

**CHARACTERISTICS AND SHAPERS OF THE FILIPINO TECHNOLOGY GENERATION****ROXANNE T. BONGCO**<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7041-4610>rtbongco@bpsu.edu.ph

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54476/ioer-imrj/369293>**ABSTRACT**

Among the major considerations of teachers in their management strategies are student characteristics. It is crucial to have a contextualized understanding of the current generation of learners in areas significant to classroom management. Hence, this study examined the characteristics of the new cohort of Filipino students, particularly their communication preferences, concerns, interests, triggers, and values. This study also scrutinized the significant events perceived to have a major influence in shaping their qualities. The case study provided an in-depth understanding of the case. Data from individual interviews were triangulated from six teachers and 10 male and female junior high school students in Bataan, Philippines. Findings show that TechGen students' characteristics are both similar and different from those of the other cohorts, although the differences are usually emphasized. The majority of the characteristics that emerged were the result of age rather than cohort, making them more similar to other generations at the same life stage. However, cohort and period effects interacted with age effects in some aspects. These characteristics of the generation result from various shapers across their socio-political, technological, and cultural spheres. The findings of this study have an impact on pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula and training, as well as on the analysis of the unintended effects of educational policies and practices.

Keywords: Generation, Generation Z, Philippines, Filipino students, Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a complex work with high demands and equally high levels of accountability from the state and society, which deem this profession as among the noblest vocations. Teachers have multiple duties that go beyond knowledge sharing (Bongco & Ancho, 2019). One of the most important and challenging duties of a teacher now is that of a classroom manager (Nguyen & Tran, 2024; Anamika, 2026), a salient yet delicate task that requires a clear understanding of learners. Knowing children and childhood development is part of teacher training.

Still, many teachers lament that students are very different now, making classroom management a real challenge. The difference in the generation could be due to the interacting effects of age, period, and cohort in shaping generations. As the Pew Research Center (2015) indicated, the age effect attributed generational differences to their life-cycle position, whether they were young or old. Meanwhile, period effects are caused by events and other social forces that affect people of all generations and have lasting effects. Finally, the cohort effect refers to the significant historical events that members of a generational cohort



experience, especially during their impressionable years, such as their teenage or young-adult years.

The generation of students now enrolled at the secondary level is labeled Generation Z, using Western categories. This includes individuals born from 1997, as distinct from the Millennials (1981-1996). Soon will be the Generation Alpha (2013 to mid-2020s). It is notable however, that the significant events that separated these cohorts were mostly American, except for the technological events which have transpired on a more global scale. As Generation Z entered the workforce, Aharon (2021) examined the characteristics of the cohort. Findings of the study characterized the GenZ as egoistical, spoiled, bold, globally competing with capacity for vast exposure, makes decisions for future carefully, capable of independent learning with technology tools, highly confident on abilities, and with a low sense of value for academic degrees. McCrindle (2014) enumerated the influential factors that shaped the Generation Z. These factors include longer life expectancy which is likely to affect economics and pension, abundance of educational stimuli compared to other generations, coming into a technological era and global world, use of images and symbols instead of words and internet instead of books in quest for information, ongoing learning, supported by mobile devices, and change in concepts of friendships. However, Salvosa and Hechanova (2020) concluded that in the Philippine workforce, there are only two cohorts- the political and the technology generations, highlighting the role of Filipino culture in the categories. In the said study, the adult technology generation described themselves as carefree, laid-back, tech-savvy, proud, individualistic, self-centered, arrogant, fickle, and adventurous. Nonetheless, gaps were identified, including a focus on the cohort without considering period effects, which are also powerful shapers of generations. Further, many of the studies focused on Western categories rather than on contextualized Filipino categories. Although a study on TechGen was conducted by Salvosa and Hechanova (2020), it could not be directly applicable to high school students due to differences in age effects.

This study, therefore, aimed to provide an in-depth description of the Filipino Technology Generation (TechGen) in Philippine basic education, particularly regarding their communication preferences, concerns, interests, triggers, and values. These descriptions offer teachers a contextualized understanding of this generation of students, enabling them to adjust their learner management effectively. Further, it emerged that the perceived shapers of this generation provide policymakers with data on the possible unintended effects of various policies and educational practices.

