

## Leading intergenerational learning in organizations: An example from Turkey

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### Abstract

*Within the fact that there are members of different generations in organizations nowadays, intergenerational learning in organizations has become more and more important. Some managers are observed to confuse about how to lead intergenerational learning environments in their organizations which makes important to conduct a research on this problem. Thus, this study was conducted and it aimed to understand the intergenerational learning process and how to lead it in a production facility in Turkey. The study group includes 61 people who are employees, team leaders, department directors, field directors and instructors. The study was carried out in the phenomenological research design. The data were gathered through interviews and analysed with content analysis. The results brought out six main themes, which are which are creating zone, acting according to generational differences, increasing motivation, supporting personal development, recording and managing “know-how”, and creating intergenerational respect and understanding.*

**Keywords:** Adult’s learning, intergenerational leadership, Intergenerational learning, learning in organizations



## Introduction

One of the biggest problems of developing countries is the imbalance which is caused by changes in demographic factors on employment. This imbalance creates a pressure on members of societies who tend to choose luxurious consumption, comfort of life and expensive technology. Together with these, the changing demographic factors bring out a serious danger related to development of human resource, which is an important trump for organizations in global market.

The fertility rate is decreasing in Turkey, and predictions about the fertility rate made by international organizations show that this rate will get lower (The World Bank, 2019). Together with other factors, such as improvements in healthcare industry (Omachonu & Einspruch, 2010) and pharmaceutical technology (Grootendorst, Piérard & Shim, 2009), the life expectancy is increasing as a result of the decrease in the fertility rate. All of these highlight that life expectancy of society and the number of elder people would continue to increase. This situation will certainly affect all parts of society, including all types of organizations. In organizations, the changes in demographic factors can provide benefits if elder generations transfer their knowledge to younger ones, and if younger generations teach technological improvements and other developments to elder ones. With the help of this, the differences among generations would become benefits, prejudices against generations would decrease and organizational climate would occur in a way that it increases productivity.

Generations are groups of individuals who have shared social experiences and witnessed common historical events (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). The process of learning among different generations “Intergenerational Learning (IGL)”, as mentioned above. The IGL can be defined as the process during which people from different generations get together for meaningful activities and interactions, the level of understanding between people from different generations increases and conflicts among generations decreases by breaking down the negative stereotypes (Schuller, 2010). The IGL has previously been understood as a “unidirectional” process, as in families, and this means that the IGL is the process where knowledge is transferred from elder generation to younger ones (Gerpott, Lehmann-Willenbrock & Voelpel, 2017). However, the conditions have changed and this unidirectional process cannot be said fully helpful in terms of the IGL in organizations. In terms of learning methods, the IGL is seen as both an informal process in which (Bottery, 2016) elder members in families teach the younger generations many facts, skills, attitudes, and values, and a formal process in which an activity is planned before implementation and a formal teaching environment is formed (Report on Intergenerational Learning and Volunteering, 2013). Throughout the years, the view that elder generations teach younger ones has changed and some studies put forward that younger generations can teach new trends, technological skills and knowledge to their elder colleagues, as well (Baily, 2009; Chen, 2013). This process of the IGL is related to adult education. During adult education process, it is important to foster the IGL activities which would lead to new chances for cooperation, sharing knowledge, views and perspectives between different generations by creating various opportunities for learning for elder adults before and after their retirement (Schmidt-Hertha, Krasovec & Formosa, 2014). Due to this fact, the IGL has become an important concept for adult learning in both formal and informal environment. Even though there are many studies related to the IGL and generational differences depending on ages in the literature as discussed above, there are some studies that put forward the fact that there are differences even within the same age groups, same generations depending on socio-economic differences, education level differences and so on (Schröder, 2018). However,

in literature, commonly accepted view is there are differences depending on generations. All of these fact makes the IGL important for organizations all employees of which are young and old adults. In order to manage the process of the IGL effectively in organizations, knowing the characteristics of generations is an important issue.

