CHAPTER 7
LEADERSHIP AND GENERATIONS

Leadership, though a well researched topic, has rarely been examined from the generational perspective, especially in the Indian context. Additionally, the follower perspective has received less research attention. Therefore, the present study explored the generational differences in the follower perspective on leadership. This chapter presents the findings related to this aspect of the study, following which, the chapter is concluded by examining them in light of the existing literature.
There has been a long-running research focus on leadership through leader-centric theories; however, exclusive focus on understanding followers and follower preferences on leadership have not been examined extensively (Baker, 2007; Uhl-Bien, et al., 2014; Yukl, 2002). It is important to understand leadership from the followers’ perspective. While there is some literature on followership, leadership, and generations, leadership preferences of followers from different generations have not been fully explored in the Indian Context.

This chapter explores leadership preferences from a generational perspective. It endeavors to understand “Who, according to the generational participants, are leaders?” “What are the preferred leadership qualities and styles for different generations?” “What according to the generational participants is the role of the leader in managing follower performance?” “What role leaders should play in generational followers’ learning and career development?” and “What are the challenges faced by senior and middle generations in managing their followers?”

The chapter starts with a discussion on the themes and subthemes related to defining a “leader,” and preferred leadership attributes qualities and styles for each of the three employee generations identified in Chapter 4. The subsequent section discusses the common qualities of leaders, as identified by the generational groups, as well as some these specific to some generational groups. This is followed by presenting some emergent findings related to challenges faced by leaders in managing followers from the Young generation. Throughout the chapter, the theme has been first illustrated using the verbatim quotes of some of the participants that represent each of the three generational groups, following by an explanation of the findings. The chapter ends with an analytical examination of the research findings in the backdrop of existing leadership theories.

**Who is a Leader?**

Leaders and leadership are constructed by the followers. In their seminal work on leader and follower identity, DeRue and Ashford (2010) argue that individuals co-create reciprocal and mutually reinforcing identities as leaders and followers, by granting a leader identity to another, and claiming a follower identity for oneself. Thus, leader and follower identity are asserted and ascertained in the course of social interactions, wherein it could be synonymous with organizational hierarchy and the individual’s position in the hierarchy, but not necessarily so (DeRue, Ashford, &
Cotton, 2009; Snow & Anderson, 1987). Hence, before we examine the generational preferences related to leadership qualities and attributes, it is crucial to understand who, according to the respondents, is a leader in the organizational setting, the immediate supervisor who manages the subordinate, the head of the vertical who gives direction to the working of the department, or the senior management team including the CEO and business head, who give strategic direction to the organization. Though earlier research on generations and leadership has not focused on the generational participants’ views on who are leaders, it is interesting to note that generational participants in the current study differed in their opinion regarding the same and associated different position holders as their leaders.

**Young Generation**

* I see my immediate supervisor as my leader, he is the one who is responsible for me, and I am answerable to him. Unlike others, he is young and dynamic, intelligent, and has an exceptional understanding of the business. He is brilliant with technology driven platforms, and hence, in an industry like advertising, where the learning curve is reinvented every day, he has maintained a top performer position for a long time. There is so much to learn from him, and one day I want to be like him. He also happens to be my senior from college. (Shahbaz, Advertising)

* We have been given a lot of mentoring from senior professionals from my organization, but I don’t associate myself with them since they can’t affect my rewards and outcomes in the organization. Hence, for me, my immediate supervisor is my leader. (Anvesha, e-Commerce)

**Middle Generation**

* I am an ardent follower of the CEO of the organization. Today, whatever we are as an organization is because of his risk taking ability. Under his stewardship, the organization has grown to great heights. In today’s VUCA\(^1\) world, it is absolutely necessary that the leader manages the vagaries and uncertainties of the market and provided sustainable growth to the organization, which he has been able to do. Hence, for me he is a leader. (Arvind, Manufacturing)

* It makes a lot of difference as to whose team one is joining, since policies and systems are formulated by the head of the department. In my organization, the head of HR is a very strong person and I know HR people in this organization are respected a lot because of him. (Umang, Steel)

**Senior Generation**

* I report to the vice president of the organization, and for me, he is my leader. In my tenure with this company, I have worked with a lot of different bosses, and I have always cooperated with all of them. I also believe in the strong senior leadership at my company and I believe people join the organization because of its senior leadership. (Ashish, FMCG)

\(^1\) VUCA- “Volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous” (Johansen, 2007).
Spiro (2006) found that Millennials are more affluent, more technologically savvy, better educated than any previous generations. Hence, they expect their leaders to be same. The Young generation expects their leader to be young, dynamic, smart, tech savvy (should know how to handle tech gadgets), from a branded institute, and having a great profile on the social network. They see these qualities in their immediate supervisors, and hence, for the Young generation, their immediate supervisors are their leaders. Prior research in this area suggests that consciously or unconsciously, individuals have set beliefs and attributes associated to how a leader should be, and these beliefs help them in attributing a leadership position to others, depending on how well the other person corresponds to implicitly held beliefs and attributes of leadership (DeRue, Ashford, & Cotton, 2009; Lord, 1985; Lord & Alliger, 1985; Schyns & Meindl, 2005).

Resonating with the implicit theory of leadership (Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994), the Young generation wants young and dynamic leaders who represent attributes of their generation. On the other hand, the Middle generation attributes CEO’s and departmental heads as their leaders, since they want the leader to have attributes of managing uncertainty and risk. Literature on the “Romance-of-Leadership” (Meindl, 1995) suggests that leadership is seen as an antidote to uncertainty, and these situations motivate individuals to grant a leadership identity to the one who is efficient in managing uncertainty and risk. The Senior generation, which has been socialized in old institutional structures of rigid hierarchy, expressed position incumbent supervisors as leaders.

A comparison of the leader definitions of the Young and Middle generations reveals that the higher individuals grow in the organization, the higher is their tendency to associate leadership with senior leaders, and less with immediate superiors. Many studies on employee poaching ascertain that people join and leave organizations because of their senior leaders (Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2009; Combes & Duranton, 2006; Sheldon & Li, 2013). Associative tendencies could also be explained by the fact that as individuals gain seniority, they care lesser about monetary rewards, and more about working with leaders and organizations who are known for their systems and policies.
**Preferred Leadership Attributes**

Leadership attributes are a blend of cognitive capacities, personality orientation, motives and values, social appraisals skills, problem-solving competencies, and general and domain-specific expertise. Some generational studies on leadership have focused on leadership attributes preferred by generational participants. In the empirical study by Arsenault (2004), on leadership attributes preferred by different generations, the researcher found that Veterans and Baby Boomers placed more importance on honestly and loyalty as an absolute imperative for leadership. This preference for loyalty correlates well with their belief in authority and hierarchical relationships. On the other hand, Xers and Nexters placed more importance on determination and ambition. It was found that they want leaders who challenge the system and create change. Xers, and especially Baby Boomers were much more likely to want leaders who have expertise in leadership abilities like challenging, inspiring, enabling, and being a role-model than did the Veterans and Nexters. In the present study, the generational participants articulated various preferred leadership attributes of their leaders. An analysis of their annotations highlights the shift in different generations' work scenarios and expectations from their leaders.

