

## Research Article

# Are Millennials Communication Deficient? Solving a Generational Puzzle in an Indian Context

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**Abstract—Background:** Although effective communication has been the most important attribute of success in the workplace, poor communication has hindered employees from performing well. This outcome worsens when communication occurs between cross-generational groups in an organization. **Literature review:** Prior research suggests that Millennials, who make up a large cohort of the population in workplaces, are technologically savvy, multitasking, and result-oriented but considered to be deficient in their communication skills. There exists a divergence between Millennials and previous generations in terms of their attitude, behavior, and value system. **Research questions:** 1. Is there a significant difference in the communication styles of Millennials and their predecessors in India? 2. Are Millennials communication deficient? 3. Do their Gen X predecessors lack the skills to recognize different generational preferences in order to effectively lead a multigenerational workforce? **Research methodology:** For this investigation, a 36-item questionnaire measured 12 interpersonal styles through three items each on a Likert-type scale. **Results:** The results presented in this study are not limited to generational stereotyping but rather claim to be accurate and context-sensitive. Millennials defied general stereotypes in several ways. The findings confirmed that although Millennials are different, they are not necessarily communication deficient. **Conclusion:** To flourish, Millennials and their predecessor and successor generations should strive to adapt to each other by avoiding stereotypes.

**Index Terms—**Communication styles, interpersonal skills, Millennials, organizational communication, relational outcomes.

The Society for Human Resource Management has argued that there are a full five generations on the job today, from the Silent Generation to Gen Z [1]. An organization is a body of communication, and employees are its most credible and valuable communication assets. The relational and communication health of any organization builds on a series of communicative exchanges. It is a reciprocal and two-way process. This process goes beyond the delegation of tasks such as managing, controlling, planning, and leading. The way that information is conveyed affects the attitudes that employees develop toward one another. The manner of communication reflects how employees often perceive themselves, their colleagues, and their mutual relationships with them.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have revealed that the ability to communicate effectively with team members in the workplace is the main predictor of employee job and communication satisfaction [2]. Employees who engage in high-quality relationships with their bosses are likely to receive additional support in terms of communication-based resources such as information, mentoring, guidance, and praise [3]. They foster high-quality relationships with their team members, and exhibit increased job performance, sense of belonging, team effectiveness, and overall good social behavior [3]–[5]. On the contrary, disagreement and differences in goals lead to stress, which negatively impacts employee productivity. A series of discrete transactions or episodes [6] results in uncertainty, reduced perceived control, or negative emotions [7], [8]. Hence, competency in communication plays an important role in such situations [2], [9]. A competent communicator must be both appropriate and effective. A competent communicator tries to accomplish his or her interpersonal goals while helping his or her interactional partners pursue their own goals [10]. The real competency of an employee should be to “get ahead” by “getting along” with the people they work with.

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## Practitioner Takeaway

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- Among the six communication styles tested in this study, the generational cohorts differ on four: Regulating, Adult, Creative, and Reactive styles.
  - The claims made in past studies that Millennials are communication deficient are not fully true, at least in the Indian context.
  - The study indicates that to flourish, both the predecessor generations and Millennials should strive to adapt to each other while avoiding stereotypes.
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### Models of Communication Styles

Communication between individuals is varied and consists of several components. It is a combination of spoken and written words, nonverbal cues used by the communicators to emphasize certain ideas in the message, and the use of styles in the verbal delivery that complement their specific personality and mood [11]. Interestingly, studies have found that understanding another person's message depends less on words and more on the style and nonverbal cues delivered during the interaction [12], [13]. Philosophers believed that people's communication styles reflect their personality types. The ancient Greeks believed in four types of personalities with distinct communication styles—Sanguine (highly expressive), Phlegmatic (thoughtful), Melancholic (cautious and courteous), and Choleric (aggressive) [14]. Carl Jung in 1933 modified these styles and called them Collaborator, Analyser, Socializer, and Controller [15]. In 1975, Dr. Paul Mok developed the Mok Communication Styles Survey to determine whether an individual's communication style is Expressive, Analytical, Amiable, or Driver [16]. Using a qualitative approach, several researchers in the past have studied conversational patterns and their impact on relationship development, indicating that managerial styles or behaviors are based on communication styles and vice versa. They identified various patterns that reflect high and low relationships [17], [18].

Although effective communication has been the most important attribute of success in the workplace [19], poor communication has hindered employees in achieving high performance. It worsens when communication occurs between cross-generational groups within an organization. Since the present world is witnessing workplaces where four generations work together, learning to recognize the generational differences is key to managing a workforce. To better understand, each generation's label, their preferences, and the stereotypes attributed to them are described below. It is important to mention, however, that demographers and social scientists diverge in their

labeling of generations, not only the groupings according to age but also the characteristics of each group.

