Chapter 6
Initiatives to address Intergenerational Communication Challenges

Seamless communication is necessary condition for an organization to operate efficiently. However, given the diversity that exists in workplace, ensuring ‘efficient and effective’ communication is a challenge. Sadri and Tran (2002) discussed three approaches to managing diversity: with affirmative action, by valuing diversity, and managing it. They also stressed that managing diversity is the most appropriate strategy. The approach to managing diversity is based on the premise that diversity brings multiple perspectives to the workplace, which should be leveraged to enhance performance. Policies and actions should aim at building and enhancing skills that make people give their best.

According to Thomas and Ely (1996), it is a widely-accepted fact that diversity in the workforce not only benefits the organization financially; it also helps enhance creativity, increases the ability to adjust to market changes and facilitates organizational and individual growth. Diversity management is not about increasing the representation of the various groups, but focusing on the human resources that are already available. Diversity is not a matter of choice for organizations; it is the inevitable outcome of the present social and business environment.

As discussed in Introduction, in organizations that have been in existence for long, there is high probability of employees from all three generations working together at any given time. Therefore, giving generational diversity due attention is a key component of diversity management. Different generations bring with them different cultural values, attitudes and behaviour. Communication is one of the several aspects in which these differences are manifested. Respecting this diversity will enhance communications; neglecting to do so can deepen the communication divide with adverse consequences for business.

Though organizations have realized the importance of diversity management and its positive influence, in practice, however, it is seen that enough efforts are not being

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19 Seamless communication refers to effective, efficient, and satisfied communication.
made in this direction. This is especially so in the management of generational diversity.

While most companies acknowledge the importance of making diversity a business consideration, diversity is often not a top business priority. Other business initiatives that present more compelling, factual evidence of payback on investment win out over diversity initiatives, which seem to offer less predictable and tangible benefits. As a result, many human resource executives revert to the argument that “it's the right thing to do” and trust that management will back their suggestions to promote a diversity-friendly work environment, then wonder why nothing happens or why well-intended initiatives fail (Robinson and Dechant, 1997: 21).

The present study adopts the ‘managing diversity’ approach. Shrivastava and Gregory (2009 as cited in Lauring and Selmer, 2012) postulated that the attitude of acceptance of the divergences and convergences that exist within groups or across groups can create an open climate in which people respect the views of each other.

This chapter discusses possible approaches and mechanisms for addressing the intergenerational communication divide. Some broad corporate initiatives are described. Then, the focus is turned on the mechanisms adopted by the organization that participated in this study. The solutions proposed by the participants are also presented. The researcher then proposes an approach that is based on the findings of this study.
Initiatives taken by the organizations to manage diversity at workplace

Table 6.1 organizations addressing diversity-based issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Organization</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Disability (Differently abled)</th>
<th>Age and Generational</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race and nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dabur</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A(^{20})</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE (India)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procter and Gamble (USA)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kraft</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>TCS</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nestle</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wipro</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infosys</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM (Australia and New Zealand)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahindra and Mahindra</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godrej</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident from the table (6.1) above that the management of generational diversity in relation to communication has not received much priority. A possible reason is that the concept of communication is fluid and context- and need-driven in the workplace. Organizations may view its importance differently. Diversity management initiatives, especially in Indian organizations, are directed mainly from

\(^{20}\) N/A refers that data is not available rather than the practice not existing (to the best of author’s knowledge).
the gender perspective namely, the empowerment and inclusion of women in the workforce. Some of the initiatives to address generational diversity in India and abroad are described in the following paragraphs.

In 2003, Anand Mahindra constituted a group of young managers and directed them to think and propose actions as if they were running the organization. This initiative was based on the concept of shadow board, which is along the lines of the shadow cabinet of the opposition party in Britain. The shadow board acts as a parallel board. The main reason for Mahindra and Mahindra’s initiative was to give an opportunity to the younger generation to participate in decision-making processes at the highest level.

