

# Gender and generation gaps in government organization: does it affect work engagement?

Utilithia Banguningsih Hanggarawati<sup>1</sup>, Gugup Kismono<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [gugup\\_kismono@ugm.ac.id](mailto:gugup_kismono@ugm.ac.id)

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### Author's email:

[utilithiab@ugm.ac.id](mailto:utilithiab@ugm.ac.id)

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This research proposed to evaluate the differences between generations and gender work engagement. This evaluation is strategically needed to clarify the debate related to the issue of work engagement. The clarification based on research findings involving respondents from different context is necessary to improve ecological validity. It is also important since the evidence obtained through this research is useful for improving the effectiveness of human resources policies.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The data were collected through self-administered questionnaire involving 128 respondents from a specific context of government organization. There were 17 items used to represent work engagement. The measurement was adapted from UWES-17. ANOVA and independent sample t-test were conducted to test the influence of generations and gender on the total of work engagement and its three dimensions.

**Findings:** Results showed that generation and gender influence work engagement. Baby Boomers indicated the strongest work engagement. Generation Y showed the lowest work engagement. Men exhibited higher work engagement than women. However, further evaluation on the dimensions of work engagement showed interesting findings. Baby Boomers did not significantly differ from their counterpart of generation X on any dimensions. Generation X consistently differed from generation Y in all dimensions. Regarding gender and the dimensions of work engagement, only absorption showed insignificant different. In general, the findings of this research was align with the theory of social exchange as well as antithesis of burnout.

**Research Limitation/Implications:** The data were collected from the government officials. It is limited that it may not capture the employees' characteristics from business organization. Generalization may also be limited. However, this specific context may offer a valuable perspective related to the situation in which seniority is important point in considering career decision made by the organization. In addition, the measurement used in this research adapted from UWES-17. Research showed that different work engagement measurement applied in diverse culture may result in inconsistent findings. A comprehensive research was necessary to evaluate the measurement that was relatively free from cultural influences.

**Practical Implications:** This research offered an interesting recommendation in relation with organizational policies to improve work engagement and its dimensions. Based on this research findings, organizations may consider emphasizing on human resources policies which was suitable for generation Y to improve work engagement.

Moreover, work-life balance to improve the level of women work engagement was also recommended.

**Originality/Value:** This research was contributed to evaluate the impact of generations and gender on work engagement and its dimensions. Research involving specific context as government officials was rare. The result may be crucial to avoid developing organizational policies that were based on research findings that came from irrelevant contexts.

**Keywords:** work engagement, vigor, dedication, absorption, Baby Boomers, X generation, Y generation, gender.

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## Introduction

Organizational sustainability is an increasingly important issue in today's disruptive era. One of the reasons is that organizations face very challenging situation related to global changes that organizations cannot respond quickly (Kim et al., 2019). High quality of human resources has a role in supporting the long-term sustainable competitiveness of the organization and it becomes extremely important. Unfortunately, human resource management is currently confronting serious challenges yet problematic, particularly the need to improve understanding of work engagement and various strategies to manage it (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Although there are many articles and discussions on work engagement (Hakanen et al., 2019), the dynamics of the organization and the development of the character of human resources have made research related to work engagement still important and nonetheless needed.

Work engagement indicates the degree of attachment to work, colleagues, and organizations that can affect the willingness of employees to develop themselves and utilize their energy and motivation to achieve the best performance (Dash, 2013). Individuals who engage and find meaning in the organization where they work will be more committed and contribute to the achievement of organizational goals (Ulrich et al., 2010). Therefore, organizations need engaged employees since they tend to be more productive, loyal, and customer focused (Mishra et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, organizations are not necessarily in a favorable situation related to engagement level. Millennials tend not to be engaged (Roehl et al., 2013). Such situations are common in many countries. Globally, only about 66% of employees indicated themselves engaged (Oehler & Adair, 2019).

Programs to increase work engagement have been introduced. Indonesia shows a score of 7.4, higher than the average score of Asian countries of 6.9, as well as a Global score of 7.0 (Mercer, 2019). However, according to Mercer's forecast (2019), the score of Indonesia's work engagement program may be overvalued for several reasons, such as managers reporting higher than the actual figure, or employees do not want to be involved in the survey and provide more accurate response.

Due to the increasingly severe challenges of the business environment, changes in the characteristics of employees and employee groups, as well as the organization's inaction in responding to various changes, work engagement is becoming increasingly important. The improvement of work engagement may result in better productivity, organizational performance, and competitiveness.

Work engagement is a two-way process that occurs between individuals and organizations. According to Saks (2006), work engagement can be understood utilizing social exchange theory, which when an individual feels being treated well by an organization, the individual feels obliged to compensate the organization in the form of engagement.

The concept of engagement attracts the attention of researchers and practitioners in the field of human resources since it can offer reliable foundation for organizations to develop strategies to improve a sustainable competitive advantage (Albrecht et al., 2015; Hakanen et al., 2019; Schaufeli, 2013; Truss et al., 2013). Research on work engagement is widely conducted (C. Knight et al., 2017; D. K. Knight et al., 2006; Rasheed et al., 2013; Taneja et al., 2015). Those studies are including demographic factors such as age (generation) and gender (Hakanen et al., 2019).

However, those studies are dominated by western cultural contexts where the responsibilities of the roles of men and women in work and family are more balanced (Byron, 2005) than in Indonesia

which is similar to the situation of countries in Asia, such as China. Segregation of men and women roles in Indonesia is relatively unbalanced, where men are socially expected to be responsible for work and women in the family (Peng et al., 2009). Although economic development and generational change bring about cultural adjustment, cultural differences in the context of the division of men and women roles still exist (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018).

