

Leader-Member Exchange & Its Impact on Relationship Conflict: A Generational Study

Ruchika Yadav & Sushama Chaudhari

One of the most prominent theories that deals with the dyadic relationship between the superior and the subordinate, and has consequences on work performance of the subordinates, is the Leader Member Exchange theory (LMX). Drawing on LMX theory, we examine the relationship between the quality of LMX dyad (superior-subordinate dyadic relationship) and its impact on relationship conflict for Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z employees. We also examine if the said relationship differs for an intergenerational LMX dyad. Scope of the research is limited to examining the relationship between the quality of LMX dyad and relationship conflict from subordinate's perspective. Data were collected from 224 individuals from four generational groups.

Ruchika Yadav (E-mail: ruchikayadav@niapune.org.in) is Research Associate & **Sushama Chaudhari** is Professor (HRM & OB), National Insurance Academy, Pune.

Introduction

In the present fast paced and hyper competitive world, organizations have realized that sustaining in long run requires not just speed, flexibility, and continuous reinvention, but also skilled personnel from diverse background and experiences in order to do better than the competition (Moore, 2010). Demographic diversity in terms of age, race, status, and gender are considered important to ensure inclusion, achieve competitive edge and build reputation of the organization. To attain demographic diversity, organizations are placing employees of diverse background, race, and experience in leadership positions (Singh, Bhullar & Sankaran, 2019). Hence, workplace demographics have undergone drastic change in the 21st century wherein employees belonging to different generational groups are working together from experienced Baby Boomers to the new-bees, Generation Z (Gen Z) who bring lot of fresh and unique perspectives to the table (Chaudhari, Yadav & Rai, 2021). However, there is another side of the story too.

Apart from the known advantages of a multi-generational workforce, it has also been established by the researchers that there are comparatively higher chances of conflict in an age-diverse organization (Stanley, 2010; Kapoor & Solomon, 2011; Hillman, 2014; Zhu, Yang & Bai, 2016; Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020), and more so in an intergenerational superior-subordinate dyad. As the age-diverse employees interact, they form certain perceptions about each other. These perceptions are formed based on the difference in experience, knowledge, values, attitude, perspectives and goals, which pose certain typical challenges for the organizational leaders, managers as well as the HR professionals (Hirsch, 2020). The challenges increase manifolds in case of an intergenerational Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) i.e., when the superior and the subordinate in a dyad belong to different generational groups. Hence understanding the differences and knowing what matters to the members of each generational group is necessary while dealing with intergenerational conflict. Furthermore, research on superior-subordinate dyadic conflict is scarce (Kangas, 2021).

Compared to studies on intragroup relationship conflict, there are very few studies which have explored relationship conflict in the context with the LMX (Stewart, 2010; Tillman, Hood & Richard, 2017), and even fewer which have studied the relationship conflict in intergenerational and intragenerational dyad. Additionally, research in the sphere of LMX has been criticized for accentuating the viewpoint of the superior in the

LMX process (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and need has been identified for a thorough exploration of the subordinate's perspective (Shamir, 2007; Kangas, 2021).

The present study advances the existing body of knowledge by examining the quality of the LMX and its impact on relationship conflict as experienced by members of various generational groups. The study has made certain important contributions. Firstly, we present a proposition which explains how the quality of LMX impacts relationship conflict between the superior and the subordinate. We present and compare this proposition from the point of view of subordinates who belong to four different generations—Baby Boomers (born before 1965), Gen X (born between 1965 and 1980), Gen Y (born between 1981 and 1994), and Gen Z (born after 1995). Secondly, we examine if the quality of LMX differs in the case of an intergenerational dyad i.e., when the superior and the subordinate belong to different generational groups. Finally, we extend the body of knowledge by including the most recent and youngest addition of employees in the workforce, Gen Z, in our study.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Relationship Conflict (RC)

Amongst all the varied and complex relationships within an organization, the most fundamental relationship is that of a superior and the subordinate. The quality and nature of the said relationship can be ascertained through the interpersonal exchange of communication between the

superior and the subordinate, and the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship that stems through the reciprocal exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kangas, 2021).

