

BRIDGING THE GENERATIONAL DIVIDE: EXPLORING COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES, WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR, AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN GENERATION Z AND GENERATION ALPHA

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Abstract:

The world economy, labour markets, workplace behaviour and communication preferences evolved due to VUCA factors. The present study investigates the evolving dynamics of intergenerational communication and workplace behaviour between Generation Z and Generation Alpha. As the first digital-native generations enter professional environments, understanding their communication preferences and conflict-handling styles becomes vital for fostering cohesive workplace cultures. The research employs a 30-item structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert Scale administered to 300 respondents, comprising 165 Generation Z and 135 Generation Alpha participants selected through stratified random sampling. The study aims to identify generational differences in interpersonal communication, technology-mediated interaction, and behavioural responses during workplace conflicts. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are conducted to examine relationships among communication preferences, collaborative tendencies, and conflict resolution strategies. Findings are expected to reveal distinct generational patterns shaped by technological socialization and value orientations. The study contributes to organizational behaviour literature by offering insights into building intergenerational understanding, enhancing communication strategies, and developing inclusive management practices for emerging multigenerational workplaces.

Keywords: *Generational Divide, Communication Style, Workplace Behaviour, Conflict Resolution, Generation Z, Generation Alpha*

1. Introduction

India is a country with “unity in diversity.” The youth and women empowerment remain the priority within the context of business policies and strategic management. In today’s complex and evolving organizational environment, a new layer of diversity has emerged as one of the most defining and challenging factors in workplace management: generational diversity. While workplaces in the past decade have focused on accommodating and integrating the working styles of Baby Boomers, Gen X and Millennials, the conversation is now rapidly shifting toward younger generations Generation Z (born 1995–2012) and the emerging Generation Alpha (born 2013 onwards). These two groups, although close in age, were raised in distinct technological, economic, and cultural environments, resulting in substantial differences in communication, collaboration, learning preferences, feedback expectations, and work values (Yılmaz &

Arda, 2024). Generation Z is the first generation to grow up in a world shaped by the omnipresence of the internet and social media, yet they also remember life before complete digital integration. They are resourceful, digitally savvy, and value authenticity, inclusion, and mental wellness. Having endured the COVID-19 pandemic during their educational and early career years, they have adapted to remote work, hybrid models, and flexible work expectations. They prefer immediate feedback, purpose-driven tasks, and an inclusive environment (Zahra & Moyo, 2025). Generation Alpha, on the other hand, is the first truly "AI-native" generation. Born during or after the smartphone boom, this cohort is growing up with AI tutors, voice assistants, gamified education, and immersive tech experiences like augmented and virtual reality. Their socialization, cognitive development, and learning are shaped by personalized algorithms, microlearning, and instant access to global information. Though still in adolescence, their behaviours, values, and expectations are already influencing education, content creation, and consumer trends and soon, they will impact the world of work (Agrawal & Van Fleet, 2025). Although these generations share a common digital upbringing, their digital behaviour differs markedly. Gen Z is mobile-first and social media dependent, while Gen Alpha is voice-activated, gamified, and algorithm-reliant. These differences have critical implications for workplace dynamics, especially in terms of communication, collaboration, leadership, and organizational culture (Esquivel, 2025).

Early workplace scenarios suggest that intergenerational tension is already emerging among these young cohorts—Gen Z is stepping into leadership roles, while Gen Alpha may soon enter internships and project-based roles. If left unaddressed, their differences in communication preferences, feedback expectations, and value orientations may lead to misunderstanding, reduced collaboration, or interpersonal conflict. This study aims to investigate the communication styles, feedback expectations, behavioural traits, and workplace values of Gen Z and Gen Alpha to better understand how to manage potential intergenerational conflicts. The research also aims to identify strategies for future-ready organizations to accommodate these upcoming generational shifts with inclusive, adaptive, and tech-integrated practices.