**Generational Preferences and Stereotypes** The exact year that distinguishes one generation from another is disputed. This study has adopted the labels given by McKinlay and Williamson [20]. The first generation is Traditionalists, also known as Silents, who were born before 1945. This generation is diminishing and rarely found in organizations today. Described as conservative and disciplined, they believe in paying their dues, prefer formality, have a great deal of respect for authority, like social order, love their things, and tend to hoard [21].

The next generation cohort is Baby Boomers. They are the people who were born between 1946 and 1965. They grew up in an era of

prosperity and optimism and were encouraged by the sense that they are a special generation capable of changing the world. They have equated work with self-worth, contribution and personal fulfilment. [22, p. 270]

After Baby Boomers, we have Generation X, which includes people who were born between 1965 and 1980. They are said to be impatient with traditional ways of working, prefer to work alone, and are skeptical, although they want to learn and grow.

Next in line is Millennials or Generation Y, which includes people born between 1980 and 2000. The definition of this cohort is broad. Although there is no officially defined period for this generation, there are two very distinct types of Millennials: those born before 1986 (Y1) and others born after 1986 (Y2). This generation has been shaped by parental excesses, computers, and intense technological advances [23].

Generation Z is the cohort succeeding the Millennials. Demographers and researchers use the mid- to late-1990s as the starting birth years of

this generation. This generation has used technology since a young age and is comfortable with the internet and social media but is not necessarily digitally literate.

Keeping in mind the retirement age (60 in India) and the average minimum age of working youth (24 in India), both the Silent generation and Gen Z have been excluded from the present study. For the purposes of this study, both Y1 and Y2 have been considered Millennials, and their predecessors are Generation X, the generation with which they are most likely to work closely.

By 2025, Millennials will constitute 75% of the major workforce, including both Y1 and Y2 [24]. This generation exhibits striking differences from the previous three generations. Their different perspectives, values, and experiences have the potential to challenge smooth working relations. Recent Google search trends revealed approximately 4 million entries focusing on ways to manage Millennials [25], [26]. A considerable amount of literature has been published depicting a disconnect between Millennials and their predecessors in terms of attitudes, behavior, and value systems [4], [9]. Although Baby Boomers and Generation X are considered to be more perseverant and respectful to their seniors, Millennials are stereotypically viewed to be impatient and detached, as well as more bold, honest, and frank [27]–[29]. Stereotypes categorize them as independent thinkers who are tech-savvy, overconfident, opinionated, high minded, aggressive, and uncomfortable with criticism.

These differences in attitude and behavior have also impacted their interactional styles with their supervisors, who consider them to be communication deficient [30]–[33]. Myers described Millennials as self-centered, unmotivated, disrespectful, and disloyal, and raised questions concerning how well they fit within organizations and interact effectively with leaders [34]. Investigating the career expectations of Millennials, Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons found tendencies toward narcissism, rapid individual achievements, and frequent promotions [35]. Furthermore, they tend to job-hop if not engaged [32]. In other studies, Millennials were found to be full of high self-esteem and high expectations, and reluctant to give wholehearted effort to anything they found less-than meaningful work [36], [37].

Also observed that Millennials prefer directions and checklists to perform effectively, but often have difficulties in making decisions under more

ambiguous circumstances [38]. They become impatient with traditional lockstep promotion tracks and look aggressively for fast track growth. They belong to the generation that is said to have been pampered by their parents, who micromanaged and protected them in every respect. This experience has hampered their ability to be self-reliant and to solve problems [38]. They seek directions at work but prefer to complete tasks at a time and place of their choice. There are instances of Millennials clashing with their predecessors regarding attire, hairstyles, piercings, tattoos, and other characteristics. They seek freedom to look as they feel and consider it a very personal thing when interfered with.

Although much has been written about Millennials' unwarranted behavior, some recent studies have negated the above-mentioned claims, considering them to be stereotypes. They found Millennials to be high achievers who are technologically efficient, very productive, and inclined to seek work that leads to a more sustainable and compassionate world [37], [39], [41]. They look for major support from their senior managers, desire to be part of the team in decision making, are comfortable working in virtual teams, and intend to give back to society [42], [43]. Omilion-Hodges and Sugg, in their attempt to identify desirable managerial communication traits of Millennials, have found them to be friendly, encouraging, empathetic, honest, and approachable [4]. They tend to favor collective action and are more willing to volunteer than their predecessors [42].

Millennials have also outranked their preceding generations in understanding others' perspectives and are predicted to be excellent future managers driven by strong work ethics [44]. Unlike their predecessors, they do not consider the computer or other electronics to be a technology because these devices are part of their lives. For them, multitasking is a norm. They want to learn, to be challenged, and to understand the relationship between their work and the overall mission of the organization. "They want ... some flexibility in where, when, and how they work" [37, p. 13].