**Young Generation**

The participants of the present study repeatedly referred to the word “Competent” while describing the preferred leadership attributes. Competency is an underlying characteristic of a person, which reflects effective and or superior performance on the job (Klemp, 1980). Competence pointed to a leader’s ability to take the organization in the right direction. On further investigation, the research participants pointed out to qualities that contributed to the description of a competent leader. They reported that a competent leader is one who: 1) is exceptionally smart, who has technical expertise, is intellectually stimulating and innovative, is a quick decision maker, is professional, is a person of ideas, and appreciates new ideas proposed by subordinates; 2) is tech savvy; 3) has exceptional interpersonal skills; 4) exudes self-confidence; 5) possess integrity, which is a hygiene factor; 6) should be fun to work with and is able to make work interesting for the subordinates; and 7) encourages subordinates to think and challenge basic assumptions and is not afraid of failures.

**Middle Generation**
The middle generation wants its leader to be fearless and courageous. They reported that a leader should be a fearless change agent who has a strong commitment and conviction for causes important for the organization. S/he should facilitate healthy competition between team members, be a strong decision maker with exemplary execution skills, create a strong culture of teamwork within the organization, and get quick approvals for ongoing projects. Additionally, the Middle generation expects their leaders to provide support during personal challenges, lead by example, and provide space for growth in forthcoming leadership roles.

**Senior Generation**

The participants from the Senior generation reported that they want their leader to be a visionary, who leads the organization to the next level of excellence by setting inspiring benchmarks and providing a level playing field for colleagues. They also insisted that though there tends to be less age difference between them and their leaders, they still expected their leaders to be more superior to them, without having a superiority complex. The Senior generation insisted that the leader should be incredibly secure and sure about himself, without getting insecure with the subordinates’ popularity and growth.

Yorges, Weiss, and Strickland (1999) found that followers judge leaders’ intentions as well as their competence. They found that a leader who appears to be more concerned about his followers increases his credibility. When such leaders with high credibility express new ideas or plans, there is a high possibility of followers accepting those views without questioning them. In a mixed method investigation on Gen Y preferences in leadership Dulin (2008) found that being competent is an important criterion required to manage the Gen Y in today’s workplace. In the context of the current study, different generations were found to prefer different qualities in a leader. It was observed that while the Young generation wants there leader to be competent, tech smart, young, and innovative, the Middle generation wants there leaders to be great at execution skills and efficient at creating systems and processes for reward and recognition in the organization. It is evident that these two generations want to work with leaders who have robust systems and policies at place, and but still offers the flexibility and autonomy paving way for their own way of working. Further, there is a shift in the expectations of the different generations, where the Young generation
wants their leaders to be decision makers and change agents, and the Middle generation wants leaders to provide support for change.

The findings of the current study resonate with a recent study on Millennials in India, by Singh, Bhandarkar, and Rai (2012). The study found that Millennials expect their leaders to be humble and have great listening skills, and be inspiring and empowering, just and fair, and a man of ideas. In the international context, Yukl (2002) proposed that followers expect leaders to perform a variety of functions; however, “providing psychological support” and “defining reality in a way that is consistent with the underlying needs and values of members” are two that stand out.

The Young generation participants are quite vocal about wanting their leaders to be young and smart. Bennis and Thomas (2002) found that optimism, tenacity, self-confidence, and “neoteny” [“the retention of youthful qualities by adults, (such as) curiosity, playfulness, eagerness, fearfulness, warmth, and energy”] were among the characteristics of a leader that may service the present population of followers. These qualities may serve leaders well in forming positive relationships with followers from different generations, particularly those from Generation X and Y.

These differences in expectations of general leadership traits supports the proposition that different generations differ in terms of what they value and prefer in a leader, and strengthens the argument for practicing generational policies in organizations.

Preferred Leadership Style

A lot has been written on leadership styles suitable for followers of different generations. For instance, Meredith, Schewe, and Hiam (2002) put forth that generational differences require all leaders to have a style that is broad and flexible. They added that the style should include a structured style for the Veterans that emphasizes delegation, an individualist approach that values self-expression for the Baby Boomers, an excitement style that makes Gen Xers feel like change agents, and a team one that is relevant to Nexters’ values of accomplishing greater societal and corporate goals.

Hitt (1990) discussed four different styles of leadership, namely, Machiavellian, Bureaucratic, Professional, and Transformational Leadership. Each of these styles reflect a particular approach to leadership, with Machiavellian leaders displaying manipulative characteristics, Bureaucratic leaders taking a rule-based approach,
Professional managers considering leadership in terms of social contracts, and Transformational Leaders considering their conscience as well as the well-being of their staff in their management style. Taking Hitt’s (1990) theory as a base, Girodo’s (1998) study on police managers found that three leadership styles were predominantly used, which were Machiavellian, Bureaucratic, and Transformational. Girodo found that the use of the Machiavellian style remains constant across all age groups, whilst the bureaucratic and transformational leadership styles increased with age and years of job experience. This suggested that senior managers have a higher tendency to use transformational leadership with increasing age. The preferences of Indian generations with respect to the leadership style, as revealed in the present study, have been explained below.

Young Generation

My leader has a Himalayan attitude where he would like me to sit near his feet like a sincere disciple, and learn from him by following his orders and decisions. I hate it when he treats me like this, and does not involve me in any of the decisions he takes. (Gautam, Steel)

I like it that my manager gives me absolute empowerment and freedom to work on a project. Recently, we were rolling out an employee engagement drive and he let me choose the interventions we were going to implement to enhance engagement. His logic was that since the recipient of this intervention is from the Gen Y, and I am from the Gen Y as well, I would understand what to do, and what not to do better. In other projects too, generally, he puts in his point of view and then involves all of us in taking crucial decisions for the department. I guess I am enjoying working in this company because of the empowerment and independence it offers me. (Tanvi, IT)

Middle Generation

Generally, at the operational level, I take all the decisions for my department but recently we were in the process of ordering a big machine and my boss involved me in the initial process of technical evaluation of the suppliers. Once I had approved a few suppliers he took the final decision in consultation with other managers, but did not involve me in the meeting. I felt bad because I had done the groundwork for it, and I would have only benefitted the decision making process. Being a part of the decision making process would have given me an insight into buying decisions, which I don’t have. (Shrikant, Petroleum)

Senior Generation

My leader behaves as the head of the family when it comes to taking big decision about the organization, and generally, when he is in that mode, he becomes very authoritative and dominating. The language changes from “us” to “Mera department, mere ladke and mera area” (my department, my boys, and my area). Normally, he is a nice guy and he has given me full freedom in my area of work. He
doesn’t interfere in my work, but makes it a point to inquire about the process implementation from time to time. I have got used to both his ways of working: the big father of the family authoritarian way, and the nice empowering way as well. (Akash, Banking)

Contrary to earlier research that posits that followers in India prefer personalized dependency in a follower-leader relationship and maintain power distance from the leaders (Sinha, 1994), the current study found that followers from all generations have become more independent and seek empowerment in exercising their roles and responsibilities.

A study by Cascio (1974) showed that 75% of Indian managers were mostly satisfied in decision-making sessions where the subordinates were uninvolved. The same study highlighted that only 29.4% of the Indian subordinates preferred participative meetings with their superiors. Most of the studies conducted in the 1960’s (e.g., Bass, 1960; Ganguli, 1964; Meade, 1967; Thiagrajan & Deep, 1970) found that authoritarian leaders were preferred in the Indian context. A large number of studies on Indian managers in the 1960’s seem to suggest the acceptance of an authoritarian leadership in the Indian Context, thus indicating that, in a majority of the cases, the Indian family system could be reinforcing the development of an authoritative or authoritarian “Karta” (head of the family) psyche (Kalra, 2004).

