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MASTER'S DEGREE IN INDUSTRIAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Generational Differences and Importance of Workplace Flexibility

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"A research Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters (Industrial/Organisational Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 15 March 2022"

Declaration

“I declare that the research study titled “Generational Differences and Importance of Workplace Flexibility” is my own work, it has not been submitted before any other degree or examination at this or any other university”

Signature: M.Tshabalala 

Date: 27 September 2022

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate generational differences and the importance of workplace flexibility, and the extent to which these differences vary across countries and cultures. The notion of generational differences in the workplace has emerged as an area of interest that has been widely studied by modern researchers, mainly because generational differences are thought to influence the behaviour and attitudes of employees in the workplace (Smola and Sutton, 2002). The largest diversity of generations is represented in today's workplace than any other time in history (Glass, 2007). At present, four generations are working together in organisations across the world. These include Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Traditionalist (Codrington and Grant-Marshall, 2006). These generations grew up in a different time period, as a result, may have different worldviews, and work expectations.

I conducted a study using open access multinational data with a sample consisting of employees from 7 multinational companies across 11 different countries in Asia, Africa, South America, North and Europe. The final sample consisted of 11,298 respondents, ranging from 17 to 65 years of age and consisted of both full time and part time employees. The initial study administered and distributed a questionnaire to the participants to identify the demographic features of the study (See Appendix A) and the workplace A flexibility questionnaire was used to assess the flexibility perceptions of four generational cohorts (See Appendix B). Data was analysed by means of Kruskal-Wallis test to determine differences between the four generational cohorts. Spearman rank-order correlations were performed to determine the relationships between workplace flexibility, age and culture.

The results of the current study revealed a non-significant relationship between workplace flexibility, age, culture and generations in a multinational sample. Overall, these results suggest that the importance of workplace flexibility may not significantly differ across the generational cohorts and across different country cultures. This may mean that people across different generational group and countries may have similar desires for flexible work practices, however age might make a small difference in this relationship which may explain that as people get older, the more they desire or prefer workplace flexibility for variety of reasons related to health and work-life balance.

Key words: generational cohorts, Generation X, Generation Y, Baby Boomers, Traditionalists, Flexibility, Workplace flexibility, Country, Culture

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The 21st century workforce is currently transforming multigenerational cohorts in the workplace (SHRM Foundation, 2017). The current workforce comprises four generational cohorts. These include Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Traditionalist. It is often suggested, particularly in the popular literature that each generation differ in their beliefs, attitudes, preferences, and work expectations (Cushing, 2019). For example, the SHRM Foundation (2017) reported that generational differences could create conflict and miscommunication in the workplace. Grobler and De Bruyn (2012) further remarked that the impact of a multi-generational workplace represents both opportunities and challenges for business managers. These require human resources professionals and business managers to implement significant adjustments in business strategies and in how different cohorts are managed (Jenkins, 2008). However, a multi-generational workforce can also create significant opportunities that are associated with a multi-skilled and multi-experienced workforce. To maximize the value of older and younger workers, organisations and human resource professionals must understand varying preferences and expectations of all different cohorts so that employees can be fully engaged and adapt to the changing workforce (Fenzel, 2013).

It has been suggested that rapid demographic changes such as a multi-generational workforce could be influential in driving the recent trends associated with shifts in how and where employees choose to work (SHRM Foundation, 2017). Hannam and Yordi (2011) explains that generational difference in how work is defined and the technology that had made it possible for employees to work anywhere had influenced the trend towards flexible work practices.

The notion of workplace flexibility has become another critical concept as business managers and human resources professionals seek to create policies and practices to deal with demographic variations and work- life balance (Putnam, Myers & Gilliard, 2013). To attract and retain a multi-generational workforce, organisations began to create a work culture that embraces flexible work practices (Putnam et al.,2013). Previous research focusing on “younger workers” and “older workers” had stressed the significance of flexibility in how employees carry out their work and the integration of work with other aspects of life (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Common issues surrounding

research in workplace flexibility emphasises the issues on the application and use of flexible workplace practices in an aging workforce. Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) reported that the application and usage of flexible work options and practices is often explored from a ‘’more is better’ ’perspective which overlooks the importance and suitability of these different flexible work options for employees with demographic variabilities. Previous research had examined differences between the generational cohorts in terms of work values and attitudes (Eletter, Sulieman & AlNaji 2017); relations between flexibility and Job performance, investigating the mediating role of employee engagement (Bal and Delange, 2014) However, most of this previous research applies to western settings (Eletter et al.,2017). Pitt-Catasouphes and Sarkisian (2014) conducted a study that examined the relationship between generations and workplace flexibility and age-related factors. However, the study also observed these differences from a westernized perspective. Therefore, the findings on generational differences from these above studies may not provide meaningful contributions and understandings about generational differences in the South African population. This could be because demographical factors such country and culture may influence preferences and the importance of workplace flexibility, and more research is needed on these differences.

Current literature on generational differences recognizes that exploring the ubiquity of generational differences is to unravel the impact in the workplace (Rudolph, Rauvola, Costanza & Zacher, 2021). Several literatures do not support the claim of generational differences in the workplace and show that there are practically no differences between generations (Hart et al., 2003), while some sources of evidence claim these differences may exist to some extent but not very significant (Korn, 2010). These contradictions are imperative in providing alternatives to generational thinking and a different understanding about the role of age and the process of aging in the workplace, as far as workplace flexibility is concerned. In this current study I intend to understand the relationship between generations, workplace flexibility and culture. Paying attention to generational differences in South Africa workspaces specifically could enable a comprehensive understanding regarding theories of generational differences about the possible implication this may have at an employee and organisational level.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of previous research and literature relating to generations, generational theories, workplace flexibility and country culture.

2.2. Defining Generations

The term generation has been defined in several ways across literature and research on generations (Costanza et al.,2012). By most definitions, a generation is typically about twenty years in length, representing roughly the period from the birth of a group of people, to the time they come of age and start having their own children (Schwewe Meredith, & Noble, 2002). The twenty-year interval also represents the division of an average human lifespan into four distinct phases: youth, adulthood, midlife and elderhood, as individuals move together from one life phase to another (Sandeen, 2008). Most commonly, the term generation has been used to refer to people born within a particular period who share similar characteristics such as birth years, age, and significant life events (Wey Smola & Sutton, 2002). Howe and Strauss (2007) define a generation as a group of individuals born and raised in the same period with similar attitudes, values and behaviours that have been forged by shared experiences and the generational cycle in which these individuals were born. More recently, Industrial Psychologists have paid increased attention at the concept of generations and define 'generations' as groups of individuals born in the same period and who experience a similar culture and shared experiences (Van Der Linde, 2019).

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Generation and Cohort Theory

The conceptual framework for the current study is centred on *generational theory* and *cohort group theory* which assumes that life events shape the experiences and worldviews of people across class, race, and geographic boundaries (Jones,2014). The generational theory was first described by Karl Mannheim (1952) in his widely discussed essays "The problem of generations". Mannheim (1952) defined generations as people who were born at about the same period and share similar life experiences that cause each generational cohort to develop different beliefs, expectations, perceptions, and behaviours (Dries, Pepermans & De Kerpel, 2008).

This involves the development of “collective mentalities” that mirror a dominant view of the world in which shared actions and common practices are created and experienced and are thought to influence the behaviour of individuals throughout their lives (Codrington, 2008). The generational theory posits that behaviour is not only shaped by age but also by the social context that influences and shapes a group of people/ generational cohort (Mosupyoe, 2014). The term cohort is commonly confused with generation. A cohort represents a group of individuals who have a shared experience of an event within the same time (Alwin & McCammon, 2007). Alwin and McCammon (2007) describe the cohort effect as a distinctive developmental and societal experiences shared among members of a specific generational group and ultimately shapes and defines individuals in the group. Consequently, each generational cohort develops collective ideas and similar cultural and historical phases shaped by unique conditions during their formative years (Jenkins, 2008). Marcinkus-Murphey (2012) also recognizes that the cohort perspective comprises distinct age-based identity, mental models, and shared values. Based on the definition of cohorts, the current study finds it sensible to compare generational cohorts when observing generational differences. The term “cohorts” will be used as a lens for the current study instead of “generations”.

The generational theory differs from other theories such as life span theory or developmental psychology theories. This difference is observed from an understanding that the generational theory is concerned with references to the events that occurred during their coming of age rather than merely focusing only on specific characteristics of people. Theorists and researchers have called for different generational groups to be treated in different and unique ways in the workplace, based on their generational cohort. The Generational Cohort theory has thus been widely used across different industries and organisations to understand intergenerational differences in the workplace (Van Der Linde,2019). The current study assesses the relationship between the generational cohorts, age and workplace flexibility. More direct, if belonging to a specific generational cohort can create specific preferences and importance towards workplace flexibility

2.3.2. The Lifespan Theory of Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC)

The Lifespan theory of Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) model is another useful model suitable to understand generational differences and work-related issues. The SOC model developed by Margret Baltes and Paul Baltes (1990) provides

a framework to understand an individual's successful developmental process across the entire lifespan (Baltes & Dickson, 2001). This framework attempts to explain how individuals sustain appropriate performance levels over time despite resource declines due to age-related factors. The SOC model explains that older workers experience age-related losses in abilities and competencies (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). According to this theory, our energy diminishes as we age, and we select personal goals to optimize the efforts we put into activities. (Lumen Learning, nd). The "selection" aspect of this theory refers to an aging individual increasing restrictions in their life due to fewer domains of functioning (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). "Compensation" occurs when the behavioural capacity of the individual is either entirely lost or reduced from previous adequate functioning. To counteract the negative consequences of age-related losses, older workers may use flexibility to maintain their performance and to reduce health related difficulties (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Translating to the notion of workplace flexibility, the SOC-model provides an explanation of why 'older people' value flexibility at work more than 'younger people'. The theory argues that as people experience work-related losses, such as the physical capabilities to conduct work, or the perseverance of working long hours, workplace flexibility could provide older workers the tools to employ SOC-strategies to cope with these losses (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Moreover, when people become older, they could create obligations in other domains, such as eldercare, through which their preference for adjusted work schedules increase. This theory has been used to explain why older workers prefer flexible work practices to remain motivated while also maintaining the desired level of productivity for the organisation (Bal & Jansen, 2016). The current study will utilise the SOC-model to understand how age-related differences may influence certain workplace flexibility practices, such that the observed differences between younger and older employees may be due to health and performance related issues as a result of aging or age.

2.4. Generations in the workplace

The modern workforce is more diverse than ever and characterized by multiple generational cohorts working side by side and each bringing different perspectives and values to the workplace. According to Cennamo & Gardner (2008), the world of work has always consisted of different generations with varying differences that are often confounded by changes in working experience, life stages, career stages and chronological age. Each generation possess a set of values, attitudes, expectations, and preferred relationship to authority (Coberly, 2017). Bowes (2008) is of the opinion

that generational differences in the workplace present significant challenges because members of a specific generation are always limited to specific beliefs, attitudes, and preferences. As employers juggle different multi-generational work attitudes and work patterns, they must develop effective leadership strategies and create appropriate working environment (Coberly, 2017). These differences have potential to create conflict, as managers strive to find commonalities to build functional work teams (Cushing, 2019). However, generational differences are considered meaningful as they can also create a high-functioning, multi-skilled and multi-experienced when these differences are strategically recognised and understood at an organisational level (Cushing, 2019).

Researchers are generally not in agreement on how many generations are currently active in the workplace (Van Der Linde, 2019); Some studies compare as few as two cohorts while others compare as many as eight cohorts, with generic descriptions ranging from “younger vs. older” to highly specific descriptions such as “early-, middle- and late-Boomers” (Lyon & Kuron, 2014). In countries outside of the United States, the age terminology of “older” versus “younger” age group often replace the United States labels (e.g., Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Y). This terminology is also dependent on different demographic trends around the globe. It is for that reason that researchers such as Sabattini, Warren, Dinolfo, Falk and Castro (2010) argue that the specific workplace issues associated with age diversity could vary from one context to the other. Mattes (2012) state that different countries often make use of different names on deciding how to identify a specific generation group. In South Africa, the different generational groups include the early Apartheid generation, the Struggle generation and the Born Frees. Research on generational cohorts in South Africa also lacks consensus on the number of generational cohorts and descriptions in the South African workplace. From a global perspective most researchers agree on four generational cohorts, namely: Traditionalists; Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (Van Der Linde, 2019). For this study, the generational cohorts were referred to as Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y.

Generational boundaries are one of the non-consensus points in the grouping of generational cohorts (Campbell et al., 2015). It was found that the boundaries separating the different generations are not precise, and that some generations overlap, depending on the country of origin (Sayers, 2007). Lyon and Kuron (2014) explains that the precise boundaries chosen to demarcate the generations are not

crucially important, as generational trends should reveal themselves even despite the "fuzziness" of the boundaries between generations (Lyon & Kuron, 2014). Birth date parameters based on the country of origin according to Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2006) as cited in Van Der Linde (2019) are depicted in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Multinational generational cohorts according to country of origin

Generations	USA	Europe/UK	Japan	South Africa
Traditionalists	1923-1942	1918-1945	1924-1945	1930-1949
Baby Boomers	1943-1962	1946-1965	1945-1965	1950-1969
Generation X	1963-1983	1966-1984	1966-1985	1970-1989
Generation Y	1984-2001	1985-2001	1986-2001	1990-2000
Generation Z: born between 2001-2020				

Source: (Codrington and Grant Marshall, 2006: as cited in Van Der Linde, 2019)

Table 2. South African generational cohorts

In the present study, generations were defined according to the South African birth years as shown in table 2 below, as per the parameters of Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2006).

Generational Timeline		
1950-1969	**1970-1989**	**1990-2005**
Baby Boomers	**Generation X**	**Generation Y**

Source (Codrington and Grant-Marshall, 2006:19 as cited in Van Der Linde (2019)

In South Africa, most publications have generational cohorts' classification merely by birth-years groupings without the consideration of the defining moments or events backing the distinctive values, attitudes, and preferences of the various groupings (Duh & Struwig, 2015). Within a given country, defining moments come from both national and international events. Different countries may experience the same defining moments that had shaped the world such as the emergence of HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s, the invention of the internet in the 1990s and space exploration in the 1950s (Howson, 2014). However, the socioeconomic, cultural, and geographical differences may have profoundly changed the effect these events had from country to country in shaping the generational cohorts that lives through them (Schewe & Meredith 2004). South Africa is defined by its historic transformation pre- and post-1994 (Mosupyoe, 2014). Other important determinants are associated with the social,

formative, and economic circumstances such as the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and its socio-economic effects in the early 2000s (Booysen, Bachmann, Matebesi, & Meyer, 2004); and the dramatic societal shifts in South Africa that had influenced the dispersion of resources such the prominence of the black middle class in South Africa in the late 2000s (McArthur-Grill, 2011). Schwewe and Meredith (2006) concur that while many countries may experience the same defining global moments, socio-economic, cultural, geographical, religious, and political differences can profoundly change the impact these events have in each country. They further argued that both global and local defining moments all contribute to the development of shared values. Codrington (2008) contend that the generational theory can be applied in different countries and contexts only if generational groups are aligned closely to represent historical events and moments that closely define them. Examples of global and local defining moments are depicted on Table 3, 4 and 5 below.