Millennials seek constant feedback, although reluctant to accept constructive criticism [38]. Borges et al. found Millennials to have greater social needs [45]. In her study, Sugg investigated which managerial traits would be especially motivating to this cohort and revealed that Millennials are not likely to be impressed with the manager who buries himself or herself in an office. Instead, they value action; that is, Millennials want

a leader who does not simply issue orders and appears removed or otherwise distanced from the team. Taken together, Millennials want someone who is active and whom they can learn from to cultivate a trusting, two-way communicative relationship [4].

The literature thus presents two opposing viewpoints. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that most of the published research throws light on Millennials' attributes from the eyes of preceding generations. No published research has examined their relational and communication desires from the Millennials' perspective. The present study uses the results of a quantitative, questionnaire-based assessment to make a comparative study of the communication styles of the two cohorts (Gen X and Millennials) in India to understand whether the Millennials' communication style is significantly different from the preceding generation's and whether they are communication deficient. The study also explores whether Gen X lacks the skills to recognize different generational preferences to effectively lead a multigenerational workforce.

Another important element of this study is that, although Millennials have been widely studied with numerous surveys showcasing the ways in which they are different from their predecessors, no single study has been exclusively done to understand Millennials and their differences from their predecessors within a specific country's social and cultural context. Thus, this study addresses the need for quantitative analysis and empirical testing of generational differences in the specific cultural context of India, where relationships and social bonding form an integral part of the culture [46].

Millennials were recently shown to have different values than those of the preceding generation. These differences are said to lead to conflicts. Other than personality differences, Millennials have been characterized as deficient in their communication skills. However, no study has concretely and objectively studied the interactional style of Millennials within a specific cultural setting. Responding to this issue, this study has framed three questions.

**RQ1.** Is there a significant difference in the communication styles of Millennials and their predecessors in India?

**RQ2.** Are Millennials communication deficient?

**RQ3.** Do their Gen X predecessors lack the skills to recognize different generational preferences in

order to effectively lead a multigenerational workforce?

## METHODOLOGY

The application of theories and models developed in one part of the world to understand phenomena that occur in another part of the world has always been a challenge. Much of the early concern about this issue has concentrated on the relevance of Western theories to understanding other cultures. Although several frameworks such as Hofstede's [47] and Trompenaars' [48] have proven useful for understanding cultural differences and have helped to establish some relatively universal dimensions, such as Individualism and Power Distance, which can be useful in understanding differences across national cultures, other researchers have raised critical challenges and questioned their universal applicability. McSweeney [49], for example, criticized Hofstede's approach in several respects: his main arguments were that surveys are not the most suitable way to measure cultural differences, and that nations are not the best units to examine cultural differences.

Individual behavior is adjusted to one's mental map, which embraces both cognitive and emotional elements. The mental map is further influenced by the environment and guided by what is interpreted from the environment. Hence, individuals with different mental maps will interpret the same stimulus differently, based on their mental environment [31]. Differences in behavior, work ethics, and culture have made the application of these theories problematic. Therefore, from the many established communication style paradigms, I chose the Transactional Style Inventory Survey developed by Pareekh [50], which considers the Indian organizational context, to explore whether Millennials in India communicate differently than their predecessors.

My study also measured the communication competence of Gen X, the preceding generation, to identify whether Millennials are communication deficient or whether their predecessors lack the skills to manage the next generation.

**Research Design** Development of the scale was based upon two basic concepts: Ego States (a set of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors) and Life Positions (specific behaviors toward others that an individual learns based on certain assumptions made early in life). It also considers two notions: the personality of any individual can be manifested

TABLE I  
TWELVE INFLUENTIAL STYLES [50, P. 131]

Ego State	Effective Style	Ineffective Style
Nurturing Parent	Supportive	Rescuing
Regulating Parent	Normative	Prescriptive
Adult	Problem-Solving	Task-Obsessive
Creative Child	Innovative	Bohemian
Reactive Child	Assertive	Aggressive
Adaptive Child	Resilient	Sulking

in three Ego States (*the parent, the adult and the child*); and these Ego States converse with one another in transactions [51], [52]. The analysis of transactions between two people presents theory in practice. During the interaction, there is the interplay of six Ego States (two Parent States, one Adult State, and three Child States) and two Life Positions (Effective and Ineffective) in which people reflect different behaviors [53], [52], [31]. Twelve influential styles emerge from the combination of Ego States and Life Positions: six effective and six ineffective (see Table I).

