ISSN Print: 2664-8792
ISSN Online: 2664-8806
Impact Factor: RJIF 8
IJRM 2025; 7(2): 36-44
www.managementpaper.net
Received: 08-04-2025
Accepted: 09-05-2025

Dr. Jahal Purohit
Research Scholar, Head of People and Organization and Communications, Bharuch, Gujarat, India

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Jahal Purohit
Research Scholar, Head of People and Organization and Communications, Bharuch, Gujarat, India

Mentorship and reverse mentorship: HR's role in facilitating knowledge exchange between Millennials and Gen Z

Jahal Purohit

DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648792.2025.v7.i2a.419

Abstract
This study explores the role of mentorship and reverse mentorship in facilitating intergenerational knowledge exchange between Millennials (born 1981-1996) and Generation Z (born 1997-2012), with a focus on Human Resource Management (HRM) as a strategic enabler. Given the growing generational diversity within modern workplaces, this research addresses the knowledge-sharing gap by analyzing how HR can bridge intergenerational divides through structured mentorship initiatives.
Employing a qualitative, secondary data-based approach, the study undertakes a thematic analysis of existing literature, organizational reports, and case studies. Three core themes emerged: communication and collaboration styles across generations, the impact of mentorship on skills development, and the outcomes of HR-led interventions.
Findings suggest that both mentorship and reverse mentorship enhance reciprocal learning, promote engagement, and support organizational growth. The study concludes with practical implications for HR policy and practice, highlighting the need for further primary research to evaluate cultural and contextual factors in the effectiveness of intergenerational mentoring.

Keywords: Millennials, Gen Z, HRM, mentorship, reverse mentorship, knowledge exchange

Introduction

Background

The current organizations are facing an unmatched merging of the various generations in the workforce, mainly the Millennials (born 1981-1996) and Generation Z (born 1997-2012). These generational groups vary in their debut experiences, values, work preferences, and communication styles, which all influence how they procure, distribute, and utilize proficiency in the workplace environment [1]. Whereas Millennials came into the job market at a time when the digital age was taking hold, and management style was commonly defined by teamwork, adaptability, and working on a mission, Gen Z is born digital natives who have been reared in the fast-transforming world of every-day technology where priority is given to intimacy, diversity, and innovation.

As this demographic scenario continues to evolve, organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the strategic necessity of intergenerational knowledge exchange. Tacit and explicit knowledge are competitive organizational resources that must be shared effectively across generations to maintain innovation, performance, and competitiveness [2]. However, the conventional linear transmission of knowledge model, based on older workers teaching younger ones, may not be adequate. A new model of learning has emerged, featuring reverse mentorship, where younger staff members train older staff on topics such as digital literacy, embracing diversity, and cultural trends. In this case, *Human Resource Management (HRM)* functions as a catalyst for planned learning spaces and intergenerational mentoring programs [3]. HR practitioners can execute, plan, and assess mentorship and reverse mentorship programs that support organizational aspirations and are responsive to the specific needs and competencies of both Millennials and Gen Z.

Problem Statement

The advantages of having a diverse generation may be abundant, but most organizations are failing to capitalize on them.

This may result in miscommunication, stereotyping, and a refusal to cooperate, thereby hindering the flow of knowledge. The lack of compatibility in values, expectations, and learning styles may impede the development of trust and mutual understanding, which are prerequisites for knowledge exchange [4]. HR departments have, in many cases, had no strategic means to achieve meaningful intergenerational interaction beyond superficial diversity programs. This disparity necessitates further research on how organized mentoring and reverse mentoring can serve as a means of reducing the generational divide and enhancing organizational learning.

Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the role of HR in utilizing mentorship and reverse mentorship as tools for facilitating intergenerational knowledge exchange between Millennials and Gen Z. The research will conduct a thematic analysis of secondary sources to identify how organizations can more actively expose their HR strategies to encourage mutual learning and mitigate intergenerational conflict.

Aim of the study

To explore how mentorship and reverse mentorship facilitate knowledge exchange between Millennials and Gen Z and examine the role of HR in enabling these practices.

Objectives

- To understand generational differences in knowledge preferences.
- To analyze how HR promotes mentorship and reverse mentorship.
- To evaluate benefits and challenges of intergenerational knowledge exchange.

Research Questions

- What is the key knowledge-sharing traits of Millennials and Gen Z?
- How does HR support mentorship/reverse mentorship initiatives?
- What challenges and best practices are associated with intergenerational mentorship?