2.5. Global and Local Defining moments

Table 3: Examples of Global Defining Moments

Event	**Date**
World War I	1914-1918
Great Depression	1920s and 30s
World War II	1941-45
Cold War and Threat of Nuclear War	1946-53
Advent of Television	1940s and 50s
Energy Crisis	1970s

Source: Schewe and Meredith (2004)

Table 4: Examples of Country-specific defining moments

Event	**Date**	**Country**
John Profumo Scandal	1963	U.K.
Nelson Mandela's Imprisonment and Release	1964 and 1990	South Africa
Cultural Revolution	1966-76	China
Six Day War	1967	Jordan, Israel and Egypt
Khmer Rouge Rule	1975-79	Cambodia and South East Asia
Assassination of Anwar Sadat	1981	Egypt
Falklands War	1982	U.K. and Argentina
Assassination of Olof Palme	1986	Sweden
Tiananmen Square Massacre	1989	China
Manuel Noriega's Arrest and Extradition to U.S.	1989	Panama
Japanese Economic "Bubble" Bursts	1991	Japan
Irish Legalization of Divorce	1995	Ireland

Source: Schewe and Meredith (2004)

Table 5: Examples of South African defining moments

Events	**Date**
The creation of the African National Congress (ANC) to defend black Africans rights and freedoms	1912
Promulgation of the notorious Land Act that pushed black people from their farms into cities and towns to work	1913
The First World War	1914-1919
The Second World War	1941-1945
The Afrikaners' National Party gain independence from British rule	1948
Apartheid (Separatism) was introduced	1950
Black nationalism and protest pass laws; ANC was also banned	1960
South Africa became a republic under white and National Party rule	1961
Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for life	1964
Protesting for better education by black students through the Soweto uprising	1976
The dismantling of the apartheid system	1990
First free and multi-racial elections that brought Mandela to power	1994

Source: Duh and Struwig, 2013

Table 4 and 5 above provide illustrations central to the arguments in the current study. These examples demonstrate that generational defining events and moments are unique to each nation. Schuman and Scott (1989) explains that individuals from the same generation may have the same collective memories, especially from their formative years of adolescence and young adulthood. When defining each generation, one must take into consideration not only the values of each cohort, but also the important events which have defined and shaped the generational cohorts (Duh & Struwig, 2013). Even when countries may experience the same defining moments such as the world wars or the great depression, several factors unique to each country (i.e., socio-economic, political, culture) could impact these events have for each nation (Schewe & Meredith, 2004). It then makes sense that both global and local defining moments could contribute to the development of shared values even when these differences in experiences do account for differences in patriotism and spirit among the same generations who come from different parts of the world. (Schewe & Meredith, 2004)

2.6. Describing generations currently in the workplace

2.6.1 Traditionalists

The traditionalists (1922-1945) are also known as “Veterans” or the “Silent Generation”. The great depression and World War II were critical events that shaped the mindset of this generation. Their core values may be impacted by the experiences during the Great depression and World War II such as the adherence to rules and conformity (Hayes, 2013). They lived in the world characterized by faith, patriotism, and justice. Traditionalists tend to have a strong work ethic and prefer an element of discipline in the workplace and remain committed in taking care of their communities (Hayes, 2011). At the workplace, there are few members of this generation present, most traditionalist have retired now, while others are approaching the retirement age (Mohr et al.,2011). Most of the Traditionalists were considered to have worked hard during their time, as a result, adequate provision was made for retirement (Jonck, Van de Walt & Sobayeni, 2017). The great depression experience may have caused this generation to plan for financial security. As a result, they are considered as the wealthiest of the four generation (Jones, 2014).

2.6.2 Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers (1946–1964) grew up in a period of change, with an emerging economy and parents coming home victorious from World War II (Nichols, 2011). During the 1940s all the way to the 1960s, a significant rise in birth-rates across the world was experienced following the post-World War II (Hayes, 2013). Consequently, the term “Baby Boomers” is used to represent extra seventeen million babies born during that period relative to previous census figures (Tolbize, 2008). The global defining moments for this cohort is the advent of television on the 1940s (Schewe, 2004); and the Universal declaration of human rights in 1948 (Howson, 2014). The South African cohort experienced the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, the rise of the black resistance movement from 1948 to 1960, the Soweto Uprising of 1976 (Jonck, Van de Walt and Sobayeni, 2017). Baby Boomers appears to have been exposed to a changing world where it was normal to challenge the established culture. This generation is probably known for reshaping corporate culture with casual dress codes and flexible schedules (Hayes, 2013). Members of this group have been characterized as individuals who believe that hard work and sacrifice are fundamental elements towards a successful career. They also tend to have a strong regard for teamwork, collaboration, and group decision-making (Tolzibe, 2008). Boomers are possibly more driven and tend to be very competitive, aspiring to higher monetary and professional titles, and more willing than others to sacrifice their personal lives for professional success (Mohr et al. 2011).

2.6.3 *Generation X*

Generation X (1965–1981) across the world grew up with a stagnant job market, corporate downsizing, and limited wage mobility (Tolbize, 2008). Due to this major life experience, members of Generation X tend to be more economically conservative than the previous generation due to witnessing their parents fall victim to layoffs, unemployment, and economic turmoil (Hayes, 2013). As such, they are more likely to leave employment with limited career development for better employment opportunities (Mohr et al.,2011). Eighty percent of 45 million Generation Xers are actively participating in the labour force, making them a prominent part of the current labour force (Nichols, 2011). Baby Boomers are often described as pessimistic, self-reliant and often fear commitment both on a personal and professional level (Hayes, 2013). They are also described as independent, self-directed, pragmatic and flexible (Mohr et al., 2011) Brought up in uncertain times, frequently by single parents, Generation X tend to be more practical, independent, and successful and believe that their overall success is dependent on the continuing education and skill development that will keep them employable throughout their lifespan (Hayes, 2013). Significant events for Generation X across the world was the global emergence of HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s in the United States. The South African population experienced an alarming rate of infections and its devastating effects of morbidity and mortality throughout the 2000s (Booysen et al.,2004). They were also the first cohort to experience the labour market regulatory codes such as the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997 in South Africa (McArthur-Gril,2011). Their preferred work environment tends to be casual and friendly and offer abundant opportunities for learning (Hayes, 2013). This cohort appears to achieve a balance between work and life are more independent, self-reliant, adaptable and seem to have a strong preference for flexible schedules than other generational groups (Tolbize, 2008).

2.6.4 Generation Y

Generation Y (1982–2000) also referred to as the “Millennials” or “Nexters” grew up during the time when everything was technologically connected with advanced innovations such as high-tech revolution of video games, ATMS and internet access (Hayes, 2013). They seem to be more connected to electronic communication, the virtual world and have broader opportunities for education and employment (Padayachee, 2017). One of the most frequently reported characteristics of this generation is their comfort with technology and social networking (Tolzibe, 2008).

Significant events experienced by Generation Y globally were September 11, the OJ Simpson murder trial and peace-keeping mission (Hayes, 2013). In South Africa they are probably the largest and diverse group that has overcome most of the socio-political barriers and changes (Tolbize, 2008). They are also often described to prefer flexible work practices and desire a more balanced life. Generation Y tend to value education, work-life balance, innovation, and diversity (Nichols, 2011).

2.7. Implications of generational diversity in the workplace

Results from past studies have revealed that the presence of different generations within the workplace could create challenges, especially in the aspect of management and the implementation of human resources practices (Jones, 2014). This is largely because individuals within these cohorts share external historical events or life experiences that took place during their formative years and contribute to differences in how they perceive their work environment (Jones, 2014). It has been suggested that these differences could make it difficult to manage the various generations when they co-exist in one organisation and often lead to different expectations and preferences (Van Der Linde, 2019). The generational differences that managers find challenging include attitudes, beliefs, values, work ethics, workplace perceptions and workplace expectations (Jones, 2014). Hillman (2014) discovered a significant relationship between generational cohorts and workplace conflict, largely created by generational work-value differences. Cogin (2012) reported that 58% of the managers (in companies with more than 500 employees) had described and reported conflict between younger and older workers, largely due their different perceptions of work ethics and work-life balance requirements (Hayes, 2013). Evidence from Weeks, Weeks and Long (2017) study showed that when diversity factors, such as age are managed effectively, benefits such as increased productivity, workforce cohesion, effective recruitment and improved leadership and succession planning, can be experienced. Van der Linde (2019) also found that there are differences between older and younger workers and found evidence for gradual changes over time in work-related variables. Evidence from time-lag and cross-sectional studies suggest that, despite several similarities, the generations in today's workplace differ not only in certain aspects of their personalities, but also in their work values (Lyons & Kuron, 2014); However, some generational studies have argued that there are no generational differences on certain work-related attributes and that the differences that appear may be attributed to other factors such chronological age, maturity or other individual differences rather than generational groups (Costanza et al.,2012).

Therefore, the current study seeks to add-in perspectives by assessing the relationship between the variables with the goal of obtaining a more nuanced understanding about the nature of the relationship between workplace flexibility and generations.

So far, this chapter has focused on the concept of generations and generational differences in the workplace, the following section will review findings on the workplace flexibility and its association with age-related factors and country culture.

2.8. Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility has traditionally been conceptualized as a set of human resources practices that enables employees to combine work and family responsibilities (Bal & De Lange, 2014). Contemporary perspectives on flexibility define it as the degree to which employees are able to make choices and arrange core aspects of their working lives (Hill et al., 2008). Other definitions by Hill et al (2008, p.152) define workplace flexibility as "the opportunity of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work related tasks". Kossek, Thompson and Lautsch (2015) use the term 'workplace flexibility' to refer to a formal or informal agreement between an employer and employee to provide individual job control over flexibility in timing, location, amount, and the ability to integrate organisational and personal needs. Research on workplace flexibility includes studies of work-family balance, maternity leave policies, telecommuting and use of technology, alternative work schedules and policies and work distribution and scheduling (Putnam et al., 2013).

Hill et al. (2008) suggests that flexibility is a comprehensive and multi-faceted concept that encompasses of variety of different things and meanings. It also considers discretion over where work is performed such as telecommuting, and the duration of work-related tasks such as part-time employment and options regarding of entry and departure from paid work such as career flexibility (Hill et al., 2008). This aspect of the definition emphasizes the importance of workplace flexibility in providing discretion and opportunities regarding how and when work is structured in the organisation, and the choice of employees to use such flexible work practices.

Literature reveals that workplace flexibility is conceptualized in two distinct ways. The first conceptualization is influenced by the organisational perspective and emphasizes flexibility on the part of the organisation with only secondary regard to employees. (Kossek, Thompson & Lautsch, 2015). This is seen when decisions about concrete

issues such as staffing models and career paths focus on ensuring organisational survival with less consideration for employee needs. By contrast, the worker perspective conceptualizes workplace flexibility as a degree to which employees can make choices to satisfy their personal needs, particularly regarding where, when, and for how long they will work (Hill et al., 2008). This perspective implicitly or explicitly conceptualizes workplace flexibility as the degree to which workers can make choices to arrange core aspects of their professional lives, particularly regarding where, when, and for how long work is performed (The Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, 2007).

The current paper defines flexibility according to the Center on Aging and Work at Boston College definition which defines workplace flexibility as: 'that employees and their supervisors have opportunities as well as some choice and control over decisions made about when, where, and how work gets done' (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, 2008, p 219). In this research I will examine four specific types of workplace flexibility as conceptualized by the Center on Aging and Work at Boston College. These are: flexibility in number of hours worked, flexibility in work schedule, flexibility in work location, and options to take time-off as defined below:

Ability to choose when workers engage in work-related tasks: This often relates to schedule flexibility. Schedule flexibility allows workers to modify their work schedules using a variety of formalized policies such as flexitime and compressed work that enable employee's flexibility in the arrangement of their daily work hours within a range of acceptable options (Hill et al., 2008)

Ability to choose where workers engage in work-related tasks: Location flexibility allows workers to choose where work-related tasks are completed and is often referred to as flexi-place (Hill et al., 2008). One way to offer flexibility to employees is to telecommute or work remotely from their traditional places of employment (generally from their homes), on a part-time or full-time basis in which employees are given the portable means to do their jobs and the freedom to choose what work venue would best meet work-related and personal needs. Recent changes in location flexibility across the world have been evident due to COVID-19 pandemic which has created an unprecedented workplace context in which a significant portion of the workforce have begun to work from home. This has also led to employees of all ages working remotely.

Ability to choose for how long workers engage in work-related tasks**:** there is increasing pressure for employers to allow employees to work part time in order to

meet work and family responsibilities (Hill et al., 2008). Ability to engage in part-time work provides employees with the flexibility to decided how long they engage in work (Baltes et al., 1999).

Flexibility In number of hours worked**:** This flexibility refers to options and opportunities provided by employer for the number of hours one works. Flexibility in number of hours worked offers employees to decide how much of work they want to conduct to modify their workload or hours to meet non-work obligation. It includes policies such as part time work and Job-sharing (Kossek, Thompson & Lautsch, 2015).

Flexibility In work schedules: This provides options regarding work schedule. Flexible work schedules enable employees to decide how they will allocate total working hours (Blažič, 2017). Flexibility in work schedule includes options in starting/ending times and opportunities regarding compressed work and shifts (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, & Besen, 2009). These options are viewed by employers as making maximum use of qualified labour whilst also acquiring and retaining talented workers (Eyck, 2003).

Flexibility In the work location: This flexibility provides options regarding the location or where to work (Blažič, 2017). Flexi-place includes being able to work from remotely and on- site or being able to occasionally change to preferred work location (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, & Besen, 2008). Flexible work locations are also promoted as a means of increasing job satisfaction (through reduced stress and travel time) and productivity (Eyck, 2003).

Options to Take time off: Employees are provided an opportunity to take time off, for either short or extended periods of time to meet responsibilities both at work and at home. Options for time off include paid leave for caregiving, personal or family responsibilities (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, & Besen, 2009).

2.9. Workplace flexibility Theories and Models

The concept of workplace flexibility has been well positioned across several theoretical perspectives such as ecological systems theory, family life course theory and other theories relating to Person-environment Fit (Hill et al.,2008). The most widely used theoretical model for workplace flexibility are the *ecological systems theory and family life course theory*. T*he ecological systems* theory postulates that the individual is best understood in the context of the interaction between the characteristics of the person and his or her environment. The family life course theory highlights the evolving

complexity of work over the course of one's life. This provides a critical perspective of the work life experience from a static experience between work and life to a more complex view of careers and lives as they unfold over historical, biological, and social time (Moen & Sweet, 2004). Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) further explain that this perspective can help explain differences in the relationship of workplace flexibility to various outcomes such as age and life stage.

2.9.1. Previous research on Generational difference, age-related factors and workplace flexibility

A survey conducted by Randstad (2008) found that flexible work hours are among the top three benefits employees identify as contributing to "happiness at the workplace," with more than 4 of every 10 of the employees indicating that flexible work hours and increased paid time off are important, just after competitive pay and health insurance. However, these rankings differed by generational groups (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, & Besen, 2009). The study shows that flexible work schedules ranked 4th among Gen Y employees, 3rd among the Gen X employees, 4th among Baby Boomers, and 3rd among the traditionalists.

Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa's (2008) examination of the relationship between workplace flexibility and other factors of employee engagement revealed that employees who utilize flexible work options are significantly more engaged than those who do not. These findings were consistent across all age groups. The results further revealed that among those who have flexibility, employees over the age of 45 were more engaged than their counterparts younger than 25. This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature on workplace flexibility by exploring these differences for different age groups. In addition, the study utilised a dataset that represents approximately 184,500 employees from 22 different organisations gathered over the period of eight years (from 1996 to 2004). For this reason, utilising a longitudinal study provided meaningful insights as to whether increased access to flexibility enables older workers to develop or retain resilience that helps them to extend their labour force participation.

Results from a study conducted by Roebuck, Smith and Haddaoui, (2013) suggest that Generation X and Y women have been a catalyst in making workplace flexibility an important business priority for organisations. The authors in this study examined how different genders viewed work-life balance (Generation X, Y and Baby Boomers) utilizing qualitative methods. Findings from the study specifically revealed that

workplace work-life balance is a challenge for all woman across all generational groups and reported that women struggle with finding a balance between personal and professional lives. While the current study examined gender differences using a quantitative survey instrument, the research was exclusively focused on differences between women across the generational groups, whilst limiting the overall understanding of generational differences for both males and females.

Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2019) also explored generational differences on workplace flexibility and noted that flexibility is no longer a women's issue but a generational and a societal concern. however, schedule flexibility was found to be a slightly higher priority among female employees. Radcliffe Public Policy Center with Harris Interactive (2000) also compared gender differences on workplace flexibility and concluded that the value men and women place on different flexible work options suggested that both women and men value flexibility. However, Hill et al., (2008) reported that women were more likely to highly value flexible work options than men. The female trend for highly valuing flexible work options is explained by Hill, Martinengo and Brennan (2008) who also found that couples and married women with young children are most likely to be interested in part-time work compared to their male and female counterparts, while unmarried, childless men were least likely to be interested. Their study showed that at every life stage woman valued almost every flexible work option more than men. Research on generational differences with emphasis on women's perception of flexible work options permits fundamental understanding on perceived difference. The current study therefore provides fundamental understanding of these difference not only in women but in both males and females across all generational groups. This will enable a broader understanding of theses perceptions in relation to different age groups, and how these may differ particularly on the South African sample.

Sánchez-Hernández et al. (2019) indicate that Millennials and Generation Z understand the need of the flexible work practices and give it greater importance than previous generations at work. Their study revealed that the millennials place priorities on factors related to workplace flexibility including compensation, benefits, and job security. Most often, the Generation Y and Millennials are described as having high expectations regarding flexible work arrangements as opposed to members of other generational groups (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010)

Bal and Dorenbosch (2014) explain that employers recognize the benefits of flexibility for older workers and workplace flexibility may have positive consequences for

organisational outcomes, such as sickness absence and turnover. Similar results were also reported by Lyons and Kuron (2014), who found that generation Y and Millennials tend to value greater flexibility at work, and thus maintaining a balance between work and other aspects in life, such as leisure. This is reflected in a greater need for options to have extended time-off from work, sabbaticals and flexible work schedules which provide younger generations more freedom in how and when they work. The authors critically reviewed research evidence on generational differences in a variety of work-related variables such as work value, attitudes, career expectations, teamwork, and work-life balance. Overall, the study does provide sufficient understanding pertaining generational difference as a work phenomenon. The current study will strive to take a specified approach by observing these differences by focusing on workplace flexibility.

In the Age and Generations Study conducted by Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa, and Besen (2009), over seventy-eight percent of respondents reported that having access to flexible work options contributes to their success as employees to a “moderate” or “great extent.” A majority of each of the age and generations group reported that having access to flexible work options contributes to their overall quality of life “to a great extent.” Employees between the ages of 36-52 were the most likely to indicate that workplace flexibility contributes to their success as an employee. Lyons and Kuron (2014), concluded in their review that the saliency of flexibility has increased over generations. They found that flexible work has become more important among younger generations, but at the same time study also reveal a curvilinear pattern, indicating that flexible work also becomes more important among older workers (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Aydemir, Dinc and Caglar (2016) investigated generational differences among traditionalists, baby boomers, generation X and generation Y in their preferences on work-life balance and work values. The analyses found that generational differences have an impact on workers values, but no differences were found on their preferences towards work life balance. Similar results from Klun (2008) also found that Generation X and Y give much more importance to work life balance comparing to older generations. These findings were also consistent with the results from cross-sectional study of hospitality workers from the Netherlands conducted by Lub et al. (2012) as cited in Lyon and Kuron (2014) showed increased importance of work–life balance between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, but a subsequent decrease with Generation Y.

When considering generational differences in the workplace, previous research seems to produce conflicting results regarding the extent to which generations differ not only in workplace flexibility but also in other work-related variables. (Rudolph, Rauvola, Costanza and Zacher,2020). While some studies have reported the importance of generations and its impact in the workplaces as reported above, some of the research studies found little or no support for generational differences (Mlodzik and De Meuse (2010). McCaffree (2007) provided similar viewpoint that stated the difference perceived among the different generational groups were not validated by empirical evidence, while the work-related variables in their study were found to be similar for all generational groups. Support for McCaffree (2007) viewpoint was provided by Lester, Standifer, Schultz and Windsor (2012) who mentioned that although many perceptions and assumptions exist for each generational cohort regarding how they might differ at work. They found that these studies have little empirical evidence that exists to substantially support its findings. Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt and Gade (2012) found on their meta-analysis examining generational differences on three work-related variables that the differences observed were found to be moderate and small, and almost zero in many instances. The authors also concluded that the small observed difference may be attributable to other factors such as age, tenure, career stage among other variables

In view of conflicting results found in the previous literature, the study sets out to further examine generational differences in the workplace that could lead to a valuable theoretical understanding.

2.10. Country and cultural influence on workplace flexibility

To better understand findings across groups of countries representing a range of cultural contexts (country and culture) and flexible employment practices, this study will apply Hofstede's (1980) framework to understand the conceptualization of national cultures to develop insights regarding why certain cultures are more likely to adopt or prefer certain flexible practices. The most common definition of culture in international management is by Hofstede (1980) who defined culture as a collective programming of the mind which differentiates the members of one family group from another. Culture, in this sense, encompasses systems of values which are the main building blocks of culture (Vaiman & Brewster, 2014). The idea of looking at cultural differences through empirically identifiable dimensions of national culture provides a

way to quantify cultural differences (Maseland & Van Hoorn, 2017). This approach led to an explosion of research relating numerical measures of cultural differences to numerous outcomes and phenomena (Hofstede, 2001). Vaiman and Brewster (2014) concur those cultural differences within and between countries affect the way businesses are practised and managed. This means that careful consideration of these cultural differences and sensitivities are crucial factors in the cross-cultural management of various generational groups in both national and multi-national companies.

In many ways, Hofstede (1980) provided a blueprint for studies of national culture. From a conceptual perspective, the frameworks provide an analysis of culture in terms of culture dimensions with specific focus on differences in national culture. Operationally, it relies on collective individual-level survey data to capture cross-national differences on these dimensions and cultural differences (Maseland & Van Hoorn, 2017). These dimensions have been widely used for both theory and research in international management (Raghuram, London & Larsen,2001); and has been widely utilised and followed by many researchers and literature to capture and measuring cultural differences (Maseland & Van Hoorn, 2017).

Workplace flexibility is increasingly a global phenomenon, with practices extended from highly developed countries to emerging or developing economies Since many studies on workplace flexibility have been conducted in developed/post-industrial societies that are centred on individualism. it is largely unknown to what extent these flexibility practices could be valued in developing economies or societies oriented toward collectivism (Lai, Besen, Sarkisian & Xu, 2020)

The framework by Hofstede is based on the premises that culture at the country level or national culture is about norms, beliefs, and values that distinguish one national community from another and are transmitted from one generation to the next (Maseland & Van Hoorn, 2017). From this view, he differentiated cultures as individualism versus collectivism. Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. individualistic cultures are self-oriented and value personal time, freedom, and challenges (Maseland & Van Hoorn, 2017). In organisations, individualism is manifested in a contractual relationship with an employer and a job that provides sufficient personal time. As its opposite, collectivism

pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups. Collectivism (or low individualism) is manifested in work unit solidarity, group responsibility for results, moralistic/family-like relationships with employers and the precedence of relationships over task. In such cultural orientations, workplace flexibility may not be valued as highly because it may hinder the group ethic (Hill et al., 2010). Among European countries, Hofstede (1991) found Great Britain, Italy and Belgium were high on individualism and Turkey, Finland and Switzerland were high on collectivism (Maseland & Van Hoorn, 2017)

Raghuram, London and Larsen (2001) concur that an understanding of the relationship between human resource practices and country culture is important for human resource professionals to develop and adopt culturally appropriate practices. The researchers investigated the extent to which variances in flexible employment practices across fourteen European countries may be attributed to cultural variances. Data were gathered through a survey of human resource practices in 4,876 companies. The results indicate that national differences between flexible employment practices were explained by cultural differences. The study found that the use of part-time work, contract work and shift work were related to individualism. The analyses found that Spain leads the European countries in its use of flexible work options while greatest proportion of teleworkers are to be found in Norway and Sweden. Translating to the notion of workplace flexibility, employees' understanding of work, their approach to it and the way they expect to be treated are factors most directly influenced by the values and norms of their country. Therefore, compared to any of the organisational functions, human resource management practices such as workplace flexibility are most likely to be influenced by culture-specific procedures, local regulations and norms Raghuram, London & Larsen (2001).

Aycan (2008) found that organisations around the world have increasingly utilized flexible employment practices to reduce labour costs, increase market share, increase employee retention, and attract a desirable human resources pool. The authors examined country differences in the use of flexible employment practices that may be attributed to cultural differences using large sample data collected from fourteen countries in Europe. They found that the adoption of any flexible employment practice was dependent on factors such as the economic, cultural differences and employment practices present in the related country.

In many European countries there has been an increasing trend to protect and enhance the rights of working parents (mothers in particular) and as a result in some countries, including the UK, employees have a statutory right to request flexible working (SABPP,2018).

A study conducted by Lai, Besen, Sarkisian and Xu (2020) examined cross-national differences in workplace flexibility between the U.S. and China. Data from 2,688 employees in three multinational organisations demonstrated that Chinese viewed workplace flexibility as less important, perceived fewer benefits and more costs associated with its use, and reported less access to and use of flexibility than Americans. The study concluded that workplace flexibility policies may produce different results in countries with different levels of industrialization (developed vs. emerging) and cultural orientation (individualism-collectivism) and suggested that such policies should be customized to improve their congruence with national contexts (Lai et al., 2020).

Another cross-national study on workplace flexibility as reported by Hill et al., (2010) explored the influence of workplace flexibility on work-life conflict from a sample of 24, 436 workers in 75 countries. They specifically examined flexibility in where (work-at-home) and when (perceived schedule flexibility) workers engage in work-related tasks. These findings were generally consistent across all four groups of countries, supporting the case that workplace flexibility is beneficial both to individuals (in the form of reduced work-life conflict) and to businesses (in the form of capacity for longer work hours). However, flexi-place was found to be less beneficial in countries with collectivist cultures

According to Brett, Tinsley, Janssens, Barsness, and Lyttle (1997) culture can influence flexible work practices. Researchers observing cultural influences adopt a perspective that observes mean-level differences in workplace flexibility to cultural variations. This approach acknowledges that constructs may be related in an irregular way across cultures.

The research on workplace flexibility and related variables within the South African context is fairly limited in comparison to vast body of research conducted internationally (Mazibuko & Govender, 2017). However, there were few studies that provided some useful information on flexible work practices in South Africa. For

example, a study conducted by Conradie and De Klerk (2019) that assessed the availability and the use of flexible work practices, and its perceived advantage from an employee's perspective found that flexible work arrangements were perceived to be beneficial by employees and their respective organisations. In South Africa, leading employers have recognised the benefits of flexible work options for both the organisation and employees and have introduced different forms of flexible work practices. The organisation case studies published each year emphasise flexible work practices as part of the recommended approach In South Africa (SABPP,2018). The current study intends to provide insights about employee's perceived flexible work practices more essentially across the respective generational groups. This will also enable more nuanced perspectives in relation to the current flexible work practices that may be perceived as important by employees of different age groups as well as the implications of these differences for both the employees and the organisations.

2.11. Literature Review Summary

In summary, the literature review provided a rich overview of generational differences and workplace flexibility in the workplace. Overall, there is some evidence to indicate that studies of generational differences have gathered increasing interest amongst organisations and researchers in recent years. Previous research has examined differences between the generational cohorts in terms of work values and other work-related variables such as job engagement (Eletter, Sulieman & AlNaji 2017); and engagement (Pitt-Catasouphes,2008.) However, it is evident from the literature that most of the previous research applies to Western settings (Eletter, Sulieman & AlNaji, 2017). There is still little academic research focusing on workplace flexibility and different generations specifically in South Africa. Considering the above, the purpose of this study is to examine generational differences in workplace flexibility and the extent to which these differences vary across country culture.

Following a review of previous research and literature, the current study intends to answer the following research questions

2.12. Research questions

1. Is there a relationship between age and workplace flexibility across four generational groups within a multinational sample?

2. Is there a relationship between age and workplace flexibility across four generational groups within the South African sample?
3. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age and generational cohorts within the multinational sample?
4. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age and generational cohorts within the South African Sample?
5. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on country?
6. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on country culture (Individualistic/Collectivist)?

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a description of the research design, population and sampling, research instruments, data collection, research analysis, trustworthiness, limitations of the study and ethical considerations for the current study.

3.2. Research Design

Research design according to Ranganathan and Aggarwal (2018), refers the set of methods and procedures utilised by the researcher to collect and analyse data to address a particular research problem. In other words, the research design is the "overall" plan for answering the research question or hypothesis (Boru,2018). The research design used in the present study was a quantitative, non-experimental, cross sectional and correlational research design.

The study was quantitative as it involved the utilization and analysis of numerical data through the application of statistical techniques to answer the research questions (Apuke,2017). Quantitative research adapts objective, rigorous and systematic strategies for generating and refining knowledge (Sousa, Driessnack & Mendes, 2007). A correlational design, refer to the systematic investigation of the nature of the relationship between dependent and independent variables. Correlations are typically cross sectional and non-experimental. The cross-sectional nature of the study refers to the notion that the researcher measured the observed phenomena at one point in time (Rindfleisch et al.,2008). The study was also cross sectional as data from the initial sample was extracted at one point in time and each respondent completed a questionnaire only once during the period of data collection. The non-experimental nature of the research design refers to the notion that there was no random assignment, manipulation of variables, or comparison groups. Instead, the researchers observed what occurred naturally without intervening (Sousa, Driessnack and Costa Mendes, 2007). It should be noted that due to the nature of this design, there was no opportunity to make inferences on causal relationships between the variables of interest.

3.3. Sample and Sampling

The initial research by The Sloan Center on Aging and Work conducted at the actual workplaces of employees in 7 multinational companies across 11 different countries in Asia, Africa, South America, North America, and Europe. In total, 24 worksites in 11 countries participated in the study, and 11,298 individual employees responded to the survey. Employees were invited to complete one 30-minute online survey during work time which they were able to access on a secure website. The survey was translated to Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Brazilian Portuguese, and Spanish. Surveys were conducted both online and in a written format. The majority of organisations opted to complete the surveys online, with some employees who elected to complete the written questionnaires.