The LMX theory inspects the dyadic relation between the superior and the subordinate in an interpersonal interface (Stewart, 2010). The theory suggests that the superiors do not follow a consistent style while dealing with the subordinates as they have different relationship with each of the subordinates (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Such relationships strictly vary based on the employment contract with the subordinates and can be categorized as low LMX or “out-group” and high LMX or “in-group”. Low LMX denotes less respect, trust and liking, whereas high LMX denotes mutual trust, respect, obligation, and reciprocal influence with the subordinates (Dansereau, et al., 1975; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden & Maslyn, 1998; DeConinck, 2009).

Liden and Maslyn (1998) identified four key dimensions of the LMX dyad (which consider both personal or social, and, professional or work-related aspects) namely, affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect. *Affect* describes mutual liking between the superior and the subordinate which is primarily based on interpersonal relationship (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). *Loyalty* refers to the extent to which the superior and the subordinate support each other’s actions and character publicly (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). *Contri-*

bution is the perceived amount and quality of work-related tasks which the superior and the subordinate contribute towards common objectives (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). *Professional respect* refers to the extent to which both the superior and the subordinate have built a reputation within as well as outside the organization with respect to their work (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). According to Maslyn and Uhl-Bien (2001), both the superior and subordinate expect different type of exchange from each other. Superiors look for more professional or work-related exchange from the subordinates, whereas subordinates seek out more personal or social exchange. Liden and Maslyn (1998) recognized that the dimensions of affect, loyalty and professional respect are related to personal or social exchange, and contribution is related to professional or work-related exchange.

Superiors look for more professional or work-related exchange from the subordinates, whereas subordinates seek out more personal or social exchange.

Xu, Liu, and Guo (2014) in their research suggested that the superior should always maintain high quality interpersonal relationship (high LMX) with the subordinates because of the support and resource exchange that is expected to happen between the two during work. As such, the high quality LMX is associated with higher job performance, commitment, and job satisfaction (Kangas, 2021), because the high quality LMX subordi-

nates (in-group) get extra tangible and intangible resources from the superiors, from which the out-group subordinates are deprived (Li & Liao, 2014; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). It has also been cited in literature, that the differential treatment of superiors towards in-group and out-group subordinates induces unfavorable feelings leading to envy and conflict (Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). However, the reality is that conflicts are inevitable, and they happen due to incongruence and diversity within the team and the organization. Such diversity can be related either to age and demographics, or the differences in values and attitude.

Conflicts are the perceived incompatibilities between the superior and the subordinate and it usually occurs when the superior and the subordinate perceive that their interests, values, and preferences are incompatible with each other (Jehn, 1995). Conflicts are unavoidable while working in teams within the organization because of the complexity and interdependence of work (Jehn, 1995). According to Zhu et al. (2016) the conflict in a superior-subordinate dyad can be associated with task, relationship, or procedure. *Task conflict* refers to the conflict concerning differing views related to work or task at hand (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). *Relationship conflict* refers to the personal incompatibilities between two people, which is not related to task (Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020). *Procedural conflict* is the conflict related to difference in opinion associated with the processes and procedures for completing a task (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). However, as compared to task

conflict and procedural conflict, relationship conflict is counter-productive, has more severe consequences and is difficult to settle (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Yadav & Chaudhari, 2020) as it stems from difference in values, preferences, personalities, and temperaments (Tillman et al., 2017). Moreover, relationship conflict is allied with several negative employee outcomes like decreased job performance, satisfaction, and commitment, increased turnover intention and stress (Tillman et al., 2017), and has significant impact on the procedures and outcomes within an organization (Jehn, 1995).

Considering the above, we argue that LMX becomes weak when subordinates face interpersonal incompatibilities with the superior. We, therefore, hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): LMX is negatively related to relationship conflict for Baby Boomers.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): LMX is negatively related to relationship conflict for Gen X.

Hypothesis 1c (H1c): LMX is negatively related to relationship conflict for Gen Y.

Hypothesis 1d (H1d): LMX is negatively related to relationship conflict for Gen Z.