Conceptual Framework

Particularly, this study is concerned with the generation of learners at present, which was defined in terms of the APC model (Pew Research Centre, 2015), which looks at generation as a result of the interacting and overlapping effects of age, period, and cohort effects. This model is aligned with the Generational Diagonal of Howe and Strauss (2007), which asserts that the generation of today has been shaped by the previous generation. The current generation is a reaction to the past. This study is particularly concerned with the teenage (13-18 years) learners in terms of age. This age marks a critical period of the individual's academic trajectories, while individuals navigate the challenges of identity formation, peer pressure and emotional development.

In terms of cohort, they are categorized as Technology Generation (TechGen). Pew Research Center distinguished this generation through proposed boundaries where GenZ are those who were born from 1997 and later (Dimock, 2019). This generation is described by Stjepić, et al., (2019) as a cohort who were raised in an extremely digital world at a very young age. The period effect taken into consideration in this study is social media hyperconnectivity. These concepts shall serve as the backbone of the study. In summary, teachers' roles in classroom/learner management are highlighted. However, it is studied in light of the diversity of learners to be managed, particularly in terms of their age-period-cohort characteristics.



Further, it also provides policy makers with baseline data on the possible unintended effects of various policies and educational practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to describe the characteristics and shapers of the Technology Generation (TechGen) students in public junior high school in the Philippines. Specifically, it has the following objectives:

1. Describe the new generation of learners in terms of:
 - a. Communication preferences
 - b. Concerns
 - c. Interests
 - d. Triggers
 - e. Values
2. Identify the events that are perceived to have a massive influence on the TechGen, and
3. Describe the perceived influence of the identified events in shaping the TechGen.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study, which provided an in-depth understanding of the case. Data were triangulated from students and teachers to ensure that the case will be illustrated from various perspectives in a classroom. The population of the study are the junior high school level teachers and learners in the Philippine basic education. Purposive sampling was employed to select five male and five female students in the TechGen between 13 and 18 years of age, and enrolled in public high school in the Philippines. The study also involved three male and three female teachers in public high school with at least three years of teaching experience of TechGen.

Interview questionnaire was developed by the researcher and was validated by three experts in the field of research and education. After the interviews, transcription was done verbatim and were returned to the participants for member

checking. This gave participants the chance to change, confirm or delete any portion of the transcript. Analysis was conducted using QDA Miner Lite, with a three-level thematic analysis that began with open coding of the verbatim transcripts. There were 57 open codes for SOP 1, which were clustered into categories of concerns, interests, preferences, triggers, and values. Finally, these were thematically analyzed to specifically describe the generational characteristics. Meanwhile, there were 20 codes for SOP 2, which were clustered into five themes (events that shaped the generation).

RESULTS

This section reports the study's findings on the characteristics of the TechGen, including their preferences, concerns, interests, triggers, and values.

1. Characteristics of the Technology Generation

Preferences: TechGen students expressed the overall preference for in-person communication over online communication (S1, S10, T3, T4). This is to ensure better understanding because face-to-face communication allows participants to access nonverbal communication cues such as facial expressions. Another possible reason for this preference could be the assurance of teacher response. This shows that in contrast to the assumption that technology generation would prefer online communications, the students' communication preferences are willing to sacrifice the convenience and speed of online communications to ensure that they will achieve the ultimate goal of communication which is common understanding (S1, S10, S8).

Concerns: TechGen's concern focused on two dimensions: academic life and social life. As typical of high school adolescents of any cohort, they are very much invested in their academics because schooling is one place where they spend most of their time at this age. While some are



concerned about actual learning (S1, S3, T3), others are focused on surviving the phase (S1) or on the appearances of their academic status (T1). They are also particularly concerned about academic fairness as it is typical of them to compare academic efforts and standing with their peers

In social aspect, TechGen focuses on belongingness which is why *pakikisama* or getting along with peers is very important to them. T4 shared concern for their focus on belongingness regardless of the cost. One of the typical strategies to protect their belongingness is *pakikisama* which prevents students from reporting issues and conflicts to the teacher. S1 expressed hesitation to report a bully for fear of consequences for the latter. With bullying as a common experience (S10, T4, T5) which could lead to humiliation, anxiety, and even physical withdrawal from schooling (S10, S4, S9), TechGen feel it important for them to protect themselves from bullying which could be by reporting it to the teacher (S4) or by minimizing it to prevent making a bigger issue out of it (S1). It was however, observed that students seem to have a very loose definition for bullying. For instance, S1 labeled the experience bullying when classmates only approached her when they needed something from her.

