

Generational differences in emotional intelligence in global human resource management

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Abstract

In today's multigenerational workforce, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a pivotal competency influencing collaboration, leadership, and overall organizational effectiveness. This paper explores how different generations—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—understand, apply, and develop EI within professional environments. Drawing from psychological theories, organizational behavior studies, and contemporary research, this study highlights that EI is not a static trait but a generationally influenced skill set shaped by upbringing, cultural trends, and technological integration.

Baby Boomers often demonstrate emotional regulation and resilience, valuing structure and hierarchy, while Generation Z tends to favor openness, inclusivity, and emotional expression. These generational distinctions affect how individuals engage with colleagues, manage stress, lead teams, and adapt to change.

Understanding these intergenerational differences is essential for organizations seeking to foster emotional intelligence across all levels. As hybrid work models, global teams, and diversity initiatives become standard, aligning HR practices and leadership development with generational EI profiles becomes a strategic and human necessity.

This study provides a foundation for future research on age-based emotional dynamics in leadership, remote work, and intercultural team management in the evolving global workplace.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence (EI); Multigenerational Workforce; Generational Differences; Leadership Development; Organizational Effectiveness; Hybrid Work Models

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of the global workplace, the ability to understand and manage emotions, both one's own and those of others, has become a critical determinant of professional success. Emotional Intelligence (EI), once considered a "soft skill," is now widely recognized as a core competency influencing leadership effectiveness, team dynamics, communication, and employee well-being. While EI is generally treated as a universal trait, recent research suggests that its expression and application vary significantly across generations.

The modern workforce is composed of at least four distinct generational cohorts: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Each of these groups has been shaped by unique socio-economic, technological, and cultural factors that influence how they perceive and express emotions in the workplace. For instance, Baby Boomers may emphasize emotional control and loyalty, while Generation Z tends to favor openness, inclusivity, and emotional expression. These generational distinctions affect how individuals engage with colleagues, manage stress, lead teams, and adapt to change.

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Understanding these intergenerational differences is essential for organizations seeking to foster EI across all levels. As hybrid work models, global teams, and diversity initiatives become standard, aligning HR practices and leadership development with generational EI profiles becomes a strategic and human necessity.

This paper investigates how each generation approaches emotional intelligence, the implications for workplace effectiveness, and strategies to bridge generational gaps for more emotionally intelligent organizations.

For an illustrative example of generational Emotional Intelligence styles applied to a negotiation context, see the fictional dialogue in 4.5.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Emotional Intelligence: Concept and Dimensions

EI has evolved into a vital framework for understanding interpersonal dynamics, particularly in organizational contexts. Salovey and Mayer (1990) first defined EI as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide thinking and action. Goleman (1995) later expanded on this, proposing five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. These dimensions are widely accepted as foundational to effective leadership, conflict resolution, and team performance. Rothschadl (2023) emphasized EI as a central factor in workplace success, particularly when leading multicultural teams. He found that emotionally intelligent leaders foster trust, inclusion, and effective communication, thereby enhancing employee satisfaction and cohesion in culturally diverse settings.

2.2. Generational Theory and Behavioral Traits

The Strauss–Howe generational theory suggests that individuals born within specific periods exhibit shared values and behaviors, shaped by sociopolitical and technological forces (Strauss & Howe, 1991). This model provides a lens through which generational attitudes toward emotional intelligence (EI) can be understood:

- **Baby Boomers (1946–1964):** Often exhibit emotional restraint, resilience, and loyalty; value formality and chain-of-command structures.
- **Generation X (1965–1980):** Emphasize autonomy and balanced emotional control; tend to be skeptical of institutional authority.
- **Millennials (1981–1996):** Prefer open communication, frequent feedback, and value emotional openness and psychological safety.
- **Generation Z (1997–2012):** Highly expressive and emotionally attuned, yet still developing emotional regulation; driven by inclusivity and digital fluency.

These generational tendencies are further supported by Rothschadl's (2023) case studies, which examined cross-cultural challenges at companies such as Microsoft, Airbnb, and Procter & Gamble (P&G), highlighting differing emotional expectations and leadership responses across age cohorts.

