

## Multigenerational Leadership in Healthcare: Similarities and Differences in Styles

<sup>1</sup>Eliza B. Ayo, PhD, <sup>2</sup>Sr. Adelina B. Javellana, SPC, MAN, MHA, FHRRM, FPCHA, <sup>3</sup>Paul C. Brigino, MD, PhD, <sup>4</sup>Alfredo D. Padua Jr. MD, PhD, <sup>5</sup>Nathaniel Francis G. Precilla, MD, PhD

<sup>1</sup>Centro Escolar University, Manila, Philippines.

<sup>2</sup>President, Philippine College of Hospital Administrators.

<sup>3, 4, 5</sup>St. Jude College-PHINMA, Manila, Philippines.



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### Corresponding Author:

Eliza B. Ayo, PhD

**Abstract:** This study investigates generational differences in leadership styles among healthcare professionals, focusing on Generation Z (Gen Z), Generation Y (Gen Y), and Generation X (Gen X). A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 122 participants from various healthcare institutions. Leadership preferences were assessed using a 15-item questionnaire measuring collaborative, adaptive, and supportive leadership characteristics on a 4-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics and comparative analyses were employed to identify similarities and differences across generational cohorts. Findings indicate that all three generations strongly value collaborative and adaptive leadership, with Gen Y and Gen Z reporting higher preferences for flexibility, spokesperson roles, and inclusive decision-making than Gen X. By contrast, Gen X respondents scored lower on public-facing and developmental aspects, reflecting a more pragmatic, task-oriented approach. These results highlight the evolving nature of healthcare leadership, where younger professionals lean toward flexible and empathetic models, while older cohorts retain more traditional tendencies. The study contributes to understanding multigenerational dynamics in healthcare organizations and offers insights for leadership training and workforce development. Implications are discussed in relation to organizational performance, patient outcomes, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Keywords:** *Generational leadership, Healthcare organizations, Collaborative leadership, Adaptability, Multigenerational workforce.*

### Cite this Article

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## Introduction

Healthcare organizations today are characterized by a multigenerational workforce. Generation X (1965–1980), Generation Y or Millennials (1981–1996), and Generation Z (1997–2012) bring distinct perspectives, values, and leadership preferences shaped by their formative contexts. Understanding these differences is essential for optimizing team performance, improving patient outcomes, and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

Recent literature highlights both opportunities and challenges in managing multigenerational teams. While collaboration, inclusivity, and adaptability are increasingly emphasized in healthcare leadership [7], evidence also suggests generational variation in how authority, mentoring, and public-facing roles are

perceived [20]. The effective management of these differences supports the development of resilient healthcare systems, aligning with SDG 3 (Health and Well-being) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

This study investigates how leadership preferences differ across Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z healthcare professionals, identifying shared strengths and meaningful generational divides.

## Literature Review

### Generational Theory

The theoretical foundation for understanding generational differences has been enhanced through a systematic review of

multigenerational team dynamics in healthcare settings. Their research demonstrates that generational effects can significantly influence leadership preferences, communication styles, and organizational expectations, particularly in healthcare environments where interdisciplinary collaboration is essential [7]. These studies have provided valuable insights into how generational differences manifest in nursing and healthcare management contexts. A comprehensive qualitative study examining differences between nurses and nurse managers in Qatar reveals that shared experiences during formative years create lasting imprints on individuals' worldviews and behavioral patterns, influencing leadership preferences throughout their careers [1].

## Leadership Style Theory

Contemporary leadership theory in healthcare has evolved beyond traditional hierarchical models to emphasize collaborative, transformational, and adaptive leadership approaches. Some studies specifically examined transformational and other leadership styles among Generation Z nursing students, finding that collaborative leadership has gained particular prominence in healthcare settings due to the interdisciplinary nature of patient care and the need for effective teamwork [2].

In nursing, the importance of transformational leadership in healthcare settings has been reinforced by recent research inspires and motivate followers to achieve goals beyond their self-interests align particularly well with the collaborative and supportive leadership characteristics valued across different generational cohorts [1].