The survey focused on employees' perceptions of their work experiences, workplace-based resources, demographic information, and their assessments of their health and wellbeing at work and in their lives in general.

The sampling strategy utilised was non-probability convenience sampling. The non-probability technique was utilized because not every element of the population would have an opportunity to partake in the study which can therefore limit the generalisability of the findings (Creswell, 2009). Likewise, participating in the study was strictly voluntary and relied on the willingness and availability of individuals.

In my current study, the final sample consisted of 11298 employees of a multinational company across 11 different countries. The gender distribution was skewed towards males, who accounted for 69.0% (n = 7785) of the respondents, while 31.0% (n = 3507) of the sample were females and "other" 0.05%. The age composition of the sample ranged from 17-65 with a sample age mean of *37.53* and standard deviation of 9.78. Unsurprisingly, the bulk of the participants, 68.3%, were a part of Generation X (n=5602), followed by Baby Boomers at 24.4% (n=1883), then Generation Y at 7.3% (n=718) and finally by Traditionalists (n=55) .With respect to race/ethnicity of the South African sample, the majority of the sample consisted of White respondents who accounted for 53.7% (n=136), followed by black 21.7% (n=55), then 'Coloureds' 16.2% (n=41) and lastly, Indian or Asian 7.9% (n=20). With respect to company and Industry, the highest industry was Pharmacy 2 at 48% (n=5395) followed Consulting1

at 22% (n=2536), Technology at 10% (n=1133), Pharmacy1 at 7% (n=786) Consulting2 at 5% (n=572) and Finance Energy at 5% (n=521).

Participants were required to have a job, part-time or full-time, to be able to participate in this research due to the nature of the current research that specifically studied individuals in the workplace. 95% of the participants were employed full-time (n =10798), part-time students were 2.1% (n=247), “others” at 0.73% (n=83) and 1.54% (n=175) missing responses. The study also required participants to describe the nature of their work schedule. The majority of the sample worked daytime schedule shift with 70% (n=7968), followed by a flexible, variable or on-call schedule at 19% (n=2160), a split shift at 7% (n=772) a rotating shift at 3% n=234 and an evening/night shift at 0.2% (n=28). When it comes to education, 24% (n=2708) of individuals within the sample had a graduate degree and 40% (n=4442) had no graduate degree.

With regards to country participation, Japan dominated the sample with 24% (n=2673), followed by Brazil at 14% (n=1549), China at 13% (n=1532), Mexico 11% (n=1268), United states 10% (n=1156), Netherlands 7% (n=755), Spain 6% (n=725), India 5% (n=611), United Kingdom 5% (n=503), South Africa 3% (n=388), Botswana 2% (n=133). The demographic characteristics of the study are summarised in Appendix F.

3.4. Instruments

3.4.1. Demographic Questionnaire (See Appendix A)

A questionnaire was administered and distributed to the participants to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample. Participants were asked to complete demographic questions to identify their sex, age, race/ethnicity, highest level of education, country, company type, type of Job, employment type (full-time/Part-time. These variables will be used for intergroup comparisons.

3.4.2 Workplace Flexibility (See Appendix B)

The instrument that was used to assess workplace flexibility was adapted from The Center on Aging and Work at Boston College’s operationalization and definition of workplace flexibility. Workplace flexibility is defined as meaning: ‘that employees and their supervisors have opportunities as well as some choice and control over decisions made about when, where, and how work gets done’ (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa &

Besen, 2009, p.4). This operationalization places workplace flexibility in four categories which are described in detail below.

3.4.3 Workplace Flexibility 4 items constructs

1. Flexibility In number of hours worked: For example, varying the beginning and ending times of the workday (either occasionally or frequently); working a compressed schedule such as four 10-hour days. Options in work hours: Flexible hours was measured by a single item (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa & Besen, 2009). An example of an item from the scale includes "How important are the following to you? Flexibility in the number of hours worked, such as part-time work or part-year work? In the current study, Cronbach alpha coefficient reported for subscales was .76
2. Flexibility In work schedules: Flexible work schedule was measured by a single item. An example of an item from the scale includes "How important are the following to you? Flexible work schedules, such as changes in starting and quitting times or choices about shifts (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa & Besen, 2009). Cronbach alpha coefficient reported for subscales was .76
3. Flexibility In the work location: Flexible work location was measured by a single item. An example of an item from the scale includes "How important are the following to you? Flexible place, such as being able to work from home or at a different worksite (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa & Besen, 2009). Cronbach alpha coefficient reported for subscales was .76
4. Options to Take time off: Options for time off was measured by a single item. An example of an item from the scale includes "How important are the following to you? Options for time off, such as paid/unpaid leave for dependent care or paid/unpaid sabbatical (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa & Besen, 2009). Cronbach alpha coefficient reported for subscales was .76

The assessment tool used in the initial study for assessing flexibility for all subscales consisted of 6-point Likert-type based scale with items ranging 1= "very unimportant"; 2=" Moderately unimportant"; 3=" Somewhat unimportant"; 4= "Somewhat important"; 5= "Moderately important"; 6=" Very important" (Pitt-Catsouphes, Matz-Costa & Besen, 2009). In the current study, Cronbach's alphas of .82 for the total instrument tool was found. For the specific sub-scales, the reliability ranged between 0.73 and 0.81 which included flexibility in the number of hours ($\alpha = 0.80$), flexibility in work location ($\alpha = 0.75$), flexibility in work schedules ($\alpha = 0.73$), and options to take time off

(α = 0.81). A general accepted rule is that reliability of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8 or greater a very good level (Ursachi, Horodnic & Zait, 2015). For the current study, scales that were above 0.7 were deemed as acceptable and suitable in running the analysis.

The initial study as described above consisted of four flexibility scales. In the current study, all four scales were combined into one flexibility scale to measure workplace flexibility against the four generational cohorts.

Table 6 below summarises the reliability scores obtained for overall scale.

Table 6: Reliability Scores for workplace flexibility

Workplace Flexibility	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Workplace Flexibility	.823

3.5. Other measures

3.5.1. Generations

Generations: Generations were coded as the year in which the respondents in sample were born by subtracting their average age from the year in which data was collected. Data was split into generations by a decade, resulting in four generations (See table 7 below).

Table 7: Generations

Generations	**Year of birth**
Traditionalists	1918-1945
Baby Boomers	1946-1965
Generation X	1966-1984
Generation Y	1985-2001

Source: (Codrington and Grant Marshall, 2006:19 as cited in Van Der Linde (2019)

South African Generations

Findings from the literature review have indicated due to the uniqueness of the South African history that is defined by transformations pre- and post-1994 (Mosupyoe, 2014); as well as additional influences that create unique generational classifications. The author argued that it is therefore problematic to use the generic or international classifications to manage or understand generations. Statistics South Africa (n.d.)

reported that changes and experiences between generations throughout the centuries have been affected by the choices to different generations in terms of access to opportunities and market participation. In the present study, the data was split to represent the South African sample by subtracting the year of birth with the year in which data was collected and recoded. The data resulted into four generational groups (See table 8 below). The current study defined generational groups according to the western terminologies (i.e., Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y).

Table 8: South African Generations

Generational Timeline.		
1950-1969	**1970-1989**	**1990-2005**
Baby Boomers	**Generation X**	**Generation Y**

Source (Codrington and Grant-Marshall, 2006:19 as cited in Van Der Linde (2019)

3.6. Country Culture

The covariates in this study included country culture. These variables were selected because they have been shown to be related to employees' access to flexible work options (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2009). To better understand findings across groups of countries representing a range of cultural contexts the study used the theory developed by Hofstede (1980) (See above literature review) to code the country of residence of the respondents as a nominal categorical variable. Data of a total of 11 countries were available for the analysis, namely, United Kingdom, China, India, Brazil, Japan, Netherlands, Mexico, Spain, South Africa and Botswana. The country culture groupings were done following the schema used by Hofstede (1980). Specifically, Individualistic countries were grouped together and divided into two groupings, namely, as individualist and collectivist countries. These groupings were based on the individualism and collectivism points available from the Hofstede website (See Appendix C). Botswana values for individualism /collectivism were not available therefore we decided to closely code in a similar rating as South Africa because they form part of the same region (Africa). Table 9 below shows a summary of Individualism and collectivism country groupings as per the Hofstede values.

According to the Hofstede (1980), scores above 60 indicates high levels of Individualism and low scores are indicative of Collectivism.

Table 9: Individualism and collectivism groupings

Individualism scores	**Collectivism scores**
United States (91)	India (48)
United Kingdom (89)	Brazil (38)
South Africa (65)	Japan (46)
Netherlands (80)	Mexico (30)
Botswana (65)	Spain (51)
	China (20)

3.7. Procedure

In the current study, I used open access data that has already been collected to answer the research questions. Open access is a publishing model for scholarly communication that makes access available to researchers at no cost (Baruah,2010). The sample data was downloaded from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). The current research was limited to items of interest that were suitable to conduct the current study and answer the main research questions.

Data collection for the initial study occurred in two stages. In the first phase, the multi-national employers were identified and recruited from the pool of organisations who expressed interest in issues related to aging and work. Most of these organisations had previous relationship with the Center and suggested by research collaborators.

To qualify as an eligible employer for participation, the organisation needed to meet the following criteria:

- a) The organisation is a multinational business that operates worksites in a minimum of 3 different countries.
- b) The organisation has enough employees (estimated at 900), that at least 300 employees at each participating worksite could be engaged in the study, assuming the response rate to be around 33%.
- c) The organisation is willing to translate, if necessary, the employee survey and information letters into the primary language spoken at each worksite.

The Second phase consisted of employees currently working at the participating employer sites and were invited for participation via direct contact from the Center. Although each employer determined specific strategies for recruitment, most

employers preferred to use a population sample and provided contact information (such as email addresses) for all their employees to participate.

The first phase of data collection included registration to use and access data from Inter-University Consortium for political and Social Research (ICPSR) database. The website required researchers to complete an online registration form that requested personal information such the researcher's name, identification number and affiliations. The second phases included a confirmation of registration sent via a registered email address. Once registration was completed and confirmed, a link pertaining access to the ICPSR database was sent. The last phase included accessing the archives on the database and downloading the data and associated files on password protected computer.

3.8. Data Analysis

Before data was analysed, it was important to establish a systematic approach in handling and analysing the data. Since the current study utilised a pre-existing dataset from an online database, that was already coded and saved as SPPS file, further steps were taken to clean the data and recode variables that were of interest to the researcher. The next phase entailed analysis of all scales utilised pertaining the reliability of the scales and to ensure consistency across the measuring instrument (Taherdoost, 2016). To analyse the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics were carried out to represent and analyse the demographics characteristics of the respondents in a more meaning way. Inferential statistics relating to correlations and Kruskal-Wallis were carried out to analyse quantitatively collected data to answer the research questions and hypothesis. The statistical analysis techniques utilised in this study are described in detail in the next section.

3.9. Reliability Analysis

Kothari (2017) stated that validity and reliability are important tests that must be met by any research design. Reliability refers to the extent to which the instruments provide consistent results across repeated measurements (Mohajan, 2017). Reliability measures consistency, precision, repeatability, and trustworthiness of a research (Mohajan, 2017). A general accepted rule is that reliability of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8 or greater a very good level (Ursachi, Horodnic and Zait, 2015). For the current study, scales that were above 0.7 were deemed as

acceptable. To assess homogeneity (internal consistency), the current study used the Cronbach alpha coefficient (α) to evaluate the extent to which all items of the scale measure the same construct (Varela et al.,2020). An instrument's internal consistency is based on the correlation between different items of the same test. This correlation indicates if several items are supposed to measure the same construct to produce similar scores (Ursachi, Horodnic, Adriana & Zait, 2015). Coefficient alpha is the best estimate of reliability because most major sources of error are due to the sampling of instrument contents (Bannigan & Watson, 2009)

3.9.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are commonly used to summarize the characteristics of a data set in an organised manner by describing the relationship between variables in a sample population (Kaur, Stoltzfus & Yellapu, 2018). Calculating descriptive statistics represents a vital step in providing a foundation for comparing variables with inferential statistical tests (Kaur, 2018). Descriptive statistics carried out in this study includes measures of frequency, central tendency, and dispersion (i.e., the mean and standard deviation). In addition, histograms, skewness, and Kurtosis coefficients were conducted to assess whether the observed dataset was acceptably close to normal or fell within the appropriate ranges for normal distribution. Normally distributed data produces a skewness and kurtosis of about zero or very close to zero (Brown, 1997). Skewness coefficients between -1.0 and +1.0 is acceptable, while Kurtosis coefficients between -3.0 and + 3.0 is acceptable.

3.9.2. Spearman's Correlation Coefficients

The current study used the correlation analyses to explore the degree of association between the independent and dependent variables (Senthilnathan,2019). Correlations between variables can be measured with the use of different coefficients. The three most popular are: Pearson's coefficients (***r***), Spearman's rho coefficients (***r***), and Kendall's tau coefficients. (Hauke, & Kossowski, 2011). The current study used the Spearman correlation coefficient also referred to as spearman's rank correlation or spearman's rho. The decision to use Spearman's rho was motivated by the premises that it is a non-parametric test that can be used in many cases where the assumptions of Pearson's Correlations are markedly violated. These assumptions include linearity, heteroscedasticity, and normal distribution (Lani, 2010), as this was the case with the current research study in which normal distribution was significantly violated. The two assumptions that underpin the Spearman's correlation specify that

two variables should be measured on an ordinal or continuous scale. In this instance, the test was specifically used to assess the strength of association between age (continuous variable) and flexibility (ordinal).

Spearman's correlations are a non-parametric test that measure the strength of the relationship between variables (Lani, 2010). A correlation coefficient of .00 signifies that no relationship exists between variables. (Mukaka, 2012), Based on direction, the coefficients measure can be categorised as positive, zero or negative correlation (Senthilnathan,2019). A positive correlation indicates that the variables are directly related (i.e., as the value of one variable increase or decreases, the other variable moves in the same direction), on the other hand, a negative correlation indicates that the variables are inversely related (i.e., as the value of one variable increase or decreases, the other variable moves in an opposite magnitude (Mukaka, 2012).

