semesters. The Turkish participants were employed in a variety of industries (24.7% education, 22.8% technology, 17.9% public sector, 17.4% health service, and 17.2% other). Average age of the Turkish sample was 36.19 ± 10.14 years. Over 41% of the Turkish sample were female.

Variables and Measurements

Generation

There is a lack of consensus among researchers about the precise birth years that define generations. For example, birth years for Boomers have been reported to start between 1940 and 1946 and end between 1960 and 1964. In addition, there is no agreement concerning the birth years for GenX and GenY (Cogin, 2012; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Kopperschmidt, 2000). To overcome this lack of consensus, as Cogin (2012) suggested, participants born in overlapping “grey area birth years” for each generation were excluded from the study. Accordingly, Boomers included those born between 1940 and 1963, GenX included those born between 1966 and 1976, and GenY included those born between 1979 and 1994. The final sample for hypothesis testing included 964 participants (407 from the US and 557 from Turkey). Descriptive statistics for each generational cohort in each country for all study variables are shown in Table 1 and 2.

Work and Organizational Attitudes

We assessed job satisfaction with four items adapted from Brayfield-Rothe (1951). A sample item includes: “*I feel that I am happier in my job than most other people*”. We rated the re-

spondent s' affective commitment with six items taken from Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). A sample item includes: "*I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization*". We measured the participants' OCB with six items adapted from Smith, Organ, and Near (1983). A sample item includes: "*I help others who have been absent*". These scales were used because of their reliability and validity and their widespread use and acceptance. The commitment scale was adapted into the Turkish language by Wasti (2003) while job satisfaction and OCB scales were adapted into the Turkish context by Gurbuz (2015). The reliability coefficient is .82 for job satisfaction, .80 for affective commitment, and .73 for OCB.

Personal values

We measured personal values with 19 items adapted from Schwartz and Bardi (2001). These values were assessed in terms of two higher-order values: conservation (i.e., tradition, conformity, and security) and self-enhancement (i.e., hedonism and power). The conservation variable was computed by averaging the tradition, conformity, and security ratings, and the self enhancement variable was computed by averaging the hedonism and power ratings. Sample items include: "*I believe that people should be satisfied with what they have*" (tradition), "*I really want to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important for me*" (hedonism), "*I want to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong*" (conformity), "*It is important for me to be rich. I want to have a lot of money*" (power), and "*It is very important for me that my country is safe*" (security). The scale was adapted into the Turkish context by Schwartz and Bardi (2001). The reliability coefficient is .74 for conservation and .66 for self-enhancement.

Protestant work ethic values

Work ethic values were measured using a 12-item scale developed by Blau and Ryan (1997). The scale is composed of four subscales: hard work (e.g., "*Hard work makes one a better person*"), non-leisure (e.g., "*Life would be more meaningful if we had more leisure time*"), independence (e.g., "*One should live one's life independent of others as much as possible*"), and asceticism (e.g., "*You cannot take it with you, so you might as well enjoy yourself*"). There are three items for each subscale. Each subscale's items were presented on a five-point scale. The ratings for each subscale were then combined and averaged. The scale was adapted into the Turkish context by Gurbuz (2015). The reliability coefficient (coefficient alpha) is .82 for hard work, .85 for non-leisure, .78 for independence, and .67 for asceticism.

Covariates

We identified gender, marital status, and education as covariates in the analyses. Age was only used to define generational cohorts due to its high correlation with this variable, ($r = -.92$; $p < .001$).

Analytic Strategy

We used confirmatory factor analysis using maximum likelihood estimation with LISREL version 9.20 software (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2015) to verify the distinctiveness of our nine self-rated scales. Results of the proposed nine-factor model (one factor: job satisfaction, one factor: affective commitment, one factor: OCB, four factors: PWE, one factor: conservation, and one factor: self-enhancement) demonstrated good fit with the data, $\chi^2 (N = 964) = 1958.68$ with 284 *df*, $p < .001$, $CFI = .90$, $SRMR = .04$, and $RMSEA = .077$ (Gurbuz & Sahin, 2018). We compared the proposed nine-factor model with several alternative models. Nested model comparisons demonstrated that the proposed nine-factor model had a significantly better fit than the nested models, revealing that self-rated measures were distinct. In addition, Harman's single-factor test was utilized to explore potential common method bias (CMB) among study variables. The results indicated that only 13.30 % of the total variance was explained by the single factor, revealing that CMB is not a serious threat for the present study.

We then used multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) and post hoc group comparisons using the Bonferroni test to test the hypotheses. In these analyses, we utilized the generation cohort groups as the independent variable.

