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Exploring the Diversity in Learning Style(s) and Training method(s) Preferences of the Pakistani Generation X and Generation Y Trainees

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The current study recognizes the change in the learning landscape of training classrooms, in the context of Pakistani workplaces, particularly in the banks operated in the southern part of the province Punjab. This has mainly resulted from an increase in generational diversity and varying learning preferences of the trainees. Accordingly, the primary objective of the study is to explore whether there is an association of Pakistani generation X and Pakistani generation Y with particular learning styles and training methods preferences which distinct them from each other at the workplace, particularly when they are occupied as the trainees. In order to fulfill this purpose, a sample of 272 employees participated to fill a questionnaire survey. This enabled the study to collect the data regarding the participants' demographic information and their preferred mode of delivery. Moreover, the questionnaire incorporated Kolb's Learning Style Inventory 3.1 (LSI) to gather the information about the trainees' intrinsic learning styles preferences. The responses of the participants were entered into SPSS for assessing the relationship among the proposed variables of the study through the Chi-square test of independence. The findings regarding trainees' learning style preferences portrayed that the Pakistani Generation X learners are intrinsically assimilators while Generation Y learners are accommodators. In addition, while Generation X learners preferred to learn through the traditional lecture-based instruction method, the Pakistani Generation Y learners turned out to be more receptive to role-play based instruction method. Therefore, the findings of this study distinctively represented the learning preferences of the Pakistani Generation X and Generation Y trainees, which, in turn, contribute to the understanding of specific learning profiles of these two generations. Furthermore, the results of the study endorse that the generational affiliation of the respondents is itself descriptive of their individual learning styles and training methods preferences. However, the interaction effect among the training methods and learning styles is found to be insignificant, since the learners with different preferences for the learning styles altogether resisted the idea of case study and e-learning training methods in the banks. Thus, the study produced important implications regarding the customization of the development of training design and delivery methods at the banks of Pakistan in accordance with the learning preferences of the two Pakistani generations, X and Y.

Keywords: Pakistani Generation X, Pakistani Generation Y, Kolb Learning Style Inventory 3.1, Learning Style Preferences, Training Methods preferences, Interaction effect.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the 'training and development' function has emerged from a mere support role to a key strategic function for the organizations surviving in radically changing conditions, where each day brings a revolution in technological, economic, and labor markets (Khatun, 2013; Khatun, 2014; Noe, Clarke, & Klein, 2014; Ropes, 2014; Suhasini & Suganthalakshmi, 2014). As a result of the dynamic, complex and uncertain market conditions (Vemic, 2007), the employer of today has now become more concerned about how different trainings serve the key business needs related to learning, behavioral change, and performance improvement (Noe, 2008; Odom & Dooley, 2009; Scott, 2010).

In affirmation of the fact that the organizational agility and its competitive advantage are the by-products of individual learning (Odom & Dooley, 2009; Vincent & Ross, 2001; Khatun, 2013; Ropes, 2014), the training and development practitioners are now increasingly focused upon examining their training methodologies and delivery techniques so as to provide optimized learning solutions that are aligned with the strategic goals of the organization (McFeely, 2002; Scott, 2010).

In this regard, recent literature from the experts on the subject matter has emphasized on the importance of regulating the process of trainer-centered, organizational-centered and trainee-centered approaches (Robotham, 2003) in the organizations. Nonetheless, amongst all these factors, the training practitioners are nowadays increasingly challenged by the dynamics associated with trainee-centered factors (Yang, 2004).

It has been acknowledged that upon entering a training experience, each learner brings certain viewpoints and expectations (Cekada, 2012), and so takes different impressions of the trainer, training content, fellow trainees, and overall training program design and delivery (Nikandrou, Brinia, & Bereri, 2009). Since the learning journey of each learner is different, every learner feels the pressure to evolve, learn, and rise differently (Khatun, 2014; Plessis, 2015). This is of important concern to the training practitioners who acknowledge that unless the training needs and expectations of each learner are fulfilled, the effectiveness of trainers, learning environments, and training budgets will not be beneficial (Plessis, 2015). Thus, in order to formulate effective learning interventions, the organizations are now focusing upon understanding the trainees'

attributes, preferences, and other learning characteristics (Afsha, 2015).

With regard to this, the recent research has highlighted that the learners' generation plays a vital role in shaping their learning preferences about learning styles and training methods, which ultimately affects the ways they want to acquire the knowledge and skills (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 1999). This way, the generational affiliation of the trainees has turned out to be descriptive of their various learning characteristics (Holyoke & Larson, 2009) in the organizations. Similarly, since each generation possesses a unique generational persona in terms of their characteristics (Kupperschmidt, 2000; DeLucia, 2015), it is very likely for the learners to differ from each other in keeping with their generational affiliations.

