

Research Paper

“Me, An Empath?”: Value Priorities and Trait Empathy Among Millennials and Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

With changing generational composition of the population around the world and with Generation Z entering workforce alongside the Millennials, differences among them are of rising interest to researchers and practitioners. The goal of this study was to quantitatively assess the value priorities and trait empathy of Millennials and Generation Z and to subsequently correlate the same. Past studies evaluating the value priorities of aforementioned generations often reflect inconsistencies with a further lack of focus on Generation Z. Similar contrasting results in the trait empathy scores of these cohorts too have been observed. The current study attempted to address these issues in addition to studying the relationship between values and empathy using the generational lens. This research employed a correlation research design and is cross-sectional in nature. Using convenience and volunteer sampling methods, a total of 78 participants from both generations residing in the United Arab Emirates completed the Portrait Values Questionnaire-21 (PVQ-21) and Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ). Results revealed no significant differences in the mean differences of values between the generations, however both generations rank the highest and the least important values similarly- benevolence and universalism and conformity and power respectively. Generation Z scored slightly higher than Millennials in trait empathy although not statistically meaningful. A positive correlation between empathy with benevolence and universalism and a negative correlation with power and conformity was found. Findings thus suggest that the groups display average trait empathy and are similar in their most and least important values. Further research examining these factors at a longitudinal level will help to achieve a clearer picture of Millennials and Generation Z.

Keywords: *Generational Differences, Birth Cohort Effects, Empathy, Values*

Karl Mannheim in 1928 put forth the Theory of Generations in his essay “The Problem of Generations” wherein he contends that all individuals living at a given time are influenced by their socio-historical environment particularly in those events wherein they are actively involved (Mannheim, 1928). This therefore gives rise to shared experiences, values, attitudes, predilections and practices thus creating a distinct culture and in turn to what is referred to as generational cohorts. The organization of a collective

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memory (Schwartz, 1996) is what differentiates this concept from ‘contemporaries’ who are people that coexist in the same time period and ‘coevals’ who are people of the same age. In defining the time period for each cohort there exists a disparity. However, based on a wide consensus Pew Research Center propounded that Millennials/Generation Y and Generation Z be defined by the birth years 1981-1996 and 1997-2012 respectively (Dimock, 2019).

Millennials also popularly known as Generation Y and less commonly known as Generation Me, Echo Boomers and Generation Nest is the first generation to experience some of the major developments within information and technology. Howe and Strauss (2000) also note the relevance and influence of globalization that had begun during this period on this generation. Generation Z also referred to as iGen or postmillennial or centennials display similar comfort in technology and in addition can also be called as social media natives. They are alive at a time witnessing “the most profound changes in the century ... with web, internet, smart phones, laptops, freely available networks and digital media” (Singh & Dangmei, 2016) as well as revamps on the social and economic front.

As societies and individuals evolve, differences in value priorities across groups, the role of values in determining societal trends, its influence on one’s behavior and attitude continues to be an area of interest in Psychology. Kluckhohn (1951) put forth a widely accepted definition of values: “A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action” (p.395). A popularly employed theory of values that is utilized in this study is The Schwartz Theory of Basic Values. It identifies ten ubiquitous values that vary in the underlying motivation and goal. These are self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism and stimulation (Schwartz, 1992). Each of these values can be further organized under four broad dimensions that contrast each other: Openness to change/Conservation and Self-transcendence/Self-enhancement. Self-direction expresses the individual’s need to act, think and choose for themselves. Stimulation reflects one’s desire for excitement, challenges and thrill rather than monotony in life. Hedonism is the pleasurable gratification of one’s desires for oneself. Achievement reflects the goal of demonstrating one’s self-efficacy and competency by attaining personal success and meeting societal standards. Power can be understood as one’s inclination in wanting to dominate, control and influence others and in their desire to establish a prestigious position within the society. Security is defined as the value that drives one to attain safety and stability within and among individuals. Conformity is the obedience to socially set expectations and norms by restricting behaviours that may potentially infringe upon the same. Tradition is the acceptance of the culturally or religiously shared customs and practices. Although tradition and conformity are similar inherently they differ in to whom the subservience is observed. In the latter it is towards frequently interacted people like parents, teachers and superiors whereas in the former it is towards religious and cultural norms and beliefs (Schwartz, 2012). Benevolence reflects one’s aspiration to better and develop the welfare of their in-group. Lastly, universalism is the regard, respect, acceptance and protection of all people and for nature.