2.3. Integrating EI and Generational Perspectives in Organizations

Bridging EI and generational theory allows organizations to align talent development and leadership approaches with the emotional frameworks of their employees. According to Blau's Social Exchange Theory (1964), emotionally intelligent interactions reinforce trust and reciprocity in workplace relationships key to reducing turnover and building resilient teams. However, as Rothschadl (2023) and Cahyono (2024) both suggest, the interpretation and application of EI vary significantly across generations. For example, Millennials may value emotional openness and vulnerability as leadership strengths, while Boomers may see these traits as signs of unprofessionalism. These intergenerational contrasts necessitate nuanced HR practices, including EI training, coaching, and leadership modeling tailored to each cohort's emotional paradigm.

3. Generational Profiles

3.1. Baby Boomers (1946–1964)

Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, represent a generation shaped by post-war reconstruction, the change from a war production economy to a consumer-focused economy, and traditional hierarchical workplace structures.

Their approach to Emotional Intelligence (EI) tends to emphasize emotional control, resilience, and professional distance. Often raised in environments that prioritized duty and stoicism, Baby Boomers generally exhibit strong self-regulation and loyalty, especially within organizational hierarchies.

In the context of EI dimensions:

- Self-regulation and perseverance are hallmarks, helping them navigate change with discipline.
- Empathy is demonstrated, though often in reserved or formalized ways, typically framed within roles and responsibilities.
- They may exhibit lower scores in emotional expression or interpersonal flexibility, preferring to separate personal emotions from professional settings.

While their experience equips them to lead through crises and uncertainty, Baby Boomers may struggle with newer expectations for transparency, vulnerability, and inclusive communication. They often view emotional openness, valued by younger generations, as potentially unprofessional or overly personal.

3.1.1. Strengths

- High emotional discipline and resilience
- Loyalty and dedication in leadership roles
- Strong conflict avoidance and mediation skills in formal environments

3.1.2. Challenges

- May underutilize empathy in feedback or coaching
- Limited comfort with emotional vulnerability or psychological safety initiatives
- Risk of generational misunderstanding in multicultural or younger teams

3.1.3. Strategic HR Recommendations

- Provide reverse mentoring opportunities with younger employees to foster mutual learning.
- Frame EI development in terms of professional effectiveness rather than personal openness.
- Involve them in crisis leadership and mentoring programs, where their emotional stability offers value.

Rothschadl (2023) noted that Boomers' strength lies in calm, consistent leadership, but emphasized the need for EI development tailored to evolving emotional and cultural norms.

3.2. Generation X (1965–1980)

Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, matured during a time of shifting family structures, rising individualism, and the early adoption of digital technologies. These conditions cultivated a generation of independent thinkers, known for pragmatism, adaptability, and self-reliance. In workplace environments, Gen X professionals are typically emotionally balanced, preferring a measured, self-regulated approach to interpersonal dynamics.

When it comes to Emotional Intelligence (EI), Generation X scores consistently high in emotional self-regulation and boundary-based empathy. Their preferred emotional style emphasizes function over sentiment, making them effective in environments where task completion and calm decision-making are prioritized (Mikuš et al., 2024).

They tend to exhibit:

- High autonomy and emotional control, avoiding emotional overexposure.
- Empathy delivered pragmatically, especially in leadership and mentoring roles.
- A measured communication style that bridges the formality of Baby Boomers with the openness of younger generations.

Thairu (2024) notes that Gen X values organizational loyalty and stability, contributing to high commitment in roles with clear expectations. However, they may also express skepticism toward emotionally driven corporate culture initiatives and resist vulnerability-based team-building practices (Tolani et al., 2024).

3.2.1. Strengths

- High self-regulation and professionalism
- Strong mediators across generations
- Leadership stability in high-pressure contexts

3.2.2. Challenges

- May undervalue psychological safety frameworks
- Less responsive to emotion-centric feedback loops
- Prefer compartmentalized emotional expression

3.2.3. Strategic HR Recommendations

- Use Gen X as cross-generational mediators, especially in emotionally charged teams.
- Position EI growth as a strategic leadership asset, emphasizing productivity gains.
- Encourage structured reflective practices like coaching or confidential peer exchange, rather than public emotional disclosure.