Intergenerational Relationship Conflict in LMX

Intergenerational relationship conflict could be either real or perceived. How-

ever, according to the seminal work done by Tajfel and Turner (1985), theorized as the Social Identity Theory, individuals attempt to categorize themselves and others based on the perceived similarities and differences. Deriving from this theory, employees in an organization, also categorize themselves as part of a particular generational group and perceive coherence with the characteristics and behaviors which are generally associated with the other employees belonging to the same generational group and categorize other employees into distinct “out-groups” on the basis of their different and unique characteristics (Urlick et al., 2017). The cognitive categorization of employees into “in-group” and “out-group” based on the generational group to which they belong impacts the intergenerational interactions, thereby leading to conflicts (Dencker, Joshi & Martocchio, 2007; Urlick et al., 2017). Corwin (1969) also theorized that heterogeneity in employees in an organization leads to conflicts. Hence the existence of multigenerational workforce is likely to augment interpersonal relationship conflicts.

One of the major types of interpersonal relationships conflict at workplace, as identified by Rahim, Antonioni, and Psenicka (2001), is the conflict between the superior and the subordinate, which occurs when both the superior and the subordinate become aware of the disagreements and clashes between them. As such, the clashes and disagreements will increase manifolds in case of intergenerational LMX dyad i.e., when the superior and the subordinate in the dyad belong to different generational

Subordinates feel most comfortable when they work with individuals of their own age-group.

groups. Andrea, Gabriella, and Timea (2016) in their study postulated that subordinates feel most comfortable when they work with individuals of their own age-group. Similarly, Standifer et al. (2013) theorized that there is significant positive relationship between the age group of an individual and his preference to work with individuals of the same age group. Hence it can be derived that subordinates belonging to a particular generational group will gel well with the superior who belongs to the same generational group as they will feel more comfortable in expressing and exchanging views, thereby, reducing the chances of discontentment and conflicts. Considering the above, we argue that relationship conflicts increase in case of intergenerational LMX dyadic relationships wherein the superior and the subordinate belong to different generational groups, rather than intragenerational LMX dyad wherein they belong to the same generational group. We therefore hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2a (H2a): Intergenerational LMX dyad will positively impact the relationship conflict.

Hypothesis 2b (H2b): Intragenerational LMX dyad will negatively impact the relationship conflict.

Sample

The present study is focused on Indian employees and data were collected

from working professionals belonging to four generational groups- Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z. The sample was selected based on purposive and snowball sampling method. The online survey questionnaire was shared with 417 individuals and completed anonymous responses were received from 263 respondents (resulting in response rate of 63.07%). The respondents included 56 Baby Boomers, 62 Gen X, 74 Gen Y, and 71 Gen Z. The minimum number of responses were received from Baby Boomer respondents, i.e. 56. Responses from Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z respondents were randomized in excel and equal sample sizes were obtained in all the four groups for data analysis. Hence the final data

for analysis included 56 responses from respondents of each generational group under the study, and the final number was 224. Gender data indicated that 69.64% of the final respondents were males and 30.36% were females. 35.28% of total respondents were employed in public sector, 59.37% in private sector, and 5.35% respondents indicated their sector of employment as 'other'. The respondents comprised those working at top level management, middle level management and lower/junior level management. Most of the respondents belonged to middle level management (46.87%), followed by lower/junior level (31.25%) and top level (21.88%). Generational group wise demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Generational Group Wise Demographic Details (%)

	Demographic	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Gender	Male	77	70	66	66
	Female	23	30	34	34
Sector of Employment	Public sector	64	13	39	25
	Private Sector	29	79	59	71
	Other	7	9	2	4
Level in Organizational Hierarchy	Top level management	41	34	11	2
	Middle level management	48	61	55	23
	Lower/junior level management	11	5	34	75

Sampling adequacy was adjudged by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test, whose statistical value varies between 0 and 1. Values between 0.8 and 0.9 are great, and values above 0.9 are superb (Field, 2009). KMO value for the data was 0.897, indicating adequate sample size. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is also significant with $p=.000$, which is less than .005 at 95 per cent confidence level (Table 2).

Table 2 KMO & Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.897
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx.	2913.293
	Chi-Square	
	Df	153
	Sig.	.000

Measures

The primary variables of study were Leader-Member Exchange and Relationship Conflict for which the already es-

established standardized scales were used to measure the variables.

