Assessment of The Role of Human Resources in The Mediation of Possible Divergences of Ideas Among Multigeneration (Baby Boomers, X, Y, And Z)

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Abstract

In the current labour market with increasingly technological and competitive situation, generations and their differences are being studied extensively in the diverse cultures. Today, companies have about three to five generations working in the same teams and with different hierarchies. Faced with this scenario, companies benefit from different ideas and concepts, due to the fact that everyone can add their thoughts and references. Still, there are conflicts among people of different ages (and generations) who diverge their concepts when making a decision or arriving at a common agreement within the organisation. In this sense, the aim of this study is to identify the perceptions of the work team within company "A" concerning intergenerational coexistence and hierarchies at work. As well as this, it is crucial to understand what the principal characteristics of each generation are, the possible divergences between them in the labour market, and the importance of Human resources as a mediation between those conflicts. This study was characterized by exploratory research. The research strategy used a questionnaire with both open and closed questions. A group of 113 participants of employees of the company 'A' responded the questionnaire from their own perspective regarding conflicts in the workplace due to the range of ages (and generational gaps).The results gave a clear idea that each generation regards their preference to work or avoid working with some different generations on their team and their reasoning. Another interesting result of this project was the perspective of what the Human Resources sector can do to minimise those conflicts.

Keywords: intergenerational conflicts, generation X, generation Z, work environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, as society has evolved, transformed, and found new forms, its way of thinking and acting, and regard to the negotiation of values and principles has also changed. One of the factors that corroborate this is the interaction between different generations in the same space. Some generations are more bold, independent and take more risks, while others are conservative and resistant to changes.

Modern day society consists of a range of people from different generations present in society and the labour market. Brito (2013) believes that the arrival of "generation Z" in the labour market deserves significant attention, since this generation carries with it an immediate profile, that is, the search for solutions to problems occurs as quickly as possible.

Few studies have empirically substantiated generational differences in work values (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). These generational differences can cause friction, mistrust, communication breakdowns, prevent effective teamwork and collaboration, and impact job satisfaction, retention, and productivity (Baily, 2009).

Therefore, it is very important to identify the generations (Baby Boomers, X, Y or Z) that are represented in any organisation in order to know how to deal with the possible conflicts that may exist between those generations. Considering this social and economic context, Formenton and Stefano (2017) shows us that, in general, organisations are concerned with personnel management and the development of their talents.

Considering that in the most diverse corporations, especially those that provide services for several generations together, many conflicts occur, be they ideal or generational ones, which must be managed with the aim of respecting each generation represented. (Corrêa Jr e et al., p. 7, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary that the human resources (HR) sector be prepared for conflict management, seeking the integration of different individuals in a company, which represents the organisational culture, as reported by Nascimento, Santos,

Valentim and Moro-Cabero (2016). Taking into account the context presented, the following question arises for the research; how can we help Human Resources manage generational conflicts within their respective organisations, from the perspective of their collaborators?

In this way, this study is derived from the idea of improving interpersonal and labour relations that occur within organisations. Therefore, considering the perspective of employees from different generations that exist within an organisation, it is important to highlight how human resource management can help the organisational culture of companies prevail in a full and harmonious way.

According to Nascimento et al. (2016), in order to understand the organisational subjects, it is necessary to study which generation they belong to, as well as what their characteristics are because it is this identification that will guide managers to deal with the specificities of each generation. It is the junction of

these different generations that characterizes the organisational and informational culture.
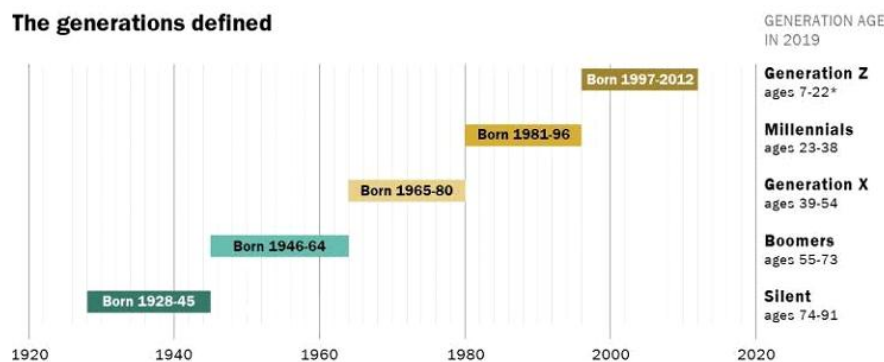
Human Resources firm Kelly Services in New Zealand conducted an Intergenerational survey (2009) they found that nearly half of New Zealand's workforce encounters 'intergenerational conflict' and these generational differences may cause friction in the workplace. This is one of the reasons that justifies the importance of this study in order to assist top management to create good working environments. Melo (2014) points out that, regardless of the age group, the aspects that appear most frequently in the list of complaints from one generation in relation to the other are: lack of previous experience, resistance, lack of will to innovate, lack of respect, lack of discipline and focus. In order to initiate an efficient dialogue between the generations, this study seeks to verify if these complaints really apply to the company under study by surveying other factors that may be important in the management of interpersonal relationships and aiming to establish a culture in which differences are valued.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

At present, society lives amid a plurality of ideals, coming from different generations present in the community and job market (Brito, 2013). It is incredibly important to identify the different generations (Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z) present in an organisation and learn how to deal with the conflicts they may have regarding the generational differences.

2.1. Generations

According to Zemke and Filpczak (2000), a generation is defined as: "what it thinks, feels, and experiences and not just by dates of birth." Each generation has unique characteristics that are directly linked to their behaviour, customs, and values. To better understand each generation, it is important to know their individualities and their impact on the organisational environment.