Dissimilarity between generations is also one of the topics being debated. Various empirical studies show that generational differences in the context of variables associate with work engagement such as personality, motivation and organizational commitment, are insignificant (Love, 2005; Wong et al., 2008). Inconsistent findings related to (orientation) work values, outcomes, and employee conformity to organizational values were demonstrated by Cennamo and Gardner (2008). However, Jena (2016) found some statistically significant differences between generations regarding the types of organizational commitments. Cugin (2012) also found some important differences related to work ethics and orientation on life and work balance.

Millennials have a uniqueness and difference with previous generations. They are generally more creative, informative, passionate and productive. This is the result of the rapid advancement of technology that occurred at the time this generation was raised (Kemenpppa and BPS, 2018). In relation with work, Gallup (2016) and KPMG (2017) identified that millennials have characteristics such as: working not only to receive a salary, but also to pursue goals and ideals, want a job that provides extensive self-development opportunities, dislike bosses who like to govern and control. Millennials also consider job is not only for working, but to be a part of their lives, they prefer to have open communication, socializing, and flexibility.

Research on engagement and generation that includes the Baby Boomers generation, X generation and Y generation are also called GenMe, Milennial, nGen, iGen, Generation Next, Gen Net, Digital Native (Schullery, 2013) which has been conducted by Hoole and Bonnema (2015; Sarraf et al., 2017; Hakanen et al., 2019). These studies found that Baby Boomers had the highest engagement level compared to both younger generations. The younger the employee's age, the lower their engagement level. Differences in engagement level in generational groups are caused by each generation having life experiences that generate different personality traits, attitudes, attributes, perspectives, behaviors, and characteristics (Doe et al., 2016; Twenge et al., 2010). The characteristics of each generation further influence the level of energy and mental resilience, willingness to work hard and persistence in confronting difficulties, involvement and enthusiasm, the level of concentration and attitude to the work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Interestingly, research on engagement and generation has inconsistent results. According to research done by Kenexa Management Consultant in 2012, the work engagement index of Y generation is higher than other generations (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015). The findings were differ from Hoole and Bonnema (2015) studies, as well as Hakanen et al. (2019) that the Baby Boomers generation has the highest engagement level compared to the younger generation. It is similar to Bano et al. (2015) which found X generation had a higher engagement level than Y generation. Real et al. (2010) concluded that although Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials differ significantly, these differences are too small and less practical to utilize as a basis for organizational policy development.

Analysis of gender differences also needs to be done in the context of engagement since men and women have different ways of thinking and behaving in work (Woudstra, 2016). This consideration is important in developing proper strategies to meet the needs of the organization (Barron et al., 2014). Research on engagement and gender is widely conducted by researchers (Iyer, 2016; Sheemun et al., 2013; Tartari & Salter, 2015). Sheemun et al. (2013) and Tartari and Salter (2015) found that the engagement level of men employees was higher than that of women employees. According to Liu et al. (2017), the difference in engagement level between men and women can be due to differences in roles, both in the family and in the work. In general, women who are working have higher stress levels than men. This is because women consider that family and work are equally important, whereas men are more likely to prioritize work compared to family (Cinamon, 2006; Liu et al., 2017). In addition, women are faced with attributes where she is expected to be more responsible for family and homework so that women will be more difficult to

engage with than man (Banihani et al., 2013). The existence of these stereotypes and attributes about women makes her more vulnerable to manage obstacles in work, which then affect engagement (Tartari & Salter, 2015).

Women are also less likely to have control when experiencing burnout compared to men (Liu et al., 2017; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). Burnout is a concept that opposed to engagement and describes a person's state of mental fatigue. Burnout and engagement are different concepts, but interconnected. The burnout is characterized by low energy levels (exhaustion) and identification (cynicism), while engagement is characterized by high energy levels (vigor) and dedication (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Lack of control in managing burnout makes women are more likely to seek social support from others so as to help her to stay engaged in work. On the other hand, men are easier to engage in work, even in the absence of social support from others because men are goal-oriented person (Suan & Nasurdin, 2016).

Research on engagement and gender also had inconsistent results. Research conducted by Rajagopal (2009; George & Joseph, 2014 and Reissova et al., 2017) showed that there is no significant difference in engagement between men and women. The divergent results of those studies indicated that more research is needed to further analyze work engagement based on generation and gender. More valid analysis on work engagement will help organizations in developing effective strategies to improve work engagement and employees productivity (Rajagopal, 2009).

## Literature Review

### Work Engagement

Work engagement, also known as employee engagement (Hakanen et al., 2019), reflects the level of commitment and perseverance of employees to their work and the values that are believed to be positive enablers in the process of achieving goals. Academics defined work engagement using different points of view. In essence there are several approaches as put forward by Kahn (1990; Maslach et al., 2001; Saks, 2006) and several other researchers who used different concept bases (Banihani et al., 2013).

Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined engagement as an employee's condition filled with positive thoughts towards work characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. The concept of work engagement is an "improvement" of the Maslach and Leiter concept introduced in 1997 (Schaufeli et al., 2002) which suggested that work engagement is the opposite end of the continuum (antithesis) of burnout. Employees with high engagement do not have to experience low burnout or vice versa. Engaged employees will fully immerse themselves in the work as a form of fulfillment of their role because of the enthusiasm and energy, dedication, and preoccupation that individuals feel in their work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Different from Schaufeli et al. (2002; Saks, 2006), they explained work engagement using social exchange theory. According to the theory of social exchange, inter-personal relationships occur because there are reciprocal interactions. Employees may provide reciprocity to the organization through engagement. Employees tend to be engaged when getting resources and benefits from the organization. According to Banihani et al. (2013), the explanation given by Saks (2006) was based on the exchange theory which is in line with Kahn (1990). According to Kahn (1990), engaged employees express it physically, cognitively, and emotionally while carrying out their work. Engagement is determined by three things, namely meaningfulness, safety, and availability. All these three things were subsequently tested by May et al. (2004) and supported by data.