For example, the training method preference of one generation can be lecture based classroom instructions, but the other generation may completely disapprove this idea and choose computer-assisted method of instructions (Akhavan Saraf et al., 2016). Similarly, some learners endorse hands-on-experiences while others find critical thinking to be effective (Wilson, 2000). In another case, while some learners prefer to learn independently, others find collaborative methods like group work to be effective (Cagiltay, 2008).

Thus, the generational diversity has turned out to be of peculiar interest to the training practitioners because the population of the training classrooms has become more generationally diverse (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 1999; Plessis, 2015; Moreno, 2016). In the context of Pakistan, it has recently been recognized that the Pakistani workplaces are collectively shared and contributed by three distinct generations, namely the Pakistani Baby Boomer Generation (Born in 1942-1961; Current age, 57-76 years), Pakistani Generation X (Born in 1962-1981; Current age, 37-56 years.), and Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y (Born in 1982-2001; Current age, 17-36 years.) (Shaikh & Jamal, 2019, 2020). Surely, when the learners from the three generations join a training classroom, they differ in their learning characteristics, including their preferences for learning styles and training methods.

Nonetheless, in Pakistan, the training and development practitioners have neglected to focus on distinct learning preferences and training needs of different generations. For example, as a matter of common practice, the corporate employees are being trained in the same training classroom, at the same time and with the same training content irrespective of the fact that they belong to different generations. Therefore, despite being trained, the trainees tend to exhibit different performance levels. This phenomenon is referred to as 'blanket training' by Tolbize in the year 2008 (Tolbize, 2008). Consequently, this lack of trainees' concern is not only leading to a drop in return over training investments but also an absence of training results.

In the realization of this situation, the current study aims to focus on the issues of learners' diversity, such as their preferences for learning styles and training methods, associated with their respective generations. Thus, the three main aspects of the adult learners; for example, learners' generation, learners' learning styles preferences and learners' training methods preferences, have been incorporated in the study for generating the holistic findings. Accordingly, the data for the study was collected from the employees, who were occupied as trainees, at the banking industry of the southern part of the province Punjab (Pakistan).

The importance of exploring the phenomena of trainees' learning styles and training methods preferences has already been emphasized by a number of researchers who stressed on the need of holistically examining the learning styles and training methods preferences of individuals in association with their particular generations (Sims, 1990; Holyoke & Larson, 2009; Cekada, 2012). However, the exploration of individuals' learning styles preferences and the connection of those preferences with their respective generations can be considered as an important matter due to the availability of relatively less systematic research (Woodward, Vonswasdi & More, 2015; Muse, 2015) in the area. As far as the exploration of the learners' training methods preferences is concerned, it is important due to the revival of many traditional training methods, and with the increase in the demands of new businesses and launch of advanced technologies, it has become crucial to observe the relevancy of training methods with the specific needs of different generations (Khatun, 2013; Afsha, 2015).

Moreover, since many researchers have commented on the scarcity of the available literature regarding generational diversity in the field of training and development (Klar, 2013; Farrell & Hurt, 2014; Urick, 2016), the current research effectively adds to this gap in literature. In particular, it can be seen as a productive expansion of the work done by Shaikh and Jamal, on generational profiling of Pakistani workforce, in the years 2019 and 2020.

The study also objectively incorporated the 'meshing hypothesis' which observed an interaction effect between learners' learning styles preferences with their preferences towards certain methods of training (Pashler et al., 2009) irrespective of their generational affiliations. The rationale behind this is imbedded in the studies which portrayed that the training methods and environments which are not conducive to the individuals' learning styles preferences, they are either resisted or completely disapproved by the learners (Buch & Bartley, 2002). Ultimately, the noncompliance of training methods with the learners' learning styles preferences was recognized as a leading factor in the previous studies for the poor training outcomes, such as shorter attention spans of the trainees and diminishing returns, experienced by the organizations, over their training investments (Khatun, 2014). However, it is important to state that all such studies overlooked the generational association of trainees or learners with their learning styles and training methods preferences. Given that, there are two main objectives of the current research which are stated under the subsequent heading.

Research Objectives (RO)

RO1: To assess whether there is a relationship between the trainees' generational affiliation and their preferences for the distinct learning style(s) and training method(s).

RO1 is divided into two sub-objectives:

RO1a: To assess the relationship between the trainees' generational affiliation and their preferences for the distinct learning style(s).

RO1b: To assess the relationship between the trainees' generational affiliation and their preferences for the distinct training method(s).

