



RAISING GENERATION ALPHA: A NARRATIVE REVIEW

¹Deepika R Lad

¹BSc Psychology Honors Student

¹Psychology Department

¹Christ University, Bangalore, India

Abstract: The newest generation, known as Generation Alpha, marks the arrival of the digital age, which is defined by a demand for technological expertise and ingenuity. Considering this is a relatively new field of research, not much is known about their unique traits or social and emotional competencies. It is essential to concentrate on helping Generation Alpha acquire these abilities. This research offers a thorough analysis of earlier interventions—such as yoga, self-regulation exercises, music therapy, and parental supervision—that tried to improve children's social and emotional skills. This information was a thorough analysis of surveys and experimental studies conducted by various researchers obtained mainly from PubMed, Frontiers, JSTOR, Research Gate, Google Scholar and other sites. It was also reviewed by experts in the LeapSpace organisation. This paper intends to address the social and emotional challenges that Generation Alpha experiences and ultimately seeks to improve their general well-being by synthesising existing studies and initiatives. Subsequent investigations could potentially gain from focusing on particular facets of Generation Alpha's personality and placing more emphasis on intervention-based methodologies. This study points out a significant gap in the literature about creative interventions and concepts designed with Generation Alpha in focus.

Keywords - Generation Alpha, Digital, Social, Emotional skills, Interventions.

Introduction

The idea of “generation” was initially born in the sociology discipline. It refers to a collection of people born and living at about the same time. Generation studies was given by an influential figure in nineteenth century sociology, Karl Mannheim (Pilcher, 1994). He devised a systematic way of studying generations that he appended to a wider social theory of knowledge. In one indispensable chapter written in 1928, Mannheim stressed the importance of considering generations as the answer to rapid changes in society that occur over short spans. He also mentioned that common experiences and beliefs which underlie solidarity among generational cohorts are not similar with specific social interactions that create actual groups. It should be noted that these interconnections are conceptual rather than concrete affiliations characteristic for particular groups in the society. He also specifically stresses upon a person's location would influence their behaviour and defines their experiences. This leads to stratification of individuals geographically and culturally. Later on, the generational strata are developed which highlights both, differences as well as similarities between different social groups under a similar culture or society (Erstad, 2010).

Every generation consists of people born every 20 years with a lifespan of 80-90 years (Strauss and Howe, 1991). In this period, there happens to be turning points in generational experiences which include strong institutions, rising autonomy, search for spiritual authenticity, heightened individualism, distrust in traditional institutions and finally, replacing older institutions with new social order and a renewed sense of group identity (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005).

From a sociological perspective, a generation would be described as the one which is followed by another generation to discard the obsolete and innovate, inheriting past knowledge and practises, cross generational comparisons, cultural heritage and gradual transition of generations which highlights non direct interaction between the oldest members and younger generations (Mannheim, 1952).

Overview of Previous Generations

Identification of generations by certain nomenclature given by authors offer an approximate time interval for each generation (Bonchis, 2021; Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005).

The Matures, sometimes referred to as the Builders or Traditionalists, are people who were born between 1900 and 1946, during which time the world saw two major wars and the Great Depression, creating a generation renowned for its toughness and self-control. Another generation called Baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964, when the period of post World War-2 was

marked by major social and economic transformations. After this period till 1980, the Generation X were formed. There was a drastic change in the social norms and a heavy inclination towards technology. Finally, Generation Z were born between 1996 and 2010 and were more surrounded by cutting edge technology. They are digital natives.

About Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha, the youngest generation starting from 2010 till 2025, are not only the start of the digital era but also a beginning to new innovations. The hope for Generation Alpha began with coining their name. Instead of naming them as Generation A as many people suggested while conducting a research survey in Australia, they were named as Generation Alpha, in the scientific tradition of adopting the Greek alphabet rather than the Latin (McCrinkle, 2020). Gen Z, Alpha, and X are some examples of labels that offer a blank canvas that a specific generation can fill with its own distinct experiences.

It is of great interest to all of us to unravel the various physical, social and psychological tendencies of generation alpha and discover more about their general behaviour compared to other generations. Before that, it is important to note that their life is completely different from what we can even imagine, it revolves around the modern age of Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) driven knowledge which is the primary reality they live in. Basic necessities for them would include constant supply of electricity, social media and ICT devices like smartphones, laptops and various others.

Literature Review

The Generation Alpha are primarily characterised by their technological proficiency and creative potential. But this could also lead to significant negative consequences. In order to mitigate these issues, it is important to understand the previous research conducted on the Generation Alpha and formulate interventions based on their characteristics.