Significance of the study

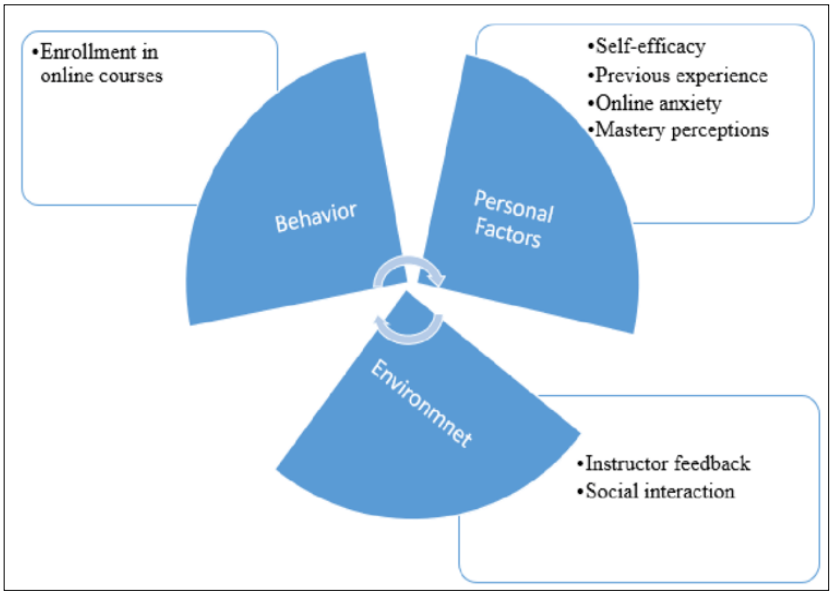
This research contributes to both the scholarly literature and HR practice, underscoring the potential value of mentorship and reverse mentorship in bridging generational gaps, as well as the effectiveness of learning within an organization. It highlights the strategic purpose of HR in supporting inclusive, adaptive, and futuristic practices of knowledge exchanges [5]. The results will inform HR practices, leadership training models, and intergenerational engagement programs that can foster a more collaborative and innovative workforce.

Literature Review

The highly critical literature review in this paper examines the scholarly arguments about generational effects, both in the workplace and in the context of knowledge exchange and Human Resource Management (HRM) practices. The particular focus is on how mentorship and reverse mentorship ensure intergenerational learning among Millennials and Generation Z. The section also discusses a theoretical premise based on the Social Learning Theory and the Knowledge Management Theory, which are also good resources to consider in tendering a good perspective of HR strategy concerning knowledge transfer across the generational barriers.

A. Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory (SLT): According to the Social Learning Theory, humans learn through the acquisition of knowledge, behaviors, and skills by observing others in a social context. The concept of modeling is central to SLT, as learners mimic the behaviors of role models, including those perceived as competent or credible. This theory is particularly relevant in mentorship and reverse mentorship settings, where interpersonal interaction generates knowledge in both directions [6]. Traditional mentorship can involve Millennials as the mentors of Gen Z employees through modeling professional behavior, organizational culture, and tacit knowledge concerning institutional XP.