3.9.3. Kruskal-Wallis

A Kruskal-Wallis is a non-parametric equivalent of a one-way ANOVA used to test for differences between several independent groups (Mehotcheva, 2008). The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) compares normal distribution curves of data sets, these curves need to be similar to each other in shape and width for the comparison to be valid (Sawyer, 2009), this is referred to the homogeneity of variance within each group. The current study explored the Levene's test for equality to assess the null hypothesis that the variances across the observed groups are similar and homogenous to conduct the ANOVA. The probability of the ***F*** statistic (significance value) was less than.05, therefore the condition of homogeneity of variance was violated.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

According to Suri (2008), the protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is fundamental in any research undertaken. In the initial study conducted by The Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, all participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality by not revealing their names and identity in the actual data collection, analysis, and reporting. ICPSR further managed confidentiality and privacy by not revealing participants identifying information such as their full names and personal identification numbers. This provided the researcher with the inability of linking information to a particular participant, therefore the data was not sensitive and had minimal risk pertaining individual privacy and confidentiality. The ICPSR website in which the data was downloaded specifies privacy regulations for

both the researchers regarding data distributions and sharing (See Appendix D). In the current study, the ethical considerations were considered to comply with the ICPSR agreement procedures and terms of use. The ethical approval to use the dataset was sought and approved through the following phases: The first phases involved accessing ICPSR website and registering researcher details to gain access to the database. The registration phase was free and required the researcher to "agree" to strict terms of use and agreement to comply with the requirements associated with the redistribution of data, privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent prior to accessing and downloading the dataset (See Appendix D). Registration was also free to all ICSPR affiliates, of which the University of Witwatersrand is a member organisation. Each aspect was effectively monitored by the researcher to ensure adherence to the website rules and regulations such as confirmation of member organisations and agreement to terms of use, therefore no permission letter was required to access the database. The second phase involved downloading the dataset and safely saving it in a password-protected computer to ensure that only the researcher had access to the dataset. The current study obtained ethics clearance from the School of Human and Community Development Ethics Committee at the University of Witwatersrand and signed by approved authorities, to grant permission to proceed with the study and confirm that any anticipated problems and potential risks have been reported to the ethics committee.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1. Introduction

In the chapter that follows, a description of statistical results obtained from the analysis of data collected is presented. Statistical analyses were carried out using IBM SPSS version 24. Data analysis involved an assessment of abnormalities in the data sample by running descriptive statistics and frequencies. The second stage involved assessing normality to make decisions regarding the appropriate tests to conduct. A non-parametric correlation was conducted to assess the strength of the relationship between age and flexibility. This was followed by a conducting a Kruskal-Wallis to determine whether there are any associations between generational groups on the dependent variable.

4.2. Descriptive statistics and test for data normality

Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed to determine the relationship between age, generational cohorts and workplace flexibility. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients and histograms were used to determine normality. Measures of skewness help us know the degree and direction (positive or negative) of the distribution departs from asymmetry. Normal distribution produces a skewness between -1.0 and 1.0, while kurtosis between -3.0 and + 3.0 is acceptable for normal distribution. Assessing the normality assumption was necessary to decide whether a parametric or non-parametric test needs to be used (ORCAN, 2020). A normality test is used to determine whether sample data was drawn form a normally distributed population. If the assumption of normality is not valid, the results of the tests will be unreliable. The assumption for normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for this current study. Table 10 below provides normality tests conducted representing the workplace flexibility scale and generational groups in the sample.

Table 10: Tests of Normality

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Generations	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Flex_M	Traditionalist	.201	8	.200*	.883	8	.200

	Baby Boomers	.096	429	.000	.960	429	.000
	Generation X	.095	1337	.000	.957	1337	.000
	Generation Y	.101	156	.000	.931	156	.000

The table above provides normality results for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and the Shapiro test. The results obtained suggests strong evidence for non-normality because the significant value depicted as "**sig."** is below 0.05 for baby boomers, Generation X and Y, suggesting that this data significantly deviates from a normal distribution, therefore the assumption of normality was violated. However, a normally distributed data was reported for Traditionalist and the dependent variable as the **sig.** value of both tests is greater than 0.05.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics- Flexibility and Generations

	Generations			Statistic	Std. Error
Flex_M	Traditionalist	Mean		3.4063	.50651
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	2.2085	
			Upper Bound	4.6040	
		5% Trimmed Mean		3.4653	
		Median		3.7500	
		Variance		2.052	
		Std. Deviation		1.43264	
		Minimum		1.00	
		Maximum		4.75	
		Range		3.75	
		Interquartile Range		2.63	
		Skewness		-.646	.752
		Kurtosis		-.992	1.481
	Baby Boomers	Mean		4.5012	.04970
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.4035	
			Upper Bound	4.5989	
		5% Trimmed Mean		4.5547	
		Median		4.5000	

	Variance		1.060	
	Std. Deviation		1.02950	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		6.00	
	Range		5.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.50	
	Skewness		-.571	.118
	Kurtosis		.010	.235
Generation X	Mean		4.5763	.02612
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.5250	
		Upper Bound	4.6275	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.6276	
	Median		4.7500	
	Variance		.912	
	Std. Deviation		.95515	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		6.00	
	Range		5.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.25	
	Skewness		-.675	.067
	Kurtosis		.577	.134
Generation Y	Mean		4.7228	.07557
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	4.5735	
		Upper Bound	4.8720	
	5% Trimmed Mean		4.7849	
	Median		4.7500	
	Variance		.891	
	Std. Deviation		.94381	
	Minimum		1.00	
	Maximum		6.00	
	Range		5.00	
	Interquartile Range		1.50	
	Skewness		-.948	.194
	Kurtosis		1.874	.386

The degree of normality was used to assess whether data was normally distributed. The results above indicate that the scores coefficients for the main variables were negatively skewed suggesting that the participants in the initial study selected the

highest points on the workplace flexibility and generation cohorts. Both kurtosis coeffects skewness coefficients for all variables indicated that the variables were non-normal. Traditionalists reported an average mean of (*M*=3.40; SD= .50), with a with kurtosis coeffects of -.99 and skewness coefficients of -.64. Baby Boomers reported an average mean of (*M*=4.50; SD= 1.02), with a with kurtosis coeffects of .01 and skewness coefficients of -.57. Generation X reported an average mean of (*M*=4.57; SD= .95), with a with kurtosis coeffects of .57 and skewness coefficients of -.67 and Generation Y reported an average mean of (*M*=4.72; SD= .94), with a with kurtosis coeffects of 1.87 and skewness coefficients of -.94

The scale histogram showed a negatively skewed distribution for the above variables (See Figure 1-4). The assumption of normality was violated; therefore, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the four generational cohorts on each of the four total scores representing the workplace flexibility scale. After the data was regarded as non-normal, the non-parametric test was conducted to answer the following research questions:

4.3. Analysis relating to the research questions

4.3.1. Research questions

1. Is there a relationship between age and workplace flexibility?
2. Is there a relationship between age and workplace flexibility across four generational groups within the South African sample?
3. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age and generational cohorts within the multinational sample?
4. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age and generational cohorts within the South African Sample?
5. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on country?
6. Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on country culture (Individualistic/Collectivist)?

The analyses used to address these questions, along with any concurrent analyses required, are presented below. These include analysis directed at addressing research question one and the Kruskal Wallis test employed for research question one and two. Whilst the original intention was to use an analysis of variance test in relation to the

second research questions, the reasons for opting for the non-parametric equivalent are presented in the relevant section

4.4. Correlation

As an initial investigation into the nature of the relationship existing between age and flexibility. Spearman's correlation coefficients were run. The Spearman's rho revealed a statistically significant and negative relationship between workplace flexibility and age (r=-.05, p=.029). The results demonstrate that employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age. However, a Spearman's correlation specifically for the South African sample with regards to age and flexibility revealed a non-significant and weak relationship (r=.118, p=0.325).

Table 12 and 13 below correlation overview matrix obtained for Age and flexibility for both the South African sample and multinational sample.

Table 12: Spearman's correlation coefficients summary for Age and Flexibility

Correlations

			fLEX_Scale	Age
Spearman's rho	fLEX_Scale_Age	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.050*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.029
		N	2456	1929

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 13: Spearman's correlation coefficients summary for South African Age and Flexibility

Correlations

			Age	fLEX_Scale
Spearman's rho	Age_Flexi_Scale	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.118
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.325
		N	288	72

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.5. Generations and Flexibility

To determine whether there are any statistical differences between different generational groups and their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted since the data distribution violated the assumptions

of homogeneity to proceed with the analysis of variance (See relevant section for normality results). A Kruskal-Wallis test provided strong evidence of a difference ($p < 0.001$) between the mean ranks of the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (See table 14 and 15). Dunn's pairwise tests (post-hoc) were carried for the four pair of groups. There was strong evidence ($p < 0.001$), adjusted using the Bonferroni correction of a difference between Traditionalist and Generation Y. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs

Table 14: Generations and Flexibility

Ranks

	Generations	N	Mean Rank
Flex_M	Traditionalist	8	493.13
	Baby Boomers	429	933.89
	Generation X	1337	968.03
	Generation Y	156	1054.99
	Total	1930	

Table 15: Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Flex_M
Kruskal-Wallis H	11.260
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	.010

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Generations

4.5.1 SA Generations and Flexibility

It was also important to run the Kruskal-Wallis test for the South African sample to to determine any statistical differences between the South African generational groups and their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility. The results indicated that no significant differences ($p > 0.001$) were found between the mean ranks of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (See table 16 and 17)

Table 16: South African Generations and Flexibility

Ranks

	Generations	N	Mean Rank

Flex_M	Baby Boomers	32	37.20
	Generation X	35	38.31
	Generation Y	6	28.25
	Total	73	

Table 17: Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Flex_M
Kruskal-Wallis H	1.177
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.555

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Generations

4.6. Flexibility and Country

To determine whether there are any statistical differences between different countries groups and their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted and provided strong evidence of a difference ($p < 0.001$) between the mean ranks of various countries in the sample (See table 18 and 19). Dunn's pairwise tests (post-hoc) were carried for the eleven pair of groups. There was strong evidence ($p < 0.001$), adjusted using the Bonferroni correction of a difference between Japan and Spain, Mexico, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States, Botswana, Brazil, and India. There was also strong evidence $p < 0.001$), between China, Spain. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs.

Table 18: Flexibility and Country

Ranks

	Country	N	Mean Rank
Flex_M	U.S.	277	1377.70
	U.K.	94	1340.43
	China	350	1057.16
	India	137	1504.39
	Brazil	371	1445.86
	Japan	636	984.13
	Netherlands	43	1241.78
	Mexico	308	1312.52

	Spain	122	1305.57
	South Africa	88	1323.10
	Botswana	34	1400.37
	Total	2460	

Table 19: Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Flex_M
Kruskal-Wallis H	176.228
Df	10
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Country

4.7. Flexibility and Individualism

To determine whether there are any statistical differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures regarding their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility, a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was no statistical significant difference ($p > 0.001$) between the mean ranks of Individualist versus Collectivist countries (See table 20 and 21).

Table: 20: Flexibility and Individualism

Ranks

	Country Culture	N	Mean Rank
Flex_M	Individualism	536	941.34
	Collectivism	1288	900.50
	Total	1824	

Table 21: Test Statistics

Test Statistics[a,b]

	Flex_M
Kruskal-Wallis H	2.295
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.130

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Country_Culture

4.8 Conclusion and Summary

The results presented in this chapter revealed the following:

- A significant but weak relationship between workplace flexibility, age, and generations.
- The South African sample revealed a non-significant relationship between workplace flexibility, age and generations.
- To determine whether there are any statistical differences between different generational groups and their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility, A relationship was observed between Traditionalist and Generation Y. There was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs regarding their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility.
- For the South African Sample, there was no significant difference between the mean ranks of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y in their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility
- To determine whether there are any statistical differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures regarding their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility, there was no statistical difference between the mean ranks of Individualist versus Collectivist countries

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the research findings. This chapter will first outline the purpose of the study, then a description of demographic information of study participants will be discussed. The chapter moves to a discussion of the statistical findings of the main results and whether these supported or contradicted previous research. Lastly, the limitations of the current study will be highlighted, and the recommendations for future research will also be made. The overall conclusion of the report will be presented at the end.

5.2. Overview of study

The purpose of the study was to examine generational differences in workplace flexibility and the extent to which generational differences vary by country culture. The notion of generational differences in the workplace had recently emerged as an area of interest that has been widely studied by modern researchers, mainly because generational differences are thought to influence the behaviour and attitude of employees in the workplace (Wey Smola & Sutton, 2002). The largest diversity of generations is represented in today's workplace than any other time in history (Glass, 2007). At present, four generations are working together in organisations across the world. These include Baby Boomers (born between 1943 and 1962), Generation X (born between 1963 and 1983), Generation Y (born between 1984 and 2001), and Traditionalist (born between 1921 and 1942) (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2006). These generations grew up in a different time period, as a result, may have different worldviews, and work expectations that may facilitate conflict in the workplace (Markus, 2017). According to SHRM (2017), generational differences have driven the trends in workplace flexibility, impacting changes in how and where employees choose to work. It is that reason that workplace flexibility has been critical concept as business managers and human resources professionals seek to create policies and practices that aim to deal with generational difference in the workplace (Putnam et al.,2013).

The current research used open access data that consisted of several sub-samples from the Age and Generations Study conducted by the Sloan Center on Aging and Work. This dataset included several observations representing 11,298 employees in 7 distinct companies (2 pharmaceuticals, 1 technology, 1 energy, 1 financial and professional services, and 2 consulting services). The multinational dataset was used

to answer the research questions. Participants in the initial study were asked a series of questions about employees' perceptions in relation to a series of work-related variables. The survey focused on employees' perceptions of their work experiences. In the current study, I filtered and analysed data that was of interest to the research objectives to reflect employees' perceptions of workplace flexibility for Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y in both the multinational sample and South African sample.

5.3. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The final sample consisted of 11,298 participants, made up of 7785 males and 3507 females which translate to 69% and 31% respectively. These results reveal that females in the sample were under-represented. The United Nations New York (2010) reported that the global human population statistics in 2010 was almost equal, with 50,4% male and 49.6 % females at a global level. Increased flexible work schedules were observed in economies across Europe in which women were seen to be predominately affected and supported through flexible working options to help increase their employment rate and the ability to continue to take care of their families and children (Silim & Stirling, 2014).

When it comes to the age distribution of participants in the study, the range was between 17 to 75. The generational groups represented in the study included the following: Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. As expected, the bulk percentage of the participants were members of generation X from both the multinational and South African sample. The most dominant generation as previously reported by numerous publications are members of Generation X (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman and Lance, 2010), Whereas Traditionalists in both the samples only comprised of a small percentage of participants. Bennet (2018) reported that traditionalist make up only 3% of the global workforce. The traditionalists are the oldest generation in the workplace, many of them have retired and only few still active in the workplace. Thus, it was unsurprising that the sample will consists of few members from the Traditionalists cohort and more participants from generation X, Y and Baby Boomers.

The majority of the South African sample identified as "White", with only a small representation of "African" participants. This racial distribution may not be an appropriate representation of the general South African population. Moreover, it provides an inaccurate representation of the approximate South African employees

who were active in the labour market between 2009-2010. This is because the proportion of black African workers in the labour force increased significantly since 1994 (Statistics South Africa, nd). The South African labour market has undergone considerable changes since the end of apartheid regarding access and participation in the labour market for both Whites and Blacks (Bhorat, Naidoo & Pillay,2016). This distribution will also raise concerns regarding the cross-cultural applicability of the results because it does not accurately reflect the cultural diversity and context of South Africa. This may further raise complex implications on the research findings such as that any differences found in workplace flexibility may not be because of age and generations but could be attributed to race. However, since it was not the aim of the study to assess cross culture differences for employees in the South African workforce, the sample may be deemed representative from a perspective that incorporate different racial groups that exist within the South Africa to enable diversity within the sample.

