Intergenerational communication in the workplace:

A Critical Review

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Abstract

As we have entered the 21st century, the demographics of the workplace now consists of four distinct generations (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y). As a result, intergenerational communication is becoming an increasing timely issue that is gaining interest for both academics and business practitioners. However, the existing empirical studies about intergenerational communication within the workplace are often understudied, compared with other factors of intergenerational issues, such as gender, and sex. Guided by the research questions: what is known from the management and communication literature about intergenerational communication in the workplace? And, what are the communication differences between different generations? The aim of this study is to synthesize the present empirical literature on intergenerational communication in the workplace, to identify various themes; as well as to raise recommendations for future studies and practitioners. From an analysis of 32 studies six key themes emerged: *1) communication technology, 2) dynamics of relationships, 3) health and well-being, 4) intergenerational communication differences and preferences, 5) attitudes and values, 6) learning and literacy*. My systematic review contributes to the development and consolidation of the theory of intergenerational communication, to be more specific, unlike other studies which focused on family context, this dissertation emphasised the workplace context, and also specified the importance of future research areas and application in a more qualitative approach.

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgement), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Signature: Date: 24/06/2021

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In the recent past, demographics in the workplace have changed significantly (Roberson, 2012). The workplace now consists of four different generations working next to each other in many organisations (Freytag & Rauscher, 2017). As a result, issues related to intergenerational communication at work have risen in importance for employees, managers, organisations, and researchers (Sanner-Stiehr & Vandermause, 2017). On one hand, good intergenerational communication can create innovation and increase productivity for organisations (Hummert, 2013). However, on the other hand, poor interactions can lead to adverse consequences such as conflict and misunderstanding (Hummert, 2013). As a result, it is essential to understand and identify methods to better manage and modify the shift to a multi-generational workplace (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Strauss and Howe (1991) proposed a theoretical concept of how to distinguish different generational cohorts in the workplace. Still, the topic of intergenerational communication remains understudied in academia. There is scarce empirical research on intergenerational communication in the workplace (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Much of the intergenerational communication research takes place in the family context (Shaw, 2013). Where research on intergenerational communication in the context of family has been conducted, results are inconclusive and at times result contradictory to the general concept of individuals (Macky et al., 2008; Parry & Urwin, 2011). There are two main schools of thought . One supports a significant difference in communication among

generations; the other finds no substantial differences (see Hart, 2006; Jurkiewicz, 2000; Wong et al., 2008).

Intergenerational communication is one of the influencing factors of intergenerational relationship (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Compared to other studies of the factors such as gender and sex, the communication research is less developed (Shore et al., 2009). My review is focused on integenrational communication in the workplace and its effect on relationships amongst different generational cohorts.

This dissertation starts by presenting a contextual background to my systematic review of intergenerational communication. I then briefly review key terms in intergenerational communication research, including 'generations', 'communication', and 'intergenerational communication'. I describe the methods I applied in my systematic review before presenting the results based on the themes that emerged via thematic analysis. I discuss each theme and conclude by making suggestions for future research, implications, limitations, and recommendations related to the findings.

1.1 Background of the review

To the best of my knowledge, no systematic literature search and review has been done on intergenerational communication in the workplace. Extant literature reviews are narrative in nature (e.g., Law et al., 2019; Van Dyke et al., 2009). Narrative reviews heavily rely on the interpretation of the researchers (Cook et al., 1997). Narrative reviews generally fail to fulfil essential requirements that might help limit bias, for example, they typically lack defined criteria for article selection and no evaluation of selected papers for validity (Cook et al., 1997). On the other hand, a systematic review

has greater transparency, following with a duplicable review process for other researchers to assess the validity (Mulrow, 1994). In addition, my systematic review thematically synthesises primary studies to show the current state of research on intergenerational research at work.

The purpose of my systematic literature search and review is to:

a. Identify and examine previous empirical research on intergenerational communication in the workplace.

b. Synthesise empirical evidence on intergenerational communication under relevant themes.

c. Make recommendations for future research on intergenerational communication in the workplace.

The systematic literature search and review will be guided by the following questions:

a. What is known from management and communication literature about intergenerational communication in the workplace?

b. How do different generations communicate in the workplace?

c. What barriers do different generations have when they communicate in the workplace?

The contributions of my systematic review approach to the literature are: firstly, it explicitly emphasised intergenerational communication in the context of the workplace, and excluded literature reviews. In essence, there are reviews focused on different influential factors of intergenerational communication such as, personality

(Twenge & Campbell, 2008), work values and attitudes (Parry & Urwin, 2011), and general findings (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Although comprehensive, authors did not adopt a systematic approach to review research on intergenerational communication at work. As stated previously, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first review on intergenerational communication at work that uses a systematic literature search. My review also contributes to the body of knowledge by adding a systematic lens to the systematic search. Finally, this review also included articles using qualitative methodologies that provides additional perspectives to intergenerational communication research. .

1.2 Generations

One issue with conducting intergenerational research is to define and categorise different generations appropriately. There are vary views to determine generations from the lens within management (Dencker et al., 2008). For example, an early theory of definning generations (Mannheim, 1952) described a generation as people who share both a specific birth year and a collection of views. This is based on historical or social phenomena that developed during their formation years. According to Schuman and Scott (1989), people in the same generational cohort share common experiences that aid them in the formation of 'collective memory'. This memory influences their future beliefs, behaviours, and characteristics. This concept is also supported by Kelan (2014) and suggests that the earlier experiences they have encountered created the unique and distinguished characteristics between one generation and another.

The sociological concept of generations contrasts with a more common approach to researching generations in contemporary management literature. In these scientific works, it is a usual practise to designate generations based on standardised age-based groups (Joshi et al., 2011)—first, setting cut-off points of birth dates, and then assessing whether each group differs in result (values, attitudes, behaviours). For example, by using a specific birth date and then testing if there are any differences in beliefs, behaviours, and characteristics. Unlike Mannheim's concept, which seeks to identify generational interactions to categorise generations, the age-based generations categorisation theory focuses more on the impacts of an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviours (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). The age-based approach also indicates the impact of individuals on the values and attitudes that are similar amongst people of the same generation, i.e., born at the same period of time (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Recent organisational researchers extend on the age-based classification of generation in response to the statement that generations are more complex and multi-dimensional than a biological age-based definition would imply (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005). Joshi et al. (2010), for example, define generation in organisations as a group of people who share a common experience throughout a certain time period (for example, organisational entry). They argue that, while external influences such as formative and life cycle experience may shape generations, organisational factors such as successive admission into companies can also impact generations. In this perspective, a generation is a group of people who join an organisation and go through orientation and training at the same time.

For this review, I will use the biological age-based concept to categorise generations for the process of my article's selections (e.g., Howe & Strauss, 2009; Lyons, 2003; Yu & Miller, 2005) (see Figure 1 for the cohorts' groups). Despite the sociological understanding of generation, the biological age-based generation categorisation satisfies the purpose of forming generational cohorts (Kelan, 2014). I have chosen the age-based concept to define generations because it is the most common and pragmatic way to better facilitates my review of the empirical evidence (Howe & Strauss, 2009). It is clearer than the sociological concept classification with its greater focus on past experiences.

Traditionalists 1925-1944	Baby Boomers 1945-1964
Generation X 1965-1979	Generation Y 1980-2000

Figure 1 *Generational Categorisation and Their Birth Years*

The previous section demonstrated the theory of biological age-based categorisation of generational cohorts. It is now necessary to look more details into them. Traditionalists (born between 1925 and 1944) grew up between the Great Depression and WWII. Their characteristics are associated with experiences from the Great Depression, and they are often described as being patriotic. They are very loyal employees and enjoy promotions and recognition from work (Dimock, 2019). Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1964) grew up during the Civil Rights Movement and

the Cold War. They believe in following rules. Their main characteristics are experimental and individualism (Dimock, 2019). Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) are the generation that grew up with the development of technology. They are independent and self-reliant. They believe in flexibility and freedom at work and value open communication regardless of position or title (Dimock, 2019). Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) grew up with computers, cell phones, the internet, etc. Their main characteristics are ambition and optimism. They believe 'work to live' rather than 'living to work' (Dimock, 2019).

