CHAPTER 9
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Having presented the entire study, this concluding chapter summarizes the findings of the current research. Additionally, the delimitations, limitations, and areas of future research have been discussed.
This study endeavored to explore generational differences in the Indian workforce. The researcher first set out to identify the employee generations in India, and attempted to identify the formative events unique to India’s socio-political history. Based on the generational groups identified, the researcher explored how these groups differed in terms of their meaning making, attitudes, expectations, and preferences related to career, learning, and leadership. Thus, the study attempted to address the following objectives: 1) to identify generational groups in the Indian workforce, 2) to explore the formative events for each generational group in the Indian workforce, 3) to study the impact of generational differences on employees’ attitudes and preferences regarding career, 4) to study follower expectations and preferred leadership styles from a generational perspective, and 5) to explore preferred learning styles from a generational perspective.

The major findings under each objective, and the conclusions thereof, have been presented in the following section.

**Major Findings**

In order to address Objective 1 and 2, i.e., to identify generational groups in the Indian workforce and to explore the formative events for each generational group, the present study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Based on its results, formative events were identified which were unique to the Indian social, economic, and political background. Subsequently, three employee generations were identified, namely, the Young Generation, the Middle Generation, and the Senior Generation. Findings of the present study highlighted the importance of using a range of dates rather than discrete points to delimit the generations. Therefore, the researcher proposed a 2-year cusp or transition period between generations to allow for overlapping events between generations. Accordingly, the following generational classification was finalized:

**Young Generation: age 15 to 28 years, born in 1987 or later**

Cusp 1: age 29 to 30 years, born from 1985 to 1986

**Middle Generation: age 31 to 44 years, born in 1971 to 1984**

Cusp 2: age 45 to 46 years, born from 1969 to 1970

**Senior Generation: age 47 and above, born in 1968 or earlier**

The third objective of the study was to explore the impact of generational differences on employees’ attitudes and preferences regarding career. An in-depth
analysis of the participants’ views on career revealed findings related to six major themes, namely, What is Career?, Career Trajectory and Mobility, Career Success, Career Aspirations, Expectations on Career Management Interventions from the Organization, and Career Challenges. The key propositions that emerged from the study are:

• The Young generation defined career as an extension of an individual’s personality and identity, which is consciously managed by choosing meaningful engagements, which in turn, helps in achieving individual potential. The Middle generation defined it as a ladder of learning experiences, and the Senior generation defined it as a ladder of succession of jobs and designations, which brings in constant change and enhancement provided by the organization.

• The fluidity in the definition of career and career success is predominantly caused by external factors like socio economic and technological changes, as well as internal factors like exposure and experience within organizations.

• The phase of identity development has major impact on future career choices and the career trajectory of the Young generation.

• The Senior generation looks at the possibilities and opportunities for continuing work after retirement.

• The researcher challenges the existing position/theories related to “modern careers,” and posits that this complex nature needs to be acknowledged and incorporated in HR policies, rather than looking for a single, one-size-fits-all kind of outlook towards careers.

The fourth objective of the study was to explore preferred learning styles from the generational perspective. The present study filled a vital gap in the existing literature on learning from the generational perspective. The in-depth analysis of the data revealed four general themes, and some generation-specific themes. The general themes were Expected Learning Interventions, Learning Orientation, Preferred Mode of Learning, and Preferred Learning Style. The generation specific themes were stereotypes against the Senior generation, the Middle generation and binge learning, and the Young generation and just in time learning. The key propositions emerging from the study are:
• Rather than focusing solely on e-Learning and completely abolishing the older, more interactive, people-oriented methods of learning, organizations should use technology to complement and enhance learning.

• Practitioners need to design custom-made learning programs that cater to the unique needs of each generational group.

• The learning needs of the Senior generation need to be catered to, because rather than being a liability to the organization, this group can be groomed to be an asset owing to their rich experience.

The fifth objective of the study was to study follower expectations and preferred leadership styles from a generational perspective. This objective examined the expectations and preferences of the three generational groups regarding leadership styles. The present study was unique because it is one of the few studies in India to have looked at the “Follower” perspective. In this regard, the findings revealed eight major themes, namely, “Who is a leader?” Preferred Leadership Attributes, Preferred Leadership Styles, Common Qualities of Leaders (including Trust & Transparency, Personal vs. Professional Involvement of Leader, Communication, Role of Leader in Managing Performance and Role of the Leader in Followers’ Learning and Career Development). Additionally, a few generational specific themes were revealed for the young generation. The key propositions emerging from the study are:

• Followers should be viewed as a heterogeneous group with characteristics and preferences that vary across generations.

• Compatibility between leaders and followers could also be based on socio-cultural factors such as region to which the subordinate belongs, caste, and college of graduation.

• Leaders should be conscious about the expectations of the generational participants and adopt a leadership style suitable to the expectations of the follower.

• The researcher challenges the relevance of the parent role of transformational leaders in the Indian workforce.

• The Senior generation prefers paternalistic leaders; the Middle generation prefers situational leaders, while the Young generation prefers transformational leaders.
Delimitations

Before discussing the limitations of the study, it is pertinent to discuss the aspects that were not the focus of the study.

1. Though the respondents of the study were sourced from public and private sector organizations, studying the sectoral divergence was not the focus of the study.
2. Similarly, both male and female participants were included in the study to ensure a diverse sample. However, understanding gender differences in generational memories and subsequent workplace attributes was delimited from the study.
3. The classification of generations in the present study is solely based on critical events unique to India, following Schuman and Scott’s (1989) method of identifying generation groups. Certain other factors such as values, family background, economic status, life stage, etc., as well as the impact of global events that could have an impact on generational characteristics, were delimited from the study.
4. The classification of generational groups created in Chapter 4 has been used to study the generational differences in career, learning, and leadership. However, the study does not focus on understanding the impact of generational memories on respondents’ perspectives on these foci of the present study.
5. Focusing on multigenerational perspectives on career, learning, and leadership, the study delimits itself from the nuances of intergenerational issues and challenges.
6. The data was collected from Mumbai and Delhi; however, the study delimits itself from the difference that may arise out of locational factors.

Study Limitations

The findings of any study must be viewed along with its limitations. The limitations of the present study are:

1. The study does not look at a larger sample including respondents from sectors like education, government and non-government organization, entrepreneurs etc.
2. International socio-economic and political events were not included in the list of critical events, which could also have a significant impact on the generational memories.
3. The influence of certain variables such as gender, education, social mobility, urban or rural settings on an individual’s selection of marking events were not explored in
the present study, and the study was restricted to the educated urban strata of the society.

4. The scope of the study was confined to explore the generational differences and its impact on the preferences pertaining to career, learning, and leadership. The other detailed nuances such as career anchors, leadership behavior of generational participants, perspectives towards instructional design, and such other preferences were not explored in this study.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

1. Factors delimiting the present study could form the focus of future generational studies in organization context.

2. The emergent theoretical propositions, as identified in the previous chapter, can be empirically established in future studies using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

3. It is possible that memories are gendered. Men and women may not have the similar perceptions on the history of their generation, whether relating to the same events or emphasizing different events. Hence, gender differences in generational memories can be explored.

4. Generational studies have primarily focused on the white-collar professionals. The blue-collar workers, which form a significant percentage of the Indian workforce, have been excluded from the scope of the generational studies until now. Future researchers may look at this particular segment of the workforce for a holistic understanding of their generational issues and challenges.

5. Finally, the effect of generational differences on career, learning, and leadership can be taken up independently, for further probing of other nuances of these concepts, using a quantitative approach.