In the relevant literature, it can be found that different generational classifications are done depending on common characteristics of members of the specific generation. In this study, the classification by Hammill (2005) was taken into consideration. Hammill (2005) divides generations into five groups depending on characteristics of generations and important events of the history of world society. It should be highlighted that there may be some differences between the members of the same generations who live in different countries or who have different socio-economic background, since the effect of important events that shape characteristics of a generation, according to Hammill (2005), may change from country to country or among members of different socio-economic background. The generations according to Hammill's (2005) classification are traditional, baby boomer, X, Y and Z generations. Members of 'traditional generation', which is also known as 'silent generation', were born between 1925-1945. This generation can be characterized by being easy-going, mature, work-oriented, thrifty and having loyal attributes. The second generation is 'Baby Boomer'. The members of this generation were born between 1946-1964. The important events this generation experienced were told to be the Kennedy and M.L. King assassinations, Vietnam War, the first step on the Moon and the unstable years during which 1960 socialist revolution took place (Ropes & Ypsilanti, 2012). The members of this generation are believed to be collectivist, hard-working and loyal. It is thought that the member of this generation value job security, teamwork, participative leadership and personal growth mostly, although it may change depending on other factors (Guerin-Marion, Manion & Parsons, 2018).

The third generation is 'X generation'. They were born between 1965-1980. They witnessed the AIDS epidemic, oil shock, cold war, foundation of communication channels such as CNN and MTV (Ropes & Ypsilanti, 2012). Since the members of this generation lived in an environment in which there are economic and financial uncertainties, they are classified as a generation that grows in an environment without a tradition (Daloğlu, 2013). Even though they would show some differences depending on members of this generation's living conditions, their key characteristics are usually individualism, independence and being adaptable. They are told to value self-reliance, opportunities to feel empowered, and work-life balance (Guerin-Marion et al., 2018).

Other generation in laboured workforce is 'Y generation'. This generation includes the individuals born between 1981-2000. The important events for this generation are occurrence of internet, fall of the Iron Curtain and 9/11 Attacks (Ropes & Ypsilanti 2012). This generation is generally individualistic, free, moving towards globalization, and comfortable with technology (Senbir, 2004). Their key characteristics are believed to be forward-looking, creative and technologically competent. They could value career mobility, professional growth, guidance and feedback and learning opportunities (Guerin-Marion et al., 2018). One should keep in mind that, as for X generation, the characteristics of Y generation may change.

The last generation is 'Z generation'. Members of this generation were born after 2001. Z generation is also called as 'crystal generation, internet generation, e-generation, new silent generation, Google generation, .com generation' and born into a digital world. They have started to participate in labour force in Turkey, as in other countries of Western countries (Olkinuora, Rinne, Mäkinen, Järvinen & Jauhiainen, 2008). They are being raised by families whose educational level and social awareness are higher than other

generations. Also, they have grown up in an environment where individuals are supported in every field by social state and non-governmental organizations.

It is a known fact that characteristics of generations may change from country to country. However, there are some studies that show generations in Turkey have similar characteristics as classified by American researchers. The events and milestones that shaped generations in the world formed generations in Turkey, as well. Despite the fact that similarities for characteristics of generations from different countries are many, there are some minor differences regarding age factor for generations in Turkey. For instance, Yüksekbilgili (2015) conducted a study regarding range of age for generation Y, and found out that it started in 1983 rather than early 1980s and occurrence of some technological development in mid-1980s were the reason for this. Also, Yüksekbilgili (2015) put forward that generation Y does not end in 2000, but in 1995 in Turkey, and the reason for this was again one of the biggest technological development, the beginning of the active use of internet in 1994. Another study was conducted by Bayhan (2014) that aims to understand the generation Y in Turkey, and it was found out that the characteristics of generation Y are similar to the characteristics of generation Y in the world. In addition to these, Şalap (2016) found out that the business values of generations in Turkey were found to be similar mostly with the employees in Europe and North America even though there were sociologically similar political events that occurred at different times in Turkey when compared to generations in Europe and North America.

Today, all five generations work together, and they bring their differences to organizations with them, which may cause intergenerational gap. Watt (2009) examined the intergenerational gaps in terms of coherence, teamwork, balance and loyalty. Watt (2009) found out that each generation perceives other generations differently in terms of rapport, manageability, teamwork, balance and loyalty. When members of different generations with different values, attributes and expectations work together in the same organization, disagreements and conflicts might arise sometimes (Toruntay, 2011; Becerikli, 2013). Hence, differences are important not only for managing the conflicts related to intergenerational gap effectively, but also for taking advantage of these types of conflicts.