Results

Intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. The correlation coefficients indicate a lack of CMB, which is a potential concern for cross-sectional, self-report survey research (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Table 1 shows that there is no baseline level of correlation among the present study's variables, and not all of the coefficients are significant, revealing a lack of CMB (Spector, 2006).

The means and standard deviations values for all the study variables in each U.S. and Turkish generational cohort are shown in Table 2. MANCOVA was conducted on the Turkish and the U.S. samples separately to determine if there was an overall effect of the generation on job satisfaction, affective commitment, OCB, personal values, and PWE values after the effects of gender, marital status, and education were taken into account. MANCOVA results for the US sample shown in Table 3 indicate that the dependent variables differed significantly between the three generational cohorts, $F(18, 786) = 3.226$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .068$. The effects of the control variables are smaller than the generational factor, with gender accounting for 5.3% of variation ($p < .05$), marital status 4.6% ($p < .05$), and education 2.9% (*n.s.*). The Turkish MANCOVA results in Table 3 also indicate that the dependent variables differed significantly for the generational groups, $F(18, 1088) = 1.987$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .032$. The effects of the control variables are smaller than the generation factor, with gender accounting for 2.8% of variation (*n.s.*), marital status 3% (*n.s.*), and level of education for 2.8% (*n.s.*).

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among the Study Variables

Variables	M		SD		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	M	SD
	Turkey														
1. Job satisfaction	3.52	.84	-	.642**	.550**	.293**	-.093*	.021	-.113**	.380**	-.021	3.49	.92		
2. Affective commitment	3.64	.86	.609**	-	.532**	.321**	-.184**	-.017	-.133**	.372**	.015	3.44	.93		
3. OCB	4.21	.53	.402**	.318**	-	.354**	-.109**	.037	-.111**	.398**	-.042	3.81	.65		
4. Hard working	4.09	.73	.135**	.096*	.228**	-	-.135**	.153**	-.068	.495**	.013	3.54	.95		
5. Non-leisure	3.71	.79	-.082	-.037	-.037	.014	-	.211**	.236**	-.134**	.199**	3.06	.82		
6. Independence	2.51	.86	.074	.001	-.049	.181**	.057	-	.277**	.109**	.240**	3.33	.87		
7. Asceticism	3.02	.84	-.059	-.211**	-.165**	.090	.335**	.238**	-	-.050	.407**	3.34	.87		
8. Conservation	3.68	.451	.132**	.081	.309**	.370**	.103*	.104*	.029	-	.056	3.78	.49		
9. Self-enhancement	2.99	.651	.002	-.087	-.100*	.184**	.292**	.319**	.425**	.026	-	3.22	.68		

Note. n = 407 for the U.S. and 557 for Turkish sample; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 2
Attitudes and Values of the U.S. and Turkish Generational Cohorts: Means and Standard Deviations

Variables	Job satisfaction		Affective commitment		OCB		Hard working		Non-leisure		Independence		Asceticism		Conservation		Self-enhancement		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
U.S.																			
Boomers (n=119)	3.67	.81	3.85	.78	4.34	.46	4.01	.74	3.51	.77	2.53	.80	2.82	.81	3.69	.48	3.08	.61	
GenX (n=114)	3.55	.80	3.74	.86	4.21	.42	3.96	.72	3.73	.72	2.47	.87	2.89	.83	3.62	.41	3.09	.55	
Gen Y (n=174)	3.39	.87	3.41	.85	4.14	.62	4.20	.70	3.78	.82	2.55	.90	3.26	.81	3.68	.45	3.32	.52	
Turkey																			
Boomers (n=68)	3.76	.78	3.72	.92	3.90	.63	3.57	.97	2.83	.79	3.27	.85	3.25	.82	3.92	.57	3.30	.60	
GenX (n=185)	3.57	.87	3.52	.90	3.82	.67	3.60	.92	3.08	.82	3.23	.90	3.26	.81	3.83	.51	3.29	.63	
Gen Y (n=304)	3.38	.95	3.32	.94	3.79	.63	3.48	.95	3.05	.82	3.41	.87	3.40	.90	3.72	.44	3.40	.61	

Table 4 shows that there were significant differences in affective commitment, OCB, hard-working, non-leisure, asceticism, and self-enhancement between the U.S. generational cohorts, whereas there were significant generational differences only in satisfaction, affective commitment, and conservation between the Turkish generational cohorts.

Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons showed that there are limited significant generational differences for both countries at the $p = .05$ level. Table 5 shows these post-hoc comparisons and a summary of the results for each study hypothesis. Contrary to our expectations, we found support for some of the study's hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 stated that Boomers would have a higher level of job satisfaction than GenXers and GenYers (H1a), a higher level of commitment than GenXers and GenYers (H1b), and a higher level of OCB than GenXers and GenYers (H1c). Hypothesis 2 proposed that GenXers would have a higher level of job satisfaction than GenYers (H2a), a higher level of commitment than GenYers (H2b), and a higher level of OCB than GenYers (H2c). As shown in Table 5, Turkish

Table 3
MANCOVA Results for the U.S. and Turkish Generational Cohorts

Variables	Wilks	F	df	p	Effect size
U.S.					
Generations	.867	3.226	786	.000	.068
Gender	.947	2.448	393	.010	.053
Marital status	.954	2.111	393	.028	.046
Education	.971	1.297	383	.236	.029
Turkey					
Generations	.937	1.987	1088	.008	.032
Gender	.972	1.759	543	.073	.028
Marital status	.970	1.842	543	.058	.030
Education	.978	1.332	543	.073	.028

Boomers had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than Turkish GenYers. The U.S. and Turkish Boomers had a significantly higher level of affective commitment than the U.S. and Turkish GenYers, whereas the U.S. GenXers had a significantly higher level of affective commitment than the U.S. GenYers. The U.S. Boomers also had a significantly higher level of OCB than the U.S. GenYers, whereas Turkish Boomers did not have a significantly higher level of OCB than Turkish GenYers. Based on these findings, H1a, H1b, H2b, and H1c were only partially supported.

In terms of PWE values, our hypothesis predicted that Boomers would have a higher hard working dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3a), a lower non-leisure dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3b), a higher independent dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3c), and a lower asceticism dimension score than GenXers and GenYers (H3d). The hypothesis predicted that GenXers would have a higher PWE hard working dimension score than GenYers (H4a), a lower non-leisure dimension score than GenYers (H4b), a higher

independent dimension score than GenYers (H4c), and a lower asceticism dimension score than GenYers (H4d). The U.S. Boomers had a significantly lower PWE non-leisure dimension score than the U.S. GenYers. The U.S. Boomers had a significantly lower PWE asceticism score than the U.S. GenYers, and the U.S. GenXers had a significantly lower PWE asceticism score than the U.S. GenYers. All PWE hypotheses were rejected for the Turkish sample based on the data obtained. The U.S. sample data fully supported H4d and partially supported H3b and H3d.

Concerning personal values, Hypothesis 5 proposed that Boomers would have a higher conservation value (e.g. conformity, security, and tradition) score than GenXers and GenYers, Hypothesis 6 predicted that GenXers would have a higher conservation value score than GenYers, Hypothesis 7 stated that GenYers would have a higher self-enhancement values (i.e. hedonism and power) score than Boomers and GenXers, and Hypothesis 8 proposed that GenXers would have a higher self-enhancement values score than Boomers. The U.S. GenYers had a significantly higher self-enhancement values score than the U.S. Boomers and GenYers, which supports H7 for the U.S. sample, whereas Turkish Boomers had a significantly higher conservation values score than Turkish GenYers, which partially supports H5 for the Turkish sample (Table 5). Because the differences in the other study variables between generational cohorts were not significant, the remaining study hypotheses were rejected (see Table 5). The last hypothesis was that generational differences would be more prevalent in the U.S. sample than in the Turkish sample. As shown in Table 5, hypotheses H2b, H4d, and H7 were fully supported and hypotheses H1b, H1c, H3b, and H3d were partially supported in the U.S. sample, based on the present findings, whereas only hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H5 were partially supported in the Turkish sample based on the study findings, indicating that generational differences were more prevalent in the U.S. sample and supporting H9.

Discussion

The present study investigated differences between generational cohorts in key work attitudes (i.e. job satisfaction, affective commitment, and citizenship behavior), personal values, and PWE values in the U.S. and Turkish samples. Overall, our findings do not support the common cliché that intergenerational differences exist in both samples.

Many earlier studies reported there are differences between generational cohorts in work-related attitudes and behaviors (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Benson & Brown, 2011; Daboval, 1998; Jorgensen, 2003; Lub et al., 2012; Raineri et al., 2012; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Yu & Miller, 2005). However, a recent meta-analysis by Costanza et al. (2012) observed that the differences among generational cohorts are relatively small and inconsistent.