This research used the concept of Schaufeli et al. (2002) which measures work engagement using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) based on three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption, with a total of 17 items questions. Compared to other measuring instruments, for example developed by May et al. (2004), based on the concept of Kahn (1990), UWES has better validity (Viljevac et al., 2012).

## Generation

The term generation is often used when discussing age-related issues, which are then grouped by the year of the person's birth. According to Pritchard and Whiting (2014), researchers such as Twenge and Campbell (2008) and Howe and Strauss (2007) conceptualized the generation as a group that had similar identity because in certain periods they experienced the same social, political, cultural, and economic events. According to the cohort generation theory, events experienced by a particular generation affect the value, attitude, and belief systems that the group has (Twenge et al., 2010). Events that occur at a critical stage of an individual's development will usually affect the individual's perspective. Late childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood are critical times of human development so that events that occur during the life of the individual shape the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the individual (Costanza et al., 2012).

The events experienced by individuals in Indonesia are different from those in other countries, thus enabling the difference of generation groups from each country. However, global interactions may bring the gap of generational characteristics disappear as happened in various places including Indonesia (Lu et al., 2006; Oyserman et al., 2002). With these considerations and for global comparative needs, this research adopted generation taxonomy by Brennan (2010; Boysen et al., 2016; Lewis & Wescott, 2017 and Schullery, 2013), namely Silent Generation, Baby Boomers generation, X generation, and Y generation. Currently, there are three generations which are still actively working, i.e. Baby Boomers, X generation, and Y generation. Although there is a slight difference in birth, it is generally agreed that the Baby Boomers generation is the generation born in 1946 – 1964, X generation is the generation born in 1965 – 1980, and Y generation is the generation born around 1981 – 1999 (Hoole & Bonnema, 2015; Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011).

Baby Boomers have characteristics that uphold the value of cooperation and harmonious relationships with others and organizations (Doe et al., 2016). In general, they are loyal and appreciate seniority (Sarraf et al., 2017). The generation tends to have a high level of engagement in response to feeling valued by the organization, highly motivated towards the job, and feel secure since the organization support their needs (Doe et al., 2016), can achieve high status and career from its work (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). This generation puts interesting and challenging work as a top priority (Schullery, 2013).

X generation, in general, does not like working in groups but prefers to have a challenging work environment that provides opportunities to thrive (Doe et al., 2016). They are more autonomous, perceive that seniority and status are less important, but prefer rewards and recognition as soon as they successfully accomplish their tasks (Sarraf et al., 2017). X generation tends to be engaged when obtaining intellectual stimulation from the organization (Barron et al., 2014), the opportunity to develop its skills to improve its marketability, as well as work-family balance (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). As expected, X generation puts extrinsic values first (Schullery, 2013).

Y generation is an independent, confident, expressive generation (Sarraf et al., 2017), more individualistic and focus on themselves (Twenge et al., 2010). This generation tends to be engaged when they obtain job autonomy, opportunity to pursue a personal life, and flexibility (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). This generation also puts leisure in the top priority, and extrinsic values in the second (Schullery, 2013), and also freedom in the workplace (Hansen & Leuty, 2012).

Furthermore, in the context of work, differences among groups of employees can affect how organizations conduct recruitment, training, assessment, promotion, and reward system. The job factors that cause job satisfaction in each generation also vary (Lewis & Wescott, 2017). Smith (2009; & Barron et al., 2014) said that each individual has different priorities, expectations, and behaviors depending on when and where they were raised.

Each generation has different characteristics because there are differences in work-related values embraced by that generation (Schullery, 2013). These values are leisure, extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic, and social (Twenge et al., 2010). Leisure is an opportunity to enjoy leisure time, vacation, and freedom. Extrinsic value emphasizes the consequences or outcomes of the work, which are tangible rewards such as income, opportunities to progress, and status. Intrinsic value emphasizes the process of work itself, which is an intangible reward, such as an interest in doing work, the

potential to learn, and the opportunity to create. Altruistic value emphasizes rewards earned through helping others or contributing to society. Social values emphasize interpersonal relationships in the workplace (Twenge et al., 2010). The differences in values embraced by each generation influence how each generation engages with work (Schullery, 2013).

### **The Influence of Generation on Work Engagement**

Barron et al. (2014) stated that in term of work, each generation has different characteristics. Identifying the characteristics of each generation is important in managing the effectiveness of the organization. By understanding the characteristics of each generation, organizations may develop strategies to drive employee engagement so that they positively affect the organization performance.

Work engagement relates to several things, such as work that provides meaningful feelings, work that makes employees comfortable and feel safe, a sense of having the physical, emotional, and psychological resources to carry out the work (Kahn, 1990; Shuck, 2011), energy, enthusiasm, passion, and preoccupation in work so that in carrying out work activities there is no feeling of burden, stress, and burnout (Bailey et al., 2017; Schaufeli, 2013), feeling indebted to the organization because of rewards, and benefits received by employees of the organization (Saks, 2006). Therefore, work engagement is very likely to be influenced by the interaction between individual characteristics and experience during work and interacting with the organizational environment (Pocnet et al., 2015).

In a generational context, individual characteristics may overlap with the characteristics of other individuals who grow up in a period and episode and experience similar events. Baby Boomers have a similar characteristic to their cohorts while X and Y generations are similar. Similar characteristics allow them to have comparable responses to work.

The context of this research is in government organizations that implement a promotional system based on the results of assessment of several dimensions of performance and seniority. Unlike in professional business organizations that focus on merit, the system applied in the context of this research allowed for sequential and generation-based career advancement. Therefore, Baby Boomers mostly occupied upper-level management (echelon II), generation X occupied echelon II or III, while generation Y occupied lower-level management (echelon IV).

