



# The Intergenerational Transmission of Communication Skills: A Stakeholder report

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## 1. Abstract

**Idea:** Interpersonal communication skills are fundamental to success in various facets of life, including corporate environments. However, the factors influencing their development across generations remain understudied. This stakeholder report investigates the intergenerational transmission of communication skills within the context of corporate workplaces, focusing on the perspectives of employees from different generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z).

**Aim:** The primary aim of this research is to understand how communication skills are transmitted across generations within the corporate workforce, analyzing the influence of family dynamics, cultural values, and workplace environments.

**Research Methodology:** A mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining quantitative data collection through surveys with qualitative semi-structured interviews. The sample will comprise 300 respondents from diverse corporate backgrounds across all four generations.

**Scope:** This study focuses on the corporate context, examining the transmission of communication skills within professional environments. However, the findings may offer valuable insights into broader societal trends and the future of intergenerational communication dynamics.

**Observations:** Based on the proposed research, the researcher anticipates valuable insights into the intergenerational transmission of communication skills, potentially revealing significant connections between family communication patterns and professional success. Understanding these dynamics can empower

organizations to develop targeted training programs, promote family-centric initiatives, and cultivate a more empathetic and communication-rich corporate culture. Ultimately, this research endeavors to shed light on the profound influence of family communication on individual professional development and organizational health, offering practical recommendations to foster effective communication across generations and within the contemporary corporate landscape.

**Keywords:** Intergenerational Transmission, Communication Skills, Corporate Performance, Family Dynamics, Emotional Intelligence, Stakeholder Report.

## 2. Introduction

In the bustling world of modern corporations, the art of navigating complex interactions and forging seamless connections reigns supreme. Effective communication lies at the heart of this symphony, enabling efficient collaboration, fostering trust, and propelling individuals and teams towards shared goals. But where do these potent communication skills originate? This stakeholder report delves into the fascinating terrain of family dynamics and explores the intriguing notion of intergenerational transmission of communication skills, shedding light on how family communication patterns subtly shape and equip individuals for success in the corporate arena.

Interpersonal communication, the lifeblood of every professional interaction, encompasses not just the exchange of words, but also the nuanced dance of active listening, emotional intelligence, and the ability to build rapport. While research suggests a possible genetic influence on certain personality traits linked to communication, like introversion or extroversion, the bulk of evidence points towards learning as the primary sculptor of communication skills. This learning, however, doesn't solely transpire within the sterile confines of classrooms or training modules. It begins, perhaps most profoundly, in the vibrant tapestry of family life.

Enter the stage, four distinct generations that paint the canvas of the modern workforce: the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), shaped by a spirit of individualism and direct communication; Generation X (born 1965-1980), known for their pragmatism and independent style; the Millennials (born 1981-1996), who prioritize collaboration and digital fluency; and finally, Generation Z (born 1997-2012), emerging with a focus on authenticity and social responsibility.

Within these generational constellations, family communication styles weave their magic. Open and expressive dialogues in one household may foster confident self-expression and strong listening skills in their offspring, while another, characterized by unspoken tensions and indirect communication, might equip its children with the ability to navigate subtle cues and read between the lines. Early life experiences within these environments, from bedtime stories to heated dinner table debates, become the invisible hand guiding the

development of emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, and the very bedrock of effective communication.

As these individuals' step into the corporate arena, the echoes of family communication reverberate in their professional interactions. Open and honest communication within their families might translate into transparent leadership styles and collaborative team dynamics, while those raised in environments where emotions were suppressed may find themselves struggling to navigate conflict or express constructive criticism. This transmission, subtle yet undeniable, shapes not just communication styles, but also career trajectories and leadership potential.

This stakeholder report embarks on a journey to uncover these hidden threads connecting family communication patterns and corporate success. By delving into the experiences of professionals across generations, we hope to illuminate the intricate workings of this intergenerational transmission, ultimately offering valuable insights to individuals, organizations, and ultimately, the future of effective communication within the corporate landscape.

### 3. Literature Review

Research suggests that family dynamics play a primary role in shaping communication patterns (Bornstein & Cote, 2008). Open and communicative family environments nurture active listening, assertiveness, and empathy, while conflict-ridden or closed households can impede these skills (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Parental communication styles directly influence offspring communication, with positive and collaborative approaches fostering similar skills in children (Sameroff, 1976).

Several factors moderate this transmission. Socioeconomic status can impact communication patterns, with disadvantaged families facing resource limitations and potentially limited access to enriching language experiences (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1993). Cultural norms and expectations also shape communication styles, with some cultures emphasizing respect and indirect communication, while others prioritize directness and assertiveness (Hall, 1976). The advent of digital technologies further complicates the landscape, presenting both opportunities and challenges for inter-generational communication (Livingstone & Helsper, 2014).