Seven talented young managers below the age of 25 were selected from a cross-section of employees. Their mandate was selecting an area of the company’s operations and proposes recommendations in the next two years. They were also told that their ideas might be accepted or rejected, but would be studied seriously by serious management before a decision was taken.

Some of the recommendations were implemented. Among them were diversification of commercial vehicles, a 24-hour helpline, and acquisitions. Prince Augustine, EVP (Human Capital), said that about 15 talented young employees graduated from executive boards and are holding key positions in Mahindra and Mahindra. Other organizations like Unilever and General Electric also introduced the concept of shadow board but found it difficult to sustain it.

Shadow board requires constant support and involvement of senior management. Mahindra and was able to sustain the shadow board for 8 years. During 2000-2009, Godrej implemented the Young Executive Board on the lines of shadow board. They chose 11 talented young managers from various departments and sister companies. YEB was asked to work on diverse areas like maternity leave policy and introducing flextime (Philip & Vijayraghavan, 2010; Rudani, 2011; The Financial Express, 2003).

Shadow boards are formed to leverage the younger generation’s talent by (a) encouraging and tapping fresh ideas (b) allow top management to identify and nurture succession (c) fostering a feeling of participation in the younger generation. However, shadow boards are designed to manage ‘talented’ younger employees only. They do not address the issue of generational diversity at large.
BHEL has adopted generational diversity initiatives by involving the older generation. Older generation employees are encouraged to groom the younger generation. A major focus area was improving communications with the younger generation.

AT and T’s (Texas) Perkins (Director, Network services) said that Boomers and the younger generation faced communication breakdown. Boomers accuse the younger generation of not wanting to work; and the younger generation complained that the older generation only gives orders. To find a way out, AT &T held a meeting at their university facility in Dallas and invited experts from Fortune 50 to share best practices on intergenerational communication to share their best practices.

Sodexo hires and trains employees from all generations in an endeavour to help them work together and learn from each other experiences and creativity. They have a diversity training programs and diversity awareness sessions. In the consultancy sector, Deloitte has done rigorous work on contextualizing generation, how to manage millennial, the challenges posed by generational diversity poses and the organizational actions to deal with it.

IBM’s (Australia and New Zealand) diversity management approach focuses on the generational component along with gender, sexual orientation, race, and disability. A series of workshops were conducted on ‘leading a multi-generational workforce’. The central aim of the workshop was to make managers aware of the need to create an environment and culture in which individual needs of employees at various stages of life are respected. The strategies adopted by IBM were (a) global webcasts to increase the awareness and abilities of Matured aged workers and, (b) at the same time, making employees aware of the challenges and opportunities about the older generation.

IBM Australia’s generation diversity initiatives focus on (a) the participation of all generations in the workforce without any age-barriers (b) being open to diverse working styles (c) continued learning and job satisfaction (d) constant feeling of connectedness with the IBM community (Workforce Diversity Report, 2007)

Credit Suisse (2009) launched a reverse mentoring programme by engaging generational differences. Opportunities were created so that the younger generation could educate the older generation to improve cross-generational and cross-level

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21 Based on the interaction with a HR consultant working on BHEL project.
communication. Mentors are the young potential leaders in Credit Suisse and the mentored are Heads of various departments, who are at least four levels above the mentor. This program was initiated in North America with the intent of replicating it in other global regions. Reverse mentoring programmes such as the one adopted by Credit Suisse help to avoid dissonance between the younger generation and current leaders (Sabattini, 2010). Procter and Gamble (USA) also worked in the area of generational diversity with a reverse mentoring program.

**Generational Diversity Initiatives by the Participating Organizations**

The older generation revealed that no formal steps were taken by their organizations to address the issues in intergenerational communication. Training programs and conferences are organized to improve communication skills, but they do not specifically take intergenerational issues into account.