Interests: Data shows that TechGen's interests are on preparation for their future, connections and self-expressions. First and foremost, students are interested in areas and topics that prepare them for the future including practical skills (e.g. decision-making) and college preparatory topics (S2, S5). Romantic connections is another interest that emerged from the data. This curiously however, was extracted only from teacher participants' responses rather from the students (T2, T3, T4, T5, T6). Finally, student show interest in expressing themselves in any form such as speaking and writing (S8). Teachers also observed how students appreciate and value opportunities to express their ideas which they believe could be reinforced by the availability of various social media platforms (T1, T2).

Triggers: Data shows that primary triggers of the students are academic pressures, conflicts, and physical appearance. Academics being one of their major concerns, students are easily triggered by pressures such as difficult lessons, poor scores inactive group members, and multiple tasks (S2, S4). Other triggers are conflicts in school (S7, S9, T5), at home (S7, T6), and relationships (T4). The TechGen's reaction to these focused on their emotional responses. Many of the students show their emotions through silence or crying (T3). As T6 said, students are non-violent but emotional. What the participants often fail to recognize are the behavioral effects of that these emotions (e.g. verbal expressions, avoidance).

Values: Data observed differences in TechGen's self-reported values and observed values. The participants reported value for faith (S7, S10), family (S1, S3), friends (S3, S4, S6), respect for elders (S2, S3, S4, S5, S8), and *pakikipagkapwa* (S1, S5, S8, S9, S10). These are all consistent to traditional Filipino values which the students claim, they have learned from the previous generations. Teachers however, observed some values of the generation which were not acknowledged by the students during the interviews. These are competition (T1, T5) and technology (T1, T3, T5).

2. Significant Events that Shaped the Technology Generation

There are five major forces that were perceived to have a massive influence on shaping the Filipino TechGen. These include changing society, technology's role in information access, educational policies, educational practices, and family dynamics.

Event 1: Changing society

This cohort is believed to have been influenced by the considerable changes in the society including political and social priorities and policies (T5, T6). Some of these social changes are the increased awareness of gender (T2), and consideration for mental health. With social media,



the youth also have easy access to support from a larger community which this kind of values. Such support could include online call-out to outright bullying of violators of these social values.

Event 2: Connection through Technology

All teacher participants agree that technology has high influence on the current generation. It must be inevitable, especially with the prevalence of developments in technology in the recent years such as mobile technology and artificial intelligence. This gives them access to a lot of information and assistance in learning (S6, S8, T5). However, sometimes use seem to be out of control (T6). The extensive potential of technology to support the academics naturally attracts students. For instance, students engage in use of AI whether in acceptable or unacceptable manner as reported by students themselves (S6, S8). Some students rely on AI simply for support to understand things they don't understand in the lesson. However, some utilize generative AI to cheat in their assessment outputs. The wide access with limited control of adults also exposes the generation to materials with highly influential contents which could be positive or negative (T5, T6). With unlimited access to information, this could give the generation the confidence that they could know everything with just a single click. However, without digital literacy, they are also prone to misinformation which is everywhere in the web.

Prevalent access to various social media platforms also influences their expression of ideas and self (T1). T2 also noted its impact on students' ability to connect their experiences with that of other people. These could help the generation process their experiences better by seeing it from another person in social media. However, social media algorithm might trick them into false assumptions unless students are trained with digital literacy.