It should also be noted that there was an interesting diversity regarding different countries and cultures represented in the sample. However, the majority of participants within the sample were from Japan, Brazil, and China with only a small representation of employees from South Africa and Botswana, which were the only African countries that formed part of the overall sample. It is reported in literature that people across different counties may have different preferences regarding workplace flexibility based on the premises of Hofstede framework that explains specific differences between collectivist and Individualistic cultures and how these may influence variations regarding the desire to integrate flexible work practices. Therefore, these limitations may influence the outcomes of the study. Since the objective of the study was to compare generational differences across different countries and cultures, this distribution also raises similar in terms of the applicability of the research findings. These limitations and concerns are acknowledged and discussed in the section that follows.

Participants in the study were employed in a range of organisational working schedules (A daytime schedule or shift, An evening shift, A split shift, A flexible schedule). A large proportion indicated that they work a daytime schedule with only few employees working on an evening shift. The range of employment also suggests that there a range of options to which different individuals in the sample had an opportunity to engage in different types of work tasks.

5.4. Results and Discussion Pertaining to research questions.

Research question 1: *Is there a relationship between age and workplace flexibility across four generational groups within the multinational sample?*

As an initial investigation into the nature of the relationship existing between age and Flexibility. The Spearman's R correlation analysis revealed the statistical significance of a weak and positive relationship between age and workplace flexibility. These findings suggest that employee's perceptions of workplace flexibility vary depending on the age of workers. These results were also somewhat expected as significant amount of literature observing generational differences have found a relationship between age and flexibility. These findings partly confirm Richert-Kazmierska and Stankiewicz (2016) study that assessed the relationship between employees age and their perception and use of flexible work options and found a significant relationship and showing how older employees were more likely to prefer work-life balance. Previous research has indicated significant relationship between workplace flexibility and generational difference and explained this relationship using the lifespan SOC model to understand the relationship between age and workplace flexibility and/or work-life balance. The model explains that older people may prefer more flexibility than younger workers in relation to their job performance, and they are in general focused on maximizing the benefits of these changes while minimizing their losses from physical and mental capabilities (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). Put differently, older workers are more likely to prefer flexible work options to maximise productivity in the workplace due to the incurred losses associated with physical and mental abilities. These losses gradually affect how older employees engage with requirements of the job.

Research question 2: *Is there a relationship between age and workplace flexibility within the South African sample?*

With regards to the South African sample, the Spearman's R correlation analysis showed a non-significant relationship between age and flexibility. The results of the present study therefore contradict the findings by Richert-Kazmierska and Stankiewicz (2016) that revealed a significant relationship between employee's age and flexible work practices. However, these results somewhat support some of the inconsistent findings found in literature on the relationship between age and workplace flexibility. For example, Walia (2015) found no relationship between age and work-life balance

in their investigation of a relationship between work-life balance and age. These findings suggest there is no distinct association between the age of the employees on workplace flexibility on the overall South African sample.

As suggested in the literature review, previous research have obtained conflicting results that both support and question the relationship between workplace flexibility and generational differences. In the current study, there are few plausible explanations for the above non-significant findings: the first explanation could be attributable to an inappropriate small sample size which may have been insufficient to detect an effect compared to the overall (multinational) sample size. Secondly, since a normal distribution of data was not found to be present for the workplace flexibility scale, the non-parametric equivalent of a one-way ANOVA was used. Unlike parametric tests, do not require making any assumptions about the distribution of the population, but these tests may lack power as compared with more traditional approaches (Malik & Kumar, 2020). Thirdly, the results may further address the conflicting results from previous research which may indicate that generational groups in the workplace may share similarities in terms of their preferences of workplace flexibility.

Research question 3**:** *Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age and generational cohorts within the multinational sample*?

The research question is specifically aimed at addressing statistical differences between different generational groups and their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility. Results from a Kruskal-Wallis test provided strong evidence of a difference between the mean ranks of the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, with particular emphasis on the difference between traditionalists and generation Y. However, there was no evidence of a difference between the other pairs. Given the results of this study, the hypothesis that Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y differ in their perceptions of workplace flexibility would differ, was not supported. The results are inconsistent with previous findings which has shown significant differences between traditionalists, baby boomers, generation X and generation Y in their preferences on work-life balance and work values. The analyses found that generational differences have an impact on workers values, but no differences were found on their preferences towards work life balance. (Aydemir, Dinc & Caglar, 2016). Richert-Kazmierska and Stankiewicz (2016) found a statistically significant differences between employees age and perception towards work-life

balance. Difference were found between respondents “55-70 years” and 35 -44 years, 55-70 years and 21-34 years age groups. Similar results from Klun (2008) also found that Generation X and Y give much more importance to work life balance comparing to older generations. Lub et al. (2012) as cited in Lyon and Kuron (2014) showed increased importance of work–life balance between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, but a subsequent decrease with Generation Y.

Research question 4**:** *Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on age and generational cohorts within the South African Sample***?**

It was also important run the Kruskal-Wallis test for the South African sample to determine any statistical differences between the South African generational groups and their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility. The results indicated that no significant differences between the mean ranks of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. The need to exclusively observe generational differences for the South African population was to understand the extent to which this difference may differ across countries and nations. Several studies have shown that the use and outcomes of workplace flexibility can differ significantly across nations (Kassinis & Stavrou, 2013).

As noted in the literature that the research on workplace flexibility and related variables within the South African context is fairly limited in comparison to vast body of research conducted internationally. However, there were a few studies that provided some useful information on flexible work practices in South Africa, for example, in the study conducted by Conradie and De Klerk (2019) that assessed the availability and the use of flexible work practices, and its perceived advantage from an employee's perspective. The study found that flexible work arrangements were perceived to be beneficial by employees and their respective organisations. The findings of this study could not provide an analysis of generational differences but the general employee perceptions. Therefore, the results obtained in the current study could not be effectively compared with similar South African studies that specifically looked at generational differences and workplace flexibility or related variables such as work-life balance. These findings were also found to partially confirm Lancaster and Stillman (2005) results that showed that flexible work practices were more needed for Millennials to balance their work and life balance. Of the three generations surveyed,

Generation X felt that flexible work schedules were somewhat more important than Baby Boomers and Millennials. Dries et al (2008) also found significant difference between Traditionalist, baby boomers, Generation X and generation Y with regards to their differences in workplace flexibility. The current research findings also support Mlodzik and De Meuse (2010) findings of their meta-analysis that reported inconsistent findings between generational differences in the workplace focusing on work commitment and work-life balance. In comparing various studies of interest, they found few or no consistent differences between the generations in the workplace.

As elaborated earlier in the current study, other potential explanations for lack of differences could also be attributable to issues with the sample size and unbalanced and/or unequal distributions of generational groups that lacked the statistical power necessary to detect in-group differences. These contradictory and inconsistent findings reported in numerous research reports and also in this current study are worrisome towards understanding the importance generational differences in the workplace and its implication for business managers and human resources professionals

Research question 5**:** *Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on country?*

With respect to whether there are any statistical differences between different countries and their preference and importance of flexibility, a Kruskal-Wallis test provided strong evidence of a difference between Spain, Japan, and China versus other countries. The United States differs from Japan and China and no differences were found between the United States and other countries or pairs. With regards to South Africa, the results reveal that differences were found between South Africa and Japan; however, no differences were found between South Africa and other pairs. These findings reveal insufficient evidence of inter- country differences in workplace flexibility. Nevertheless, the results revealed a trend between Asian cultures and western cultures in relation to their preferences towards workplace flexibility. There are only a few studies that focused on countries in Asia, West and Northern America. Existing studies show that there are differences between Asia/the East and the West towards their preferences workplace flexibility (Chandra, 2012). Cooke and Jing (2009), outlined that work-life balance practices encountered by employees in China were found to be significantly different in precept and practice compared to western countries. Similar results were found by Lai et al. (2017) examining the differences in workplace flexibility between the United States and China, they found that China

viewed workplace flexibility as less important and reported less access and use of flexibility than Americans. In the current study, it was unexpected that no significant differences were found between South Africa and other countries regarding workplace flexibility because of their different formative years. For example, the SABPP (2018) revealed differences between South African and Australia on the experiences with flexible work practices. Their analysis revealed that the Australian government was more supportive of flexible work practices towards the support of mothers with children, single mothers, and persons with disabilities in comparison to South African government. These included part-time, flexitime, job sharing, career breaks and study leave. Secondly, several studies have shown that the use and outcomes of workplace flexibility can differ significantly across nations (Kassinis & Stavrou, 2013). Based on this rationale, it was expected that South Africa would differ in workplace flexibility compared to other countries.

Research question 6**:** *Do employees' preferences and importance of workplace flexibility vary depending on country culture (Individualistic/Communistic)?*

To determine whether there are any statistical differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures regarding their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility, a Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between Individualist versus Communist countries regarding their preferences and importance of workplace flexibility. Eleven countries in the sample were grouped according to the Hofstede framework based on their individualism and collectivism scores. Communistic countries included: India, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, Spain, China, whereas Individualistic cultures included: USA, UK, SA, Netherlands, Botswana. Since many studies on workplace flexibility have been conducted in developed societies that are centred on individualism. It is largely unclear to what extent these flexibility practices could be valued in developing economies or in collectivist communities (Lai, Besen, Sarkisian and Xu, 2020). The current research results yielded unexpected results and contradicted with Raghuram, London and Larsen (2001) who assessed different countries and cultures through a survey of 4,876 companies. They found that national differences between flexible employment practices were explained by cultural differences. Lai, Besen, Sarkisian and Xu (2020) also found similar results in their study of cross-national differences in workplace flexibility between the U.S. and China. The results revealed that workplace flexibility policies may produce different results in countries with different levels of

industrialization (developing and developed) and cultural orientation (individualism and collectivism).

5.5. Implications of the study

The current study has important theoretical and practical implications for organisations and future research. Most notably, the study provided some evidence that preference for workplace flexibility is associated with age and generational cohorts. It was also established that workplace flexibility may only differ between certain countries but overall, the desire for flexibility across all countries may be concluded as similar despite the employee's country or culture.

The study could not confirm the logic of the generational cohort theory and the SOC model in relation to workplace flexibility. According to generation theory, younger workers who are currently entering the workforce have different values and needs from previous generations (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Twenge et al., 2010). The youngest generations of workers, the Generation Y or Millennials, are regularly described as having high expectations regarding flexible work arrangements (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). The lifespan SOC model explains that older people may prefer more flexibility than younger workers in relation to their job performance, and they are in general focused on maximizing the benefits of these changes while minimizing their losses from physical and mental capabilities (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). Put differently, older workers are more likely to prefer flexible work options to maximise productivity in the workplace due to the incurred losses associated with physical and mental abilities. Both these theories impose serious and important implications for management human resources practices. The study necessitates more research and knowledge in research about generational differences and workplace flexibility to resolve the inconsistent and contradictory results, specifically for the South African perspective. There is clearly a need for more comparative studies to assess these differences between countries and cultures using effective methodological methods, and instrumentation. It is this imperative that business leaders and managers should exercise more caution when implementing workplace flexibility policies targeted to different generational groups in the workplace. A possible way of ensuring the above may be to place emphasis on strategies that seek to enhance the working experiences of all generational groups and providing an understanding that while employees may be different, they may also place similar preferences and importance on various workplace values, such as workplace flexibility. While it has been suggested that

"younger" generation places more emphasis on flexible work practices, this may also be the case for "older workers".

Among other things, when employees have the same perceptions about the importance of workplace flexibility, this may also change how management and employees engage with each other by paying less attention to generational difference and more emphasis on matters that advocate for career development and other imperative aspects that promote flexible work practices for all employees. Similar generational views on workplace flexibility could further bring mutual understanding and cooperation in the organisation, with employees working towards a common vision. This means that it may not be necessary to cater flexible work practices to each generational group since it is possible that they are applicable to all generational groups and across all cultures and countries. It is therefore important for management to also consider the fact that workplace flexibility may generally be crucial and important for all employees across all ages and in different cultures and countries. They should carefully consider the fact that increased globalisation has affected employment practices in the 21st century; and along these changes came a great deal of preferences, acceptability, and the use of flexible workplace practices by employees of all ages and generational cohorts irrespective of their socio-economic, political variations (SHRM, 2017).

5.6. Limitations and recommendations for future research

The first limitation of current study is the fact that it was cross-sectional, and data was only collected at one point in time. Cross sectional studies cannot analyse behaviour over time and unable to establish the degree of causality, thereby relying on assumptions of association (Rindfleisch et al.,2008). There is a need for more studies to investigate generational difference on workplace flexibility on a larger scale and perhaps using longitudinal studies to observe trends as generational members mature and progress overtime. This will ensure that more empirical support and in-depth understanding is obtained. The importance of longitudinal studies is to identify and relate events to specific exposures and how these may change over time (Caruana, Roman, Hernández-Sánchez & Solli, 2015). It is then important that the perceptions and attitudes of different generational groups towards workplace flexibility will need to be re-tested to establish if the assumed perceptions remain constant over time or will change over time due to other factors not cohort related. Longitudinal studies are thus recommended for future research to argue that other factors and variables are not

affecting the results. Jones, Murray and Tapp (2018) argued that if generational "stereotypes" remain constant over time, this would then provide profound support to both the research on generational differences and the generational cohort descriptions.

Another notable limitation of the study is the sample, sample size and the under representation of the generation cohorts, namely the Traditionalists. This generational cohort was underrepresented in the sample with the sample size numbering with less than 100 participants. However, this was expected as there are only few traditionalists left in the workplace. This limitation may have influenced the possibility of a true differences between the groups being overlooked. With regards to the sample limitation, majority of the South African sample identified as "White", with only a small representation of "African" participants. This racial distribution may not be an appropriate representation of the general South African population. This distribution raise concerns regarding the cross-cultural applicability of the results because it does not accurately reflect the cultural diversity and context of South Africa. This may further raise complex implications on the research findings such as that any differences found in workplace flexibility may not be because of age and generations but could be attributed to race.

With regards to the sample of the study and sampling there was only few South Africans represented in the multinational sample. Therefore, it could also be possible that the study lacked the suitable statistical power to detect differences between South Africa and other countries. Future research may need to assess multinational differences using an appropriate sample and sample sizes that are supported by a more representative sample, most importantly including enough participants from each generational cohort and countries. This would make it possible to detect the necessary differences between all four generational groups currently explored in the current study. The initial study also made use of a nonprobability sampling technique. This process limits generalizability as not every individual in the population had the equal chance of being included in the study. It also elicits the possibility of bias in sample selection and consequently may distort findings of the study. It can be said that generalisation based on convenience is only limited to the specific group under observation. In that regard, generalisation is only limited to the population of 7 multinational companies from finance, consulting, energy, technology, and pharmaceutical companies in 11 countries. In terms of gender, the sample was unbalanced with males dominating the sample with (n=7785) and males (n=3507).

However, the strong point of the sample is its significant reflection on the diversity of the population with regards to gender, race/ ethnicity and countries, company, multi-generational groups. The racial distribution for the South African sample was also diverse although a majority of White respondents dominated the sample, this composition may not be an appropriate representation of the actual population of South African sample. With regards to country, the sample consisted of respondents from 11 countries. It is also worth noting that the interpretation of the findings of the research are only limited to the sample populations in which this study was conducted, that is, the specific countries and organisations that participated in the study. It is recommended that future studies may conduct similar studies in variety of contexts and supported by a representative sample to enable the research to become more generalizable to similar populations universally.