## Generational Characteristics in Healthcare

Generation X professionals in healthcare are characterized by their independence, pragmatism, and results-oriented approach to leadership. The American Hospital Association notes that they value work-life balance and prefer direct communication styles while demonstrating adaptability to new technologies and processes that have emerged throughout their careers [3].

Generation Y (Millennials) on the other hand, demonstrate distinct characteristics in their approach to leadership and workplace engagement. This cohort is typically collaborative, technology-savvy, and purpose-driven in their leadership approaches [20]. They seek meaningful work experiences and prefer participative decision-making processes, while valuing continuous feedback and professional development opportunities.

Generation Z represents the newest cohort entering this field, their leadership characteristics are increasingly being studied in this context. This generation is characterized by digital nativity, entrepreneurial thinking, and a strong preference for diverse and inclusive work environments [2]. Their leadership styles continue to evolve as they gain professional experience in healthcare settings.

These recent studies show that successful multigenerational teams benefit from clear structure, mutual respect, and inclusive practices [7]. When properly managed, generational diversity can lead to stronger team performance, competitive advantages, and improved organizational outcomes [11].

## Research Questions

1. What are the preferred leadership styles among Generation Z, Generation Y, and Generation X healthcare professionals?
2. How do the leadership style preferences of these generations differ?
3. How can the identified differences and similarities in leadership styles be used in the development of effective leadership training and organizational strategies in healthcare settings?

## Conceptual Framework

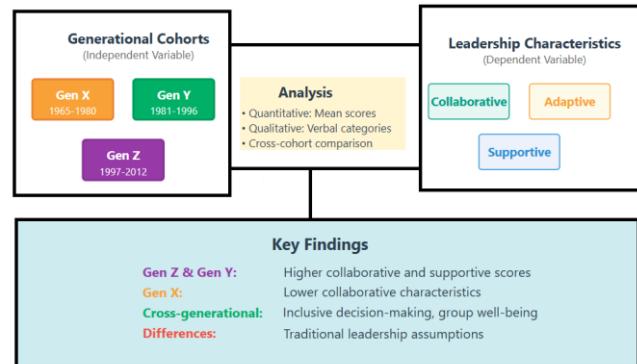


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

### Design and Participants

A cross-sectional survey design was employed. A total of 122 healthcare professionals participated, comprising 30 Gen Z (24.6%), 53 Gen Y (43.4%), and 39 Gen X (32.0%) respondents. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling from medical institutions in the Philippines.

### Instrument

Leadership preferences were measured using a structured 15-item questionnaire covering collaborative, adaptive, and supportive leadership traits. Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *Not me at all* to 4 = *exactly like me*). Content validity was established via expert review, and internal consistency reliability achieved acceptable levels (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

### Data Collection and Analysis

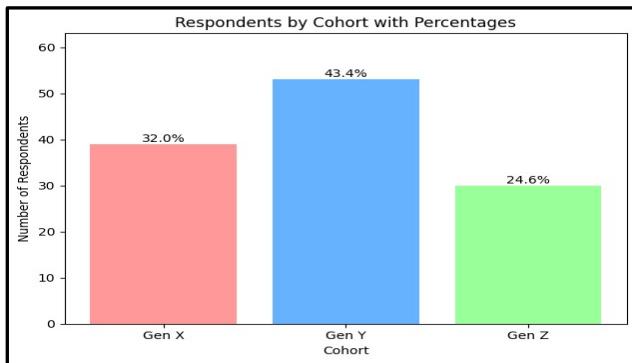
Demographic variables (age, gender, education, position) were collected. Descriptive statistics summarized participant characteristics and leadership scores. One-way ANOVA with Tukey post hoc tests was used to examine differences across generations. Effect sizes ( $\eta^2$ ) were calculated to assess the magnitude of differences. Data were analyzed using SPSS v.26.