Event 3: Educational Policies

Another significant event according to teachers which must have an impact on the characteristics of this generation is the increased

awareness of educational policies. Among the top mentioned policies are the Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, and Mental Health Policies. These policies affect students, not only with through their scope and philosophy, but also through the interpretations of the community. It is notable however, that educational policies' impact on TechGen is recognized, not only in its presence but also in its absence. Teacher 1 cited the focus of policies in protecting students while neglecting the needs of the teachers to be protected in effectively performing their jobs of holistic teaching of the students. Given that students would need corrections, they feel held back by these policies. The interpretation or misinterpretation of these policies is also significant. For instance, students and parents are more aware of their rights and protections afforded to them by these policies (T2, T4, T6) which affected the students' behaviors inside the classroom.

Event 4: Educational Practices

Educational practices from the top to the grassroots level also affect the TechGen. These include school practices that emanate from their interpretation or misinterpretation of policies. The extensive process necessary to drop or fail a student becomes a burden to the teacher. It also takes away the teachers' opportunity to offer timely support to correct the students, whether in discipline or learning needs. This means that for the sake of the process, the student's learning is compromised. This could be the reason for the poor filtering of students who are promoted to the next level, even without developing the required learning competencies, such as basic reading comprehension (T4)

Event 5: Family Dynamics

According to the data, another significant event is the family dynamics which affect the rearing practices. Filipinos belong to a collectivist society where family is one of the top social values. However, with the changes and challenges in the economy, especially post-pandemic, families' adjustments to cope have affected their dynamics. For instance, T2, T4, and T5 observed based on



interviews with students that some learners lack the necessary guidance that they need due to demands of parents' job or broken family set-up. Another is the mindset of turning over all responsibility of educating the children to the school. This makes student management all the more difficult since one of the most acceptable ways to discipline kids is through parent conference. Further, with the absence of strong authority figures at times, subjecting to classroom policies may require a lot of adjustment (T1).

DISCUSSION

The TechGen students in public junior high schools' characteristics are different and yet similar with the other cohorts at adolescence stage, which implies the interaction of age, cohort, and period effects (Pew Research Center, 2015). Most of their interests, concerns, and triggers are typical among adolescents regardless of their cohort. In other words, the TechGen's characteristics in these five aspects are mostly similar to the adolescent Political Generation.

As students spend majority of their waking hours at school and with the emphasis that Filipinos put on education, it is natural that adolescents are very much concerned with academics. As Slot, Akkerman, and Wubbels (2019) indicated, schools is reported 25% of the time as an object of interest among Dutch adolescents. However, their interest in academics does not always point to learning. At times, they are more focused on their academic standings which consequently makes scholastic fairness a massive issue among them. The same was found by Slot, Bronkhorst, Wubbels, and Akkerman (2020) who concluded that schools relate to adolescent interests in three distinct ways: interest in school, at school, or after school.

Further, teens are naturally interested in relationships, consistent with findings of Wang (2024) and Viejo, Ortega-Ruiz, and Sanchez (2015) which highlighted the interest that love generate at this life stage. The latter even identified love as a major source of interpersonal strength. At adolescence, the primary contexts of love are friendship and dating, consistent with the

findings of the current study where romantic love and *pakikisama* (getting along with others) with peers is highlighted.

What was surprising about the findings, however, was the express preference of this generation for in-person communication with the teacher. This is an unexpected finding because it would be natural to assume that the Technology Generation who had been shaped by ease and speed of digital communications will prefer the digital modality (Salvosa & Hechanova, 2020). However, students are willing to sacrifice their own style and convenience for the sake of better understanding. The conscious adjustment of the students' generational style in communication to fit perceived style of the teacher was also found in the study of Bongco and Ama (2023) in their study of intergenerational communication styles among higher education students and faculty in the Philippines. This highlights the Filipino core value of *pakikipagkapwa* which is focused on maintaining harmonious relationships (Macapagal et al., 2013).

However, in some ways TechGen highlighted different characteristics that could be attributed to the interaction of their age, period or cohort effects. For instance, the generation showed high concern for self-protection particularly from bullying. The change came, along with the high incidence in violence and school bullying where Philippines was even labeled as the bullying capital of the world based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 rankings (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2025). Various international and local studies, including reports collected by the Department of Education of the Philippines agree that students are exposed to diverse types of bullying including physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying (Bacelonia, 2024, Esguerra et al., 2020, Kilag et al., 2023, Maximo et al., 2014). This puts *pakikisama* in a brandnew light where it is not only a core value to ensure group cohesion and belonging, but also a means to protect oneself.