Baby Boomers have gone through a long period of work, participated in various development programs, and because they occupy the upper level of management, the rewards and benefits they receive are greater than the younger generation. In addition to the comfort they experienced, the attributes that inherent in its position have a high potential to promote pride. Those characteristics relate to engagement (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Therefore, it is very reasonable that Baby Boomers show higher work engagement than X or Y generation. With similar arguments, it is logical that X generation presents higher work engagement than Y generation.

In terms of burnout antithesis, in the government bureaucracy and high power distance culture of Indonesia (Hofstede et al., 2010), respect for superiors should be considered in carrying out work activities. Y generation needs to observe X generation as its superior. Likewise, X generation needs to appreciate their senior as respectable leaders. Critics should be minimized. Therefore, younger generations may experience more stress or burnout. As a result, the younger generation will have a lower level of work engagement than the older generation.

Based on the arguments presented, this research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: The level of work engagement among generations is different, where the older generation has a higher level of work engagement compared to the younger generation. Baby Boomers present the strongest work engagement, followed by X generation, then Y generation.

### **Gender**

Gender illustrates the social meaning given to men/male and women/female (Wood & Eagly, 2002). According to traditional perceptions related to social roles based on gender, men are expected to take a more active role in the domain of work while women in the household domain

(Eagly & Wood, 2016). Therefore, it is natural for men to do activities in their work with working hours that exceed women (van Klaveren et al., 2010).

Women participation in the workforce is increasing year after year. Men involvement in the family domain is also getting higher. Nevertheless, the division of roles and social perceptions of men and women have not been entirely the same (Cinamon, 2006). Men are still expected to be the backbone of families with active involvement in paid (formal) work with higher working hours (Taei, 2019; van Klaveren et al., 2010). Meanwhile, women are still perceived to have more primary responsibilities in the family even though they also work full-time in the formal sector (Peng et al., 2009).

Indonesian culture that traditionally distinguishes the different roles of men and women (Javidan & House, 2001; van Klaveren et al., 2010), has an impact on differences in engagement in the world of work. Men are more connected to work than women. Not only is the issue of longer working hours (UNDP, 2005; van Klaveren et al., 2010), men also get higher positions and salaries compared to women (Sohn, 2015).

### **The Effect of Gender on Work Engagement**

Social perception that expects men as bread winners results in a strong urge for men to get involved and achieve success in work domain. In relation to work values, men attach more importance to salaries and opportunities for promotion, while women are more concerned with working hours and ease of transportation to the workplace (Frieze et al., 2006).

Differences in characteristics can be one of the factors that influence engagement levels of men and women, but it is also influenced by social constraints or social pressures (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). Social constraints and pressures can lead to burnout (Banihani et al., 2013). Burnout leads to a decrease in motivation and commitment to work (Iyer, 2016) and it is more common for women to experience it compared to men.

Individual decisions to engage with work will depend on the social context (Tartari & Salter, 2015). Men and women do not always get the same opportunities to engage with organizations (Banihani et al., 2013). In an environment dominated by men, women need longer time and greater effort to engage with organizations.

In addition, the decision to engage also depends on the individual's perception of the costs and benefits that will be obtained from engagement (Tartari & Salter, 2015). For example, women tend to have greater household responsibilities than men so women invest more resources in families than in work domain. The opposite occurs to men. As bread winner men assume their role in the domain of work as best as possible for the success of the family. High engagement is perceived as one of the important steps that men must take for the success of the job. Therefore, men tend to be more engaged and involved to their work compared to women.

The context of this research is relatively more women-friendly. Human resource management is carried out in accordance with government regulations and internal regulations that are relatively ideal to provide equal opportunities for men and women. Nevertheless, the social perception of the roles of men and women as described above is still very relevant. Thus, Hypothesis 2 of this research is formulated as follows:

H2: Men and women work engagement levels are different. Men work engagement is higher than the women work engagement.

## **Research Method**

### **Measurement Development**

Work engagement was measured using a questionnaire from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17), developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). This questionnaire has been widely used in various cultural contexts, both in Europe, America and in other regions such as Japan, Iran, Israel, Australia and South Africa (Knight et al., 2017). The instrument used varied data and showed high validity and reliability. The stability of the instrument in various contexts indicated that the UWES-17 has a high generalizability and was ecologically valid (Dawson & Marcotte, 2017). The definition of work engagement refers to Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 74), i.e. "a positive, fulfilling, work-related

state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". The operational definition is consistently used by researchers so it is less likely to cause confusion in understanding the variable. However, this research analyzed validity and reliability of the measurements even though it did not use sophisticated statistic.

Following Schaufeli et al. (2006), the items of the questionnaire in this research was compiled relatively random. The purpose of the research is explained in the introduction including the questionnaire. Additionally, each question/statement was made simple to reduce multi-interpretation. These methods are intended to reduce the likelihood of respondents filling out questionnaires haphazardly which may result in the occurrence of common method bias (Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020).

Prospective participants were asked to rate statements using a scale of 7-point Likert, namely: 1 = never; 2 = almost never; 3 = rarely; 4 = sometimes; 5 = often; 6 = very often; and 7 = always. The first score for the "never" option is different from Schaufeli et al. (2002). In general, the UWES scale used by researchers follows Schaufeli et al. (2002) that is, i.e. 0 = never up to 6 = always. However, scoring 1 to 7 has been used by Viljevac et al. (2012). Scale modifications were also implemented by Guillen & Martinez-Alvarado (2014).