RO2: To assess the relationship between the trainees' preferred learning style(s) and their preferences for the training method(s).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The organizational interest in generational differences in learning started in the 1990s (Klar, 2013) when the organizations started deploying a diverse workforce (Rajesh & Ekambaram, 2014; LM, 2017; Kicheva, 2017). Undoubtedly, intergenerational differences induce a profound effect on training practices which has forced the training practitioners to reassess their training practices, content, and mode of training. Some examples of generationally savvy training practices opted by a few companies are reported by Afsha (2015). Afsha's study reported that Pepsi is using gamification for the induction of younger workers in the organization. Philips has benefited from the technique of reverse mentoring to train older workers about things like social media and other technological advancements. Marico has special mentoring and coaching courses for younger employees. Likewise, to train the senior employee on handling the younger workforce, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and Larsen & Toubro Limited (L&T) have utilized 'Leadership sensitization training'. However, in order to formulate such training practices, it is important to explore the learning styles and training methods preferences of each generation. The succeeding literature in this paper deals with this area.

The Pakistani Generations

The concept of generations has been widely acknowledged for its potential explanatory power regarding the understanding of the individual and collective behaviors (Kicheva, 2017; Afsha, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2017). This is because generations are known to exhibit a distinct generational persona in terms of their characteristics which result from the lasting effects of the socio-economic, political, and technologically significant events that they encounter in their coming-of-age era (Mannheim, 1952; Yu & Miller, 2005; Hole, Zhong, & Schwartz, 2010; Costanza et al., 2012; Ng & Parry, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, the current study has expanded the work, on generational profiling of Pakistani workforce, conducted by Shaikh & Jamal, particularly in the years 2019 and 2020. For example, Table 1 is extracted from Shaikh & Jamal's (2019) study which shows the classification of the current Pakistani workforce into three Pakistani generations along with their defining events and characteristics.

Table 1: The Defining Events and Characteristics of Pakistani Generations

Generation Title	Pakistani Millennials/Generation Y (Born between 1982-2001; Current age 17-36 yrs.)	Pakistani Generation X (Born between 1962-1981; Current age 37-56 yrs.)	Pakistani Baby Boomer Generation (Born between 1942-1961; Current age 57-76 yrs.)
Defining Events	War on Terror after 9/11, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in 2007, Imran Khan's historical fete on 3 October 2011, and the rise of the movement of Tabdeeli, the advent of Cable, Desktop PC, Internet, Social Media, and Mobile Phones, active participation of women in the labor force, CPEC	Benazir Bhutto as the first female prime minister in 1988, Pakistan as a nuclear power in 1998, Economic Crisis in 1998, Islamization during the Zia-ul-Haq's era (1978-1988), the Kargil War of 1999, the advent of Colored Television, VCR, and Dish Television, the introduction of Landline Telephones at the household level, PCO, The 8 O'clock television dramas, 1992 Cricket World cup victory	The Pakistan-India conflict of 1971 and separation of East Pakistan, Nationalization during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's era, Execution of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1979), stronger postal system and the trend of handwritten letters, Introduction of Radio at the household level, the advent of Black and White Television, the boom of the Film industry, Ration shops
Generational Characteristics	They are futuristic and want to create an impact They complain about competition and scarcity of resources They tend to be individualistic They are more westernized and globalized They believe in the quality of life They are self-focused and desire 'becoming a king at the age of a prince' They seek customized careers and flexible workplace policies and prefer 'portfolio careers' They do not do the work unless important becomes urgent They seek autonomy They are Tech savvy and embrace technological changes They hate check and balance, yet they are resilient and want instant gratification and rewards They desire a challenging and charismatic leadership	They are opinionated They are conventional They conform with Pakistani Generation Yers as subordinates but face challenges with Pakistani Boomers as Bosses They are wary of finances and secure future They seek job security They are rational and seek progression through traditional career paths They take responsibility for their work They seek authority and power They seek work-life balance They do not appreciate control over them They prefer transactional leadership They comply with technological changes, but with the help of respective training	They are collectivists They are formal They are patriotic They are organized They value history They have strong values and are culturally bound They are hardworking and workaholics They believe in seniority and control They exercise check and balance and solicit feedback as bosses They resist technological changes

Extracted from Shaikh & Jamal's (2019) study: 'The context-specific categorization of generations: An exploratory study based on the collective memories of the active workforce of Pakistan-Paper 1'.

Table 1 explains the defining events of the three Pakistani generations which comprises the active workforce of Pakistan. It also portrays their generational characteristics in the work-related context. Nonetheless, since Shaikh & Jamal's (2019) study was restricted in its scope regarding learning styles and training methods preferences of these generations, this study delves into the generational personas of the Pakistani generations in terms of their preferred training methods and learning styles.