The older generation also felt that their organizations have not taken cognizance of intergenerational communication gap. The communication process is taken for granted. Usha, older generation employee, said her organization’s policies younger generation-centric. The needs of the older generation have not been considered. It is left to the older generation to take the necessary initiatives at individual levels.

The middle-aged generation participants also said states that their organizations did not take initiatives to improve intergenerational communications. Evidently, organizations do not take consider intergenerational factors to be barrier to communication. Their business processes are not designed taking into consideration an eventuality like this. In addition, they felt that HR policies are level of management based and lacks the component of generational diversity.

The younger generation also agreed that their organizations did not take any measures to manage generational diversity. There are certain platforms, but people rarely express their concerns. Nagendera (younger generation) said, ‘I have not experienced it myself. But it happens I guess. We have HR committee meetings to raise our problems but it doesn’t work like that, as nobody raises any issue. There are no structured initiatives to address the issue’.
Initiatives suggested by the participants

McGuire, Todnem and Hutchings (2007) derived a model to facilitate intergenerational interaction in organizations, which was based on Parker and Ross theories. The model identified four distinct stages in generational group interaction, 1) initial contact 2) Conflict 3) Cooperation 4) assimilation. Central to the model is the idea that people are unaware and do not understand the generational differences arising from age-stereotypes. It reasoned that the need for accommodation and differentiation will result in the formation of generational groups and identifies the significance of HR interventions in achieving and managing interaction amongst such groups in order to create a positive empowering work environment.

It is important for the organizations to communicate diversity within organizations in order to have functional communication across generations. Employees should be aware of generational differences so that their communication is not coloured by age stereotypes. Organizations can publish information on workforce diversity, policies, statements, and profiles of the workforce (Gröschl and Pontoise 2011).

Initiatives Suggested by the Older generation

The older generation felt strongly that training programmes and seminars are not the best way reduce the intergenerational communication gap because the approach is extremely formal. Their apprehension is that the learning’s from such programmes are rarely implemented in the workplace context. They themselves have not experienced any changes in approach and style in intergenerational communications as a result of training programmes. Attempts should be on breaking down the barriers of formality.

The older generation felt that informal settings and events like picnics, dinner with families, sporting and cultural events that encourage participation by all generations are a better approach. After-office interaction is important in building cordial relationships so that preconceived notions do not influence thoughts. This will also help in the older generation to overcome their inhibitions with the younger employees. An open environment can be achieved in which generations can communicate with each other freely and without bias.
Informal\textsuperscript{22} nature of communication must also be accompanied by increased interaction between generations. The older generation’s view is that such objectives should be pursued with rigour to reduce intergenerational communication gap. It is assumed that in-depth conversation will reduce the likelihood of communication breakdown. Thus, there should be regular meetings to obtain feedback and to know and understand each other’s communication problems. If pressing issues are discussed in an open environment to the result is better decision-making.

Van de Ven et al (2008) said that in-depth communication with diverse groups helps to reduce the influence of stereotypes because, it is believed, that people develop respect for differing perspectives with greater exposure.

\[\ldots\] it is required. First thing, we will share all our experiences; what we have learnt we will pass on to them. I mean, we should overcome this generation driven hierarchical barrier. So, I should not feel that this person is from the younger generation and he has no right to tell me that what I am doing is incorrect. This freedom I can and I should give. If we are doing something wrong we should accept. If we are right they should accept and if they are right we should accept. It should not be a hindrance that I said right then you should accept (Usha, Older generation).

Older generation participants also suggested that the younger generation should be provided a platform on which they can freely share their experiences and opinions. They should also be able point out the mistakes of the older generation and propose corrective actions. The lack of such a platform it is a deterrent to the young people. The older generation expressed the opinion that suppression can negatively impact communication.

\[\ldots\] it is a regular sectional meetings. In certain departments, these meetings are regularly carried out. However, in our department meetings used to take place, in which all three generation were present. Over 50-60 people would sit together and discuss their ideas. These meetings are not that regular now. They still happen but not that regularly...it should be regular and allow generations to share their experiences (Mishra, Older generation).