Shift to the service sector

Studies have shown that the Generation Alpha would not only be proficient in modern technology but also excel in various other areas. A study shows that they focus on creativity, being dynamic and leadership abilities (Dos Reis et al., 2018). This study also proves that there is a gradual shift in the job market. The generation alpha would focus more towards service sector and technology-related professions like bloggers, content creators, YouTubers and influencers.

Negative effects of technology

There have also been studies which show the negative consequences of being extremely addicted to such devices by which an average of two hours is spent on mobile gaming which leads to loneliness and aggressiveness upon withdrawal (Arora & Jha, 2020). Biologically, brain plasticity, which is the reorganisation of neural structures and connection due to exposure to a particular stimuli, changes due to games and internet use. It also causes sleep disturbances, obesity and other harmful effects. Growth of cortical brain regions is hampered and there is a reduction in brain tissue density which leads to problems in cognition (Takeuchi, 2016).

Comparative analysis with Generation Z

A qualitative study found that there are more negative than positive effects of generation alpha. They were curious, had high self esteem, emotional and independent of rules, but mainly were ill-tempered and self centred, sensitive and conscious compared to generation Z. This research was conducted with the help of preschool teacher's perspectives on this particular generation (Apaydin & Kaya, 2020).

Furthermore, this particular generation has also been termed as 'screamagers' due to their ill tempered behaviours. They were also termed as 'screenagers' (Ziatdinov and Cilliers, 2021). It was due to their dependence on smart devices.

There is a strong resemblance between this generation and the previous one, which is the Generation Z. Both the generations have indulged in technology and learned to communicate with these devices. The crucial change occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic which infuses a boost of using technology mainly by Gen Alpha for their educational purposes at a very young age than Gen Z. Thus, to develop critical thinking in Gen Alpha, was a task because it needed time and attention for details instead of speed browsing and multi-tasking online.

They lack critical qualities like loyalty, mindfulness and responsibility (Selvi et al, 2022). But, research has proved them to be more creative and determined than Gen Z (Apaydin and Kaya, 2020).

Social and Emotional Skills

There are high hopes for Generation Alpha, starting with them being called as an entrepreneurial generation in which one of two will obtain a university degree. But, to be able to function critically and focus more on social emotional skills, parents and teachers of Generation Alpha must inculcate critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills in this generation (Drugas, 2020).

Focusing more towards the emotional state of adolescents, it has been noted that there is a world-wide trend of every generation becoming more emotionally disturbed, lonely, impulsive, nervous, prone to worry and angrier than the previous generation (Goleman, 1995). It is essential to analyse and improve the emotional intelligence of adolescents before the circumstances worsen. It could be incredibly fruitful because it helps in dealing with one's feelings effectively and innovatively. Generation Alpha are more exposed towards machines before they could comprehend much about them, this is due to the parents' socioeconomic status which helps afford expensive gadgets which the children start using at a very young age. If the family is impacted by poverty, there is less interaction between the parents and children due to over stress which fails to provide adequate protection to children that would impact their emotional intelligence (Anthony et al, 2005).

Therefore, an increasing body of literature focuses upon how the cause of academic failure in school children is primarily due to their lack of social-emotional intelligence (Chandler, 1984). Enhancing strategies to improve these aspects have been emerging through current research. There is also a need to improve parents' socio economic status which is highly correlated with confidence level of children to interact with the society.

Interventions

Music

One way to express oneself and find an outlet for emotions and feelings is through music. In addition to providing entertainment, it serves as a channel for interpersonal communication (Suthers and Niland, 2007). It enhances cognitive, social, motor, language and academic abilities.

A study was conducted with a sample of 55 children who were aged 3-5 years. They were a part of the experimental group. Another 47 children were a part of the control group and did not receive the intervention. They were engaged in an 8 month intervention program focused on listening to music. The aim was to increase socioemotional skills. The results reported by the teachers concluded that significant improvement in skills were seen in the experimental group (Ritblatt et al., 2013).

Another study, paired up 48 children who were 4-year-old to understand the relationship between music and cooperation in children. They were assigned on a random basis to play without music or to collaborate with others on creating music. When compared to the children in the non-music condition, the children in the music condition showed a higher readiness to assist and collaborate (Kirschner and Tomasello, 2010).

However, there were also studies which mentioned no significant benefits of music intervention. A study on 195 children aged between 5-8 were divided into two groups, experimental (n = 122) and control group (n = 73). Despite the control group being provided with regular music education, no significant differences were noted between the two groups (Rickard et al., 2013).