1.3 Communication

This section reviews the forms of communication, communication power distance, models of communication. Communication is the mean of exchanging ideas, information, and messages with others (Sanchez & Guo, 2005). Forms of communication include verbal communication (speaking), nonverbal communication (body language and facial expressions), and digital communication (phone calls) (Sanchez & Guo, 2005).

Early communication theory indicates that different generational cohorts may face misunderstandings and conflicts caused by power distance (Hofstede, 2001). According to Fock et al. (2013), power distance between different aged employees is a vital result of poor communication in organisations. Power distance is the level of inequity among employees in various roles of authority.

Over time, models of communication have developed. The way different generations communicate in the workplace now has evolved due to the level of their

education and professional growth (Hofstede, 2001). Early communication models focused on senders only, which suggested that the message's meaning would be understood if it was fully received (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Berlo (1960) developed a communication model which emphasised the sender's and receiver's relationship. This indicates that the more developed the participants' communication knowledge and ability, the more successfully the message would be received. The most recent communication model focused more on the sharing media (Burton, 2008). In addition, these communication engagements and the emphasis of the current communication model focus on individual message receivers, and these disparities in communication styles and tactics may jeopardise both trust and productive dialogues.

Communication is essential in business for both employers and employees. The ability to convey messages correctly through communication is vital and can build trust between each participant (Glass, 2007). According to Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), communication may affect team and organisational performance directly or indirectly, and a range of individual characteristics during communication influence relationships in the workplace, affecting employees' work satisfaction and productivity. These concerns focus on the ability of younger employees to establish productive working relationships with older employees and to improve organisational performance (McGuire et al., 2007). For example, younger employees' open communication expectations may lead older employees feel disrespected.

1.4 Intergenerational communication

Intergenerational communication research draws support from social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and communication accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991). According to communication accommodation theory, people would adjust or accommodate their speech patterns and gestures to interact with others (Giles et al., 1991). It is the strategies people employ when they believe they are communicating with people who do not belong to their social group (Giles et al., 1991). These methods or strategies of communication are frequently based on preconceptions. Later on, this was examined also by Giles et al. (1991) with the basis to explain "the social cognitive processes mediating individuals' perceptions of the environment and their communicative behaviours. Social identity theory refers to generational cohorts are divided into different social groups, and within that groups, communication differs (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to social identity theory, people are social beings that divide society into groups and view themselves as belonging to or distinct from those social categories (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). One method of dividing society into groups is age (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Age categorisation is rather unique in that, unlike many other social categories such as race or gender, a person remains connected with that category throughout the majority of his or her life. With the passage of time, a person moves with age from a (young) category to a different category (middle age, or old) (Hummert et al., 1994). The individual's identity as a member of a specific age cohort serves as the foundation for both communication and social categorization (Hogg & Terry, 2001).

The communication predicament of aging (CPA) model was developed on the basis of communication accommodation theory to underline the negative effect of age stereotypes on intergenerational communication (Ryan et al., 1986). For example, a young person may accommodate the verbal or non-verbal language when communicating with an older person. However, modification of language or speech may result in over-accommodations inappropriate for the older person. Then the receiver may feel dissatisfied and give a negative response.

Research on intergenerational communication has primarily focused on either the social or family context. McCann and Giles (2006) are a notable exception. In their study, young bankers in Thailand and the U.S. participants were completed the 'Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Commutation' questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to rate the perceptions of both peer and intergenerational communication. Results indicated that Thai bankers are more non-accommodative in intergenerational communication than the American bankers. Also, older bankers were more non-accommodative than younger bankers in both countries.

Chapter 2 Research Design

2.1 Method

2.1.1 Systematic review

A systematic review is a method of collating research using replicable methods to synthesise knowledge on a specific topic (Carney & Geddes, 2002). A systematic review aims to identify, select, compare, contrast, and integrate published research on a particular topic (Gough et al., 2017). It is often limited to a specific time frame, and the methods used to conduct the review are clearly described and reported for replicability (Grant & Booth, 2009). Systematic reviews are used in various disciplines, including management (Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2015), and health (Thorpe & Holt, 2005). In addition, a well-executed systematic literature review can contribute to theory and provide a framework for future research (Thorpe & Holt, 2005).

Although researchers have conducted primary studies on intergenerational communication (e.g., Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2015; Law et al., 2019), a systematic literature search and review is yet to be conducted.

2.1.2 Identification of research protocol and questions

I used a search protocol recommended by researchers with relevant expertise (Wright et al., 2007;Grant & Booth, 2009). This research protocol has been used in other literature reviews in health (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), hospitality and tourism (Gomezelj, 2016), and management (Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2015). The current literature review was guided by the following research questions and   Intergenerational

communication in the workplace was the focus of this literature review and was the basic search term.

    a. What is known from management and communication literature about intergenerational communication in the workplace?

    b. How do different generations communicate in the workplace?

    c. What barriers do different generations have when they communicate in the workplace?

I used the following process to conduct my systematic literature review: 1) Electronic database search using keywords and terms. 2) Literature selection by applying inclusion and exclusion criteria. 3) Quality assessment by applying journal metrics. 4) Data charting through an annotated bibliography. 5) Theme identification by thematic analysis.

2.1.3 Searching strategy: keywords and terms

In a systematic review, the search parameters of the literature search must be carefully considered and executed to capture relevant studies (Levac, et al., 2010). The strategy is to search the keywords related to the research topic and to set the time period for peer-reviewed publications in electronic databases. The keywords used in my search are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Keywords for searching

Keywords used in searching

Intergenerational communication

Workplace communication

Inter-group communication

Generational communication

I used the following databases to search for relevant articles: EBSCOhost, Emerald, Full-text, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. Management and communication articles from reputable scholarly journals can be accessed through the above-mentioned databases. I selected the above mentioned databases because they have options for limiting searches to specific criteria. I present the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the next section.

2.1.4 Literature selection: inclusion and exclusion criteria

For my review, I created a set of criteria for both inclusion and exclusion. The studies must: 1) be in the English language, 2) be published in a peer-reviewed journal (this systematic review does not include book chapters, conference materials, theses, and dissertation papers), 3) be empirical studies that deal with data extraction of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodology reviews and literature reviews were excluded from my review, 4) be articles that focus on intergenerational communication differences between more than one generational cohort in the workplace as the main topic, for example, topics on intergenerational communication in the workplace or multi-generational communication in the workplace (see Table 2 for inclusion and exclusion criteria).

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Written in English language
	Scholarly peer-reviewed articles
	Examined more than one generation
	Focus on the context of workplace
Exclusion Criteria	Book or book chapters, literature reviews, conference materials, theses, or dissertation papers

2.1.5 Identification of relevant literature

The systematic search was conducted on the 10th of October 2020, and 2,165 articles were retrieved from the four electronic databases and imported into EndNote (X9). After I removed duplicates (n=365), I screened 1,800 articles based on the titles and abstracts. I removed 1,735 articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria (reasons for exclusion are presented in figure 2 below).

2.1.6 Quality assessment

I carried out a quality assessment by screening the potentially relevant articles (n=65). This process reduced the sample articles by considering 1) their 2020 Journal Impact Factor (JIF), and 2) the 2019 Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List. Journal rankings are used extensively by researchers to measure journal article quality (Royle et al., 2013). I obtained the journal impact factor (JIF)

indices from Clarivate's (2020) journal citation report. I retrieved the ABDC list from the Australian Business Deans Council website. The quality assessment process resulted in 32 articles in total to be included in my review.

Although the ABDC Journal Quality List is produced by a group of editors and professional experts, the JIF is derived from citations in published work. Using the ABDC Journal Quality List and the JIF to assess quality contributes to the robustness of my systematic literature review.

In addition, not many constrains were set for the JIF number on the selected articles, but it needed to have a JIF score to meet the inclusion requirement. The minimum requirement for the ABDC ranking was set to be at least C to be included in the review.

