International Journal of Academic Research in Business, Arts and Science (IJARBAS.COM)

Employee Market Place (EMP): A Conceptual Paradigm for Examining Digital Natives in the Modern Workplace

AUTHOR(S):
Nduneche Ezurike

Abstract

This study sought to provide a conceptual discourse on the needs of the digital natives in the workplace. The study was anchored on the Generational Cohort Theory and Social Exchange Theory, while the Employee Market Place (EMP) model hinged on trust, employee innovation, leadership, consumerism and sustainability; was the researchers approach for engaging Millennials and Generation Z employees in the workplace. To test this model, a survey was conducted among 1000 Millennials and Generation Z employees across various organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria. Findings from this study revealed that trust between both Millennials and Generation Z employees, and management can play a pivotal role in enhancing workplace productivity among Millennials and Generation Z employees. Findings further revealed that innovations and changes initiated by Millennials and Gen Z employees, have had a positive impact in different organizations to a moderate extent. However, traditional workplace culture emerges as a predominant barrier faced by Millennials and Gen Z employees when introducing innovative ideas within the workplace. The study concluded that trust, a formidable platform to share innovative ideas, involvement in leadership positions and a commitment to sustainable work place values such as diversity, equity, inclusion and social responsibility, can play a pivotal role in engaging and enhancing workplace productivity among Millennials and Gen Z employees within the work environment.

Keywords: Employee Market Place (EMP), Digital Natives, Millennials, Generation Z,

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Email: editor@ijarbas.com editor.ijarbas@gmail.com Website: ijarbas.com

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About Author

Author(s):

Nduneche Ezurike

Department of Marketing,
LIGS University, Honolulu, Hawaii,
United States of America.
+2348037179146
Nduneche@live.com

Introduction

In the digital work environment, there are three categorizations of individuals: 'digital immigrants,' 'digital natives,' and 'digital refugees.' While digital immigrants live in two cultures (the pre-digital and the digital), digital natives are exclusively immersed in the digital culture (Sadiku et al., 2022). Digital refugees, on the other hand, are individuals who have limited or no access to digital technology and are often displaced from the digital world due to various barriers such as economic, geographic, or educational factors (Combes, 2009). Providing an age-based demarcation, Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) contends that individuals born after 1980 are commonly referred to as digital natives, while those born prior to this era are categorized as digital immigrants. This distinction is rooted in the premise that digital natives have been exposed to digital technologies from a young age and have seamlessly integrated them into various aspects of their lives (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016)."

Digital natives, which constitutes Generation Z and Millennials, are individuals who have come of age in a world saturated with digital technology. Unlike their predecessors, they have been exposed to smartphones, social media, and constant connectivity from a young age, shaping their communication styles and worldview. Taking into cognizance the mass influx of digital natives in the workforce, the coinage "digital native workforce" has come into existence.

According to TechStep (2024), the term "digital native workforce" refers to a generation of employees who have entered the labour market during a time marked by the widespread integration of digital technologies into various aspects of life and work. This demographic, primarily made up of Millennials and Generation Z employees embrace a tech-centric approach to tasks, actively seeking innovative solutions and efficiencies through the strategic application of digital resources in the workplace.

Workforce demographic composition is dynamic and has significant impact on the ability of an organization to actualize its goals and objectives (James et al., 2021). This is why modern organizational analysts have advocated for the understanding of workforce generational diversity for organisations to be sustainable in the highly competitive and volatile business environment (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012).

Traditional formal organizations are starting to experience the impact of a multi-generational workforce. However, an influential segment of this workforce called "digital natives" comprising of Millennials and Gen-Z, are perceived to be disrupting established norms within formal institutions (Onukwuba, 2020). This group of employees seeks the flexibility to work from any location outside the office, prefers adaptable working hours, custom compensation, shorter job tenures, among other preferences. To the digital native workforce, traditional formal organizations are gradually becoming unattractive due to tenets such as physical availability at work, confinement to office location, abstract rules and regulations, just to mention a few (James et al., 2021).

	Traditionalists (Born before 1946)	Baby Boomers (1946 -1964)	Generation X (1965 -1979)	Millennials (1980 - 1994)	Generation Z (1995 - 2010)
Communication and feedback needs	"No news is good news"	"Performance review once a year is sufficient"	"Frequent, honest feedback"	"Immediate feedback"	"Frequent, prompt, swift and face-to-face feedback"
Working styles	Do what you're told, earn your way up the hierarchy by seniority	Compete and grind your way to the top	Independent, divide and conquer approach	Highly collaborative & vocal, speaking up is important	Self-directed and independent approach to learning
Motivations and priorities	Treated fairly Pass time	Recognition Staying relevant and useful	Provision	Find community, meaning and purpose	Supportive leaders, meaning and purpose
Work values and expectations	Loyalty "I am at my workplace for eight hours. If necessary, I stay late to complete an assignment"	Driven "I am at my workplace for eight to 10 hours. If necessary, I will take work home"	Efficiency "I try to complete my work at the office. If necessary, I will take it home"	Work-life integration "This is a 24/7 world, I work until 5:00 and will log on tonight"	Work-life balance "I don't want to think about work after working hours"