In order to assess test emotion comprehension (TEC), an experimental study was conducted on thirty children who had received formal music instruction outside of school for at least eight months. And these children were compared to another thirty children who had not had any external music training. According to the results, children who had received musical training scored considerably higher on the TEC (Schellenberg and Mankarious, 2012).

An experimental study was conducted on 52 children, aged between 8 to 11 and were further divided into three groups at random: a control group (n = 21), a games group (n = 8), or a musical group interaction programme (n = 23). Compared to the game and control groups, the children in the music group scored higher on two of the three measures of empathy (Rabinowitch et al., 2013).

Self Regulation

Exercise-Related Interventions. A study examined how physical activities affect children's cognitive functioning. In a survey targeting 181 children aged between ten and twelve, one of the three six-week PE programs had to be chosen consisting of; team games involving high physical effort and substantial mental engagement, aerobics that require a lot of energy and involve low thinking, or control group where there is not much physical exertion nor thought process for the child. Prior to commencement and after completion of the intervention, cardiovascular fitness (20-m shuttle run) as well as executive functions (updating, inhibition, shifting) were measured. Aerobic exercise (4% to 5%) and team games brought about improvements in aerobic fitness. Nevertheless only team games participants showed improvement in their ability to adapt. Therefore enhancing kids' executive functions through cognitively demanding physical activity meant more sense at all (Schmidt et al., 2015).

Another study emphasised on the need for High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) for improving cognitive and mental health in adolescents (Costigan et al., 2016). The sample consisted of 65 children with the mean age of 15 years who were grouped into three conditions: Aerobic Exercise Program (n = 21), Resistance and Aerobic Program (n = 22) and control group (n = 22). Every three times a week in physical education class or during lunch time, HIIT sessions of 8-10 minutes were held. Although not statistically significant, the results indicated slight improvements in executive function and psychological well being among adolescents.

Mindfulness. An interesting study conducted in secondary school examined the possibility and impact of incorporating yoga practice into the curriculum and understanding the impact on psychosocial well being. In this investigation, 51 students from 11th and 12th grade were selected randomly and exposed to a Kripalu-based yoga program for ten weeks. Yoga classes met two or three times weekly and included physical postures, breathing exercises, relaxation and meditation. Psychosocial wellbeing was measured using Positive and Negative Affect Schedule for Children (PANAS-C) and Profile of Mood States-Short Form (POMS-SF), as well as other tests related to stress perception and attitude. This paper shows that students who practised yoga maintained or enhanced their psychosocial health while those who did not showed a decline in their overall mood as well as excessive anxiety levels (Parker et al., 2014).

Another study assessed the benefits of a 12-week mindfulness-based Kindness Curriculum (KC) on 68 preschoolers who were assessed in a randomised controlled research (Flook et al., 2015). The KC group outperformed the control group in terms of social competence and academic grades, whereas the latter displayed more self-centred behaviour. Additionally, the KC group exhibited improved delay of pleasure and cognitive flexibility. The most drastic improvements were seen in children whose executive functioning and social competence were initially lower. The results indicate that the KC programme can improve young children's prosocial behaviour and self-regulation, which calls for more study in a variety of contexts.

Family-Based Intervention. A study examined the impact of a parent engagement intervention called "Getting Ready," on the school readiness of poor preschool children, focusing on social-emotional outcomes (Sheridan et al., 2010). Involving 220 children over four years, the randomised trial found significant improvements in interpersonal competencies (attachment, initiative, anxiety/withdrawal) among children in the intervention group compared to the control group over a two-year period. However, there were no significant differences between groups regarding behavioural concerns (anger/aggression, self-control, behavioural problems).

In a study, The Family Check-Up (FCU) intervention, which aims to improve middle school children's adjustment and prevent problem behaviour, was examined. Sample consisted of 377 families who participated in the study, which was conducted in three public middle schools. Participants were randomised to either the FCU intervention or the control group. Around 38% of families took part in the FCU. The three-year intervention enhanced young people's self-regulation, which predicted a reduction in depression and an increase in high school involvement. These results demonstrate the potential advantages of family engagement and parenting skills-focused school-based mental health services (Stormshak et al., 2010).

Research Gap

The research gap has been identified with the assistance of the observations made by several research scholars from the literature study mentioned above. In the current dynamic environment, competition has sparked the creation of novel concepts based on contemporary lifestyles, particularly in the field of education. There is not much importance given to the social and emotional development of children in this technology drive era.

The idea of how this technology can be utilised to promote and educate an alpha generation in a constructive way is not well-represented in academic literature.