Communication between people in an organization can be from one Ego State to a different one or from one Ego State to the same Ego State. The person who initiates the communication expects a reply from a certain Ego State. If the reply comes from a different Ego State than the expected one, then it may be Ineffective, and the message may be lost, not received, or disregarded by the person receiving it. Because developing solutions in today's workplace require communication skills—including the ability to work in a team, solve problems, and adapt to various audiences—developing effective communication styles is essential.

### Relationship Between Communication Styles and Managerial Behaviors

The scale assessed communication styles according to six variables. Each variable is further divided into two latent variables; they are categorized as effective or ineffective styles. Table I illustrates the 12 influential styles and their level of effectiveness.

1. In the Nurturing style, Supportive managers provide encouragement for improvement. Their behavior includes coaching and mentoring their colleagues, encouraging their subordinates, and providing the conditions necessary for continuous improvement. Managers with this style show patience in understanding and learning about the problems of their co-workers and empathize with them. On the other hand, Rescuing managers foster dependency. They perceive their role as rescuing the subordinate or co-worker, who is seen as incapable of taking care of themselves. Obviously, this style does not help other people become independent. Unwarranted praise can lead to complacency and foster narcissism; thus, it is considered unsatisfactory or ineffective.
2. In the Regulating style, Normative managers not only develop norms of behavior but explain their significance to their peers and subordinates. Managers with this style not only help others to solve a specific problem but also help them prepare ways to approach the problem. Prescriptive managers, on the other hand, are always critical of others' behavior and impose rules and regulations, which are generally not welcomed. Managers with this style are judgmental and do not believe in giving options. This approach is not satisfactory and is thus ineffective.
3. In the Adult style, Problem-Solving managers deal happily with the problems of their team members and find solutions. In doing so, they involve and invite the help of subordinates and peers. On the other hand, Task-Obsessive managers ignore everything unrelated to the office task. They are insensitive to the emotional needs and personal problems of their peers and subordinates. They ignore other members' feelings, an unsatisfactory and ineffective approach.
4. In the Creative style, Innovative managers are enthusiastic and motivate others with new ideas. They pay enough attention to nurturing others' ideas so that they result in concrete actions. On the other hand, Bohemian managers are creative but impatient with current practices. These managers are not concerned with how new ideas work. They do not stick to one idea until its completion before jumping to the other. Hence, this approach is considered unsatisfactory or ineffective.
5. In the Reactive style, Assertive managers explore problems with perseverance. They confront the organization to get things done for their subordinates and team members. They are frank and open, but also respect the feelings of others. Aggressive managers, on the other hand, are fighters, but their aggression causes subordinates to avoid them. Thus, this approach is not satisfactory or effective.
6. In the Adaptive style, Resilient managers are able to bounce back when encountering unavoidable challenges [54]–[57]. Their managerial behaviors are to accept others and learn from them. They are flexible and open to

change. On the other hand, Sulking managers keep negative feelings within themselves, avoid meeting people, and are not able to fulfill their commitments. They feel bad about the situation but avoid confronting the problems. Thus, this approach is considered unsatisfactory and ineffective.

**Instrument** The questionnaire consisted of 36 items and measured 12 interpersonal styles through three items each on a Likert-type scale ranging from “Almost always true” (5) to “Almost never true” (1) [50]. Out of a total of 36 items, the scale was used normally on 18 items. For the remaining 18 items that measured ineffective or not satisfactory styles, the scale was inverted. The re-test reliability coefficient of the instrument (with a four week interval) done on several groups ranged between 0.51 and 0.74 for the different styles. The scale demonstrated strong construct validity [58].

The study used several controlled variables such as age dissimilarity, organizational tenure, and sex dissimilarity. In this study, demographic dissimilarity mattered more than individual demography because it aimed to measure the differences in communication styles of the two different generations. Also, organizational tenure helped divide the data and separate the population into two categories: Millennials and their predecessors. The analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics 24.

**Participants** For this study, two sets of data were collected. One represented Millennials—both generation Y1 (maturing Millennials, age 22 to 29 years old) and generation Y2 (milestone Millennials, 30 to 37 years old)—and their predecessors (Boomers and Gen X). The survey was an integral part of training activities focused on interpersonal communication skills conducted at various public and private power sector organizations across India during a three-year period (2017–2019). The training involved a self-assessment exercise where the survey was administered to batches of 25–30 participants with the average age ranging from 24–57 years.

The power sector in India is mainly governed by the Ministry of Power. Generation, transmission, and distribution are the three major pillars of the power sector. As far as energy generation is concerned, it is mainly divided among three sectors called the Central Sector, the State Sector, and the Private Sector. Central or Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) constitute 29.78% (62826.63 MW) of total

installed capacity (210951.72 MW) in India as of December 31, 2012. Other than PSUs, several state-level corporations account for about 41.10% of overall energy generation. Private sector enterprises contribute about 29.11% (61409.24 MW) of total installed capacity and play a major role in the generation, transmission, and distribution of energy (<http://indianpowersector.com>).