Source: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-Millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/

Figure. 1 The generations defined

The idea of classifying generations started with Baby Boomers. After this, changes began occurring frequently. kept for around 20 years, finishing in 1964 as noted by Roof, W. C., & Greer, B. (1993).

2.1.1. Silent Generation

In 2020, this generation represents people who are 75 to 95 years old (Howe, 2014). The vast majority of people from the silent generation have retired and are therefore not the main focus of this research. The Silent Generation grew up facing social and economic problems, as they were the generation right before World War II, born between 1925 and 1945. (Howe, 2014). Economically, this generation's first problem was the 1929 Crisis, also known as the 'Great Depression'. It was a strong economic recession that hit international capitalism in the late 1920s. It marked the decline of economic liberalism at that time, and its causes were overproduction and financial speculation (Crafts & Fearon, 2010).

The first social issue presented to them were when they were children during the World War (Howe, 2014). The Second World War was one of the biggest conflicts for humanity, taking place from 1939 to 1945, in different areas in Oceania, Asia, Africa and Europe. This conflict was fought between Allies (United Kingdom, France, USA, USSR etc.) and Axis (Italy, Germany, Japan etc.) and resulted in the death of approximately 60 million people plus significant material destruction (Churchill, W. S, 2013).

The silent generation were told that the sacrifices made in battle were for their future. Due to all the difficulties faced when they were kids, the Silent Generation consider the possibility of work a privilege, with this mindset they achieve great results, being considered a hardworking generation (Kane, 2019).

2.1.2. Baby Boomers

According to SBCoaching (2019): "the Baby Boomer generation got its name as it represents the "boom" in births that happened between 1946 and 1964". This phenomenon has been explained by the return of World War II combatants, who as an act of compensation for the lives taken in battle, increased the birth rate. This generation is also called the 'TV Generation' (1950/1960) as they were born during the period in which the television was invented. The majority of this generation are parents and even grandparents, but they were young during the 60s and 70s. Therefore, they were shaped by significant political, economic, and cultural changes that the world was going through at that time and television played an essential role in all this transformation, as it served as a means of propagating ideas and tendencies. These messages mobilised the population to fight for their rights.

It is possible to observe that this generation was marked by intense conflicts, including the beginning of the fight for feminism, counterculture, black rights, and the Vietnam War (Jordao, 2016, p. 7). The fight for their rights is what defines this generation. Their battle was against the culture prevalent at that time.

They started to fight for the rights of minorities, including young people, LGBTQ community, black people, etc., thus they were considered rebels of that time (Jordao, 2016, p. 7).

According to Malafaia (2011), Baby Boomers value their careers, are loyal to the organisation and have dominant values such as: achievement, ambition, and status. This generation went through difficult adolescence stages, moments marked by civil rights movements, the War in Vietnam and military dictatorship. It is also noteworthy that the Baby Boomers generation had a difficult relationship with parents in adolescence. Still, when they became parents, they committed themselves to form their children for future Generation X (Erickson, 2011).

2.1.3. Generation X

Generation X represents Baby Boomers' children. SBCoaching (2019) note that this generation's focus takes the lamentations of its predecessors much more into account. They see their parents dedicating their lifetime to a single company, often giving up better offers due to their loyalty to their company, but sometimes are not recognized for this. Generation X are more open to new opportunities.

Jordao (2016) identified that the Generation X consists of people with more affection for news, despite being somewhat insecure and fearing job loss for future generations. Even so, a good portion of them are idealists, who dream of undertaking or changing professions to achieve full realisation. However, Formenton and Stefano (2017) note that: "the members of this generation value the flexibility of work-life balance options. While money is important as a career performance indicator, they are willing to sacrifice wages and status for longer and more options" (p. 9-10). Similarly, Morais (2016, p. 185) states that "members of Generation X tend to value work and financial stability, on the condition of guaranteeing the realisation of personal and material desires".

The younger members of Generation X are even less willing to delay their personal desires for the good of the company. What most characterises Generation X is the ability to learn new things, autonomy, and entrepreneurship. For Tulgan (2013), this generation has unpleasant characteristics, being considered cynical, despicable, naive, arrogant, and materialistic. However, Formenton and Stefano, identified as:

"Generation X is more comfortable than that of Baby Boomers working in regard to race, gender and sexual orientation" (2017, p. 12).

Thus, the two generations believe that the other is materialistic. According to Corrêa et al. (2016) Generation X witnessed and participated in the transition from analogue to digital, which forced them to develop working techniques that blend traditional and creative processes. Despite being considered a precursor generation, for participating in the technological transition process and also major events of the time, Generation X demonstrates resistance to innovations and insecurity in competing with people more than young people. A key value of Generation X is the art of achieving a balance between career and quality of life.

2.1.4. Generation Y

According to Jordao (2016) Generation Y is known as the Millennial generation, or Internet generation. This generation developed at a time of huge technological advances and economic prosperity in a highly urbanised environment. This was also immediately after the establishment of the domain of virtuality as a system of social and media interaction, and in part at the level of labour relations.

If Generation X was conceived in the transition to the new technological world, Generation Y was the first generation to be genuinely born in this environment, even if incipient (Jordao, 2016, p. 16). The author demonstrates that Generation Y was the first to be born and raised in an advanced technological environment with greater social interaction, via virtual means. Corrêa Jr et al. (2016) also note: "Gen Y is looking for innovation by breaking paradigms and, at the same time, fast feedback, and constant professional growth. Among its main objectives, the commitment to make the hierarchies of organisations more flexible and horizontal is worth highlighting" (2016, p.11).