Source: Health Risk, 2022

The aforementioned behavioural tendencies of Millennials and Generation Z employees in the workplace has been met with disdain among organizational leaders, predominantly occupied by Baby Boomers and Generation X. To these leaders, ideas such as remote work, working two or three days in the week, amongst others suggest anti formal organization practices. Other problematic characteristics of the digital native workforce as identified by these managers includes; aversion to criticism (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), issues relating to feedback (Payton, 2015), and a preference for unconventional work schedules or processes beyond the conventional workplace model (Zemke et al., 2013). This suggests that organizational leaders are finding it difficult to understand the needs and preferences of the digital native workforce, hence, the need for scholarly and professional intervention to navigate the challenges posed by the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce.

The increasing presence of Millennials and Generation Z in the workplace has sparked considerable attention from scholars in organizational studies, particularly concerning the changing dynamics and generational shift in the workplace (Anderson et al., 2016). However, there is a paucity of research aimed at explaining how organizational leaders can meet the needs of digital native workforce in order to actualize organizational goals and objectives. This study endeavors to fill the existing gap in the research by offering a conceptual discourse on the needs of the digital-native generations, which are both millennials and Generation Z, as well as providing a practical approach as to how organizations can effectively address the needs of digital natives, thereby fostering a more productive and harmonious workforce.

Literature Review
Millennials in the Workplace

Millennials also known as Generation Y, Peter Pan or Boomerang generation, Echo Boomers, the Nintendo generation, Nexters, the Boomlet, amongst others, are those given birth to between the early 1980s and mid-1990s to early 2000s (Muthuveloo& Theo, 2017; Campbell et al., 2015). They represent a demographic shaped by historical events and characterized by distinct traits. According to James et al., (2021), This group, predominantly comprising the working class in formal employment are career multitaskers and are known for being pragmatic and technology enthusiasts in the formal working system. Statistics suggests that the millennial workforce according would be more than half of the world workforce population by year 2025 (Stewart et al., 2017).

The millennial workforce has been found to have preference for new forms of communication over traditional methods of communication within formal organizations (Ramli & Soeltan, 2019). Unlike their non-millennial counterparts, who often prefer long-term commitments to a single organization, retaining millennial employees poses a significant challenge as they are more inclined to switch to another organization or venture into entrepreneurship shortly after joining an organization (Özçelik, 2015; Kelleher, 2011).

Millennials' attitudes and behaviour in the workplace encompass a range of characteristics such as; preference for a work environment that promotes positive diversity, multitasking, flexibility, individualism, autonomy, social networking, and innovative communication through modern technologies. These attributes set them apart from non-millennials, including the silent generation, baby boomers, and generation X (Muthuveloo & Teoh, 2017; Ferri-Reed, 2010).

Millennials exhibit a distinctive integration of work and social life, viewing the workplace as an extension of their personal environment rather than a distinct realm governed by different values. (Roestenburg, 2020). As a result of their continuous engagement with the internet, their multitasking abilities are heightened, fostering a belief that they can effectively handle multiple tasks concurrently (Kim, 2018). Contrary to previous generations, millennials tend to mold the organization and the concept of work to align with their lifestyle, hence the question: how can the organization fit my circumstances? plays a pivotal role in their decision about an employment opportunity that think how they may contribute to the workplace. Baum (2019) perceives this attitude as the "work to live philosophy". This generation holds short-term expectations of work and is less inclined to make sacrifices for long-term benefits. If a job no longer aligns with their preferences, millennials are likely to move on to new opportunities. Their perceived narcissistic tendencies have led to the characterization of millennials as the "Me, me, me generation" (Wood, 2019). They often experience conflict and tensions as they try to cope with organizations structures and systems designed for the previous generations. According to Sadiku et al. (2022) they may find themselves at loggerheads with more experienced employees (immigrant natives) who expect automatic respect but may not receive it.

Millennials have a natural affinity for technology; therefore, they are likely to text each other during meetings whilst older generations are more inclined to engage in face-to-face discussions (Roestenburg, 2020). Their communication with managers tends to lean towards email or messaging apps like WhatsApp rather than in-person interactions (LaPorte & Wright, 2016). For millennials, the internet is as important as air, water, and food, having

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grown up in a world where technology is woven into the fabric of daily life. Their perspective on organizations is shaped by the belief that these organizations must accommodate them and their needs (Roestenburg, 2020).

Discussing how to manage millennials employees in the workplace, Stewart et al. (2017) asserts that adjusting the organizational culture is necessary to make the work environment appealing for Millennials. Explicating further, the scholar noted that if Millennials can be shown that their contributions align with larger objectives of the organization, a sense of belonging and an improvement in the overall working culture in the organization becomes imminent. Regular feedback is preferred by millennials as it aligns with their learning preferences.