As Rothschadl (2023) and Mikuš et al. (2024) highlight, Gen X's emotional resilience is a critical asset, especially during periods of transformation or organizational restructuring. However, unlocking their full emotional leadership potential may require recalibrating traditional EI interventions to align with their values of independence and competence.

3.3. Millennials (1981–1996)

Millennials—also known as Generation Y—came of age during rapid globalization, the digital revolution, and a cultural shift toward emotional openness and mental health awareness. These formative experiences shaped a generation that values empathy, feedback, and psychological safety in the workplace. Millennials generally display strong emotional awareness, a desire for authentic communication, and an expectation that leaders demonstrate emotional transparency.

From an Emotional Intelligence (EI) perspective, Millennials tend to excel in:

- Empathy and social awareness, particularly in diverse or team-based environments
- Seeking continuous feedback as a developmental tool
- Open emotional expression, favoring environments where feelings and mental health are openly acknowledged

Mikuš et al. (2024) observed that Millennials exhibit high interpersonal sensitivity, making them well-suited for collaborative and inclusive leadership models. However, their high engagement with emotionally charged feedback loops can lead to burnout and emotional overload, especially in high-demand or unclear environments.

Thairu (2024) also highlights a high correlation between Millennials' EI and work commitment, especially when paired with job autonomy and strong internal values. However, without structured EI development, their openness may drift into emotional volatility or sensitivity to perceived injustice.

3.3.1. Strengths

- Strong empathy and team-building capabilities
- Comfortable with vulnerability and emotional coaching
- High emotional attunement in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives

3.3.2. Challenges

- Susceptible to emotional fatigue or burnout
- May misinterpret constructive feedback as an emotional threat
- Require frequent affirmation, which may frustrate older colleagues

3.3.3. Strategic HR Recommendations

- Design emotionally intelligent feedback systems, including 360-degree and coaching frameworks
- Offer mental health and resilience programs to prevent burnout
- Promote Millennials as DEI and culture champions, leveraging their emotional fluency

Mikuš et al. (2024) emphasize that Millennials embody the shift toward emotionally transparent leadership. Their comfort with vulnerability, emotional language, and feedback culture represents an opportunity for transforming organizational values, provided emotional boundaries and resilience are carefully reinforced.

3.4. Generation Z (1997–2012)

Generation Z, the first cohort to grow up fully immersed in digital technology, has emerged as a workforce defined by hyper-connectivity, emotional expressiveness, and inclusivity. Shaped by a world of social media, mental health advocacy, and cultural fluidity, Gen Z brings a fresh emotional language to the workplace, often emphasizing emotional honesty, identity affirmation, and social justice.

In Emotional Intelligence (EI) terms, Gen Z displays exceptional emotional expression and social awareness, especially concerning equity and inclusion. They are often highly attuned to emotional cues, especially in digital interactions, but are still developing in emotional regulation and resilience under pressure.

Cahyono (2024) and Mikuš et al. (2024) both found that Gen Z workers are deeply values-driven, seeking purpose and belonging. However, their emotional sensitivity can lead to over-identification with emotions, workplace anxiety, or difficulty coping with traditional corporate hierarchies.

This generation demands psychological safety and authenticity, but often requires guidance in managing emotional complexity, especially in ambiguous or high-stress environments.

3.4.1. Strengths

- High levels of emotional awareness and social responsibility
- Champion inclusive leadership and identity-based empathy
- Comfortable using technology to express and process emotions

3.4.2. Challenges

- Underdeveloped emotional regulation and impulse control
- Struggle with real-time conflict and emotionally ambiguous situations
- Risk of disengagement when values aren't aligned with workplace culture

3.4.3. Strategic HR Recommendations

- Introduce structured resilience and coping-skills training early in career paths
- Use digital-first communication platforms to meet emotional needs in hybrid teams
- Pair Gen Z with emotionally stable mentors for developmental grounding

Cahyono (2024) argues that Gen Z is redefining Emotional Intelligence, not as a managerial toolkit, but as a core cultural expectation. Their EI is high in expression, but not yet matched by maturity in regulation, requiring deliberate coaching and emotionally literate environments.