Training Methods

The selection of training methods is an important element of instructional system design (ISD). The selection of training methods and their deployment through a training delivery system is a challenging task (Scott, 2010). Mostly the selection of training methods depends upon the nature of the training content (Dwyer, 2001), training objectives, training schedule and budget, and trainers' expertise (Scott, 2010). Also, it is up to the trainers' discretion to deploy as many training methods as possible which may lead them to think that they have met the required effectiveness of the training (Wilson, 2000).

During the last couple of decades several training methods have evolved, nonetheless, each of them has its pros and cons (Khatun, 2014). Normally, the trainees possess a favorable choice for some methods (Cassidy, 2004), which is referred to as 'training methods preferences' in this study. The next headings

converse about lectures, role-plays, case studies and e-learning which are the main training methods utilized by the banking sector of Pakistan (Awan & Saeed, 2014), specifically the learning and development centers of the banks situated in the southern part of Punjab province.

Lecture

Lectures are known as the simplest and most effective instructional method (Wilson, 2000b; Haghighi, 2000; Karthikeyan, 2008) when it comes to the delivery of the basic facts, complex information, principles, concepts, theories, and attitudes (Karthikeyan, 2008). The biggest merit of lectures is that it is the most cost-effective method for training a larger audience (Wilson, 2000b; Haghighi, 2000; Karthikeyan, 2008). Mostly they are enjoyed by the non-analytic (Fatt, 1993) and passive learners (Wilson, 2000b; Haghighi, 2000). However, on the flip side, the one-way flow of information in lectures turns out to be detrimental to the audience's focus and motivation (Wilson, 2000b).

Role-Plays

Role-plays are synonymously referred to as role-reversal, role-playing, psychodrama, socio-drama. It is 'a method of human interaction, which involves realistic behavior in imaginary situations' (Haghighi, 2000; Karthikeyan, 2008). Role-plays are more like the action-version of case studies. The format of role-plays involves the allocation of roles to the participants (Wilson, 2000b) who are required to act out that situation without rehearsal (Karthikeyan, 2008). During this process, the performers and spectators independently learn through making observations. These observations help them to self-reflect and accordingly develop responses to various situations (Wilson, 2000b). However, on the flip side, the role-plays if not properly executed lead to time wastage (Haghighi, 2000).

Case study

A case study uses problem-solving or investigative techniques to analyze a real or fictional situation, and so it can either be in a written text form which may extend up to 50 pages, or it can be portrayed by the subjects who report their personal incidents (Wilson, 2000b). The biggest advantage of case study with the discussion of realistic scenarios (Read & Kleiner, 1996; Wilson, 2000b), the participants are given the liberty of connecting ideas and deriving solutions, and there exists no limitation and requirement for a standard answer (Read & Kleiner, 1996). However, the trainer steers the discussion and finalizes the most appropriate answers. This way, the case study method of training polishes the thinking skills and brainstorming abilities of the trainees (Wilson, 2000b).

E-learning

E-learning refers to the delivery of training or education through electronic media (Suhasini & Suganthalakshmi, 2014). It is synonymously referred to as CBT (Computer-Based Training), WBT (Web-Based Training), or IBT (Internet-Based Training) (Graziadei, n.d.). Nowadays, e-learning has turned out to be a cost-effective training method since it provides feasibility for training a larger audience of learners whilst they remain on their workstations. This has also turned out to be a good opportunity for learners who want to learn according to their own pace. Nonetheless, the development of the programmed e-learning modules and their constant up-gradation and maintenance requires a constant investment (Zornada, 2005).

Learning Styles

The Kolb's learning style theory was chosen for this study, not only because it is widely cited in the learning styles literature, but because the trainers at the banking sector suggested that it was the suitable model for understanding of the learning styles of adult learners in the banks.

Kolb's model of Learning Styles

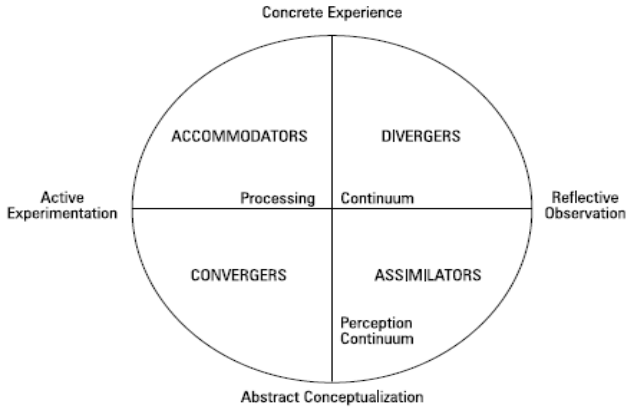

Figure 1: *Kolb's Learning Style model*

The concept of experiential learning as portrayed by Kolb is embedded in the fact that the learners vary in processing information and the way they assign meaning to the processed information. Figure 1 represents Kolb's learning style model which depicts how an individual grasps information through concrete experience and abstract conceptualization and transforms that experience into learning through the processes of active experimentation and reflective observation. All these four processes yield the following four learning styles:

