PREVALENCE OF INDIVIDUALITY AND CONFORMITY AS BEHAVIORAL TRAITS AMONG GENERATION Z

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine how individuality and conformity are prevalent in the behavioral traits of Generation Z. This study sought to determine the importance of social acceptance and assessed the behavioral traits of Generation Z relative to individuality and conformity. Further, the study used descriptive-analytic research design and was conducted to the 278 students of the College of Teacher Education in Batangas State University which were selected using stratified random sampling. Questionnaire and interview were the main data gathering instrument used. The weighted mean and composite mean were used as statistical tools. The findings revealed that social acceptance has a great impact on the respondents as it helps them to improve their personalities and boost their self-esteem to express themselves. This study also revealed that most of Generation Z strongly agreed with the assessment on individuality while the respondents agreed with the assessment on conformity. Moreover, the study implies that both individuality and conformity were significant to Generation Z.

Keywords: Conformity, Generation Z, Individuality, Conformity

INTRODUCTION

Society is consisting of a group of individuals who lived in the pattern of norms, sharing the same culture and having an interaction that builds a relationship among individuals. The members of society maintain themselves with the help of these relationships, accepting and adapting different standards that a society has. Society has its characteristics of having the sense of belongingness and cooperation. Moreover, socialization occurs in the society where it is the way on how an individual adjust, learn and behave on the environment that they have. An individual also learns to observe the behavior or norms around them. The response that they have on the observation may brought a social influence where the individuals will adhere on it or follow their own perspective. According to Ginsberg (2012), society is described as a group of people who are bound together by particular relationships or patterns of conduct that distinguish them from those who do not engage in these relationships or who behave differently.

Furthermore, societies are groups of people who are linked together by friendship or a common goal. The various societies educate people how to act, what to believe, and how they will be punished if they do not follow the established laws and conventions. The society of

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today's time enjoys many privileges. When various persons of community feel a sense of unity and mutual relationship, they find themselves in a society because they are attracted to each other and believe that they are linked by feelings. People are allowed to live the way they choose their life. Everything that they have now such as freedom to express their emotion and opinion, practice their own religion, and live life independently reminds the fathers and forefathers of what the brave heroes have done.

Accordingly, the youth is the still the hope of the country, not discounting the Generation Z of today's time. Generation Z is born after 1995 and is considered the future global of economy. Turner (2015, as cited in Mat Salleh et al., 2017) stated that those born in these years were born during a difficult era, which included issues like terrorism, global political instability, and environmental concerns. They are the first generation to be exposed to modern technology such as social networking sites and information overload. This generation is rather optimistic and very driven about their personal ambitions.

This generation gets to decide to do things as they see fit, which simply to say, just like choosing between individuality and conformity. However, there are some people who want to be alone and embrace their individuality because it's their personal happiness. For them, trying to disguise or change who they are to meet someone else's ideas diminishes their feeling of self-worth, leading a lower self-esteem and an increase in insecurities. Besides, individuality aims to promote self-reliance and independence of an individual.

On the other hand, there are some people who also want to be someone or want to conform to other people because for them conforming makes things easier. Accordingly, some thinks that when an act is done almost by everyone, most often than not, this act will be thought to be good as it has been tried and tested. People may feel confident in doing the same and think that they are in the right path. Another thing, conforming is basically ensuring population survival because some people enjoy success because they learn not only from their own mistakes and successes, but also from others.

However, human being lives are centered around the line that separates individuality and conformity between the individual and societal or to stand in or to stand out which leads to decision making that reflects on who people are. It is totally a constant battle of figuring out what people want to do but also having the desire to be accepted by others. An individuality is differentiating oneself from others. It is a way where persons appraise themselves as unique from other individuals; who follow their own ideas and feelings on many things. It is also being independent and sticks on what beliefs they have which tends to do things without considering others' perspective and criticism. Champagne (2013, as cited in Hager, 2014) stated that individuality is described as a collection of different behavioral and physiological qualities among individuals that arises when distinct environmental effects act on the genome via complicated pathways to produce phenotypic variation.

On the contrary, when a person does not want to work on their own, they choose to be with others and conform. People naturally want to belong to something bigger and accepted by others. It's more likely that people always want to join other people to feel that they are not alone. For the sake of group cohesion, through simply following the steps or ways the others have they eventually go for it and find a place within. Thus, conformity offers a sense of belonging and group identity which everyone aligns their attitudes, behaviors with those people around them. Additionally, in order to avoid appearing foolish, people conform to the expectations of the group, and this can be especially strong in instances where they are unsure how to respond or if the expectations are vague (Kendra, 2019).