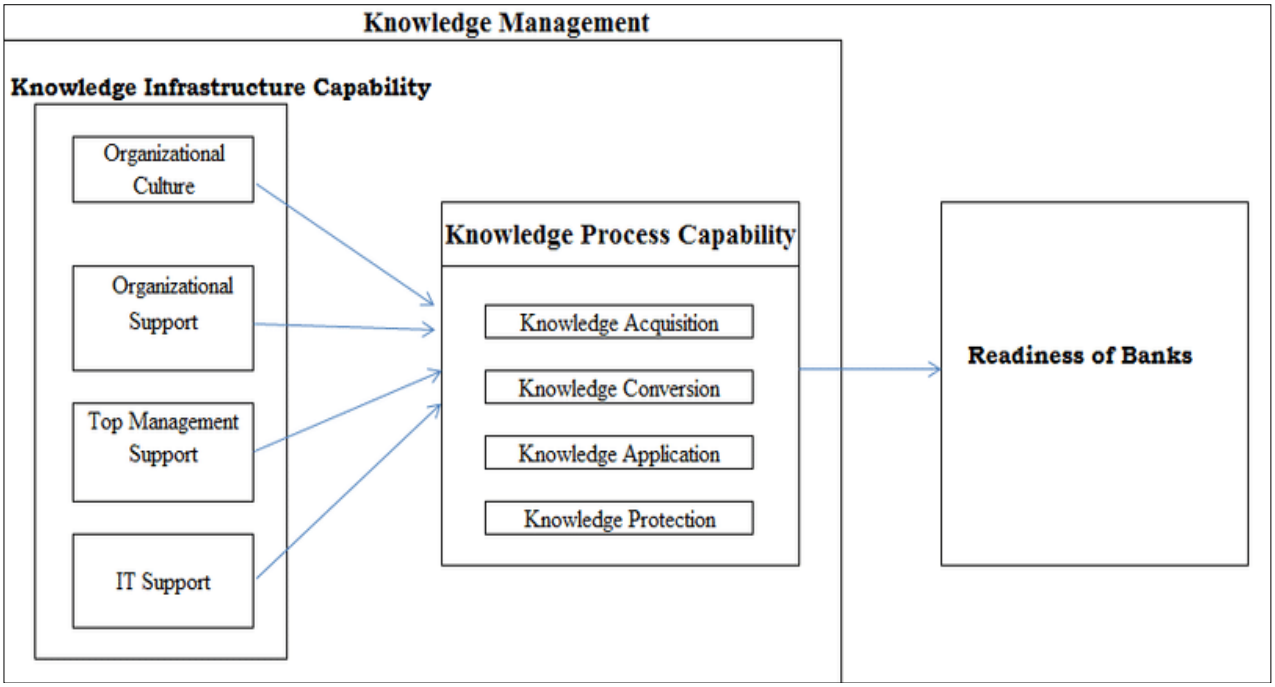
Source: 7

Fig 1: Social Learning Theory

On the other hand, in situations where there is reverse mentorship, Gen Z employees can serve as role models in areas where they may possess a comparative advantage, such as digital fluency, technological adaptability, and inclusive thinking. Observational learning extends the internalization of new skills and attitudes, which leverages a more flexible and intergenerationally coherent workforce [7]. To the HR, SLT highlights the significance of curated mentorship combinations, psychological safety, and organizational role-modeling. Such leadership endorsement, reward systems in mentorship engagement, and inclusive training settings are part of HR interventions that can operationalize SLT principles in a world of continuous and socially embedded learning.

Knowledge Management Theory (KMT)

The Knowledge Management Theory (KMT) is used to inform the creation, dissemination, and internalization of knowledge within organizations. Key to this is the SECI model that describes four knowledge conversion processes: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization. This model uses mentorship and reverse mentorship as primary tools [8]. Experience is a key component of informal mentoring, enabling the sharing of tacit knowledge through socialization. Externalization involves verbalizing expertise with the help of a mentor and mentee. Combination combines precise knowledge, whereas internalization is part of learning by doing, augmented with instructions.



Source: 9

Fig 2: Knowledge Management Theory (KMT)

In the present research, the accumulated experience of Millennials generally leads to externalization and combination, while Gen Z impacts socialization and internalization, primarily through digital fluency. HR exercises strategic positions, helping arrange such exchanges with digital tools, mentorship models, and knowledge-sharing functions [9]. Therefore, KMT emphasizes the role that HR plays in preserving knowledge, fostering learning agility, and facilitating the intergenerational flow of knowledge to meet changing organizational requirements. KMT describes how reverse mentorship can help HR maintain institutional memory and ensure future-proofed skills and communities of practice by improving informal and more formal knowledge transfer channels.

B. Review of Key Literature

Generational learning styles and expectations

According to Widen *et al.*, (2020), Millennials and Generation Z exhibit different knowledge-sharing behaviors depending on their access to technology, learning conditions, and work expectations [10]. They claim that Gen Z, as digital natives, is more oriented towards informal, fast-paced, and tech-enabled learning environments. In contrast, Millennials are more oriented towards collaborative, experiential, and feedback-based. This view aligns with the notion that customized learning interventions are essential to optimize knowledge transfer across generations.

Conversely, the limitations of arguing against the essentialist approach to generational category labelling are fundamental, as Rudolph *et al.*, (2021) posit that the presumed generational differences have been overemphasized and lack of sound empirical support [11]. Individual, contextual, and organizational-level variables, argue these researchers, are more predictive of learning preferences than generational labels alone. This raises doubts about the usefulness of generic generational ideas in HR practice and cautions against simplification in program design.

According to a study by Khattak *et al.*, (2021), which confirms concerns about reverse mentorship, young staff tend to be more competent and flexible when it comes to digitalization. Nonetheless, they did indicate that there is diversity within generation cohorts, and successful mentorship programs should consider this diversity within age groups [12]. The literature as a whole demonstrates a contested landscape, underscoring the necessity for HR to develop flexible, evidence-based approaches to designing

intergenerational learning systems. Stereotyping generations threatens to perpetuate discrimination in inclusive learning cultures. They indicate that organizations should evaluate learning needs based on diagnostic tools and not on age assumptions. This perspective underscores the need for a personalized learning environment tailored to individual skills rather than generational characteristics. The HR, therefore, must shift the focus of sorting by age to enable learner-friendly modular setups that take into account individual learning profiles.

