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Mannerisms of Millennials: Why Are They Different?

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Abstract
Differences in attitudes and mannerisms of the millennials and the older generation could result in intergenerational conflicts. This study aims to determine the definitions of good mannerisms as perceived by the two different generations and to identify the factors that contribute to the mannerisms and characteristics of the millennials. Using a non-experimental design, a questionnaire was distributed to 400 respondents. The responses by the millennials differed in some aspects from the older generation. Nevertheless, both groups agreed that the lack of a good upbringing and social media influences were the primary reasons for the lack of good mannerisms among millennials.

Keywords: Millennials, Mannerism, Values, Characteristics

1.0 Introduction
Generation Y, born between the early 1980s and 2000, is popularly known as the millennials. By virtue of the universality of their character and attitude, the millennials are presenting themselves to the world as a legion that cannot be ignored. They have a set of distinct universal characteristics, different from the generations before them in many aspects, including characteristics, the outlook in life, dress pattern, knowledge of the English language, education level, food habits, religious behaviour, social behaviour, technology and so on.

One aspect, however, stands out as most prominent over others from the perspective of the older generation. The characteristics of these young people have become an area of contention, regardless of race, culture, creed or religion. A universal trait among the millennials today is their lack of values and respect not only for parents, grandparents, teachers and elders but also for each other.

1.1 Problem Statement
Politeness in daily interaction has always been highly regarded in all cultures, and its crucial role in creating and maintaining human relationships is known. Good mannerisms could be depicted through verbal or non-verbal language, as they are a part of having a good personality which is vital for successful learning in school. Indeed, success in school and in life is associated with individual

personality and learning styles. Good mannerisms have always been a symbol of human civilisation, but it becomes a cause for concern when we encounter the millennial generation that does not value them, let alone believe that practising them is necessary. This is a worrying trend that needs to be addressed; without good values such as politeness, kindness and courtesy, our society is at risk of sliding backwards in civilisation.

The general purpose of this study is to gather information from two categories of people who could shed light on millennials' behaviours.
(i) The millennials - to find out what they perceive of the characteristics of young people like themselves.
(ii) Parents, teachers and guardians - the very people responsible for raising and nurturing the millennials.

1.2 Objectives of the study
This study has a two-fold aim.
R.O. 1. To determine the definitions of good mannerisms as perceived by the older generation and the millennials.
R.O. 2. To identify the factors that contribute to the mannerisms and characteristics of the millennials, viewed from their perspective as well as those of the older generation.

1.3 Significance of the study
The findings of this study could be used by policymakers to place greater emphasis on the practice and teaching of good mannerisms in educational institutions.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 How the Millennials are Defined
Millennials are those born between the early 1980s and 2000, the cohort that was the first to come of age in the new millennium. By 2022, they will be between the ages of early 20s and 40s, gradually moving into the workforce. The environment this generation was born in was somewhat different from that of the generations before. It is one of a fast-phase era, with the highest technological advancement and most modern gadgets such as digital media, the internet, mobile phones, instant communication and social networking.

2.2 On Attitude and Good Manners
The Oxford dictionary defines attitude as "the way in which a person views and evaluates something or someone, it determines whether people like or dislike things which in turn results in the way in which they behave towards them". While manners refer to "a behaviour that is considered to be polite in a particular society or culture". Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that people acquire behaviour through observation and imitation, its a cognitive process in which interaction takes place between personal factors, behavioral factors and environmental factors (de la Fuente et al., 2022). This theory assigns the role of the environment a prominent position in the formation of human behavior.

One should learn to use proper words or phrases in a given situation within a given culture while bearing in mind the acceptable social distance (Uzair-ul-Hassan et al., 2017). Politeness is the behaviour standard to show mutual respect and friendliness among human contacts and exchanges - the most basic requirement of civilised behaviour. It is all about respecting others, which has time and again been proven a stepping-stone to achieving successful relationships. This feature was highlighted by Arumugam, Dass, Alias, Kaur, Abdul Murad & Nayan (2015, p.48) where millennials, *'….. are known to lack virtues highly regarded by societies of the earlier generations.'* Human beings of all cultures have always regarded politeness as a mark of human civilisation as its role in forming and maintaining good relationships as well as in preserving social harmony is known (Sezan, 2012).

2.3 Modernisation and its impact on the ethics and mannerisms of young people
In all cultures and societies, the young must display good manners such as respect, kindness and considerate behaviour towards older folks (Swabrick, 2013). It is unfortunate that the rapid modernisation and globalisation in our industrialised world have brought about an erosion of good values such as elder respect and change of attitude towards the older generation among our young (Dass, Subramaniam, Muslia & Hasan, 2021). Studies on youth's morals and attitudes toward the ageing population and ageism have depicted this phenomenon. A recent poll found that 62% of Malaysians worry about growing old, while more than half feel there is a lack of respect for the elderly (Chung, 2019).