Related to the nature of the IGL, studies show that learning styles and methods of different generation individuals are different from each other (Corrigan, Mcnamara and O'hara, 2013; Polat & Kazak, 2015). For example, in a study conducted by Polat and Kazak (2015) on teachers, it was seen that elder generation teachers preferred the method of learning by asking more, and then they preferred the method of learning through observation, learning by listening to other people's conversations and imitating others' practices and methods respectively; the situation is the opposite for the younger generation participants and they prefer the method of learning through observation more than by asking. In addition, the generations' learning topics vary according to their needs. The study indicated that the learning styles of employees of different generations also differed.

Even though there are the above-mentioned handicaps, the researches show that the IGL has important benefits. Bontekoning (2007) found out that the IGL stimulates socialization of younger generations, results in decrease in negative stereotypes among different generations, and increases the level of social capital. In addition to these, Spanning (2008) put forward that the IGL enables critical knowledge transfer, improves ability for innovation and social capital. Despite the fact that the IGL has such kind of benefits, there are some barriers to it. One of them is stereotypes. These stereotypes occur between elder and younger generations. Younger generations may feel shy about teaching something to elder colleagues, since their knowledge may be valued as worthless. Also,

elder generations may feel shy about learning something new from younger colleagues, since they may be criticized as not being capable of participating in learning environments (Lamont, Swift & Abrams, 2015). Another barrier to the IGL is psychosocial barriers which are ageist attitudes (Murphy, 2018). The elder generations may believe that younger generations might not teach them something. These negative attitudes may result in some deficiencies in organizations, since it is important for organizations to take advantage of diversities in organizations and age is one of them. Thus, leading the IGL is another important issue to be taken into consideration in organizations in order to manage human resources efficiently.

Thomas and Cheese (2005) say that leadership is having an ability to change or influence the behaviour of the followers. A leader is a person who primarily can mobilize other people, communicate with them reciprocally and make them believe that s/he always supports them (Thomas & Cheese, 2005). Cook, Philip, Hunsaker, Robert and Coffey (1997) describe the leadership as a process of guiding the followers, giving them energy, and attaching them willingly to the vision of the leader. Guerin-Marion et al. (2018) suggested an integrative conceptual framework for intergenerational leadership. This model includes individual and organizational needs, communication process and leadership strategies. Within individual needs, there are gender roles, skills and abilities, and generational characteristics are included. Within organizational needs, there are culture of organizations, resources, and leadership styles together with all generations' characteristics who participate in organizations. Thirdly, Guerin-Marion et al. (2018) emphasizes the importance of communication. For communication process to be effective, it should appeal to all generations' preferences. This framework suggests three methods for this. The first one is sending e-mails about both external and internal news to all staff. The second one is a monthly newsletter which includes news about projects, individual accomplishments and personal news. The third method is a regular face-to-face meeting with all staff.

The last component of Guerin-Marion et al.'s (2018) framework is leadership strategies. These strategies include two dimensions, which are talent management and decision making. The talent management consists of recruitment according to staff's skills and orientation process, supporting professional development, and providing mentorship. On the other hand, decision making process includes building policies and procedures, and preparing the strategic plan by receiving opinions from staff, encouraging staff to form staff committees and receive their feedback. Guerin-Marion et al. (2018) emphasizes that a collaborative decision-making process will be more beneficial and the decisions will be followed more loyally.

Since different generations are included in today's organizations and managing or leading them is a complicated process, it is highly important to examine the IGL process in organizations in a detailed way. As for many other countries all over the world, understanding of the IGL is a problematic situation for Turkey, as well. Thus, this research aims to understand the IGL process and how to lead it in a production facility in Turkey.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

The research design of the study is phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The phenomenological study describes ways how a phenomenon is

perceived by people in detail (Dey, 1993). Within this study, leading intergenerational learning in an organization in Turkey is examined in detail through perceptions and points of views of employees, team leaders, field directors, department directors and instructors. The researchers tried to understand what the managers and employees knew about the IGL, how they felt about being included in an intergenerational learning process and being led through this process, and what should be done to lead the IGL effectively.