After assessing for journal quality, 32 peer-reviewed articles met my inclusion and exclusion criteria and were included in the systematic literature review. A diagram detailing the literature search process is presented in Figure 2.
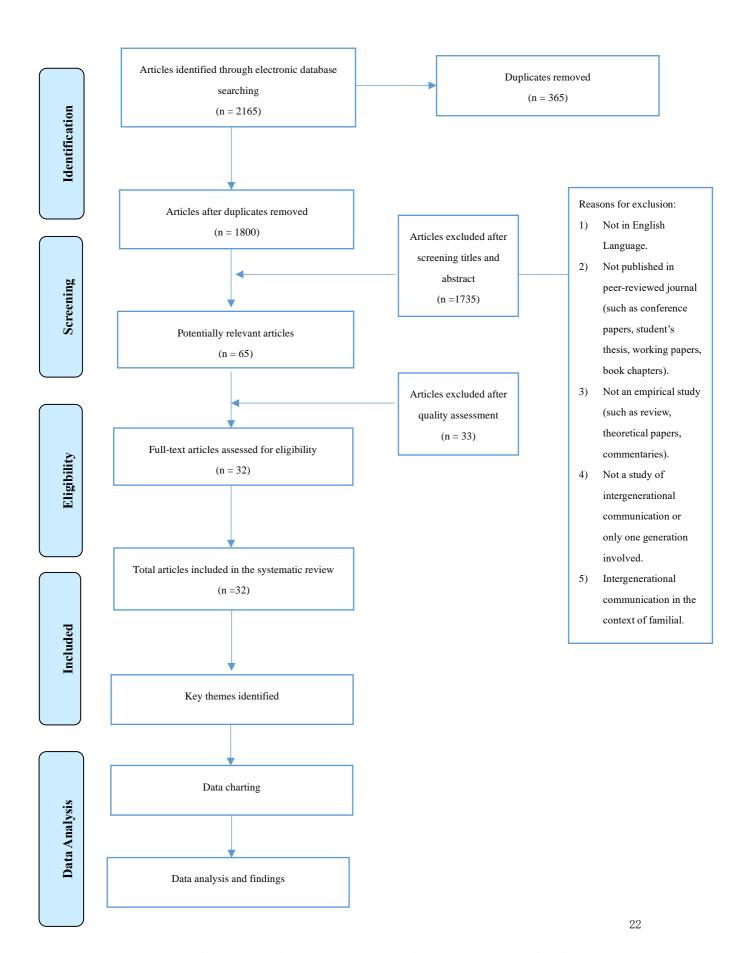
```
┌─────────────────┐
│                 │  Identification
│  Articles identified through electronic database          Duplicates removed
│  searching                                                (n = 365)
│  (n = 2165)
│
│  Screening
│
│  Articles after duplicates removed      Articles excluded after    Reasons for exclusion:
│  (n = 1800)                             screening titles and        1)  Not in English
│                                         abstract                        Language.
│  Potentially relevant articles          (n =1735)                   2)  Not published in
│  (n = 65)                                                               peer-reviewed journal
│                                                                         (such as conference
│  Eligibility                            Articles excluded after         papers, student's
│                                         quality assessment              thesis, working papers,
│  Full-text articles assessed for        (n = 33)                        book chapters).
│  eligibility                                                        3)  Not an empirical study
│  (n = 32)                                                               (such as review,
│                                                                         theoretical papers,
│  Total articles included in the systematic review                      commentaries).
│  (n =32)                                                            4)  Not a study of
│                                                                         intergenerational
│  Included                                                               communication or
│                                                                         only one generation
│  Key themes identified                                                  involved.
│                                                                     5)  Intergenerational
│                                                                         communication in the
│                                                                         context of familial.
│  Data Analysis
│
│  Data charting
│
│  Data analysis and findings
└─────────────────┘
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Figure 2 Reviewed articles selection process, resulting in 32 selected

2.1.7 Charting data

Data charting was conducted on the 32 articles that met the inclusion criteria (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Data charting is a process to extract data in an organised format (Tranfield et al., 2003). Data charting is also a process that permits a researcher to analyse the themes systematically and transparently (Ritchie et al., 2014). Themes are patterns that at a minimum, describe and organise possible observations and, at a maximum, interpret aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). This process involves categorising and synthesising key themes to interpret the data. This includes sample characteristics, methods, and findings (Arksey & O' Malley, 2005). This systematic review used a spreadsheet to chart data.

2.1.8 Key themes identified

The charting data, found in appendix 1, provided an insight into the themes that appeared in each study. The categorised information listed in appendix 1 included author, date, country of origin, method, purpose, findings, and quality assessment. In the process of synthesising the extracted studies, I identified six themes that covered the state of intergenerational research in the workplace (See Table 3). The themes were: 1) *Technology* (n=3)—the intergenerational communication preferences in terms of technology used, 2) *Dynamics of relationships* (n=5)—the impact of intergenerational communication on relationships between different employees in the workplace, 3) *Health and Well-being* (n=6)—the health and well-being of employees when they conducted intergenerational communication with each other, 4) *Intergenerational communication differences and preferences* (=12)—the different communication methods between generational cohorts and their preferences when choosing

communication media, and barriers of intergenerational communication, 5) *Attitudes and Values* (n=4)—the influence of intergenerational communication on employees' attitudes and values towards job satisfaction, employee engagement, organisational commitment, and work certainty 6) *Learning and Literacy* (n=2)—the willingness of employees to learn and adapt to the differences and similarities of intergenerational communication.

Table 2

Key Themes Synthesised in this Systematic Literature Review

Themes	Count
Intergenerational Communication Differences and Preferences	12
Intergenerational Communication Technology	3
Dynamics of Relationships	5
Health and Well-being	6
Attitudes and Values	4
Learning and Literacy	2

2.2 Validity

Bias is of major concern when conducting a systematic literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009). Bias is defined as any inclination that inhibits an issue from being considered objectively (Wright et al., 2007). Bias is defined in research as "systematic inaccuracy induced into sampling or testing by selecting or promoting one result or answer over others." Bias can arise at any stage of the research process, including study design and data collecting, as well as data analysis and publishing (Wright et al., 2007). Bias is not a binary variable. Bias interpretation cannot be reduced to a simple question:

is bias present or not? Instead, evaluators of the literature must examine how much bias was avoided by effective research design and implementation. Because some degree of bias is almost always present in a published study, readers must examine how bias may impact a study's findings.

For this study, bias may exist because I performed the literature search. That stated, I observed the recommended protocols to the best of my ability. Appendix 2 shows the databases and journal outlets of the studies included in my literature review to make my review more reliable. Also, the quality assessment adapted in this systematic review supported the validity of this study (Wright et al., 2007). Findings of literature reviews can be used to recommend policy for practitioners or policymakers (Grant & Booth, 2009). Additionally, a well-designed study can support the quality of a study (Wright et al., 2007). Using both the well-designed study and quality assessment of included articles supported this study to make recommendations for practitioners and policymakers, as well as for future study.

Chapter 3 Results and Analysis

3.1 Results

This section presents the results of my review. To classify the themes of the examined 32 articles, the results were analysed for: 1) country of origin, 2) generational cohorts examined in the sampled studies, 3) type of research methods, 4) sample population, and 5) theoretical frameworks adopted in the sampled studies.

In addition to the above general results of the selected studies in my review, I will also present the six distinct themes emerged accordingly as a result of thematic analysis process based on the topic and contents of the sampled studies (see Table 3, p23). The themes are also developed through the patterns and focuses on the topics from the sampled studies.The reason why I present the results based on the themes is to provide a clearer picture of the research on intergenerational communication at work (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In total, I evaluated 32 empirical studies that focused on intergenerational communication in the workplace. Nine studies were qualitative, and 23 studies were quantitative. Findings show that research has been conducted in 12 countries (with one study comparing participants from five different countries). Most studies were from the US (n=17, 53%), Canada (n=3), Germany (n=2), and Turkey (n=1). Other studies were undertaken in India (n=3), Japan (n=1), Malaysia (n=2), Taiwan (n=1), Thailand (n=1), and Vietnam (n=1).

Among the 32 studies, four studies drew and examined data from four generations (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y). Seventeen studies used and tested data from three different generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y). Three studies involved comparing data from two generations, which were Baby Boomers and Gen X. And lastly, seven studies used sample data to compare intergenerational communication between Gen X and Gen Y. Instead of specifying the generational cohort, there was one study that used the term 'age group' as the classification of the generational cohort (Appendix 3).

Most (n=23, 72%) of the studies used quantitative research designs and analytical methods, such as Ota et al. (2012) used questionnaires designed by McCann et al. (2005) and Giles et al. (2007). Study designs and methods included survey, cross-sectional, ANOVA Test and independent t-test. Fewer (n=9, 28%) studies used qualitative designs and methods, including focus groups, case studies, and in-depth interviews. Most of the empirical studies used samples of employees from various organisations (n=24, 75%). Employee samples were from various industries, including higher education, healthcare, medicine, hospitality, and the banking sector. In addition, a few studies drew samples from university students (n=6), such as the University of California, Santa Barbara, United States and Alumni of INSEAD, and some universities did not specify names in Thailand, North and South America.

Altogether twenty theories (see theoretical frameworks, appendix 1, p62) were used across the 32 included articles. Among them, the most used theoretical frameworks, by

frequency, were Communication Accommodation Theory (n=21), followed by Social Exchange Theory (n=7), Social Identity Theory (n=7), Media Richness Theory (n=6), and Social Comparison Theory (n=4).

3.1.1 Intergenerational communication differences and preferences (n=12)

The above results from the 32 selected articles give us the general concepts of the articles, including the country of origin, type of research method, sample population, and theoretical frameworks adopted. In the following section, I will demonstrate the results from each theme identified across the 32 sample studies.

Twelve research articles identified several communication methods such as face-to-face, telephone, and social media (Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2017; McCann et al., 2004; Lester et al., 2012). Some studies have found that communication choices can be related to ~~the~~ age and role of users (Ota et al, 2012). For example, older generations would consider physical communication to be effective; however, younger generations would prefer emails or social media platforms throughout their daily work communications .