2. Literature Review

a. Generational Theory and Workplace Dynamics

Karl Mannheim's (1952) generational cohort theory provides a foundational framework for analysing generational behaviours in organizational contexts. According to Mannheim, individuals who share a common location in history form generational cohorts that are shaped by significant social, technological, and economic events. Strauss and Howe (1991) extended this theory by defining recurring generational archetypes and historical cycles. Gen Z and Gen Alpha are successive cohorts whose digital nativity differentiates them from older generations. However, their experience of that digital exposure differs: Gen Z grew up during the transition to smartphones and witnessed the birth of influencer culture and gig economy, whereas Gen Alpha was born into an environment where digital tools are no longer optional but essential. According to Duisenbekova (2023), Gen Alpha differs from Gen Z not just in tech use but also in cognitive development and socialization. Alpha's engagement with AI, immersive learning, and real-time feedback systems is shaping their identity and problem-solving strategies from a very young age.

b. Communication and Feedback Preferences

Generational differences in communication are among the primary causes of workplace misalignment. Gen Z typically prefers instant messaging, informal communication, and transparency, while also expecting prompt feedback. They frequently use digital platforms such as Slack, Teams, or WhatsApp for workplace interaction. In contrast, Gen Alpha shows a higher comfort with voice-enabled tools (e.g., Siri, Alexa), emojis, video-based messages, and gamified

interfaces. They respond well to multimedia content and may resist long-form writing or overly structured corporate communication. Research by Ozolina et al. (2024) indicates that Gen Z values authenticity in feedback and prefers peer-level feedback loops over hierarchical reviews. Gen Alpha, as projected, may lean toward gamified feedback systems that include real-time badges, dashboards, and rewards integrated into performance tracking tools.

c. Work Behaviour and Digital Expectations

Gen Z tends to seek work-life balance, diversity, autonomy, and transparency in leadership. They often align with organizations that promote mental wellness and sustainability. They expect opportunities for upskilling and are not afraid to change employers if their values are not met. Gen Alpha is growing up in an era of hyper-personalization and immersive experiences. Their educational systems are integrated with gamification, digital dashboards, and AI-based tutors, meaning they may expect gamified work environments, custom workflows, and digital recognition systems. Duisenbekova (2023) suggested that Gen Alpha will prefer tech-integrated, hybrid learning workplaces over traditional models. This shift could cause friction if Gen Z managers impose relatively structured workflows on Alpha interns or early career professionals, leading to misalignment in work ethics, pace, and task execution styles.

d. Values and Intergenerational Conflict

Both generations are value-driven, but their focal points may differ. Gen Z is highly motivated by social justice, inclusion, and mental health advocacy, while Gen Alpha is projected to prioritize climate sustainability, global citizenship, and ethical tech use. These generational value gaps may lead to subtle conflict, particularly in areas like corporate social responsibility, communication tone, and expectations of leadership. Moore and Krause (2021) observed that perceived value clashes between generations often manifest as communication breakdowns and misunderstanding of intent. If Gen Z adopts traditional leadership styles without adapting to Alpha's learning and feedback preferences, it could lead to functional but persistent workplace conflict, particularly in project collaboration and cross-generational mentorship.

3. Research Objectives

1. To examine the communication style differences between Generation Z and Generation Alpha in workplace contexts
2. To explore the preferred feedback mechanisms and digital interaction tools used by Gen Z and Gen Alpha
3. To compare workplace behaviour and value systems, such as flexibility, sustainability, and autonomy, between the two generations
4. To assess perceived intergenerational conflict between Gen Z and Gen Alpha in collaborative or leadership roles

4. Research Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a quantitative descriptive-comparative research design using a structured questionnaire to assess and compare communication styles, feedback preferences, workplace behaviour, and conflict perceptions among Generation Z and Generation Alpha.

Population and Sample: The study focuses on individuals aged 13 to 28 years, encompassing participants from both Generation Z and Generation Alpha. A total of 300 respondents were selected, including 165 individuals representing Generation Z and 135 representing Generation Alpha. The sampling was conducted using a stratified random sampling method to ensure balanced representation across generational groups. The inclusion criteria defined Generation Z as individuals born between 1995 and 2012, currently aged 18 to 28 years, while Generation Alpha included individuals born in 2013 onwards, currently aged 13 to 17 years.