### Ethical Considerations

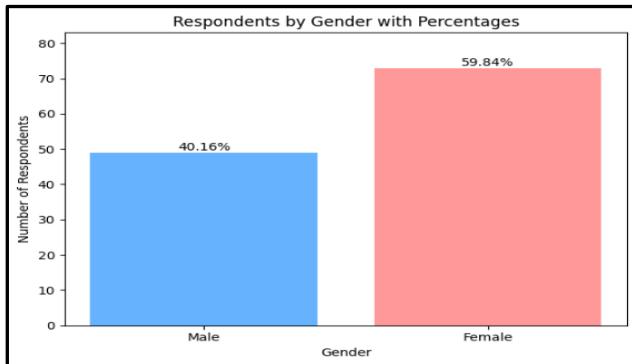
The study was reviewed and approved by the Centro Escolar University Institutional Ethics Review Board. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained.

## Results

### Demographic Characteristics on Age and Gender



**Fig.1. Generational Cohort**



**Fig.2. Gender**

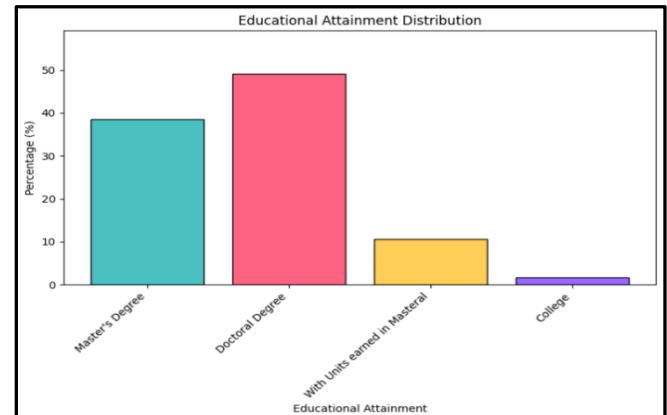
Figure 2 presents the generational cohort distribution, revealing a skewed sample toward younger to middle-aged respondents. Generation Y, or Millennials, dominate the sample with 53 respondents (43.4%), indicating a strong representation of individuals who are typically in the early to mid-stages of their careers and potentially emerging or established in leadership roles. Following this, Generation X accounts for 39 respondents (32.0%), representing a significant but smaller group of more experienced, mid-to-late career professionals. Generation Z is the smallest cohort, with 30 respondents (24.6%), reflecting limited representation from the youngest generation, many of whom may still be entering the workforce or occupying junior positions. Overall, the combined younger generations (Gen Y and Gen Z) make up 68% of the sample, which could impact the study's findings, especially if it focuses on leadership perceptions or styles. Younger cohorts may favor or embody different approaches—such as more collaborative or innovative leadership—compared to older generations. Younger leaders (Gen Y/Z) prefer autocratic or transformational styles, while older leaders (Gen X) shift toward democratic or laissez-faire approaches [22], [13], [20], [4]. The data's Gen Y dominance (43.4%) and lower Gen Z representation (24.6%) suggest a mix of transformational and possibly autocratic tendencies.

On the other hand, figure 3 shows the gender distribution of the sample, revealing a female-majority composition. Females account for 73 respondents, representing nearly 60% (59.84%) of the total, while males comprise 49 respondents (40.16%). This imbalance indicates that the data may primarily reflect perspectives or behaviors more typical of female respondents. In the context of leadership studies, such a gender skew could influence the findings, potentially amplifying gender-specific leadership styles or traits, especially if the study examines self-reported or observed leadership behaviors. The combined insights from the data indicate that the sample is predominantly female and heavily focused on