Mentorship and reverse mentorship models

According to Garg, Murphy, and Singh (2021), reverse mentoring can be effective in enhancing employee work outcomes through increased engagement in their work when combined with job crafting strategies. They also stress that younger workers, as teachers, can inject novelty and digital literacy that may reinvigorate the functions of older ones [13]. According to their results, reverse mentoring is not only a mechanism of knowledge transfer but also a means of further growth in motivation and productivity. Conversely, according to the research of Madhavanprabhakaran *et al.*, (2022), although reverse mentoring can encourage intergenerational learning, it may not be as effective in highly hierarchical or conservative careers and occupations, such as nursing [14]. They advise that age stereotyping and hierarchy might not make open communication easier, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the model unless a strong organizational culture and leadership support backs it. Meanwhile, as Valle, Lorduy-Arellano, and Porras-Gonzalez (2022) promote, reverse mentoring can be a revolutionary pedagogy. Their analysis of in-service teachers shows the impact younger mentors had in changing a decades-old belief in language teaching. Nevertheless, they agree that preserving credibility and respect between intergenerational mentors and mentees is challenging [15]. Overall, the literature indicates that reverse mentoring is a promising yet sensitive model. The ability of HR to interact with the norms of different generations, work with perceptions, and establish psychologically safe teaching conditions determines its success.

Reverse mentorship is mutually beneficial as long as the relational dynamics and the learning objectives are built into it. They focus on the significance of trust building and explicit expectations in reducing the tension related to hierarchy. This also advances the belief that effective mentorship requires more than the allocation of roles; it also necessitates a shift in organizational culture that embraces mutual learning and dedication to development, particularly in cross-generational relations.

HR's role in knowledge management

According to Matějka and Kor Stan (2024), Human Resource professionals play a key role in intergenerational knowledge transfer through the design of learning activities that create a learning environment conducive to collaborative learning experiences. According to them, HR can serve as a facilitator between cohorts of multiple generations by crafting developmental models that combine formal training and informal learning [16]. Their paper emphasizes the importance of experience-sharing programs that bridge the generation of learning preferences in facilitated settings. Conversely, HR might play an overrated role in the absence of a serious pedagogical design (Boluk and Miller, 2021). They claim that unless HR creates mentorship within the broader strategic contextual framework, in terms of tying it to institutional learning objectives and pedagogic inclusivity, mentoring programs will be performative [17]. They emphasize that effective intergenerational knowledge transfer requires participatory models in which the younger and older workers remain equally powerful.

In line with this debate, which Madhavanprabhakaran *et al.*, (2022) further argue, HR should not only facilitate the logistical aspects of reverse mentoring but also help overcome the deep-seated generation biases that hinder trust and knowledge transfer. They call for HR interventions that promote psychological safety, build mutual respect, and incentivize open communication. Taken together, the literature reflects consensus on HR's critical role yet diverges on how deeply HR must embed intergenerational learning into the organization's core knowledge management strategy [18]. The knowledge management efforts often fail when HR overlooks informal knowledge networks, such as peer communities and social learning groups. They recommend that HR should actively map and support these organic systems to supplement formal programs. Integrating mentorship into these networks can ensure knowledge flows more authentically, especially across generational lines, and enhances retention and innovation by embedding learning in daily organizational routines.

Literature Gap

Despite growing interest in intergenerational knowledge exchange, limited research critically examines how HR operationalizes mentorship and reverse mentorship, specifically between Millennials and Gen Z. Existing studies often generalize generational dynamics or focus on single-directional models, underscoring the need for a deeper exploration of HR's strategic role in reciprocal mentoring frameworks.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a Qualitative, Exploratory Research Design, employing Secondary Data sources to investigate the role of mentorship and reverse mentorship in facilitating knowledge exchange between Millennials and Generation Z, with a particular focus on the role of Human Resource Management (HRM). Qualitative Research is well-suited to exploring complex social phenomena such as intergenerational dynamics and organizational behavior, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the underlying processes [19]. The exploratory nature of the study is indicative of the evolving discussions about generational learning styles, mentoring, and the role of HR in bridging the generation gap.

A Secondary Research approach is employed, drawing on available literature, practitioner reports, and case studies from peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and organizational white papers. There was no primary data in this study. This approach was selected to refer to a diversity of academic and practical sources and maintain academic and ethical integrity [20]. Secondary sources will enable a streamlined synthesis of current knowledge, which is especially true given the newness of reverse mentorship and the apparent lack of empirical data on this particular generational issue.

Thematic Analysis was employed as the primary method of data interpretation. Based on the framework by Braun and Clarke (2006), the coding of relevant literature was conducted to identify common trends and themes regarding knowledge-sharing behavior, mentorship outcomes, and HR interventions. The induction generated themes grounded in the data while also being informed by the theoretical focus of Social Learning Theory and Knowledge Management Theory [21]. This will allow the finding of conceptual connections between attributes of various generations, approaches to mentorship, and HRM. The reason behind selecting thematic analysis is its flexibility and suitability for synthesizing diverse qualitative information.