4. Cross-Generational Comparisons of Emotional Intelligence

The contemporary workplace is a dynamic intersection of four generational cohorts—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—each bringing unique emotional norms, communication preferences, and values. While Emotional Intelligence (EI) is widely recognized as a universal competency, its expression, development, and application vary substantially across generations. This section synthesizes key differences and identifies areas of convergence, offering a comparative lens to help HR leaders design inclusive, emotionally intelligent organizations.

4.1. Key Differences across EI Dimensions

4.1 Key Differences Across EI Dimensions
Source: Synthesized from Rothschild (2023), Mikuš et al. (2024), Cahyono (2024)

EI Dimension	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials	Generation Z
Self-Awareness	Moderate, private	High, internalized	High, expressive	High, often externalized
Self-Regulation	Strong control, formal restraint	Consistent and composed	Moderately developed	Developing, more reactive
Empathy	Role-based, formal	Practical, situational	Deep, inclusive, interpersonal	Emotionally attuned, values-driven
Social Skills	Formal communication	Task-oriented communication	Feedback-rich, team-focused	Digital-first, emotionally expressive
Motivation	Duty- and status-driven	Achievement- and autonomy-driven	Purpose- and impact-driven	Identity- and values-driven

Figure 1 Key Differences Across Generations

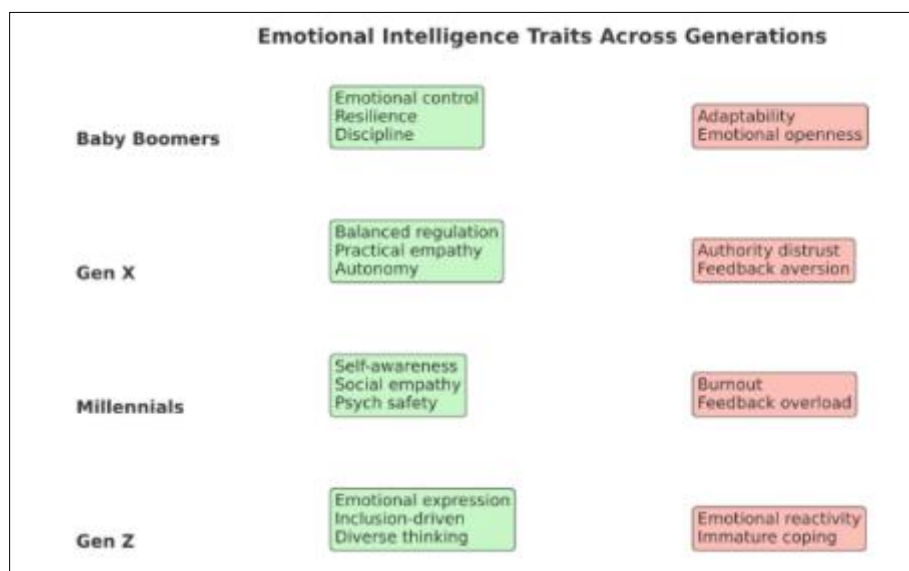


Figure 2 Emotional Intelligence Traits Across Generations

4.2. Generational Strengths & Blind Spots

- Baby Boomers bring emotional steadiness and organizational loyalty, but may underinvest in emotional openness or diversity conversations.
- Generation X is emotionally balanced and self-reliant but may be emotionally reserved or skeptical of wellness initiatives.
- Millennials are empathetic collaborators but may be emotionally fatigued by overfeedback or high emotional labor roles.
- Gen Z is expressive and values-driven, but still developing coping strategies and conflict resilience.

4.3. Communication Styles and Emotional Fluency

Boomers and Gen X tend to prefer structured, one-on-one conversations, while Millennials and Gen Z are more comfortable with collaborative and digital channels. Gen Z especially favors emotionally infused social platforms (e.g., emojis, mood trackers, anonymous feedback). These differences can cause emotional misreads and tension if not navigated intentionally.