Research Objectives

- To understand the concept of Generation Alpha in general
- To highlight the importance of social-emotional skills in understanding the personality characteristics of Generation Alpha
- To summarise interventions based on previous research on Generation Alpha

Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of Generation Alpha?
- What role do family, school, and community environments play in the development of social-emotional skills in Generation Alpha?
- What types of interventions have been successful in promoting social-emotional skills in Generation Alpha?

Research Methodology

The research approach used is narrative review and is a comprehensive investigation and analysis of surveys conducted by various researchers. Information obtained from Emerald, Frontiers, ProQuest, PubMed, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar. Concepts and ideas linked to technical words have been gathered from historical sources.

Findings

This paper summarises the overall information regarding the characteristics, social and emotional skills and previous interventions to improve those skills in Generation Alpha.

Everyone relies on technology at some point to help ease difficulties of certain tasks. Among them are Generation Alpha for whom ICT is not an addition but an integral part of life that makes them fitted for professional positions in service delivery and technology sectors that require creative solutions. However, it is important to note that excessive use of technology can promote ill health conditions as well as cognitive impairments. Nevertheless, when compared with generation z, alpha has more emotional independence and higher levels of temperamental behaviour although they rely more on tech devices since covid-19 outbreak.

In conclusion, the heightened cases of emotional disorders among young people underpins the value of social-emotional skills necessary for their holistic growth as well as academic excellence. Music, exercise mindfulness-based interventions should be encouraged to increase these skills while family-centred ones have also proven effective; however, additional investigations are needed to utilise technological tools appropriately in education programs. All in all, this investigation stresses creating tailor-made approaches towards enhancing overall wellness of generation alpha children through innovative methods and family groups which must help the children develop social and emotional skills.

Theoretical Framework

Behavioural theory seems apt when trying to understand why people behave the way they do. In depth, an interpretation of all behaviours acquired through being conditioned to our interactions with the environment is the main idea of behavioural theory. It was given by B. F Skinner and John B. Watson, who are key figures of the school of behaviourism and mainly focused on stimulus-response associations, classical conditioning and reinforcement.

Generation Alpha has garnered attention for both positive and negative reasons (Nagy and Kolcsey, 2016). Bandura's theory of social learning, which prioritises learning through observation, modelling, and imitation, offers a useful foundation for comprehending the ways in which this generation engages with media, technology, and social settings. Generation Alpha observes and learns from their model, it could be any person around them. Primarily, from their caregivers, the children learn to adapt the way they behave. If the caregivers tend to be occupied with their smartphones and frustrated most of the time, the children tend to model this kind of behaviour. This could be harmful in the future for their social and emotional development. Thus, Bandura's

Social Learning Theory primarily emphasises the importance of observation and modelling in learning and development (Bandura, 1977).

It is important to emphasise children's early growth and development in a safe environment which provides warmth and care which shape their early attachments and provide social and emotional development. Bowlby's attachment theory focuses upon this particular aspect. Caregivers play a key role in the emotional regulation of the child (Bowlby, 1969). In the context of Generation Alpha, it is important to keep the children active and successfully complete all the developmental milestones with adequate support of the parents. The use of technology and screen time must be monitored. A sense of security must be provided to the children by the presence of the parents by attending to their needs.

In order to make the children follow certain rules and tend to obey authority figures, it is important for the caregivers to ensure certain values to the children. Obedience and Punishment must be practised. According to Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory, it is important for the children's decisions to be shaped by the adults and consequences of breaking the rules (Kohlberg, 1958). Generation Alpha can also have certain morals and values which help contribute to their moral development.

In conclusion, behavioural theories like those contributed by Skinner, Watson, and Bandura can be used to analyse the behavioural patterns of Generation Alpha and gain important insights into their interactions and growth. Caregivers and educators can better assist Generation Alpha's holistic development and help them become resilient and adaptable in a world that is changing rapidly by incorporating these theoretical concepts.

Summary and Conclusions

Generation Alpha, is a largely unexplored demographic that requires further research to fully understand their behaviour, potential career paths, and social, cognitive, and emotional development. As of now, Generation Alpha is distinguished mostly by their familiarity with technology and their expectation of being fully immersed in artificial intelligence. This has led to worries regarding potential technology addiction and its effects on their development. This paper examines current interventions, including music, yoga, self-regulation, and parental participation, with a particular focus on the social and emotional development of the child. In order to ensure Generation Alpha's well-being and ability to respond to social expectations, the study emphasises the significance of creating fresh, practical solutions to aid in their navigation and adaptation of their technologically enhanced surroundings.

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