It particularly works well in identifying convergence and divergence in views of the literature, thus meeting the study's objective of learning about the models of mentorship as well as those of HR facilitating it. Overall, this methodology enables a robust and theoretically informed exploration of the interplay between generational dynamics and HR-led knowledge exchange strategies.

Data Analysis

Communication and collaboration styles across generations

Statista (2025) reveals that 40% of Gen Z and 38% of Millennials use Social Media for customer service, indicating a preference for digital-first communication among both cohorts [22]. This data illustrates how younger employees favor instant, flexible channels. Millennials balance email and social media, whereas Gen Z prioritizes chatbots, instant messaging, and visual short-form videos (e.g., 70% of Gen Z prefer short-form videos). Analyzing this through the lens of Objective 1, these preferences reflect inherent differences in knowledge acquisition and interaction styles. Millennials' hybrid approach aligns with their learning expectations of structure and feedback, while Gen Z's preference for immediacy and brevity suggests adaptability to rapid, context-rich exchanges. These findings affirm the Literature Review's assertions concerning divergent generational styles but add quantitative nuance [23]. They also underscore organizational implications: HR must design communication frameworks that accommodate multi-channel engagement, ensuring knowledge flows through both synchronous (e.g., face-to-face) and asynchronous (e.g., messaging, video) methods.

Reddit contributors note that Millennials favor a formal tone via email and structured platforms, whereas Gen Z prefers a casual, concise tone via instant messaging and social media. This qualitative evidence reinforces the quantitative data, confirming generational differences exist but are context-sensitive [24]. The theme aligns strongly with Objective 1 by clarifying the generational differences in knowledge-sharing traits: structured versus instant, formal versus informal. It also links to earlier literature but adds new empirical clarity where the literature argues for generational distinction, and the analysis specifies exact communication modalities and usage rates. Therefore, the strategic role of HR is to create multi-modal communication spaces that fill the communication gap between generations, facilitating effective mentorship and knowledge transfer.

In addition to the platform differences, cross-generational communication also reveals differences in expectations for feedback, tone, and hierarchical relationships. Structured corporate culture tends to shape Millennials' appreciation for positive feedback cycles and clarity in workflow [25]. In contrast, Gen Z, which has evolved into a decentralized, agile digital culture, demands promptness, the informality of feedback, and bottom-up, rather than top-down, communication. This change signals a broader shift in organizational culture, where HR must not only adapt to but also serve as a moderator of these new expectations. The success of knowledge sharing is thus dependent on the HR's skills to establish psychologically safe environments where both generations can be treated with respect and facilitated to be listened to, thereby limiting miscommunication and promoting inclusive, inter-generational communication that maintains mentorship interactions.

Mentorship impact on skills development

According to Statista data, the implemented formal mentoring programs yielded a significant productivity improvement of 72%, and protégés who participated experienced a 19% higher statistical chance of advancing their role in the profession than non-participants [26]. Moreover, employees who participate in a formal mentorship program report more pronounced career development strategies and role effectiveness, and 75 percent of them say that mentoring has allowed them to grow as professionals. These quantitative findings align with Objective 2 by demonstrating the concrete benefits of mentorship on skill enhancement. The 72% productivity gain demonstrates how knowledge transfer through mentoring not only elevates individual performance but also enhances organizational efficiency [27].

Similarly, the increased clarity around career progression highlights the importance of longitudinal development, which HR can strategically foster. Analyzing this theme alongside our earlier literature review reveals strong consistency yet adds measurable value. The literature has defined the positive impact of mentorship on career outcomes; here, the data substantiates these claims with precise gains. The study posited that reverse mentoring enhances work engagement, and skills data confirms this, as mentorship yields both productivity and promotional benefits.

However, the variance in adoption rates, from 56% to 71% of organizations offering to mentor, suggests uneven implementation, reflecting caution that insufficient pedagogical integration may undercut program efficacy [28]. In educational settings, reverse mentoring has been shown to support professional learning, which aligns with these organizational metrics. Nevertheless, the data also expose a potential disjunction: while structured mentoring boosts skills, nearly half of employees, including Millennials and Gen Z, still lack access to such programs, as 56% report having no mentor. This lack presents both a challenge and an opportunity for HR to close the gap through inclusive mentorship policies.

These findings align with the assertions in the literature about the benefits of mentorship, providing empirical specificity that is often lacking in qualitative accounts. While prior studies have emphasized engagement and motivation, the data offer quantifiable confirmation, particularly in the link between formal programs and promotion, which enhances understanding of how mentorship achieves objective two by measurably improving skills development.