Edward B. Titchener coined the term empathy, a translation of the German word *Einfühlung* that was coined by Theodore Lipps in the 1880s which meant “feeling into” (Hardee, 2003). Spreng et al. (2009) understood empathy as an ability to understand feelings from another’s perspective. Empathy is often conceptualized as including an affective and a cognitive component. Affective empathy enables the individual to experience the emotions being consciously or unconsciously perceived resulting in a phenomenon such as emotional

contagion (Cuff et al., 2014). Cognitive empathy also known as perspective-taking enables one to identify and understand the emotion being expressed by the other. This includes attending to the target, their cues and interpretation of the same (Enz et al., 2009).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generational Cohorts and Value Priorities

Studies evaluating the behavioural, ideological, attitudinal and other conceptual similarities and dissimilarities across generations are numerous. Research in understanding values within generational cohorts too are conducted (Blazeviciene & Jakusovaite, 2007; Leijen et al., 2022). However, in comparison a context of work is often adopted in most value-based generational research. Although they are seen to differ significantly in this construct, at the same time discrepancies as well as debate regarding if the differences are in fact so pronounced continues (Alferjany & Alias, 2021).

Discussing in broad dimensions of personal values, Lyons et al. (2007) conducted a cross-sectional study that assessed generational differences in values in Silent-generation, Baby-boomers, Generation X and Millennials. The study revealed that while comparing means of Millennials self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence) is the highest followed by openness to change (stimulation and self-direction), self-enhancement (achievement, power and hedonism) and conservation (security, conformity and tradition). Lyons et al.'s (2007) results were fairly reproduced in this study although self-enhancement and conservation were ranked interchangeably. On the contrary Marcus et al. (2016) reported the following order among Turkish Millennials- self-enhancement, openness to change, self-transcendence and conservation of which the latter two occupy the same level of priority.

Similar results in some measure was obtained in the study conducted by Crešnar and Nedelko (2020). In contrast, Leijen et al.'s (2022) results differ. Based on their longitudinal study Millennials attached lower importance to universalism, self-direction, achievement and security and a higher importance to hedonism and stimulation. No difference of statistical significance was found in benevolence, conformity, and power. An examination of means of values of Millennials reveal that their values are prioritized in the following order- hedonism, benevolence, self-direction, security universalism, conformity, stimulation, achievement and power.

Weber (2015) concluded that Millennials emphasized one particular value orientation over others- Personal-Competence. This orientation according to Weber's (1990) work includes terminal values and instrumental values that overlap with those found in aforementioned researches that used Schwartz's model.

Generation and Empathy

As stated earlier, empirical research has provided us with impressions that are for the most part consistent of each generational cohorts. Relevant to this study, researches describe Millennials as demonstrating higher materialistic inclinations, emphasizing on extrinsic values of money, status and fame over intrinsic values (Weber, 2015). Twenge et al. (2008) reported that Millennials held levels of narcissism higher than other generations when they were at a similar age. Similar findings were also observed in individualism (Twenge, 2006) and positive self-view (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Aforementioned traits are proven to be negatively related to empathy and prosocial behavior (Watson et al., 1994). Results in Twenge's (2010) study communicated a decline in care and concern for others which was

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demonstrated in a lack of prioritization to engage in charity donation and reduced civic orientation.