According to Engelmann (2007), [...] these individuals grew up exposed to diseases, for example, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). They witnessed terrorism as a global phenomenon, experienced technological evolution and are the generation most connected to mobile networks and technologies. Proactivity, ambition, optimism, and appreciation of teamwork are some of the characteristics of this generation since they are always eager for challenges and can multitask simultaneously (Nascimento et. al 2016, p. 19-20). This is a generation that consistently questions preestablished rules, and when they do not suit certain environments, they look for new horizons.

Regarding the desires of young people of Generation Y, Jordao (2016) identifies that the clearest signs of the importance that young people attach to their own values have started to present in the world of work. Like their employees, companies make hierarchies more flexible, acting in a network, prioritising ethics, and responsibility. If the question was how to balance a social life with a career in the past, today this is not even questioned: life out of the office is the priority for most. In this way, we can assume that the young people of generation Y have other priorities than those related to work activities; therefore, it is necessary to adapt the employment opportunities to this generation's lifestyle.

Regarding the religiosity of Generation Y, there were no major changes from the previous generation, X. According to Jordao (2016, p. 20), [...] spirituality of young people and adults has not changed, many still believe in God and pray even if some choose not to have an official religion. This shows that youth are more distrustful of religious institutions, not religions [..]. Some evidence points out that this is a matter of lack of affiliation and not faith in God, as noted by Jordao (2016). According to a global survey by Deloitte 'The Millennial Survey 2016', found that 50% of the labour market consisted of individuals from Generation Y, also known as Millennials. According to the same survey, in 2020, professionals in the age group of up to 34 years were predicted to occupy 75% of the vacancies.

2.1.5. Generation Z

Braga and Sene (2017) present that Generation Z is quite different from the generations that preceded it. Although some of them have not yet entered the labour market, there are some striking characteristics of these digital natives that should bring about changes in the working world. Although they appear to be more demanding than Millennials, they are also much more proactive, which should be considered by the market. (Tulgan, 2013). For that reason, they seek to create their own solutions when they find nothing that satisfies them. The entrepreneurial profile is one of the traits that defines the youngest group in the generational pyramid. A main objective for people from Generation Z is to find a job that meets all of their values, as shown by Nascimento et. al (2016). Thus, we can argue that for Generation Z, sustainability and social responsibility are strong and non-negotiable factors. Furthermore, Lauer (2011) conducted a study on Generation Y. She found that members of Generation Z are good at multitasking and manage to perform several activities simultaneously; however, they lack focus at times, and this can make them scattered professionals.

Carvalho (2012) presents that Generation Z is contemporary to a reality connected to the Internet, in which family values, such as sitting at the table and talking to parents, are not as expressive as the virtual contacts established by young people on the Web. Generation Z also stands out for its eccentricity. This generation values diversity, spontaneity, autonomy, and the absence of stereotypes.

Similarly, Brito (2013) assumed that the members of this generation cannot imagine a place without technology and the Internet; since childhood they have already had technological devices and are used to obtaining information without limits from any part of the globe. For Generation Z there are no borders. Even though most of Generation Z has this characteristic, this is not a rule. Some people of this generation can have different behaviour depending on their social and organisational situation.

2.2. Generations and Conflict - Empirical Studies

The word "conflict" means 'opposition of interests', 'feelings', or 'ideas', which result in disagreement, confusion, turmoil, or disorder (Dictionary, 2013). For an organisational analysis, the conflict must be understood as an antagonism between the subjects or the subject in relation to the circumstances the individual is faced with. Thus, the conflict is equivalent to the sensations, feelings and perceptions of the subjects who share the same action, situation, or environment.

Morgan (1996, p. 158) states that conflicts occur whenever interests collide. Although there are some indicators that point to the imminence of a conflict, its management is not always an easy task. Different perceptions about situations, moral value of an action, or the way of solving problems seems to create the perfect condition for the occurrence of conflicts, especially in low error tolerance environments. Robbins (2004, p. 174) proposes a categorization of conflicting factors in three distinct groups:

a. *Communication*: when communication is not clear or direct, enough for your understanding
b. *Structure*: when the leadership style favours the emergence of divergences in perception and internal equity in relation to preferences and reward and recognition systems
c. *Personal variables*: personality characteristics, divergences in opinions are potential sources of conflict. Personal variables refer, also, to the value system attributed to work.

In the corporate environment, differences of opinion are highlighted to managers of departments and top management should use methods to determine when to intervene so that conflict of opinions does not generate an internal problem. According to Kullock (2010), a lack of control can cause a company to have an internal problem so great that it loses focus of the external environment where the customers and market information help outline their strategies. To win the market, it is necessary to meet the requirements of customers and for that, it is important that conflicts within a company are resolved effectively.

2.2.1. Generations and their possible conflicts in the corporate environment

Individuals from Generation Y, who were born in a period of intense technological changes, are resourceful and efficient with recent technologies, unlike those from Generation X, who learned to solve problems in a more structured way based on the application of resources that were not necessarily technological. This difference in the problem-solving process can be a source of conflict between the two generations. Having watched the financial insecurity of the 1980s, members of Generation X tend to support the previous generation, while people from Generation Y seek solutions using technological advances and tend to seek support from members of its generation (Morgado and Oliveira, 2009).

Schein (1996) offers a vision of career construction anchored in maturity and progressive skill development. Career anchoring is impacted, especially by the social structure and collective values in which generations experience, believe and support the growth process. The personality types of each generation can also generate conflicts. The Generation Y individual, for example, likes to participate in company processes and wants to be heard expressing their ideas. They listen to music and use their cell phone whilst at work. Individuals from Generation Y are typically good at multitasking, which can cause discontent of the other generations who are more reserved and believe that these actions make work unproductive.

According to Zemke (2008, P.53): "Generation X, in the work environment, has a need for information and flexibility coupled with the aversion to strict supervision". Generation X professionals seek to develop their skills, and secure their jobs with characteristics such as security, loyalty, experience, and commitment. Given all the above, it is possible to identify within the generations analysed, characteristics unique to each of them. It is important that steps are taken to mitigate these generational differences within the corporate world.

