

The Generational Gap: Are Personalities to Blame?

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Introduction

- As generations age and enter the work force, conflicts can arise due to misunderstandings among the generations. As evidenced by the infamous feud and miscommunication between Baby Boomers and Millennials, a generational misunderstanding may be to blame. However, the question then becomes; what is the cause of the misunderstanding?
- This research is an attempt to find a difference between the two generations facing the new challenges of adult life; Generation Y, known as Millennials, and Generation Z. Through the rise of social media interaction, marked differences have been noted in both of the generations’ behaviors and interactions with each other. Could this be a difference in personality traits?
- To answer and address this question, the research used data provided to evaluate young adults’ responses on the Big Five Personality test and associated terms of personality.

Description of Variables

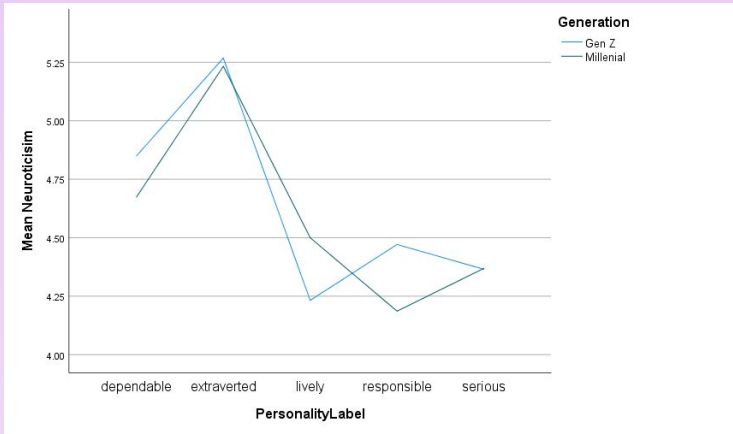
Throughout this study, the data used contained different variables to be analyzed statistically. The variables are as follows:

- Gender: Participants reported binary gender as part of the data collection. The majority of participants were female (n = 534, 52.3%). One participant’s gender was listed as a numeric value as opposed to one of the binary genders, and thusly, the participant’s gender was listed as “N/A”
- Age: Age was collected along with the data from the personality test. This is the individual’s age in years when data collection occurred. The mean age was 19.9 years (SD = 2.43). Ages ranged from 17 years old to 28 years old. Three data entries had “5” listed as age; considering the nature of the study and how age served as an essential variable, these three data entries were dropped.
 - Generation: Based on age, participants were assigned a Generation. The data was collected in 2020, so if a participant was 21 or above at the time of data collection, the participant was assigned to Generation Y. 20 and below were assigned to Generation Z. The majority of participants fell into Generation Z (n = 710, 69.5%), while the remaining (n = 311, 30.5%) were classified as Generation Y.
- Personality Label: Each participant was assigned a personality label. Five different labels were assigned; the most common was Serious (n = 314, 30.8%), indicating the participant had a serious nature. The second most common was Extraverted (n = 226, 22.1%), which described an individual who is typically outgoing in nature. Extraverted was followed by Responsible (n = 164, 16.1%). Responsible signifies the participant is independent and able to accomplish what needs to be done. The last two had similar numbers; Dependable (n = 159, 15.6%) and Lively (n = 158, 15.5%). Dependable individuals are reliable and depended on to complete a task, while lively individuals are tasked with keeping the energy in a room. Each personality plays a vital role in society, but has society’s views on each changed through the generations?

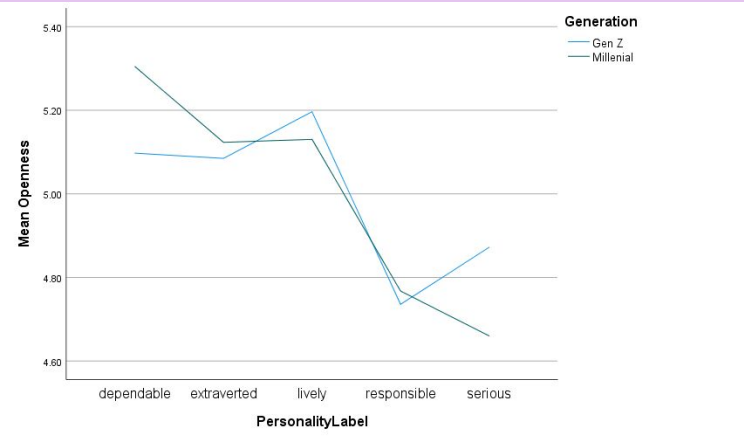
The Big Five Personality Test and Results