Data Collection: A 20-item structured questionnaire was developed based on previously validated instruments and relevant theoretical constructs to ensure content reliability and validity. The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), enabling participants to express the extent of their agreement with each statement. The instrument comprised items designed to assess four key dimensions: communication preferences, feedback styles, workplace values, and conflict perceptions, providing comprehensive insights into generational differences in workplace interactions and behavioural tendencies.

Data Collection Procedure: The survey was administered online using Google Forms over a 4-week period. Parental consent was obtained for Gen Alpha respondents (under 18).

Data Analysis Tools:

- **Software:** SPSS v26
- **Techniques Used:** Descriptive statistics (mean, SD); Independent t-test (for intergenerational comparison) and Reliability test using Cronbach alpha

5. Analysis and Interpretation

a. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Profile of Age group

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 10-13 years	135	45.0	45.0	45.0
13-28 years	165	55.0	55.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Interpretation: Age is one of the most significant aspects in demographics of respondents. 45% of the respondents are in the age group of 10-13 years (i.e. generation alpha) and 55% of the respondents are in the age group of 13-28 years (i.e. generation Z).

Table 2: Profile of Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	180	60.0	60.0	60.0
Female	120	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

The authors have made an effort to understand the gender diversity in the present study. It is found that 60% of the respondents are males and the remaining 40% are females.

Table 3: Profile of Occupation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Student	156	52.0	52.0	52.0
Working	144	48.0	48.0	100.0
Total	300	100.0	100.0	

Along with the gender and age, it is important to understand the occupation of respondents since it has great influence on the income level, financial stability, standard of living, motivation level etc. It is observed that 52% of the respondents are students while the remaining 48% are working.

b. Reliability of constructs

Table 4: Reliability of constructs

Construct	Cronbach alpha
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1. Communication Preferences	0.873
2. Feedback preferences	0.705
3. Work behavior and Values	0.767
4. Intergenerational Perception and Conflict	0.937

c. Hypothesis testing

Communication preferences

1. H0: There is no significant difference in the communication preferences of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

H1: There is a significant difference in the communication preferences of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

Table 5: Communication preferences with respect to Age group

	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I prefer short, direct messages over long messages.	10-13 years	135	3.89	.878	.076
	13-28 years	165	2.27	.618	.048
I am comfortable using emoji's, gifs, and memes in day-to-day communication.	10-13 years	135	3.33	.946	.081
	13-28 years	165	2.18	.718	.056
I would rather have video or voice messages than text messages	10-13 years	135	3.56	.687	.059
	13-28 years	165	2.55	.784	.061
I feel more productive when communication is informal and peer-to-peer	10-13 years	135	3.78	.920	.079
	13-28 years	165	2.18	.939	.073

Table 6: Independent samples t test of Communication preferences with respect to generation (age group)

		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I prefer short, direct messages over long messages.	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.616	.087	1.446	1.787
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.616	.090	1.440	1.793

I am comfortable using emoji, gifs, and memes in day-to-day communication.	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.152	.096	.962	1.341
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.152	.099	.957	1.346
I would rather have video or voice messages than text messages	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.010	.086	.841	1.180
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.010	.085	.843	1.177
I feel more productive when communication is informal and peer-to-peer	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.596	.108	1.384	1.808
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.596	.108	1.384	1.808

Interpretation: Since the significance values= 0.000< 0.05, we reject H0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the communication preferences of Generation Z and Generation alpha. Gen alpha prefer short, direct messages over detailed emails, are comfortable using emojis, gifs, and memes in professional communication, would rather have video or voice messages than text messages and feel more productive when communication is informal and peer-to-peer, as compared to Gen Z.

Feedback preferences

2. H0: There is no significant difference in the feedback preferences of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

H1: There is a significant difference in the feedback preferences of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

Table 7: Feedback preferences with respect to age group

	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I prefer immediate feedback instead of periodic evaluations.	10-13 years	135	3.56	.499	.043
	13-28 years	165	2.36	.645	.050
I feel more motivated when feedback is digital (via an app or platform).	10-13 years	135	3.56	1.170	.101
	13-28 years	165	3.27	.865	.067
I find gamified feedback (badges, scores) more engaging than verbal praise	10-13 years	135	4.11	.878	.076
	13-28 years	165	2.45	1.161	.090
	10-13 years	135	3.44	.687	.059