Furthermore, in terms of generational communication preferences, there are also studies looked at the impact of personal factors such as gender and culture (see Ota et al., 2012) Polat and Yılmaz, (2020) investigated that culture was part of the reasons causing intergenerational communication differences. They found culture would significantly impact the way people choose their communication media. For example, Asian people are conservative with physical conversations, while Western people are

more open to face-to-face communications. Some studies found more convergence than divergence among communication preferences (Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008; Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2017; Rosa & Hastings, 2016). For example, Malek and Jaguli (2018) found that, contrary to the perceptions that older generations (Baby Boomer) are more resilient to social media communication than younger generations (Generation X and Generation Y), there was no clear evidence in general. Similar to Malek and Jaguli's finding (2018), it appears that there are no specific preferences among generations in choosing communication channels at the workplace (Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2017; Hall, 2016). In essence, it appears that all generational cohorts prefer face-to-face communication.

On the contrary to the results stated above that there is no clear communication preferences between different generational cohorts, Lester et al (2012) conducted a research examined that there are barriers, including an individual's past experiences, culture, power differences in the organisation, and different language interpretations (also see Lagacé et al 2019), which affect intergenerational communication preference. For example, for written communication in the workplace, older generations use an ellipsis to express continued thinking at the end of a sentence. However, younger generations would regard the ellipsis as a passive speechless power difference (Lester et al., 2012).

Later on to the finding of Lester et al., (2012), Polat and Yılmaz (2020) conducted a qualitative study on intergenerational communication barriers and found that an

employee's culture background plays a significant role in determining intergenerational communication barriers. For example, Traditionalists born in different cultures found it is difficult to understand Generation Y's languages quickly and comprehensively. This finding indicates that culture could be a barrier to affect intergenerational communication and cause misunderstanding of the message.

In addition to the barriers affecting intergenerational communication, Lagacé et al. (2019) found that language interpretation is another barrier to intergenerational communication in the workplace. Written communication is as important as spoken communication in the workplace (Polat & Yılmaz, 2020). It is quite difficult for individuals to recognise whether the written language is being sarcastic or something else (i.e. the ellipsis example).

Lastly, Both Lagacé et al. (2019) and Polat and Yılmaz (2020) indicated that personal past experiences are the other cause of intergenerational communication barrier, as all the co-existing different generational cohorts share the different method of communication in the workplace.

3.1.2 Communication technology (n=3)

One of the themes of intergenerational communication in the workplace involves generational attitudes and preferences regarding technology. Younger generations tend to be more digitally proficient and comfortable with contemporary forms of communication of social media and messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facetime, WeChat, and Slack (Carrier et al., 2009; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Haeger & Lingham,

2014). In addition to proficiency and comfort, younger workers consider themselves to be competent users on technological communication platforms (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009; Haeger & Lingham, 2014). Generation Yers are more exposed to media and technology in their day-to-day work and use it more effectively than older generations (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009).

Haeger and Lingham (2009) conducted a qualitative study and found technology communication affects intergenerational relationships amongst different aged employees. This is mainly because different generations choose different means of communication. There is some debate about actual differences in the use of technology in intergenerational communication (Lester et al., 2012). The discussion is whether Baby Boomers and Generation X prefer technology-driven means of communication than Generation Y. The youngest generation is considered to value technology-based communication and social media communication more than the older generations, as well as the older generations are considered to value face-to-face communication more than other younger generations (Lester et al., 2012). However, all three generations (Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y) appreciate physical contact, such as face-to-face communication interaction, to complete work-related tasks (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Lester et al., 2012).

In addition to multi-task work completion, it is defined as shifting activities and attentions from one task to another, for example, checking your phone and email when working on other tasks (Bartel, 2017) and technology-related communication behaviour

indicates a clear difference between different generations. By using technological communication modes, younger generations report higher rates of multi-tasking than older generations (Carrier et al., 2009). However, opposite to the concept of Carrier et al (2009), Lester et al., 2012 found a contradicte notion that there is no significant choice preference in relationship to communication technology.

3.1.3 Dynamics of relationships (n=5)

Intergenerational communication affects the relationship among different generational cohorts in the workplace (Wok & Hashim, 2013; McCann et al., 2005; Mehra & Nickerson, 2018; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008). Both Mehra and Nickerson (2018) and Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) supported the finding that a positive workplace communication environment could minimise the gap of intergenerational conflicts and ease the relationship between one generation to another and it would also increase the productivity and efficiency of work. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) also indicated that globalisation affects the way different generational cohorts communicate, which causes intergenerational issues and conflicts, especially each cohort has got their distinct traits (Myers & Sadaghiani).

In the quantitative study, Wok and Hashim (2013) found that younger generations (Generation X and Generation Y) tended to learn and adapt from the older generation (Baby Boomers) in terms of workplace communication, and younger generations had received positive feedback from the older generation. However, the younger generation reported rarely receiving compliments from the older employees. McCann et al. (2005)

also supported the finding with evidence that younger generations values politeness and respects the way they communicate with older generations. These findings indicate that the relationship between different generational cohorts in the workplace could be either positively or negatively affected by how they practice the process of communication (McCann et al., 2005). And effective communication could enhance the relationship between the different generations (Wok & Hashim, 2013).

3.1.4 Health and well-being (n=6)

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2021). Many factors are thought to influence an individual's health and well-being. Some of these factors include poverty, social status, and level of education (Whitehead, 1991). In addition, intergenerational communication can also contribute to the health and well-being of employees in the workplace (Reiser et al., 2019).

Poor or reduced communication among different generational cohorts in the workplace can harm the health and well-being of either employees or managers (McElfresh & Stark, 2020; Clark & Eastland, 2019; Curtis, Bowen & Reid, 2017; Reiser et al., 2019; Okoli, 2010; Anderson & Morgan, 2017). For example, a manager could be stressed because of poor communication with a different generational cohort.

One study conducted by Clark and Eastland (2019) examined four distinct types of generational communication (Veterans, Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y)

in the medical imaging department in the Southern States of America. They found that communication between the hierarchy levels of management impacts the well-being of employees, for example, when an older employee takes orders from a manager who is younger than they are, they would feel uncomfortable and reluctant to follow them. On the other hand, some researchers suggest that well-controlled power differences and authority will lead to effective communication and reduce the possibility of conflicts when directing subordinates (Okoli, 2010;Reiser et al., 2019).

Curtis et al. (2017) indicated that age discrimination affects intergenerational communication. The improvement of intergenerational communication could contribute to a healthier working environment in the workplace. Health and well-being care for our older generations is essential, and should be considered when looking at the process of communication in the workplace (McElfresh & Stark, 2000). Health impairments are measurable, and some of these health impairments directly influence all generations. For example, working in a non language abusive environment can reduce the oppertunity of being stressed from work (Okoli, 2010).

3.1.5 Attitudes and values (n=4)

Gursoy et al. (2013) reported that attitudes and values affect communication between different generational cohorts. The included articles in my review investigated the influence of communication on job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and employee engagement (Freytag & Rauscher, 2017; Zehrer & Leiß, 2020; Gursoy et al., 2013). For example, Freytag and Rauscher (2017) found effects of communication on

attitudes in terms of job satisfaction. Two quantitative studies (Wen et al., 2010) supported a decrease in job satisfaction in Generation X and Generation Y due to their attitudes to communication. On the contrary, Gursoy et al (2013) investigated data from a controlled sample and found a reduction in satisfaction for Baby Boomers and increased satisfaction in younger generations. The reason of this reduction could be, for example, Baby Boomers claim that they are not given opportunities of interviews when seeking for a new job and there have been no significant changes in people's employment situations (Gursoy et al., 2013).