Generation Z in the Workplace

Generation Z popularly referred to as Gen-Z are young adults or teenagers born from mid-1990s to early 2010s. The exact dates vary depending on the chosen author, but most commonly, the birth of this demographic ranges between1995–2010 (Hysa et al., 2022; Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). According to Lanier (2017), Gen Z is known to be the first true "digital native" generation. This is because during, their formative years was at a time where there was an unprecedented growth in Information and Communication Technology (Ezurike, 2023). They are more connected to their social media and the Internet than their Millennials counterparts and this accounts for they reason why they are often dubbed "Facebook generation" "post-Millennials," or "iGen" (Andrea et al., 2016; Magano et al., 2020).

This generation appears to be driven by the pursuit of their dream job and the desire to expand their skills Magano et al. (2020), suggesting that they may switch jobs more frequently compared to previous generations (Csiszárik-Kocsír & Garia-Fodor, 2018). Motivation factors for this cohort also include opportunities for career advancement, higher salaries, engaging and meaningful work, and being part of a good team Csiszárik-Kocsír & Garia-Fodor, 2018).

Due to their upbringing in a digital environment, Generation Z employees have cultivated distinct behavioural norms in the sharing and utilization of technology, setting them apart from previous generations. In the workplace as new comers, they bring their unique behaviours, identities, preferences, and approaches to using technology in the workplace (James et al., 2021).

Their attitude towards work is largely similar to the Millennials; however, they exhibit a lower level of commitment to work, emphasizing that performance is not a top priority. Instead, they prioritize happiness and well-being over their professional endeavours (Andrea et al., 2016).

In the workplace, this particular demographic is more willing to address their employers and challenge organizational policies if they find them unsuitable. They hold elevated expectations for their immediate supervisors, expecting them to assume a parental role and ensure their comfort (Roestenburg, 2020). Their psychological sense of entitlement, coupled with a need for acknowledgment and praise, requires accommodation in the contemporary workplace (Baum, 2019).

Highlighting their impact on the workplace, O'Boyle et al. (2017) cited in Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) contends that Generation Z plays a pivotal role in the introduction and usage of

advanced technology in the workplace. However, there is some uncertainty among researchers regarding their interpersonal communication and relationship abilities (Roestenburg, 2020). Furthermore, it is noted that members of Generation Z are influenced by the perception that companies typically utilize and value employees solely when their services are required (Scholz, 2019).

According to Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) there is a huge likelihood for Generation Z employees to change jobs more frequently; thus, Human Resources (HR) does not only have to worry about how to attract the new generation, but how to focus their efforts on providing Gen Zers with what they require to remain within the company.

To manage and retain this generation in the workplace, there are some characteristics of this generation that organizational leaders should take with utmost importance. They prioritize honesty in their leaders above all else, favour face-to-face communication with their superiors, appreciate open dialogue, possess a strong desire for their ideas to be heard and valued by their managers, and also anticipate a commitment to social responsibility (Roestenburg, 2020).

Employee Market Place (EMP) as an Emerging Paradigm

The concept of the Employee Marketplace (EMP) represents a paradigm shift in the way organizations perceive and engage their workforce. EMP challenges the traditional hierarchical model and positions employees as active participants in co-creating workplace culture and driving organizational outcomes. This approach recognizes that employees bring not only their skills but also their unique interests, values, and perspectives to the workplace. EMP fosters an environment where these attributes are harnessed to enhance innovation, productivity, and overall organizational performance.

To understand the identity of digital natives, the Employee Marketplace Framework, SELFIE, explains the distinctive behaviors and attitudes characterizing workplace Millennials and Gen Z. Each element in SELFIE—Self Confidence, Entitled, Learning, Freedom, Influence, and Expressive charts a formidable framework to understand the identity of Millennials and Gen Z in the workplace.

Self Confidence: The digital natives exhibit heightened self-confidence derived from their extensive social connections across generations. Two factors are largely responsible for that. Firstly, the abundance of accessible information plays a crucial role, facilitated by social media networks that enable them to exchange ideas and forge connections with individuals across distant corners of the globe. Secondly, their notable impact spans various regions, extending beyond the realms of successful online ventures and crowdfunding initiatives. For example, Millennial entrepreneurs in Africa are making substantial contributions in sectors such as IT, Agribusiness, creative industries, media and entertainment, as well as fintech and financial services.

Entitled: Of all the prevailing stereotypes about digital natives, one of the biggest and most cited is their sense of entitlement or what is referred to as the "entitlement complex" or what is described in psychology as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) which is commonly associated with entitlement or ones intrinsic belief that he or she is owed something. This entitlement complex has had negative consequences in the workplace such as; demands for higher pay, rule-breaking tendencies, requests for special privileges, amongst other.

