

# Thesis



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## **Theory & Problem Statement**

### **Effective Leadership with a Multigenerational Workforce**



## Effective Leadership with a Multigenerational Workforce

Leadership is a crucial aspect in several institutions that entails guiding people towards a specific goal. While leadership can be provided to such institutions, effective leadership is highly recommended, given its benefits, including enhanced customer satisfaction, reduced turnover, increased sales, revenues, and improved productivity (Epperson, 2018). Epperson (2018) explains that effective leadership also enhances employee passion and engagement, leading to higher customer loyalty. According to Vilkinas et al. (2020), numerous studies have been conducted to determine what makes an effective leader, but there is no consensus on what makes an effective leader. However, Vilkinas et al. (2020) assert that effective leaders have the motivation to lead, play the role of integrator, and have behavioral repertoire meaning that they can display excellent full behavioral range through excellent communication, vision, innovations, and collaboration. Given the lack of consensus on the definition of effective leadership, this study aims to provide such a consensus.

Workplace diversity is an extensively researched topic. According to Roberson (2019), workplace diversity refers to having employees with different characteristics such as age and race. Roberson (2019) asserts that diversity is essential in improving organizational performance. Improved performance comes from promoting creativity and innovation that come from the different perspectives of people with unique points of view, knowledge, and experiences. Since diversity offers key workplace benefits, it is essential to understand how to manage diversity for enhanced performance effectively.

While diversity can enhance success, workplaces face several diversity challenges. For instance, Cletus et al. (2018) assert that diversity issues can quickly arise, which results in several other challenges. Diversity can be based on age, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, physical ability, etcetera. Here, the focus will be on age differences in the workplace, equivalent to having a multigenerational workforce. Several studies have identified workplace disparities based on age. For instance, Appel-Meulenbroek et al. (2019) conducted a study that revealed some disparities between the workplace needs of the different generations at a workplace and indicated that there is a need to create office environments that can accommodate all generations. Zaharee et al. (2018) assert that while there is not much difference in motivating the different cohorts in a multigenerational workforce, one difference between the younger and the older is that younger professionals prefer rotation and continuous feedback. Mahmoud et al. (2020) also found that when comparing younger and older generations, one of the most significant differences concerns their motivation, with younger workforces desiring more intrinsic motivation than the older generations. Understanding such differences is critical in finding solutions for managing workplace challenges related to age differences.

Workplace diversity challenges exacerbate the lack of a consensus in defining effective leadership. Li et al. (2020) describe various types of team diversity, such as variety diversity, separation diversity, and disparity diversity influence leadership types and team disbandment. Since younger and older workers can prefer different types of motivation, there is no one-size-fits-all approach when leading a multigenerational workforce. Duggan (2020) says that the current workforce comprises about five generations, which must be acknowledged and responded to. Duggan (2020) explains that the various generations have diverse needs that impact how leaders must act toward them for the best results. For instance, Duggan (2020) explains that baby boomers may focus on respect and hierarchy while younger workers seek more flexibility. Such and other dynamics affect communication among the generations and influence supervision.

As can be determined so far, there is a lack of consensus in determining the definition of effective leadership. Workplace diversity based on age can exacerbate the challenge of finding a consensus on the definition of effective leadership since it creates the need for different communication and supervision approaches when dealing with the different generations. Therefore, this research aims to understand effective leadership in healthcare with a multigenerational workforce. The study will provide meaningful insight on relating with and understanding Millennials and Generation Xers, and will argue that although there is no one-size-fits-all approach for effectively leading a multigenerational workforce, effective leadership for such a workforce in healthcare requires a transformative approach. The study will enhance understanding concerning effective leadership in healthcare by considering the diverse ethnicities of the groups.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem to be addressed by this study is that there is a lack of consensus concerning what encompasses effective leadership in a multigenerational workforce in healthcare. Ideally, workplace diversity, such as having a multigenerational workforce in healthcare, should present benefits to an organization relating to enhanced performance (Roberson, 2019). Improved performance comes from promoting creativity and innovation that gives the different perspectives of people with unique points of view, knowledge, and experiences. Still, understanding should be fostered concerning multigenerational workforces that yield a consensus concerning the definition of effective leadership for multigenerational workforces.

An ideal situation has not been attained. Vilkinas et al. (2020) assert that numerous studies have been conducted to determine what makes an effective leader, but there is no consensus on what makes an effective leader. Furthermore, studies have indicated challenges in leading multigenerational workforces. For instance, when exploring the nature of motivational processes in a multigenerational workforce, Heyns and Kerr (2018) determined that millennials have the lowest motivation scores

when compared with generation Xers. Woods (2019) also found that multigenerational workforces have significant perception challenges which can be harnessed to be beneficial. Woods (2019) asserts that the Generation Xers from their study reported values and beliefs as the most significant challenge when working with different generations. Waltz et al. (2020) report that while millennials get motivated by frequent positive feedback and prefer modern communication methods such as texts and social media, they often feel disrespected by younger generations. Still, Hayes et al. (2018) posit that there are stereotypical challenges facing workplaces with multigenerational personnel which adversely impact the workplace. The challenges faced by multigenerational workforces indicate the need for effective leadership, which requires understanding the definition of an effective leader.

Researching effective leadership in healthcare when leading multigenerational workforces will impact several parties within the sector. Chatterjee et al. (2018) explain that healthcare organizations are complicated networks of numerous professional groups, specialists, and departments that often require a change to enhance service quality. Chatterjee et al. (2018) further posit that leadership acts as a catalyst for achieving effective change for ensuring success within the changing and competitive environment. Therefore, the problem of being unable to determine what constitutes effective leadership affects a majority of the healthcare fraternity, such as the doctors and nurses who are hospital staff and the patients.

Failing to research effective leadership with multigenerational workforces is likely to have dire consequences in the healthcare sector. For instance, since leadership is vital for change to enhance the quality of care (Chatterjee et al., 2018), ineffective leadership is likely to increase patient dissatisfaction rates. Furthermore, without the study on effective leadership, multigenerational workplace issues will occur, such as communication issues resulting from different communication preferences across the generations, multiple perspectives given the different ethnicities, and varying expectations given the different motivational requirements of the generations.

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