Given with these different views about individuality and conformity the researchers observed that there are people that chose to be individual and to conform. In that case, the researchers aimed to know how prevalent the individualist and conformist are as behavioral traits of the Generation Z. This study aimed to understand how the social acceptance important to the generation Z and why an individual prefers to conform with others or stick on their own interest.

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to identify the prevalence of individuality and conformity as behavioral changes among the generation Z. Specifically, this sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the importance of social acceptance among the Generation Z
2. To assess the respondent's behavioral traits relative to:
    2.1 individuality; and
    2.2 conformity
3. To draw implications about the prevalence of individuality and conformity among Generation Z

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive analytic research design. It is appropriate for this research since it aimed to characterize a population, circumstance, or occurrence in a methodical and exact manner. It can also explore one or more variables by employing a number of quantitative and qualitative methodologies (McCombes, 2019). The emerging questions, procedures, data normally obtained in the participants' environment, data analysis, and the researcher's interpretations of the data gathered were all part of this process. Krejcie and Morgan Table with five per cent margin of error was utilized to determine the sample size of 278 participants, in which 263 of them were included to answer the survey questionnaire and 15 students were interviewed from the Department of the College of Teacher Education of Batangas State University. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to proportionate the allocation of each group within the population.

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument. Items in the questionnaire were based on the readings, observations, other theses, and articles that were related to the study. In addition, it was supplemented by interviews. The statistical tools used was weighted mean to assess the total responses of the participants and aid the researchers in the interpretation of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Importance of Social Acceptance

Social acceptance is a concept in the society where individuals find their sense of belongingness. It is the ability to accept and acknowledge the differences and diversity in other individuals or groups of individuals.

It can be inferred from the interviewed participants that social acceptance has a great impact on themselves. It is very important to every individual because it helps to improve their personalities, boost their self-esteem and self-confidence, and also a way to showcase their abilities and talent. Social acceptance implies the sense of belongingness where everyone can freely express themselves to others regardless of the flaws that everyone has. It also brings positivity and happiness that people around them as they are. It is important for them to be part of society, depending on what they want to do with their life and who they want to be with (Ginsberg, R., 2018).

Moreover, one of the participants shared that "*social acceptance in the context of 21st century is very dominant as everyone is being educated and open minded.*" Everyone is being aware and learning to accept whether what other may prefer such as in terms of gender and in other certain things. As to what Esudu (2016) stated that in comparison to earlier centuries, the 21st century demonstrates equal engagement by both genders in many activities. Gender roles have shifted in recent years with men and women playing an equal role in owning and leading large corporations, being very active in their families and communities, owning personal businesses, managing large organizations, leading political groups, and earning higher academic degrees from all sectors.

On the other hand, one of them stated, *isipin mo nalang kapag mag-isa ka yung ganun wala kang kausap parang feel mo lagi outcast ka, sobrang parang nakakalungkot, nakakadepress sa feeling.* This can be inferred that social acceptance plays a big role to every individual. This brought a different kind of feeling when someone accepts and it leads one to have a positive mindset. While when one feels being left out, one feels weak, worried and thinking some negative thoughts. This

statement supports the concept of Bradberry (2018), as he expressed that people are motivated to be accepted by other members of their group and those who did the opposite were thrown out in the cold to fend for themselves. Also, when one is socially accepted, they are given importance and chances for survival.

Further, the participants also implied that social acceptance is one of the factors that influence their personal development. This affects them in terms of how they behave, on their attitude and also on their decision making. This helps them to think and learn to consider things and understand other perspectives. It also leads them to freely share their knowledge and experience without being afraid on the judgment of other people. This reflects on Owlgen (n.d.) stated that the social acceptance makes people more outgoing, flexible, and active as they live in a social group where person's performance behavior and role play are influenced by the society. The individual uses it through self-evaluating and reflecting their self-concept to a large extent.

2. Behavioral Traits of the Respondents

2.1 Individuality. Individuality is the trait of a person having their own interests and goals that are distinct from those of others.

The respondents assessed themselves relative to individuality which obtained a composite mean of 3.00 and verbal interpretation of agree. The top three highest and lowest rankings were considered according to the views of the students that they agreed with.