Leader-Member Exchange Scale: Items for the scale were adapted from Leader-Member Exchange scale developed by Liden and Maslyn (1998). The scale included 10-items which measured affect, loyalty, contribution, and professional respect dimensions of the superior-subordinate relationship. Example of items in the scale are “I like my superior very much as a person”, “My superior would defend me to others in the organization if I made an honest mistake”. The items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 5-strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree.

Relationship Conflict Scale: Items for the scale were adapted from The Workplace Interpersonal Conflict Scale (WICS) by Wright et al. (2017). The scale included 8-items which apprehended the sensitivities of interpersonal conflict between the superior and the subordinate. Example of items in the scale are “How often do you feel like you were treated unfairly by your superior?”, “How often have you been shown lack of respect by your superior?” The items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 5-always to 1-never.

Reliability & Validity

Cronbach’s Alpha, which is the most common measure of internal consistency and reliability of the survey instrument, was calculated in SPSS Version 24. The commonly acceptable level for Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.70 (Ursachi, Horodnic & Zait,

2015; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Overall Cronbach’s Alpha value for the survey instrument came out to be 0.708, which indicates that the items in the scale have high internal consistency. Cronbach’s Alpha value for Leader-Member Exchange scale and Relationship Conflict scale came out to be 0.911 and 0.932 respectively (Table 3).

Table 3 Reliability Statistics

Measure	Cronbach’s Alpha	No. of Items
Overall	0.708	18
Vertical Dyad	0.911	10
Relationship Conflict	0.932	8

The construct validity is measured by Average Variance Extracted, which came out at acceptable levels (Table 4). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the amount of variance that is captured by a construct versus the amount of variance captured due to measurement error (Santos & Cirillo, 2021). AVE value above 0.5 is acceptable (Hair et al., 2010), and it is calculated by the following formula:

$$AVE = \frac{\sum \lambda^2}{N}$$

AVE = Average Variance Extracted

λ = Standardised Factor Loading

N = Number of items

(Ghadi et al., 2012)

Table 4 Average Variance Extracted

Measure	AVE	No. of Items
Overall	0.589	18
Vertical Dyad	0.545	10
Relationship Conflict	0.643	8

Data Analyses & Results

Data was analyzed in SPSS version 24 through descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression. Descriptive statis-

tics (mean, standard deviation and variance) is given in Table 5. Correlation values are produced in Table 6. Regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesis.

Table 5. Generational Group wise Mean, Standard Deviation & Variance

	LMX				Relationship Conflict			
	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Mean	4.08	3.86	3.70	3.76	2.21	2.40	2.20	2.46
SD	0.892	0.995	1.002	1.087	1.084	1.133	0.958	1.222
Variance	0.795	0.991	1.005	1.182	1.174	1.283	0.918	1.494

Table 6 Correlations

			LMX	RC
Spearman's rho	LMX	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.505**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	224	224
	RC	Correlation Coefficient	-.505**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	224	224

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Spearman's correlation test was conducted to measure the strength and direction of relationship between the two variables. The value of correlation ranges between -1 and +1, wherein -1 indicates strong negative correlation and +1 indicates strong positive correlation between the variables (Patrick, 2018). The above table indicates that there is significant negative correlation between LMX and Relationship Conflict ($r = -.505$).

There is significant negative correlation between LMX and Relationship Conflict.

Regression analysis explains the degree of relationship between dependent and independent variable (Schneider,

Hommel & Blettner, 2010). The regression coefficient (β) indicates the contribution of independent variable towards explaining the dependent variable (Schneider et al., 2010). Therefore, both Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using linear regression analysis.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that LMX quality is negatively related to relationship conflict for Baby Boomers (H1a), Gen X (H1b), Gen Y (H1c), and Gen Z (H1d). As can be seen in Table 7, LMX is negatively related to relationship conflict, but it is not significant, for Baby Boomers ($\beta = -.251$, ns). However, LMX is significantly and negatively related to relationship conflict for Gen X ($\beta = -.321$, $p < .05$) Gen Y ($\beta = -.676$, $p < .05$) and