### ***Study group***

The study was carried out in a large-scale production facility that works on automotive sector in the Central District of Kocaeli, Turkey. The reasons for choosing this company: a) The firm is active in Kocaeli, which is the Turkey's production base, for more than 40 years, b) the inclusion of several new technology production facilities inside and c) includes employees from different ages. While observing the learning process in this facility, the researchers witnessed that the IGL occurred among generations. The managers of the organization were aware of this fact. They believed that the IGL would continue in the facility since there were different generations working together. They also stated that the effectiveness of the IGL should be increased, however they did not know exactly what to do and how to do to increase the effectiveness of this learning process. Hence, the managers supported this study to comprehend how to lead the IGL efficiently and sufficiently.

The company has seven separate production facilities and one training department responsible for training the employees working on those facilities. The company is organized in a hierarchical format; at the top, General Manager, under him/her the Coordinator and seven different Department Managers under the Coordinator, one Department Director under each Department Manager, Field Directors under the Department Director, Team Leader under the Field Director and employees at the bottom. The number of employees is approximately 3000. When it comes to the generations actively working in the company, there are baby boomers, generation X and generation Y. There is not any member from generation Z.

Maximum diversity sample selection technique, from purposive sampling method, was used in the study. The idea here is to create a relatively small sample in order to reflect the diversity of the employees that might affect the results (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In order to ensure maximum diversity, the study was carried out with 61 people with at least 1 person from each department, 12 X and 12 Y generation employees, 4 Baby Boomer, 4 X and 4Y generation field directors, 5 Baby Boomer and 5 X generation department directors, 2 X and 1 Y generation instructors, 6 X and 6 Y team leaders. Their ages range between 24 and 67. In addition to these, their tenure changes between 2 years and 45 years. All of the participants were male.

### ***Data collection tool***

The study data was collected via face-to-face interviews. The interviews were conducted in Turkish, and afterwards they were translated into English by the researchers. Interviewing is the most commonly used data collection method in phenomenology studies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

During data collection, semi-structured interview form was used. It has two sections. In the first section, questions related to demographic information were collected. These questions were about their status, their years of birth and their seniority. In the

second section, ‘What should be done to lead intergenerational learning in organizations?’ was the main question. During interviews, the research team tried to clarify the important concepts such as the IGL and leadership before starting interviews. By doing this, the participants had clear understanding of what they were doing. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, and each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

During data collection, the participants were informed about the study and the participants gave consent that the interview can be recorded in written form. In addition, it was told that the codes would be used instead of the participant's name (“E” for employees, “TL” for team leaders, “FD” for field directors, “DD” for department directors and “IN” for instructors).

For data analysis, the content analysis technique was used. In content analysis process, the data which are found to be similar regarding some codes and categories are organized under certain themes and then interpreted (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The process of content analysis includes four levels which are 1) labeling data, 2) finding themes, 3) organizing labels and themes and 4) identification and interpretation of the findings.

Within this research, the researchers conducted content analysis to the data on their own firstly. They labelled the names of codes, categories and themes. After that, they came together to negotiate about the codes, categories and themes. The similar codes, categories and themes were taken as they are, and the different ones were discussed. Also, the researchers asked the views of another expert on codes, categories and themes. After the negotiation with the expert, the main themes were determined.

### **Findings**

After the content analysis process, eight themes and related sub-themes were determined. The themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Main themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes	Generations			Total
		BB	X	Y	
<b>Creating zone</b>	Formal and informal social activities	3	11	10	24
	Team works including different generations	2	5	5	12
	Operations including different generations	2	3	3	8
	Matching experienced employees with novices	2	2	1	5
	Social platform and social portals		2	1	3
	Generations that are divided equally in operations			1	1
<b>Acting according to generational differences</b>	Speaking generations' language	2	1	1	4
	Emphasizing the importance of experience to younger generations.		1	1	2
	Making evaluations by taking generational differences into consideration	1		1	2
	Developing communication models which are suitable for generations			1	1
	Determining behavioural models depending on new generational tendencies			1	1
<b>Increasing motivation</b>	Giving responsibilities	5	5	5	15
	Making elder generations feel valuable	1		1	2
	Dividing workload suitable for generations			1	1
	Making assignments and giving guidance based on technology and experience to elder generations.		1		1
	Encouraging employee's ideas.		1		1
	Designing new generations' jobs with the systems they are predisposed to (computer, etc.)	1			1
<b>Supporting personal development</b>	Encouraging elder generations to be innovative and technology-lover	1	2	3	6
	Supporting guidance and counselling		2		2
	Analysing the needs by evaluating employees' level of knowledge			1	1