Before starting the exercise, the respondents were told that their responses would be used for a research study. They agreed and consented to having understood that their participation in the study was voluntary. Moreover, they were assured confidentiality and anonymity. They were asked to assess their own communication style at the workplace. The total sample size ( $n$ ) was 434, from which 20 cases were deleted due to incomplete entries. Thus, the final sample was 414, of which 21% were females and 79% males. The research targeted two different generations of which 204 (49.3%) of the sample was made up of predecessors and 210 (50.7%) of Millennials (Y 1+ Y2). The average age of the first set of data varied between 40 and 55 years, and the second set of data varied between 23 and 39 years. The participants in the first set of data reported an average tenure of 15–30 years with their organization, while the second set reported an average tenure of 1–10 years. 62% of responses were from the PSUs and 38% from the private player.

**Data Analysis** A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to understand whether the two groups (Millennials and their predecessors) differed significantly from each other in one or more characteristics of styles of communication. For the present study, the dependent variables were six communication styles with two categories each: one is effective another is ineffective or not satisfactory, and the independent variable was Generation, which had two groups: Predecessors (Boomers and Gen X) and Millennials.

Before the MANOVA was performed, the data were checked according to certain assumptions. Although the data passed most of the assumptions, the test for multivariate outliers was also conducted. First, the variables with linear combinations were identified to compute the Mahalanobis Distances for the combination of independent variables. Then, Mahalanobis Distances were compared to a chi-square distribution with the same degrees of freedom that corresponded to the number of variables that had been grouped together to calculate the Mahalanobis

TABLE II  
MULTIVARIATE TESTS<sup>a</sup>

Effect		Value	F <sup>b</sup>	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>c</sup>
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.996	9170.405	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.996	110044.856	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.004	9170.405	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.996	110044.856	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	274.426	9170.405	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.996	110044.856	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	274.426	9170.405	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.996	110044.856	1.000
Generation	Pillai's Trace	0.405	22.722	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.405	272.670	1.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.595	22.722	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.405	272.670	1.000
	Hotelling's Trace	0.680	22.722	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.405	272.670	1.000
	Roy's Largest Root	0.680	22.722	12.000	401.000	0.000	0.405	272.670	1.000

<sup>a</sup>Design: Intercept + Generation.<sup>b</sup>Exact statistic.<sup>c</sup>Computed using alpha = 0.05

Distances (in this case, 12 latent variables). By using the formula  $1 - \text{CDF} \times \text{CHISQ}(X1, X2)$ , the  $p$ -value of the right-tail of the chi-square was calculated. The values were once again examined in the data view. Multivariate outliers were extracted whenever the values of the new probability variable were less than 0.001. In this case, four outliers were identified with the following IDs: 203.00, 158.00, 140.00, and 171.00. Prior to running inferential analyses, all four cases were removed.

## RESULTS

Table II shows the results of the multivariate tests. The Wilks' Lambda row in the bottom half of the table (shaded in blue) indicates whether the one-way MANOVA was statistically significant.

The Sig. value of 0.000 (that is,  $p < 0.0005$ ;  $F(12, 401) = 22.722$ ; Wilk's lambda = 0.595, partial eta squared = 0.41) indicates that there was a statistically significant difference in the communication styles of the employees based on the generation they belonged to. To check the specific differences, see Table III.

**RQ1: Is There a Significant Difference in the Communication Styles of Millennials and Their Predecessors in India?** Surveys taken by 414 employees of two different generations on six communication styles, each having effective and

ineffective categories, with  $p < 0.0005$  mean scores for Regulating style (Normative and Prescriptive), Adult style (Problem Solver and Task Obsessive), Creative style (Innovative and Bohemian), and Reactive style (Assertive and Aggressive), show that there were statistically significant differences between Millennials and their predecessors. However, this was not found to be true between Nurturing style (Supportive  $p = 0.435$ , Rescuer  $p = 0.081$ ), and Adaptive style (Resilient  $p = 0.882$  and Sulking  $p = 0.609$ ). Hence, out of six styles, Millennials were found to be significantly different from their Predecessors in four styles. Communication styles that emerged and the managerial behaviors related to those styles are further discussed in detail in the next section.

## RQ2: Are Millennials Communication Deficient?

To answer the second question, whether the Millennials are deficient in communication skills, estimated marginal means of both cohorts were observed on all six styles. First, the differences in the means were calculated between the effective and ineffective styles of each generation and then the comparative analysis was done.