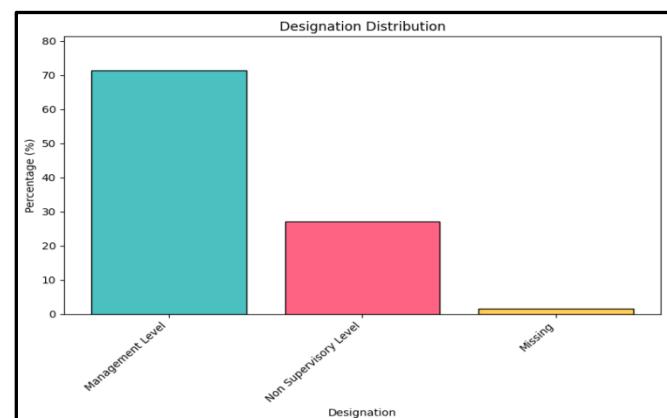
Generation Y, which may highlight leadership dynamics typical of a demographic often associated with adaptive and inclusive leadership styles. This composition suggests that the findings might underrepresent more traditional or hierarchical leadership approaches that are more common among older, male-dominated groups. For example, in a leadership study context, Gen Z females might be more inclined toward transformational leadership, while Gen X males could favor transactional styles. Younger generations (Gen Y, Gen Z) favor visionary, collaborative styles, while older cohorts (Gen X) may align with traditional or delegative approaches [16], [17]. This aligns with the data's generational skew toward Gen Y. Age and gender interact with contextual factors like education and organizational setting, with older female leaders potentially blending transformational and situational autocratic styles [13], [4].

The high female representation in this sample is not a limitation but rather a significant observation of progress. It provides empirical evidence of the increasing presence of women in leadership roles within healthcare. This serves as a direct contribution to understanding Target 5.5, from the perspective of Sustainable Development Goal 5, which calls for ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership [23]. The findings indicate that this demographic group, which is now increasingly in positions of leadership, demonstrates a strong preference for collaborative, democratic, and transformational styles. This suggests a positive trend toward more inclusive and effective leadership in the sector.

## **Educational Attainment and Organizational Position**



**Fig.4. Educational Attainment**



**Fig.5. Organizational Position**

Figure 4 illustrates the educational attainment of the sample, which is notably highly educated. The largest group consists of 60 respondents (49.18%) holding doctoral degrees, indicating a significant proportion with advanced academic qualifications such as PhDs or their equivalents. Following this, 47 respondents (38.52%) have earned master's degrees, comprising a substantial segment with graduate-level education. Additionally, 13 respondents (10.66%) have completed some units toward a master's degree but have not yet finished the program, while only a small minority of 2 respondents (1.64%) possesses solely an undergraduate college education. The sample is heavily skewed toward advanced degrees, with 87.7% holding either masters or doctoral qualifications. This suggests the participants are likely professional and with leadership roles often require high levels of education. Higher education (master's or doctoral degrees) is strongly associated with transformational and democratic leadership styles, as it fosters skills like critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and strategic vision [4], [15], [19]. Leaders with lower education (e.g., college only) may lean toward transactional or autocratic styles [13]. The data's 98.36% graduate-educated sample suggests a strong transformational or democratic leadership orientation.

Figure 5 presents the organizational positions of respondents, revealing a leadership-heavy sample. A majority, 87 respondents

## Leadership Style Analysis

**Table 1: Leadership Style of Gen Z (n=30, 24.6%)**

| Statement   | Mean Score | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|------------|-----------------------|
| Teams work best with everyone involved in decisions | 3.64       | Highly characteristic |
| Good at bringing out the best in others             | 3.58       | Highly characteristic |
| Can take on leadership but not a 'leader'           | 3.20       | Characteristic        |
| Happy to be the spokesperson                        | 3.45       | Characteristic        |
| Good at adapting to situations                      | 3.70       | Highly characteristic |
| Determined to push projects forward                 | 3.65       | Highly characteristic |
| Allow mistakes for learning                         | 3.50       | Highly characteristic |
| Enjoy working on committees                         | 3.40       | Characteristic        |
| Group well-being is most important                  | 3.55       | Highly characteristic |
| See situations from many perspectives               | 3.60       | Highly characteristic |
| Don't mind long discussions for thoroughness        | 3.30       | Characteristic        |
| Good at organizing others                           | 3.45       | Characteristic        |
| Abide by formal decisions with proper procedures    | 3.25       | Characteristic        |
| Set high standards for self and others              | 3.50       | Highly characteristic |
| Love helping others develop                         | 3.65       | Highly characteristic |