A “Capital ‘L’ leadership” signifies the previous ways of seeing leaders as all knowing—you lead, you tell us what to do. A “Small ‘l’ leadership” is a contrary view—a view that leadership is shared. A large number of Middle generation participants expressed the view that leaders should have a collaborative and participative style of leadership, where the leaders involve everyone in taking important decisions. The Young generation participants felt that they would love to be a part of the decision making process and provide inputs for the process. According to a recent study conducted by DDI, a major pain point for Indian organizations was opening up discussions when making strategic decisions (only 45% of the leaders described their organizations as doing this). This reluctance to have open, uncensored discussions might be due to the large number of Generation X and Generation Y leaders at the lower levels. A generation gap between the young, lower-level leaders and the older, senior-level leaders could be adversely affecting communication and hindering discussions about strategy in organizations. Different generations seem to prefer and expect different leadership styles from their leaders. While the Young generation and
Middle generation wants a participative and collaborative leadership style, the Senior generation readily accepts working with authoritarian leaders who are seen as the Karta of the family.

These findings indicate that a high power distance between leaders and followers has been the hallmark of Indian organizational life, which is still persistent in the working of the Senior generation managers, who have been socialized in the earlier ways of management. Influenced by the Indian culture, the Indian managers’ style includes willingness to delegate authority but not accept authority, possessiveness towards subordinates, fear of independent decision-making, and exhibiting respect for authority figures (Kakar, 1971; Sharma 1984). This style is being replaced by a modern thinking of empowering the young blood and involving them in participative decision-making.

In the context of the above-discussed leadership styles, it is important to acknowledge that leadership styles are often a Gestalt of several qualities. This makes it pertinent to discuss the qualities that the generational participants identified as being representative of their leaders. These common qualities of leaders have been presented in the next section.

**Common Qualities of Leaders**

Though the three generations were found to differ in terms of their descriptions of leaders, and preferences and expectations regarding leadership styles, they agreed upon certain common qualities that they expected leaders to possess, which have been elaborated below.

**Trust and Transparency**

Leaders need to be trusted by their followers because trust is the mortar that binds the follower with the leader (Nanus, 1989). Though the definition of trust is highly contested, terms such as “willingness to be vulnerable” in one’s relationship (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995) have been commonly used to define it. Trust in the leader correlates positively with various outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviors, performance, and satisfaction (e.g., Jung & Avolio, 2000; Pillai, Schreisheim, & Williams, 1999). Transparency on the other hand entails “interactions characterized by sharing relevant information, being open to giving and receiving feedback, being forthcoming regarding motives and the reasoning behind decisions, and
displaying alignment between words and actions” (Vogelgesang, 2008, p. 43). In the Indian context, trust and transparency are seen as an important attribute in developing long-term relationships between leaders and followers. Earlier research on Transformational leadership in the Indian scenario has found trustworthiness as an important attribute of effective transformational leaders. Though the three generations in the present study identified trust and transparency as important qualities, the meaning of trust, trustworthiness, and transparency were differently constructed by these generations. To illustrate, some views on trust, trustworthiness, and transparency have been quoted below:

**Young generation.**

My leader should be trustworthy. The person should inspire the team members to believe in his dream. He should transpire trust through his speech and action. What’s the use of systems and policies if one knows that the leader is going to photo finish the appraisal process? It’s a must that leaders achieve transparency in their dealings with their followers and treat all the team members equally. (Mukharjee, FMCG)

**Middle generation.**

There should be trust between the leader and followers. I would always prefer to work with a trusting boss who gives me the freedom to work. Recently during an M&A that my company was going through, my leader allowed me to take some risky decisions, which later proved to be in the benefit of the organization. I was thrilled with the trust my leader showed in my decisions. (Saptarishi, Retail)

I was given the responsibility to manage the team for almost a month when my manager was on leave. I was grateful for the confidence entrusted upon me and my manager appreciated the way I handled the team and work. I appreciate that over a period of time we have developed trust and transparency in dealing and communicating with each other. (Kiran, Power)

**Senior generation.**

A boss-subordinate relationship should be based on trust and mutual respect for each other. I was working with the same leader in an earlier organization too. I moved with him in the current organization. I did this because I trust him and know that he cares for my future and will always think about me before taking any serious decision. (Rajiv, Consulting)

Concern over ways to build trust has been, and continues to be, on the rise, because developing trust in the workplace is considered critical to organizational success. Trustworthiness precedes trust, governs leaders’ effectiveness, and is a function of the leaders’ traits or character (Ruppel & Harrington, 2000; Zauderer, 2005). The preceding finding is true in the case of a multigenerational workforce too. The Young generation, who are the new entrants into an organization, consider it
important that the leader should be trustworthy to go on to the next level of trust, and for that, they see transparency in communication and interaction as a mitigating factors. The Middle generation, which has now spent some time in the organization, hypothesizes that transparency in communication as an important factor to build trust, and wants its dyadic relationship to be based on trust. This shift in perspective is natural since many participants from the Middle generation are already in leadership positions, and hence they face a sandwich situation of managing expectations of their followers, who are from the Young generation, and their leaders, who are from the Senior generation. Earlier research posits that trust is the natural fruit of trustworthy individuals and facilitates effective interactions (Lester & Browser, 2003). When firmly grounded, trustworthiness becomes a trait-related reputation. Leaders then build upon this reputation through actions (behaviors) that would then engender trust. Hence, members of the Middle generation will now have to build trustworthiness in the eyes of the followers, and exhibit competence to be trusted in the eyes of their leaders.

Rather than the skills they possess, effective leaders are followed mainly because people trust and respect them (Bass, 1989). Additionally, they trust their team members to discharge organizational responsibilities effectively. Effective leadership therefore should be more concerned with building trustworthiness at the outset. This requires leaders to rely more on qualities such as integrity, honesty, generosity, forgiveness, tolerance, wisdom, and compassion.

Bass’ (1989, 1990) theory of transformational leadership states that some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles. Subsequent research in the Indian domain has found follower loyalty to be an outcome of the leader member trust-based relationship (Singh & Krishnan, 2005). In keeping with these perspectives, the findings of the present study indicated that, in true sense, leadership emergence, a necessary condition for trait-based leadership, could be achieved through a trust-based relationship between leaders and followers. Admittedly, some personality traits are more conducive to trustworthiness. Traits such as honesty, generosity, forgiveness, tolerance, wisdom, and compassion are more likely to engender trustworthiness than characteristics such as competence, ambition, courage, confidence, fairness, and so on. Hence, leaders may need to pass a series of tests to gain trust.
Personal vs Professional Involvement

One of the themes, which came out during discussion with the generational participants, was on leaders’ involvement with the followers work and life.