I want my performance to be tracked using real-time digital dashboards	13-28 years	165	2.82	.577	.045
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Table 8: Independent samples t test of Feedback preferences with respect to generation (age group)

		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
					I prefer immediate feedback instead of periodic evaluations.	Equal variances assumed
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.192	.066	1.062	1.322
I feel more motivated when feedback is digital (via an app or platform).	Equal variances assumed	.017	.283	.118	.051	.514
	Equal variances not assumed	.020	.283	.121	.044	.521
I find gamified feedback (badges, scores) more engaging than verbal praise	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.657	.121	1.418	1.895
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.657	.118	1.425	1.888
I want my performance to be tracked using real-time digital dashboards	Equal variances assumed	.000	.626	.073	.483	.770
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	.626	.074	.480	.773

Interpretation: Since the significance values are < 0.05 , we reject H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the feedback preferences of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

Gen alpha prefers immediate feedback instead of periodic evaluations, feel more motivated when feedback is digital (via an app or platform), find gamified feedback (badges, scores) more engaging than verbal praise and want their performance to be tracked using real-time digital dashboards, as compared to Gen Z.

Work Behaviour and Values

3. H0: There is no significant difference in the work behaviour and values of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

H1: There is a significant difference in the work behaviour and values of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

Table 9: Work behaviour and values with respect to age group

	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I value autonomy and freedom in how I complete my work	10-13 years	135	4.00	.820	.071
	13-28 years	165	3.64	.645	.050
I prefer flexible work schedules over fixed routines	10-13 years	135	3.67	.669	.058
	13-28 years	165	2.27	.618	.048
I would choose to work for a company based on its environmental policies	10-13 years	135	4.00	.669	.058
	13-28 years	165	3.64	.483	.038
I believe mental wellness should be a core part of company culture.	10-13 years	135	3.67	.473	.041
	13-28 years	165	4.27	.618	.048

Table 10: Independent samples t test of Work behaviour and values with respect to generation (age group)

		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I value autonomy and freedom in how I complete my work	Equal variances assumed	.000	.364	.085	.197	.530
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	.364	.087	.193	.534
I prefer flexible work schedules over fixed routines	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.394	.074	1.247	1.541
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.394	.075	1.246	1.542

I would choose to work for a company based on its environmental policies	Equal variances assumed	.000	.364	.067	.233	.495
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	.364	.069	.228	.499
I believe mental wellness should be a core part of company culture.	Equal variances assumed	.000	-.606	.065	-.733	-.479
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	-.606	.063	-.730	-.482

Interpretation: Since the significance values are < 0.05 , we reject H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the work behaviour and values of Generation Z and Generation alpha. Gen alpha value autonomy and freedom in how they complete their work, prefer flexible work schedules over fixed routines, would choose to work for a company based on its environmental policies and believe mental wellness should be a core part of company culture, as compared to Gen Z.

Intergenerational Perception and Conflict

4. H_0 : There is no significant difference in the Intergenerational Perception and Conflict of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

H_1 : There is a significant difference in the Intergenerational Perception and Conflict of Generation Z and Generation alpha.

Table 11: Intergenerational Perception and Conflict with respect to age group

	Age group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I find it challenging to collaborate with people from other generations	10-13 years	135	4.00	.473	.041
	13-28 years	165	2.36	1.153	.090
I feel misunderstood by older or younger colleagues	10-13 years	135	4.00	.820	.071
	13-28 years	165	2.18	.939	.073
I think generational differences often create communication gaps	10-13 years	135	4.44	.687	.059
	13-28 years	165	2.36	1.153	.090
I believe diverse generations working together leads to more innovation	10-13 years	135	4.33	.473	.041
	13-28 years	165	3.55	.658	.051

Table 12: Independent samples t test of Intergenerational Perception and Conflict with respect to generation (age group)

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		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
I find it challenging to collaborate with people from other generations	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.636	.106	1.428	1.845
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.636	.099	1.442	1.831
I feel misunderstood by older or younger colleagues	Equal variances assumed	.000	1.818	.103	1.616	2.021
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	1.818	.102	1.618	2.018
I think generational differences often create communication gaps	Equal variances assumed	.000	2.081	.113	1.859	2.303
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	2.081	.108	1.869	2.293
I believe diverse generations working together leads to more innovation	Equal variances assumed	.000	.788	.068	.655	.921
	Equal variances not assumed	.000	.788	.065	.659	.917

Interpretation: Since the significance values are < 0.05 , we reject H_0 and conclude that there is a significant difference in the Intergenerational Perception and Conflict of Generation Z and Generation alpha. Gen alpha finds it challenging to collaborate with people from other generations. They feel misunderstood by older or younger colleagues. They think that generational differences often create communication gaps at work. They believe that diverse generations working together leads to more innovation, as compared to Gen Z.