The effect of different values on communication between different cohorts in the workplace was reported high through all the co-existing generations as the organisations have raised the awareness of the issue of intergenerational communication and it could turn into a bigger hassle if it is not addressed (Wen et al., 2010; Freytag & Rauscher, 2017).

3.1.6 Learning and literacy (n=2)

Education on intergenerational communication assists employees to understand communication media and methods that differ from generation to generation and helps different generations to collaborate better, grow and learn from each other (Gibson, 2009; Chen, 2019). Both studies suggested that organisations with multi-generational cohorts working together should seek educational programs that help employees understand intergenerational communication issues (Gibson, 2009; Chen, 2019). Chen (2019) also suggested that enabling an agile learning program would relieve the tension

caused by intergenerational communication differences and would bring the organisation to a healthier level of development.

Chapter 4 Discussion

This section of the systematic review will explore the overview of the research questions set previously by discussing the key findings found in each theme, followed by highlighting gaps for future literature research exploration, and also, the limitations of this systematic review will be presented as well.

The first research question of my review ought to find out what is know from management and communication literature about intergenerational communication in the workplace. My review indicates that intergenerational communication differences is still a developing field with little research emphasis. Throughout the analysis process of the findings of the included articles, six key themes emerged. My review indicates that certain studied themes have received more attention than others (e.g. intergenerational communication differences and preferences, n=12), while others have received less attention (communication technology, n=3 and learning and literacy, n=2). As a result, my review aids in the identification of areas that are understudied and hence for further investigation.

The second question explored how do different generations communicate in the workplace. My review reveals that there is an overabundance of quantitative empirical research (n=23) and a scarcity of qualitative investigations (n=9), which is calling the need that more supporting qualitative approaches need to be researched. My review also indicates that although there are evidences in examining generational communication differences, however, little focus is made on the differences within generational cohorts.

These differences include such as gender, ethnicity, and social class. Therefore, future studies of these components would contribute to the overall of intergenerational communication research.

The third question sought to discover what barriers do different generations have when they communicate in the workplace. My review indicates that culture and interpretations of individuals languages affect the relationships between different generational cohorts in the workplace. This suggests that educational programmes should be set in conjunction with the employees training to minimise the barriers.

4.1 Intergenerational communication differences and preferences

The differences and preferences of communication between different generations in the workplace appeared to occupy the largest included articles during the process of my thematic analysis. These differences include: Baby Boomers grew up in times, where face-to-face communication was the primary form of working communication (Lester et al., 2012). Having said that, telephone only became an important tool in Boomers' offices. It was not until the late 1960s, email was developed. And it was not fully introduced to the organisations until the late 1980s. Therefore, Baby Boomers have never completely adopted the digital communication revolution (Rosa & Hastings, 2016). While close enough to face-to-face communication, Baby Boomers still prefer to use phones as their main communication method in the workplace (Rosa & Hastings, 2016). Generation Xers are regarded as the earliest adopters of emails and use it as the primary method of communication at work. Apart from emails, generation Xers do not

prefer other digital communication, such as social media at work (Hall, 2016). Generation Yers (Millennials) are described as the first "digitally native" generation. They grew up with smart phones and prefer text communications because they can get direct respond from the receivers. As a result, they do not like phone calls (Hall, 2016).

However, some of the findings of my review reveal that there was no clear difference of communication methods in the workplace, regardless of age, as senior aged employees would prefer to use the same advanced communication media and tools as their junior aged peers (Lester et al., 2012; Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2017; Hall, 2016). It can be argued that written communications could cause barriers, because it is difficult to interpret the tone when you cannot see the person you are speaking to (Wen et al., 2010). Although literature stated above does not indicate there is a clear preference of difference in choosing communication methods among generations in the workplace, for practitioners in organizations should look into the importance of it to minimise generational communication gap in the workplace (Polat & Yılmaz, 2020), which will limit the generational communication gaps in the workplace and create a more effective communications across different generations.

There are ways of measuring the factors which impact intergenerational communication differences and communication preferences, such as gender, the age, and the role of the users (Ota, et al., 2012). Although Ota et al. (2012) used ethnicity culture as a factor to examine intergenerational communication differences and preferences, it was only limited in the United States, which the sample of participants

might not be representative enough to cover cultures in other parts of the world. For example, an Asian senior aged employee would prefer their younger peers to use respectful tones in their daily working communications (Ota et al., 2012). While a Western senior aged employee would prefer a flat tone, regardless of their positions, with younger cohorts in the workplace (Ota et al., 2012). This indicates that ethnicity and national culture influences the preferences of communication between different generations in the workplace. Practitioners are suggested to take culture as an advantage to create a more diverse organisation by promoting and implementing positive communications between different generations.

4.2 Communication technology

All generational cohorts acknowledge the value of communication technology in the workplace to increase work productivity and efficiency (Lester et al., 2012). Some research supported the view that the younger generations e.g., Gen Ys, are more comfortable with technological communication, such as WhatsApp, Facetime, WeChat, and Slack (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). This indicates that younger generations are more friendly users of technology-based communication tools in their daily working than the older generations. However, there is an increase in the proportion of older employees, especially Baby Boomers, in organisations utilizing technology communication to interact with their peers (Smith, 2014). The differences in technological behaviour related to communication depends on the efficiency and proficiency of users, rather than resistance (Lester et al., 2012). This indicates that technological communication

might not be representative enough to cover cultures in other parts of the world. For example, an Asian senior aged employee would prefer their younger peers to use respectful tones in their daily working communications (Ota et al., 2012). While a Western senior aged employee would prefer a flat tone, regardless of their positions, with younger cohorts in the workplace (Ota et al., 2012). This indicates that ethnicity and national culture influences the preferences of communication between different generations in the workplace. Practitioners are suggested to take culture as an advantage to create a more diverse organisation by promoting and implementing positive communications between different generations.

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interactions are used by many older generations to help them increase the productivity of work, as long as they are accessible.

Haeger and Lingham (2014) pointed to the effects and consequences of technology communication on intergenerational relationships. It is reported that the quality of relationships decrease when younger employees consider older employees to be slow and reluctant to use technology communication tools, such as texting or email, and social communication tools, such as Facebook or WhatsApp (Palmore, 2008). It is always coin-sided that either younger or older generations need to adapt each others communication patterns. However it is challenging for older employees to adopt and adapt to quick changes in digital technology. On the other hand, it may provide older employees with opportunities and relevant reasons to better interact and engage with younger employees in the workplace (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). It is suggested that the use of technology communication, including social media and virtual media, will enable older generations to retain and enhance workplace relationships with younger generations, especially between managers and subordinates (Haeger & Lingham, 2014). Managers in the organisations are suggested to promote technology communication tools and modes to the older generations to mitigate the intergenerational relationships. In addition, intergenerational relationships will be improved amongst generations if older employees make use of technology communication in a meaningful purpose to interact with younger employees in the workplace. With limited research on the topic of

intergenerational communication, more comprehensive studies are required to support the literature.

4.3 Dynamics of relationships

Dynamics of relationship in the context of workplace was referred and defined as the ways employees interact and communicate from one generation to another (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), and was the theme found throughout the literature in my review. Consistent with the findings of other studies, dynamics of relationships has also been used in intergenerational relationships (Vanderven, 2004). Communication was one of the influential factors which affected the relationships amongst different generational cohorts in workplace (Wok & Hashim, 2013; Mehra & Nickerson, 2018; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). This indicates that communication can either form a good team to function exceptionally well or fall to pieces. For practitioners, they should encourage open communications between employees and management to increase motivation, productivity, and commitment in order to have a successful team, as communication is one of the most important factors.

Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz-Costa (2008) suggested that minimising the generational communication issue could improve and enhance relationships among different age groups (Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y). Managers need to understand communication differences in each cohort to develop effective communication and improve their relationships with their employees (Anderson & Morgan, 2017).

4.4 Health and well-being

The health and well-being of individual employees in organisations, when related to intergenerational communication, emerged as a topic throughout the analysis process. Studies within this review mentioned poor and reduced communication affect health and well-being among different age groups in the workplace (McElfresh & Stark, 2020; Clark & Eastland, 2019; Curtis, Bowen & Reid, 2017; Reiser et al., 2019; Okoli, 2010; Anderson & Morgan, 2017). This indicates that poor communication would influence individual employees' health (both physical and mental) and well-being (work productivity and efficiency) and leads to intergenerational issues, such as tension. Knowing the fact that communication could cause intergenerational issues, managers in the organisations are required to not only look after employees' physical health, but also to try to limit conflicts caused by communication, such as language bullying, to make employees stay in a healthier working environment to protect employees health. Although as stated before, the sampled studies included in my review covered the theme of health and well-being, it is still with limited amount of empirical studies, more investigations need to be done on the circumstances of communication to employees' health and well-being in the workplace. For example, investigations can be drawn on what conditions communication would affect employees health and well-being; which generation in the workplace is impacted, and what are the natures and causes of this.

Nevertheless, not only poor communication would cause a negative effect of an individual's health and well-being, but also power difference between junior and senior

employees in the workplace would cause tension, which may affect individuals health. There is a trend that younger aged employees are giving orders to senior aged employees, as generation Ys are taking more managerial roles in the organisations (Clark & Eastland, 2019). Consequently, older employees may think they are unfairly treated and lead to health and well-being problems (Clark & Eastland, 2019). Similar to power distance will cause a negative effect of an individual's health and well-being in the workplace, hierarchy level of management is another cause of employees health issues, for example, managers may forcefully make their subordinates follow their instructions, because they are in management layer. Based on the above statement although employees' health and well-being is a well-researched topic and numerous programmes and interventions have been developed, recent developments have emphasised the importance of approaching intergenerational communication through a holistic lens (Reiser et al., 2019). However, unlike the topic of employees' health and well-being in organisational behaviour, there seems to be limited intervention programmes to improve the health and well-being of employees as a result of the issue of intergenerational communication issues. Based on the findings, a specific area for further investigation could be on the solution of age discrimination towards older generations in the workplace, as more younger generations are stepping into the workplace, the need for caring older employees health would be vital for practitioners to create a quality organisations.

4.5 Attitudes and values

Both attitudes and values emerged as a theme across the analysis process of my review. Empirical support on the impact of attitudes and values to intergenerational communication focused on job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and employee engagement (Freytag & Rauscher, 2017; Zehrer & Leiß, 2020; Gursoy et al., 2013). It is debatable that some research articles in my review supported the evidence that younger generations (Generation X and Generation Y) were less satisfied and less committed to their jobs than older generations (Traditionalist and Baby Boomer), when there is a communication breakdown the younger cohorts are more greatly affected (Freytag & Rauscher, 2017; Wen et al., 2010). On the contrary, Gursoy et al (2013) found the opposite evidence that there was less job satisfaction from Baby Boomers as a result of poor intergenerational communication. However, what indicates more is that there seems to be a neglect of personal status and career stages of employees considered across the included sample studies. For example, a Generation Y would be quite stable and satisfied with his or her job in the middle stage of their career, especially when they are building a family. The potential attitude differences across generations could also be affected by their career status (Hewlett et al., 2009). For example, in general consideration, a senior aged person that has been in a particular role for more than 10 years, is unlikely to leave their job (Hall, 2016). This suggests that future research should take both personal status and career stages into consideration, which might shed

lights and bring positive results to the understanding of how communication can affect and influence the attitude between different aged generational cohorts .

In terms of work values, the results of findings suggests that younger employees emphasise more on external values and less internal values than their older counterparts. For example, younger employees would be happier than older employees to receive verbal recognition from work (Gursoy et al., 2013). However, there is still an argument over whether there is link between work values and social values of employees, possibly due to the intergenerational differences. This suggests that future research could investigate more closely with the issues between generational work values and social values.

4.6 Learning and literacy

Both academics and practitioners have realised the concern of differences in generational communication in the workplace. And evidence has supported that organisations should seek more educational programmes to help employees understand intergenerational communication issues (Gibson, 2009; Chen, 2019). However, empirical evidence has only supported the importance for employees to understand intergenerational communication exists, there were no suggested training programmes in communication skills to solve the tension of intergenerational communication in the workplace. This suggests that tests of different programmes should be developed to assist the long-term concern of intergenerational communication in the workplace.

4.7 Limitations of this review

My literature review demonstrates the importance of accumulating empirical data to help shape intergenerational communication and practise in the workplace. It helps me better understand the situation of my own workplace, in regards to communicate effectively with both younger and older employees and enhance internal cohesion within my company. Although my review was conducted in a transparent, replicable, and systematic manner, the following limitations should be acknowledged.

Firstly, the number of empirical research papers on the topic of intergenerational communication in the workplace provided me with a diverse and complex pool for collecting data and findings from evidence-based articles. Clearly, one systematic review cannot solve the problems of intergenerational communication issues on its own, but it will help to clarify the existing empirical research evidence and make implications for future research and practice.

Secondly, I have restricted the search process to articles only available in AUT's library collection that were peer-reviewed articles in the English language and listed in two journal metrics. There were no book chapters, dissertations, or reviews included in my systematic review, because they are not peer-reviewed articles. However, as the increasing global interest on intergenerational communication found in my systematic review increases, there might be other studies published in other languages that provide a contradictory or complementary conclusion to that reached in my review.

Thirdly, the evaluation of this systematic review was conducted by myself, assisted with two journal metrics to increase the credibility and accuracy of the findings. Therefore, bias may have been applied when exploring the methodology of all the included empirical articles when putting together the findings of these studies of each emerged theme.

4.8 Future research and considerations

With consideration to the factors that impact intergenerational communication in the workplace, there is a need for both researchers and practitioners to investigate different areas that may influence intergenerational communication, such as cultural context, personality of individual employees, and learning programmes, as these factors might affect the outcomes of intergenerational communication in the workplace. Despite the fact that there are numerous studies available which emphasise the above mentioned factors, future research could draw the attention to, for example, to what degree and extent can culture impact the intergenerational communication and what learning programmes can be developed to facilitate employees who are encountering generational communication differences in the workplace? In addition, context plays an important role in the applicability of research.

Throughout the discussion of the findings, there is a gap of knowledge emerged. As more younger employees are taking more managerial roles in the organizations, and they are giving orders to older employees, more research should be conducted on the relationship between younger managers and older subordinates. Questions of the gap

can be considered, such as: what communication methods do younger managers apply with older subordinates?; How does age difference influence the workplace relationships between younger managers and older subordinates?.

The vast majority of the included articles within this literature review was carried out in the USA and as a result, the representativeness of findings might be limited to that country only. Although Australia and New Zealand have yet to develop a body of research focusing on intergenerational communication issues, my review suggests that as intergenerational communication issues are being researched globally they should be evidenced locally.