In Table IV, we see that the predicted means for groups 1 (Predecessors) and 2 (Millennials) for the Nurturing style are 11.14 and 11.02 for the effective category (Supportive), and 7.8 and 7.5 for the negative (Rescuing) category. Statistically,

TABLE III  
SPECIFIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STYLES AS REVEALED IN TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

Generation	Style	Mean	SD	Generation 1 Mean	Generation 1 SD	F	p	Generation 2 Mean	Generation 2 SD
Supportive	Supportive	1.572	1	1.572	0.611	0.435	0.001	0.611	0.122
	Rescuer	8.977	1	8.977	3.052	0.081	0.007	3.052	0.414
Normative	Normative	613.906	1	613.91	127.004	0.000	0.236	127.004	1.000
	Prescriptive	375.487	1	375.49	87.571	0.000	0.175	87.571	1.000
Problem solver	Problem solver	133.438	1	133.44	35.559	0.000	0.079	35.559	1.000
	Task-obsessive	110.942	1	110.94	26.137	0.000	0.060	26.137	0.999
Innovative	Innovative	139.429	1	139.43	26.448	0.000	0.060	26.448	0.999
	Bohemian	140.271	1	140.27	26.018	0.000	0.059	26.018	0.999
Assertive	Assertive	89.979	1	89.979	17.975	0.000	0.042	17.975	0.988
	Aggressive	106.662	1	106.66	22.262	0.000	0.051	22.262	0.997
Resilient	Resilient	0.077	1	0.077	0.022	0.882	0.000	0.022	0.053
	Sulking	1.115	1	1.115	0.261	0.609	0.001	0.261	0.080

TABLE IV  
ESTIMATED MARGINAL MEANS

Dependent Variable	Generation Latent Variables (Categories)	Generation <sup>a</sup>	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Nurturing	Supportive	1	11.147	0.112	10.926	11.368
		2	11.024	0.111	10.806	11.241
	Rescuer	1	7.809	0.120	7.573	8.045
		2	7.514	0.118	7.282	7.747
Regulating	Normative	1	9.250	0.154	8.947	9.553
		2	11.686	0.152	11.387	11.984
	Prescriptive	1	10.672	0.145	10.387	10.957
		2	8.767	0.143	8.486	9.048
Adult	Problem solver	1	8.922	0.136	8.655	9.188
		2	10.057	0.134	9.794	10.320
	Task obsessive	1	8.907	0.144	8.623	9.190
		2	7.871	0.142	7.592	8.151
Creative	Innovative	1	10.627	0.161	10.311	10.943
		2	9.467	0.158	9.155	9.778
	Bohemian	1	6.583	0.163	6.264	6.903
		2	7.748	0.160	7.433	8.063
Reactive	Assertive	1	11.137	0.157	10.829	11.445
		2	10.205	0.154	9.901	10.508
	Aggressive	1	8.299	0.153	7.998	8.600
		2	9.314	0.151	9.017	9.611
Adaptive	Resilient	1	11.211	0.131	10.953	11.469
		2	11.238	0.129	10.984	11.492
	Sulking	1	7.799	0.145	7.515	8.083
		2	7.695	0.143	7.415	7.975

<sup>a</sup>Generation 1 = Boomers and Gen X; Generation 2 = Millennials (Y1 + Y2)

these values are very similar, indicating that there is no significant difference between the Millennials' communication style on this variable and that of their predecessors. Both generations rated themselves highly on the Supportive style, which is an effective communication style indicating managerial behaviors such as coaching and mentoring their colleagues, encouraging their

subordinates, and providing the conditions necessary for continuous improvement. The result appears to refute claims made in the past studies that Millennials are not supportive.

The predicted means for group 1 and 2 in the Regulating style are significantly statistically different with the mean score of 9.2 and 11.6 for



the effective category (Normative) and 10.6 and 8.7 for the negative category (Prescriptive). Group 2's high scores on the Normative style indicate that Millennials not only like to abide by the norms laid out by the organization, but also to explain their significance to their peers and subordinates, helping them prepare ways to approach problems in the workplace. This finding again refutes claims made in past studies that Millennials break rules. On the same variable, the predecessors rated themselves highly on Prescriptive style, indicating that Millennials are getting frequent directions on how to perform tasks in the workplace. Although the predecessors might consider this as guidance, Millennials, who love freedom at work, might consider it as interference.

The predicted means for group 1 and 2 in the Adult style are different, with the mean score of 8.9 and 10.0 for the effective category (Problem Solvers) and mean scores of 8.9 and 7.8 for the negative category (Task Obsessive). Though the difference is not very great in the negative category, the predecessors rated themselves highly on Task obsessiveness, indicating managerial behavior such as being insensitive to the emotional needs and personal problems of their peers and subordinates, and ignoring everything that is not related to the office task. At the same time, Millennials with high scores on the effective category emerged as Problem Solvers, indicating that they deal happily with the problems of their team members and find solutions by inviting the help of and involving subordinates, peers, and others. The results in this category also refute the claims maintained in the past that Millennials are full of attitude.