**Young generation.**

*The leader should not try to interfere in my personal issues and personal life. What I do after office is my prerogative. I hate it when my boss is inquisitive about my girlfriend and discusses if or whether I am dating anyone. How is it important for my role at work? I hate it when he behaves nosey with me. I don’t like the father of the family approach, where he treats me like his kid and expects me to respect him in return.*  
(Yadugirish, Consulting)

**Middle generation.**

*At times, I like that my boss inquires about my husband and kids, admission of my kids and other stuff. It makes me feel connected at an individual level. We have socialized with each other’s families during a lot of organizational get-togethers and hence, know each one’s family members quite well. I think that him knowing about my family is also important so that when I have to take an off because of my son’s exams, or husband’s health, he will not disapprove of it, since he knows the context from where I am coming. But having said that, I also expect him to maintain a professional boundary while at work.*  
(Rekha, Banking)

**Senior generation.**

*A leader should be like the father of the family, who takes care for all his team members. Having worked for this company for the past 25 years, I have developed a special relationship with my superior, which goes beyond the realm of professional work. He has stood for me in good and bad times, and I have done the same for him and truly been loyal to him. With so many new comers joining the organization, he still makes it a point to have special time for me. I think a leader cannot have a same yardstick and rule for all. He has to create special provisions for old time loyalists.*  
(Arun, Oil and Natural Gas)

Conger (2001) put forth that the Generation X focuses on being well established financially, in a successful organization, with capable leadership. As such, it would appear that the younger generations place less value on caring as a leadership quality, since there interest is financial remuneration. Good pay is viewed as a function of capable management and a successful organization.

The present study revealed that the Young generation wants to have a professional relationship with their supervisors; the Middle generation want a balance of personal and professional approach; whereas, the Senior generation expects to have a special personal relationship with their superiors.
Earlier cross-cultural research between India and US on leader members exchange and paternalism found that Indian managers prefer paternalistic leaders (Pellegrini, Scandura, & Jayaraman, 2010). Paternalism is defined as a “hierarchical relationship in which a leader guides the professional and personal lives of subordinates in a manner resembling a parent, and in exchange, expects loyalty and deference” (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007, p. 493). Paternalistic leadership suggests that people in authority assume the role of parents. In the current study, members of the Senior generation, who have been socialized in traditional Indian family structure, were found to expect the leader to play the role of paternalistic leadership, of being the Karta of the family. However, the findings for the Young generation were a departure from earlier studies on leadership in India. Singh and Bhandarkar’s (1988) work on transformational leadership, which was later retested in the studies conducted by Singh and Krishnan (2005) found that Indian followers wanted a “Nurturant” leader who behaves like a strict father figure. The nurturant-task model developed by Sinha (1995) was also based on the same premise. However, the Young generation’s need for professionalism, as observed in the present study, is indicative of changes in the work culture in Indian organizations.

Communication
A leader’s communication style with his followers has not been studied in much; however, several authors have noted that communication is central to leadership (Awamleh & Gardner 1999; Frese, Beimel, & Schoenborn, 2003; Riggio, R. E., Riggio, Salinas & Cole, 2003; Towler 2003). However, except for studies devoted to oratory skills and content in highly specific speech-like contexts, few studies have attempted to operationalize the communication styles leaders use in their daily transactions with followers. Given that the core element of leadership is a leader’s interpersonal communication style (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2009), it becomes important to understand how followers from different generational groups view leadership communication and how do they expect their leaders to communicate with them.

In a recent study by Development Dimensions International (Boatman & Wellins, 2011), it was found that leaders from the Senior generation were reluctant in having an open, uncensored discussion about strategic decisions with their followers. Additionally, most senior leaders (55%) did not discuss strategic issues with their
followers. The authors posited that communication between leaders and followers of different generations is one of the important reasons for widening the generation gap and intergenerational conflicts in India. The present study revealed that the preferences for communication between leaders and followers are perceived differentially by all generations, and members of each generation want to have different types of communication with their leaders.

The Young generation was found to prefer fast and informal communication mediated through technology\(^2\); the Middle generation is comfortable with both face-to-face, as well as technology-based communication, either formal or informal; whereas, the Senior generation was found to prefer face-to-face, formal communication, to understand the hidden meaning of communication through body language. The Senior generation also insisted that they are not “technologically challenged” and are comfortable with using instant messengers and e-mail, but they still prefer face-to-face communication over technology-based communication. These findings resonate with the findings of a recent study on intergenerational communication (Singh, 2014). She reported that though Senior generation participants, who grew up in the absence of technology, are stereotyped as “technology ignorant,” they have learned to adapt to technology driven communication.

The other nuances of generational preferences of leadership communication have been illustrated in the following quotes, and elaborated after the quotes.

**Young generation.**

*It seems that meetings are just about the leaders telling us what they want us to know, and not a dialog between them and us. Meetings convert into long monologs of what was my leader's achievement in the 1970's and 80's. I don’t understand why it important for me to know what happened in the 1970's or 80's. I get so bored with such historical talk. Then, since I am disengaged in the discussion, I start using my mobile for Whatsapp or games, and that is seen as casual behavior on my part. I don’t understand why my leader can't have a structured approach to all discussions and meetings, instead of reliving glories of the past?* (Kumar, Investment Banking)

*I should be able to communicate constantly with my leader with a no-barriers-held approach. The leader should have a great social media presence and should be handy with messaging through mails, texts, Whatsapp and other social platforms.* (Manoj, ITES)

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\(^2\) Technology, in the present study, has been understood through the participants understanding about the concept. According to participants, technology is the facilitator for the communication process, and includes computer based knowledge, gadgets, ERP processes, internal messenger (computer-based), SMS, e-mails and WhatsApp.
Once we had to submit a proposal for a consulting assignment to a public sector organization, and we had limited time for that. I suggested that we make the proposal in a power point presentation format for ease of time but my leader insisted that we follow the pdf, paper based method. He made me write three drafts of the proposal and every time I would go with a draft, he would sit and make correction. For example, instead of Sir, he wanted Mr.XYZ, with full name and designation, instead of investment from the organization, he made me submit a cost to company sheet. We wasted so much time in this correction and re-correction that we missed the deadline for the proposal submission and lost the opportunity. (Himanshu, Operational Consulting)

**Middle generation.**

Leaders should offer frank and candid feedback about what’s in their mind. Often I have seen my superior saying something and meaning something absolutely different. I don’t think language is the reason for this dissonance, but rather a need to be diplomatic and yet correct at all times. Hence, I have made it a practice to always get things in writing before I start working on any project, so that I know what the expectations from me are. Tomorrow, if something wrong happens I will always have the written document to prove my intentions behind the work. (Ranvir, Manufacturing)

I would like to work with a senior who makes an effort to encourage communication from subordinates instead of having a one way communication where my seniors talk and I have to listen. I have felt that many times, my senior is not keen in taking feedback from me, but simply is delegating responsibilities on me. I think, if I am spending my valuable time with my leader, the meeting should definitely have a take away. The “Leader” should talk with me and not just to me. (Rahul, Pharmaceuticals)

For every single decision I take, my leader would expect me to go personally to him and tell him what happened, rather than on a mail that could be a much faster method of communication. It looks as if he is trying to gain depth into the rationale for taking that decision with a face-to-face dialog. (Vikrant, Operations Research)

**Senior generation.**

The leader should be an information and knowledge provider. He should also be an active listener. He should manage a smooth information flow between different project teams. I would rather listen to bad news from my leader than other sources. A leader plays an important role in managing information within the system. (Anuja, ITES)