As I have acknowledged before, although my sampled studies are representative enough, however, I am not at the stage of informing or recommending policies of intergenerational communication, as the quantity of empirical research articles are still limited. However, the findings of my review suggest that solutions can be found by increasing the awareness and understanding of intergenerational communication and more research is required to back up the literature of intergenerational communication in the context of Australia and New Zealand.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

As the structure of workplace population has significantly changed, there is an increasing interest in intergenerational communication in the workplace from both practitioners and academics. However, the field of intergenerational communication research has remained understudied, as Sanner-Stiehr and Vandermause (2017) claimed, "Intergenerational communication plays a central, though as yet understudied, role in workplace ageism". The field of intergenerational communications research has seen a wide range of issues and analytical methodologies used. This systematic review has contributed to the growing literature of intergenerational communication. Nonetheless, it also shows that there are a number of component parts that might be evaluated in further studies, such as communication technology and learning and literacy. Only limited number of studies included in my sample that investigated the above categories. While the study contributes a more comprehensive picture on a descriptive level, additional research is required to assess treatments and, as a result to generate new ones.

Although no policies and recommendations were made based on the limited findings, the thematic analysis of the themes emerged in my review has contributed to the ongoing literature of intergenerational communication by adding studies (Haeger & Lingham, 2014; Anderson & Morgan, 2017; McElfresh & Stark, 2020) which were not included in any forms of the previous reviews (e.g. Law et al. (2019) interdisciplinary review on intergenerational communication and Woodward and Vongswasdi (2015) systematic review on generational diversity). Despite the fact that the studies included

in my systematic review provided a global view of intergenerational communication in the workplace, local context within Australia and New Zealand is important, as issues could affect local businesses in Australia and New Zealand.

As more younger generations are moving to workplace, multi-generations do co-exit in the workplace. I hope that the research gaps emerged in my systematic review can further be researched.

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Appendix 1 Themes Data

Intergenerational Communication and Technology, n=3

Author, date & country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework	Findings	Quality
(Carrier et al., 2009) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – survey.	To examine if advances in communication technologies might affect workplace generational relations.	Participants (n=1,319) across three different generations, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Exchange Theory.	The usage of modern technologies is better for younger generations. In comparison to prior generations, more communication channels were used to fulfil everyday job. And the employment of technological communication at work is of benefit to every age.	IF: 5.003 ABDC: A
(Haeger & Lingham,	Quantitative – survey.	To investigate how specific technological advancements	Employees (n=270) covered all five different	Communication Accommodation	The methodologies and preferences for the	IF: 1.958 ABDC: B

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
2014) The U.S.A.		influenced the relationship of communication patterns in a multigenerational business.	generations that co-existed in the workplace.	Theory. Social Identity Theory.	employment of technology in workplaces were clearly different through the generations.	
(Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – survey and independent t-test.	Compared and contrasted the characteristics of communication technology between Generation X and Generation Y.	A total sample of 797 employees returned the questionnaire, generation X consisted of 401 and generation Y consisted of 396.	Social Comparison Theory.	Results revealed that Generation Y is amenable to more Internet use of communication than the previous generation.	IF: 2.135 ABDC: A

Dynamics of relationship, n=5

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
(Wok & Hashim, 2013) Malaysia.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate youthful employees' perspectives on communication and working relationships with elder coworkers.	Employees from five Malaysian universities (n=575).	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Comparison	The younger staff learn from the elderly staff through communicative collaboration and receive favourable feedback from their elder workers, while	IF: 4.462 ABDC: A

				Theory. Social Exchange Theory.	the older staff barely complement their younger staff.	
(McCann et al., 2005) The U.S.A.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate age stereotypes, norms of respect, beliefs about intra- and intergenerational communication, and communication satisfaction toward young adult, middle-aged, and older adult targets.	Participants (n=137), with equal male and female represented. The participants were from different ethnic groups.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Comparison Theory.	Politeness and deference, and communicative respect enhance communication with senior workers.	IF: 2.336 ABDC: B
(Mehra & Nickerson, 2018) India.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate the impact of generational categorisation on managers' satisfaction with intergenerational	Managers from different companies (n=400).	Media Richness Theory.	Differences in communication across generations exist, however a healthy atmosphere for communication might overcome the gap.	IF: 3.689 ABDC: B

		communication..				
(Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) The U.S.A.	Qualitative – interviews.	To identify how millennials communicate with other generations in the workplace, and millennials communicated values to interact with other generations.	Managers and subordinates (total n=24, managers n=11, subordinates n=13).	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Exchange Theory.	Millennials have special features that allow them to interact with various generations. Globalization, communication and information technology, economy, and socialising are all expected to have an impact on millennials.	IF: 0.212 ABDC: C
(Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008).	Quantitative method – survey.	To evaluate the communication, engagement, and flexibility of employees from various generations at work.	Using 49,209 observations representing 183,454 employees in 22 different companies.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Identity Theory. Leadership Theory.	Flexibility fit is critical for bridging the communication gap and improving employee engagement and relationships.	IF: 0.325 ABDC: C

Health and Well-being, n=6

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
(Anderson & Morgan, 2017) The U.S.A.	Qualitative method -Interview.	To comprehend and characterise intergenerational communication in the context of healthcare.	Employed nurses (n=32). Classification of employees: older workers: 55 and over, younger employees 20-34, and middle-aged 35-54,	Communication Accommodation Theory.	(a) Intergenerational hostility is common & socialized. (B) Dispensable resource based on generations.	IF: 2.121 ABDC: B
(McElfresh & Stark, 2020) Five different countries.	Quantitative method - survey.	To examine if one's working life as a librarian was linked to beliefs that communication in the workplace effects age and/or generation.	Survey questionnaires collected from health sciences librarians in five different countries n=150.	Communication Accommodation Theory.	Generational differences affect communication in the workplace.	IF: 2.042 ABDC: B
(Clark & Eastland,	Quantitative method - a cross-sectional	To study generational disparities in	Managers of medical imaging departments	Communication Accommodation	The 4 generational groups – veterans, baby boomers,	IF: 2.023

2019) The U.S.A.	survey.	intergenerational communication potential conflicts in medical imaging departments.	(n=64).	Theory.	generation X and millennia — have different communication	ABDC: C
(Curtis, Bowen & Reid, 2017) The U.S.A.	Quantitative method - survey.	To investigate nursing personnel' experiences with generational discrimination in communication in the workplace.	The total survey participants (n=251), 152 (61%) were completed. Generational cohorts age category: 20-29 (more than half, n=82), under 20 (n=19), 30-59 (n=48).	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Exchange Theory.	Horizontal discrimination exists in intergenerational communication.	IF: 1.614 ABDC: B
(Reiser et al., 2019) The U.S.A.	Quantitative method – survey.	To study the opinions of genetic consultants with respect to communication and the workplace.	Respondents (n=407, estimated 10% response rate.) from different generational counselling employees.	Social Comparison Theory. Social Exchange Theory.	Baby-Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials have different preferences of communication patterns and approaches.	IF: 0.162 ABDC: C
(Okoli, 2010)	Qualitative method -	To understand	Interviewees consist of	Parse's Theory.	Senior and experienced	IF: 0.022

The U.S.A.	case study.	intergenerational communication in the operating room.	nurses (n=14) from a different perspective of age.	Generational Gap Theory.	employees have more influence and authority, which leads to better communication and less disagreements.	ABDC: -

Intergenerational Communication Differences and Preferences, n=12

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
(McCann & Giles, 2006) Thailand & The U.S.A.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate the intergenerational communication differences between generations in the banking sector.	Nonmanagerial-level bankers in two nations (n=348). American bankers (n=168), Thai bankers (n=180). The average age of the sample was 23.15 years. Overall, males were 114 and females were 234.	Social Accommodation Theory. Social Identity Theory.	Older bankers were seen as more non-accommodating than young bankers. Thai bankers perceived others, in general, as less accommodating (e.g., supportive, helpful) than did their American counterparts.	IF: 3.449 ABDC: A
(Woodward &	Quantitative	To investigate generational	Global business	Media Richness	Communication preferences	IF: 1.216