Divergers

The individuals with this learning style prefer to apprehend the experience through concrete experience and comprehend it through reflective observation (Kolb, 1976; Kolb, 1984). The divergers are described as the ones who brainstorm by taking several observations from different angels (Hawk & Shah, 2007; Cagiltay, 2008). They delve into the matter with an open-minded approach to find solutions (Kolb, 1984; Cagiltay, 2008) due to which they are also known to be imaginative (Kolb, 1976; Kolb, 1984; Ament, 1990; Hawk & Shah, 2007). Besides, they are also sensitive to other's feelings. So, their people-oriented nature helps them to empathetically listen to others and they exhibit highly refined values while interacting with people (Trevelin, & Colenci, n.d.; Kolb, 1984; McFeely, 2002).

Assimilators

Assimilators tend to perceive information through abstract conceptualization and process it through reflective observation (Kolb, 1984; Buch & Sena, 2001). They are thinking-oriented (Buch & Sena, 2001; McFeely, 2002) and value logic; thus, they judge theories for this logic and precision rather than their practicality (Kolb, 1984).

Convergers

The individuals with Converger learning style prefer the experience that is brought in through abstract conceptualization and processed through active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Such learners tend to think and perform at the same time (Hawk & Shah, 2007). Due to their well-developed deductive reasoning skills (Hawk & Shah, 2007) they are profound at decision making, implementing solutions, and problem-solving (Kolb, 1976; Kolb, 1984; Buch & Sena, 2001; Cagiltay, 2008). In addition, these learners tend to be unemotional (Kolb, 1976; Hawk & Shah, 2007) and prefer learning through trial-and-error. But yet do not tend to be risk-takers (Buch and Bartley, 2002; McFeely, 2002; Sarabdeen, 2013).

Accommodators

The individuals with an accommodator learning style prefer experience that is brought in through concrete experience and processed through active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Being assertive, action-oriented and risk-taker defines them (Ament, 1990). They tend to easily switch over theoretical and practical approaches (Trevelin & Colenci, n.d.) to judge theories over logic (Kolb, 1984). Thus, they are capable of intuitive problem solving (Hawk & Shah, 2007).

The literature has revealed that an instructional method, which accommodates well with the learning styles preferences of the learners, can be considered as an effective one. With regard to this, Khatun (2013) and Sarabdeen (2013) emphasized that the awareness of learning styles' diversity can enhance the features of instructional strategy. In fact, it has become a must-have to account for the learning styles before the selection of training delivery modes (Buch & Bartley, 2002). In realization of this fact, the current research also observed the interaction effect between the learners' preferred learning styles and their training methods preferences.

The practitioners' literature has indicated that the learners with certain learning styles preferences show certain preferences for the training methods as well. This idea can be evidently understood with the help of the literature presented in the succeeding headings:

The research has shown that divergers enjoy creative activities (Ament, 1990; Hawk & Shah, 2007) like idea-generation through brainstorming (McFeely, 2002; Buch and Bartley, 2002), reflective activities (McFeely, 2002; Buch and Bartley, 2002), buzz sessions, group discussions (Ament, 1990), creative questioning activities, reflective papers, observational activities (Cagiltay, 2008), musicals, and discussion of critical issues (Trevelin & Colenci, n.d.). Due to their intrinsic features, it was expected for this study that divergers will perform better in traditional classroom-based training.

The Assimilators tend to be private learners, thus the activities which require higher coordination and interaction, like group work, simulations, and sharing of personal feelings turn them off (Buch & Bartley, 2002). It has been reported in the practitioner literature that assimilators are apt at working with theoretical models, inductive reasoning, and abstract concepts (Ament, 1990; Hawk & Shah, 2007). The activities that interest them includes problem-solving activities (Ament, 1990), exploring analytical models (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), testing theories and organizing experiments (Kolb, 1984; Buch & Sena, 2001), interpretation of theoretical texts, maps, and diagrams (Trevelin & Colenci, n.d.). Additionally, they are known to perform well in case studies (McFeely, 2002; Buch and Bartley, 2002), lectures (Cagiltay, 2008; Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and individual papers (Cagiltay, 2008). Based on this prior research, it was predicted that the assimilators would prefer lecture-based delivery methods.