Every CEO needs someone who can listen—a board member, an adviser—someone to whom he can speak in total confidence, to whom he can say, “I’ve had it; I’m about to resign” or “I really want to beat this guy up.” You need someone who understands and can help you to find the balance. Leaders often forget the importance of stable emotional relationships—especially outside the company. It helps tremendously to manage stress. Someone who can keep you in sync of your originality and constantly reminds you of who you are…Today, the separation between generations is stronger than between nations, because they were born in a new age. For them, the modern equipment of communication is what paper and pen are for us. They can communicate much more easily and don’t feel all this hidden discrimination that we were born with and find so difficult to get rid of. (Vijay, Engineering)
Precise and structured communication seems to be an important construct of leadership communication (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2009). Past research suggests that leaders may have to rely on more general “conversation models” (Van der Molen & Gramsbergen-Hoogland, 2005) to deal with different generation. The present study revealed that the Young generation seeks a form of communication that is built on trust and transparency. They want an open communication system with their leaders, where they can freely express their views, without fearing the consequences of the communication. Further, the Young generation employees seem to expect their leaders to keep the communication in meetings precise, relevant, and context specific, and to keep them actively engaged in the discussion. Though this generation values the importance of technology, they continue to put a premium on human connection and interpersonal communication (Dulin, 2008). The Middle generation, which has accepted the electronic communication system far more effectively than the Senior generation, finds it hard to manage the duality of communication with the Senior generation, arising out of the latter’s tendency to be non-commitment to issues at one hand and to expect fulfillment of one’s wishes on the other hand. Additionally, the Middle generation has been socialized in written communication, as compared to face-to-face interactions. According to the Hofstede (1980) model of Indian national culture, low uncertainty avoidance is a key characteristic of Indian managers. This pushes managers to accept current uncertainty without searching for proactive efforts of reducing it. Senior generation members, who have been socialized in this culture of low uncertainty avoidance, continue to use diplomatic methods to avoid commitment to issues. This clearly portrays a shift in generational thinking between the Senior and Middle generation participants, where the former wants a written documentation of the communication, and the later prefers face-to-face communication. As followers, however, the Senior generation expects its leaders to play the role of a knowledge provider and disseminator, they need leaders who act as sounding boards in times of dilemmas, and prefer them to be strong with interpersonal communication, by offering face-to-face communication.

The findings of the present study also indicated that communication effectiveness significantly influences perceived leader performance, and acted as a mediator of the leadership style on performance—an important extension to the leadership literature. Many leaders take listening skills for granted, and instead focus on
learning how to articulate and present their own views more effectively. Good listening is vital for building a base of knowledge that generates fresh insights and ideas. Regarding this, Groysberg and Slind (2012) stressed the need for leaders to have a conversational communication with their followers. They added that conversationally adept leaders step down from their corporate perches and then step up to the challenge of communicating personally and transparently with their people. This leads to the related area of the role of the leader in managing performance, which has been discussed in the next section.

**Role of the Leader in Managing Performance**

Managing employee performance is crucial for the growth and development of employees. It has a direct impact on pay, performance, developmental feedback (coaching and mentoring), and potential adjustments of future assessments. The role of leaders in managing subordinates’ performance has been studied extensively (Bass 1990; House 1971; Stogdill 1950). While some studies have looked at the impact of leaders’ motivation on achieving organizational and personal goals (e.g., Hamstra, Sassenberg, van Yperen, & Wisse, 2014), others have looked at the correlation between leadership style and organizational commitment, and performance goal orientation (e.g., Limsila & Ogunlana, 2008). In this regards, research focusing on employee performance, its antecedents, and precedence in the Indian scenario has focused more on the systems perspective of performance management, but not on the employee expectations, attitudes, and role played by supervisors and subordinates in performance management systems (Amba-Rao, Petrick, Gupta, & Embse, 2000). The current theme explores the generational followers’ expectations from leaders in managing their performance, as revealed in the present study.

**Young generation.**

*When I joined this organization, I was put in the team which was handling the public relations of a political party. The elections were just around the corner and hence there was a lot of work to be done in the team. Initially, I was not too keen in working in the campaign of a political leader, but my boss coached me that we PR experts should keep our personal feelings devoid of our professional work. To get me more involved in the assignment, he kept on giving me difficult targets, and every time I would achieve something, he would set the benchmark of the next target higher. When I would go wrong, he would sit with me to review what happened and why it should not happen again. There were times when I have worked for forty hours straight without a break. I think it was also possible only because he constantly kept on motivating us to achieve it. Today when the political*
party has won, I feel there is a small part of me which believes that I too have won. (Shahbaz, Advertising)

My first posting was in a rural district in Madhya Pradesh. I was managing 400 outlets across three villages. My colleagues, who joined with me, got posed in the urban markets, right under the nose of senior sales team. My posting required a lot of travelling in harsh conditions. I was the first company representative posted in the location, since before me; the locations were serviced by distributor sales representatives. In one year, I was able to enhance the sales of these outlets by 200%, but when it was time for performance ratings all the guys posted in head quarters got the best ratings because they were working in close proximity to the power centre. When I asked why I was given average rating, I was never given a satisfactory answer, nor the rationale behind the unequal reward distribution. (Gaurav, FMCG)

Middle generation.
In my organization, there is no distinction between good performance and bad performance. No matter what one does, at the yearend review, the chamchas (sycophants) of the leader are the ones who get the best rating and performance linked rewards. We never get any clarity on what basis was the performance judged and evaluated. I think the role of the leader should be to clearly define performance target and rewards. If I know that I am running towards a pot of gold then I am more motivated to work. I simply do not believe in the dictum “Karm Kiye ja aur phal ki chinta mat kar” (work hard without worrying about the benefits). This is an old school of thought and I don’t quite believe in it. After all, I too have my responsibilities and I want clarity on what I am doing and why I am doing that. I want feedback which is black and white, no sugar coating and no motivation talk, just tell me why what is happening. (Prasanna, Healthcare Pharmaceuticals)

As a part of the M&A team I was promised certain amount of reward for the successful completion of the acquisition. When I did not get it, I inquired about it with my leader and he started giving me sob stories that how he also has not got anything that year since the organization is not doing well. I got very frustrated because I had put my heart and blood in the work and one of the reasons for that was the reward too. I told him that his pain cannot be the remedy for the hurt caused to me. (Mahesh, Strategy Consulting)

When my leader had brought me in this company, he had promised a lot of things which also included certain roles. Initially he kept a few promises, but from the last three years I am stuck in the same role and I haven’t got any promotions as promised earlier by my leader. (Michael, Construction)

Senior generation.
I have grown in a time when we were taught that there are just one rule of working in an organization and that the boss is always right. Hence I have never questioned any decision of my senior leader and I don’t see any value in doing it. Whether I get a good ranking or average ranking, I am happy. At the end of the day I work for my own satisfaction because I strongly believe in the Karma theory. (Neetu, Retail)

When I was brought in this company as a CEO, there was an increase in the share value of the stock price based on my reputation in the industry. The organization made a lot of money because of me. I was promised a non political work place
where my boss was supposed to give me unconditional support for my decisions and also a minimum period of 2 years to show growth and returns on investments. But no sooner than I joined I faced organizational politics rampaged everywhere. For everything, I started getting targeted by office politics and very quarter there were expectations of growth. I felt miserable. I thought it was my bosses’ responsibility to protect me from organizational vagaries. (Gopal, Pharmaceuticals)

As evident from the examples presented above, the current study revealed that the Young generation wants its leaders to set performance targets in consultation with them. They also want leaders to set stretch targets for them, so that they can achieve the unachievable, and to provide continuous feedback to enhance performance. Leaders have the ability to energize, direct, and sustain work related efforts. This findings is in keeping with earlier research, which suggests that the process of achieving great targets starts with performance planning, which establishes a well-crafted and updated performance plan, which in turn, helps in year-end evaluations of achievement and development areas (London, Edward, & John, 2004; Singh, 2013). Additionally, stretching targets motivates employees to attain difficult goals, if the leader provides strong organizational support to achieve those goals (Locke & Latham, 1990; Mone & London, 2002; O’Leary-Kelly, Martocchio, & Frink, 1994). Concise and actionable performance feedback not only influences future performance (Caroll & Schneier, 1982), but also impacts work related attitudes like intention to stay, organizational commitment, and overall job satisfaction (Jawahar, 2006)