Research by Wachege and Rugendo (2017) on youth morality in Kenya found that modernisation did impact family values among the young, where individualism, new attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyles have become a norm. A Pakistani study stated that rapid modernisation is to be blamed for the deterioration of religious practices among young people giving way to individualism, lack of religious faith and belief, and an attitude of disrespect for elders (Menhas, Umer, Akhtar & Shabbir, 2015). A study conducted in Poland by Cybulski et al. (2013) wrote that the elderly in nursing homes revealed a negative perception of the young, although the respondents viewed young people of today as helpful, they were said to fall short in many vital aspects concerning respect, kind-heartedness and an understanding attitude toward the needs of the elderly. This study recommends programs enabling youth to interact with the elders to bridge the inter-generational gap. Studies have documented the positive impact of intergenerational programs where student participants displayed positive changes in their attitude towards the elders at the end of the program (Whiteland, 2016).

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Another research was done in ASEAN Plus Three countries on how the elderly perceived an age-friendly environment to study how they felt in terms of being respected and socially included by society (Tiraphat et al., 2020). The findings revealed that 20% of Malaysian participants responded bad,41% rated fair, while the remaining 39% rated good. In contrast, 46% and 44% of Japanese participants rated bad and fair in response to the statement, while only a small percentage (9.3 %) rated good (Tiraphat et al., 2020). This is yet another indicator that modernisation which comes with advancement in the economy, does correlate with the level of dissatisfaction among the elderly over the mannerisms of the younger generation. Therefore, it can be summed up that the cost of modernisation which stems from industrialisation, is a generation of young people who are individualistic and lack human values (Dass, Subramaniam, Muslia & Hasan,2021). Meng (2019) on moral degradation in developed nations throughout the world says that this is a cause for concern as, without the ability to humble themselves to learn from life experiences and share in the wisdom of the elderly, the young suffer a considerable loss (Dass, Subramaniam & Rahmat, 2021).

Yet another predicament facing our young today is the fact that they do not realise the moral quandary they are in. Recent research by Dass, Subramaniam, Muslia and Hasan (2021) proves this point where it was found that millennials generally rated themselves higher on a scale of attitudes and mannerisms compared to how the older generation, that is their parents, teachers or guardian perceived of them. This study also noted significant differences in the ratings, which exceeded 60% for some of the questions between the two groups of participants. Another survey on classroom etiquette and social behaviour among pre-service teachers at Laguna State Polytechnic University showed that participants largely held positive perceptions of themselves (Tamban & Lazaro, 2018). Though they acknowledged that it is slightly wrong to cheat in exams, go late to class, use the telephone or yawn in class or refrain from responding when teacher questions, they generally thought that their behaviour was right. In responding to questions on social behaviour, such as respecting and honouring their parents, being helpful, honest, considerate as well as helping lecturers carry their things, they agreed these are highly desirable behaviour. While the youth of today may be cognizant of the good moral behaviour and etiquette expected of them, knowledge alone may not be sufficient to help put them into practice (Dass, Subramaniam, Muslia & Hasan, 2021).

In reality, the millennials generally think it is alright to be different regardless of whether or not their behaviour is acceptable to the society they live in. This frame of mind leads them to create their own moral standard and outlook in life (Twenge, 2006). Could this also be a reason for the expectation of a higher than reasonable salary by over 32% of Malaysian fresh graduates (Kadir, Naghavi, Subramaniam, & Halim, 2020)? A significant factor for the difference in characteristics of millennials compared to generations before them is perhaps the dawn of a digitalised world to which millennials are natives to (Roslan & Subramaniam, 2020). Perhaps, this could also be attributed to the way in which millennials are raised and nurtured. By encouraging them to be confident, to speak up their minds and to stand up for themselves, the older generation has raised a generation of children who have grown up to be 'me, myself and I' centred. This 21st century parenting style and new pedagogical approach (Twenge, 2016) may be the reasons why the millennials are of the mindset that they are equal to those older, leading to an inter-generational conflict (Dass,Subramaniam, Muslia & Hasan, 2021).

However, there are not many studies that have examined the millennials' manners in Malaysia and how they are perceived by society, in particular their parents, teachers and guardians. The empirical findings of a study conducted by researchers, Dass, Subramaniam and Rahmat in 2021, also supported by a second study shows that our young people today lack good manners towards each other as well as towards those older, fall short of feelings of empathy, compassion or kindness and inadequately meet the level of mannerisms expected of them by the older generation (Dass, Subramaniam, Muslia, & Hasan, 2021). In summary, their moral values have changed (Wachege & Rugendo, 2017) while their religious practices have corroded (Menhas et al., 2015).