Gen Z's leadership style is predominantly transformational and servant-oriented, reflected in their high scores in adaptability (3.70), project drive (3.65), and development (3.65). They demonstrate a strong capacity for fostering innovation through inclusivity and empathy, qualities that can significantly enhance team engagement and retention in modern workplaces. However, their lower scores in formal aspects—such as self-identifying as a "leader" (3.20)—suggest reluctance toward authoritative roles, which may contribute to underrepresentation in executive positions. This indicates a need for targeted training in areas such

(71.31%), occupy management-level positions, likely including roles such as managers, directors, or executives. In contrast, 33 respondents (27.05%) are in non-supervisory positions, potentially staff or technical roles without direct leadership responsibilities. There are 2 respondents (1.64%) with missing data on this variable. The predominance of management-level participants supports the idea that the study targets individuals in leadership roles, which may emphasize leadership style findings compared to perspectives from non-supervisory employees. Management-level leaders tend to adopt transformational or democratic styles to inspire and align teams, while non-supervisory roles are more associated with transactional or autocratic leadership perceptions ([5], [21]). The data's 71.31% management-level respondents likely drive transformational trends, while the 27.05% non-supervisory group may report more structured styles.

Higher education enhances transformational leadership in senior roles, while lower education in non-supervisory roles correlates with transactional or autocratic styles [4], [15]. The data's combination of high education and management roles strongly suggests a transformational leadership bias, potentially tempered by transactional preferences among the small non-supervisory or college-only groups.

as procedural compliance, delegation, and public speaking to strengthen their formal leadership presence. While the findings are based on a small sample size (n=30), which limits generalizability, the 24.6% subset suggests a focused group within the study. Nonetheless, the patterns observed align closely with Gen Z's values, shaped by social media, economic instability, and cultural diversity, which collectively drive their preference for ethical, flexible leadership styles over traditional command-and-control approaches.

Organizations aiming to harness Gen Z's strengths should design roles that incorporate collaborative tools and establish mentorship programs to support their development. At the individual level, Gen Z leaders would benefit from workshops that build confidence in formal leadership skills, such as delegation and public advocacy.

The analysis highlights Gen Z's potential as empathetic and adaptive leaders in an evolving world, with opportunities to further enhance their impact through structured development and broader validation.

**Table 2: Leadership Style of Gen Y (n=53, 43.4%)**

| Statement   | Mean Score | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|------------|-----------------------|
| Teams work best with everyone involved in decisions | 3.64       | Highly characteristic |
| Good at bringing out the best in others             | 3.58       | Highly characteristic |
| Can take on leadership but not a 'leader'           | 3.20       | Characteristic        |
| Happy to be the spokesperson                        | 3.45       | Characteristic        |
| Good at adapting to situations                      | 3.70       | Highly characteristic |
| Determined to push projects forward                 | 3.65       | Highly characteristic |
| Allow mistakes for learning                         | 3.50       | Highly characteristic |
| Enjoy working on committees                         | 3.40       | Characteristic        |
| Group well-being is most important                  | 3.55       | Highly characteristic |
| See situations from many perspectives               | 3.60       | Highly characteristic |
| Don't mind long discussions for thoroughness        | 3.30       | Characteristic        |
| Good at organizing others                           | 3.45       | Characteristic        |
| Abide by formal decisions with proper procedures    | 3.25       | Characteristic        |
| Set high standards for self and others              | 3.50       | Highly characteristic |
| Love helping others develop                         | 3.65       | Highly characteristic |

Gen Y's leadership style is marked by high scores in adaptability (3.70), project drive (3.65), and development (3.65), which mirror the strengths of Gen Z and indicate a strong alignment with innovative, people-focused leadership. Their collaborative (3.52 average) and developmental (3.58 average) tendencies further position them well for modern workplaces that emphasize teamwork and engagement. However, like Gen Z, Gen Y shows lower scores in formal leadership roles (3.20–3.45), suggesting some discomfort with traditional authority or bureaucratic processes, which may limit their progression in hierarchical organizations. Targeted training in public speaking, procedural navigation, and formal leadership responsibilities could help address these gaps and prepare them for broader leadership roles.