(Vongswasdi, 2017) A global study.	method – survey.	differences in business communication practices among global leaders and managers.	executives (n=191, 21.7% completion rate. Participants age category: BB(47-59), GX(33-46), and GY (15-32).	Theory. Social Influence Theory. Channel expansion Theory. Media Synchronicity Theory.	differ among Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y.	ABDC: B
(Ota, McCann & Honeycutt, 2012) Japan & Thailand.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate Japanese and Thai younger adults' intra- and intergenerational communication.	Data was collected from a 4-year university in both Japan and Thailand. Japan participants: 41 males and 72 females. Thai participants: 31 males and 100 females.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Identity Theory.	Different views on intergenerational communication at work exist, and culture is one of the factors contributing to the problem.	IF: 3.540 ABDC: A
(McCann et	Quantitative	To investigate young adults'	The total number of	Communication	Interactions with older people	IF: 1.333

al., 2004) South & North Vietnam, & the U.S.A.	method – survey.	beliefs about their intra and intergenerational communications in three countries.	participants was 554, with 167 from the U.S.A, 167 from North Vietnam, and 224 from South Vietnam respectively.	Accommodation Theory.	are more problematic than their interactions with their peers.	ABDC: C
(Malek & Jaguli, 2018) Malaysia.	Qualitative method – interview.	To investigate the generational differences in workplace communication.	Leaders from different organizations, participants consisted of 12 female leaders and 24 of their direct reports.	Communication Accommodation Theory.	Power and authority relate to generational differences in workplace communication.	IF: 4.856 ABDC: A
(Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008) The U.S.A.	Qualitative - in-depth focused group discussions.	To identify the differences and similarities of intergenerational communication to increase the productivity of both the managers and employees.	Employees (n=91) from three different generations were classified into the focus groups.	Media Richness Theory. Social exchange Theory.	Findings suggested Baby Boomers respect hierarchy when communicating with others, while the Generation Xers rebel against authority.	IF: 6.701 ABDC:A*

(Rosa & Hastings, 2016).	Qualitative method – interview.	To explore how intergenerational communication difference plays a role in affecting the perception of and communication with millennial employees.	A total number of 25 managers aged 31 or older. The characteristics and self-references placed participants in Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Identity Theory. Social Exchange Theory.	Millennials are perceived as Millennials: "kids", "age group," and "Millennials" that affect manager's communication with them.	IF: 0.625 ABDC: C
(Hall, 2016) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – survey.	To investigate the communication preferences between Gen Xers and millennials in the workplace.	Participants (n=84), the sample age ranged between 19 to 45. Females were 58.33% and males were 41.67%.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Social Identity Theory.	Intergenerational communication disparities occurred, and employees in firms should adjust to these differences and seek to improve relationships across generations.	IF: 1.546 ABDC: A
(Mehra & Nickerson, 2019) India.	Quantitative – survey.	To investigate the communication preferences reported by different generations in the Indian	Managers in 19 listed organizations (n=822) with a response rate of 64.4%.	Media Richness Theory. Communication Accommodation	Communication satisfaction was poor in both generations studied, with GenYers reporting the lowest levels of satisfaction.	IF: 3.689 ABDC: B

		workplace and the relationship between communication preferences and employee satisfaction.		Theory. Communication Predicament of Ageing Theory.	The intergenerational communication connection was not improved by a manager's generational category.	
(Lester et al., 2012) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – survey.	To examine how intergenerational communication differed with different generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Gen Xers in the workplace.	Employees in the organization (n=263), with a 56% response rate. 84% were female and 16% were male. Ages of employees 17-65.	Generational Cohort Theory.	According to the findings, the differences that people perceive across generations surpass the actual value differences that respondents reported..	IF: 2.197 ABDC: A
(Lagacé, Van de Beeck, & Firzly, 2019) Canada.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate the communication barrier between generations and the relation with intergenerational workplace climate.	The total number of questionnaire participants was 415, with a response rate of 34.6%.	Intergroup Contact Theory.	Positive intergenerational workplace climate bridges the communication gap.	IF: 4.206 ABDC: A
(Polat &	Qualitative method	To determine barriers to	The study group of	Media Richness	Personal factors, relational	IF: 1.977

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
Yılmaz, 2020) Turkey.	– Interview.	intergenerational learning and communication.	employees consists of 61 participants. The participants were different hierarchical and generational cohorts.	Theory. Communication Accommodation Theory.	factors, and managerial factors affect communication among generations.	ABDC: B

Attitudes and Values, n=4

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
(Gursoy et al., 2013) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – a cross-sectional survey and one-way ANOVA tests.	Identified attitudes and values towards communication in the workplace between different generations.	Employees (n=814, a return rate of 52%) of a North American branded hotel.	Communication Accommodation Theory. Value Theory.	There are differences in communication attitudes and ideals among generations. Understanding generational differences can help managers create a more pleasant and effective workplace.	IF: 6.701 ABDC: A*
(Zehrer & Leiß, 2020)	Qualitative method -an action research	To understand intergenerational	A case study described three different	Leadership Theory.	Emotional barriers and communication hindrances	IF: 3.256 ABDC: A

Germany.	approach case study.	communication in business families during their leadership succession.	generations in the family business of running a four-star hotel.	Social Identity Theory.	exist in communication.	
(Freytag & Rauscher, 2017) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – Survey.	Explored intergenerational communication perceptions in organizations.	Participants (n=567) ranged in age from 18 to 88.	Communication Patterns Theory.	The findings revealed that communication views in advanced care planning differed significantly among generations.	IF: 1.596 ABDC: A
(Wen et al., 2010) The U.S.A.	Quantitative – survey.	Examined the selection of communication channels and media in relation to generational differences in the workplace concerning multigenerational workplace.	Respondent (n=79), Generation X (58%), and Generation Y (42%).	Media Richness Theory. Generational Cohort Theory. Technology Acceptance Model Theory.	According to the findings of this study, the impression of the ease of use of conventional and mobile phone-based media by the two generations is not substantially different, although there are disparities in computer and internet-based media.	IF: 1.254 ABDC: A

Learning and Literacy, n=2

Author, date &country	Methodology	Purposes	Sample population	Theoretical framework used	Findings	Quality
(Gibson, 2009) The U.S.A.	Quantitative method – survey.	To investigate communication amongst four active generations—Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial.	Participants in different generational cohorts were examined (n=321).	Communication Accommodation Theory.	Communication gaps exist between generations due to different characteristics.	IF: 2.023 ABDC: C
(Chen, 2019) Taiwan.	Qualitative method – Interview.	To investigate the language-accommodation strategies used by Taiwanese teachers when communicating with older adults in senior-education contexts.	Interviewee number (n=15), 9 females and 6 males, all aged between 40 to 70.	Communication Accommodation Theory.	In intergenerational communication, young and middle-aged teachers were more likely to encounter deep-seated conflict and power struggles.	IF: 1.224 ABDC: B

Appendix 2 Database and Journals Included

Database	Journal	No. included
EBSCOHost	Management Communication Quarterly	1
Google Scholar	Journal of the Medical Library Association	1
Emerald	Corporate Communication International	1
EBSCOHost	International Communication Association	1
Emerald	Journal of Communication Management	1
EBSCOHost	Communication Research and Practice	1
EBSCOHost	Human Communication Research	1
EBSCOHost	Communication Studies	1
ScienceDirect	Nursing Education Perspectives	2
Emerald	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	2
EBSCOHost	Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology	1
EBSCOHost	Journal of Asian Pacific Communication	1
ScienceDirect	Nurse Education in Practice	1
EBSCOHost	Journal of Intergenerational Relationships	1
Google Scholar	Leadership & Organization Development Journal	1
EBSCOHost	Qualitative Research Reports in Communication	1
EBSCOHost	International Journal of Ageing and Later Life	1
EBSCOHost	Community, Work & Family	1
Google Scholar	National Society of Genetic Counselors	2
Emerald	Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	2
ScienceDirect	Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict	2
EBSCOHost	International Journal of Hospitality Management	2
Google Scholar	Journal of Business Psychology	1
Emerald	The Marketing Management Journal	1

Appendix 3 Sample Data Categorised by Generational Cohorts

Generational cohorts	Count	References
Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y	4	(Haeger & Lingham, 2014); (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008); (Anderson & Morgan, 2017); (Reiser et al., 2019)
Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y	17	(Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008); (Woodward & Vongswasdi, 2017); (Carrier et al., 2009); (McCann et al., 2005); (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010); (McElfresh & Stark, 2020); (Clark & Eastland, 2019); (Curtis, Bowen & Reid, 2017); (McCann et al., 2004); (McCann et al., 2004); (Malek & Jaguli, 2018); (Mehra & Nickerson, 2019); (Lester et al., 2012); (Polat & Yılmaz, 2020); (Gursoy et al., 2013); (Gibson, 2009); (Chen, 2019)
Baby Boomers, and Gen X	3	(Mehra & Nickerson, 2018); (Okoli, 2010); (Lagacé, Van de Beeck, & Firzly, 2019)
Gen X and Gen Y	7	(Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009); (McCann & Giles, 2006); (Ota, McCann & Honeycutt, 2012); (Rosa & Hastings, 2016); (Hall, 2016); (Zehrer & Leiß, 2020); (Freytag & Rauscher, 2017)
Not specified	1	(Wok & Hashim, 2013)