Due to their intrinsic nature, the Convergers tend to prefer technical tasks over interpersonal activities (Kolb, 1984). The researchers have found that convergers prefer a blended method of instruction incorporating a web-based method of training delivery (Buch and Bartley, 2002; McFeely, 2002; Sarabdeen, 2013). However, they also do well in small group discussions (McFeely, 2002; Sarabdeen, 2013), practical exercises, technical tasks, analogies (Cagiltay, 2008), discussions over controversial issues, presentation of seminars, and case studies (Trevelin & Colenci, n.d.). Thus, amongst all the training methods, they tend to dislike lectures (Buch and Bartley, 2002; McFeely, 2002; Sarabdeen, 2013). The prior research supports that convergers will perform better in computer-based delivery methods and will equally prefer case-study discussion.

Accommodators prefer to practice in fieldwork (Cagiltay, 2008). The activities that motivate them include projects, small group discussions, games, simulations, cases studies, role-plays (Trevelin & Colenci, n.d.; Ament, 1990; Buch & Sena, 2001; McFeely, 2002; Cagiltay, 2008), interviews, debates, and construction of objects (Trevelin & Colenci, n.d.). Based on these findings, it was expected that Accommodators will perform better in role plays and simulations.

Conceptual Framework

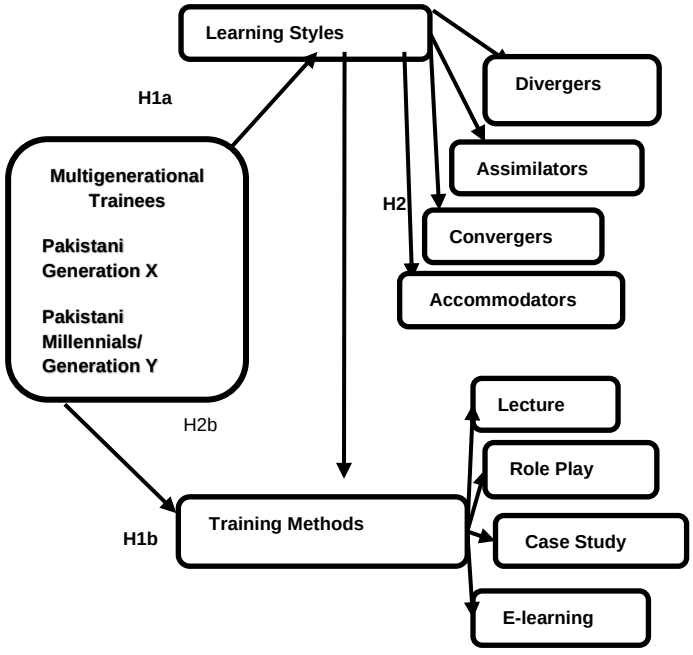

Figure 2: *Conceptual Framework*

Hypotheses (H)

H1: There exists a significant relationship between the trainees' generational affiliation and their preferences for the distinct learning style(s) and training method(s).

H1 is divided into two sub-hypotheses:

H1a: There exists a significant relationship between the trainees' generational affiliation and their preferences for the distinct learning style(s).

H1b: There exists a significant relationship between the trainees' generational affiliation and their preferences for the distinct training method(s).

H2: There exists a positive relationship between the trainees' preferred learning style(s) and their preferences for the training method(s).

Methodology

Research Design

This study incorporated the 'descriptive research design'. Under this approach, the quantitative methods were deployed to observe the generational affiliation of the trainees with their preferences for learning styles and training methods. Also, the interaction effect among the learning styles preferences of the trainees and their preferences for the training methods was ascertained under the same research design.

Population

The population of this study is comprised of the trainees nominated for various technical and soft skills trainings in the two learning and development centers situated at southern Punjab, Pakistan. Since both of these training centers belonged to the commercial banks thus, they provided both technical and soft skills training courses. Some of the soft skills training sessions from which the sample of the study was sourced on convenience basis included the training sessions on service effectiveness, conflict management, interpersonal communication, professional grooming, service for life, high-performance skills building, and time management. However, much of the sample was obtained from the technical training sessions, including digital banking, email management, orientation session, account opening, ATM operations and management, clearing, collection of cheques and lockers management, effective cash management, bank's liability products, and effective yearly closing, using the convenience sampling technique.

The data was collected through the questionnaire survey responses, during the years 2018 and 2019, from the two learning and development centers understudy. At the first learning and development center, only 2600 man-days were achieved in 2018 while 3600 man-days were accomplished in 2019, thus, the target population from this training center was comprised of 6200 trainees. In the second training center, around 950 man-days were achieved from 47 training sessions in 2018, and 1050 man-days were achieved from 51 training sessions during 2019. Thus, the target population from this learning and development center was comprised of 2000 trainees. Hence, the total target population from both learning and development centers had been calculated as 8200 trainees.