Banaco, Bondança and Rogers (2014) have identified the intergenerational gaps and presented the reasons behind them. They stated that: "... differences between generations serve to reveal the generational contrast and make the conflict between generations clearer that has always existed and remains because the world changes, updates and evolves and, with that, society also changes. Values that were new in the 1980s, with the as time went by, they became old-fashioned. But this is a natural factor because the world it will never be static in time".

Due to the constant change in society, organisations are forced to adapt to a new posture in order to become increasingly competitive by seeking new professionals who are more motivated and demonstrate their skills whilst keeping up with the new challenges of modern society (Nascimento et. Al,2016). This justifies the conflicts among the generations and provides a motivation to conduct this study. Among all the practical actions that organisations can take to productively integrate generations in the work environment and be successful in interpersonal relationships, the generational conflict comes as an important variant. This study seeks to explore the perceptions of employees regarding generational conflicts at their places of work.

2.3. Research Objectives

This research seeks to analyse the current context of the labour market, taking into account the different generations present in contemporary society and consequently in the labour market. Therefore, this research will relate the sector of human resources (HR) with conflict management, seeking the integration of different individuals of a company, representing the organisational culture. The research presents the following question as a central issue; how can HR, which is responsible for managing people, help manage generational conflicts within their respective organisations, from the point of view of their employees?

When planning research, you need to draw a line of reasoning, so that the research comes to life. For that to happen, it is necessary to define the specific objectives and general aspects of said research. The general objective of this research is to relate the different generations working in the labour market, their interactions, and the way in which the Human Resource sector (HR) can assist in mediating conflicts between them. From this general objective, the research presents its specific points, which were separated into the following three items:
   a. To explore the characteristics of the different generations, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z, for literary review.
   b. To investigate the generational conflicts that may exist within an organisation due to the uniqueness of each generation and its relationship with the job market,
   c. To assist the Human Resource (HR) sector of "Company A" to manage, mediate and manage interpersonal relationships arising from generational conflicts, through the analysis of data from responses to questionnaires about the generations represented and their possible conflicts in the workplace.

3. METHODOLOGY

Methodology is defined as "a way to systematically solve the research problem" or "science of studying how research is done scientifically" (Kothari, 2004, p. 8). This section will be used to explain the methodological approach used to collect the required data for this research. All the processes used in this research are strongly based in theoretical references to guide the researcher to follow the correct track.

3.1. Research Design

This study is characterized by exploratory research, in which it seeks to align the complexities of the different generations represented within the labour market. According to Gil (2007) exploratory research aims to provide greater familiarity with the problem, make it more explicit or build hypotheses. Many of these searches involve: (a) bibliographic survey; (b) interviews with people who have had practical experiences with the researched problem; and (c) analysing examples that encourage understanding.

Fonseca (2002, p. 20) states as: "the samples are generally large and considered representative percentage of the population, the results are taken as if they were an image of the entire target population of the research. Quantitative research has an objectivity as characteristic". It is, therefore, a quantitative sample with regard to the opinion of participants from all generations who answered the questionnaire that contained open and closed questions has been carried out in this research.

3.2. Data Collection

The data in this study has been collected through a questionnaire as the primary source. "Primary data is data that has not been collected before, is held by the researcher, and is collected for the purpose of meeting the specific needs of the research in progress." (Mattar, 1999, p. 134). Therefore, as primary data, information relevant to the theme of this article will be collected through a questionnaire with the focus being on certain generations' opinions on conflicts in the labour market.

3.2.1. Research Instrument

The research instrument for data collection and analysis was a questionnaire consisting of open and closed multiple choice questions, which was taken by 113 respondents from different generations. It was sent online via Google Forms in the period from November 2020 to February 2021.

The questionnaire was used to identify the generations and show through statistical presentation their characteristics, their conflicts, and relationships in the work environment. The questionnaire contained 12 questions, with 10 closed and 2 open questions. The decision to use both formats of questions on the questionnaire is in an attempt to understand more deeply the reasons that motivate the participant in that specific subject.

3.2.2. Sample population

The sample size is around 113 participants from the same company in the South Island of New Zealand. The participants are based in Invercargill, Christchurch, and Queenstown. Due to the distance between the branches and the insecurities caused by the lockdown and COVID-19, the questionnaire was completed on Google Forms and sent to the participants by email, WhatsApp, and social media. The questionnaire took participants around 5-10 minutes to fill out. Due to limited time and financial constraints the data in this study has been collected by utilising convenience sampling.

Convenience sampling is common in research due to the simplicity, low cost, and speed of results (Gravetter and Forzano, 2012, P. 125). In projects that do not require a highly detailed quantity of data, or when, because of external factors, it is not possible to achieve the initial planned data, convenience sampling is utilized. In this project, due to the lockdown in New Zealand and limitations regarding the COVID-19 virus, the researcher applied convenience sampling.

4.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the questionnaire was to verify the work relationships between the different generations in the same work environment, determine weaknesses and potential strengths of the team according to the generational characteristics of the employees.

4.1. Demographic Analysis
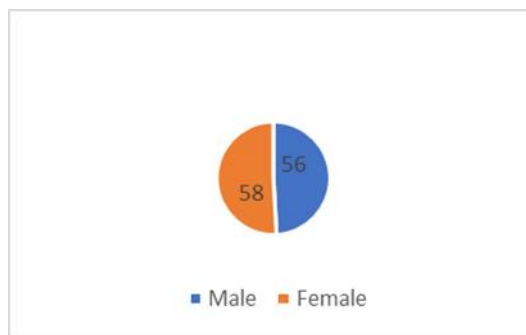**Question 1**: What's your gender?

Figure 2. Gender

Discussion
Fig. 2 shows that company 'A' has a well-balanced gender division, with the majority of those who were surveyed being women.