Table 7 Regression Analysis on Relationship Between LMX & RC

Baby Boomers						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.571	.721		4.951	.000
	LMX	-.333	.175	-.251	-1.906	.062

a. Dependent Variable: RC

Gen X						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.993	.649		6.150	.000
	LMX	-.411	.165	-.321	-2.492	.016

a. Dependent Variable: RC

Gen Y						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	4.720	.381		12.401	.000
	LMX	-.679	.101	-.676	-6.733	.000

a. Dependent Variable: RC

Gen Z						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.300	.544		9.748	.000
	LMX	-.754	.141	-.587	-5.333	.000

a. Dependent Variable: RC

Gen Z ($\beta = -.587, p < .05$). Hence hypothesis 1a is rejected, and hypotheses 1b, 1c and 1d are accepted.

The survey instrument for data collection included an item which captured the birth year category of the respondent and the birth year category of the superior of the respondent. The response for the item

helped in identifying whether the respondent and his/her immediate superior belonged to same generational group (intragenerational) or different generational group (intergenerational). Table 8 gives the details of generational groups to which the superior of the respondents belonged. e.g., out of 56 Baby Boomers respondents, superior of 33 respondents belonged to the

Table 8 Generational Group of Superiors of the Respondents

Subordinate =>	Baby Boomers (BB)				Gen X				Gen Y				Gen Z			
Superior =>	BB	X	Y	Z	BB	X	Y	Z	BB	X	Y	Z	BB	X	Y	Z
	33	21	2	-	15	39	2	-	8	35	13	-	-	16	36	4
Total =>	56				56				56				56			

same generational group (i.e., Baby Boomers), superior of 21 respondents belonged to Gen X category, and superior of 2 respondents belonged to Gen Y category.

Table 9 and 10 present the correlation and regression values of the relationship between LMX and Relationship Conflict in intergenerational and intragenerational LMX. Intergenerational LMX is one where the superior and the subordinate belong the different generational groups, while in intragenerational LMX, the superior and the subordinate belong to the same generational group.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that intergenerational LMX dyad will positively impact the relationship conflict (H2a) and intragenerational LMX dyad will negatively impact the relationship conflict (H2b). As can be seen in Table 9 and 10, LMX is significantly and negatively related to relationship conflict for intergenerational dyad ($\beta = -.589, p < .01$). LMX is significantly and negatively related to relationship conflict for intragenerational dyad ($\beta = -.282, p < .05$). Hence hypothesis 2a is rejected and 2b is accepted.

Table 9. Correlations

			Intergenerational		Intragenerational	
			LMX	RC	LMX	RC
Spearman's rho	LMX	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.603*	1.000	-.379**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.	.000
		N	135	135	89	89
RC	RC	Correlation Coefficient	-.603**	1.000	-.379**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.
		N	135	135	89	89

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion & Conclusion

As the age diversity in an organization increases, it becomes important to understand the effects of multigenerational workforce, teams and dyads (Audenaer & Bos-Nehles, 2019). Hence, in this research we examined the relationship between the quality of LMX dyad

(superior-subordinate dyadic relationship) and its impact on relationship conflict for employees belonging to four different generational groups- Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z. We also examined if the said relationship between LMX and relationship conflict differs in the case of an intergenerational and intragenerational LMX dyad. The results of cor-

Table 10. Regression Analysis of Intergenerational and Intragenerational LMX & RC

Intergenerational					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T
1	(Constant)	4.739	.299		15.842
	LMX	-.653	.078	-.589	-8.414

a. Dependent Variable: RC

Intragenerational					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T
1	(Constant)	3.994	.592		6.746
	LMX	-.403	.147	-.282	-2.741

a. Dependent Variable: RC

relation and regression analysis indicated significant relationship between the variables.

If the superior-subordinate relationship is weak, the interpersonal incompatibilities between Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z subordinates and their superior increase.