A friendly environment must be created. This can be achieved by keeping our egos aside. Our egos have been doing quite a bit of damage to the communication process by making it a formal affair. Where there is an ego, there are slim chances of a friendly environment being fostered. (Jadhav, Older generation).

\textsuperscript{22} Informal nature communication takes place when the prescribed channels/medium/ways to communicate are not adhered. It is depended on social affiliation within the organization.
Older generation also argued that there should be an emphasis on creating cross-generational teams. A heterogeneous team compels the members to try and get to know each other. Once the initial notions of stereotypes are overcome, such cross-generational teams can contribute to effective and satisfying communication.

*First of all, we need to have cross-functional teams that include people from all age groups. Then, people will automatically start engaging with each other and 90% of problems will be resolved. Then, it will increase people’s ability to understand positives and negatives of various age groups in order to react in a conducive manner. There will be more appreciation. The focus should be not on the designation, but on function and age. This step is best because you are not telling someone consciously that you are old or you are young. You are telling someone that you are very young to do this or you are very old to do this. While the younger generation will imbibe new things and the older generation will appreciate their roles and the responsibility they will have to give somebody younger than them. That how you encourage people (Tushar, Older generation)*

According to the older generation, one of the important things that they must pay heed to be keeping abreast with advances and changes in technology; and adapt quickly. This will provide them with some tools to bridge the communication gap. Shripal (Older generation) felt that technology must be used more rigorously by the older generation.

The older generation also stated their preference for sharing stories highlighting their experiences. Stories will help the younger generations relate better to the situation better and understand their era (culture). Tushar (older generation) said that whenever there was a complex situation, he preferred to explain it with a story. Stories help people to apply their minds in a better way and also help the younger generation to understand their cultural background. Barker and Gower (2010) discussed a recent approach — storytelling— to deal with the communication divide in a diverse workforce. The underlying assumption of this approach is that people across cultures like stories.

[…] recognizing all humans as storytellers with the ability to send and receive messages that establish a value-laden reality, establishes a common ground among all participants and provides a faster method of establishing a social relationship. This enhanced exchange of communication allows for swift evaluation and reaction in a competitive business environment, thereby allowing for the accomplishment of corporate and individual goals among all participants. With this existing support for the cross-cultural power of storytelling and its business application, and the critical need for a communication tool addressing the organizational diversity continuum, it follows that story-telling is a viable solution to promote cogent communication and assist in the development of organizational understanding, building stronger employee relationships and therefore increasing business productivity (302:303).
Initiatives Suggested by the Middle-aged generation

The middle-aged generation advocates thorough understanding of the problem before any initiatives are taken. They feel that a deeper study is necessary to understand the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the phenomenon and its impact on organizational behaviours.

*I think they should do some research on it. Without doing a proper research, how can we tackle the problem? Parivartan is oblivious to the fact that some thing of this sort exists in their organization. First of all, they should take your result and try to learn from it. It is very important to have some serious research on the issue, what difference it will make and how it influences Parivartan.(Lal, Middle-aged generation).*

According to the middle-aged generation, the HR policies of the organization are based on management level. They were of the opinion that the policies should specifically age. To explain their point, they disclosed that the company sanctioned loans the amounts of which are determined by the management level of the employee and not his/her age. However, the researcher would like to state that loan amounts are linked to the salary of the employee, which is an indication of his/her capacity to repay. Senior the employee, the higher the salary is going to be; higher the loan amount sanctioned. Therefore, the organization should try to strike a balance.

The Middle-aged generation is under the most pressure, both at work and in personal finances. They are at a stage where they have to meet large financial commitments — purchase of a home, provide for children’s higher education, etc. The older generation, on the other hand, has passed this stage and the younger generation is yet to take on the commitments. Thus, middle-aged participants felt that company policies place them at a disadvantage. A discounted employee is unlikely to commit fully to making communications effective. Counterview to this, according to the researcher is that loan amounts to older employees are also determined by the number of years of service left. Closer to retirement, less the sanctioned amount.