Question 2: Year of birth
The second question of the questionnaire sought to investigate which generation each employee belonged to. The question was separated by birth range, fearing that the employee did not know the name of the generation to which they belong.
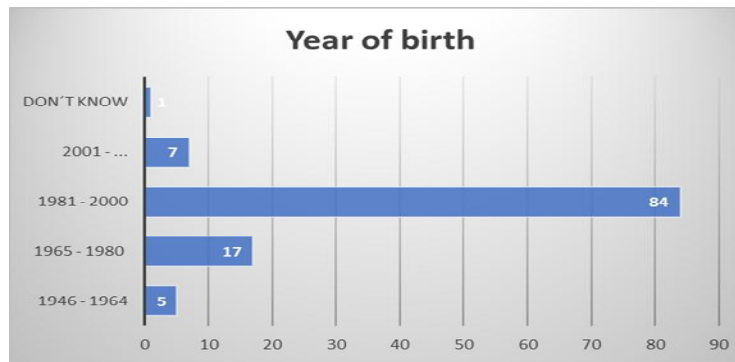
Figure 3. Year of Birth

Discussion

The birth year corresponding to the period 1946-1964 refers to the Baby Boomer's generation, 1965-1980 to Generation X, 1981-2000 to Generation Y, 2001 onwards to Generation Z.

Regarding the generational structure, according to Fig. 3, the vast majority of the structural composition of company 'A' is made up of members of Generation Y. In other words, 73.68% of the workforce belongs to Generation Y. This finding is consistent to the research conducted by Pew Research Centre (2020), which claims that the population of Americans representing Generation Y in the workplace has been growing continuously since 1995 and, since the first quarter of 2015, they have been a majority in American companies. This reveals that the company may have a more horizontal work relationship profile, rather than being a traditionalist corporation.

Similarly, Comazzetto (2016) reveals that Generation Y sees labour relations in a much more horizontal way, without hierarchical regimes, which can cause difficulties in more traditional companies. It also shows us that a characteristic of Generation Y is that they do not see a reason to stay in a place that does not allow growth in a relatively short period.

Question 3: For how many years have you been working at this company?
The third question takes into account the number of years of work that the employee provides company "A".

Figure 4. Tenure with this company

Discussion

According to Fig. 4, we can see that 59.65% of the employees have worked for more than 10 years in this company. Company 'A' appears to have a relatively low turnover rate and employees are loyal to their company. Considering that 73.68% of the employees belong to Generation Y and this generation favours a faster growth in their professional trajectory, it can be assumed that the company meets the professional needs of the vast majority of its employees due to the fact that 59.65% of the professional staff have been with the company for over 10 years.

It was discovered that 25% of the employees who have worked for less than 5 years in this company belong to Generation Z, which is very different from the Generation X and the Baby Boomers, because it is composed of people who, according to Carvalho (2012), are much more immediate and eccentric, who value diversity and autonomy. Thus, they prefer a career without borders, motivated by factors such as flexibility, autonomy, and quality of life. That is why the turnover of employees of this generation is considered normal, since this group seeks to find a job market that suits their needs and not the other way around Tulgan (2013).

4.2. Generational Gaps and Issues

Question 4: Have you ever had experience working with people younger or older than you?

With regard to question number 4 of the questionnaire, the intention was to ask employees whether or not they have had experience working with people who are younger or older than themselves.

Figure 6. *Work experience with other generations*

Discussion

According to Fig. 5, it can be noted that almost all of the employees have experienced working with older or younger people. This shows that company A provides heterogeneity to its work teams, which is justified by the presence of several generations in the compositional structure of its workforce.

The interaction between people from different generations in the job market is important because older people can contribute their market experience, while younger people can bring their dynamism and technological knowledge. It is not

about who is the most intelligent, but how each individual can contribute to a common goal, to meet the company's needs in the market.

The union of older and younger people in the same company can generate better results for the corporation, as long as the entire work team knows how to respect the differences and professional needs of each individual. According to Melo (2014), due to the difference in ages and lifestyles, a paradigm of conflict between generations is often created, which can culminate in the impossibility of relationships; however, coexistence is possible and beneficial to both.

Question 5: On average, how old were your workmates? Select more than one if necessary.

Question 5 was a complement to question 4, which made it possible to verify the age range of work relationships between young and old employees.

Table 1 – Average Age of workmates

Generation	On average, age of the teammate
Baby Boomers	83,33% with work experiences with people between 40 and 60 years old
X	57,89% with work experience with people up to 40 years old
Y	50,34% with work experiences with people between 20 and 39 years old, that is, with people who belong to their own generation, "Y"
Z	45,45% with work experiences with people between 20 and 39 years old

Source: Authors' construct

Discussion

It can be observed from the Table 1 that 83.3% of the Baby Boomer generation, with a more conservative profile, seek to have work experiences with people close to their own age or individuals from Generation X. These individuals are open to change, but in a limited way as they are conservative.

Generation X are more open to new experiences and seek working relationships with younger individuals, of more recent generations. According to table 5, 57.89% of these employees had working relationships with people up to 40 years old, that is, individuals of the Y and Z generations.

The Y generation, according to table 5, usually relate professionally with individuals of their own generation, that is, 50.39% have experience working with individuals between the ages of 20 and 39 years old. 50% of individuals from Generation Y want to work with people from their age bracket.