Konrath et al., (2011) analyzed the responses of 14,000 then college going students and found out that average score within the component of empathic concern and perspective taking in Interpersonal Reactivity Index (1983) had dropped by 48 percent and 34 percent between 1979 and 2009. A dramatic deterioration of the same had especially occurred between 2000 and 2009. Metz (2017) stated that Millennials show lower empathy levels. It must be noted that this cohort is defined in his study by the years 1982-2001 thus his results is applicable partly to Generation Z as well. Significant differences in empathy with a gradual decline was observed amongst Millennials and Generation Z in the study carried out by Křeménková and Kvintová (2017).

On the other hand, Hamm et al. (2020) adjusted for gender, race, and education level in the mean empathy scores of 588 residents and fellows discovered no statistically significant differences between the Millennials and Generation X. Versey et al. (2020) in their study assessed 722 participants between the ages of 18 and 35 and reported no significant differences in empathic concern and perspective taking was observed between Millennials and Generation Z. Katz et al. (2021) states in her book *Gen Z, Explained: The Art of Living in a Digital Age* that “they are strong in their individuality and strong in their sense of community.... They also care about others”. Lastly, “they never knew the world before terrorism or global warming. As a result, Gen Z is the most informed, evolved, and empathetic generation of its kind” (Google, 2017).

Values and Empathy

According to Schwartz (1994) values are said to have five key features that characterize them. Firstly, they are beliefs, secondly they drive one towards a certain goal, they transcend specific situations, they steer and aid in the evaluation of information and are organized in a hierarchical manner of importance (Schwartz, 1994). Roccas et al. (2002) expressed that values come in handy to justify behaviours that reflect certain trait. For example, an individual that is high on the conformity value will willingly comply with orders. Here their behavior can be understood through the lens of the value held by the individual. Additionally, Schwartz’s (1994) definition of values implies that they are not conditional and enables one to behave in ways that are appropriate in a variety of situations. Thus they are predictors of behaviours that are consistent and this consistency may be perceived as traits (Balliet et al., 2008).

Utilizing Davis’ (1983) Interpersonal Reactivity Index Ardenghi et al. (2021) investigated values as a predictor to empathy and gender differences in the former. They examined 398 Italian medical students and found out that benevolence and universalism correlated positively with both the emotional and cognitive dimensions of empathy, whereas achievement, hedonism, power and security were negatively associated with empathy. Alternatively, in an examination of the relationship between Schwartz’s values and empathy by Balliet et al., (2008) benevolence demonstrated the strongest positive correlation with empathy and achievement the strongest negative relationship.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To understand the value priorities of Millennials and Generation Z, assess their trait empathy and evaluate the relationship between the same.

Hypotheses

1. There is a difference in the value priorities of Millennials and Generation Z.
2. There is a significant difference in the trait empathy of Millennials and Generation Z.
3. There is a correlation between values and empathy.

Sample

The study primarily used convenience and volunteer sampling to attain its sample. These sampling methods enabled an ease in reaching out to mass participants and thus is ideal for this study. A total of 78 individuals ($M= 24.75$, $SD= 5.2$) participated in this study of which 33 individuals were Millennials and 45 were Generation Z. Of the total sample, 51 were females (65.68), 26 males (32.9%) and one chose to not disclose their gender (1.28%). Additionally, 76 participants were of Indian nationality and the remaining of Nigerian and Filipino nationality. Among the participants most had attained Bachelor's degree or equivalent (45.1 %), and rest held either a Doctoral degree or equivalent (3.7%), Master's degree or equivalent (20.7%), Diploma or Associate degree (2.4%) or were in higher secondary (6.1%) or middle school (1.2%). 65.9% of the respondents had resided in the United Arab Emirates for 10 years and above, 14.6 % for 3-5 years, 8.5% for 6-9 years and 11% for 1-2 years.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