	Managers' supporting all generations' personal development through trainings out of the organization, etc.		1		1
	Sharing the importance of knowledge in order to make elder generations willing to learn			1	1
	Explaining the importance of learning to elder generations			1	1
	Standardizing all generations' "know-how"s	4	5	5	14
<b>Recording and managing "know-how"</b>	Giving lectures to elder generations about the importance of knowledge	1	2		3
	Providing managerial support for the sharing of elder generation employees' experiences.		1	1	2
	Creating an organizational culture that supports knowledge transfer to future generations	2			2
	Avoiding behaviours and use of language that causes generational conflict	4	6	1	11
<b>Creating intergenerational respect and understanding</b>	Improving empathy skills	1	2	1	4
	Colleague approach in intergenerational relations	1	1		2
	Considering the ideas of new generations	1	1		2
	Preserving social values in the workplace.		1		1

BB: Baby boomers

The first theme is "creating zone". The participants highlighted the importance of formal and informal social activities, team works and operations including different generations, matching experienced and elder employees with novices, creating social platforms to get acquainted and dividing generations equally in operations.

**Formal and informal social activities.** Participants emphasized that formal and informal social activities would enhance interaction among generations. For example, one of the participants stated that "For the adoption of intergenerational differences, multi-generational formal-informal social activities should be carried out. The activities such as meals, trips, water skiing, solution-oriented group activities that will enable interaction within the factory, trips to innovation fairs etc. can be done" (X27-E19).

**Team works including different generations.** Participants highlight the importance of inclusion of different generations into team works. One of the participants, who was a Baby Boomer, said that "Multi-generational teamwork will increase solidarity and

communication among generations. This will allow the flow of information to be more natural and easier among generations” (BB6-DD3).

***Operations including different generations.*** One of the key points that should be taken into consideration by leaders to lead the IGL was designing operations which included different generations, according to participants. A participant mentioned that “Work designs in the working areas should be multi-generational and the leaders of these employees should direct them to activities such as breakfast, food, new year event” (BB8-DD2).

***Matching experienced employees with novices.*** Participants highlight the importance of grouping experienced and novices in the same teams. One of the participants said that “Experienced employees and novices can be paired and collaborated. In this way, people who interact with each other can start speaking a common language” (Y13-E11).

***Social platform and social portals.*** The effective use of social media to get generations accustomed to each other was mentioned by participants. A participant mentioned that “As it is unlikely that the elder generation and younger generation will share socially the same areas, we can use social media platforms and we can try to understand each other” (X5-IN1).

***Generations that are divided equally in operations.*** Dividing generations equally in operational groups while leading the IGL was another point mentioned by participants. A participant who was Y generation said that “If the different generations are distributed in a balanced way in the operations we work with, it will be much easier for us to come together and the flow of information between generations will naturally happen” (Y22-TL12).

The second theme is “acting according to generational differences”. The examples of participants’ utterances for each sub-theme presented in Table 1 are below.

***Speaking generations’ language.*** Participants underlined the importance of understanding other generations’ language. One of the participants said that “If we try to understand the new generation, if we can speak their language, they will learn our language as well and as we speak each other's language, we can easily transfer our knowledge” (BB7, DD9).

***Emphasizing the importance of experience to younger generations.*** Participants believed the importance of making new generations understand the importance of experience and respect elder ones. A participant said that “Employees from new generation begin to understand the importance of knowledge if they respect the experience of employees from elder generations. The prejudices that will be eliminated with this effect will allow the transfer of information comfortably” (X23, TL8).

***Making evaluations by taking generational differences into consideration.*** For a leader to evaluate the performance effectively, participants underlined taking generational differences into consideration. One participant mentioned that “Considering the age difference, the authorities should act depending on the levels of the related groups and the decisions to be made should be evaluated accordingly” (Y2, FD9).

***Developing communication models which are suitable for generations.*** Since communication is an important part of leading intergenerational leadership, participants emphasized developing communication models suitable for generations. One of the participants said “If you want to teach your partner something, you need to find the best way of communication that s/he understands. If elder generations understand young generations, and young generations understand the way the elder generations communicate, the information flow will become more easily” (X12, E12).

