

Original Research Article

Assessing the views of generation X faculty about generation Y medical students: a questionnaire-based study

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Received: 28 January 2021

Revised: 01 March 2021

Accepted: 02 March 2021

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ABSTRACT

Background: The aim of the study was to discuss the opinions of present medical faculty of generation X about generation Y medical students and to enlist the ways to bridge the gap between two generations to maximize the productivity of teaching and learning process.

Methods: The method used for the study was in form of a written questionnaire, filled by generation X teaching medical faculty of various departments of medical colleges of Haryana and Chandigarh. Data collected after an interview schedule was entered in Microsoft excel sheet and appropriate statistical tests were applied to analyze it. Questionnaire comprised of socio-demographic profile of the medical faculty and their opinions about major behavioral difference in generation Y students. The opinions expressed and suggestions given by faculty were discussed.

Results: There were many differences that generation X observed between themselves and the generation Y students. However, the majority of the teachers were open to learning new methods to bridge the gap.

Conclusions: Bridging the gap, accepting the new generation as they are and molding our self to match their needs can be productive to the present practices of medical education.

Keywords: Generation gap, Generation Y medical students, Generation X medical faculty, Views

INTRODUCTION

Generation gap is a very commonly used term in general conversations. It is also socially recognized and well observed by all. Generation gap creates coldness between two generations, which makes connection, effective communication and understanding a challenge. Teacher and student must come on the same plane decreasing the space between them so that teaching can be smoother and learning more effective. A generation is defined as a group of people born over a period of 20 years that comprises of the time from their birth to adulthood. Borges et al stated generational cohorts to share their

values and behaviors due to similar experiences and influences.¹ People born between 1965 and 1981 are of the generation X, those born between 1982 and 2005 are of generation Y. Bickel et al noted considerable differences in work styles and attitudes of different generational teams of health care providers.² The differing values and expectations between generations pose a challenge in resolving intergenerational conflicts Howell et al.³ These differences can be traced to different ways they were parented.⁴⁻⁷

Generation Y (Millennial generation) exhibit certain characteristics unique to them.

Davis mentions that the generation Y appreciates the use of technology due to its availability to them since young age.⁸

They are the generation who saw uncertainty in form of terrorism, globalization, SARS outbreak and economic recession in their growing years. The millennials are proficient in online connectedness, teamwork, free expression, work life flexibility and technology. Teaching this generation requires clear-cut instructions in everything and they prefer explicit communication. There is no assumption of common knowledge also (Eckleberry-Hunt et al).⁹Analyses by Borges et al showed significant differences for Generation X versus Millennial medical students on 10 of the 16-personality factors.¹ Manuel et al supported a link between personality and clinical skills performance in generation Y students.¹⁰ There is a lot of frustration among the teachers as well as the taught due to generation gap. Faculties working in medical teaching programs are increasingly frustrated that their learners appear to have different priorities and values than they themselves had when they were in training. Residents demonstrate frustration with faculty expectations regarding work duties and interaction with patients and other medical professionals. A significant component of these issues may be due to generational differences between educators and learners.

We need to address the issue in our country as well. Assessing the views of the teachers about the students whom they are teaching is essential in recognizing the gap. Once the subjective difference is known effective strategy can be built to bridge it. This study intended to discuss the views of generation X medical faculty regarding the opinions on difference in generation Y students from generation X and to find ways to bridge the gap between two generations to facilitate better learning.

METHODS

The method used for the study was in form of a written questionnaire, filled by generation X teaching medical faculty of four medical colleges of Haryana and Chandigarh. 128 GEN X Medical faculties from PGIMS Rohtak, AMCH Shahabad, GMCH Chandigarh and MMCH Mullana were included in the study.

Sample size

It was calculated by assuming the prevalence of different views of generation X faculty about generation Y students to be 50% and taking power of study to be 80% and attrition to be 20%. Final a sample size of 128 was selected from these four medical colleges.

Sampling technique

Population proportion to sample size (PPS) technique was used for sampling where proportional generation X faculty were selected as per their number like PGIMS had maximum faculty in generation X age group so

proportional higher number of faculty were selected from this college. According to faculty strength in each college, sample was taken. 55 faculty from PGIMS Rohtak, 15 from AMCH Shahabad, 29 from GMCH Chandigarh and 29 from MMCH Mullana were included in the study. The working faculty of the four medical colleges born between 1965 and 1981 were randomly selected and included in the study.

Study period

Study was conducted from April 2019 to August 2019. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethical committee and the confidentiality of the data was dutifully preserved. This was a questionnaire based cross sectional study. The consent was taken from the subjects after informing them about the purpose of the study. The subjects were individually interviewed and were subjected to a semi-structured, pre-tested and validated questionnaire. Questionnaire comprised of socio-demographic profile of the medical faculty, their opinions about major behavioral difference in generation Y students on a three-point Likert scale and suggestions to bridge the gap. Data was collected after an interview schedule and was entered in Microsoft excel sheet. The data was analyzed by applying percentages and proportions for different parameters. Conclusions were drawn after appropriate interpretation of the analyzed data.