These patterns reflect Gen Y's formative experiences, shaped by economic instability and the rise of social media, which appear to align closely with Gen Z's values and approaches. While the larger sample size provides stronger confidence in these findings, the nearly identical scores between the two generations raise questions about differentiation, suggesting the need for further clarification or additional methodological rigor.

For organizations, leveraging Gen Y's strengths through collaborative tools such as Asana and Trello, combined with flexible structures and mentorship programs, will maximize their effectiveness. At the individual level, Gen Y professionals would benefit from skill development in formal leadership and public representation to succeed in traditional organizational settings. For researchers, future studies should explore whether the identical patterns across generations reflect genuine convergence in values and leadership styles or result from methodological limitations, with comparisons to older generations and qualitative approaches providing additional insights.

Gen Y's leadership profile is collaborative, adaptive, and growth-oriented, closely mirroring Gen Z's. This similarity suggests shared generational values that are well-suited to dynamic and inclusive workplaces but may be less effective in rigid, hierarchical contexts. If the identical scores are not a coincidence, both generations appear poised to redefine leadership as flexible and inclusive, though further investigation is needed to uncover potential nuances between them.

**Table 3: Leadership Style of Gen X (n=39, 32.0%)**

| Statement   | Mean Score | Verbal Interpretation   |
|---|------------|-------------------------|
| Teams work best with everyone involved in decisions | 3.51       | Highly characteristic   |
| Good at bringing out the best in others             | 3.41       | Characteristic          |
| Can take on leadership but not a 'leader'           | 2.82       | Somewhat characteristic |
| Happy to be the spokesperson                        | 2.92       | Somewhat characteristic |
| Good at adapting to situations                      | 3.62       | Highly characteristic   |

|  |      |                       |
|--|------|-----------------------|
| Determined to push projects forward              | 3.54 | Highly characteristic |
| Allow mistakes for learning                      | 3.33 | Characteristic        |
| Enjoy working on committees                      | 3.44 | Characteristic        |
| Group well-being is most important               | 3.51 | Highly characteristic |
| See situations from many perspectives            | 3.41 | Characteristic        |
| Don't mind long discussions for thoroughness     | 3.23 | Characteristic        |
| Good at organizing others                        | 3.31 | Characteristic        |
| Abide by formal decisions with proper procedures | 3.15 | Characteristic        |
| Set high standards for self and others           | 3.23 | Characteristic        |
| Love helping others develop                      | 3.44 | Characteristic        |

Gen X demonstrates notable strengths in adaptability (3.62) and project drive (3.54), making them particularly effective in dynamic or transitional environments such as organizations undergoing restructuring or change. Their balanced collaboration score (3.42 average) reflects a steady approach to teamwork, which suits leadership in more stable workplace settings. However, their lower scores in formal leadership roles (2.82), spokesperson responsibilities (2.92), and developmental traits (3.39 average) suggest potential struggles with public-facing leadership or mentoring younger colleagues. Furthermore, their skepticism toward bureaucracy (3.15) may create friction in rigid or highly hierarchical corporate cultures.

These tendencies reflect Gen X's generational context as the "middle child" of leadership, bridging the traditional, authority-driven style of Boomers and the more digital, inclusive style of younger generations. Their pragmatism and independence make them versatile leaders, but they are less naturally aligned with the empathetic, inclusive ideals now emphasized in modern workplaces.

For organizations, Gen X's adaptability and drive can be leveraged effectively in roles focused on change management or operational

efficiency, while their comfort with committee structures (3.44) makes them valuable contributors in task forces and decision-making groups without requiring extensive public-facing roles. At the individual level, Gen X leaders would benefit from developing mentoring and public advocacy skills to align with contemporary expectations of empathetic leadership, as well as training in digital collaboration tools to better connect with younger colleagues. For researchers, further investigation is warranted to understand why Gen X scores lower across several dimensions, with qualitative data on workplace experiences and comparisons with Boomers providing clearer generational distinctions.