Learning: Contrary to stereotypes, the digital natives actively engage in informal and unstructured learning, utilizing various forms of information acquisition. Their shorter attention spans drive a preference for collaborative and peer-driven learning environments. Proficient in leveraging technology for learning, Millennials and Gen Z prioritize relevance and multimedia formats in their educational pursuits, and this has contributed to the evolution of learning platforms such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

Freedom: Beyond monetary incentives, digital natives place a premium on work-life balance, flexible hours, and collaborative environments. Recognition and a degree of freedom are critical for retaining Millennials and Gen Zs in the workforce. The desire for flexibility extends to remote work options, with complaints about inflexibility cited as a common reason for job transitions.

Influence: Millennials and Gen Zs are both influenced by their peers and aspire to be influencers themselves. This has given birth to newer categories of influencers, from people with only a few thousand followers to those with millions of social followers. All of them have two things in common. Authentic voices, and the power to effectively engage their followers with aesthetic content. Gone are the days when brands used to rely mainly on celebrity endorsements and advertisements. Millennials and Gen Zers have disrupted trends in consumer behavior. They need social proof before they decide to buy anything.

Expressive: Digital natives are rewriting the communication rulebook, introducing unconventional expressions and deliberately misspelled words to convey tone, body language, humor, and even annoyance.

EMP Conceptual Framework
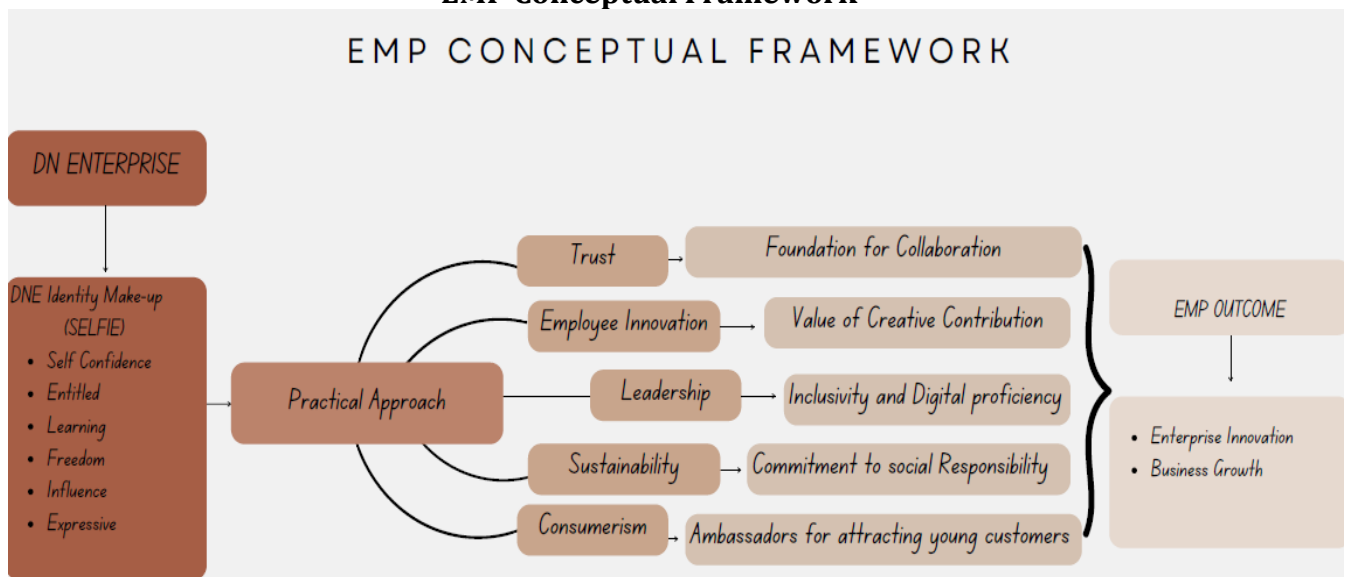
Trust

Trust, within the EMP framework, emerges as a foundational element essential for fostering a collaborative and innovative work environment. Within the EMP framework, trust is built through transparent leadership practices and consistent communication. Leaders play a

pivotal role in setting the tone for trust by being authentic, approachable, and accountable. When employees perceive that their leaders are trustworthy, they are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors, such as proposing innovative ideas, knowing that their contributions are valued and respected.

Trust is also nurtured through inclusive decision-making processes, where employees feel empowered to voice their opinions and know that their perspectives will be considered. The EMP framework encourages leaders to involve employees in key decisions related to innovation and problem-solving. As employees trust in the integrity of their leaders, they become more willing to step outside their comfort zones and contribute creatively in their respective organizations.

Employee Innovation:

Employee innovation, as envisioned in the EMP framework can provide insurmountable value in cultivating a dynamic and adaptive workforce, particularly in addressing the needs of digital natives within the workplace. Within this framework, employee innovation is not merely a solitary endeavour but a collaborative and inclusive process. The EMP model encourages the creation of mechanisms that facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas among employees and organizational leaders, thus promoting an environment where diverse perspectives are merged to drive creative solutions.

