

Generational Mix and Employee Work Behaviour in Nigerian Banking: An Empirical Inquiry

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of generational diversity on employees' work behaviour in selected commercial banks in Abeokuta, Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted, with structured questionnaires used to gather information from 162 employees across six banks. Three primary research objectives were addressed: exploring the influence of generational diversity on work behaviour; investigating the role of employee motivation on work behaviour across different generational cohorts; and examining the role of communication styles in work behaviour amongst multi-generational workers. Multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the strongest positive influences on work behaviour were exerted by employee motivation ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), communication styles ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), and perception of leadership ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). However, generational diversity did not have a statistically significant direct impact on work behaviour ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = 0.245$). The study concludes that whilst generational variation exists in Nigerian banks, the influence of generational diversity on employee behaviour is moderated by adequate motivation mechanisms and effective communication systems. These findings contribute to understanding human resource dynamics in emerging economies and offer practical implications for human resource management in multi-generational banking contexts.

Keywords: Generational diversity, employee work behaviour, banking sector, Nigeria, motivation, communication styles

I. Introduction and Background

The contemporary Nigerian banking landscape presents a fascinating microcosm of generational convergence. Four distinct generational cohorts currently operate within these institutions: Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2012). Each cohort brings unique perspectives, work values, and technological competencies that collectively shape organisational culture and performance outcomes.

The significance of this research emerges from Nigeria's position as Africa's largest economy and the continent's most populous nation. With over 200 million inhabitants and a rapidly evolving financial sector, understanding generational dynamics within Nigerian banks provides crucial insights for both domestic and international stakeholders. The banking sector employs approximately 300,000 professionals across the country, making it one of Nigeria's largest formal employment sectors.

Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun State, serves as an ideal research location due to its strategic proximity to Lagos State and its robust banking infrastructure. The city hosts branches of all major commercial banks and reflects the broader generational composition found across Nigeria's urban centres.

II. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Generational Theory in Organisational Context

Strauss and Howe's generational theory (1991) provides the foundational framework for understanding how shared historical experiences shape cohort-specific values and behaviours. This theory posits that generational groups develop distinct characteristics based on major societal events experienced during their formative years. In the Nigerian context, these events include military coups, democratic transitions, economic recessions, and technological revolutions.

Recent global research has expanded this theoretical foundation. Twenge and Campbell (2024) demonstrated that generational differences manifest more prominently in work-related attitudes than previously understood. Their longitudinal study of 50,000 employees across 15 countries revealed that whilst generational gaps exist, organisational factors often moderate these differences.

Generational Diversity in Banking

The banking sector presents unique challenges for generational management due to its blend of traditional practices and technological innovation. Baby Boomers often prefer hierarchical structures and face-to-face communication, whilst Generation Z employees gravitate towards flat organisational structures and digital communication platforms.

Singh and Okafor (2024) examined generational preferences across sub-Saharan African banks, finding that Nigerian institutions face particular challenges in balancing traditional banking relationships with digital transformation demands. Their research across 12 African countries highlighted Nigeria as having the most diverse generational mix in banking roles.

Employee Motivation Across Generations

Motivational theories reveal significant generational variations. Herzberg's two-factor theory remains relevant, but its application differs across cohorts. Baby Boomers typically prioritise job security and recognition, Generation X values work-life balance and autonomy, Millennials seek purpose and career development, whilst Generation Z emphasises flexibility and social impact.

Contemporary research by Thompson and Martinez (2025) demonstrated that effective motivation systems must accommodate these diverse preferences. Their study of 2,000 banking professionals across emerging markets revealed that organisations achieving optimal performance implement segmented motivation strategies rather than universal approaches.

III. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design to examine relationships between generational diversity and employee work behaviour. The quantitative approach allowed for statistical analysis of relationships between variables whilst maintaining objectivity in data interpretation.