Despite small effect sizes, the results of our study reveal the existence of some weak patterns. Turkish Boomers had a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than Turkish

GenYers. The U.S. and Turkish Boomers had a significantly higher level of affective commitment than the U.S. and Turkish GenYers, whereas the U.S. GenXers had a significantly higher level of affective commitment than the U.S. GenYers. In addition, the U.S. (but not Turkish) Boomers had a significantly higher level of OCB than the U.S. GenYers. These findings indicate that older generations are generally more satisfied, committed, and demonstrate citizenship behaviors to a greater degree than the young generations, which is in agreement with earlier research that has shown that chronological age is positively correlated with job satisfaction (Kacmar & Ferris, 1989), commitment (Ng and Feldman, 2010), and citizenship behaviors (Ng & Feldman, 2008). Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky (2002) observed that the strongest predictors of commitment were supportive organizational climate, effective leadership, and role clarity. Likewise, Judge et al. (2002) suggested that some personality traits are correlated with job satisfaction, which might be main antecedents for the higher level of job satisfaction among the older generations.

Kowske et al. (2010) did not observe robust support for generational differences in terms of job satisfaction, even after compensating for the effects of age, as did Costanza et al. (2012). More recently, Costanza & Finkelstein (2015) argued that “stereotypes about generational differences in the workplace are unfounded and ill advised” (p. 321).

Our study also found that intergenerational differences in work-related attitudes and values are relatively limited, revealing that there are no substantive differences in among generational cohorts. This result is in line with the findings of Costanza et al. (2012) and others (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010; Wallace, 2006). Furthermore, the present findings are consistent with those produced via earlier longitudinal research that indicated value preferences remain relatively stable throughout an individual’s life cycle (Inglehart, 1997). For instance, in the context of Turkey, GenXers and GenYers do not differ in terms of any of the variables studied. In the US context, there is no significant difference between these generations except for affective commitment and ascetism. The violation of psychological contract may be a possible explanation for this situation, particularly in terms of work and organizational related variables. As psychological contract studies, employees work hard, have a strong loyalty to their companies, and prioritize their job in their lives in exchange for career opportunities, lifelong job guarantee, and good salary (Hirsch & Shanley, 1996). This informal relationship occurred between the employer and the employee is called a psychological contract. However, it seems difficult for organizations to meet these expectations of employees in today’s turbulent economic structure. Organizations have provided less than expected fees for salary, and terminated the job of employees for various reasons including re-organization, downsizing, and economic turbulences, as a result, the non-voluntary labor turnover rate has increased considerably (Arthur & Rousseau, 1994; Maguire, 1993). Thus, the psychological contract between employers and employees has been breached and violated in the perception of employees (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Turnley & Feldman,

Table 4
MANCOVA Results for Each Study Variable, According to the U.S. and Turkish Samples

Variables	Job satisfaction		Affective commitment		OCB		Hard working		Non-leisure		Independence		Asceticism		Conservation		Self-enhancement	
	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2	F	η^2
U.S. Generations	2.367	.012	7.953***	.038	3.601*	.018	4.618**	.023	4.480*	.022	1.126	.006	13.579***	.064	677	.003	5.460**	.027
Turkish Generations	4.584*	.016	4.900**	.017	.292	.001	.155	.001	2.380	.009	380	.002	.056	.000	3.236*	.012	1.491	.005

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

Table 5
The U.S. and Turkish Generation Cohort Differences: Hypotheses and Results of Post Hoc Group Comparisons

Variables	Hypotheses		U.S. Generation Group Differences		Turkish Generation Group Differences	
	Hypotheses	Results	Hypotheses	Results	Hypotheses	Results
Job satisfaction	H1a. Boomers > GenXers and GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Partially supported. Boomers > GenYers
	H2a. GenXers > GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
Affective commitment	H1b. Boomers > GenXers and GenYers	Partially supported. Boomers > GenYers		Partially supported. Boomers > GenYers		Partially supported. Boomers > GenYers
	H2b. GenXers > GenYers	Supported.		Supported.		Rejected.
OCB	H1c. Boomers > GenXers and GenYers	Partially supported. Boomers > GenYers		Partially supported. Boomers > GenYers		Rejected.
	H2c. GenXers > GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
Hard working	H3a. Boomers > GenXers and GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
	H4a. GenXers > GenYers	Rejected. GenYers > GenXers		Rejected. GenYers > GenXers		Rejected.
Non-leisure	H3b. Boomers < GenXers and GenYers	Partially Supported. Boomers < GenYers		Partially Supported. Boomers < GenYers		Rejected.
	H4b. GenXers < GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
Independence	H3c. Boomers > GenXers and GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
	H4c. GenXers > GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
Asceticism	H3d. Boomers < GenXers and GenYers	Partially Supported. Boomers < GenYers		Partially Supported. Boomers < GenYers		Rejected.
	H4d. GenXers < GenYers	Supported.		Supported.		Rejected.
Conservation	H5. Boomers > GenXers and GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Partially Supported. Boomers > GenYers
	H6. GenXers > GenYers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.
Self-enhancement	H7. GenYers > Boomers and GenXers	Supported.		Supported.		Rejected.
	H8. GenXers > Boomers	Rejected.		Rejected.		Rejected.