### Validity and Reliability

Following Shimazu et al. 2008; Storm & Rothmann, 2003; Fong & Siu-Man Ng, 2012; Mills et al. 2012; Byrne et al., 2016, this research utilized measurement of work engagement developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) based on three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption. The original English-language questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia using back translation method with the aim to further contextualize the situation and Indonesian work culture (Souza et al., 2017). Then, face validity is done to check the question items, especially to observe the relevance of items with measured variables (Beugelsdijk & Welzel, 2018) and working conditions according to perception and experience of prospective respondents. Face validity is also useful to check the respondent's understanding of question and accommodate feedback if the question is considered unclear (Connell et al., 2018) as well as to assess the practicality of question (Nevo, 1985). This process is carried out using focused group discussion involving 20 employees with characteristics similar to prospective respondents. As a result, minor revisions were done to improve consistency of sentence structure and to generate easier-to-understand questions.

The draft resulting from the face validity process is followed by reliability analysis to measure internal consistency over various question items in each work engagement dimension. The criteria used for reliability testing is Cronbach's alpha. Alpha coefficient is widely used in various research (Streiner, 2003). Alpha score should not be less than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). The reliability test results are shown in Table 1. The lowest value was 0.841 (vigor dimension). Thus, the dimensions and all question were considered reliable. Therefore, the data collection was conducted using questionnaires containing 3 dimensions and 17 question items (Appendix 1) as developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002).

**Table 1.** Reliability Test Result of Work Engagement

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
<i>Vigor</i>	0.841
<i>Dedication</i>	0.871
<i>Absorption</i>	0.879

Source: Primary data processed

### Data Collection Method

This research involved respondents working in government offices which were responsible for policy development and providing transportation infrastructure. The expected outcomes of their work were a comprehensive policy and infrastructure that allowed public transportation (trains) in various regions in Indonesia which was getting better. The interesting thing was that as civil servants, its demographic structure tended to be balanced between men and women, and employees tend to be relatively young.



The data collection process was conducted online and offline. Online data collection was also intended to facilitate respondents' participation since some employees were not in their respective workplaces. The characteristics of those who participated online and offline were not distinguished so it is expected that respondents came from the same population. All participation was voluntary. This was emphasized in the introduction to the questionnaire.

Online data collection procedures were as follow: (1) requested participation from respondents via email and whatsApp; (2) attach the questionnaire link in google docs; (3) briefly explained the research being studied and how to fill out questionnaires; and (4) gave 1 week to fill out the questionnaire. To ensure that the response of questionnaires was voluntary, prospective respondents who did not respond to participate in this research were not sent reminders.

Offline data collection procedures were as follow: (1) contacted directly prospective respondents; (2) requested participation; (3) briefly explained the research being conducted and how to fill out questionnaires; (4) distributed the questionnaire to prospective respondents; (5) informing that the questionnaire will be taken back within 1 week; and (6) notified that prospective respondents who return questionnaires to researchers can leave their questionnaires to other prospective respondents. In case the prospective respondent is not willing to participate, simply do so by not returning the questionnaire.

Various steps in the data collection process through online and offline surveys were taken to maintain some important ethical points in survey research as stated by Asai et al. (2003). Questionnaires are also anonymous to protect the interests of participants and improve the usefulness of research (Wainwright & Sambrook, 2010).

The data obtained were from 128 respondents who completely fill out the research questionnaire. They consisted of 108 participants who submitted the questionnaires through offline, and 20 through online (google forms).

### Data Analysis

The hypothesis was tested using ANOVA and independent sample t-test with SPSS software and Excel Workbook. One-way ANOVA was done to analyze the differences in work engagement levels among generations. Independent sample t-test was conducted to determine the difference in work engagement levels based on gender (men and women).

## Results and Discussion

### Respondent Profile

The majority of respondents indicated 6 – 10 years working experiences (39.8%). The proportion of men and women were relatively balanced, 63 men (49.2%) and 65 women (50.8%). Millennials dominated the number of respondents, which was 75 people (58.6%). In contrast, Baby Boomers were only 4 people (3.1%). Overall, employees who are from the Baby Boomers generation and are still active in the office are few. Table 2 shows respondents' profile.

**Table 2.** Respondents' Profile

		Frequency	Percentage
Length of service	≤5 years	32	25%
	6-10 years	51	39.8%
	11-15 years	18	14.1%
	≥16 years	27	21.1%
Born/Generation	1957-1964 (Baby Boomers)	4	3.1%
	1965-1980 (X Gen)	49	38.3%
	≥ 1981 (Y Gen/Millennial)	75	58.6%
Gender	Men	63	49.2%
	Women	65	50.8%

Source: Primary data processed

## Descriptive Statistics

The lowest-scoring work engagement dimensions is absorption (4.776), followed by vigor (5.097), and dedication (5.241). These scores are classified as high on a scale of 1 – 7. The correlation between dimensions is all statistically significant with the strongest correlation value of 0.681, which is between dedication and vigor (Table 3). The correlation coefficient is not so high that each dimension is different or not identical to each other (Daoud, 2018; Fairchild & MacKinnon, 2009). From the score of those dimensions resulted in a fairly high (total) work engagement score, which is 5.026.

**Table 3.** Correlations among Work Engagement Dimensions

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>Vigor</i>	<i>Dedication</i>	<i>Absorption</i>
<i>Vigor</i>	5.097	0.783	1		
<i>Dedication</i>	5.241	0.933	0.681**	1	
<i>Absorption</i>	4.776	0.922	0.654**	0.461**	1
** $p \leq 0.01$ (2-tailed).					N = 128

Source: Primary data processed

According to Appendix 2, the items that had the highest average score were items number 10, 8, and 7. These three items were dimensions of dedication. This illustrated that employees had a sense of pride in the work they do (mean = 5.469), feel enthusiastic about the work (mean = 5.320), and feel the work done has its own purpose and meaning for them (mean = 5.273).