Motivation is also a core component of the EMP framework. This is hinged on the recognition and reward for the innovative contributions of digital natives in the workplace. The framework also envisions linking innovation to career progression, ensuring that employees are not only motivated by intrinsic rewards but also by the prospect of advancing within the organization through their creative contributions.

In providing resources for employee innovation, the EMP framework suggests the investment in continuous training and upskilling of digital natives to enable them contribute meaningfully to the overall growth of the organization. This framework suggests that organizational leaders should align employee innovation with strategic business goals, to ensure organizations are on a right path towards a future where adaptability, creativity, and technological prowess collectively drive success in the ever-evolving business environment.

Leadership: Within the EMP (Employee Marketplace) framework, Millennials and Gen Z leaders, marked by their adaptability, inclusivity, and digital proficiency, are positioned as catalysts for organizational change. The framework acknowledges their potential to drive innovation and actualize organizational goals and objectives.

However, the EMP framework also recognizes the challenges faced by Millennials and Gen Z leaders as they strive to balance their innovative spirit with the value derived from experience and mentorship. The framework emphasizes the importance of integrating the energy and fresh perspectives of Millennials and Gen Z leaders with the institutional knowledge and guidance provided by seasoned mentors, predominantly from the Baby Boomers and Generation X cohorts.

Consumerism: The EMP framework recognizes that Millennials and Gen Z employees hold a unique position within organizations, not only as workers but also as potential ambassadors to attract young customers. Their shared experiences, values, and digital fluency make them highly relatable to younger demographics. As these group of employees engage with customers through various touchpoints, their authenticity and understanding of contemporary trends can resonate deeply with young consumers. By harnessing the influence of Millennial and Gen Z employees, organizations can effectively connect with and appeal to

younger customer segments, which in turn, leads to driving growth and sustaining relevance in today's dynamic marketplace.

However, while capitalizing on the Gen Z market can be a lucrative strategy for businesses, it is imperative to pursue this approach with ethical considerations and social responsibility. It is crucial to acknowledge and respect the individuality and influential role of Gen Z as agents of social change, rather than merely viewing them as a conduit for profit. This balanced approach ensures that business strategies not only align with market trends but also uphold the dignity and diversity inherent within this generation.

Sustainability: Within the EMP (Employee Marketplace) framework, there is a distinct acknowledgment of the pivotal role played by Millennials and Gen Z employees in driving sustainability and social responsibility initiatives. The framework recognizes that these cohorts bring a unique blend of values, digital proficiency, and a heightened awareness of global issues to the organizational landscape. Their understanding of technology and their commitment to social and environmental causes make them instrumental in actualizing sustainability goals.

Furthermore, the EMP framework also recognizes that companies embracing sustainable practices not only align with the values of their employees but also gain favor with the discerning Millennials and Gen Z consumer base. This alignment creates a positive feedback loop within the EMP framework, where employee commitment to sustainability resonates with consumer expectations, contributing to enhanced organizational credibility. The model suggests that companies who lag behind in adopting sustainable practices risk not only losing favour with their own employees but also face the jeopardy of eroding credibility with the influential Millennials and Gen Z consumer demographic.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study was anchored on the Generational Cohort Theory and the Social Exchange Theory. The motive behind the adoption of these theories is their relevance to this study.

Generational Cohort Theory

The Generational Cohort Theory posits that the behaviour of different generations is caused by the circumstances those generations grew up in and were exposed to (Roestenburg, 2020). This presupposes that suggests that individuals who experienced the same social, economic and cultural events during their formative years are likely to maintain similar values throughout their lifetimes (Fernadez-Duran, 2016).

Generations share common characteristics based on shared experiences, and these collective experiences influences what each generation contributes to the professional environment (Padayachee, 2017). This assertion is quite logical as Millennials and Generation Z especially considering that Millennials and Generation Z, having come of age during a period of rapid technological advancements, are recognized for introducing significant technological impacts in the workplace. This theory maintains that the generational composition of the workplace can significantly impact a business's ultimate success. Literature from this perspective often portrays managers as passive individuals requiring instruction on how to deal with younger people in the workplace This perspective tends to cast the older generation as the antagonist in need of adapting to the younger generation's requirements.

This is of great relevance to this paper as it charts a framework to understand the influence of Millennials and Generation Z in the workplace. By implying that the behavior of different generations is shaped by the circumstances they experienced during their formative years, the Generational Cohort Theory provides a framework to understand the distinct

characteristics and contributions of Millennials and Generation Z in the workplace. Given that these cohorts emerged during a time of rapid technological advancements, their shared experiences have positioned them as trailblazers in introducing significant technological impacts within professional environments. In the context of this paper the theory further suggests that older generational cohorts such as the Baby Boomers and Generation X which are presumed to hold traditional values and workplace methodologies, find difficulties in understanding and embracing the unique perspectives, preferences, and work styles of their younger counterparts, thus suggesting the need for them to adapt to the evolving requirements of Millennials and Generation Z in the workplace.

Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory is a psychological theory that explains how people weigh the costs and benefits of social relationships, including those in the workplace (Blau, 1964). The theory contends that commitments are formed through a series of interactions between parties within a state of mutual interdependence (Onukwuba, 2020). According to this theory, employees who believe their employer values and supports them are inclined to reciprocate by demonstrating commitment to the organization and performing better at work (Eisenberger et al., 2010).

Proponents of this theory suggests that relationships develop into trusting, loyal, and mutually committed connections, as long as the involved parties adhere to certain exchange rules, often centered around reciprocity and repayment. These rules dictate that the actions of one-party prompt a corresponding response or actions from the other party. The theory suggests that the level of engagement exhibited by millennials and Gen Z employees in the workplace, is likely to vary based on the support and backing they receive from the organization (Onukwuba, 2020). The foregoing implies that when organizations provide employees with advantageous benefits, employees are likely to respond by going above and beyond their regular duties.

Over the years both theoretical and empirical researchers have utilized the Social Exchange Theory (SET) to investigate the correlation between flexible work arrangements and employee outcomes. Conversely, Critiques of this theory point out its concentration on the individual its limited capacity to explain social relationships are formed and maintained (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Despite these criticisms, the Social Exchange Theory remains a popular theory in the field of organizational behaviour because of its usefulness in understanding how flexibility in the workplace can influence employee attitudes and behaviours (Kimani & Mose, 2023)

The Social Exchange Theory is of great relevance to this study, as it serves as the theoretical linchpin for the Employee Market Place (EMP) framework. The EMP framework, built upon the pillars of Trust, Employee Innovation, Leadership, and Sustainability, aligns seamlessly with the foundational principles of the Social Exchange Theory. By recognizing the significance of trust, innovation, leadership, and sustainability, the study aligns itself with the core tenets of the Social Exchange Theory, providing insights into the variables that enhance workplace productivity among Millennials and Gen Z employees.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. Ogunsanya et. al (2019) asserts that "survey is the study of a specific group or population to find out opinion, describe behaviour, predict behaviour and explain behaviour. The survey research design was considered appropriate for this study because the population of the study is a large one and survey method helps in

choosing a sample which is representative of the entire population of study. Questionnaires served as the instrument of data collection for this study and was administered online, through the use of Google forms. The study population for this study comprised of millennials and Gen Z employees across different organization in Lagos state. The rationale behind choosing Lagos state, Nigeria as the study population is hinged on the mass number of companies in the state.

Results

Table 1: Presentation of Demographic Data

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	518	51.8%
	Female	482	48.3%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
Level	Entry Level	248	24.8%
	Mid-level	274	27.4%
	Senior Level	238	23.8%
	Executive Level	240	24.8
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
Job Sector	Financial services	302	30.2%
	Marketing communication	243	24.3%
	Digital and Technology	124	12.4%
	Hospitality	78	7.8%
	Academia	86	8.6%
	Self Employed	87	8.7%
	Others	80	8.0%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
Years of Experience	1-5 years	262	26.2%
	6-10 years	205	20.5%
	11-15 years	180	18.0%
	16-20 years	181	18.1%
	21 years above	172	17.2%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

The provided demographic data in Table 1 reveals a balanced representation in terms of gender, with 51.8% males and 48.3% females among the surveyed individuals. Career levels are distributed across entry level (24.8%), mid-level (27.4%), senior level (23.8%), and executive level (24.8%), indicating a relatively even distribution of professionals at different stages of their careers. In terms of job sectors, the Financial Services sector stands out with

30.2% representation, followed by Marketing Communication at 24.3%, and Digital and Technology at 12.4%. Notably, self-employed individuals constitute 8.7% of the surveyed population. Sectors like Hospitality, Academia, and Others have smaller but diverse representations. Examining years of experience, the majority of respondents fall within the 1-5 years category (26.2%) or 6-10 years category (20.5%).

Table 2: Trust

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How do you perceive the level of trust between Millennials and Gen Z employees and	High Trust	71	7.1%
	Moderate Trust	651	65.1%
	Low Trust	235	23.5%
	Unsure	43	4.3%
management within your organization?	**Total**	**1000**	**100%**
What impact does the trust between Millennials and Gen Z employees	Positive Impact	753	75.3%
	Negative Impact	125	12.5%
	No Impact	122	12.2%
and management have on workplace productivity and innovation?	**Total**	**1000**	**100.0%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data in table 2 indicates that a majority of respondents, comprising 65.1%, perceive a moderate level of trust between Gen Z employees and management. Additionally, 7.1% of respondents believe there is a high level of trust, while 23.5% perceive a low level of trust. A smaller portion, 4.3%, expresses uncertainty about the level of trust. These findings implies that a significant proportion of the respondents sampled for this study perceive a moderate level of trust between Millennials and Gen Z employees and management various organizations.