In addition to career advancement, mentorship influences critical soft skills, such as adaptability, resilience, and emotional intelligence essential competencies in volatile and hybrid work environments [29]. These dimensions, although less tangible, underpin long-term professional success and reinforce intergenerational learning as mutually beneficial. Mentors refine leadership and coaching capabilities, while mentees enhance critical thinking and networking proficiencies. HR must, therefore, position mentorship not as a transactional or compliance-driven activity but as a developmental strategy embedded within the organizational learning culture. Embedding reflective practices, feedback loops, and recognition mechanisms can deepen skills transfer, ensuring the continuity and relevance of expertise across generational cohorts and enhancing succession readiness.

HR Interventions and Outcomes

Organizations with formal mentoring programs are 67% more likely to be financially solvent, and such initiatives can boost employee engagement by up to 82% while increasing retention by around 22% [30]. These statistics underscore the significant impact HR can have through the strategic deployment of intergenerational mentoring frameworks. Financial stability and employee engagement are both critical HR outcomes directly influenced by knowledge exchange initiatives.

Statista data further reveal that 72% of Diversity Inc's top 50 companies have implemented reverse mentoring, resulting in a notable 33% increase in profitability for those with culturally diverse leadership teams [31]. This suggests that HR's facilitation of reverse mentorship is not only an equality measure but a measurable driver of organizational performance, performance underpinned by enhanced cross-generational understanding and shared competencies.

Additionally, Fortune firms run mentorship programs that feature mentored leaders who report revenue growth and profit increases. This highlights the importance of scale and of implementing structured, outcomes-driven mentoring practices as advocated by HR. These quantitative findings align well with our third objective of evaluating HR-driven outcomes [32]. While the literature review captures HR's role conceptually, these data provide clear links between HR interventions and concrete outcomes. For instance, a study warning that mentorship can remain performative unless fully integrated into strategic HR processes is borne out here: highly successful programs correlate with measurable returns.

In comparison with prior qualitative findings, this data offers new clarity but also some divergence. Where previous research had focused on the intrinsic value of mentoring—greater levels of diversity, inclusiveness, and engagement—the quantitative data can verify that such dividends pay off in bottom lines and retention indicators on the ground. Theoretically, this theme relates to Objective 1, concerning the benefits of the HR-designed mentoring framework, as it is not only instrumental in sharing knowledge but also leads to quantifiably improved organizational performance, engagement, and stability. It aligns generational communication preferences with institutional necessities, strengthening the strategic nature of HR [33].

Accordingly, HR interventions are not just facilitative, but they are also critical business-oriented organizational levers that connect mentoring initiatives to bottom-line business results. The figures support the literature review's conceptual claims about HR's central presence in shaping the results of mentorship while also providing empirical validation, specifically measurable increases in involvement, loyalty, and profitability, which could not be established in prior qualitative debates.

The stewardship of HR also involves fostering a culture of continuous learning beyond formal mentorship systems. Long-term relevance and buy-in depend on the strategic alignment of mentoring with organizational values and key performance indicators [34]. By documenting and evaluating performance appraisals, leadership pipelines, and diversity indicators about mentorship results, HR can institutionalize learning as a strategic asset rather than a discretionary program.

Moreover, effective interventions typically depend on HR's ability to assess and refine mentoring models based on evidence-based learning. This iterative improvement cycle does more than enhance program impact; it also helps place HR as a proactive force of change, utilizing adaptive knowledge strategies in multigenerational workforces.

Discussion

The results of the three themes provide detailed insights into the Research Questions. According to Theme 1, Communication and Collaboration Styles, Millennials tend to direct and use digital communication, whereas Gen Z is more oriented to visual, rapid, and socially responsible interaction. This directly addresses the first Research Question by highlighting the generational differences in knowledge-sharing traits and interaction styles. Theme 2 Mentorship's Impact on Skills Development confirms that both generations benefit from knowledge exchange: Millennials from digital agility and Gen Z from contextual understanding and soft skills. This addresses the second Research Question by illustrating how HR-enabled mentorship fosters mutual learning and upskilling.

Theme 3, HR Interventions and Outcomes, provides quantifiable evidence linking HR-driven mentoring strategies to positive organizational outcomes, including increased engagement, retention, and financial growth. This contributes to the third Research Question by identifying successful HR practices, challenges, and organizational benefits associated with intergenerational mentorship. Collectively, the themes confirm that strategic mentorship and reverse mentorship facilitate bidirectional learning and intergenerational cohesion, with HR playing a central role in operationalizing and sustaining these frameworks.