Finally, the Z generation, which is the youngest in the market and vast majority, seek to work with people from Generation Y. One of the factors that can explain the potential compatibility of these two generations is that both generations have a certain mastery in relation to the use of technology. Tulgan (2013) reveals that even though it is more immediate and demanding than Generation Z, the Millennials, are generally much more proactive. For this reason, they themselves

seek to create their own solutions when they do not find anything that satisfies them in the market, another factor that justifies the preference of working relationships with Generation Y, is that they are less conservative than previous generations.

Question 6: What was the biggest difficulty you encountered when working on a project with people from different generations? Select more than one, if necessary. The Question 6 seek out to list the main difficulties that employees encountered when working with people of different ages, whether they are older or younger.

Table 2: Challenges respondents encountered at workplace

Question 6: What was the biggest difficulty you encountered when working on a project with people from different generations? Select more than one, if necessary			
Baby Boomers: lack of commitment, low emotional intelligence, and attention deficit	**Generation X**: Professional relationship, closed communication, lack of attention and mobile addiction	**Generation Y:** Inflexibility, low emotional intelligence, lack of innovation	**Generation Z:** Inflexibility

Source: Authors' construct

Discussion

The Baby Boomers generation listed the main difficulties in professional relationships as lack of commitment, low emotional intelligence, and attention deficit. All of these difficulties were found in the professional relationship with individuals aged 40 or over. Generation X listed the main difficulties in professional relationships as closed communication, lack of attention and mobile addiction.

In Table 2, it can be observed that Generation X had more professional relationships with generations Y and Z, as they are more technological individuals, who use technology to their advantage. Generation Y listed inflexibility, low emotional intelligence, and lack of innovation as the main difficulties in workplace interactions. They realize that working exclusively with professionals of the same age group may not be the best solution, since they have similar characteristics, which can cause inflexibility and lack of innovation.

Lastly, the Z generation finds inflexibility as the main difficulty in their interactions with other generations, perhaps because they are the youngest in the job market, and as a result, they may suffer being discredited by their work colleagues.

Question 7: Among the items below, which do you consider a factor that makes teamwork difficult? Select more than one, if necessary.

Table 3: list the main difficulties of teamwork for you

Question 7: If you selected "other" in the previous question, please list the main difficulties of teamwork for you.			
Baby Boomers: Individualism, inappropriate use of smartphones	**Generation X:** Individualism, inappropriate use of smartphones, lack of belonging the team	**Generation Y:** Individualism, inappropriate use of smartphones, lack of belonging the team, lack of commitment, competence, attention, and variation types of leadership	**Generation Z:** Individualism, inappropriate use of smartphones, lack of belonging the team, lack of commitment, competence, attention, and variation types of leadership, immediatism

Source: Authors' construct

Complementing the previous item, question 7 sought to present what factors the employees consider that hinder work relationships in a general manner.

Discussion

The 'baby-boomer' generation presented individualism, conservatism, and inappropriate use of smartphones as factors that hinder teamwork. However difficult this generation's adaptation may be, according to Formenton and Estefano (2017), they have tried to adjust to this more globalized and technological world of work, with the desire to understand more about what technology has to offer.

Generation X presented as factors that hinder teamwork, in addition to the items mentioned by the Baby Boomers, the lack of belonging to the team, that is, the unwillingness to 'wear the shirt' of the work team. One factor that can justify this difficulty is conservatism and individualism, mentioned by the Baby Boomers and Generation X, and confirmed by the theory of Jorgensen (2003, P. 4) that shows one of the most expressive characteristics of these two generations is "the value of company commitment and loyalty". If another generation does not have the same values as them, it can be difficult to accept them as a trustable team member they can work with.

For members of Generation Y, the lack of commitment, competence, attention, and a variation in the types of leadership leading to the lack of unity were factors that make teamwork difficult. According to Formenton and Stefano (2017), this generation yearns for meaningful work with a lot of learning, is team-oriented and seeks the input and affirmation of others, so they demand commitment, competence, and attention. Regarding leadership, Comazzetto (2016), reveals that this generation sees labour relations in a much more horizontal way, without hierarchical regimes.

The participants from Generation Z shared that the lack of immediacy is a factor that hinders teamwork. Immediateness is a characteristic of this generation, according to Brito (2013). The author says that the arrival of Generation Z in the job market is subject to much attention, given its tendency to search for solutions to

problems as quickly as possible. This attention factor is cited by the members of the generation itself as a hindrance to teamwork relationships.

Question 8: If you were to select someone to be your partner in the workplace, what age would you prefer this person to be?

Figure 6. Favourite teammates in the workplace

Discussion

Fig. 6 reveals that 81.58% of the employees would choose a member of the Y generation as part of their work team. The following factors may explain the reason for this.

"This generation developed at a time of great technological advances and economic prosperity, and material ease, and effectively, in a highly urbanized environment, immediately after the establishment of the domain of virtuality as a system of social and media interaction, and partly at the level labour relations" (Jordao, 2016, p. 16). In this way, the author explains that the Y generation was the first to be born and raised in an advanced technological environment with greater social interaction, via virtual means. It is a more questioning generation with tendencies towards media approaches.

In addition to enjoying challenges and opportunities, they are excellent at multitasking. These reasons presented can be listed as the main drivers for company A employees wanting to choose people of the Y Generation to have as their workmates. However, 40% of the Baby Boomer employees would prefer people of the Y generation in their work teams. In contrast, 100of the employees representing Generation Z would choose people from the Y generation to compose their work team.