Moreover, in both of the learning and development centers, it was ensured that all the participants were trained in a multigenerational training classroom, and where all the three training interventions understudy, including lectures, role plays and case studies were simultaneously incorporated in each of the above-mentioned training courses. Also, it was ensured that questionnaire survey respondents had exposure to e-learning.

Sampling Technique and Sample size

Although the population for the study was known, it deployed the nonprobability convenience sampling method to obtain the sample size of 500 which according to Comrey and Lee (1992) is the optimum sample size in the inferential statistics. Nonetheless, from the 500 survey questionnaires which were floated across the trainees, only 380 filled questionnaires were returned. This had made a response rate of 76 percent. Furthermore, amongst these filled questionnaires, only 279 responses were sorted out as complete and dully filled; thus, they were considered for the analysis before any further screening.

Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire survey had been devised in such a way that the first part of the questionnaire included a few questions regarding the demographic profile of the respondents. Following this, the second part included the questions on training methods and learning styles preferences. This was created by adapting McFeely's (2002) 'Preferred Mode of Delivery Survey' which incorporated questions on specific training methods, such as lectures, role-plays, case studies, and e-learning. On the other hand, for gauging the learning styles of the respondents, Kolb's Learning Style Inventory 3.1 (LSI) was adopted which has already been proven for the validity and reliability in a number of inquiries on learning styles (Iliff, 1994; Kayes, 2002; Kolb, 2007; Khatun, 2014). In addition, all through administering this survey, it was ensured that the participants self-scored Kolb's LSI 3.1 on completing the survey.

Analysis

For the purpose of analysis, firstly, the responses of the 279 respondents were keyed into SPSS. Then, the descriptive statistics were calculated to explore the gender, education, and generational affiliation of the respondents. It was revealed through the respondents' demographic profile that about 147 trainees belonged to Pakistani Generation X; and 125 belonged to Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y, whereas, the representation of the Pakistani Baby Boomer Generation was 5 responses only. Therefore, the responses of Baby Boomer trainees were eliminated from the analysis, and so the final analysis was run on 272 responses.

Later, to check the association among the proposed hypothesis, the Chi-Square Statistics were calculated (with a significance level set as $p<0.05$) since all these variables were categorical and nominal in nature. Firstly, a 2 x 4 Chi-Square test of independence was administered on the variables of the generational groups (Pakistani Generation X, and Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y) and learning styles (Accommodating, Diverging, Converging and Assimilating). The strength of the relationship was monitored by Cramer's V, and the cross-tabulations were calculated which portrayed

whether learning style frequencies differed between the two generations of workers or not. This was followed by a 2 x 4 Chi-Square test of independence which was run on the variables of the generational groups (Pakistani Generation X, and Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y) and training methods (Lectures, Role-plays, Case studies, and E-learning). Again, the Cramer's V was deployed to gauge the strength of the relationship, and frequencies were calculated based on the scores of cross-tabulations. Lastly, in order to monitor the interaction effect between the preferred learning styles (Accommodating, Diverging, Converging, and Assimilating) and training methods (Lectures, Role-plays, Case studies, and E-learning), the 4 x 4 Chi-Square test of independence was run, which was followed by the calculation of Cramer's V and cross-tabulations.

Findings and Discussion

The results of the Chi-square test of independence ($\chi 2$= 23.935, df= 3, p= 0.000) indicated that there was a significant relationship of the trainees' generation with their learning styles preferences. The value of Cramer's V= 0.297 portrayed this relationship to be moderate. It was depicted through the cross-tabulations that amongst the Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y (Age 17-36 yrs.), 39.2 percent trainees were Accommodators, 4 percent were Divergers, 24 percent were Convergers, and about 32.8 percent trainees were Assimilators. While amongst Pakistani Generation X trainees (Age 37-56), it was revealed that 15.0 percent of them were Accommodators, 10.9 percent were Divergers, 24.3 percent were Convergers, and 49.7 percent of trainees were Assimilators.

This represents that when the two generations, X and Y, are trained together in a multigenerational training classroom, their information processing would vary according to their learning styles (Buch & Sena, 2001; Pashler et al., 2009) predispositions. Consequently, they are likely to endorse a few learning elements, and will decline the others. Also, this was evident in achieving the other objective of the study where the hypothesized relationship between learners' generation and their preferences for training methods was checked.