1. **Portrait Values Questionnaire-21 (PVQ-21) a.k.a. the Human Values Scale of the European Social Survey (ESS21):** PVQ-21 was developed by Schwartz (2021) to assess basic values in his theory. Categorized under four broad dimensions that contrast each other: Openness to Change/Conservation and Self-Transcendence /Self-Enhancement the values are as follows: universalism, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, benevolence, hedonism, self-direction and stimulation. Scoring involves rating of 21 items on a 6-point Likert scale (1= “*very much like me*”, 6= “*not like me at all*”). The instrument is not context specific, can be administered online and is suitable for participants above the age of 13. The reliabilities of the two value dimensions i.e. Openness to Change/Conservation and Self-Transcendence /Self-Enhancement exceeded .70, which is commonly considered as acceptable (Verkasalo et al., 2008). Test-retest reliabilities of the ten values- universalism .83 & .75, tradition .81 & .80, conformity .86 & .72, security .88 & .70, power .84 & .77, achievement .83 & .82, benevolence .82 & .62, hedonism .84 & .65, self-direction .66 & .70, and stimulation .74 & .76. - as conducted in two countries- Israel and Germany respectively revealed a moderate to high reliability (Schwartz, 2003).
2. **Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ):** Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) was developed by Spreng et al. (2009) is a unidimensional, brief and valid tool to assess both emotional, sympathetic physiological arousal and cognitive measures of empathy. Consisting of 16 items, each item is constructed in a Likert style format with a 4-point scale (0= “*never*”, 4 = “*always*”). A wide range of attributes and empathy related behaviours are covered in TEQ (Spreng et al., 2009). This includes sympathetic physiological arousal (eg., “It upsets me to see someone being treated disrespectfully”), altruism (eg., “I enjoy making other people feel better”), prosocial helping behaviour (eg., “I get a strong urge to help when I see someone who is upset”), emotion comprehension (eg., “I can tell when others are sad even when they do not say anything”), emotional contagion (eg., “When someone is feeling excited item 1) and assessment of emotional states in others by indexing the frequency of

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behaviors demonstrating appropriate sensitivity (eg., “Other people’s misfortunes do not disturb me a great deal”). It has an internal consistency of $\alpha = .87$ and a high test–retest reliability, $r = .81, p < .001$.

Procedure

Recruitment and collection of data was conducted online. Participants for the study were reached out either directly through social networking platforms or through advertisement of the study on discussion forums like Reddit thus making volunteer participation possible. All research data was collected through Google Forms. Participants were provided with an online copy of the informed consent so as to receive a voluntary participation for the study. Adhering to The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct by the American Psychological Association in Section 8: Research and Publication as well as those outlined by the research committee of Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dubai, the informed consent detailed all vital information necessary to the participant’s knowledge. An additional parental consent was included and obtained for those below the age of 18. Following this a socio-demographic schedule, Portrait Values Questionnaire-21 (PVQ-21) and the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire were given. Aforementioned instruments were shared using Google Forms. Two participants from the sample pool were selected using probability methods and rewarded an Amazon gift card worth Dhs 50. No other compensation or reimbursements were provided for their participation in the study.

Statistical Analysis

IBM SPSS Version 23 was used to analyze the results. Shapiro- Wilk test of normality was conducted to determine whether data obtained was normally distributed following which differences in value priorities between Millennials and Generation Z was assessed using one- way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare means of trait empathy scores between generations. A Pearson’s correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between values and empathy. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

RESULTS

Shapiro- Wilk test of normality was conducted to determine whether data obtained was normally distributed. The results indicated a failure to reject the null hypothesis for all variables across both groups except for hedonism, power and empathy. However, no outliers were reflected in the respective box plots and the skewness and kurtosis scores fit within the recommended normality thresholds. Thus, it may be concluded that data is normally distributed.

Generations and Value Priorities

Differences in value priorities between Millennials and Generation Z was assessed using one- way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). There was non- significant difference in mean scores of values based on generation (multivariate $F(11,66 \text{ df}) = .533, p = .874$; Wilk’s Lambda = 0.918, partial $\eta^2 = .082$) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Multivariate Test- Wilks’ Lambda

Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^c
.918	.533b	11.000	66.000	.874	0.082	5.862	.261

a. Design: Intercept + YOB

b. Exact statistic c. Computed using alpha = .05

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Millennials ranked benevolence and universalism the highest followed by security, self-direction, hedonism, stimulation, tradition, achievement and lastly conformity and power. A similar order is found with Generation Z wherein benevolence and universalism is followed by self-direction, stimulation, security, hedonism, achievement, tradition, power and conformity (see Table 2). Millennials and Generation Z report an agreement on the most important values- benevolence ($M=.411, SD=.144$ and $M= .467, SD=.098$) and universalism ($M=.396, SD=.100$ and $M= .452, SD=.085$) and the least important values- conformity ($M=-.392, SD=.180$ and $M= -.744, SD=.154$ and power ($M= -.786, SD=.159$ and $M=-.711, SD=.136$). The first hypothesis was therefore not supported.

Table 2 Comparison of Means between Millennials and Generation Z

Dependent Variable	YOB	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Conformity	1981-1996	-.392	.180	-.751	-.034
	1997-2012	-.744	.154	-1.051	-.438
Tradition	1981-1996	-.044	.131	-.305	.217
	1997-2012	-.222	.112	-.446	.001
Benevolence	1981-1996	.411	.114	.184	.638
	1997-2012	.467	.098	.272	.661
Universalism	1981-1996	.396	.100	.197	.594
	1997-2012	.452	.085	.282	.621
Self-direction	1981-1996	.183	.131	-.077	.443
	1997-2012	.222	.112	.000	.445
Stimulation	1981-1996	.077	.137	-.196	.351
	1997-2012	.200	.118	-.034	.435
Hedonism	1981-1996	.092	.119	-.145	.330
	1997-2012	.033	.102	-.170	.237
Achievement	1981-1996	-.347	.152	-.650	-.044
	1997-2012	.022	.130	-.237	.282
Power	1981-1996	-.786	.159	-1.104	-.469
	1997-2012	-.711	.136	-.983	-.439
Security	1981-1996	.214	.111	-.008	.435
	1997-2012	.056	.095	-.134	.246
Empathy	1981-1996	45.242	1.527	42.201	48.284
	1997-2012	46.222	1.308	43.618	48.827

Generations and Empathy

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare means of trait empathy scores between generations (see Table 3). Millennials ($M=45.24, SD=9.11$) and Generation Z ($M=46.22, SD=8.51$) did not demonstrate a significant difference in the trait empathy scores $t(76) = -.487, p= .627$ although Generation Z did score higher than the former. Thus, contrary to the hypothesis, no evidence was found for significant differences in generations and empathy.

Table 3 Comparison of Means between Millennials and Generation Z

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
.395	.532	-.487	76	.627	-.97980	2.01037	-4.98379	3.02419

Association Between Values and Empathy

A Pearson’s correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between values and empathy (see Table 4). The following results were yielded: conformity ($r=-.298, p=.008$), tradition ($r=-.166, p=.145$), benevolence ($r=.533, p<.001$), universalism ($r=.414, p<0.001$), self-direction ($r=.214, p=.060$), stimulation ($r=.054, p=.637$), hedonism ($r=-.116, p=.313$), achievement ($r=-.150, p=.190$), power ($r=-.286, p=.011$) and security ($r=.008, p=.946$). An evaluation of these results revealed that there was a significant moderate positive correlation between empathy and benevolence and empathy and universalism. Additionally, a significant weak negative correlation was found with conformity and power. Thus, evidence was found for the last hypothesis.

Table 4 Correlations Between Values and Empathy

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Conformity	-.298**	.008	78
Tradition	-.166	.145	78
Benevolence	.533**	.000	78
Universalism	.414**	.000	78
Self-direction	.214	.060	78
Stimulation	.054	.637	78
Hedonism	-.116	.313	78
Achievement	-.150	.190	78
Power	-.286*	.011	78
Security	.008	.946	78
Empathy	1		78

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the value priorities and trait empathy of Millennials and Generation Z and to explore the relationship between the same. The results were contrary to the research hypotheses except in the assumption put forth in terms of the correlation between values and empathy.