6. Discussion

The findings reaffirm that while both Gen Z and Alpha are digital natives, their mode of digital engagement differs significantly. Gen Alpha's higher preference for immersive, gamified feedback systems confirms predictions by Duisenbekova (2023) and supports the notion that early AI and tech exposure reshapes cognitive expectations. Gen Z, shaped by structured educational disruption (e.g., the pandemic), shows more alignment with scheduled collaboration tools and values such as

mental wellness and flexible working conditions. Gen Alpha's preference for gamified environments, quick feedback, and intuitive communication suggests a demand for more interactive HRM systems. Gen alpha finds it challenging to collaborate with people from other generations. They feel misunderstood by older or younger colleagues. They think that generational differences often create communication gaps at work. They believe that diverse generations working together leads to more innovation, as compared to Gen Z.

7. Managerial Implications

1. **Digital Personalization:** Managers should offer gamified or AI-supported feedback systems to engage Gen Alpha and Gen Z more effectively.
2. **Cross-Generational Teams:** HR should foster mentoring and reverse mentoring between Gen Z and Alpha to reduce friction.
3. **Training Modules:** Incorporate microlearning, visual-based communication, and gamified assessments to align with generational learning preferences.
4. **Feedback Culture:** Develop fast, transparent, and engaging feedback loops—possibly using dashboards, app notifications, or badges.
5. **Flexible Work Structures:** While Gen Z demands flexibility, Gen Alpha will expect **hyper-flexibility**, including hybrid or AI-mediated team structures.

8. Limitations of Study

- **Age-related cognitive maturity:** Gen Alpha is still in developmental stages, and their responses may evolve over time.
- **Limited workplace exposure:** Many Gen Alpha respondents have not yet experienced actual workplace environments.
- **Cultural homogeneity:** The sample may reflect region-specific values and may not generalize globally.
- **Self-reported data:** Responses are based on perceptions and preferences, not observed behaviour.

9. Scope for Further Research

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Track Gen Alpha's real workplace behaviour over time as they formally enter employment.
2. **Cross-Cultural Comparison:** Explore generational traits in different countries and economic settings.
3. **AI Integration Studies:** Analyze how Gen Alpha adapts to AI-supported leadership, decision-making, and collaboration.
4. **Education-to-Work Pipeline:** Examine how gamified learning systems impact workplace learning adaptability.

10. Conclusion:

All the above discussion highlights that VUCA-driven transformations and technological immersion have significantly reshaped intergenerational workplace behaviour. Generations Z and Alpha exhibit distinct yet complementary communication preferences and conflict-resolution orientations shaped by their digital upbringing and value-based expectations. The findings emphasize that while Generation Z demonstrates a balance between structured interpersonal communication and technology-mediated collaboration, Generation Alpha exhibits higher adaptability toward digitized, autonomous, and visually driven modes of interaction. These patterns collectively underline the growing necessity for organizations to realign communication frameworks and leadership approaches to accommodate generational diversity. Importantly, the analysis provides empirical evidence supporting the integration of inclusive communication

strategies and digital empathy within managerial practices. By fostering open dialogue, embracing technology-enabled collaboration, and promoting emotional intelligence across teams, organizations can mitigate intergenerational friction and enhance collective performance. The study thereby contributes to modern organizational behaviour literature by offering practical insights for HR leaders and policymakers to design training interventions, mentorship programs, and hybrid communication systems that strengthen cohesion in technology-driven, multigenerational workplaces. The study helps in revisiting the policies for the upcoming workforce to align with their driving forces, communication styles, workplace behaviours to create win-win situations.

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