4.4. Building Emotional Bridges in the Workplace

To support intergenerational collaboration:

- Introduce reverse mentoring, where younger employees coach on inclusivity and empathy, while seniors model regulation and resilience.
- Standardize emotionally intelligent feedback models, tailored to each cohort's preferences.
- Promote multigenerational team projects that include emotional reflection checkpoints.

Cahyono (2024) emphasizes, workplaces that normalize both emotional expressiveness and emotional regulation tend to experience higher trust, reduce turnover, and promote more innovation across generations.

4.5. Generational EI in Action — Fictional Dialogue Scenario

To illustrate the generational differences in emotional intelligence and their application in emotionally charged, cross-sector negotiations, the following fictional dialogue demonstrates how each cohort might contribute to structuring a negotiation with a governmental agency focused on improving sea, creek, and canal water quality in the lagoon of Venezia. Each example highlights emotional reasoning, communication style, and strategic preferences rooted in generational EI tendencies.

Table 1 Generational EI Reflections in Environmental Negotiation Scenario

Generation	Style Summary	EI Traits
Baby Boomers	Formal, policy-aligned, respectful of hierarchy; proposes white paper and formal channels.	Self-regulation, deference, emotional control, Duty-driven motivation.
Generation X	Pragmatic, solution-focused, emphasizes evidence and practical implementation.	Self-reliance, emotional restraint, problem-solving, boundary-based empathy.
Millennials	Collaborative, empathetic, values-driven; proposes storytelling and co-creation.	Empathy, emotional openness, team orientation, inclusivity.
Generation Z	Direct, digital-first, transparent; uses multimedia and demands accountability.	Emotional honesty, digital fluency, values-driven assertiveness.

4.5.1. Baby Boomers

"We need to initiate contact through official channels, perhaps an introductory letter to the agency head, followed by a formal proposal. Our goal should be to align with their long-term policy mandates. We must be clear, controlled, and respectful of roles. I suggest a preliminary white paper outlining our technical objectives and the mutual benefits of this collaboration."

4.5.2. Generation X

"Let's get straight to the core issues backed by data. What really matters is the data, who's polluting, by how much, and what cost-effective measures work. I'd recommend we walk in with clear accountability metrics and maybe an app prototype for tracking pollutants. We can pitch this as a solution that the agency can adopt with minimal disruption. Practicality will win them over."

4.5.3. Millennials

"This is a shared values mission, climate justice, community health, and biodiversity. I think we start with a storytelling session or even a co-hosted town hall. We can bring in citizen voices and create space for the agency to feel like partners. Let's co-author the agenda, not dictate it. Emotional resonance and trust will lead to action."

4.5.4. Gen Z

"We should identify failures, but ground them in real-time metrics.. Let's go in with a TikTok-style explainer video backed by interactive dashboards. AI can help map pollution sources in real-time. Also, transparency is non-negotiable; let's demand open data sharing. We can't sugarcoat things; they'll respect us more if we keep it raw and real."

4.5.5. Generational EI Approach Is "Best" in Negotiation?

The short answer is: it depends. More specifically, it depends on who is on the other side of the table and what emotional dynamics you are trying to influence.

4.6. Strategic EI Takeaway

The most emotionally intelligent approach is the one that adapts to your audience's emotional logic, not your own. This concept aligns with what Goleman (1995) termed *empathic attunement*, where successful influencers match emotional tones and motivations to build rapport and drive action.

4.7. Blended Multigenerational Strategy?

Yes! A cross-generational team could rotate roles:

- Boomer: Opens with credibility, builds trust
- Gen X: Frames logic and feasibility
- Millennial: Facilitates engagement and co-creation
- Gen Z: Activates passion and digital transparency

This approach speaks to everyone in the room while modeling inclusive, emotionally intelligent leadership.