RESULTS

The randomly selected, generation X faculty who consented to be a part of the study from the four medical colleges were individually interviewed and subjected to the questionnaire. Total 128 faculty members participated in the study. Out of these 53.9% were males and 46.1% were females. Most of the participants were equal or above 40 years of age, leaving behind only 6.25% who were below 40 years of age. 97.66% of the faculty agreed that this generation is different from their own.

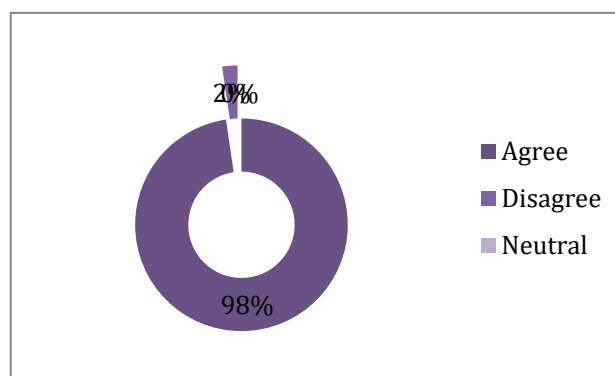


Figure 1: Generation Y is different from generation X.

93% of the teachers felt that this generation talks more freely to them as compared to how they themselves used to talk in front of their teachers in their student life. More

than 80% of the teachers felt that this generation is more fearless and assertive in putting forward their point. More than 85% of the faculty observed the generation Y students to be more confident than what they used to be. 77.3% of the teachers anticipated the students to be more impulsive than them. On the contrary 65.6% of the faculty inferred them to have higher sensitivity levels. Less than a half of the teachers found this generation to have less attention span than them. More than 60% of the faculty found the students of the new generation to be easier going and preferring shortcuts than themselves. 75 % of the educators found the new generation to be more conscious of their looks.

Table 1: Generation Y discord.

Characteristics	Percentage (%)		
	True	False	Neutral
More fearless	82.8	7.8	9.38
Talk more freely	93	3.9	3.13
More assertive	84.4	7.03	8.6
More confident	86.7	6.25	7.03
More impulsive	77.3	7.8	14.8
More sensitive	65.6	25	9.38
More looks conscious	75	7.8	14.8
Believe in short cuts	66.4	23.3	10.16
Easier going	62.5	21.09	16.41
Less attentive	46.1	21.09	32.82

71.88% of the educators felt that the millennials demanded respect, which was not a matter of concern at all, during their student life. Less than a half of the lecturers found the new generation students to be more disrespectful. 67.9% of the teachers experienced the situations in which teachers were hurt by the behavior of students but the students had no such intention. 56.25% of the teachers underwent circumstances wherein, the teacher got annoyed but the students didn't have any clue of what went wrong and what their mistake was.

Table 2: What makes generation Y different?

Characteristics	Percentage (%)		
	True	False	Neutral
More disrespectful	45.3	15.6	39.1
Demand respect	71.88	14.8	13.28
Teacher hurt but students have no such intention	67.97	9.38	22.66
Teacher annoyed but students have no clue	56.25	26.56	17.2
Teacher scared to scold fearing increased sensitivity and incidence of depression in students	18.76	39.84	41.41

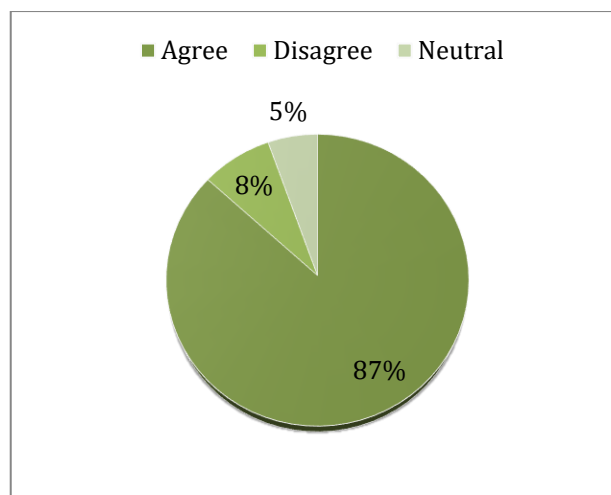


Figure 2: Definition of respect is different in the two generations.

Thus, 86.7% of the educators agreed that possibly student's definition of respect differs from their own.

78.1% of the educators concurred that deep down they expect the students to behave with them the way they behaved with their teachers. 86.7% of them realized the need to increase their own patience levels. However, only 22.66% of the educators acknowledged that they were inflexible.

Table 3: Self introspection by generation X faculties.