The findings in table 2 also revealed that a substantial majority of respondents, totalling 75.3%, believe that the trust between Gen Z employees and management has a positive impact on workplace productivity and innovation. In contrast, 12.5% perceive a negative impact, and 12.2% express a neutral stance on the matter. These results highlight a prevailing positive sentiment among the surveyed individuals regarding the influence of trust in enhancing productivity and innovation among Millennials and Gen Z employees in the workplace.

Table 3: Employee Innovation

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How comfortable do you feel in suggesting innovative ideas or solutions in your workplace??	Very comfortable	622	62.2%
	Somewhat comfortable	262	26.2%
	Not comfortable	81	8.1%
	Neutral	35	3.5%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
To what extent has any specific innovations or changes initiated by Millennials or Gen Z employees positively impacted your workplace?	Very Large Extent	137	13.7%
	Large Extent	345	34.5%
	Moderate Extent	448	44.8%
	No Extent	70	7.0%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
What barriers, if any, do you believe Millennials and Gen Z employees face when trying to introduce innovative ideas in the workplace?	Resistance from senior management	143	14.3%
	Lack of support or resources	345	34.5%
	Traditional workplace culture	404	40.4%
	Insufficient recognition or acknowledgement of ideas	108	10.8%
	Others	0	0%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3 reveals that a significant portion, representing 62.2%, reported feeling very comfortable expressing innovative ideas. Another substantial group, comprising 26.2%, indicated feeling somewhat comfortable in sharing their innovative thoughts. On the contrary, 8.1% of respondents mentioned not feeling comfortable sharing innovative ideas, while 3.5% reported a neutral stance.

Additionally, the findings from table 3 reveal that 137 respondents representing 13.7%, believe that innovations initiated by Millennials and Gen Z employees have had a very large extent of positive impact in their workplace, 345 respondents comprising 34.5% of study's sample, reported that innovations Initiated by Millennials and Gen Z employees have positively impacted their workplace to a large extent, while a significant majority constituting

of 448 respondents disclosed that changes initiated by Millennials and Gen Z's in the workplace have had a moderate extent of positive impact in their workplace. Conversely, 70 respondents (7%) indicated that there has been no extent of positive impact from innovations initiated by Millennials and Gen Z employees. These findings suggest that a higher proportion of the surveyed individuals holds a positive perspective on the contributions and innovations introduced by Millennials and Gen Z employees, indicating a favourable perception of their impact on the workplace.

Table 3 further suggests that a notable majority of respondents perceive traditional workplace culture as the predominant barrier faced by Gen Z employees when introducing innovative ideas. This is evident as 404 respondents, constituting 40.4% of the participants pointed to traditional workplace culture as a significant obstacle. In contrast, resistance from senior management is reported by 14.3%, lack of support or resources by 34.5%, and insufficient recognition and acknowledgment of ideas by 10.8%. The findings underscore a prevailing sentiment among the surveyed individuals that the rigidity of traditional workplace culture poses a significant challenge for Gen Z employees in their endeavors to bring innovative ideas to the workplace.

Table 4: Leadership

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How does your organization perceive the Millennials and Gen Z cohorts?	Just a numerical strength	158	15.8%
	Innovation catalysts	360	36.0%
	Change agents	182	18.2%
	Tech pioneers	237	23.7%
	Others	63	6.3%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
Millennials and Gen Z leaders prioritize technology adeptness in the work place?	Strongly agree	388	38.8%
	Agree	506	50.6%
	Neutral	102	10.2%
	Disagree	4	4%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the data in table 4, 15.8% of respondents view Millennials and Gen Z employees as merely a numerical strength. The majority, constituting 36.0%, considers Millennials and Gen Z employees as innovation catalysts, emphasizing their role in driving change and creative advancements. Additionally, 18.2% perceive them as change agents, while another significant group, accounting for 23.7%, identifies them as tech pioneers, emphasizing their role in driving technological advancements. A smaller portion, 6.3%, falls into the "Others" category. These findings suggests that Millennials and Gen Z employees are not only a demographic force but also as catalysts for innovation, agents of change, and pioneers in technology in the workplace.

Based on the survey responses, majority of respondents, comprising 506 participants (50.6%) strongly agree that Gen Z leaders prioritize technology adeptness in the workplace. Additionally, 38.8% agree with this sentiment. A smaller percentage, 10.2%, expresses a neutral stance on the matter, while only 0.4% disagree. Interestingly, no respondents strongly disagree with the idea that Gen Z leaders prioritize technology adeptness. These findings indicate a widespread perception that Gen Z leaders are inclined to prioritize and value technological proficiency in the workplace.