In comparison with the literature review, the thematic findings demonstrate both alignment and divergence with the existing literature, offering a nuanced understanding of intergenerational mentorship. Firstly, the findings regarding communication styles support Widen *et al.,* (2020), who suggested that Millennials prefer structured, collaborative platforms while Gen Z favors instantaneous and visual communication tools [10]. Statista's data expands this view by quantifying preferred platforms, such as Gen Z's dominant use of TikTok and visual communication apps, aligning with the qualitative assumptions but adding specificity.

However, Rudolph *et al.,* (2021) argued against overgeneralizing generational traits, cautioning that preferences are often shaped more by context than by birth cohort [11]. This caution remains relevant but is somewhat

challenged by the empirical consistency in the communication preferences identified in the data.

Secondly, in the area of mentorship models, as emphasized by Madhavanprabhakaran *et al.*, (2022), reverse mentorship is a means by which older generations can adopt digital skills. The findings support this, confirming that reverse mentorship enhances the adaptability of Gen X and Millennials to technological tools [14]. The data analysis also reveals reverse benefits for Gen Z, who acquire emotional intelligence, organizational knowledge, and leadership exposure elements underexplored in the existing literature.

As noted by Valle *et al.*, (2022) in their focus on reverse mentoring as a tool for changing pedagogical beliefs, our study extends this impact to skill development in broader corporate settings [15]. In terms of HR's role in facilitating knowledge management, as argued by Matějka and Kořán (2024), HR is pivotal in fostering structured intergenerational learning through the development of tailored policies. This is substantiated by our findings, which demonstrate a positive correlation between HR-led mentorship programs and increased retention, diversity, and financial outcomes [16].

However, as warned by Boluk and Miller (2021), such initiatives risk becoming tokenistic unless integrated into a broader organizational strategy. This concern is reflected in our theme findings, particularly where reverse mentorship is implemented ad hoc or inconsistently. Quantitative data from Statista strengthen the literature's conceptual claims [17]. For example, the finding that 97.5% of Fortune 500 firms use mentorship programs supports the broad assertions made in earlier research. Yet, it also introduces a new dimension, one largely absent from the qualitative literature, by linking these practices to measurable outcomes, such as profitability and retention. This reveals a limitation in existing literature: a tendency to focus on theoretical benefits without empirical validation. The themes largely confirm but also extend and challenge the reviewed literature. The key advancement offered by this study lies in its empirical linkage of mentoring practices with strategic HR outcomes, bridging a notable gap between theoretical advocacy and organizational evidence.

- **Implications:** This study highlights the strategic value of mentorship and reverses the traditional role of mentorship as a tool for HR to bridge generational divides and enhance knowledge sharing. For HR practitioners, the findings underscore the need to integrate these frameworks into organizational learning and development strategies [35]. Structured mentoring not only enhances communication and skill transfer between Millennials and Gen Z but also contributes to employee engagement, innovation, and long-term organizational performance. The evidence suggests that HR should prioritize the design of mentorship programs that are reciprocal, inclusive, and aligned with organizational goals to maximize the benefits of intergenerational knowledge exchange.
- **Limitations:** This research is limited by its exclusive reliance on Secondary Data, which may not fully capture the lived experiences or contextual nuances of mentorship practices within individual organizations. The rich Thematic Analysis is limited by the extent and quality of already available literature and data [36]. Furthermore, the research focuses solely on Anglo-American settings, which may overlook any cultural factors that contribute to generational differences and HR practices. Such findings are valid and should be extended in future studies by using primary data collected through interviews or surveys in other cultures and organizational contexts.

Conclusion and future research directions

The proposed study aims to investigate how mentorship and reverse mentorship can be utilized to facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer between Millennials and Generation Z, as well as the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in enabling this process. The study reviewed generational communication styles, the effects of mentoring on skill acquisition, and the organizational outcomes of HR interventions, employing a Qualitative, Secondary-data-based Thematic Analysis. The findings indicate that, although Millennials and Gen Z share specific common values, they differ significantly in their approaches to communication and learning preferences. Gen Z prefers quick, digital, and socially aware communication, while Millennials prefer organized communication and professional development. Such variations highlight the need to resort to customized mentorship strategies, enabling effective knowledge transfer.

The study also revealed that reverse mentorship offers mutual benefits. Gen Z members bring digital fluency and innovation, while Millennials bring contextual, emotional, and organizational knowledge. This teamwork also promotes personal expertise and group bonding. HR plays a central role in enabling these dynamics, and formal mentorship programs are associated with greater retention, diversity, engagement, and overall organizational performance. Despite these insights, some areas for further exploration remain. First, the use of secondary data narrows the capacity to collect qualitative and subjective experiences of mentors. Future research should also utilize primary data sources, such as interviews, focus groups, or longitudinal case studies, to gain deeper insights into the personal and organizational effects of mentorship.