Meanwhile, various contexts are giving new dynamics to the usual triggers of adolescents. For instance, since TechGen expressed concerns on academic and standings, they also feel



academic pressure which had been observed as well by other studies among adolescents in other parts of the world (World Health Organization, 2024; Jiang, Gao, Wu, & Guo, 2022). Its dynamics, however may have been influenced by the academic policies in the Philippines as it shifted from norm-reference to the criterion-reference standard for selection of academic awardees (Department of Education, 2016). This policy meant well by shifting focus from competition with others to competition with oneself, enabling more students to excel. However, the flood of students who are recognized as achievers could make "excellence" a social norm. Further, with the availability of the web and AI, the social perception is that excellence had been so much easier compared to the previous generations who had to compete with others while resorting to limited resources. This could result to steeper pressure for the TechGen students.

Furthermore, since peers are naturally important among adolescents which is why belonging is paramount to them, it follows that conflicts at school would trigger strong emotional or behavioral reactions among them. However, digital platform provides an avenue to extend possible conflicts among peers such as digital bullying. It does not only alter the nature of the conflicts, but also magnified the extent of its reach. Similarly, a Pew Research Center study showed that social media could cause conflicts or drama (usually used by teens to describe conflict, in lieu with bullying) (Lenhart, 2015). Even among friends, digital stress could result from online expectations of availability (Angelini, & Gini, 2025).

Regarding values, students and teachers have different views about GenTech values. While the students profess more traditional Filipino values of family, faith, respect, and *pakikipagkapwa*, teachers observe the generation's value for competition and technology. The value of technology for this generation is already expected since the cohort was basically labeled Technology Generation by Salvosa and Hechanova (2020) due to the massive influence of technology in their development, similar with the GenZ of the western standard (Boysen, Daste, & Northern, 2016; Dimock, 2019). Technology has always been part of their world. In fact, a mobile

device is almost an extension of human anatomy and digital footprint is almost a must in this era. Nonetheless, students fail to acknowledge them as values possibly because technology is not typically considered as a common value. It could also be due to the dominant negative attitude of the older generations towards technology use (Offerman et al, 2023). Similarly, competition is a value that TechGen did not recognize but was observed by teachers. This value is not typically considered as a core value because Filipino Psychology is mainly focused on *pakikipagkapwa* or living in harmony with others, avoiding conflict as much as possible. They only resort to competition as a necessity. However, this was observed as a value of this generation which could be due to social media which heightened comparison with others (Bonfanti, et al., 2025). The differences in cited values could be due to misinterpretation of the elder generations of the TechGen or the teen's lack of self-awareness of their own values. As Wilsn and Dunn (2004) wrote, it may be difficult for people to know themselves due to personal motives and the architecture of their minds. People could block unwanted thoughts through conscious or subconscious repression, especially if they believe that these are negative values based on the dominant social values. In summary, this generation has qualities which are distinct from the other cohort, but they are also similar in many ways. Further, their self-identified values still align with the traditional Filipino values of faith, family and *pakikipagkapwa*. They believe that they have learned these values from the elders, though the teachers think differently.

These characteristics of the generation are shaped by various events. One of these is the changes in the society such as the heightened emphasis on mental health, particularly post-pandemic (Alibudbud, 2022). With the passing of the Philippine Mental Health Act (Republic Act No. 11036) which was signed into law on June 21, 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered 25% increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression globally (World Health Organization, 2022) the Filipino society has become more aware of mental health than ever before. However, due to the challenges of the pandemic and the



haunting reports of teens committing suicide that are often blamed on the complex dynamics of schooling at the time (Lalu, 2020, Cervantes, 2020) the approach on the mental health had been more of coddling rather than empowering. Further, with the high incidence of suicide, education and the society in general had to be very cautious in mental health issues. As Michalek et al (2024) indicated, suicide is a leading cause of death among people age 15-29. In 2019 alone, there had been a reported case of 8,327 deaths among teens 10-14 years old, globally. Further, child protective policies and practices of the educational system which explicitly prohibits corporal punishment and humiliation of students, leaning more on positive management techniques. Finally, it is also worth mentioning the strong child protective social values and the receipt culture that enables very public trials in social media, along with helicopter parenting exhibited by the Millennial parents (Bongco & Ancho 2023). As a result, people had been extremely careful about mental health, resulting to a generation which is accustomed to a world that is very cautious of their mental state.