3.0 Methodology

To answer the two research objectives, a non-experimental design, using a survey questionnaire was distributed to 400 respondents, of which 200 were millennials and the remaining 200 were from the older generation. Using a purposive sampling technique, the respondents were identified based on a set of selection criteria mainly age and role of the older generation, and a survey link was distributed via online Google forms. Group A comprised of Gen Y also termed as millennials who comprised college students in the age range of 22 – 25 years. Group B respondents comprised of the older generation who were 45 years and above. A majority of these respondents (84%) were female, while 16 % were males. They assumed various roles such as teachers (N=26, 25%), parents (N=18, 19 %), teachers who were also parents (N=38, 39 %) and others (N=16, 17 %). Within a period of two weeks, 126 usable questionnaires were received from Group A and 101 from Group B.

The questionnaire for both groups was divided into two sections where section A consisted of demographic questions, and Section B had questions on mannerisms and behaviour. Questions in Section B were adapted from Kerrigan (2020), where good mannerisms for children and adults were listed. The good mannerisms enlisted were further grouped into categories such as manners at home, manners at mealtimes, manners when having guests at home, manners when being a guest and manners in public places. In this study, three categories of mannerisms were chosen, namely, manners at home, manners when having guests and manners in public places.

Section B consisted of ten questions, which were in the form of situations encountered and the responses were in the form of behaviours that the millennials will display in response to the given situation. The responses were analysed using thematic analysis and grouped into three categories of mannerisms, namely "polite", "less polite" and "not polite". This section also required respondents to cite factors that they thought contributed to the mannerisms of millennials which answers Objective 2. Based on the responses, the factors that contributed to the attitudes and mannerisms of the millennials were identified.

4.0 Findings and Discussion
The findings of the analysis for both objectives are presented below.

4.1 Comparing the Definitions of Good Mannerisms between the Two Generations
The first objective of the study is: To determine the definitions of good mannerisms as perceived by the older generation and the millennials. The question posed was "How do you define politeness?".

The responses from both cohorts were listed, analysed and further categorised into three main themes, shown in Table 1, below with some examples of the comments:

Table 1: Responses to the question: 'How do you define politeness?'

Gen Y		Older Gen	
Main themes	**Examples**	**Main themes**	**Examples**
1. Polite behaviour	1. Soft-spoken; well-mannered; respect for elders; humility; gentleness, mild-mannered; being calm.	1. Polite behaviour.	1. Showing respect; greeting older persons; being courteous.
2. Tone of voice	2. Speaking softly; voice not raised.	2. Tone of voice.	2. Speaking kindly; speaking with a soft tone of voice.
3. Emotional intelligence	3. Moderation; conflict avoidance; being in control of one's emotions; doing good deeds for others.	3. Adherence to traditional values.	3. Norms and code of ethics formulated by family, group or society on good behaviour for interaction in society; Politeness is behaving with respect and in accordance with certain values deemed acceptable by society in front of another individual.

A majority of responses from both cohorts Gen Y and the older generation could be categorised under "Polite behaviour" and "Tone of voice". The respondents from both groups identified terms such as 'Showing respect to elders' and 'Being courteous' as definitions of politeness. Nevertheless, there was a slight difference in the third most common theme, while the older generation identified terms that fit into the category of 'Adherence to traditional values, the younger generation was more inclined toward terms such as 'conflict avoidance' and 'moderation' as their definition of politeness.

To get a clearer insight into the polite mannerisms of the millennials, the respondents were asked two open-ended questions:
What are the politeness terms that you know?
How often do you use these terms?
The responses are summarised in Table 2, on page 7.

Table 2: Gen Y: Politeness terms and frequency of use

Polite terms used	Frequency of use
Thank you You're welcome Please Sorry It's OK Excuse me I would be delighted Do you mind? If you don't mind me saying I would prefer to Would, could, should	Very often – 18 (16%) Often - 59 (51.7%) Seldom -6 (5.2 %) According to my mood -20 (17.5%) When I feel like it – 11 (9.6%)