Generational Cohorts and Value Priorities

There are three key findings of the present research. First although no significant difference is found in the mean differences of values between the generations, a result that is worthy of being noted is that both generations rank the highest and the least important values similarly- benevolence and universalism and conformity and power respectively. These findings have been replicated at least in part in previous studies. However, the finding that Generation Z too endorse power relatively lesser than other values is novel. The consensus between the generations in the ranking of these values accompanied by the finding that

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differences between them were not statistically significant might suggest that Millennials and Generation Z may not be as distinct in this aspect.

It may also benefit to discuss the stability and change of values across time. Millennials showed a stability of some values in adulthood i.e. achievement, conformity and hedonism while others such as security, self-direction, benevolence and universalism increase and yet other values like power and stimulation decrease in importance (Leijen et al., 2022). Milfont et al. (2016) on the other hand contest that with biological and psychological maturation value priorities change. Women and older adults emphasize on self-transcendence and conservation values whereas men and younger individuals espouse self-enhancement and openness to change values. A larger proportion of the sample consist of women and hence sex may have shaped the results however there also exists a consistency in the pattern of results with previous studies.

Generation and Empathy

While comparing mean trait empathy scores, Generation Z scored slightly higher than Millennials although it is not statistically meaningful. Total scores in Toronto Empathy Questionnaire can range between 0 to 64, wherein higher scores express higher levels of self-reported empathy scores. Since there are no official norms for this measure and since there are no previous studies that use this tool and draw a comparison between these generations, an evaluation of these scores is done with available data. Three studies that evaluated the empathy scores of undergraduate students in Toronto with a mean age ranging between 18.6 to 18.9 years were 44.54, 47.27 and 46.95 (Spreng et al., 2009). This sample fits roughly with our current Millennials. Similarly, Malaysian medical students of Year I, II, III, IV and V in session 2016-2017 reported a mean empathy of 46.2, 45.3, 46.1, 45.3, 46 respectively (Haque et al., 2018). A study conducted amongst medical students in South Korea with a mean age of 19.72 reported a mean empathy score of 44.6 (Yeo & Kim, 2021). Amongst 941 Saudi medical students, a mean score of 42.31 and a median of 43 was calculated (Bin Abdulrahman et al., 2022). These samples approximate our Generation Z in this study. Taken together, our results indicate that Millennials and Generation Z exhibit an average level of empathy contradicting previous popular findings (Twenge, 2010; Konrath et al., 2010; Metz, 2017, Křeménková & Kvintová, 2017).

Technology and Internet is often assigned a negative reputation when discussing its effects and impact on empathy (Konrath, 2012). However, it may also be useful to discuss contrary findings. Whether it be the vision of Facebook which states “Give people the capacity to form communities and bring the globe closer together”, or of Instagram “to capture and share the world’s moments” or of WhatsApp “...Behind every product, the decision is our desire to let people communicate anywhere in the world without barriers”, or of Snapchat “..empower people to express themselves, live in the moment, learn about the world, and have fun together”, the very purpose of Internet and the social media seems to be to connect people from different parts of the world. Rosen (2012) reported that those who spent an increased amount of time online showed more virtual empathy and those individuals who were able to express such empathy were able to do so even in the real world. Carrier et al. (2015) found that virtual empathy was positively correlated with real world empathy, increased time spent online did not reduce face to face time or real-world empathy. Thus, these findings may be worth exploring into understanding further the role technology truly plays in empathy.

Values and Empathy

Statistically supported positive correlation of benevolence (Balliet et al., 2008) and universalism with empathy is noted in several other papers (Silfver et al., 2008). This positive correlation together with the value priorities reported provide a stronger evidence for the prevalence of trait empathy in Millennials and Generation Z. The negative correlation between empathy and power albeit weak is substantiated in the conclusions of these aforementioned papers (Myry & Helkama, 2001; Ardenghi et al., 2021).