The results indicated that the quality of LMX dyad is negatively related to relationship conflict for Gen X ($\beta = -.321$, $p < .05$), Gen Y ($\beta = -.676$, $p < .05$), and Gen Z ($\beta = -.587$, $p < .05$) employees, which shows that if the superior-subordinate relationship is weak, the interpersonal incompatibilities between Gen X, Gen Y and Gen Z subordinates and their superior increase. When the superior-subordinate relationship is strong, the interpersonal incompatibilities between the superior and the subordinate decrease. The results are compatible with the find-

ings of previous research (Testa, 2002; Tulgan, 2004). However, for subordinates belonging to Baby Boomer category, the said relationship between the quality of LMX dyad and relationship conflict was insignificant ($\beta = -.251$, ns). Baby Boomers who are born before 1965, would be of the age 57 years and above as in 2021. Considering the stipulated age of retirement in India as 60 years, many Baby Boomer employees would have been retired as of now, and others would be on the verge of retirement. Hence, the plausible reason for insignificant relationship between the quality of LMX dyad and relationship conflict of Baby Boomers with their superiors could be that the Baby Boomer subordinates become indifferent about the quality of relationship with the superior when they are nearing retirement and therefore it doesn't matter to them. Baby Boomers identify more with the organization as compared to immediate superior as superiors have limited role during this career stage (retirement).

If the superior and the subordinate belong to the same generational group, the dyadic relation between them would be strong and the interpersonal incompatibilities will be less.

It was also hypothesized that intergenerational LMX dyad will positively impact relationship conflict i.e., if the superior and the subordinate belonged to the different generational groups, quality of LMX will be low and the interpersonal incompatibilities will increase. However, the results of the study did not support this. Conversely, the results of the study identified that intragenerational LMX dyad negatively impacts the relationship conflict, which means that if the superior and the subordinate belong to the same generational group, the dyadic relation between them would be strong and the interpersonal incompatibilities will be less. The finding is supported by some of the earlier research. Dencker et al. (2007) established in their research that “age” is one of the prominent reasons for categorization of employees into “in-group” and “out-group”, which leads to intergenerational conflict. Age inverse dyadic relationships carry negative repercussions which may even hamper organization’s performance. Larger the age difference, more frequent will be the negative emotions like anger, fright, disgust, and conflict. However, if the age gap is less and both the superior and the subordinate belong to the same generational group, then subordinates are likely to experience lesser negative emotions (Kunze & Mengesm, 2017). Andrea et

al. (2016) in their study postulated that people feel most comfortable when they work with individuals of their own age-group. Similarly, Standifer et al. (2013) also theorized that there is significant positive relationship between the age group of an individual and his preference to work with individuals of the same age group. Therefore, when individuals work with superiors who belong to the same generational group, the LMX dyad is strong and relationship conflicts are less. However, Levenson and Deal (2016) had contradictory findings in their study. They established that conflicts have nothing to do with the generational group, but they occur based on the difference in life stage and career stage to which an individual belongs.

Implications of the Study

The research has pertinent practical implications for the superiors who intent to establish high quality relationship with their subordinates. Since superiors must get the work done from the subordinates, it is important for them to understand the consequences of the quality of relationship they establish with their subordinates. According to Frone (2000), the dyadic conflict between the superior and the subordinate can lead to problems of job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention. On the contrary, high quality LMX dyad will ensure higher levels of productivity, greater job satisfaction and innovation (Stephenson, 2017). A congenial atmosphere and high quality LMX will ensure that the subordinates are comfortable and effective while working, and conflicts are minimized

(Gerstner & Day, 1997; Kangas, 2021). Hence the findings of the study will help organizational leaders and HR professionals to realize the benefits of an age-diverse workforce by reassessment of the superior-subordinate dyadic relations. It will also support better team formation and better understanding of a multi-generational workforce.

Limitations & Scope for Future Research

The current study focusses on examining the quality of LMX dyad and its impact on relationship conflict. In the study, only the subordinate's perspective is considered, superior's point of view in determining the quality of the LMX dyad is not considered and no data was collected from the superiors. Further research can consider studying the quality of LMX dyad based on responses from both the members of the dyad. Secondly, the research is based on the data of pilot study, hence the results are based on a small sample size of 224 respondents (which includes 56 responses from each of the four generations of employees under consideration- Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z). Further studies can include a larger sample size to ensure generalizability of results.

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