Like older generation, the middle-aged participants also emphasized the need to increase depth of communication and to bridge the generation gap. To achieve this, they believed that there should be regular group meetings in which informal communication should be encouraged. Weick (1993) proved empirically that frequent and constant communication reduces uncertainty and increases the performance levels.
Equally important, people should make the attempt to use all channels of communication. The middle-aged generation felt that the choice of channel should be situation-dependent, but all the possible channels must be sued to the extent possible.

*Interpersonal and informal communication definitely helps. In a formal environment, people are concerned with achieving their own goals. If there is an environment in which people want to share, it helps to understand each other’s view and accordingly you can communicate more effectively. Building interpersonal relationships is definitely going to help generational communication (Bijoy, Middle-aged generation).*

Middle-aged participants also narrated experiences in which even well-planned and structured initiatives did not achieve their objectives. Neha (middle-aged generation) described a town-hall meeting in her organization in which the HR department didn’t make the necessary efforts to get people to speak and discuss problems. Till people remain unwilling to discuss the issues, there can be no constructive communication. Neha felt that it is not about level of management that stops them from opening up, even with an older generation employee who is below them they can’t be blatant in their feedback.

There must be respect for the older generation’s age and experience. Initiatives should not be excessively structured and formal. Creative means and solutions must be devised to overcome the communication divide.

The middle-aged and the older generations are agreed that an open environment can result in productive intergenerational communication. However, there is a difference of opinion on the means. The middle-aged were of the opinion that an open environment should start with childhood and children must be encouraged to respect diversity. At home, a child should know that its grandparents and schoolteacher belong to different generations. Awareness of intergenerational dynamics would set in at an early age and stereotypes will not be allowed to build up. Instead, values and norms will be accorded importance. The young should be encouraged to build and sustain interpersonal relationships.

*I think it should start from school. After a point, efforts do not yield results. At the school stage, a person is raw and can still be molded and there is a lot of interaction amongst three generations. It should not be done in the usual way, rather create separate platforms for interactions amongst generations. Therefore, when a child finishes its education and joins corporate world, then the generational differences do not influence communication in a negative manner. (Bijoy, Middle-aged generation).*
Initiatives suggested by the younger generation

The younger generation participants proposed that the induction programmes for new recruits should include sensitization to generational diversity. However, contrary to the older generation’s views, they felt that parties and informal gatherings seldom improve the communications because, in such gatherings, the tendency is for people to form groups that they would be comfortable in. Such events have limited value in promoting interpersonal relationships. Employees participate because they are afraid of saying no. Given a choice, they would rather spend the time with family, close friends, or participate in activities that they really enjoy. What is needed is regular meetings that include people of all ages to increase the levels of interaction. Regular communications increases coordination between groups and positively influence the relationships (Dougherty, 1992).

I will suggest that, when we hire people, they should be made to interact more with their seniors and older people on a weekly basis. With the middle-aged generation there is not much problem as we are working with them. So our interactions are regular. Middle-aged generation does not create much more problem. For the older generation we should have something at that time only (regular basis). At that time, we must understand how they talk and what are their needs and expectations as well as what we need to do to change in our communications (Ramandeep, younger generation).

It is clear that work teams should be composed of different generations. Cross-generational teams will help them to break down the generational barriers (stereotypes); and the comfort levels of the team members with each other will increase. Interactions will tend to become informal, which is believed to be important in reducing the generation gap.

[...] it is very difficult to bring everyone together as everybody has a different way of thinking. We need multi- generational teams. After 5-6 team meetings, I feel that the situation will change. More interaction with the older generation will be good. We must understand and know the older generation better and also give them an opportunity to know us (Kiran, younger generation)

The younger generation also expected the middle-aged generation to play an important role. They are the bridge between the older and the younger generations. According to the younger generation, there must be constant efforts to strengthen the bridge.