As the name implies, five different aspects of personality are calculated through the Big Five Personality test. In the study, each participant’s scores were collected and analyzed through statistical means to see if there was any significant difference between Generation Y and Generation Z. In total, 1021 participants and the data provided from the participation in the study were used in the analysis. Each of the five traits were first calculated with a 2x5 factorial ANOVA in order to differentiate between generations and the personality labels in each. Afterwards, a between-measures t-test was conducted to see if any group differences occurred without the personality label.

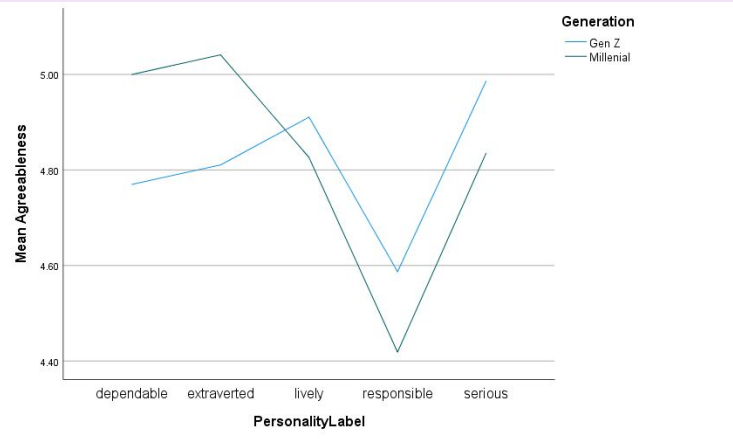
- Openness: Openness measures how open minded an individual is in life. In general, participants scored the highest on this trait (mean = 4.97, SD = 1.53), with scores ranging from 1 (n = 29, 2.8%) to 8 (n = 4, 0.4%) on a scale of 0-10. When analyzed in a factorial ANOVA, the results showed that there was no significant difference between the Generations and the personality labels assigned to the individuals within the Generations. To test if any significance existed without the labels, a t-test was performed to assess differences in means. The mean of Generation Y (M = 4.95, SD = 1.60) was not significantly different from the mean of Generation Z (M = 4.98, SD = 1.49). This indicates that the two generations have similar openness of mind, and the personality view of openness has not changed through the generations.



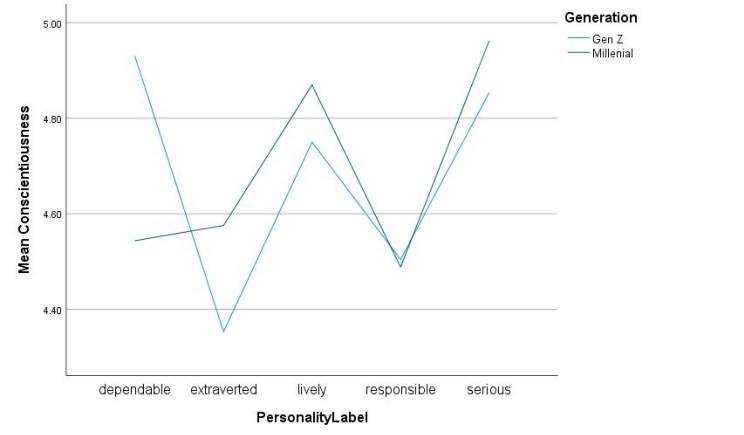
- Neuroticism: Neuroticism deals with negative emotions, such as depression, anger, and anxiety. This can have a large impact on the personality as a whole. All together, participants scored slightly less than average (mean = 4.63, SD = 1.71), with scores ranging from 1 (n = 61, 6.0%) to 9 (n = 1, 0.1%). When further analyzed, the results showed that there was no significant difference between the Generations and the personality labels assigned when it came to Neuroticism scores. To test if any difference existed with the means of the Generation scores, a t-test was performed. The results showed there to be no significant difference between Generation Y (mean = 4.61, SD = 1.72) and Generation Z (mean = 4.63, SD = 1.71), indicating both generations still face the struggle of negative emotions.