## Hypothesis Testing

### The influence of generations on work engagement

Based on demographic data obtained, variance analysis test (ANOVA) is performed. Table 4 shows significant differences in work engagement among generations. However, exceptions occur in the dedication dimension. The F value of 2.081 and Sig = 0.129 indicated that the differences among generations in the dedication dimension were statistically meaningless. Further analysis was conducted to compare work engagement dimensions in pairs as shown in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Work Engagement Based on Generation

	Born/Generation	N	Mean	Standard deviation	F	Sig
Vigor	1957-1964(Baby Boomers)	4	5.665	0.989	5.158	0.007*
	1965-1980 (Gen X)	49	5.316	0.768		
	≥1981 (Gen Y)	75	4.922	0.741		
	Total	128	5.096	0.783		
Dedication	1957-1964 (Baby Boomers)	4	5.700	0.503	2.081	0.129
	1965-1980 (Gen X)	49	5.408	0.945		
	≥1981 (Gen Y)	75	5.106	0.926		
	Total	128	5.241	0.933		
Absorption	1957-1964 (Baby Boomers)	4	5.457	0.974	6.560	0.002*
	1965-1980 (Gen X)	49	5.075	0.910		
	≥1981 (Gen Y)	75	4.544	0.862		
	Total	128	4.776	0.921		
Total work engagement	1957-1964 (Baby Boomers)	4	5.602	0.807	6.274	0.003*
	1965-1980 (Gen X)	49	5.258	0.753		
	≥1981 (Gen Y)	75	4.843	0.705		
	Total	128	5.026	0.748		

Source: Primary data processed

Table 5 shows that Baby Boomers had the highest work engagement with an average of 5.603, followed by X generation (5.258). Meanwhile, Y generation presented the lowest work engagement level of 4.843.

**Table 5.** Paired Comparison of Work Engagement Dimensions among Generations

Dimensions	Generation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	t Statistic	Significance
Vigor	BB	5.667	0.540	0.351 (BB – X)	1.772	0.137
	X	5.316	0.090	0.745 (BB – Y)	2.795	0.038
	Y	4.922	0.104	0.394 (X – Y)	6.819	0.001
Dedication	BB	5.700	0.622	0.292 (BB – X)	1.254	0.278
	X	5.408	0.161	0.593 (BB – Y)	1.766	0.152
	Y	5.107	0.172	0.301 (X – Y)	5.403	0.005
Absorption	BB	5.458	0.557	0.383 (BB – X)	2.118	0.087
	X	5.075	0.239	0.914 (BB – Y)	3.574	0.016
	Y	4.544	0.258	0.531 (X – Y)	8.133	0.001
Total work engagement	BB	5.603	0.545	0.345 (BB – X)	3.149	0.006
	X	5.258	0.219	0.760 (BB – Y)	4.862	0.001
	Y	4.843	0.266	0.415 (X – Y)	10.244	0.001

Notes: BB = Baby Boomers, X = X Generation, Y = Y Generation.

Source: Primary data processed

In the three dimensions of engagement, Baby Boomers also held the highest average (vigor = 5.667, dedication = 5.700, and absorption = 5.458) compared to X generation (vigor = 5.316, dedication = 5.408, absorption = 5.075) and Y generation (vigor = 4.922; dedication = 5.107; absorption = 4.544). Significant (total) work engagement differences occurred among generations. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Therefore, older generations had stronger work engagement compared to younger generations.

Further analysis showed interesting results. When analyzed based on dimensions, the results vary. Baby Boomers and X generation showed insignificant difference. Significant differences occurred between Baby Boomers and Y generation on all dimensions but dedication. X generation and Y generation consistently differed significantly at all levels of work engagement: aggregated as well as per dimension.

**The impact of gender on work engagement**

Gender showed a significant influence on work engagement (sig = 0.004). Men had higher work engagement than women. The three dimensions of work engagement also supported the hypothesis that stated men has stronger work engagement than women. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

In more detail (Table 6), dimensions showed distinct pattern in which vigor and dedication indicated significant differences. Interesting result was shown by absorption. Although men were higher on average, these differences were not statistically significant.

**Table 6.** Gender Differences on Work Engagement

	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean difference	t	Significance
Vigor	Men	63	5.320	0.764	0.440	3.300	0.001
	Women	65	4.880	0.745			
Dedication	Men	63	5.479	0.850	0.470	2.933	0.004
	Women	65	5.010	0.960			
Absorption	Men	63	4.892	0.864	0.227	1.399	0.164
	Women	65	4.665	0.968			
Total engagement	Men	63	5.216	0.689	0.374	2.907	0.004
	Women	65	4.842	0.763			

Source: Primary data processed

## Discussion

The results showed work engagement level of 5.026 (SD = 0.748) from a maximum of 7 points. The score was not very high. This may be due to millennial engagement of only 4.843 (SD = 0.705). Among the dimensions of the work engagement variable, it was found that dedication showed the highest (mean = 5.241; SD = 0.933), followed by vigor dimension (mean = 5.096; SD = 0.783) and absorption (mean = 4.776; SD = 0.922).

When considered by generation, the highest level of work engagement was indicated by the Baby Boomers generation followed by X and Y generations. It was interesting that there was consistency across all dimensions and almost all items where the more senior generations showed stronger engagement. In addition, as shown in Appendix 2, employees of all three generations had high enthusiasm (item 8) and pride (item 10).