Only the middle-aged generation employees can do proper ‘liaison’ between the older and the younger generations. If they want things to be done they should be
able to convince the older generation. The older generation must believe that there is scope for improvements instead of accepting something that they are told (Shantaram, younger generation).

Awareness in the older generation that times are changing will not come automatically. They must be made aware of and made to accept that technology is inevitable at the workplace and it cannot be avoided. They must also learn to understand the younger generation’s expectations.

An open environment can be created if the older generation overcomes their ego. The cabin culture must be replaced with an open office environment to foster interaction. Non-formal and informal communication should be encouraged; this will give more opportunities for communications between the older and the younger generations.

 [...] more of open door policy and more of casual communications rather than work related. Having non-work communication helps work-related communications. In many IT companies people address their seniors/elders by the name, it is required here, also. It is not that I should call an older generation by his name it is just that over there, there is comfort in the feeling that everybody is equal, there is a open door policy, and people can talk casually. So, may be if that happens then there is a lot scope for the younger generation to communicate with the older generation and the middle-aged generation, this is what we want and this is where we can improve (Shantaram, younger generation).

One important consideration in communication is that the interactants must use a common channel of communication rather than try to overaccomodate. It was shown in this study that if the older generation changes its communication means to technology-based channels and the younger generation non-technology in their interactions, the probability is high that it will lead to communication breakdown.
Steps to Deal with Intergenerational Communication Gap

One must not underestimate the complexity of diversity management. A substantial amount of effort must be made by an organization to leverage its diversity to achieve positive outcomes (Bennett et al., 2012).

Figure 6.1 A broad framework to approach intergeneration communication breakdown at an intergroup level.

The three A’s — Awareness, Assimilation and Accommodation—will help organizations to avoid intergenerational communication breakdown. The different generations at the workplace must be made aware of the diversity of generational characteristics. This is the first step towards sensitizing people on the issue.

Awareness may not necessarily result in acceptance. It is important that the generations assimilate the differences. This will help the generations to share information and experiences on the difference into their thoughts and dialogues. Awareness and assimilation will lead to the accommodation of generational differences. This will make intergeneration communications effective and a satisfying experience.
Therefore, generations need to make cognitive, affective, and behavioral accommodation in their communication process. To elaborate on this point, the older generation must change its rigid mindset (cognitive change) to accommodate the open-mindedness of the younger generation; they need to be emotive (affective change) to accommodate the expectations of the middle-aged and the younger generations both of whom feel that the older generation tends to separate emotion from facts. The older generation also needs to give regular feedback and must be conversant with the new-age tools of communications (behavioural change) to accommodate the changes at the societal level.

**A Model to Overcome Intergenerational Communication Breakdown**

Mechanistic management and human resource policies have made the diversity management process to focus on eliminating diversity rather than channelizing it in a positive direction for the benefit the organization (Christensen, 2005). In this research, the researcher proposes a model that addresses the problem of intergenerational communication breakdown without diluting diversity.

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**Figure 6.2 Approach to overcome the Generation Gap in communication**
This model is based on the data gathered during the study and tries to address the issue of intergenerational communication breakdown. It is important for organizations to make generational diversity integral to their structures, strategies, and processes (Bennett et al., 2012).

The first step is to recognize that intergenerational communication is an issue. This study showed that organizations do not take cognizance of generational diversity. Typically, organization mindset is governed by the ideology that organizational goals and targets supersede all other factors. Organizations believe that people should leave their identities outside the organization. However, reality is constructed by people and hence, there can be multiple realities. This is a compelling argument that, at all levels of the organization, generational diversity should be recognized.