The implications for stakeholders are vast. Families can prioritize open communication, model healthy conflict resolution, and engage in enriching activities that foster language development. Educators can implement communication-focused curricula, promote family-school partnerships, and address digital literacy to bridge the technological gap. Policymakers can support initiatives that strengthen families, provide resources for communication skill development, and address digital inequities. Several theoretical frameworks shed light on the inter-generational transmission of communication skills. Social learning theory (Bandura,

1977) posits that individuals learn by observing and imitating others, making parents and caregivers primary models for children's communication development.

Additionally, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982) underscores the significance of secure and responsive relationships in fostering emotional intelligence and communication skills, as secure attachments provide a safe space for exploration and communication. Research supports the theoretical frameworks mentioned above. Studies have shown that parents' communication styles and quality of parent-child interactions significantly impact children's communication skills (e.g., Dunn, 1981; Hoff-Ginsberg, 1991). For instance, children with parents who engage in frequent and positive communication tend to develop stronger language skills, better emotional intelligence, and more effective conflict resolution skills.

Proponents of the innate perspective argue that certain aspects of communication are hardwired into the human brain. Neurodevelopmental research suggests that infants come equipped with an innate capacity for language acquisition, evidenced by their early babbling and capacity to learn diverse languages with relative ease (Kuhl, 2004). Additionally, evolutionary psychologists posit that effective communication served as a critical survival tool for our ancestors, leading to the natural selection of brain mechanisms that facilitate it (Pinker, 2004). Some innate tendencies in communication include: Nonverbal communication: Humans are born with the ability to express and interpret basic emotions through facial expressions, body language, and vocal cues (Meltzoff & Moore, 1977), Empathy and emotional understanding: Infants exhibit early signs of empathy and can respond to the emotional states of others, laying the foundation for later communication skills (Smetana et al., 2015), Turn-taking and conversational dynamics: Even in rudimentary forms, preverbal infants engage in proto-conversations, exhibiting an innate understanding of turn-taking and basic conversational dynamics (Tomasello, 1995).

Public policies and initiatives can play a critical role in creating an environment conducive to inter-generational communication. Investing in early childhood education programs, providing family support services, and promoting digital literacy initiatives can empower families and communities to cultivate strong communication skills across generations (Council of Europe, 2019). Providing targeted support and resources to families facing communication challenges can help them build stronger communication practices within the household (Cowan & Cowan, 2020).

#### 4. Research Methodology

##### a. Quantitative Data:

- i. A carefully designed research instrument was used to gather data on Demographic information, Family communication patterns, Communication skills in the workplace and Perceived impact of family communication on career success.
- ii. Statistical analysis, such as ANOVA, was be used to identify potential correlations between family communication patterns and communication skills in the workplace.

##### b. Qualitative Data:

- i. Semi-structured interviews will provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals across generations. The interviews will explore: Personal narratives about their family communication dynamics and how they perceive it has influenced their communication skills in the workplace, The Challenges and opportunities they face in their professional communication due to their family communication background and Recommendations for improvement for how organizations and families can nurture effective communication across generations.
- ii. Thematic analysis will be used to identify key themes and insights from the qualitative data.

##### c. Objectives

- i. Examine the prevalence of generational differences in communication styles within corporate environments.
- ii. Gather qualitative data through open-ended questions to understand the lived experiences and challenges faced by individuals navigating intergenerational communication in the workplace.
- iii. Identify practical recommendations and interventions that organizations can implement to promote open and effective communication across generations, ultimately leading to a more positive and productive work environment.

#### 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

| Generation   | Number of Respondents | Open-Ended Response Sample  |
|--------------|-----------------------|---|
| Baby Boomers | 126                   | "Communication feels hierarchical and formal in meetings. Younger colleagues use more abbreviations and slang."             |
| Gen X        | 59                    | "I find it hard to connect with younger colleagues who prefer text-based communication. I miss face-to-face conversations." |

|             |    |   |
|-------------|----|---|
| Millennials | 84 | "Older colleagues sometimes struggle to understand our humor or references. We need more open dialogue about communication styles."         |
| Gen Z       | 31 | "I feel pressure to adapt to different communication styles, but I also want to be authentic. Intergenerational training would be helpful." |