Characteristics	Percentage (%)		
	True	False	Neutral
We expect students to behave the way we behaved with our teachers	78.1	10.94	10.16
We are not flexible	22.66	47.66	29.69
We need to increase our patience	86.7	5.47	7.8

More than 93.75% of the faculty admitted that the students are fonder of friendly teachers. 86.7% of the educators felt that a balance between being friendly and maintaining distance is a possibility.

Table 4: Possibility of connection building and communication.

Characteristics	Percentage (%)		
	True	False	Neutral
Students like friendly teachers	93.75	3.9	2.33
A balance between being friendly and maintaining distance can be made	86.7	7.03	6.25

78.1 % of the educators approved that training of teachers to understand generation Y can be beneficial. 70.3% of

the teachers admitted that the training of students about what generation X faculty expects should be done.

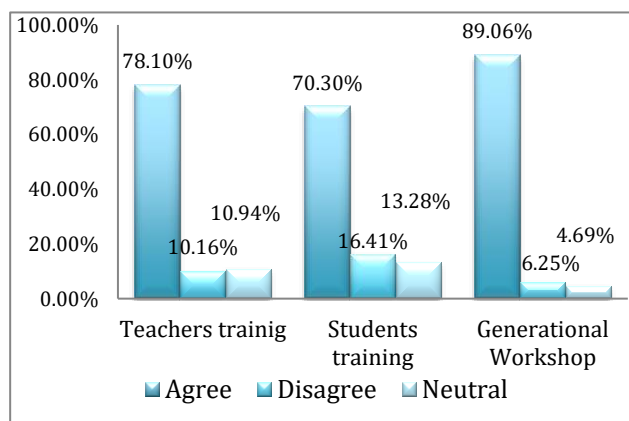


Figure 3: Training can help bridge the generation gap.

89.06% of the lecturers were of the opinion that training and workshop facilitating effective communication and connection building between the teachers and students can be productive.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed insights into the generational differences between the teachers and the taught. These differences are creating a barrier in imparting knowledge to the students effectively. A focus on the attitudes, values and behavior of generation next is essential because the future of medicine depends on getting their education right. The generational difference that we inferred is consistent with other studies. Philibert et al, Solet and Borges et al also recognize significant differences in personality traits of generation Y medical students from generation X.^{1,11-12}

Teachers in our study acknowledged the assertiveness of generation Y students. This finding concurs with research into the attributes of generational diversity studied by Johnson et al.¹³

Even though generation Y believes in short cuts, is more easy-going and prefers instant results and gives immediate reactions, Kambria et al, apart from this anecdotally also brought to the forefront how the dedication of generation Y residents went beyond their duty hours, with electronic medical records. They also reported generation Y residents spending time at home checking patients' records and reports and learning about the conditions of their patients.¹⁴ We believe our study is one of the initial studies to note the differences in generational characteristics in medical students of our country with the intention of bridging the gap thus facilitating better communication and connection between the medical teachers and the taught. However, we recognize that not including the observation of generation X faculty regarding the temperaments, attitudes and

working styles of residents of generation Y may be considered a limitation of this study.

Our study revealed that not even half of the faculty considered the millennials to be less attentive. This observation is in accord with the observations of Borges et al.¹⁵ Twenje also observed that for this generation, intimidation style teaching is a potential barrier to learning; in line with our observations of the new generation students being more fearless and demanding more respect.¹⁶

There are a number of studies on the differences of the two generations, but the opinions of one regarding the other generation have hardly been studied. More than the objective differences, our study focused on the subjective difference perceived by the generation X teachers about the generation Y students. Even though the objectivity might have been hampered, yet the opinions of one generation of the other can aid us to mark the problem areas in the minds of the teachers. Additionally, we recommend considering to explore the opinions of the new generation students regarding the teachers of older generation so that problem areas on the other end be also marked; thus, gaining access and making way to decreasing gap from both the ends.

In this view an effective model of generational workshop needs to be created.

A recommendation for future studies is to lay stress on the differences in preferred teaching methods and learning styles. As we are shifting our education system from information stalking to effective application of the information, our teaching styles must be tailored to meet the demands of the shift in education system in the light of the generational differences.

Limitations

Not including the observation of generation X faculty regarding the temperaments, attitudes and working styles of residents of generation Y may be considered a limitation of this study. Opinions of the new generation regarding the attitudes of the teachers could have made the study multidirectional.

CONCLUSION

Generation X observes generation Y to be substantially different from them. Generation X and Y speak different languages in terms of paying and commanding respect. Generation X and Y need to communicate and connect to understand their differences. Teachers need to introspect, decrease expectations and increase flexibility. A friendly democratic behavior of generation X teachers, instead of traditional authoritative one can be more productive. Training workshops addressing the generational issues can be helpful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors would like to thank the faculty from PGIMS Rohtak, AMCH Shahabad, GMCH Chandigarh and MMCH Mullana for their active participation in the study.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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Cite this article as: Chayal V, Goel A, Chandel R, Shivhare G. Assessing the views of generation X faculty about generation Y medical students: a questionnaire-based study. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2021;8:1656-60.