A final limitation pertaining to the current research is the nature of the statistical methods and analyses used in the current study. Since a normal distribution of data was not found to be present for the workplace flexibility scale, the non-parametric equivalent of a one-way ANOVA was used. Unlike parametric tests, do not require making any assumptions about the distribution of the population, but these tests may lack power as compared with more traditional approaches (Malik & Kumar, 2020). Future research should employ additional or more measures to assess perceptions of workplace flexibility on generational difference to enable results that are trustworthy. It is plausible that future studies may find different results if they utilize more rigorous methodological research designs and analysis than the ones used in the current study.

Lastly, it is an area of concern how workplace flexibility was measured in the current study, it was not apparent as to how the initial study used the workplace flexibility scale to assess different aspects of workplace flexibility. A possible solution for future research in this instance would be to use same degree of measures as presumably used by the researchers. This may enable the correct application of use of instruments.

5.7. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate generational differences and importance of workplace flexibility, and the extent to which these differences vary across countries and cultures. Unexpectedly. The results obtained revealed a small and negative relationship between workplace flexibility, age, and generations in a multinational sample. A non-significant relationship was found for the South African sample. The

study also revealed few differences between generational cohorts and workplace flexibility for the multinational sample. The findings revealed a difference between traditionalist and Generation Y, there was no evidence of a difference between other generational groups. With regards to the South African sample, no differences were found. These findings appeared to both contradict and support previous research in a sense that numerous studies have observed differences, while some observed little to no evidence of an existing relationship or difference. It was noted that these findings further add to the current complexities and contradictions that have also been observed and discussed in the literature review. It was then recommended that future studies should employ more rigorous approaches that are carried out on larger scale using longitudinal studies to observe patterns and trends over time. Nevertheless, the research findings provided an in-depth understanding of the study of generational differences and its complexities. The current dramatic changes in the wake of the global pandemic of COVID-19 has seen members of all generations experiencing common challenges regarding a shift towards a more dynamic and hybrid ways of working. As a result, more flexible work practices have increasingly become a preferred expectation for both younger and older employees. They had to rethink ways of ensuring efficiency and comfortability whilst also maintaining performance as they navigate the impact of the pandemic both in their personal spaces and environment in which they work. In light of this, it will be Interesting for future research to unpack these differences and expectations in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic for an in-depth and more nuanced understanding of workplace flexibility and generational difference from this point of view.

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Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Do you have an undergraduate degree from a university?

1 No 2 Yes

2. Do you have any graduate degrees?
- 1 No
- 2 Yes

3. Are you …?
- 1 Male
- 2 Female

1. Using the list below, please indicate in which country you were born.
2. Using the list below, please indicate your current country (or countries) of residence.
3. Please select your primary racial or ethnic identification. (If you identify with two or more groups equally, please select the Multiracial category.)
4. How strong is your attachment to your religion? 1 No attachment at all 2 Weak 3 Moderate 4 Strong 5 Very strong

Appendix B: Workplace Flexibility Instrument

How important are the following to you?

5. Importance of Flexibility in the number of hours

Flexibility in the number of hours worked, such as part-time work or part-year work?

Very unimportant	Moderately unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important

6. **Importance of Flexibility in work schedules**

Flexible work schedules, such as changes in starting and quitting times or choices about shifts?

Very unimportant	Moderately unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important

7. Importance of options to take time off

Options for time off, such as paid/unpaid leave for dependent care or paid/unpaid sabbatical?

Very unimportant	Moderately unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important

8. Importance of Flexibility in work schedules

Flexible work schedules, such as changes in starting and quitting times or choices about shifts?

Very unimportant	Moderately unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important

Appendix: C: Hofstede Framework

Table 7.1 Individualism Rankings for 50 Countries and Three Regions

1	United States	28	Turkey
2	Australia	29	Uruguay
3	Great Britain	30	Greece
4/5	Canada	31	Philippines
4/5	The Netherlands	32	Mexico
6	New Zealand	33/35	East Africa
7	Italy	33/35	Yugoslavia
8	Belgium	33/35	Portugal
9	Denmark	36	Malaysia
10/11	Sweden	37	Hong Kong
10/11	France	38	Chile
12	Ireland	39/41	West Africa
13	Norway	39/41	Singapore
14	Switzerland	39/41	Thailand
15	Germany (F.R.)	42	El Salvador
16	South Africa	43	South Korea
17	Finland	44	Taiwan
18	Austria	45	Peru
19	Israel	46	Costa Rica
20	Spain	47/48	Pakistan
21	India	47/48	Indonesia
22/23	Japan	49	Colombia
22/23	Argentina	50	Venezuela
24	Iran	51	Panama
25	Jamaica	52	Ecuador
26/27	Brazil	53	Guatemala
26/27	Arab countries		

SOURCE: Hofstede (2001, Exhibit 5.1, p. 215).

Appendix D: Ethics Form

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE: PROTOCOL NUMBER: MAORG/20/019W

PROJECT TITLE:	Generational differences and perceptions of workplace flexibility.
INVESTIGATOR	Tshabalala Tshidi (672918)
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SHCD/Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	27 July 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	No Risk
EXPIRY DATE	31 December 2022

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 25 August 2020 **CHAIRPERSON**

_____

(Dr Colleen Bernstein)

cc: Prof. Karen Milner (Supervisor)

_____

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.



Signature

_____/_____/_____ 25 08 2020

Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix E: ICPSR Terms of Use

ICPSR Terms of Use (retrieved from website)

Please read the terms of use below. If you agree to them, click on the "Agree" button to proceed. If you do not agree, you can click on the "Disagree" button to return to the home page.

ICPSR adheres to the principles of the CoreTrustSeal Core Trustworthy Data Repositories Requirements, which, in part, require the data consumer to comply with access regulations and applicable licenses imposed both by law and by the data repository, and to conform to codes of conduct that are generally accepted in higher education and scientific research for the exchange and proper use of knowledge and information.

These data are distributed under the following terms of use, which are governed by ICPSR. By continuing past this point to the data retrieval process, you signify your agreement to comply with the requirements stated below:

Privacy of RESEARCH SUBJECTS

Any intentional identification of a RESEARCH SUBJECT (whether an individual or an organization) or unauthorized disclosure of his or her confidential information violates the PROMISE OF CONFIDENTIALITY given to the providers of the information. Therefore, users of data agree:

- To use these datasets solely for research or statistical purposes and not for investigation of specific RESEARCH SUBJECTS, except when identification is authorized in writing by ICPSR (icpsr-help@umich.edu)
- To make no use of the identity of any RESEARCH SUBJECT discovered inadvertently, and to advise ICPSR of any such discovery (icpsr-help@umich.edu)

Redistribution of Data

You agree not to redistribute data or other materials without the written agreement of ICPSR, unless:

1. You serve as the OFFICIAL or DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE at an ICPSR MEMBER INSTITUTION and are assisting AUTHORIZED USERS with obtaining data, or
2. You are collaborating with other AUTHORIZED USERS to analyze the data for research or instructional purposes.

When sharing data or other materials in these approved ways, you must include all accompanying files with the data, including terms of use. More information on permission to redistribute data can be found on the ICPSR Web site.

Citing Data

You agree to reference the recommended bibliographic citation in any publication that employs resources provided by ICPSR. Authors of publications based on ICPSR data are required to send citations of their published works to ICPSR for inclusion in a database of related publications (bibliography@icpsr.umich.edu) .

Disclaimer

You acknowledge that the original collector of the data, ICPSR, and the relevant funding agency bear no responsibility for use of the data or for interpretations or inferences based upon such uses.

Violations

If ICPSR determines that the terms of this agreement have been violated, ICPSR will act according to our policy on terms of use violations. Sanctions can include:

- ICPSR may revoke the existing agreement, demand the return of the data in question, and deny all future access to ICPSR data.
- The violation may be reported to the Research Integrity Officer, Institutional Review Board, or Human Subjects Review Committee of the user's institution. A range of sanctions are available to institutions including revocation of tenure and termination.
- If the confidentiality of human subjects has been violated, the case may be reported to the Federal Office for Human Research Protections. This may result in an investigation of the user's institution, which can result in institution-wide sanctions including the suspension of all research grants.
- A court may award the payment of damages to any individual(s)/organization(s) harmed by the breach of the agreement.

Definitions

authorized user
: A faculty member, staff member, or student at a member institution

ICPSR
: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research

member institution
: An institutional member of ICPSR

Official/Designated Representative
: An individual appointed to represent a university's interests in ICPSR. This individual is also charged with providing user support to campus users.

promise of confidentiality
: A promise to a respondent or research participant that the information the respondent provides will not be disseminated without the permission of the respondent; that the fact that the respondent participated in the study will not be disclosed; and that disseminated information will include no linkages to the identity of the respondent. Such a promise encompasses traditional notions of both confidentiality and anonymity. Names and other identifying information regarding respondents, proxies, or other persons on whom the respondent or proxy provides information, are presumed to be confidential.

research subject
: A person or organization observed for purposes of research. Also called a respondent. A respondent is generally a survey respondent or informant, experimental or observational subject, focus group participant, or any other person providing information to a study or on whose behalf a proxy provides information.

Agree | Disagree

Data Confidentiality

The success of social science research relies on participants? willingness to engage in the research process. People often participate in research projects under an assumption that their responses will be kept confidential and will not be linked back to them. Thus, it is critically important to protect the identities of research participants. One way to protect participants? identities is by assessing each study?s disclosure risk, which is the degree of risk that a data record from a study could be linked to a specific person or organization, thereby revealing information that otherwise would not be known or known with as much certainty. Concerns about disclosure risk have grown as more datasets have become available online and it has become increasingly easy to link data. ICPSR works to ensure that the appropriate level of confidentiality remains intact for all of its data holdings.

ICPSR's Approach to Confidentiality

ICPSR accepts data with identifying information under conditions consistent with the informed consent of the study participants and the relevant Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. ICPSR staff work with data depositors to address disclosure risks. Once data are deposited with ICPSR, staff employ stringent procedures to protect the confidentiality of individuals and organizations whose personal information may be part of the archived data collection. Steps ICPSR staff take to maintain data confidentiality include:

- Completing a detailed review of all datasets to assess disclosure risk
- If necessary, modifying data to reduce disclosure risk
- Limiting access to datasets for which modifying the data would substantially limit their utility or the risk of disclosure remains high
- Training staff and consulting with data producers in methods of disclosure risk assessment and mitigation

Disclosure Risk

With the exception of deposits placed in openICPSR, our public data-sharing service, ICPSR reviews all datasets to assess disclosure risk. ICPSR trains data curators to apply specified procedures to protect respondent confidentiality in all of the data ICPSR curates, archives, and distributes. For example, ICPSR checks each study for **identifiers** present in the data.

Identifiers

Two kinds of variables often found in social science data present problems that could endanger research subjects' confidentiality: direct identifiers and indirect identifiers.

Direct identifiers. These are variables that point explicitly to particular individuals or units. Examples include:

- Names
- Addresses, including ZIP and other postal codes
- Telephone numbers, including area codes
- Social Security numbers
- Other linkable numbers such as driver's license numbers, certification numbers, etc.

Indirect identifiers. These are variables that can be problematic as they may be used together or in conjunction with other information to identify individual respondents. Examples include:

- Detailed geographic information (e.g., state, county, province, or census tract of residence)
- Organizations to which the respondent belongs
- Educational institutions from which the respondent graduated and year of graduation
- Detailed occupational titles
- Place where respondent grew up
- Exact dates of events (e.g., birth, death, marriage, divorce)

- Detailed income
- Offices or posts held by respondent

ICPSR may recode data to reduce disclosure risk. Recoding can include converting dates to time intervals, exact dates of birth to age groups, detailed geographic codes to broader levels of geography, and detailed income to income ranges or categories.

If modifications to address identifiers to create a public-use dataset will seriously reduce the analytic utility of the data, ICPSR may release a restricted-use dataset or both public- and restricted-use datasets. Restricted-use datasets retain confidential, identifying information, and are accessible under controlled conditions.

Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Data Sharing

Protection of respondent confidentiality is a core tenet of responsible research practice that begins with obtaining informed consent. Informed consent is a process of communication between a participant and researcher which enables the participant to decide voluntarily whether or not to participate in a study. Human subjects involved in a project must participate willingly and be adequately informed about the research. The informed consent must include a statement describing how the confidentiality of subject records will be maintained. However, it is also important that informed consent be written in a way that does not unduly limit an investigator's discretion to share data with the research community.

Recommended informed consent language for data sharing

Confidentiality and IRBs

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) take different approaches to secondary analysis of research datasets such as those distributed on ICPSR's website. Some institutions require IRB review of proposals to analyze secondary data. Other institutions provide IRB exemption for projects involving secondary data if the data were acquired from preapproved sources such as ICPSR. Other institutions are establishing unique policies to address these issues. More about Institutional Review Boards

Levels of Restricted Data Access

Depending on the outcome of the disclosure risk review, ICPSR may suggest modifying the data and/or distributing the data at a higher level of restriction. Sometimes data cannot be modified to protect confidentiality without significantly compromising the research potential of the data. In these cases, access to the data is restricted in order to impose further confidentiality safeguards.

ICPSR has established several mechanisms through which restricted data can be distributed:

- **Secure Download:** With this option, users submit an application to access the data, and after approval, download the data using a single-use password. At the end of the approved access period, users must destroy the data.
- **Virtual Data Enclave (VDE):** The VDE is a secure, online environment in which approved users analyze restricted data via a remote desktop using several available software options, including SAS, Stata, and SPSS. Researchers do not receive a copy of the data, but rather analyze the data stored on ICPSR?s servers. Final analysis output is vetted and, if approved, released to the researcher.
- **Physical Data Enclave:** For highly restricted data, ICPSR has a physical enclave which requires that approved users be on site at ICPSR to use the data. Data use in the physical data enclave is monitored by ICPSR staff. Final analysis output is vetted and, if approved, released to the researcher.
- **Secure online analysis:** This option provides analysis of restricted-use data behind an interface with programmable disclosure protection for selected users. With this option, users submit an application to access the data.

Consulting

In addition to the steps ICPSR takes to ensure the confidentiality of data that has already been deposited, we also offer the following services related to disclosure risk assessment and mitigation to researchers who have not yet deposited their data or who are in the earlier stages of the data collection process:

- Informed consent review
- Consultation regarding issues of disclosure risk (no charge)
- Basic disclosure risk assessment
- Full disclosure analysis: risk assessment and options for mitigation and data distribution
- Training

For further information on ICPSR services, contact us at ICPSR-help@umich.edu or 734-647-2200.

Recommended Informed Consent Language for Data Sharing

Language to Avoid

Promises in the informed consent can appear to limit an investigator's ability to share data with the research community. In reality, investigators can inform study participants that they are scientists with an obligation to protect confidentiality and still share the study data with the broad scientific community. Many effective means exist to create public-use data files or share restricted-use data files under controlled conditions. That is, data can be modified to reduce the risk of disclosure or shared with additional safeguards while preserving their value for science.

Model Language

Here are two model statements investigators may use in informed consents to describe protection of confidentiality that also allows data sharing.