The findings show that having privacy received the highest rating, with a weighted mean of 3.55 and a verbal interpretation of agree. This indicates that the respondents most likely wanted to have a time for themselves where they can freely think of what they want and to do things on their own without being disturbed by others. This correlates with the concept of Solove (2014) which cited that privacy allows people to manage their reputations and protect themselves from angry judgments while also allowing them to think freely.

It also encourages people to set limits in order to avoid awkward social situations and scenarios that could harm interpersonal relationships. Having privacy also nurtures individual's ability that promotes their own growth and improvement. The second highest assessment was on indicator stating that "I feel good when I tend to do my own stuff" which got a weighted mean of 3.45 and a verbal interpretation of agree.

The third highest assessment was "I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways," which had a verbal interpretation of agree and a weighted mean of 3.24. This indicates that the respondents were likely to be unique and different in everything. According in Coco Chanel Quotes, in order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different, and presumably accentuated the value of being unique. Although being similar to others may make some people feel comfortable and safe, some dare to be different (Team, 2014). It has both positive and negative connotations. Actually, human's uniqueness might severely challenge the society's norms and uniformity if all human beings appreciate being unique. Even so, there are numerous people who seem uniqueness like a favorable, pleasing, attractive, seducing and advantageous thing. The need for uniqueness was defined as a personal trait or feature of individualism (Schumpe and Erb, 2015).

On the other hand, the lowest assessment had a verbal interpretation of agree and got the weighted mean of 2.50 which is "I act based on how I want to express myself." This may be inferred that this statement is not negative because the verbal interpretation of it was also agree. This indicates that the respondents acted based on what others want to see in themselves. The second lowest assessment which got also a verbal interpretation of agree and a weighted mean of 2.50 is the "I take pride in accomplishing what others can't usually do". This finding supported Reddy (2018) as he pointed out that the main reason to be proud of one's work is to strive to be the best among the peers and to give one's all to any duties one is assigned. Taking ownership can also boost the value of the employees and make them valuable assets to the firm.

Moreover, the third lowest assessment was on indicator: "Social acceptance bothers me too much and makes me feel awkward" which got a weighted mean of 2.76 and a verbal interpretation

of agree. This infer that the respondents experience being uncomfortable with other people around them. According to Raypole, (2019), people experiencing social awkwardness as it is a collection of feelings and experiences that shapes and patterns one's lives. This can be noticed when people experience failure to observe social cues such as greeting and saying hello and some misunderstood other's way of interacting with them. Consequently, people feel awkward and might have a hard time on navigating conversations with peers or to group of people.

2.2 Conformity. Conformity is a social influence that entails changing one's beliefs or conduct to fit in with a group. As assessed, the data show that the composite mean of 2.69 was verbally interpreted as agree. To note further, respondents have strongly agreed that they considered themselves as followers in a group. This got the highest weighted mean of 3.86. It can be deduced from this result that respondents go along with what others were doing. They obey what is new in the group to fit in and to connect with others. People were more likely to be followers than leaders, and good leaders and followers have a lot in common. A good follower is both self-sufficient and involved in the organization. It is impossible to be an effective follower if one is alienated, conforming, docile, or a pragmatic survivor (Suda, 2013).

The second highest assessment is "I consult my friends for their opinion when I faced with dilemmas" got a verbal interpretation of agree and a weighted mean of 3.02. This can be inferred as respondents value the opinions of their friends when they have a problem. This statement supported Smith et al (2013), as they found that when peer social validation increases, people utilize more positive coping strategies to engage with the new organization and less disengagement coping strategies over time.

The third highest assessment that got a verbal interpretation of agree and a weighted mean of 2.89 was on indicator stating that being able to fit in with others is very important to me. This result can be taken to mean that most of the respondents give importance to the people that surround them. It can be said then that this result substantiates

Bhasin (2020) as he stated that fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be accepted.

On the other hand, there were three statements that got the lowest assessments, which had a verbal interpretation of disagree. Foremost was on indicator stating that "I change my style in order to be liked by others" which got a weighted mean of 2.18. This indicates that they did not change themselves to be accepted by the group they have. They expressed themselves in the group on actually how and who the way they really are. This statement supported the idea of Bhasin (2020) as he noted that belonging does not' require people to change who they were but requires them to be who they should be.