It is noteworthy that the younger generation is quite aware of the various politeness terms, with a majority (67%) using them either very often or often. These results indicate that a significant proportion of the younger generation upholds the traditional values of their elders. However, it is interesting to note that approximately 30% of them were less likely to use these terms. In fact, Fig. 1 above shows that about 27% of the respondents used these terms according to their 'mood' or emotional state. This can be attributed to their tendency to be self-centered as they have been raised to be confident and to stand up for themselves (Dass,Subramaniam, Muslia & Hasan, 2021) In short, while it is reassuring that the majority of the Gen Y are aware of terms of politeness, they may not necessarily put this knowledge into practice. These findings correspond with literature where it was established that knowledge of good mannerisms among Gen Y alone is insufficient. (Dass, Subramaniam, Muslia & Hasan, 2021).
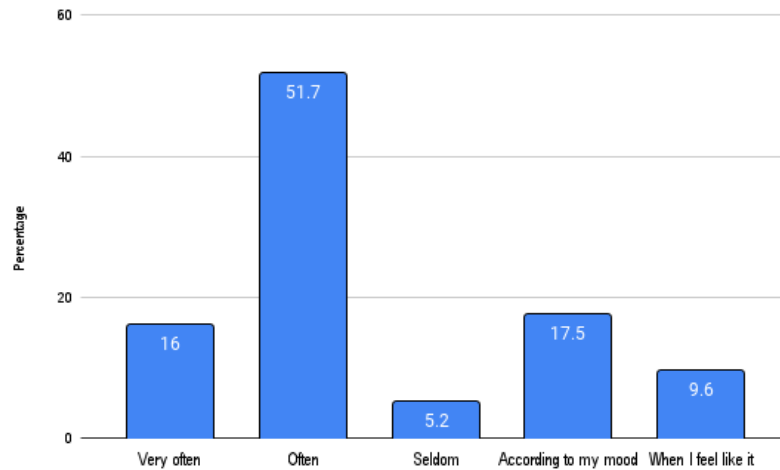
Fig 1: Gen Y: Frequency of use of politeness terms

4.2 Factors that Contribute to Attitudes and Mannerisms of the Millennials
The second objective of the study is to compare the factors that contribute to the attitudes and mannerisms of Gen Y from the perspectives of the millennials (Gen Y) and the older generations. For the second research objective, both groups were posed with the question - Why do younger people lack politeness?

The responses are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Perspectives of Millennials & Older Generation factors that contribute to the attitudes and mannerisms of Gen Y

Gen Y	Older Gen
Flaws in upbringing	Flaws in upbringing
Lack of focus on etiquette in formal education	
Modernisation	Modernisation
Mainstream media and Social media	Mainstream media and social media
Peer influence	Peer influence
Focus on devices.	Overuse of devices.

Overall, both generations agree that upbringing is the main reason for the lack of politeness. The millennials have indicated that a lack of focus on etiquette in formal education has a role to play as well. The present school system lacks focus on courtesy and good manners while placing more emphasis on academic achievement. This is a noteworthy point put forward by the millennials themselves. There is a need for schools to bring back the culture of instilling good manners among the young, also notable is that both groups agree that peer influence and modern culture that focuses on devices and social media also contribute significantly to the lack of appropriate mannerisms among this younger generation that is under study.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion
Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from this study. Firstly, the findings reveal that the 2 groups studied differ slightly in their definition of politeness, an indication that there exists a certain degree of difference in the set of values held by our young of today, in comparison to the generations before them. Secondly, in terms of factors that contribute to the said mannerism, there are similarities and differences between the two groups of participants under study. Both groups agree on the importance of parental guidance, which is lacking when both parents are working, leaving no time at home to teach children good manners. When youngsters lack good role models, their behaviour tends to be influenced by peers and social media. Some interesting suggestions were presented by both groups. The older group suggests that character education be taught in schools, in particular, by emulating Japan in teaching etiquette and manners in primary school. The millennials, on the other hand, suggest using pop culture to teach etiquette. Finally, and most importantly, both generations agree that proper upbringing, both at school and at home plays an important role in instilling good mannerisms.

5.2 Recommendation

Some recommendations that could be put forward to tackle this issue include endeavours to instil good mannerisms from a young age by both parents and teachers. This calls for a concerted effort by schools as well as religious institutions. Research on inter-generational programs by local education authorities will help shed light on inter-generational conflicts and help the young obey, respect and value the older generation. As upbringing is the main reason for the lack of politeness highlighted by both generations, parents need to play a more pivotal role in the upbringing of the next generation by being role models and setting good examples. In terms of institutional reforms, apart from being good role models, teachers and schools should conduct politeness campaigns and, place greater emphasis on character education from a young age. In conclusion, a wholesome effort by all parties concerned is necessary for the character building of our young.

This study had a sample size of 400 respondents, future studies will look at bigger sample sizes.

Acknowledgements

Paper Contribution to Related Field of

This paper highlights a worrying trend that needs to be tackled, for, without good values such as politeness and courtesy, society is at risk of sliding backwards in civilisation, as millennials are the force of the future.

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