***Determining behavioural models depending on new generational tendencies.*** As for communication, behavioural models are one of the important aspects to be taken into consideration by leaders, according to participants. A participant mentioned “New generations can be profiled and their tendencies can be identified. After that, road map for elder generations can be determined” (Y3, E2).

For the third theme, “increasing motivation”, the analysis of participants’ answers revealed that the participants highlighted the importance of giving responsibilities, making elders feel valuable, dividing workload suitably for generations, giving support to elder generations about technology, encouraging all employees’ ideas, and designing new generations jobs according to the systems they are familiar with.

***Giving responsibilities.*** A leader in an intergenerational organization should give responsibilities to all generations. A participant underlined that “Experienced generations need to be assigned responsibilities. In this way, the elder generations can get rid of the feeling of being thrown away and dedicate themselves to working, learning and teaching more and they can feel motivated” (X13, TL6).

***Making elder generations feel valuable.*** The elder generations are valuable for organizations and they should be felt valuable. A participant from Y generation said that “It can be benefited from the knowledge of the elder generations by increasing their work motivation and making them feel valuable. A person who feels valued will share his / her knowledge as a teacher” (Y14, TL7).

***Dividing workload suitable for generations.*** In order to increase motivation, participants underlined the importance of dividing workload suitably. An employee from Y generation said that “Work and responsibility should be given to generations which are suitable for them. The heavy workload makes people feel burnout and reduces their work motivation. A person who loses motivation also doesn't care about learning” (Y3, E2).

***Making assignments and giving guidance based on technology and experience to elder generations.*** Participants highlighted that making elder generation feel valuable by giving assignments based on technology and experience will increase their motivation. A team leader mentioned that “If elder generations are given assignments which will be done with technological devices, they would be motivated since they can feel effective. Similarly, they would feel in the same way if they are given assignments depending on their experience. These would certainly increase their motivation (Y14, TL7).”

***Encouraging employee’s ideas.*** Encouragement for speaking of ideas is an important factor for increasing motivation. An employee from X generation said that “Young generations should be heard and their discussions and suggestions should be allowed. People who are constantly silenced, whose speech is prevented and whose ideas are

ignored are taken out of the system feeling unworthy and do not care about losing any information and taking any information” (X18, E4).

***Designing new generations’ jobs with the systems they are predisposed to (computer, etc.).*** Using technology while designing jobs for younger generation should be taken into consideration by managers. A participant emphasized that “The jobs for young people should be designed appropriate for their skills to make them love their job. This will increase their performance and motivation that is caused by feeling successful, and all of these will increase their motivation to learn new things” (BB3, FD12).

The fourth theme is “supporting personal development”. The sub-themes for this theme given in Table 1 are exemplified and explained below with the help of participants’ utterances.

***Encouraging elder generations to be innovative and technology-lover.*** The first mostly emphasized aspect of supporting personal development is to encourage elder generations for innovation and technology. A field director explained this “Elder generations should be encouraged to be innovative and learn something from young generations. They should be constantly informed about efficiency of the technology in business life, the opportunities created by new ideas and they should be given responsibilities in the projects if necessary. I was always sceptical to take control of electronic systems, but now I cannot finish counting the benefits of these systems in terms of quality, efficiency and safety” (X21, FD7).

***Supporting guidance and counselling.*** Guidance is an important fact for personal development. An employee said “It should be ensured that experienced people give advice to new generations by highlighting their leading qualifications. In this way, while the ties between them become stronger, career development of young generations is ensured” (X1, E1).

***Analysing the needs by evaluating employees’ level of knowledge.*** The needs analysis for employees’ personal development is emphasized by participants. An employee mentioned that “In order to transfer the information, it is necessary to determine whether the person needs this training. In general, training needs are based on lack of experience for young generations, and lack of system and technology-based information for elder generations. In this case, the competence levels of people should be measured continuously and their needs should be determined. According to these needs, career development of the person should be followed by the company and necessary training should be given” (Y18, E18).

***Managers’ supporting all generations’ personal development through trainings out of the organization, etc.*** Manager support is a desired aspect for personal development of employees. An employee from Y generation said “The personal development of all generations should be supported by management. Personal development trainings should be provided by companies’ managers. For example, after the excel training of the company, I started to do a lot of work on my own. There were even a few things I taught to a few young generations” (X27, E19).