The second was "I am willing to change my behavior to be able to impress the people around me" which got a weighted mean of 2.34. This can be surmised that people change to impress others because they will be taken away from who they really were. They cannot express themselves well and find it difficult to motivate others because their only focus in life was to impress others. This result then supports the concept of Young (2008) who stated that impressing others should not be the primary goal rather, it should be a by-product of how one conducts life. Inferring further, putting impressiveness first has various drawbacks, such as making it difficult to stay motivated if the motivation is simply superficial.

Meanwhile, the lowest assessment expressed in weighted mean of 2.40 was on indicator "I am willing to change my behavior to be able to be accepted within the social circle of popular people." It can be inferred from this result that respondents do not want to change themselves just so other people will like them. The gathered result substantiates what Naim (2017) pointed out that being a new person is not bringing the kind of happiness or peace of mind that many people are looking for. Changing the kind of person, one is does not guarantee that the person will fit in automatically in the group, rather it can even bring more the feeling of being isolated and like a phony. Instead, this can be a losing situation where an individual may not gain anything nor win anyone. This may even mean that the person can be at the losing end.

3. Implications that may be drawn relative to Individuality and Conformity

It can be drawn from the assessments that individuality is very essential to the life of Generation z. This implies that while some people may not recognize its worth, they want to be different in some way from the crowd at some point. They may dress differently and opt to do things that they enjoy without seeking the approval of a large number of people. Also, people tend to express their opinions based on what they want to say. Simply put, they can truly be themselves. This statement supported the concept of Anjalization (2018) as she stated that being different means being true to self. Nowadays, everyone faces various problems in the society that affect their behavior and particularly certain problems are easier to be solved by just relying on themselves that is why Generation Z most likely prefers individuality than to conform with others.

In terms of assessment in conformity, it can be drawn that conformity was also preferred by Generation Z depending upon the situation that they are in. Individuals are conforming on the society that they have such as they used to be a follower in different things or even when deciding what to do. This describes the individuals who are wanting to fit in or to be in the trend as this makes them happy. This statement supported Bhasin (2020) as he pointed out that as social beings, people yearn the need to not only be part of a tribe but to feel part of it.

This also suggests that people are likely to conform because they want their problems to be easily solved by joining and associating themselves with a certain group of persons or cliques. Also, they always rather be with someone or with a circle of friends as they cannot feel alone or an outcast. To deduce further, it can be sensed that respondents felt that being with others assured them of having someone who they can lean onto, ask for some advice, and who can understand them. To note, the result gives credence to what Savva (2015) had cited that, when an individual shares one's feeling and thoughts with someone else, they may be able to relate it to them since they have had comparable ones or similar mistakes that they have made in the past.

However, majority of people have similar issues, flaws, and weaknesses. Everyone needs someone to lean on. Someone they can rely onto, listen sympathetically or provide a different perspective; someone they can empathize with; someone whom they will find comfort and care; and someone who will listen without bias. This kind of connection somehow makes one feel relieved and accepted. Nonetheless, results most likely imply that conforming is to go along with what is new and not to impress others and change oneself. In some instances, individuals pertain to situations they have while others consider some situations whether to be beneficial to them or not in terms of improving themselves or their behavior.

Furthermore, this implies that both individuality and conformity were very significant to the people, especially to the Generation Z. Thus, priming the interdependent self may activate incentive to maintain harmony and comply to others' perspectives, whereas priming the independent self is more likely to activate motivation to be self-sufficient and resist social pressure. This helps to express themselves and at the same time, they can conform towards something around the environment that he/she is living with.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results and findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Social acceptance plays an important role to the respondents as it leads them to build stronger personality and improve themselves. The results also show that the respondents strongly agree with the assessment on individuality.

On the other hand, results show that the respondents agree with the assessment on conformity and cite that both individuality and conformity are very significant to Generation Z. This helps them to be mindful, express themselves, be self-sufficient and sometimes adhere towards something depending upon the situation around their environment in which they live.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To make this research more efficient and beneficial to the society, the researchers offer the following recommendations based on the conclusions that are drawn:

1. Educators may help with the provided information to understand the aspects of individuality and conformity in relation to the behavioral changes, that they can use to guide their students.

2. The guidance counsellor/ specialists may assess and relate as to why the Generation Z behaves the way they do and help the individuals in assessing their behavior and taking appropriate action.

3. Future researchers may conduct further study relating to this research and use this as a reference that may produce broader range of understanding in regards to behavior.

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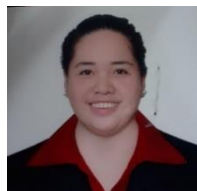
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