Question 9: Please explain your answer to question 8.
Question 9, aims to justify the practical reason for choosing a certain generation in its work team, expanding on question 8. The justifications presented for choosing Generation Y were as follows:

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Table 4. Responses to Question 8

Reasons for choosing particular generation
• Active, innovative & hard workers
• More flexibility
• Open minded and willing to act as a team
• Because in this age group we have a better level of acceptance of technology and consequently of innovation.
• It's easier to work with people that are among your age group
• Suitable age range for a mix of maturity and innovation and I'd select someone of my age range

Source: Authors' construct

Discussion

In Table 4, respondents provided justification to work with different generations. Among the factors mentioned in the responses, the main ones were greater flexibility, open mind and innovation which confirms the analysis made by Corrêa JR et al. (2016) on Generation Y's innovative characteristics compared to previous generations.

Another point that Engelmann (2007) highlights in his article, is that Generation Y has been more exposed to all forms of technology than previous generations, which makes them much more connected and open to the new world. And even though this generation has decreased access to technology than Generation Z (Jordao, 2016), their maturity and greater life experience make them the generation with the greatest acceptance in the market.

Question 10: If you would like to avoid working with someone due to their age, what age would you select?

Question 10 sought to investigate which generation, across the age groups, each employee would not like to have in their work team.
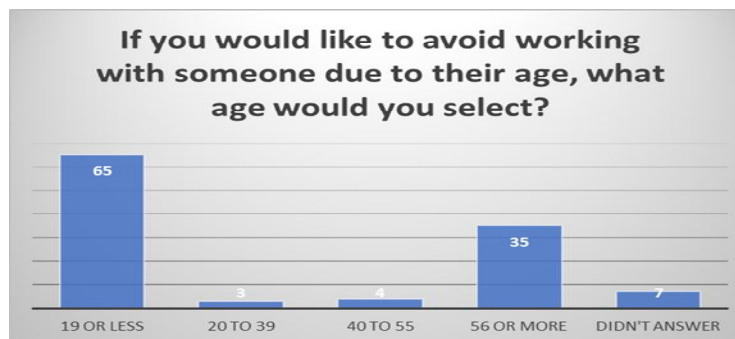

Figure 7. Age groups to be avoided by respondents

Discussion

According to Fig. 7, 65% of company 'A' employees would not choose the Z generation to form their work team. According to Rocha (2008), participation in the labour market is increasingly seen as a condition for the full realization of individuals, regardless of gender, condition in the family and income level. In line with this cultural pattern, Rocha (2008) expresses that there is empirical evidence that, for individuals aged 15 to 24, "the job market values experience more than education" and that one year more experience increases the probability that the young person is hired by 20%, while an extra year of schooling increases this probability by only 1%. The entry of young people into the job market comes with some prejudices on the part of older employees. Rocha (2008) shows that the difficulties have, in part, to do with the characteristics of young people, such as the lack of experience and tendency to experiment.

These factors explain, in light of the theory, the reason why the majority of the employees of company A would not want someone from Generation Z, to be on their work team.

Question 11: Reasons to avoid working with generation Z.
The Question 11 sought to reveal the reasoning behind their answers to question 10.

Table 5. Reasons to avoid working with Generation Z

1. This generation is too immediatism and lack of attention
2. Even though they are techy savvy, they usually are not committed with the role. No real-life experience, no attention to what matters at the job.
3. Low responsibility and commitment and easily distracted
4. I believe that other generations are not the problem, but I find a lack of emotional intelligence and lack of experience in the Gen. Z.
5. Younger generations, more likely to lack of experience and likely to spend more time in training and learning.

Source: Authors' construct

Discussion

Among the factors listed in Table 9 that served as a justification were immediacy, the lack of attention of young people, lack of commitment, lack of experience, naivety, and a lack of commitment. According to Glazer, Mahoney & Randall (2019) one of the most common issues regarding Generation Z is their difficulty to focus on tasks that are not related to their interests.

One of the participants reported that "Undeniably, the youngest are digital natives, but their inability to work as a team and their low emotional intelligence make them people that I would not recommend", which is complemented by another participant, saying that "The youngest are technologically advanced, but their inability to work as a team and their low emotional intelligence make them people I would not choose".

Another undesirable characteristic of the Z generation, according to the employees of company A is that the majority of young people do not have resilience, are easily frustrated, and are heavily dependent on their phone. This finding goes with the ideas shared by Jonathan Haidt & Greg Lukianoff (2018) that Generation Z is hypersensitive and constantly complaining. Another reason is centred on the opinion that the vast majority of young people are concerned with excuses for not performing tasks.

Question 12: In your opinion, what is the importance of Human Resources in mediating conflicts between generations in the workplace? How can Human Resources help mediate conflict between generations in the workplace?
Question 12 of the questionnaire sought to investigate the importance of Human Resources in mediating conflicts between generations in the workplace and what they should do to intervene.

Table 6. Importance of Human Resources in mediating conflicts

Question 12: In your opinion, what is the importance of Human Resources in mediating conflicts between generations in the workplace? How can Human Resources help mediate conflict between generations in the workplace?			
Baby Boomers:	**Generation X:**	**Generation Y:**	**Generation Z:**
Macro view of the situation, understand personal needs and others	Respect personal differences, align personal values with company values and others	Common decisions for common issues, allow employees to give their opinion and others	Open communication between all levels of the hierarchy, give space to the younger people to give their opinion and others

Source: Authors' construct

Discussion

According to the employees' responses, HR can assist leaders and managers with training, quality research, and serving as an auditor for investigating possible conflicts for the Baby Boomer generation. "Baby Boomers" still say that Human Resources needs to have a macro-level and strategic view. According to Formenton and Stefano (2017), Baby Boomers are seen as good leaders who are open to new ideas and suggestions from other generations, allowing the improvement of practices in the workplace, an effective way of creating opportunities to provide improvement in the company.

For generation "X", Human Resources must understand all generations, respecting differences and having good communication, enabling the integration of different generations, promoting inclusion policies in the workplace. For this generation, Human Resources needs to make it clear to the whole team that each one has their experience and knowledge and that everyone is subject to improvement. One of the suggestions is related to the integration of different generations, and it is up to Human Resources to present the company's culture and mediate conflicts between people from different areas and ages.