The research question that we wanted to answer further in this research was about differences in work engagement levels based on generation and gender. Baby Boomers' work engagement was higher than the younger generation. However, not all dimensions showed significant differences. In fact, none of the work engagement dimensions of the Baby Boomers generation differed significantly from X generation. Baby Boomers and Y generations differed significantly on vigor and absorption dimensions. From the results of the analysis, consistent differences occurred between X generation and Y generation, both at the work engagement level and in the dimensions. These findings were in line with Hoole and Bonnema (2015) which showed that Baby Boomers significantly showed stronger work engagement than X and Y generations. However, Hoole and Bonnema's research found that X and Y generation work engagement were not significantly different.

On the other hand, this result supported Bano et al. (2015) which also found that X generation presented a higher engagement score than Y generation. This condition may be affected by the process and time of an employee's interaction with their work and organization. Y generation has shorter tenure and experience than X generation to better understand the organization. Y generation employees in this research were mostly junior employees so it was not optimally adapted to the work, work environment and organizational values. They needed time to coping and understand how the organization is managed.

In addition, Y generation may not yet obtain the opportunity to advance their career thus affecting their engagement (Fenzel, 2013). This was in line with the theory of social exchange that engagement was a reciprocal relationship between employees and organizations (Saks, 2006). When benefiting from the organization, employees will pay for it by increasing engagement. Doe et al. (2016) argued that Y generation tended to be less engaged or disengaged towards organizations because the organization had not provided benefits for them.

One of the factors that significantly influencing engagement is rewards (Schullery, 2013). Since the context of this research was in government organizations, rewards received by employees generally in line with their position level. Senior employees were more likely to get promoted to higher positions than junior employees. Therefore, Baby Boomers and X generation were very likely to retain higher engagement than Y generation because the rewards received were greater.

Another possibility that may contribute to the relatively low engagement of Y generation was the absorption dimension. The difference in absorption among generations was the greatest compared to other dimensions. The absorption level difference of Baby Boomers and Y generation was 0.914 (the largest) followed by the difference between X and Y generations (0.531), and Baby Boomers and X generation (0.383). The data supported the notion that the longer the employees are with the organization, the more aligned they are with the work environment and organizational values. Senior employees adapt better than younger employees; thus, comfort levels are high, stress levels and job burnout of senior employees are lower (Leiter et al., 2009). If engagement is the antithesis of burnout, the more senior generation will present higher engagement and lower burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Theoretically, the findings of this research were aligned with the theory of social exchange (Saks, 2006) as well as antithesis of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Therefore, work engagement must be maintained sustainably. The suitability of employees with organizational values (Leiter et

al., 2009) is important to consider during selection and socialization, but the opportunity for promotion and getting adequate rewards can be an effective strategy in improving work engagement. It certainly takes a process and a relatively long time.

The gender-based analysis found men work engagement level (mean of 5.216) were significantly higher than women's (mean of 4.842). Significant differences also occurred in vigor (men = 5.320, women = 4.880) and dedication (men = 5.479, women = 5.010). In the absorption dimension, men also showed a higher level than women. However, the differences in those dimensions were statistically insignificant. The findings of this research were in line with the analysis of Banihani et al. (2013) but in contrast with Sharma et al. (2017).

The decision to engage depends on each individual's perception of the costs and benefits to be earned (Tartari & Salter, 2015). The costs that must be borne by women tend to be higher than that of by men. Women are vulnerable to conflicts between family and work because women who hold full time job still socially perceived to be responsible for taking care of household activities. Therefore, women do not always get the same chances or positive respond to opportunities to make them more engaged compare to men (Banihani et al., 2013).

Job preferences also differ between men and women. Men are more likely to prioritize work than family since their position as the breadwinner. This role motivates men to engage with work. Meanwhile, women perceive that family and work are equally important so that women are more prone to stress and burnout which had an impact on weakening engagement (Liu et al., 2017).

Engagement is a form of employee reciprocal interaction with an organization. When an organization provides support and attention to employees who have contributed to the organization, these employees will be more engaged (IBM, 2014). This implies that organizations need to implement a variety of incentives that will help increase employee engagement. Therefore, management needs to develop a comprehensive human resource management strategy, provide rewards and benefits according to employee performance, and offer supports for employees to cultivate their creative ideas that will benefit the organization.

### **Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

Work engagement in this research was measured primarily based on the concept of Schaufeli et al. (2002) which was cultivated from the antithesis concept of burnout Maslach et al. (2001). Another concept that is also utilized is the theory of social exchange (Saks, 2006). The findings of this research generally support both important concepts. Generations and gender which have different exposures to activities that cause stress, and perceived costs and benefits, affect work engagement.

In the context of government organizations (as in this research), the more senior a person and those who have higher positions indicated their higher adaptability to changes in jobs, work environment and organizational values. A person's adaptive response in the organization was related to the adjustments he or she had made to the changes that occur in the work and organizational environment in order to overcome evolving challenges that positively affected their attitude (work), and mental well-being (Yang et al., 2019). This condition is needed to control burnout that is the antithesis of work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006). Effective adaptability becomes a resource that positively affects work engagement. In organizations that value seniority, such as the context of this research, older generations generally had long tenures, relatively high positions, and successful careers. This condition, again, indicated their ability to adapt to changes, and made them feel comfortable. Adaptations made through adjustments to the work and work environment had a positive impact on a person's suitability with the work and work environment so as to foster passion, enthusiasm, energy, pride, and commitment in work (Memon et al., 2015). Their comfort in the organization due to the long adaptation process so that the suitability of a person and his job (person-job fit), and the suitability with the organizational environment (person-organization fit) is getting higher and fosters a feeling of indebtedness to the organization and encourages them to return the favor. This situation is in line with the concept of social exchange theory (Saks, 2006). The younger generation is at an early stage in the process; thus, their work engagement is relatively lower.