Table 5: Sustainability

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Millennials and Gen Z employees place a high value on sustainability and social responsibility in the workplace?	Yes	1000	100%
	No	0	0%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**
Millennials and Gen Z employees values the promotion of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the work place?	Strongly agree	225	22.5%
	Agree	561	56.1%
	Neutral	182	18.2%
	Disagree	32	3.2%
	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
	Total	**1000**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data in table 5 indicates that all respondents sampled for this study hold a strong belief that Millennials and Gen Z employees place a high value on sustainability and social responsibility in the workplace. The data in table 5 also revealed that a significant majority of respondents, accounting for 561 respondents (56.1%), agree that Millennials and Gen Z employees value the promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. An additional 22.5% strongly agree with this perception. A smaller portion, 18.2%, expresses a neutral stance on the matter, while only 3.2% disagree. Notably, Millennials and Gen Z employees value the promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. These findings suggest a prevailing positive sentiment among the surveyed individuals regarding the value placed by Millennials and Gen Z employees on the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion within organizational settings.

Discussion of Findings

Trust: In terms of trust dynamics, a moderate level of trust between Millennial and Gen Z employees and management is perceived by the majority (561 respondents). Importantly, a substantial 753 respondents (75.3%) believe that trust positively influences workplace productivity and innovation, underlining the importance of fostering trustful relationships within organizations. These findings is in consonance with the tenets of the EMP model which suggests that that trust from the management plays a pivotal role in enhancing workplace productivity amongst Millennials and Gen Z employees. The findings also tally with the

viewpoints of the Social Exchange Theory which presupposes that employees who believe their employer trust them are inclined to reciprocate by demonstrating commitment to the organization and performing better at work

Employee Innovation: Notably, a considerable portion of respondents feels comfortable sharing innovative ideas within their workplace with 302 respondents (30.2%) expressing high comfort levels in sharing innovative ideas in their workplace. Similarly, 448 respondents (44.8%) opined that innovations and changes initiated by Millennials and Gen Z employees, have had a positive impact in different organizations to a moderate extent. However, traditional workplace culture emerges as a predominant barrier faced by Millennials and Gen Z employees when introducing innovative ideas within the workplace, with 404 respondents (40.4%) identifying it as a significant obstacle. These findings align with the view of O'Boyle et al. (2017) who contends that Generation Z plays a pivotal role in the introduction and usage of advanced technology in the workplace. The findings are also in correlation with the position of the Generational Cohort Theory which asserts that Millennials and Generation Z, having come of age during a period of rapid technological advancements, are recognized for introducing significant technological impacts in the workplace. The findings are also in tandem with the viewpoint of James et al. (2021) who suggests that to the digital native workforce, traditional formal organizations are gradually becoming unattractive due to the conventional workplace culture.

Leadership: Findings from this section provided insights into how Gen Z is perceived in leadership roles. A significant portion of respondents sees the Millennials and Gen Z cohorts not just as a numerical force but as innovation catalysts (360 respondents) and change agents (182 respondents). Furthermore, 894 respondents (89.4%) believes that Millennials and Gen Z leaders prioritize technology adeptness in the workplace, reinforcing the perception of their tech-savvy nature. The findings align with the viewpoint of James et al. (2021) who articulates that in the workplace, the Millennials and Generation Z cohort bring their unique behaviours, identities, preferences, and approaches to using technology in the workplace.

Sustainability: Findings from this section revealed that Millennials and Gen Z employees place high value on sustainability and social responsibility in the workplace. Also, 786 respondents (78.6%) believes that Millennials and Gen Z employees value the promotion diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. These findings are in consonance with the viewpoints of Roestenburg (2020) who asserts that Millennials and Gen Z employees in the workplace possess a strong desire for their ideas to be heard and valued by their managers, and also anticipate a commitment to sustainable work place values such as diversity, equity, inclusion and social responsibility.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that trust, a formidable platform to share innovative ideas, involvement in leadership positions and a commitment to sustainable work place values such as diversity, equity, inclusion and social responsibility, can play a pivotal role in engaging and enhancing workplace productivity among Millennials and Gen Z employees within the work environment.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby given:

- Organizational leaders should encourage a workplace culture that values inclusivity and embraces diverse perspectives. Organizational leaders should foster an

environment where employees, including Millennials and Gen Z, feel comfortable sharing innovative ideas without fear of judgment.

- Organizations should prioritize the technological adeptness of Millennials and Gen Z employees. This can be done by Implementing training programs to enhance digital skills across the workforce and create a tech-friendly environment. This not only meets the expectations of Millennials and Gen Z but also positions the organization for success in an increasingly digital landscape.
- Companies should actively address the challenges posed by traditional workplace cultures, identified as a significant barrier for Gen Z innovation. Organizations should consider implementing flexibility in work structures, promoting a more collaborative and open environment, and revisiting outdated policies to create a workplace that accommodates diverse thinking styles.
- Trust is foundational for fostering a positive work environment that enhances both productivity and innovation. Therefore, organizations should recognize the importance of trust between Millennials and Gen Z employees and management, by making concerted efforts towards building and maintaining trust through transparent communication, fair policies, and inclusive decision-making processes.
- Organizations should adopt the EMP model in engaging the Millennials and Gen Z demographic in the workplace.

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Cite this article:

Published by

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