The Middle generation sought clarity and transparency in goals, evaluation standards, and performance rewards. The Senior generation stressed on the need for leaders to protect them from the vagaries of organizational politics. Together, participants from both these generations elaborated that leaders in organizations today follow two methods of performance ranking. Either they follow the socialistic model of rating everyone equally and dividing the post-performance reward kitty equally between subordinates, or alternatively, they follow the in-group out-group philosophy where subordinates belonging to the leader’s in-group get favorable ratings and subsequent rewards. In this regards, research on performance management in Indian organizations have found that managers working in multinational organizations have come to consider merit and equity as important dimensions of performance management policies, unlike organizations of Indian origin, which still have an in-group out-group orientation, power distances between a boss and subordinates, and

Finally, a recent study (Hamstra, Sassenberg, van Yperen, & Wisse, 2014) found that transactional leadership and performance goal achievements of followers are positively correlated. Additionally, transformational leaders stress on the achievement of normative standards, set clear goals for followers, and define the performance evaluation criteria and rewards after the attainment of targets (Bass, 1996; House, 1971, 1996; Hulleman, Godes, Hendricks, & Harackiewicz, 2010; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The present study found that this goal directed behavior is preferred by the Middle generation participants.

**Role of the Leader in Learning and Career Development**

Leaders’ role in subordinates’ learning and career development has been well researched in the past. The transformational leadership perspective posits that the leader challenges followers’ assumptions and provides mentoring and coaching to help them achieve desired goals through intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1996). Similarly, the role of the Leader-Member Exchange or LMX theory has been studied extensively with regard to providing better career opportunities to in-group members. Further, House’s (1996) path goal theory proposed that the function of a leader is to create a coaching, rewarding, and motivating relationship with subordinates. Similarly, Burns (1978) defines that the role of the leader includes coaching and supporting the follower to move “followers up through the levels of need and the stages of moral development.” Despite this rich background knowledge on this topic, generational participants’ expectations regarding leaders’ role in learning and career development has not been explored adequately. Therefore, it was studied under the ambit of leadership in the present study. Findings revealed that the members of the different generations expected their leaders to play different roles in followers’ learning and career development.

**Young generation.**

*When I joined this organization, my development report highlighted that I was good at operational work and correctly identified language and presentation skills as my developmental areas. I come from a vernacular background; hence, I am not very comfortable in making a presentation in English. Right from day one, my leader pushed me into operational roles and made me slog hard with my weakness. She would push me to make presentation and share it with her, before presenting it in front of others. Because of her, I was even able to present the yearly report in*
front of our senior management, which was a moment of great achievement for me. In hindsight, I realize that she allowed me to commit many mistakes and learn from them. Having said that, she was also very critical of my work. She has always made my life miserable when my work is not up to the mark. I never make this mistake of thinking of her as my friend, because there is always a professional boundary between me and her where she pushes me to achieve goals and I respond by working hard on set targets. She has really been a good mentor to me. (Kokila, Oil PSU)

It was year ending, and being in the finance department, there is a lot of work to be completed during yearend. At times, we have to work continuously for three to four days at a stretch, without taking a break to achieve yearend deadline. Our team leader, who is also the chief financial officer in the organization, sat with us through those three days and did not go home like all others. Having him around gave us a lot of motivation to achieve deadlines in stipulated time and gave us a chance to learn from him. (Yogesh, Automobile)

Middle generation.
Generally these seniors have a method of picking up people to work in their key projects. These chosen people act as a coterie for the leader. My leader chose me to work with him on some key projects because we are alumni of the same alma mater. During this project, I got rich cross functional exposure, got to learn from my leader who himself has great cross sectoral exposure, got to rub shoulders with the best people in my company, and my leader also helped me in taking some crucial decisions regarding my career. I feel bad for my other team members who couldn’t get this opportunity. They call us the leader’s chamchas, but how does it make any difference to me, I got what I wanted. (Amit, Retail)

We regularly have the zonal meets where in my boss introduces me to his colleagues (zonal heads). It’s a great networking opportunity with the biggies of the business. My boss referred me and now they are moving me into the chairman’s office where one gets to manage bigger projects, bigger portfolios, and you never face any cash issues in implementing your decisions. (Vishal, FMCG)

For the first ten years of my career, I was working in the sales division of my organization, but later, when I got my first kid, I requested my manager to move me into an easier role of sales training. I was lucky that my manager understood my predicament and moved me into sales training. Otherwise, I would have to leave the organization and take a career break. (Zainab, Pharmaceuticals)

Senior generation.
My current leader has been with me in the past three organizations. Every time he changes his job, he takes his entire team with him and we have also moved with him because it is for our benefit. Very few people are lucky to get a true mentor a guru in their bosses, I am one of the lucky ones. (Ajay, Paint Company)

There is very less learning that can actually happen at this age now. My only wish is to become CEO of the organization and I wish my supervisor positively presents my case in front of the right people. Otherwise, today’s organizations have become such big political entities that it is easy to lose opportunities and be affected by organizational politics. (Kumar, Consulting)
The data of the present study made it evident that the Young generation is motivated to work with leaders who can provide ample learning and professional growth opportunities, and is tolerant regarding mistakes. In lines with this finding, in a study on Gen Y and leadership, Dulin (2008) found that Gen Y’s viewed learning as a life time commitment, and sought professional growth opportunities that not only allowed them to advance in their career, but also kept them from getting bored in their jobs. Further, earlier studies on the adaption of transformational leadership in the Indian context found that Nurturant leaders groom, guide, and protect followers, who, in turn, reciprocate by following the vision propagated by the leader. In the role of a Nurturant leader, the leader retains the mantle of being a mentor, simultaneously empowering the followers to work alone (Singh & Bhandarkar, 1988; Singh & Krishnan, 2005). The present study revealed that the Young generation expects leaders to play the role of a leader who mentors and empowers them to achieve great heights.

The Middle generation, though conscious about formation of a coterie within the organization, was found to be comfortable with enjoying the benefits of the coterie system. It was found that they want their leaders to enhance their learning through exposure to cross-functional projects and leaders’ experiential knowledge. The current research resonates with postulates of the LMX theory. According to the theory, effective leadership occurs when leaders and followers maintain a high-quality relationship characterized by mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Further, followers rely on leaders for support in career advancement, in return for loyalty and assistance in leaders’ projects. The current study found that members of the Middle generation enjoyed the benefits of in-group relationships with their leader. Further, research on LMX has found Indians to be very respectful of their superior’s right to make decisions about their subordinate’s career (Varma, Srinivas, & Stroh, 2005) and views of Senior generation in the present study resonate with this perspective. This could be because the Senior generation is in a life-long search for a Guru who blends intimacy with authority (Kakar, 1978; Nagpal, 2003).