Next is the Creative style where groups 1 and 2 have different mean scores (10.6 and 9.4) for the effective category (Innovative), meaning that the predecessors are innovative, unlike past studies that showed them to be closed-minded when it comes to innovation. On the other hand, the mean scores of Millennials were comparatively higher (6.5 and 7.7) in the negative category (Bohemian), indicating that although the younger generation likes to follow norms, they may not hesitate to break them if needed. This style is characteristic of the managerial behavior of being impatient with current practices, not sticking to one idea until its completion and jumping to the other. The result on this style is similar to the past findings.

The predicted means for groups 1 and 2 in the Reactive style are different with the mean score of (11.13 and 10.20) for the effective category (Assertive), indicating that the predecessors are

assertive, possess managerial behaviors such as exploring problems with perseverance, and confront the organization to get things done for their subordinates and team members. With mean scores of 8.2 and 9.3 for the negative category (Aggressive), Millennials emerged as aggressive, indicating the managerial behavior of being tough fighters but also displaying aggression that may make others avoid them. This result is also in line with the previous findings that Millennials seek quality over quantity of work.

In the Adaptive style, the predicted means of 11.21 and 11.23 for groups 1 and 2 for the effective category (Resilient) and for the negative category [(Sulking) 7.8 and 7.5] are very similar. The mean scores also indicate that both generations rated themselves highly on the effective category, designating themselves as perseverant and resilient, and indicating managerial behaviors such as being flexible, accepting others, and learning from those behaviors.

To summarize, we see that the generational cohorts differ from each other in most of the styles (four out of six). These measures quantify distinct differences in values categorized as the Regulating, Adult, Creative, and Reactive styles. The differences in the results shed light on why Millennials may be perceived as difficult to work with. But are Millennials communication deficient? The statistics show that the least evident contrast among generations was in the Nurturing and Adaptive styles, which showed no significant differences across generations. Out of the four remaining styles, Regulating and Adult style, Millennials scored better than their predecessors. On Creative and Reactive styles, predecessors scored better than Millennials. Based on these findings, we can say that the claims made in past studies that find that Millennials are communication deficient are not fully true, at least in the Indian context.

### **RQ3: Are Predecessors Lacking the Skills to Recognize Different Generational Preferences to Effectively Lead a Multi-Generational Workforce?**

The findings confirmed some generational stereotypes and refuted others, indicating the importance of both understanding the prevailing stereotypes and paying attention to the attitudes and skills of a particular cohort of people in particular workplace situations. The predecessors assessed themselves higher on Prescriptive style, indicating that Millennials are receiving frequent directions on how to perform tasks in the workplace. Geert Hofstede, one of the leading academics on culture, conducted research

in the late 1960s. Based on his analysis of the dataset, he initially distinguished four, later five, and finally six dimensions of cultural orientation that are different for various national cultures [47], [59]. India's Power Distance index on Hofstede Dimension for the culture is 77 in comparison to a world average of 56.5. With the high mean score on Prescriptive style, predecessors proved themselves to be overly dominant. In a comment box given at the end of the survey, one Millennial employee wrote,

My boss does not trust me. After assigning the task, she frequently monitors and interrupts. She finds fault in every step and doubts my decisions. Her bossy attitude irritates me.

While predecessors might consider this behavior as guidance, Millennials, who love freedom at work, might consider it as interference. Predecessors need to understand that at work, managing performance can enhance engagement but too much supervision can damage it as well. This also indicated that Millennials in India are looking for a reduction in Power Distance. High scores in Task Obsessiveness by predecessors indicated their high expectations of Millennials in terms of hours devoted to office work. Millennials, on the other hand, emerged as Problem Solvers and Innovators who prefer quality over quantity of work. For them, the ideal workweek would include more time spent on the discussion of new ideas, on coaching and mentoring, and on the development of their leadership skills. Along with financial security, they seek a good work-life balance [60]. My research has also proved that meaningful work is positively related to psychological empowerment of employees [61].