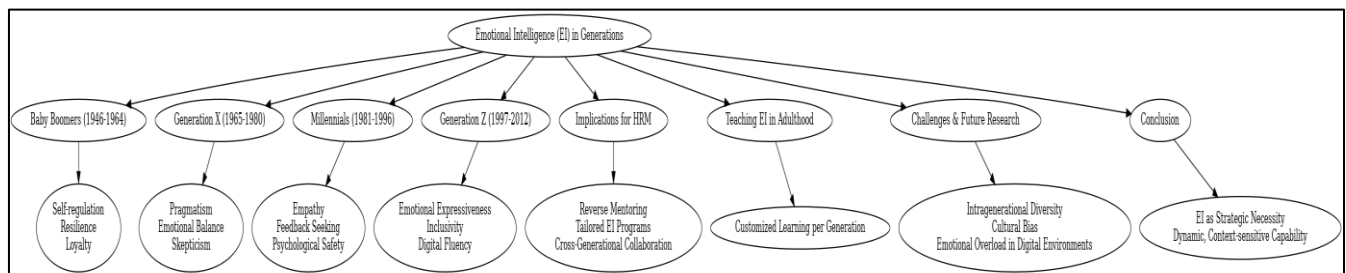


Figure 3 EI Implications, Teaching, and Challenges

5. Implications for Global Human Resource Management (GHRM)

The growing diversity of age cohorts in today's workplace introduces both complexity and opportunity for HR leaders. Understanding the generational nuances in EI from regulation and expression to feedback preferences and resilience enables HR to move beyond "one-size-fits-all" strategies and develop emotionally responsive systems that engage, support, and retain talent across generations. Rothschild, F. (2023).

5.1. Emotional Intelligence Development Strategies

Different generations require different methods of learning and emotional growth. Key strategies include:

- **Baby Boomers:** Engage through coaching and mentoring programs that honor their experience while integrating emotional agility tools in a structured format.
- **Gen X:** Offer autonomy-oriented EI development, such as self-paced coaching apps or confidential executive reflection tools.

- **Millennials:** Use feedback-rich environments and workshops that incorporate wellness, group reflection, and emotional literacy training.
- **Gen Z:** Integrate gamified emotional training, digital mood tracking, and mentorship into onboarding and career planning.

5.2. Reverse Mentoring and Peer Learning

Generationally mixed teams thrive when knowledge flows in both directions. Reverse mentoring—where Gen Z and Millennials mentor Boomers and Gen X on emotional expression, DEI, and tech-enabled empathy has been shown to build mutual respect and relational trust (Cahyono, 2024).

Additionally, cross-cohort peer groups enhance reflective learning, especially when combined with psychological safety training.

5.3. Integrating EI in Core HR Systems

To embed EI into the DNA of an organization, it must influence key systems:

- **Performance Reviews:** Include EI-based competencies such as empathy, regulation, and team cohesion in evaluation rubrics.
- **Recruitment:** Assess EI as part of leadership potential, not just communication style.
- **Succession Planning:** Prioritize emotionally intelligent leaders with generational agility.
- **DEI Strategies:** Leverage emotional fluency from Millennials and Gen Z to design inclusive practices aligned with cultural sensitivity.

5.4. Emotional Governance in Hybrid Workforces

The shift toward hybrid and remote work demands emotionally aware leadership, especially when tone, empathy, and feedback are mediated by technology. Gen Z and Millennials may thrive in asynchronous channels, but Boomers and Gen X may require more intentional emotional check-ins.

HR should ensure:

- Virtual EI training sessions tailored by cohort
- Digital communication guidelines that support emotional clarity
- Emotional “pulse checks” and anonymous feedback tools to monitor well-being

Emotional governance is no longer optional; it’s a strategic pillar for organizational resilience.

6. Can Emotional Intelligence Be Taught in Adulthood?

6.1. Lifelong Learning Across Generations

While Emotional Intelligence (EI) is often associated with early childhood development, a growing body of research confirms that EI is not static and can be cultivated throughout adulthood. This is particularly relevant in the multigenerational workplace, where Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z all demonstrate distinct EI competencies and thus benefit from different learning approaches.

Zeidner, Matthews, and Roberts (2004) found that structured EI interventions, such as emotional feedback, coaching, and social simulations, can improve emotional regulation and empathy in adults across various age groups. However, generational preferences significantly shape how these interventions are received. For instance, Baby Boomers may prefer structured, individualized coaching programs that emphasize professionalism and regulation. Generation X, known for autonomy and pragmatism, may engage more with private, self-directed learning tools that promote reflection and efficiency.