With reference to mentoring, research posits that career mentoring functions, which include challenging assignments, coaching, exposure, protection, and sponsorship, directly assist protégés’ career advancement (Hezlett & Gibson, 2007). Mentoring has been proclaimed as one of the key career development and advancement tools in the organizational milieu over the last decade (Simonetti, Ariss, & Martinez, 1999). Sponsorships, on the other hand, have been pronounced as critically important to
the upward mobility of individuals in organizations (Kanter, 1977). The present study revealed that generational participants viewed their leaders as facilitating different roles in their career development. The Middle generation members expressed that they want a mentor with a strong social capital and social network; whereas the Senior generation participants want their leaders to sponsor them for higher positions.

Another important point in this context is the difference between a mentoring and sponsoring role of the leader. “Mentoring” involves providing psychological support for career advancement of the protégé, whereas “sponsoring” has been viewed as a developmental relationship in which the sponsor provides instrumental career support by nominating the protégé for promotion and other types of organizational activities that may be supportive of promotion (Campion and Goldfinch, 1983; Thomas, 1993). In the context of the current study, the generational participants from the Senior generation were very vocal about not wanting mentoring from their leaders, but expecting sponsorship. This finding brings out the need for research in the area of sponsorship for developing future leaders for organizations.

Another role that the generational participants articulated for the leader was related to the development of a learning culture in the organization. The Middle and Senior generations were very vocal about the fact that though organizations spend a substantial amount of resources on training manpower, the resources are wasted since participants are never relieved from their existing duties while attending such developmental initiatives. The participants cited that their leaders come up with brilliant ideas for stopping them from attending such initiatives. Hence, one of the important roles of a leader was perceived as to create a learning culture in the organization, and to create systems and processes from which everyone can benefit. In line with these findings, previous research on leaders’ role in creating a learning culture in the organization argues that leaders should move out of their traditional charismatic and transformational roles and look at an alternative learning culture. It purports that a leader’s role is to build a learning organization based on facilitating learning in others, acting as a role model, encouraging learning through challenge and intellectual stimulation, institutionalizing learning through the provision of incentives, and training (Sadler, 2003; Salk & Simonin, 2003).

Thus, the present study revealed some common qualities that participants from all the generations expected in their leaders. However, the above findings and discussing clarify that there were intergroup differences in the preferences within each
of these qualities. In addition to these leader characteristics that were identified across generations, the data revealed some themes that were unique to the Young generation. These findings have been presented in the next section.

**Themes Unique to the Young Generation**

The present study revealed that the Young generation wants to work with leaders who respect their individuality. In a similar study on Millennials in teams, Harris-Boundy and Flatt (2010) found that Millennials demonstrate higher levels of individualism than collectivism. Similarly, Hershatter and Epstein (2010) explored the ways that the Millennial generation approaches the world of work, and suggested that Millennials integrate technology into their lives and expect accommodations by organizations based upon their experiences, needs, and desires. The present study revealed that the Young generation has an excessive need for independence in the work they do, and the way they want to do it. As articulated by one of the respondents,

*There is no need for close supervision for completion of work. My leader should give me more freedom to self-manage my work.* (Nisha, Insurance)

Earlier research has characterized the Gen Y as technical, adaptable, and learning centered (Deal, 2007; Dobbs, Healey, Kane, Mak, & McNamara, 2007). They have had exposure to or owned a computer at a young age, have had experience utilizing the internet, and understand that they can find any information in seconds (NAS Insights, 2006). Hence, in line with the findings of the present study, they believe that they can manage their own work by themselves without the supervision of any senior.

The Young Generation also faces difficulties in managing their seniors, and has a different view on authority and hierarchy. One of the participants quoted,

*They say that Gen Y does not have respect for authority and hierarchy. However, we think that just because you were in the organization before me does not mean that you are better than I am. If you want respect, you need to gain it.* (Sonal, Banking)

They are more likely to challenge the status quo or question a process or procedure at their employment if they are uncomfortable with a decision. This finding was in accordance with that revealed by Chester (2002), who noted their positive characteristics as adaptable, innovative, efficient, resilient, tolerant, and committed, and
negative values as impatient, desensitized, disengaged, sceptical, disrespectful, and bluntly expressive. They are often referred as the “why” generation, and do not hesitate to voice their concerns and opinions. They do not blindly conform to organizational standards (Lyon, Legg, & Toulson, 2005).

Another theme that was unique to the Young generation was their need for work-life balance. Though there is substantial research in the Indian context on work life balance and issues pertaining to it, none of these studies has examined the generational perspective. According to the generational participants, differences in generational perspectives towards work leads to work life balance issues between generations. One of the Young generation respondents observed,

*Our leaders should respect our work life balance issues. They should not expect us to sit in the office for late hours just because they are sitting there. Once my work is done I don’t understand why I should be staying in the organization. I have a life outside the organization and my leader should respect that.* (Gaurav, FMCG)

Another participant from the Middle generation observed,

*I really get caught between work and home. I have a two year old son whom I hardly get to see, since my boss calls me on Saturdays and Sundays too. It was ok when I was young and not married, but now I have responsibilities of my own, and my boss should respect my work life balance issues.* (Suri, IT Consulting)

Managers handling Young and Middle generation will have to be very sensitive of their need for work life balance. Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, and Ogden (2007) argued that employers should take Millennials’ desire for a work-life balance into account, pointing out that Millennials value their non-work time, and while they want to enjoy work, they do not want it to dominate their lives. Rather, they want it to fund their lifestyle. In a study on Gen Y, Spiro (2006) has also found that while money is important to Millennials, their key motivator is maintaining a work life balance, therefore they seeking out companies that foster strong workplace relationships, promote a sense of purpose, or make a difference.

Thus, overall, the present study highlighted the generational differences in attitudes and preferences regarding leadership. As expressed earlier, the focus of the present study was on the “follower” perspective on leadership. However, given that majority of the participants from the Middle and Senior generation are leaders themselves, it was not possible to ignore their opinions on the leader’s perspective. Therefore, remaining true to the basic research questions of the present study, the researcher steered such discussions to the generational differences. Thus, the present
study revealed some emergent findings regarding challenges faced by leaders in
managing the Young generation.

The Middle and Senior generation shared some of their challenges in managing
Young Generation in the workplace, as well as a multi-generational team. One of the
respondents from the Middle generation commented on Young generation being too
vocal on the social media space,

> One of Gen Y employees was inappropriately dressed for the office and hence we
had to tell her to go home and change her dress. In the evening, she vented out this
episode on her Facebook page, commenting that her manager told her to go home,
since her manager did not have the guts to wear a similar dress. (Mahesh, Strategic Consulting)

This, according to the respondent was bad for the image of the organization, as
well as the senior who told the girl to change the dress. According to the Senior
generation, the Young generation lacks professional behavior and are very casual in
their approach towards work. In earlier studies done internationally, managers have
expressed similar difficulties in managing Gen Y (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015; Culpin et
al., 2015).