In conclusion, Gen X's leadership profile (average mean: 3.32) is adaptive, pragmatic, and moderately collaborative, yet less engaged with formal leadership and developmental roles compared to Gen Y and Gen Z (both averaging 3.49). Their strengths make them well-suited for dynamic environments, though their aversion to traditional leadership structures may limit advancement in hierarchical organizations. The consistent score differences from younger cohorts' highlight Gen X's distinct leadership identity, shaped by its unique historical and cultural context. Additional data, such as detailed survey methodology, could further refine and validate these insights.

*Table 4: Comparative Analysis*

| Dimension         | Gen Z | Gen Y | Gen X | p-value | $\eta^2$ | Post Hoc |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|----------|----------|
| Adaptability      | 3.70  | 3.70  | 3.62  | >.05    | .01      | ns       |
| Project Drive     | 3.65  | 3.65  | 3.54  | >.05    | .01      | ns       |
| Development       | 3.65  | 3.65  | 3.39  | <.05    | .06      | Z/Y > X  |
| Collaboration     | 3.52  | 3.52  | 3.42  | >.05    | .01      | ns       |
| Formal Leadership | 3.20  | 3.20  | 2.82  | <.01    | .15      | Z/Y > X  |
| Spokesperson Role | 3.45  | 3.45  | 2.92  | <.01    | .16      | Z/Y > X  |

## Discussion

### Generational Similarities

The findings reveal substantial similarities across all three generational cohorts in their leadership style preferences, consistent with recent healthcare research on generational

Dynamics. Adaptability, project drive, and collaboration scored highly across groups, with small effect sizes ( $\eta^2 < .01$ ), suggesting these leadership traits transcend generational boundaries. This reflects the sector's emphasis on teamwork, resilience, and collective problem-solving.

Moreover, high mean scores for statements related to bringing out the best in others and helping others develop indicate a shared commitment to supportive leadership. Such preferences align with healthcare's increasing reliance on interdisciplinary teamwork and patient-centered care [7]. This widespread commitment to collaborative leadership, which emphasizes group well-being and continuous learning, also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), particularly Target 8.3, which promotes productive activities and decent job creation.

## Generational Differences

Despite these commonalities, generational membership significantly influenced developmental orientation, formal leadership identity, and spokesperson roles. A medium effect size ( $\eta^2 \approx .06-.10$ ) was observed for development, with Gen Z and Gen Y placing stronger emphasis on mentorship compared to Gen X, reflecting younger cohorts' preference for feedback-driven and growth-oriented leadership. In terms of formal leadership identity, a large effect size ( $\eta^2 > .14$ ) indicated that Gen Z and Gen Y were more willing to self-identify as leaders, whereas Gen X demonstrated reluctance toward formal authority, likely stemming from their pragmatic and independent professional orientation. Similarly, spokesperson roles showed another large effect size ( $\eta^2 > .14$ ), highlighting younger generations' greater comfort with external communication and advocacy, shaped by their digital nativity and familiarity with platforms that encourage personal expression. These statistically significant and practically meaningful differences underscore how formative experiences shape generational approaches to leadership in healthcare.

## Implications for Healthcare Organizations

The strong, shared orientation toward adaptability and collaboration suggests healthcare organizations should continue emphasizing team-based leadership programs across all cohorts. At the same time, the generational divides in leadership identity and spokesperson roles indicate the need for tailored strategies. Gen X leaders may excel in change management and operational efficiency but benefit from training in public-facing and developmental roles. Conversely, Gen Y and Gen Z professionals should be leveraged for innovation, advocacy, and inclusive leadership initiatives while strengthening their skills in procedural compliance and hierarchical navigation.

## Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the Gen Z sample was relatively small ( $n = 30$ ), which limits generalizability for this emerging cohort. Similar challenges have been reported in prior research on Generation Z healthcare professionals, as many are still in the early stages of their careers [2]. Second, the reliance on self-reported survey data introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may have over- or under-reported certain leadership tendencies. Third, while mean scores and ANOVA tests were used to compare generational groups, the absence of reported standard deviations restricts analysis of within-group variability, which may provide additional insight into the diversity of leadership preferences within each generation. Finally, the study was conducted in the Philippines, and cultural context may limit the transferability of results to other healthcare systems.