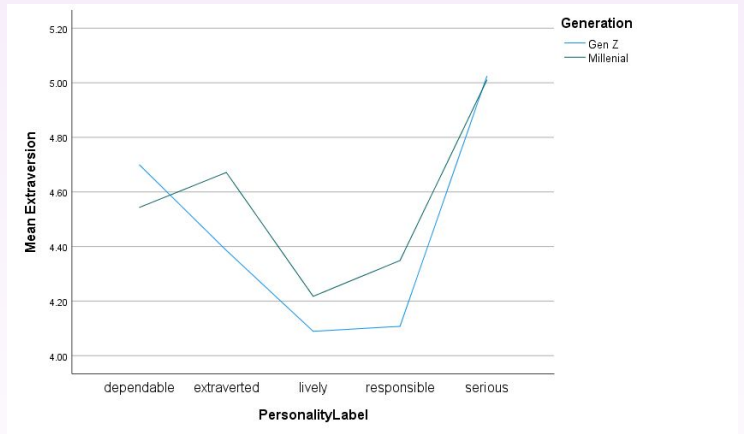
Conscientiousness: This measure on the Big Five deals with discipline and self control. How disciplined is an individual; how responsible and trustworthy is the person? This is a more subtle measure of personality, but still has quite the impact. All together, the participants in the study scored just under the middle of the scale (mean = 4.70, SD = 1.73), with scores ranging from 1 (n = 55, 5.4%) to 9 (n = 1, 0.1%). Looking into potential group differences, no significant group differences existed between the generations in the personality labels. To see if any significant differences with the generations existed without the labels, a t-test was performed. The results showed no significance between the score for Generation Y (mean = 4.73, SD = 1.70) versus Generation Z (mean = 4.68, SD = 1.75). This indicates both generations have similar methods of self-discipline and responsibility.



Agreeableness: An individual scoring high in agreeableness tends to be optimistic and friendly. Individuals scoring high in this category are known to be kind hearted and easy to get along with. Participants from both generations scored the second highest in this category (mean = 4.84, SD = 1.66), with scores ranging from 1 (n = 51, 5.0%) to 8 (n = 14, 1.4%). When comparing the generations and personality labels, there was no significant difference in means. Without personality labels, the result stayed the same; no significant difference in means existed between Generation Y (mean = 4.85, SD = 1.67) and Generation Z (mean = 4.83, SD = 1.64). These results indicate both generations have friendliness and optimism.



Extraversion: Extraversion is an individual’s ranking of how outgoing and social the individual tends to be in life. Scoring low on extraversion typically earns the label of “introverted,” but that label is not assigned by the Big Five Personality Test. Overall, extraversion was the lowest average trait among all participants (mean = 4.57, SD = 1.55), with results ranging from a 1 (n = 43, 4.2%) to 8 (n = 8, 0.8%). When statistically analyzed to find any significant differences between generations and personality labels, no significant results appeared. Taking out personality labels, there was no significant difference in the means of Generation Y (mean = 4.65, SD = 1.47) and Generation Z (mean = 4.53, SD = 1.59). While the differences were not significant, this particular personality trait did have the lowest p score out of all five; p = 0.249. This is the only p value less than 0.6 for the t-tests. This means that extraversion was the closest to being significant, indicating a potential shift in how the two generation express extraversion.



Conclusion & Discussion

- While none of the statistical tests yielded significance, conclusions can still be drawn from the analysis.
- The conclusion from this data indicated the two generations view personality labels in the same way, and that the individuals from each generation have somewhat of the same layout for personalities.
- In the future, research could be conducted in a number of different ways to branch off of this;
 - Make a clearer distinction between the generations; this study may not have done this as efficiently as needed.
 - Try this with generations further apart; the Baby Boomers and Generation Z may have much more interesting results as there exists roughly 40 years in between the generations.

References

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Ilan, Y. (2020). *Big five traits with personality labels*. (Version V1). [Data Set]. [Big Five Traits with Personality Labels | Kaggle](#)

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