A result in this study that merits comment is the negative correlation of conformity with empathy. It is interesting that such a relationship be found when concepts such as prosocial conformity is known to highly exert strong influences on individuals (Nook et al., 2016). This result may be interpreted in the light of the values ranked highly by the generations. For both, self-direction is one among the top 4 values prioritized. Conformity and self-direction can be seen oppositional to each other since one involves adherence and obedience to the group and the other autonomy in thoughts and actions (Castaño & Lino, 2013). When understanding the role played by values Helkama (2004) states that conceptually conformity links to prevention of antisocial behavior and benevolence the promotion of prosocial behavior. Silfver et al. (2008) contemplated on the possibility that “conformity and tradition play a more important role in moral motivation in more traditional societies, whereas, in modern societies, morality is mainly based on universalism and benevolence values”. United Arab Emirates is characterized by its presence of numerous cultures, nationalities, ethnicities and its substantially large expat population. Thus, there is a need for increased cultural studies particularly with an emphasis on the expats to understand the role societies and cultures play in value development.

Limitations and future research directions

There are four potential limitations concerning the results of this study. First is in regards to the design of the study which is cross-sectional in nature with a sample that is primarily Indian from a single country- United Arab Emirates. Therefore, results attained may not be generalizable. Therefore, longitudinal and multicultural studies using larger sample sizes would be recommended to further explore the differences and/or similarities between Millennials and Generation Z. Nonetheless, self-report questionnaires used in this study are reliable and cross-culturally validated and in doing so provides useful results. This is presumably one of the first studies of this nature to be carried out in United Arab Emirates. Secondly, in normality testing three variables in one group rejected the null hypothesis. But no outliers were reflected in the respective box plots and the skewness and kurtosis scores fit within the recommended normality thresholds. Nevertheless, it is suggested that the results be interpreted with caution. Another limitation is that to assess trait empathy Spreng et al.’s (2009) 16-item questionnaire was used. This scale was chosen over other more popularly used scales despite not having a normative data to compare the results to so as to prevent respondent fatigue. It is therefore recommended that future studies use other similar alternatives with a developed norm or split the questions into different sections which can be shared at different times or day as recommended by (Sharma, 2022) when replicating this study. Another limitation is the proportion of males and females in the sample wherein the latter was much higher in number. Gender differences in values and empathy has not been evaluated in this study since the focus was on generational variations and moreover doing so will further reduce male participants in each group.

Despite these limitations, this study reveals some important features of Millennials and Generation Z. In contrast to the more materialistic and hedonistic image that is often

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presented, the results suggest that they are relatively more empathetic than what they are attributed with. Empathy has real life implications in different aspects of socio-emotional and psychological wellbeing. It is rapidly being seen as a crucial professional competence in healthcare necessary to attain better outcomes and is regarded as an important leadership skill within the corporate. It is however also equally important to keep an out for signs of empathy and compassion fatigue among this cohort so that interventions and strategies can be employed at the earliest. This study also provides a small insight into the personal values of Indian expats in United Arab Emirates. Nonetheless, further research examining these factors at a longitudinal level will help to achieve a clearer picture of Millennials and Generation Z.

CONCLUSION

This research intended to understand the value priorities of Millennials and Generation Z and subsequently assessing their trait empathy. The study reports some findings that reaffirmed the conclusions of previous studies, some that opposes others and a finding that has not been reported to the best of our knowledge. No significant difference is found in the mean differences of values between the generations, however it is important to note that both generations rank the highest and the least important values similarly- benevolence and universalism and conformity and power respectively. Stability and change of values across time as well as the sex composition of the samples may have played an important role in these results. A comparison of mean trait empathy scores reveals that Generation Z score slightly higher than Millennials although it is not statistically meaningful. Furthermore, Millennials and Generation Z exhibit an average level of empathy. A statistically significant positive correlation of benevolence and universalism with empathy and a negative correlation of power and conformity with empathy is found. Such an association between conformity and empathy is new and contrasting to previous research. This result may be interpreted in the light of the values ranked highly by the generations- self-direction wherein conformity and self-direction is seen oppositional to each other in terms of its goal. Despite its limitations this study contributes to the continuing attempts of researchers and practitioners alike to further understand the Millennials and the Generation Z.

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