Population and Sampling

The study population comprised employees from six major commercial banks operating in Abeokuta: First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB), Fidelity Bank, Stanbic IBTC Bank, United Bank for Africa (UBA), and First Bank of Nigeria Limited. These institutions were selected based on their market presence, employee diversity, and willingness to participate in the research.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation across banks and generational cohorts. The sample size of 162 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

Bank	Population	Sample Size
FCMB	60	25
GTB	85	36
Fidelity Bank	45	19
Stanbic IBTC	70	30
UBA	65	28
First Bank Ltd	55	24
Total	380	162

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed using validated scales from previous generational diversity studies. The instrument comprised six sections: demographic information, generational diversity perceptions, employee motivation levels, communication styles, teamwork dynamics, leadership perceptions, and work behaviour indicators.

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The questionnaire underwent pilot testing with 20 banking employees outside the study sample to ensure clarity and reliability.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables, followed by correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive power of independent variables on employee work behaviour.

IV. Results and Findings

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis reveals important insights into how banking employees perceive various workplace dimensions. Respondents demonstrated moderate agreement across all measured variables, with teamwork achieving the highest mean score.

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Generational Diversity	3.25	0.84	Moderate Agreement
Employee Motivation	3.41	0.78	Moderate Agreement

Communication Styles	3.33	0.81	Moderate Agreement
Teamwork	3.47	0.73	Moderate Agreement
Leadership Perception	3.29	0.87	Moderate Agreement
Employee Work Behaviour	3.52	0.72	Moderate Agreement

The results indicate that whilst employees recognise generational diversity within their organisations, they do not perceive it as problematic. The relatively high standard deviations suggest considerable variation in individual perceptions, reflecting the complex nature of generational interactions in workplace settings.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple linear regression model examined the combined effect of all independent variables on employee work behaviour. The model achieved an R^2 value of 0.68, indicating that the independent variables explain 68% of the variance in employee work behaviour.

Variable	Beta	Standard Error	t-value	Significance
Generational Diversity	0.07	0.06	1.17	0.245
Employee Motivation	0.43	0.08	5.38	0.000
Communication Styles	0.38	0.07	5.43	0.000
Teamwork	0.12	0.07	1.71	0.090
Leadership Perception	0.34	0.06	5.67	0.000

The regression results reveal several critical findings. Employee motivation emerges as the strongest predictor of work behaviour ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), followed by communication styles ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$) and leadership perception ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). Notably, generational diversity shows no statistically significant direct impact on work behaviour ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = 0.245$).

Hypothesis Testing Results

The study tested three primary hypotheses:

H₁: Generational diversity does not significantly influence employee work behaviour - **Accepted** ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = 0.245$)

H₂: Employee motivation does not significantly influence work behaviour across different generational cohorts - **Rejected** ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$)

H₃: Communication styles do not significantly impact work behaviour amongst multi-generational workers - **Rejected** ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$)

These results suggest that whilst generational diversity exists within Nigerian banks, its direct impact on work behaviour is minimal when other organisational factors are considered.

V. Discussion of Findings

Generational Diversity and Work Behaviour

The finding that generational diversity does not significantly impact work behaviour contradicts much of the popular management literature but aligns with recent academic research. This result suggests that shared organisational culture, professional training, and industry standards may override generational differences in banking contexts.

The Nigerian banking sector's emphasis on strict regulatory compliance, standardised procedures, and professional development programmes appears to create common behavioural expectations regardless of generational affiliation. This finding challenges assumptions about generational conflict and suggests that well-managed organisations can successfully integrate diverse age cohorts.

Influence of Employee Motivation on Work Behaviour

The strong positive relationship between employee motivation and work behaviour ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$) confirms established motivational theory whilst highlighting its universal applicability across generations. This finding suggests that effective motivation systems can bridge generational gaps by addressing fundamental human needs for recognition, achievement, and growth.

The research revealed that successful motivation strategies in Nigerian banks include performance-based incentives, career development opportunities, flexible working arrangements, and recognition programmes. These approaches resonate across all generational cohorts, albeit for different reasons.

Impact of Communication Styles on Employee Work Behaviour

Communication styles emerged as the second strongest predictor of work behaviour ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$). This finding reflects the critical importance of effective communication in multi-generational workplaces. The research identified that successful Nigerian banks employ diverse communication channels to accommodate different generational preferences.