The next step is to assess whether generational characteristics impact communication. In case of significant impact; the areas that are impacted (which may individual, group, and organization levels) must be identified. According to published studies, intergenerational communication is seen to have significant influence on employee commitment, productivity, job satisfaction, etc.

The impact study will lead to the identification of factors that influence intergenerational communication negatively. In the present study, it was seen that age stereotypes and conflicting generational characteristics are the primary reasons for the communication gap. Efforts should be directed at addressing these factors. Organizations should stress not only increasing awareness of generational differences among the employees; they should also encourage them to be agents of spreading awareness. A chain reaction must be set in motion in which people are spreading awareness among friends and colleagues that will, in turn, do the same to others, and so on.

The researcher suggests that assumptions must be avoided. Organizations must encourage the networking among employees and establish suitable platforms like blogs and newsletters to facilitate the process. Examples of how stereotypes were challenged and overcome may be discussed. Typically, the discussion may be about how an older generation employee improved his (her) proficiency in the use of technology or a younger generation employee’s loyalty towards the organization.

As discussed previously, communications based on assumption only increase the gap between sender and recipient and lead to eventual communication breakdown. A
generalized picture may help to initiate an exchange, but cannot guide the exchange. The influence of their preconceived notions (age stereotypes) on communication must be resisted by all generations.

Organizations must facilitate communications in both directions. This is the only way stereotypes can be overcome, colleagues can get to know each other better irrespective of the generation they may belong to and misunderstandings can be avoided. This results in better decision-making.

The expectation that the listener should constantly make efforts to understand us should be matched the speaker’s willingness to be open. The best way to do this is to seek and give feedback. Feedback can be given in direct or indirect ways. The direct method is the formal method of feedback. The present study showed that people give and seek feedback in an indirect manner. They rely on body language as a feedback mechanism.

In similar fashion, organizations must build a formal system of giving/seeking feedback. People of different generations in the organization must understand that two-way communication alone cannot help the communication process; a suitable feedback mechanism is equally necessary. Follow-up succeeds feedback. It is necessary because it helps people to know whether the feedback has been acted upon.

The role cultural diversity is an important factor in the management of generational diversity. Cultural diversity is a prerequisite condition for generational diversity. It is essential to have an understanding of cultural diversity. This study showed that in certain circumstances, culture could be a barrier. The study revealed that the younger generation had to be guarded in their behaviour as they were expected to show respect to older employees. Suitable training programmes may be conducted by organizations to increase awareness of the role of cultural constraints in communications and how they can be overcome. A common ground must be found to build a sense of belonging and interdependence.

We are diverse; but we must also be flexible. Diversity is not the problem; it is our attitude that is the problem. People from all generations must be flexible and open minded. They must feel motivated to adopt all available tools to communicate. Learning opportunities must also be made available at the workplace so that older generation learns to use technology-mediated channels like email or text messaging. Simulation exercises or role-plays in face-to-face communication will make the younger generation understand the nuances.
Communication styles are another area where flexibility is necessary to avoid conflicts. The present study showed that passive and submissive style of communication work best with the older generation. The older generation must learn to show flexibility towards other styles. By finding a common ground, communication gap can be reduced.

Both sender and receiver in a communication must play the role of learners. This will make the communication process more open. By this approach, both stakeholders will accept that there is always a scope to learn. However, the older generation may find it difficult to adapt. Greater engagement with the older generation may increase the likelihood of making this approach feasible.

Lastly, generations have to realize that they may differ on varied aspects but they should strive achieve points of convergence for effective, efficient, and satisfied intergenerational communications.

Summary
This study showed that organizations have yet to recognize the existence intergenerational communication issues. The companies where this study was carried out do not have any processes or systems to address the matter. Participants have suggested various group or organization initiatives. The researcher has proposed a broad framework named as ‘Triple A’ - Awareness, Assimilation, and Accommodation to address the issues in intergenerational communication. Based on the framework, the researcher has developed a model to prevent breakdown in intergenerational communication.