

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES AMONG ADULT LEARNERS IN THE UNITED STATES

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A limited number of studies examine generational differences in learning style preferences. The purpose of the present non-experimental, retrospective, causal-comparative study was to compare the generational cohorts of Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y/Millennial in terms of learning style preferences in the United States. Two hundred and forty-four participants completed the Felder-Soloman Index of Learning Styles assessment, which measures four dimensions of learning style preferences. The sample was comprised of survey participants (voluntarily associated with SurveyMonkey, a third-party online survey provider) who lived in the United States. The analysis included four chi-square tests of independence in order to answer each research question. The Pearson values for all tests were greater than .05; therefore the results failed to reject the null hypotheses and did not identify a significant difference between cohorts. Across all generations, preferences were for reflective, sensing, visual, and sequential learning styles. The insignificant results of this study are important since organizations need to be cautious about accepting information regarding generational differences in learning style preferences, which lack empirical support. Instead, organizations benefit from applying adult learning theory and evaluating the learning style preferences of their unique training audiences. Study limitations and implications for further research are discussed.