***Sharing the importance of knowledge in order to make elder generations willing to learn.*** If an organization would like elder employees to be willing to learn, it should share the importance of knowledge according to participants. “Due to their commitment to

traditions, elder generations care about the experience but this prevents them from acquiring new knowledge” (X12, E12).

***Explaining the importance of learning to elder generations.*** Similarly, the importance of learning should be explained to elder generations, as an employee said “It's hard to teach the elder generation something new. For this reason, they must first understand what learning how to use computer or a program will facilitate to improve themselves” (Y13, E11).

The next theme is “recording and managing ‘know-how’s”. The participants talked about standardization, talking about the importance of knowledge in the organization, supporting elder generations’ share of knowledge and creating a culture that supports knowledge transfer to next generations.

***Standardizing all generations’ “know-how”s.*** For recording and managing know-how’s in an organization, it is important to standardize them. An employee from X generation said that “In order to spread intergenerational learning within the organization correctly, it is necessary to reveal the non-standard information (know-how) in younger generation who are experienced or have a high level of knowledge on the subject. These know-how’s should be recorded in such a way that everyone can understand them” (X12, E12).

***Giving lectures to elder generations about the importance of knowledge.*** A baby boomer field director highlighted the importance of giving lectures to elder generations about the importance of knowledge by saying “Elder generations should be educated about the importance of knowledge. Many people retire without sharing the information they have. While the information in the enterprise is as valuable as gold, the information taken in retirement is not different from a non-recycled waste” (BB5, FD6).

***Providing managerial support for the sharing of elder generation employees’ experiences.*** A department director counted the managerial support for sharing experiences of elder generations as another important issue. “Support should be provided by management for issues such as time, needs and cost which are necessary for elder generations to share their experiences” (X20, DD8).

***Creating an organizational culture that supports knowledge transfer to future generations.*** In connection with the previous code, another department director mentioned a supportive organizational culture for transferring knowledge by saying “An organizational culture should be created in which the transfer of knowledge to future generations is supported. People should think that sharing information is a natural and positive thing. If someone thinks he has lost his power when he shares his knowledge, they do not share the knowledge and experience through the younger generations” (BB7, DD9).

The last theme is “creating intergenerational respect and understanding”. The participants emphasized the importance of use of language, empathy skills, approaches among generations, valuing the ideas of young generation and social values.

***Avoiding behaviours and use of language that causes generational conflict.*** The first important aspect of creating intergenerational respect is to be careful with the language used and behaviours. “Elder generations should avoid words that would cause intergenerational conflict such as ‘When I was young,...’ and new generations should avoid words like ‘It was in the past’. If there is a conflict, respect doesn’t exist,

relationships are degraded, experiences cannot be transferred either from bottom to top or from top to bottom” (X18, E4).

***Improving empathy skills.*** Empathy would certainly be beneficial for intergenerational relationship respect. A field director from Y generation mentioned “People's empathy skills need to be improved. Nobody can teach anything or learn anything if s/he doesn't understand the other. This would be felt more if there is a factor like generational difference” (Y10, FD3).

***Colleague approach in intergenerational relations.*** Maintaining balance between generations is another point of consideration, as a field director said “The elder and younger generations need to be approached like colleague, not like brother-sister. The brother-sister relationship can be intimate, but when the line is crossed, no one shows the tolerance that anyone will show to his brother. Therefore, formal relations prevent problems that may occur between the elder and the younger generations, so that information can be conveyed more easily by the environment of respect” (BB1, FD1).

***Considering the ideas of new generations.*** Another way of creating intergenerational respect is to consider the ideas of new generations. A department director from baby boomer generation said that “It is necessary to create the perception that elder generations can learn from the new generation. For this, new generation employees can be honoured and respected by elder generations. In this case, experience and exchange of ideas will increase between the two generations” (BB6, DD3).

***Preserving social values in the workplace.*** A team leader from X generation underlined that social values should be preserved for creating intergenerational respect. “As social values decrease, respect decreases, as well. Protecting our social values in the workplace increases respect and trust, and experiences between generations begin to be transferred” (X8, TL3).

## **Discussion**

The research aimed to have a deep understanding about how to lead the IGL in organizations according to the perceptions of both employees and managers. As a result of the research, it is found that there is a need for some changes to be done at the organizational level, and for the individuals who are the representatives of the generations in order for the managers to lead the intergenerational learning. Leading intergenerational learning needs to be done at organizational level by creating intergenerational learning environment, acting by taking generational differences into consideration, increasing motivation, supporting personal development of all employees from different generations, recording and managing the know-how based on experience, and creating intergenerational respect and understanding.