## Findings of the Study

1. All three generations strongly value collaborative and adaptive leadership styles. Specifically, Gen Y (Millennials) and Gen Z show a higher preference for flexibility, inclusive decision-making, and spokesperson roles (communication and advocacy). In contrast, Gen X exhibits a more pragmatic, task-oriented approach, with lower scores in public-facing and developmental aspects of leadership.
2. Gen Z and Gen Y place greater emphasis on mentorship, feedback, communication, and inclusivity. They are more comfortable with external communication and advocacy roles, shaped by their digital nativity. They favor flexible, participative, and communicative leadership styles. Gen X tends to be more pragmatic, independent, and results-focused, with a preference for direct communication and operational efficiency. They are less inclined toward public-facing roles and developmental mentoring compared to younger cohorts.
3. Healthcare organizations can leverage these insights by developing tailored leadership programs: Foster collaborative, inclusive, and flexible leadership approaches across all generations, emphasizing teamwork and adaptability. Provide targeted development for Gen X in public-facing and developmental roles, such as communication skills and mentorship training. Engage Gen Y and Z in innovation, advocacy, and inclusive leadership initiatives, and strengthen their skills in hierarchical navigation and procedural compliance. Implement mentorship programs pairing experienced Gen X leaders with younger staff to facilitate knowledge transfer and support career development. These strategies align with the shared values and distinct preferences of each cohort, enhancing workforce synergy, innovation, and patient outcomes.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that while healthcare professionals across generations share a strong foundation of collaborative and adaptive leadership, significant differences exist in development, formal leadership, and spokesperson roles. These differences are practically meaningful, with younger cohorts more inclined toward inclusive and communicative leadership and Gen X retaining pragmatic independence.

By tailoring leadership development to these strengths and gaps, healthcare organizations can enhance workforce synergy and patient outcomes. The findings also align with global objectives, supporting SDG 3 (Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work).

## Recommendations

### For Healthcare Organizations

Healthcare organizations should develop comprehensive leadership development programs that capitalize on the shared collaborative values across all generations while addressing the unique strengths of each cohort. Training programs should emphasize adaptability, team involvement in decision-making and supportive leadership approaches that all generations value, as recommended by the American Hospital Association (2014). This focus on developing a collaborative culture also serves as a strategic investment in

creating “decent work” environments, which fosters employee retention, reduces burnout, and ultimately supports the long-term economic sustainability of healthcare organizations, in alignment with SDG 8 [23].

Organizations should consider creating mentorship programs that pair experienced Gen X leaders with younger professionals, allowing for knowledge transfer while leveraging the communication and flexibility strengths of Gen Y and Gen Z professionals. This approach can help bridge any generational gaps while maximizing the leadership potential of all employees [1].

## For Leadership Development

Leadership development programs should focus on building core competencies in collaborative leadership, adaptability, and employee development, as these areas showed strong agreement across all generations. Programs should also provide opportunities for professionals to develop skills in areas where their generation may be less comfortable, such as situational leadership training for Gen X professionals.

Organizations should consider implementing flexible leadership models that allow professionals to contribute their strengths while developing competencies in areas that may be less natural to their generational cohort. This approach can help create more well-rounded leaders while respecting generational preferences [7].

Organizations should frame leadership training and mentorship programs as a core component of lifelong learning, directly contributing to the aims of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). This approach recognizes that professional development is not a one-time event but a continuous process of acquiring skills for employment and entrepreneurship, as outlined in Target 4.4 [23].

## For Future Research

Future research should address these limitations by employing larger and more balanced samples of all generational cohorts, particularly Gen Z, to ensure more robust comparisons. Longitudinal studies would be valuable for examining how leadership preferences evolve as professionals gain experience and move into higher-level roles. Further investigation is also needed into how generational leadership differences influence concrete organizational outcomes, including patient satisfaction, staff retention, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Cross-cultural comparative studies could provide additional insight into whether the generational leadership patterns observed here are universal or context-specific. Finally, mixed-methods approaches that integrate qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys may capture the nuanced ways in which generational identity shapes leadership practice in healthcare settings.

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