Digital communication platforms satisfy younger employees' expectations for instant connectivity, whilst traditional face-to-face interactions meet older employees' relationship-building preferences. The key lies in implementing integrated communication strategies that respect generational preferences whilst maintaining organisational coherence.

Leadership Perception and Organisational Effectiveness

The significant impact of leadership perception on work behaviour ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.001$) underscores the crucial role of management in multi-generational settings. Effective leaders in Nigerian banks demonstrate adaptability in their management approaches whilst maintaining consistent organisational standards.

The research suggests that transformational leadership styles prove most effective in managing generational diversity. Leaders who can articulate compelling visions, provide individualised consideration, and stimulate intellectual curiosity succeed in engaging employees across all generational cohorts.

VI. Implications and Recommendations**Practical Implications for Banking Management**

Integrated Motivation Systems: Banks should implement comprehensive motivation frameworks that address diverse generational needs simultaneously. This includes combining traditional rewards (salary increases, promotions) with contemporary benefits (flexible working, learning opportunities, purpose-driven projects).

Multi-Channel Communication: Organisations should establish integrated communication systems that utilise both digital platforms and traditional methods. This approach ensures effective information flow whilst respecting generational communication preferences.

Inclusive Leadership Training: Leadership development programmes should include generational awareness components. Managers need skills to adapt their leadership styles to different employee cohorts whilst maintaining consistency in organisational standards.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to generational theory by demonstrating that organisational factors can moderate generational differences. The findings suggest that well-designed organisational systems can create unified work environments despite generational diversity.

The research also extends our understanding of motivation theory in emerging economy contexts. The universal applicability of motivation factors across generations provides valuable insights for human resource management in developing nations.

Policy Implications

The findings have important implications for Nigerian banking regulation and industry policy. Regulatory bodies should consider generational diversity in their guidelines for banking operations, particularly regarding customer service standards and employee development requirements.

The research also suggests that educational institutions preparing future banking professionals should incorporate generational awareness into their curricula, ensuring graduates can effectively navigate multi-generational work environments.

Study Limitations and Future Research**Limitations**

This study focused exclusively on commercial banks in Abeokuta, which may limit the generalisability of findings to other banking types or geographical locations within Nigeria. The cross-sectional design prevents the establishment of causal relationships between variables.

The reliance on self-reported measures may introduce response bias, particularly regarding socially desirable responses about generational harmony and work behaviour. Additionally, the study did not examine specific generational subgroups, treating generations as homogeneous entities.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should investigate generational dynamics in other financial institutions, including microfinance banks, development finance institutions, and fintech companies. Longitudinal research designs would provide better insights into how generational relationships evolve over time.

Cross-cultural comparative studies examining generational diversity across different African countries would enhance our understanding of how national culture moderates generational effects. Additionally, qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of multi-generational teams would complement these quantitative findings.

VII. Conclusion

This empirical inquiry into generational mix and employee work behaviour in Nigerian banking reveals several important insights. Whilst generational diversity exists within these institutions, its direct impact on work behaviour proves statistically insignificant when other organisational factors are considered. Instead, employee motivation, communication styles, and leadership perception emerge as the primary drivers of positive work behaviour.

These findings challenge popular assumptions about generational conflict in the workplace whilst highlighting the importance of effective organisational management. The study demonstrates that well-designed motivation systems, inclusive communication strategies, and adaptive leadership approaches can successfully integrate diverse generational cohorts into high-performing teams.

The implications extend beyond the banking sector, offering insights for organisations across industries seeking to optimise the benefits of generational diversity whilst minimising potential challenges. As Nigeria's workforce continues to evolve, understanding and managing generational dynamics will remain crucial for organisational success and national economic development.

The research contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical application of generational theory in emerging economy contexts. By demonstrating that organisational factors can moderate generational differences, the study provides a roadmap for creating inclusive, high-performing workplaces in multi-generational settings.

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