Millennials, highly attuned to psychological safety and group-based learning, respond well to emotionally immersive environments that promote discussion, feedback, and openness (Brackett & Rivers, 2011). Generation Z, meanwhile, benefits from gamified EI training, digital mood tools, and short, interactive learning modules that reflect their digital fluency and value-driven emotional outlook.

Cherniss et al. (1998) and Ryback (2012) emphasize that EI training is most effective when aligned with workplace realities and when supported by a culture of emotional learning. Regardless of generation, employees learn best in emotionally rich environments that allow for expression, risk-taking, and feedback.

7. Challenges and Future Research Directions

While this study underscores the value of tailoring EI strategies across generations, it also highlights several limitations and open questions that warrant further exploration. As the nature of work continues to evolve, so too must our understanding of emotional behavior, cultural influence, and generational dynamics.

7.1. Research Gaps and Theoretical Limitations

- Overgeneralization within those groups: Not all members of a generation behave similarly. Personality, cultural background, gender identity, and neurodiversity all influence EI. Future studies should explore intragenerational variance and intersectionality within age groups.
- Geographic and cultural biases: Much of the generational EI literature is Western-centric. Comparative studies across Eastern, African, and Latin American regions could reveal alternative EI patterns and workplace expectations.
- Underrepresentation of Gen Z: As the newest entrants to the workforce, Gen Z's emotional competencies are still emerging. Research will be essential to track the maturation of EI traits over time.

7.2. Challenges in Practice

- Resistance to cross-generational empathy: Older generations may resist vulnerability; younger cohorts may dismiss traditional professionalism. Bridging this gap requires cultural fluency and EI literacy training across all levels.
- Emotionally unregulated digital environments: Social media, remote work, and always-on culture increase the risk of emotional overload, especially among Gen Z. Organizations must evolve digital wellness policies that address emotional fatigue.
- Data ethics and emotion tracking: As organizations adopt mood-tracking tools or sentiment analysis, privacy, transparency, and ethical data usage must be top priorities.

7.3. Directions for Future Research

- Cross-cultural emotional intelligence benchmarking
- The role of AI in detecting and training EI across generations
- Emotional adaptability in multigenerational remote teams
- The influence of political and socio-economic climates on generational EI evolution
- Impact of emotional design User Experience/User Interface (UX/UI) on EI expression in hybrid work
- Preparing for Generation Alpha, how today's educational and parenting styles will shape their workplace EI

As Rothschild (2023) proposed, the workplace is not merely a site of task execution, it is a psychological and emotional ecosystem. The next wave of research must move beyond traits and into adaptive emotional systems that accommodate generational shifts, technological evolution, and cultural transformation.

8. Conclusion

In an increasingly diverse and dynamic workplace, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged not just as a desirable trait but as a strategic necessity. This paper explored how different generations, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, experience, express, and apply EI in professional environments. Each generation brings distinct emotional strengths, communication preferences, and leadership expectations shaped by historical, technological, and cultural influences.

Baby Boomers offer emotional regulation and crisis resilience but may need support in embracing emotional openness. Generation X excels in self-control and pragmatism but often underplays the relational dimensions of leadership. Millennials thrive on empathy, collaboration, and psychological safety, while Generation Z brings emotional honesty and inclusivity but is still maturing in self-regulation and resilience.

By recognizing and leveraging these generational EI patterns, organizations can cultivate more empathetic, adaptive, and inclusive workplaces. Strategically designed HR practices, including personalized EI development, reverse mentoring, and emotionally intelligent performance systems, can bridge generational gaps and foster collective growth.

This exploration also highlights the evolving nature of EI itself: from a static trait to a dynamic, context-sensitive capability. As hybrid work expands, digital tools evolve, and new generations enter the workforce, Emotional Intelligence will remain a central pillar of organizational sustainability.

To thrive in the future, businesses must not only acknowledge generational differences but also actively design systems that honor, integrate, and evolve with them.

EI can and should be taught at all life stages, but training must be tailored to match generational mindsets, motivations, and learning styles. By doing so, organizations unlock emotional capacity across all age groups, fostering more empathetic, inclusive, and resilient teams.

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