Another challenge reported by generational participants was about managing
the expectations of the Young generation. One of the managers quoted,

> They are in a huge hurry of getting to the top of the organization. They want salary
revision twice in a year, they want bigger and better roles as compared to their
peers, it seems that this generation is the burned out generation of our country.
They want to fulfill the expectations of their parents, and match up to the speed of
growth of their industry peers. This forces them to jump jobs every two years in
expecting better pastures. The challenge then becomes how one does rely on such
people who are not going to be there with you after two years? They act as such
bad role models for their juniors too! (Aman, Manufacturing)

The commonly-held perception in the management literature is that the notion
of hard work pays dividend does not apply to the Young generation. This perception
may be supported by the findings of Twenge, Zhang, and Im (2004), which indicated
birth cohort differences in locus of control, where the Young generation reported a
significantly more external locus of control, which is linked to greater cynicism and
helpfulness. As a result, the Gen Y may seek to retain control over other aspects of their
lives.
Discussion

Research on leadership and followership as a relational process asserts that followers be treated as a single group of people (Russell, 2003). However, the current research found that participants belonging to different generations preferred different leadership styles, attributes, preferred different role leaders should play in performance, learning and career development, and expected communication patterns. Hence, it would be safe to ascertain that followers are not a single group of people, but differ based on generations. This implies that leaders need to recognize different groups of followers in the organizational setting. These generational differences in leadership preferences have been presented in Table 7.1.

Various studies have tried to analyze generational differences in preferred leadership styles (Arsenault, 2004; Deal, 2007; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). Across studies, researchers have found a strong correlation between changing generational attitudes and values and leadership preferences (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). These differences are not formed due to individual positions in life stage, nor are they a reflection of inter group differences, but they reflect broader changes in society, organizations, and work trends. These changes challenge organizational policies and practices and warrant for new management practices suitable to the emerging workforce. These changes also enunciate that leaders should be sensitized about various preference and expectations of different generations, and therefore, need to develop a generational competency and mindset of dealing differently with different generations.

Earlier studies on the LMX theory have found that the compatibility and quality of relationship between leader and follower is based on multiple factors like demographics, similarity in attitudes and values, and functional background among others (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2005; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). The current study found that compatibility between leader and follower could also be based on region to which subordinate belongs, caste, and college of graduation.

Contrary to earlier research, which posits that followers in India prefer personalized dependency in relationship and maintain power distance with the leaders (Sinha, 1984), the current research found that followers from all generations preferred to work more independently, and seek empowerment in exercising their roles and responsibilities.

In the Indian adaptation of the transformational leadership model, Singh and Bhandarkar (1988) proposed a “nurturant” role of a leader. In a nurturant role, the
leader behaves like a strict father figure who brings in transformation in the followers by being demanding and authoritative, and yet caring and sacrificing at the same time. Their model was further researched and substantiated by the findings of Sinha (1995) and Singh and Krishnan (2005). However, the present study indicates that the Young generation’s preference of leadership styles warrants a re-examination of the nurturant aspect of the transformational leadership model. The participants of the Young generation in the present study expressed that though they preferred a transformational leader who nurtures them through professional support, they did not want their leaders behaving like a father figure who indulges in the personal lives of the followers.

In congruence with earlier research on transformational leadership, the Young generation respondents of the current research preferred transformational leaders. They emphasized that their leader should be young, tech savvy, competent, trust worthy, who respects their individuality, and challenges status quo. They want their leaders to fuel their learning agility and support their learning need through intellectually stimulating projects, encouraging creativity while giving space to the followers to commit mistakes and learn, direct them according to their individual abilities, and help them achieve stretch assignments which assist in career development. They want their leaders to inspire them through a collective vision of change and provide clarity on performance standards, creates engaging space to achieving targets, sets transparent evaluation criteria, and celebrates the followers’ victory on achievement of results (Bass & Avolio, 2004; Bass, 1985; Barbuto, 1997).

The middle generation emphasized that their leader should be a strong decision maker with exemplary execution skill. He/she should be able to build a team culture while supporting a healthy competition within the team members. Additionally, they expressed that building trusting relationships formed on the bedrock of clear communications should be the leader’s chief forte. Further, the middle generation enjoys the inspirational support of transformational leaders in the form of empowerment and independence at work. Interestingly, some of them also aspired to become a part of the in-group of a strong leader who could support them in enhancing their career. They also strongly voiced the need for transactional leaders who could set clear performance, evaluation, and reward criteria. Hence, to manage the diverse expectations of Middle generation followers, leaders would be expected to imbibe situational leadership skills to manage each individual’s aspirations.
The Senior generation participants’ lifelong search for a guru and father figure for finds semblance in Paternalist Leaders. Paternalism is defined as “hierarchical relationship in which a leader guides professional and personal lives of subordinates in a manner resembling a parent, and in exchange expects loyalty and deference” (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007). The concept of paternalistic leadership suggests that people in authority positions assume the role of parents. In the current research, members of the Senior generation, who have been socialized in traditional Indian family structure, expect the leader to play the role of paternalistic leadership of being the Karta of the family.

In sum, the present study revealed important generational differences in preferences regarding leadership, and highlighted the importance of acknowledging these differences, and changing leadership styles to cater to these unique group preferences. Having looked at the findings related to leadership, the next chapter presents the important insights derived from the findings of the present study, and the organizational implications of the same.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Young Generation</th>
<th>Middle Generation</th>
<th>Senior Generation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is a leader?</strong></td>
<td>Immediate supervisors who are young and dynamic</td>
<td>CEO’s and department heads who manage uncertainty &amp; risk</td>
<td>Position incumbent. Supervisor as a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred leadership attributes</strong></td>
<td>Exceptionally smart, has technical expertise, is intellectually stimulating, innovative, quick decision maker, professional, person of ideas, appreciates new ideas proposed by subordinates, tech savvy, great interpersonal skills, exudes self confidence, integrity is a hygiene factor and the leader must possess, should be fun to work with, and should be able to make work interesting for subordinates.</td>
<td>Fearless and courageous, be a change agent with strong commitment and conviction for causes, facilitates healthy competition, strong decision maker with exemplary execution skills, can create strong team work culture within the organization, gets quick approvals for ongoing projects, provides support during personal challenges, leads by example.</td>
<td>Visionary, leads the organization to the next level of excellence by setting inspiring benchmarks and providing level playing field for colleagues.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred leadership style</strong></td>
<td>Independent and seek empowerment, collaborative and participative decision making.</td>
<td>Independent and seek empowerment, collaborative and participative decision making.</td>
<td>Respects power distance between leader &amp; follower. Accepted authoritative leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Trust &amp; transparency</strong></td>
<td>Leaders should be trustworthy. Transparency in communications and interactions viewed as mitigating factors for building trust.</td>
<td>Transparency in communication viewed as vital to build trust. Want leaders to trust them.</td>
<td>Relationship should be based on mutual trust and respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred involvement</strong></td>
<td>Professional relationship with leader. Dislikes parental behaviour of leaders.</td>
<td>Mix of personal and professional relationship.</td>
<td>Special personal relationship with their supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Fast and informal communication mediated through technology</td>
<td>Face-to-face and technology based communication, either formal or informal</td>
<td>Face-to-face formal communication to understand the hidden meaning through body language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Leader in managing performance</strong></td>
<td>Motivates performance by setting by aggressive targets and reward mechanism, supports achievements of goals through feedback, transparency in rating.</td>
<td>Seek transparency in rating because Chamchas get the best ratings. Monetary reward, timely promotions, clarity in evaluation criteria.</td>
<td>Stick to promises, very less space to grow any further, but seek challenging role. Protection from organizational politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of leader in learning &amp; career development</strong></td>
<td>Expect leaders to provide ample learning and professional growth opportunities and have high tolerance for mistakes, play the role of mentors who empower them to achieve great heights.</td>
<td>Are conscious about formation of a coterie within organization, comfortable with enjoying the benefits of coterie system, rely on leaders for support in career advancement in return for loyalty and assistance in leaders’ projects.</td>
<td>Are in a lifelong search for a Guru who blends intimacy with authority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>