For Morais (2016, p. 185), "Xers tend to value work and financial stability, on condition that they guarantee the fulfilment of flexibility, the options for balancing the work and personal life, this is one of the reasons that they suggest Human Resources sector should respect personal needs.

In this sense, given what was revealed by generation "X", we found that Human Resources can build a bridge between the generations, bringing a little of each generation, respecting the differences and aligning itself with the company's mission. Thus, it can map the main issues of each generation and also the prejudices against them, working on each one to overcome the questions about generational prejudices.

For generation "Y", according to question 12, Human Resources is the basis of communication. If the team members have a disagreement, the Human Resources can talk to everyone individually and then survey possible solutions, reaching common agreements. In addition, establishing standards for working together can be a good idea; integrating the team and providing focused discussions that would allow each generation to be heard but also understand how to deal with other generations. In this way, innovation environments are created, encouraging people from different generations work together, with the same conditions and prestige, balancing, enhancing, and combining the qualities of all generations.

This generation wants a clear direction and support from the management of people or their leaders in their activities; they seek practicality, flexibility, and autonomy in carrying out tasks. (Coimbra & Schikmann, 2001; Martin & Tulgan, 2006). According to Morais (2016), Generation Y wants meaningful work and always seeks to learn, is team-oriented and seeks the input and affirmation of others.

The "Y" generation also mentions that Human Resources can provide an equal education, without differences in positions, thus achieving a universal language. Therefore, Human Resources must act as an interlocutor and weave the generations together to remove differences and mental blocks in favour of something better. It appears that the employees of generation "Y" believe that Human Resources is responsible for "breaking the ice", it needs to find what unites the generations and explore it in the best possible way. But they have to be extremely careful to avoid a "sloppy" workplace, establishing and maintaining effective two-way communication to understand what employees need and care about.

For the "Z" generation, according to question 12, Human Resources needs to maintain an open dialogue between managers and the team, in addition to encouraging this to happen among employees as well. This can occur through inclusive practices to develop emotional intelligence capabilities. This generation believes that Human Resources is the area responsible for taking actions that facilitate coexistence and encourage a good flow with companions.

The traditional hierarchy no longer makes sense for this generation if they want to talk to the boss, they go, enter the room, and talk as if it were just another co-worker. Such an attitude was not common in previous generations. This new group of professionals comes to the market looking for companies that value connectivity, openness to dialogue, fast and effective communication, speed and globality (Lauer, C. (2009); McCrindle, 2011; Facco et al., 2015).

5. CONCLUSION

This research sought to analyse the current context of the labour market, and what can be done when different generations present in contemporary society and consequently in the labour market experience conflict.

Thus, it was very important to present the types of generations that are present in an organisation and to identify the anxieties and weaknesses in order to know how to deal with the conflicts that may exist between these generations. Formenton and Stefano (2017, p. 4) show that organisations, in general, have been concerned with human resources and the part they play in the development of the staff.

Based on this study, it was possible to realise that for the Baby Boomers generation, Human Resources can assist leaders and managers with training, quality research, serving as a parameter for investigating possible conflicts. This generation also says that Human Resources needs to have a macro-level and strategic view, in order to understand the behaviour of individuals, enabling the choice of the best strategy.

Furthermore, research has shown that for Generation X, it is necessary that Human Resources understands the needs of all generations, respecting differences and having good communication, enabling the integration of different generations, thus promoting inclusion in the workplace. For this generation, Human Resources needs to make it clear to the whole team that each one has experience and knowledge and that everyone is subject to improvement. One of the suggestions made was related to the integration of different generations, with Human Resources being in charge of presenting the company's culture and mediating conflicts between people from different areas and ages.

In this sense, in light of what was pointed out by Generation X, it was found that Human Resources can build a bridge between generations, bringing out the best of each generation, respecting differences and aligning members with the company's mission. Thus, it can map the main issues of each generation and also the prejudices against them, working on each one to overcome generational prejudices.

For the Y generation, we found that Human Resources is the basis of communication. If team members have a disagreement, Human Resources can talk to everyone individually and then survey the possible solutions, reaching common agreements. In addition, establishing standards for working together was one of the ideas proposed by the employees of company A, which could help integrate the team and provide focused discussions that would allow each

generation to be heard and understand how to deal with other generations. In this way, environments of innovation would be created, making people of different generations work together, with the same conditions and prestige, balancing, enhancing, and combining the qualities of all generations.

Regarding the Z generation, Human Resources needs to maintain an open dialogue between managers and the team, in addition to encouraging this to happen among employees. This can occur through inclusive practices that develop emotional intelligence capabilities. This generation believes that Human Resources is the area responsible for taking actions that facilitate coexistence and encourage a good flow with colleagues.

The researcher faced limitations while developing the project. It is challenging to develop research based on generations in a specific company as a foreigner. The questionnaire was completed by 113 participants, who are employees of a company in the South Island of New Zealand, during an atypical year, due to COVID-19 and the lockdown. Therefore, the results of this project cannot be representative of the whole market.

The data collected about the workplace was found via online searches. The original idea for this project was to get more data from internal journals and to do an interview with Human Resources staff to understand in more depth how the company is currently managing the range of generations in the workplace. However, the researcher did not have the expected support of the company to use internal information and also was not able to use their name in this research. This is the reason that in Chapter 3 the researcher uses the codename of 'company A'.

Regarding the participants of the questionnaire, the original idea was to collect roughly the same amount of people from each generation to have a more precise result for the findings and analysis. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was difficult to find representatives for some of the generations working in that specific company, so the research has more participants from the Millennial generation than others.

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