1998). Violation of the psychological contract may reduce the loyalty, satisfaction, voice, and intention to remain of all, even of those who naturally (e.g. older generations) have a higher level (Turnley & Feldman, 1998; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

As findings of our study, generational differences are more prevalent in the U.S sample than the Turkish one. These results may have an explanation: cultural differences among both countries, and the level of psychological contract violation. Firstly, According to Stell and Taras (2010: p. 212) "... individual attitudes, beliefs and behaviors are believed to be culturally determined. According to Hofstede (1980, 1984), the differences in attitudes and behaviors between individuals are less in collectivist societies. Individuals depend on their own traditions and norms of adults, and therefore exhibit more similar attitudes and behaviors. In individualistic societies, however, individuals are unique, less dependent on traditions and what their ancestors do, and are therefore more prone to different attitudes and behaviors. Turkey is listed among collectivistic societies and individuals are more inclined to experience collectivist attitudes and behaviors. Secondly, this result may because of the level of psychological contract violation being relatively higher in Turkey. Unfortunately, Turkey has been unable to achieve economic balance and has experienced economic crisis more than any developed country (Barkey, 2019). The number of unemployed aged 15 and above in Turkey increased by 980.000 compared to the same period last year, and during August 2019 was 4 million 650 thousand people (TUİK, 2019). The relatively high level of layoffs, economic crises and turmoil in Turkey (compared to the U.S) may cause further violation of the psychological contract, which as a result, further reduces loyalty, commitment, OCB, and motivation to be hard-working (Turnley & Feldman, 1998; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

In sum, the present findings offer only limited support for generational differences in work-related attitudes and values. Based on the present study's findings and previously published findings, we argue that chronological age and other variables are related to the small effects observed in the present study. Moreover, the present findings show that generational differences are more prevalent in the US sample than in the Turkish sample, as was expected.

Implications for Practice

Based on popular press and generational gurus' ideas about generational differences, most organizations and managers have unfortunately already started to tailor workplace practices to work preferences of generational cohorts. For example, they have determined HR programs that explain how employees of different generational cohorts should be managed. However, the present study's findings and those of earlier relevant studies suggest that such programs and interventions may not be effective strategies. Instead of using myths, stereotypes, popular practices or inconsistent results about generations, organization, managers and practitioners should rely on actual individual differences that are supported by solid theory and strong

research to predict crucial work outcomes. Another more plausible option for managers and organizations is to conduct needs analyses to determine employee preferences and develop workplace practices based on the findings.

Limitations and Future research

The present study has some limitations, including the inclusion of samples from only two countries. We collected the research data from employees working in a variety of industries located in western New York State, the U.S. and Ankara, Turkey. However, both countries have a vast degree of regional differences and cultural nuances. Hence our sample does not perfectly represent the whole country. Future research with more representative samples would have strengthened the generalizability of the results. Inclusion of samples from other countries might have helped to determine the generalizability of the U.S.-centric generational cohort taxonomy. Additionally, the present study used cross-sectional data, which limits the ability to separate variance attributable to the effects of generational cohort, age, and period effects (Costanza et al., 2012). Additional research employing more robust research methods, such as cross-classified HLM, longitudinal design, and cross-temporal meta-analysis, might yield more reliable findings. Most importantly, as was mentioned above, each country's experiences and events that affect generational cohort characteristics are unique. Apparently, more research is needed to precisely define and categorize generational cohorts, to better conceptualize generational phenomena, to identify generational differences that result from generational cohort inclusion and age, and to determine if the US-centric generational taxonomy (e.g. Boomers, GenXers, and GenYers) is generalizable to other countries. For example, future research using more qualitative research methods should be conducted within cultures around the world to define the start and end years for country-specific generations.

Conclusion

We investigated differences in work and organizational attitudes (i.e. affective commitment, job satisfaction, and OCB), work ethic values, and personal values between generational cohorts in Turkish and the U.S. samples. We did not find substantial support for the presence of generational differences or their association to key outcome variables. Our findings did not fully support the common cliché that intergenerational differences exist in work-related attitudes, work ethic values, and personal values. In addition, the U.S. originated classification of generations cannot be generalized for the Turkish business context. Our findings act as a warning to organizations seeking to adopt HR strategies based on the common cliché and stereotypes on generational differences.

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