## DISCUSSION

Millennials have observed their parents living in fear of the instability of their jobs, so they insist on more reasonable work schedules and work-life balance. Results indicated that Millennials valued organizational culture and followed norms laid out by their seniors, but simultaneously rated themselves comparatively high on the Bohemian style, indicating that they may not hesitate to break the old rules if they find them irrelevant and obsolete. This also means that they look for guidance but prefer to do their tasks by their own choice of time, style, and place. They would prefer a more creative and inclusive work environment over an authoritarian culture. They are comfortable working virtually using technology [62]. They prefer

the open and free flow of communication and the right to dress the way that they want to. While predecessors rated higher on Assertiveness, Millennials rated themselves high on Aggression. Many factors contribute to this rating, such as the dynamic and fast paced business environment, technology, cut-throat competition with their peers, and reputation management. Although aggression is a widely noted weak attribute belonging to business skills in past literature, what is interesting to note is their admission to this in Millennials' self-assessment exercise. Being aware of one's weaknesses is a gift in that it can help one register those weaknesses consciously. Suppressing or changing feelings may not be a very healthy way of treating aggression. It can be harnessed with astuteness.

My study suggests that the beliefs that the world holds about Millennials is an exaggeration. Yes, they are different but not necessarily communication deficient. Predecessors who are struggling to work with and retain young employees should be open to making changes in the company's culture to accommodate them. As Dacher Keltner, Faculty Director of the Greater Good Science Centre, rightly stated,

Sometimes, stereotyping young people might just indicate our anxiety about all the rapid change that's happening today. In a hurry to judge, we sometimes overlook the rapid changes that are happening in the economy, eventually impacting the culture and behavior. [63]

Rapid technological changes, stagnant wages, a swelling population, and increasing competition have impacted Millennials' choices and attitudes. With the changing times, employers need to become more tolerant of the Millennials' way of life, looks, and the way that they dress. Some companies have already taken steps to resolve these clashes by introducing areas for gaming and relaxing. In addition to international companies such as Google, KPMG, and Microsoft, India has some good examples of such companies. Hari Krishna Exporters Ltd. offers a cricket playground, meditation center, jacuzzi, and swings for employees to relax and socialize [64]. RMSI Pvt. Ltd. in Delhi, NCR, provides parenting and relationship counseling; other activities include a music band, photography club, painting, acting, movie making, guitar classes, Zumba lessons, and sports tournaments [65]. Wipro has a carefree campus and a friendly environment along with professional and personal grooming initiatives.

Employee benefits include paid holidays, maternity leave, and counseling sessions for managing work life [65]. Hindustan Unilever provides its employees with recreational activities such as a meditation room, yoga classes, and a library [65]. To maximize its employees productivity, Bharti Airtel has introduced flexible work hours and home office as well as remote work. Other benefits include daycare and grocery shopping centers, fitness and spa facilities, and six-month sabbaticals for personal and educational purposes [65].

## CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study thus indicates that to flourish, both the predecessors and Millennials should strive to adapt to each other while avoiding stereotypes. Altering employees' personalities is a difficult task; thus, companies should focus on managing Millennials carefully and benefitting from their qualities. To achieve this goal, employers should identify and promote the drivers that facilitate a healthy relationship between the two generations, and discourage the drivers that threaten it. Human resource departments should play a vital role in identifying those drivers and intervening by designing the right kind of training for their employees. New recruiting techniques and training in interpersonal communication are warranted, especially for Millennials, as they should also be conscious about their behavior and the ways that behavior can be perceived by others. The results show both generations to be Supportive, highlighting managerial behavior such as mentoring, coaching, learning about the problems of co-workers, and empathizing with each other. For better implementation of these qualities, conversational training should be added as a compulsory module in corporate training programs, focusing on developing active listening and acknowledging nonverbal cues.

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Predecessors rated themselves high on the Prescriptive style, indicating that many of them are critical or judgmental, and do not believe in giving options. They frequently tell Millennials how to perform tasks in the workplace. As Millennials are sensitive to criticism, predecessors may find it useful to deliver critique prudently. Companies can offer blogs on work-life balance, short videos, and articles acknowledging their achievements. Millennials emerge as Problem Solvers, indicating managerial qualities such as dealing happily with the problems of their team members and finding solutions by accepting the assistance of subordinates and peers. Many organizations have mentoring schemes that help bridge the gap. They should also introduce reverse mentoring schemes in which Millennials can mentor their supervisors in the fields of technology and social media. Although this may contradict traditional workplace practices, it will provide an opportunity for give and take, where new and experienced employees share their knowledge, enhancing both cohorts' understanding, and thereby improving overall communication and collaboration in the workplace.

Despite these significant findings, my study has several limitations and suggestions for future research. First, the data were collected through self-reports, and the possibility of bias cannot be ruled out. Second, communication styles of individuals are not permanent. They change or evolve over time. The study failed to reflect the developmental changes in the cohorts' communication styles with the passage of time. Third, the measurement tool used was framed a long time ago. It needs to be revisited to check whether the variables hold the same significance as they did when the framework was designed. A comparative study of the communication styles of males and females, developmental approaches, and changes in the communication styles over time are some of the areas where future research can focus.

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