As such, the results of the Chi-square value of χ^2 = 9.779, df= 3, and p= 0.21 reported a significant relationship amongst the learners' generation and their preferred training methods. Although the Cramer's V (e.g. V= 0.190) did not denote a very strong relationship between the variables; however, the frequencies for the preferences for each training methods were observed through cross tabulations. And due to the cross tabulations, it was observed that among the Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y (17-36 yrs.), maximum preference was depicted for role-plays (e.g., with a proportion of 41.6 percent of the trainees). About 28.8 percent of the trainees reported Lectures as their preferred training method. As for the case studies, 26.4 percent of the trainees reported them as their preferred training method. In addition, only 3.2 percent Millennials / Generation Y trainees endorsed trainings through E-learning. On the other hand, majority of the Pakistani Generation X (37-56 yrs.) endorsed the idea of lecture-based training (e.g., with a proportion of 43.5 percent), about 32.0 percent of them preferred role-plays, around 17.7 percent endorsed case studies as their preferred training method, and, again, the minimum preference was observed for E-learning (e.g., 6.8 percent). Thus, the current study acknowledges the study of Akhavan-Saraf et al. (2016) which supports that each generation prefers a different set of training methodologies.

Nonetheless, the hypothesized preferences for training methods based on their learning styles were not supported, since the Chi-square results portrayed an insignificant relationship between the two. This was validated through the statistics of χ^2 = 10.809, df= 9, and p= 0.289 which portrayed that there was no interaction effect between the learners (e.g., who preferred certain learning styles) and their preferred training methods. Hence, this unsubstantiated the relationship which was supported by the studies of McCann (2006) and Khatun (2013) as their research proved that the interaction effect among the learners' learning styles preferences and their preferred training methods is not viable in all contexts.

Conclusion

With reference to the changing learning landscapes of the modern era, the problem discussed in this study is pertained to the intricacies of adult learners regarding their generations' preferences for learning styles and training methods. Accordingly, the proposed study recognized that there is a lack of generational evidence in the context of training and learning in Pakistan. Contrary to this, there is abundant evidence regarding the western generations which has helped the western trainers in rendering the training activities as per the distinct training methods preferences of the trainees belonging to different generations.

In realization of this, the framework investigated in this study revealed that the Generation X learners were intrinsically Assimilator in terms of their learning styles preferences and were more inclined towards the traditional lecture-based instruction method. In contrast, the Pakistani Millennials / Generation Y learners were found to be receptive to the role-play-based instructions, and they were explored to be intrinsically Accommodators in terms of their learning styles preferences. Surprisingly, it was found that both generations declined case study and e-learning training methods.

However, the individuals' preferences for training methods, including lectures, role-plays, case studies and e-learning were not observed to be dependent upon the learners' intrinsic learning styles preferences (e.g., Diverging, Assimilating, Converging and Accommodating).

Thus, it was portrayed through these results that the generational affiliation is more descriptive for the understanding of the learners' learning preferences. For example, the generational differences in learning preferences which resulted from this study portrayed that each generation has its individual needs of growth and development (Akhavan Saraf et al., 2016; Kicheva, 2017). This way, the study emphasizes that taking an account of such generational differences (Cekada, 2012) is becoming an important matter for the organizations to survive in today's world.

Therefore, the study implies that now is the time to customize the generic training plans and design new training structures. Particularly, it emphasizes on the need of a thorough revamping of training programs. In this way, the results of this study would help the training practitioners in understanding the characteristics of the learners, whom they intend to train (Dwyer, 2001) in the future. For example, this will enable the trainers to match the learners' training methods and learning styles preferences with their specific generations so as to provide them with the training which will go well with their generation-specific needs or preferences for the learning styles and training methods (Sims, 1990; Wilson, 2000a, Urick, 2017). Hence, the findings of this study will support the design, development and delivery of the training content (Buch & Bartley, 2002; Pashler et al., 2009) and programs.

In other words, this study has produced vital implications for the trainers to incorporate those training methods into the training programs which would fit well to the generational mix of the trainees they intend to train. Thus, these findings will contribute in developing the training practices which will effectively achieve the learning outcomes of training programs and yield greater returns over learning investments (Sarabdeen, 2013; Khatun, 2013).

Future Recommendations

Although this study addressed the research questions and hypotheses with quantitative research design, however in order to delve into the phenomenon of generational learning, it is proposed that future research requires a thorough qualitative exploratory inquiry into the phenomenon of multigenerational learning. Doing so will not only explain the reasons for the unique learning styles and training methods preferences of each generation, but also, it will yield the intrinsic learning characteristics of the multigenerational learners regarding their learning attitudes, motivators, preferred learning interventions, and other elements (e.g., preferred trainers). This exploration of the learning mechanisms of different generations will assist the organizations in enhancing and developing their training programs and delivery methods with the consideration of not only the generational requirements but also the effects (Odom & Dooley, 2009) of such programs.

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