Sample 1. Study staff will protect your personal information closely so no one will be able to connect your responses and any other information that identifies you. Federal or state laws may require us to show information to university or government officials (or sponsors), who are responsible for monitoring the safety of this study. Directly identifying information (e.g. names, addresses) will be safeguarded and maintained under controlled conditions. You will not be identified in any publication from this study.

Sample 2. The information in this study will be used only for research purposes and in ways that will not reveal who you are. Federal or state laws may require us to show information to university or government officials (or sponsors) who are responsible for monitoring the safety of this study. You will not be identified in any publication from this study.

Known Concerns and Recommended Alternatives

Concern 3

Promises made that the data will be seen or accessed only by the research team.

Recommendations:

Explain the form that the identifying information will take and who has access:

- "Your identifying information will be replaced with codes. Only the research team will have access to information that identifies you to carry out this research study. Your identifying information will not be shared with others outside this research study."

If no "research data" will be released to persons in official or unofficial capacities, make sure that sharing data with other researchers is not left to be interpreted in this category but is allowed through a statement such as:

- "Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public."
- "During the project, information from this study will be kept in locked files that only the research staff can open. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public."
- "This [Certificate of Confidentiality] allows for answers that you give during the surveys to be kept secret during this project. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public."

State it explicitly when personally identifying information will be destroyed, removed, or changed:

- "All personally identifying information collected about you will be destroyed once it is no longer needed for the study. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public."

Concern 4

Descriptions of how the information will be stored during the project imply the data are stored only during the project and do not allow the storage of any data beyond the research project so the research portion of the data can be shared.

Directly identifying elements need to be stored separately from the "research data" (i.e., the data for analysis) and must be destroyed within a specified period after the end of the research project. The research data can be shared if appropriately de-identified or as a limited dataset (aka restricted-use dataset).

Recommendation:

Explain the duration of the data storage and what happens to directly identifying information:

- "If you decide to be in this study, the study researchers will get information that identifies you and your personal health information. This may include information that might directly identify you, such as your name and address. This information will be kept for the length of the study (five years). After that time it will be destroyed or de-identified, meaning we will replace your identifying information with a code that does not directly identify you. The principal investigator will keep a link that identifies you to your coded information, but this link will be kept secure and available only to the principal investigator or selected members of the research team. Any information that can identify you will remain confidential. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public.

Concern 5

The phrase "shared anonymously" may prohibit sharing data using a limited-use (aka restricted-use) dataset if the data cannot be completely anonymized or de-identified.

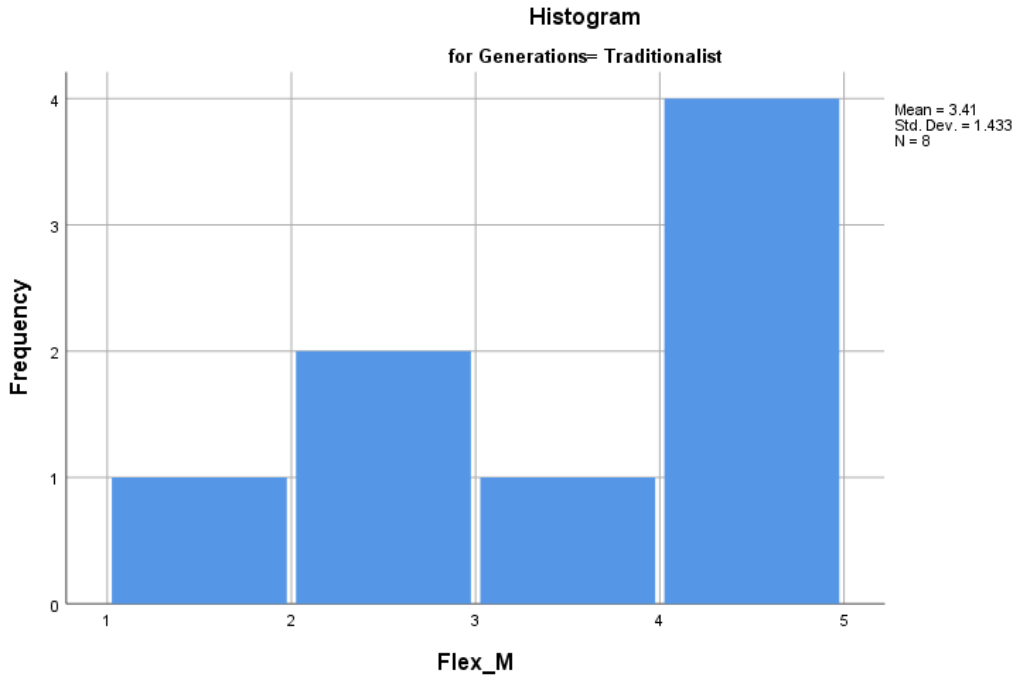
Recommendation:

If the personally identifying elements were collected (i.e., the data were not collected anonymously), use a statement that acknowledges the directly identifiable information will be removed but does not promise all indirect identifiers will be removed:

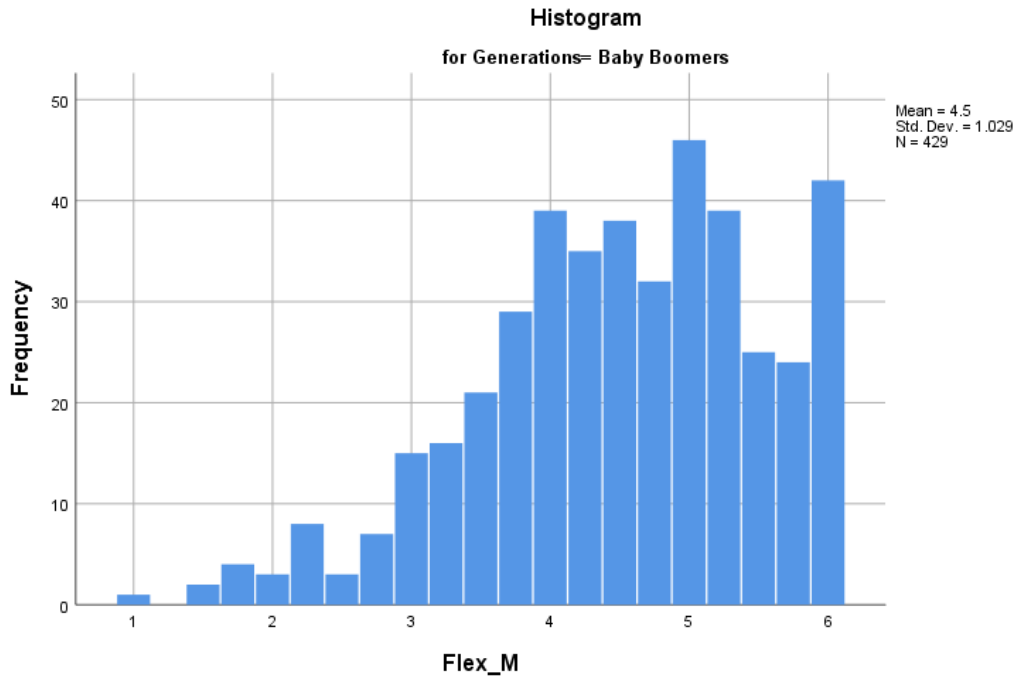
- "Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before files are shared with other researchers or results are made public."

Figures

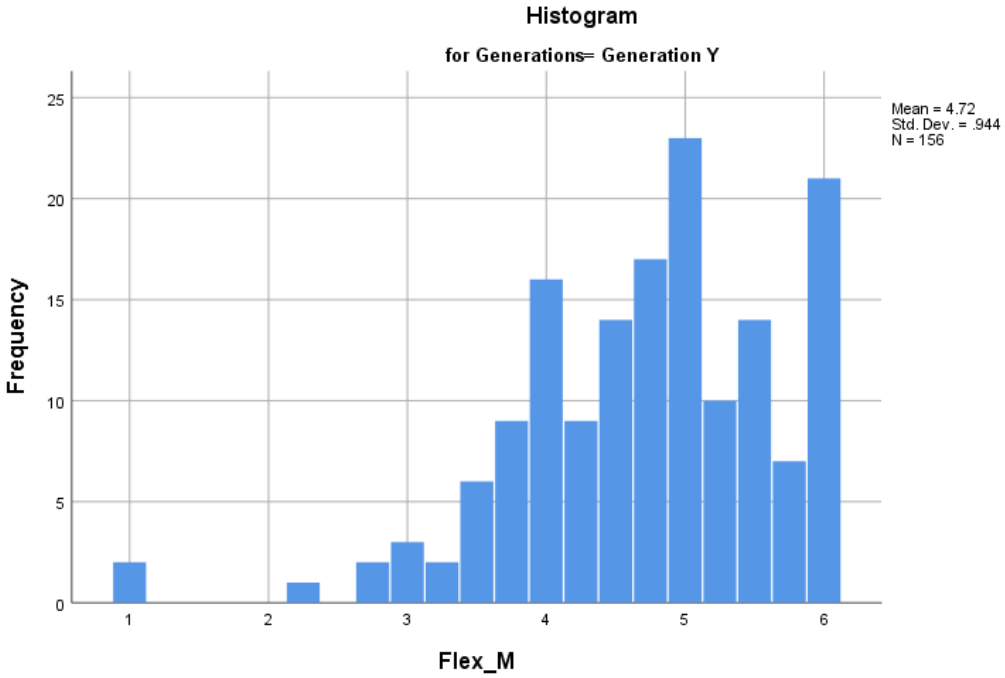
1. Traditionalist Histogram



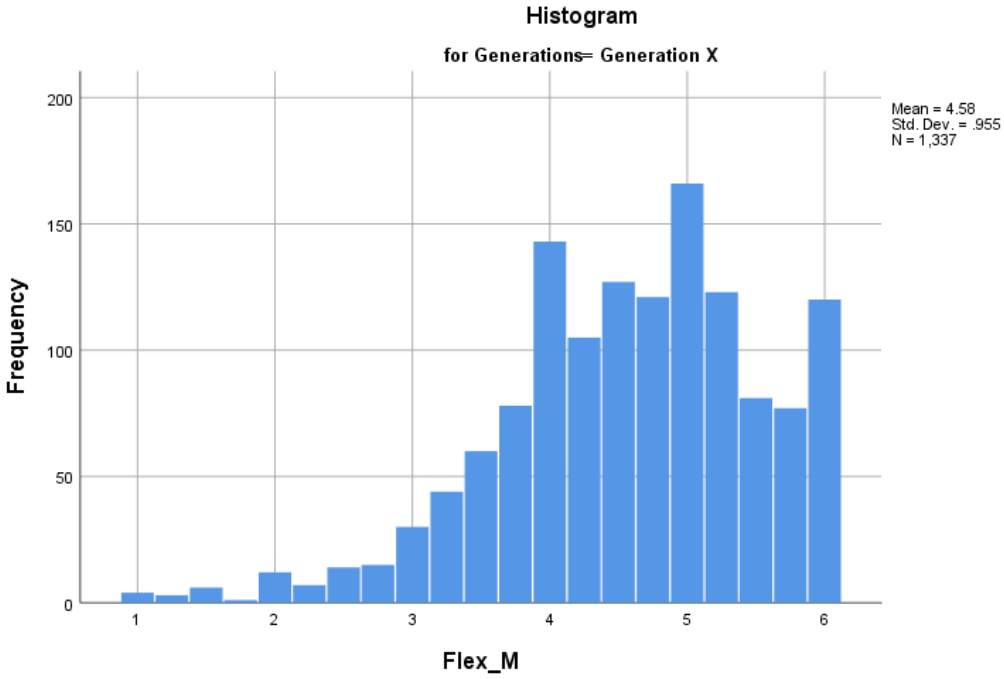
2. Baby Boomers Histogram



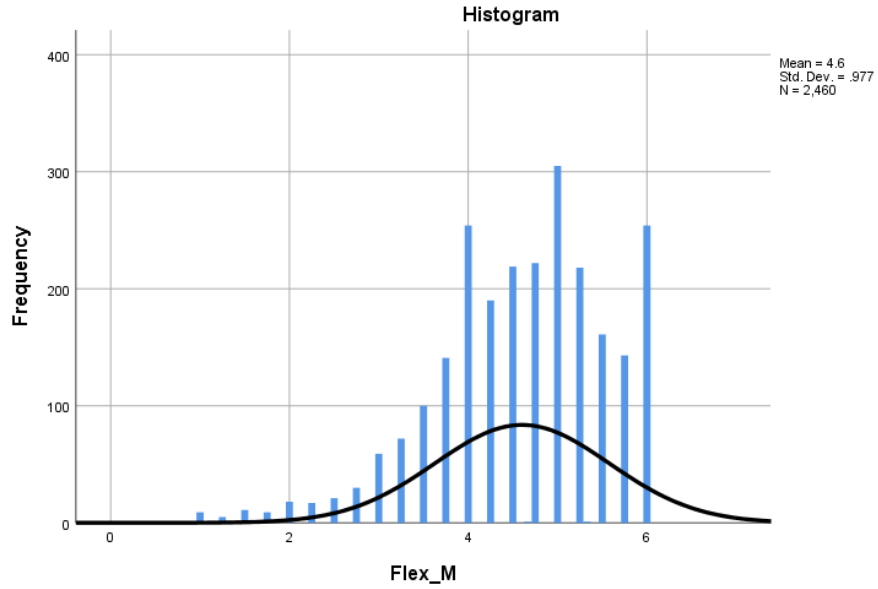
3. **Generation Y Histogram**



4. Generation X Histogram



5. Flexibility Scale: Histogram



6. Demographic Characteristics of the sample

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
SA Generations		
Traditionalist	7	1.8
Baby Boomers	87	22.4
Generation X	174	44.8
Generation Y	20	5.2
Total	288	74.2
System	100	25.8
	388	100.0
Generations		
Traditionalist	55	.5
Baby Boomers	1883	16.7
Generation X	5602	49.6
Generation Y	718	6.4
Total	8258	73.1
System	3040	26.9
Sex/Gender		
Male	7785	68.9
Female	3507	31.0
Other	6	.1
Total	11298	100.0
Race		
Black African	55	.5
White	136	1.2
Coloured	41	.4
Indian or Asian	20	.2
Other, please specify	1	.0
Total	253	2.2
Company		

Tech	1133	10.0
Consulting1	2536	22.4
Pharma1	786	7.0
Energy	355	3.1
Pharma2	5395	47.8
Consulting2	572	5.1
Finance	521	4.6
Total	11298	100.0
Employment Type		
Full-time	10793	95.5
Part-time	247	2.2
Other, please explain	83	.7
Total	11123	98.5
System	175	1.5
University Degree		
No	1814	16.1
Yes	7148	63.3
Total	8962	79.3
System	2336	20.7
Total	11298	100.0
Country		
U.S.	1156	10.2
U.K.	508	4.5
China	1532	13.6
India	611	5.4
Brazil	1549	13.7
Japan	2673	23.7
Netherlands	755	6.7
Mexico	1268	11.2
Spain	725	6.4
South Africa	388	3.4
Botswana	133	1.2
Total	11298	100.0
Working Schedule		
A daytime schedule or shift	7958	70.4
An evening/night shift	28	.2
A rotating shift	234	2.1
A split shift	772	6.8
A flexible, variable, or on-call schedule	2160	19.1
Total	11152	98.7
System	146	1.3
Total	11298	100.0