What managers need to do to lead intergenerational learning can be listed as to treat employees of different generations free of prejudices, to create environment suitable for communication based on generation characteristics, and to take learning styles and motivation tools into consideration. On the other hand, managers can lead the employees of each generation by supporting their personal development.

It is stated that the first thing to be done to lead intergenerational learning is to create zone for intergenerational space. The intergenerational space includes individuals

who are members of different generations; especially designed to facilitate and improve the interaction between young and old (Vanderbeck & Worth, 2014). However, creating dynamic intergenerational spaces is more than creating a physical place (Brown & Henkin, 2012). The purpose of creating an intergenerational space is to create an environment that addresses different age groups, to allow interaction of these age groups and to encourage meaningful time (Kaplan, Thang, Sanchez & Hoffman, 2016), which also helps improve the adult learning (Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2014). These areas can occur naturally in daily life or can be designed for a purpose. All kinds of outdoor areas such as parks, open-air cinemas, open-air theatres, picnic areas, camping areas can be used to create intergenerational space with indoor spaces such as conference halls, meeting rooms, training classes, dance halls (Brown & Henkin, 2012). Therefore, in order to lead intergenerational learning, it would be appropriate for managers to create intergenerational spaces through formal and informal social activities, multi-generation teamwork, multi-generation operations, matching of experienced and novices, social platform and social portals.

Intergenerational learning within the organizational structure is a planned or unplanned, social-cooperative learning path that can develop in different ways provided that the work-related tasks are centralized (Ropes & Ypsilanti, 2012). Intergenerational learning also encourages the development of intergenerational solidarity (Corrigan et al., 2013). The intergenerational learning is based on interrelation and cooperation. And it can develop cooperation between different generations in organizations and strong ties can be formed between generations (Krašovec & Kump, 2010). Thus, managers should give the deserved value to the IGL if they want to improve the fertility of organizations by making each and every employee from all generations feel motivated.

According to Woolsey (2016), constructive interactions among the employees of the organization should be encouraged and strategies that support the sharing and transformation of knowledge should be developed for the continuity of growth. To ensure the protection of intellectual capital, the baby boomers at a workplace must be prepared to seize its implicit information before they retire (Booker, 2015, p. 2). As information is spread to the whole organization and shared by the employees through an open organizational climate, it will further increase the organizational learning capacity (Pinar, 1999). As emphasized by the research participants, the intergenerational leadership roles of managers are of great importance for an organization in transforming the generation information, which is developed based on the experiences of different generations, and which is often implicit in the organization, into open information and transferred to the organization. Thus, managers of all types of organization should try to fulfil the expectations, some of which are the findings of this study, if they would like to administrate the IGL effectively.

Another point to discuss as a result of this study is that managers need to know how to treat employees from different generations and with different skills and qualities, to understand and respect their sensitivity to lead employees of different generations. Since each generation has its own characteristics (Mannheim, 1952), the participants of this study frequently emphasized that managers should prepare operations suitable for each generations' competencies and needs, evaluate employees by taking generational differences into consideration, develop a language which is suitable and respectful for each generation. Thus, managers should be aware of these generational differences, intergenerational interactions and manage them effectively if they would like to be a good leader who works hard for their organizations' getting stronger and more successful.

One of the important points that should be addressed in this study is that all participants were male. It is possible to say that the results may show difference if female

participants were included. Thus, for further research, it can be suggested to conduct a broader study which include participant from both sexes to understand whether or not any differences related to perception of the IGL exist.

When the overall findings are discussed in detail, it is possible to see that the IGL is an important concept for any type of organizations all over the world. Since this study is conducted in Turkey and there are some other studies about the IGL from different countries (e.g.: Corrigan, Mcnamara & O'hara, 2013; Dorczak & Portela Pruaño, 2020; Hiçyılmaz & Polat, 2020; Krašovec & Kump, 2010; Schmidt-Hertha et al., 2014; Vanderbeck & Worth, 2014), understanding how to lead the IGL and different generations in organizations would seem to stay as an important subject for the leaders.

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[18] Polat, Günçavdı Alabay & Yılmaz

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