Further, technology is definitely a major shaper of this generation in different ways. First, it amplified their connection with society through social media- which is consistent with studies of Salvosa and Hechanova (2020) who proposed the label. This aligns with the influential factors that shaped the GenZ according to McCrindle (2014) and Stjepić, et al., (2019) which is the very technological and global world that they were born in. As Bonfanti, et al (2025) indicated, this opens avenues not only to share, but also to compare themselves with others. Further, it enables massive access to information, although sifting credible from non-credible information is much more challenging than ever before. This allows a wider access to information which credibility needs constant validation. This explains the massive knowledge of the learners, parents, and larger community on relevant rights and policies although their understanding is not always accurate.

Another way by which technology could have affected the TechGen is the emerging prevalence of AI tools in all aspects of life. For a generation of students who are very concerned

with academics, and easily triggered by scholastic pressures, AI offers a very tempting help for students. However, many academic institutions are still apprehensive over its adoption. Hence, the lack of robust ethical guidelines on acceptable use of AI in education leads to lack of confidence of students in its use. As Abubakar, Jeilani, and Yusuf (2025) found, even though use of AI could have positive effect on learning, overreliance could lead to reduced analytical skills. This however, could be mitigated by policy implementation and ethical awareness. Without such, it could lead to lower competencies in analysis skills and more ethical issues such as academic dishonesty. Looking at the Philippine's performance in international assessments such as the PISA in 2022, the country consistently ranked as among the poor-performing countries in reading, science, math, and creative thinking. EDCOM 2 (2026) in its final report also highlighted the deficiency in foundational competencies-leading to lifelong handicaps. While this is a complex problem that requires a systemic approach, it is clear that students could benefit from the assistance of AI, which is very much available for them. However, since the academic community still sees AI as an enemy, the potential is missed, leading this generation to decide how to engage with AI on their own. Unfortunately, these options typically involve the tendency to over-rely (which could lead to reduced analytic competence) and the tendency to consider AI as a cheat move rather than a potential support for better learning.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing findings, this section presents the conclusions drawn from the study and the corresponding recommendations.

The Technology Generation learners in junior high school are both similar and different from other cohorts at the same life stage due to age, period, and cohort effects. Their triggers, concerns, and interests are the same with other adolescents across various cohorts, indicating it is primarily due to age effects. Nonetheless, the period and cohort effects could interact with them



to alter certain dynamics. Self-declared values point to traditional Filipino values learned from the elders. However, teachers tend to see more of the differences in values (competition and technology) rather than the similarities. Significant events which had shaped these characteristics include technology, policies, educational practices, and family dynamics. In other words, the kids of today are the product of this complex world that was shaped by adults' decisions and actions- whether consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or not. Hence, this is a critical time for the decision-makers and actors in the state and society to reflect on whether these generational characteristics are indeed the qualities that they aim to inculcate in the succeeding generations. Meanwhile, teachers who had to manage these generations in their classrooms are left with the challenge of contextualizing their learner management strategies to the new characteristics of this generation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the conclusions drawn from the study.

1. It is recommended that evolving characteristics of students should be verified and integrated into the teacher's pre-service and continuous professional development.
2. For researchers, it is recommended to further confirm the qualitative findings of this study. Setting cut-offs on the technology cohort would also be valuable for succeeding generational studies.
3. These period effects interact with cohort and age effects to shape their unique identity as a generation. Hence, it is highly recommended for policymakers and administrators to analyze the possible unintended effects of such policies and practices on the students' characteristics.

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