The higher level of men work engagement (compare to that of women) encourages the need to develop programs based on the principle of gender equality. However, individual choices about the social role to be taken cannot be immediately changed. Although there has been a lot of progress, social perception of the roles of men and women is still urge men to spend more time at work. The dominant role of men in the work domain encourages them to focus more on work and pursue careers so that adaptability to changes is stronger. Men spend more time at work compared to women. For men, the situation does not need to raise concerns about work to family conflict (Gutek et al., 1991). Therefore, they are more comfortable with the situation compared to women, less stressed, and perhaps very low in their burnout levels. This situation, both seen from the antithesis concept of burnout and the theory of social exchange, is rational and cause men to show stronger work engagement than that of women.

The findings may be utilized to develop managerial policies of the organization, especially in terms of the selection and placement of candidate in particular positions, the development of human resources and talents to adapt to organizational changes. These programs are important as nonfinancial rewards for employees. These nonfinancial rewards will be easier for government organizations to implement due to limited budgets and relatively low budget flexibility. Those types of programs are expected to increase convenience and encourage a sense of employee indebtedness; thus, their work engagement improved.

In addition to the policies that is suitable for older generation and men, innovative policies should also be developed to target younger groups or women. Increased flexibility of work, such as the application of work from home or flexi-time can be appealed to the younger generation as well as women. For the younger generation, the flexibility of work can be utilized to perform personal activities of their choice (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). For women, work flexibility is beneficial for improving work-life balance because women prioritize family than work (Lips & Lawson, 2009). Furthermore, work flexibility is a valuable nonfinancial reward for women because it can reduce conflict from family to work, stress and burnout (Hill et al., 2001). All of these situations may increase work engagement.

## **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Several limitations are identified from this research. Firstly, the number of participants of the Baby Boomers generation was very small. Researchers did not massively ask prospective respondents to participate in the survey through google forms. No reminders were prepared for prospective respondents who had been sent questionnaires since it can negatively influence the voluntary nature of the survey. As a result, the participation rate for Baby Boomers was only about 3%, X generation was about 38%, and Y generation was about 59%. Therefore, the generalization of the results of this research, particularly those associated with Baby Boomers, should be done carefully.

Secondly, the context of this research was in government organizations with a relatively less flexible human resource management system compared to professional business organizations. On the one hand, the context enriched previous studies, however, the application on different industry should be made with careful consideration. Further research is recommended to be conducted in a context similar to this research in order to improve its ecological validity.

Thirdly, this research used instruments developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) and has been widely used in various cultural contexts of different countries and organizations. In general, the instrument showed high validity. However, in specific contexts, such as in Japanese culture, the instrument had a poor confirmatory factor. The items were not grouped on three-dimensional vigor, dedication, and absorption. Therefore, further research, especially with regard to specific contexts, needs to retest its validity (Kulikowski, 2017) or interpret it carefully by always considering the context of the research (Akihito Shimazu et al., 2010).

Fourthly, this research used UWES-17 instrument developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). Schaufeli et al. (2006) developed an alternative short version instrument UWES-9 which consisted of the same 3 dimensions but each consists of 3 items. A review of the quality of UWES-17 and UWES-9 was conducted by Kulikowski (2017) and the results were inconsistent. Thus in certain

contexts, UWES-17 was better than UWES-9 or vice versa. Therefore, further research in a context similar to this research could use both instruments to examine a more suitable instrument.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Measurement of Work Engagement

Dimensions	No.	Item (English)	Item (Bahasa)
Vigor	1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy	Saat bekerja, saya merasa sangat berenergi.
	2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	Saat bekerja, saya merasa kuat dan bersemangat.
	3	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	Ketika saya bangun di pagi hari, saya merasa bersemangat ingin berangkat kerja.
	4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time	Saya dapat terus bekerja dalam waktu yang lama.
	5	At my job, I am very resilient mentally	Saya memiliki ketahanan kerja yang sangat tinggi.
	6	At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	Dalam bekerja, saya pantang menyerah, bahkan ketika sesuatu tidak berjalan dengan baik.
Dedication	7	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	Saya merasa pekerjaan yang saya lakukan memiliki arti dan tujuan tersendiri bagi saya.
	8	I am enthusiastic about my job	Saya merasa antusias dengan pekerjaan saya.
	9	My job inspires me	Pekerjaan saya menginspirasi saya.
	10	I am proud on the work that I do	Saya bangga dengan pekerjaan yang saya lakukan.
Absorption	11	To me, my job is challenging	Bagi saya, pekerjaan saya menantang.
	12	Time flies when I'm working	Saya merasa waktu berlalu dengan cepat saat saya bekerja.
	13	When I am working, I forget everything else around me	Saat bekerja, saya seakan lupa akan segala sesuatu di sekeliling saya.
	14	I feel happy when I am working intensely	Saya merasa senang saat sibuk bekerja.
	15	I am immersed in my work	Saya larut dalam pekerjaan saya.
	16	I get carried away when I'm working	Saya terbawa suasana ketika bekerja.
	17	It is difficult to detach myself from my job	Saya merasa sulit untuk melepaskan diri dari pekerjaan saya.

## Appendix 2. Means per Item of Work Engagement

Dimensions	Item	Mean	Deviation standard	Minimum value	Maximum value
Vigor	1	5,156	1,125	3	7
	2	5,156	0,967	3	7
	3	5,141	1,099	3	7
	4	4,898	1,018	2	7
	5	5,070	1,029	3	7
	6	5,156	1,046	3	7
	7	5,273	1,077	2	7
	8	5,320	1,079	3	7
	9	5,055	1,152	2	7
	10	5,469	1,143	2	7
Dedication	11	5,086	1,280	1	7
	12	5,188	1,142	2	7
	13	4,734	1,264	1	7
	14	4,992	1,207	2	7
	15	4,602	1,104	2	7
Absorption	16	4,586	1,105	2	7
	17	4,555	1,176	2	7