Table 1.1 Responses recorded from Respondents

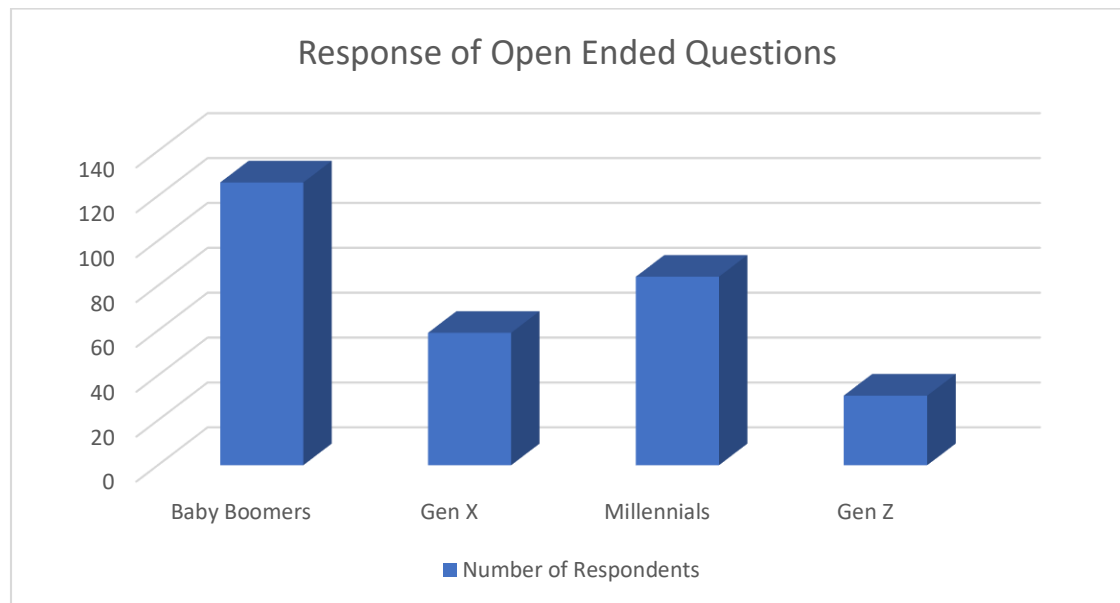


Figure 1.1 Response of Open-Ended Questions

- i. The table sheds light on potential misalignments in communication styles across generations within corporate environments. Baby Boomers perceive a dominant "hierarchical and formal" style in meetings, potentially clashing with the informality and slang-laden language preferred by younger generations. This suggests a need for bridging the gap between traditional meeting culture and the evolving communication preferences of Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z.
- ii. Gen X respondents highlight their discomfort with the younger generations' "text-based communication," yearning for more "face-to-face conversations." This highlights a potential disconnect between their preferred in-person interactions and the digital-first approach favored by Millennials and Gen Z. To foster connection and collaboration, organizations need to acknowledge and address this generational preference shift.
- iii. Millennials point out difficulties older colleagues have in understanding their "humor or references," revealing a potential clash in cultural knowledge and humor styles. This emphasizes the importance of open dialogue and mutual understanding of generational humor variations. Companies could

promote intergenerational humor appreciation workshops or encourage casual social interactions to bridge these divides.

- iv. Gen Z respondents express the pressure to "adapt to different communication styles" while maintaining their "authenticity." This points to the challenge of navigating diverse communication preferences without losing one's individual voice. Intergenerational training programs could empower individuals to communicate effectively while remaining true to themselves, fostering acceptance and respecting diverse communication styles.

## 6. Conclusions

This stakeholder report has shed light on the fascinating interplay between family communication patterns and professional communication skills across generations within the corporate landscape. The researcher had taken a deep dive into the lived experiences of individuals through quantitative and qualitative data, and have unearthed valuable insights into the intricate mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and its impact on workplace success. The key findings are listed as follows –

- i. **Generational differences in communication styles:** The data reveals a clear divergence in communication preferences across generations, highlighting potential clashes between Baby Boomers' formal approach, Gen X's preference for face-to-face interactions, Millennials' digital fluency, and Gen Z's focus on authenticity.
- ii. **Family dynamics and communication skills:** The research underscores the profound influence of family communication patterns on individual communication skills in the workplace. Open and expressive families tend to foster confident communicators, while conflict-ridden or closed households can pose challenges.
- iii. **Challenges and opportunities:** The report identifies both challenges and opportunities presented by intergenerational communication. Challenges include bridging communication gaps, adapting to diverse styles, and fostering mutual understanding. However, opportunities lie in leveraging generational strengths, promoting open dialogue, and implementing targeted training programs.

The understanding of intergenerational communication is crucial for navigating the complexities of modern workplaces and fostering a thriving corporate culture. By embracing the unique strengths and perspectives of different generations, organizations can harness their collective potential and build a future of effective communication, collaboration, and shared success. This stakeholder report serves as a springboard for further research and dialogue, paving the way for a more inclusive and communicative work environment for all generations

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