Secondly, this research study was largely Western-centric in its cultural aspects, primarily using Anglo-American cases. Future studies should consider intergenerational mentoring in non-Western or multicultural organizational contexts, where generational values and expectations in the workplace can vary significantly. Additionally, future researchers may investigate the long-term effects of reverse mentoring on leadership, innovation, and employee satisfaction. Knowing how these interventions evolve would help present a more comprehensive picture of their strategic value. Generally, this study supports the viability of mentorship and reverse mentorship as pivotal aspects of HRM, which can bridge generational gaps and establish a sustainable organizational learning culture.

Reference

1. Rudolph CW, Rauvola RS, Costanza DP, Zacher H. Generations and generational differences: Debunking myths in organizational science and practice and paving new paths forward. J Bus Psychol. 2021 Dec;36:945-67.
2. Woodfield PJ, Husted K. Sharing knowledge across generations and its impact on innovation. Wine Bus J. 2022 Jan 7;5(1):88-103.

3. da Luz DO, Boente AN, dos Santos Viana AM, da Silva Ferreira VM. Cross-mentoring reward models: strategies for enhancing intergenerational engagement and retention. Caderno Pedagógico. 2024 Sep 25;21(9):e8303.
4. Alexander A, Martin DP, Manolchev C, Miller K. University-industry collaboration: using meta-rules to overcome barriers to knowledge transfer. J Technol Transfer. 2020 Apr;45(2):371-92.
5. Masruri LG, Muqofa MR, Afkhari MH, Hilman MZ, Aprila MF. Strategic Human Resource Management in a Knowledge-Based Economy: Optimizing Talent Lifecycle Dynamics. OIKOS. 2025 Jun 27;17(2):199-216.
6. Firmansyah D, Saepuloh D. Social learning theory: Cognitive and behavioral approaches. J Ilm Pendid Holist (JIPH). 2022 Dec;1(3):297-324.
7. Pendergast D, Deagon J. Rapid response and lockdown learnings Home economics, the global pandemic 2020, and beyond. Int J Home Econ, 2020 Jul 1, p. 1.
8. Edwards JS. Where knowledge management and information management meet: Research directions. Int J Info Manag. 2022 Apr 1;63:102458.
9. Ferreira J, Mueller J, Papa A. Strategic knowledge management: theory, practice and future challenges. J Knowl Manag. 2020 Mar 12;24(2):121-6.
10. Widen G, Ahmad F, Siven T, Ivantsova E. Understanding generational differences in knowledge sharing. In: Proceedings of the European Conference on Knowledge Management, 2020 Dec 1, p. 841-849. ACIL.
11. Rudolph CW, Rauvola RS, Costanza DP, Zacher H. Generations and generational differences: Debunking myths in organizational science and practice and paving new paths forward. J Bus Psychol. 2021 Dec;36:945-67.
12. Khattak SR, Rahman SU, Saleem Z, Fayaz M, Fayaz M, Iqbal K. Reverse Mentoring: Improving Technological Skills of Older Peers: A Moderated Mediation Approach. Multicult Educ. 2021;7(4):248-60.
13. Garg N, Murphy W, Singh P. Reverse mentoring, job crafting and work-outcomes: the mediating role of work engagement. Career Dev Int. 2021 May 4;26(2):290-308.
14. Madhavanprabhakaran G, Francis F, Labrague LJ. Reverse mentoring and intergenerational learning in nursing: bridging generational diversity. Sultan Qaboos Univ Med J. 2022 Nov 7;22(4):472.
15. Valle L, Lorduy-Arellano D, Porras-González N. Using reverse mentoring to transform in-service teachers' beliefs about how to teach english. Profile Issues Teach Prof Dev. 2022 Jun;24(1):63-76.
16. Matějka M, Kořán R. Intergenerational exchange: Connecting learning experiences across generations. R&E-SOURCE. 2024 Mar 5:165-75.
17. Boluk KA, Miller MC. Intergenerational mentorship in pedagogical design and delivery. SCHOLE. 2021 Jul 3;36(1-2):26-41.
18. Madhavanprabhakaran G, Francis F, Labrague LJ. Reverse mentoring and intergenerational learning in nursing: bridging generational diversity. Sultan Qaboos Univ Med J. 2022 Nov 7;22(4):472.
19. Olawale SR, Chinagozi OG, Joe ON. Exploratory research design in management science: A review of literature on conduct and application. Int J Res Innov Soc Sci. 2023;7(4):1384-95.
20. Twis MK, Miller VJ, Cronley C, Fields N. Collecting qualitative data through mobile applications: A multiple case study report. J Tech Human Serv. 2020 Jan 2;38(1):38-53.
21. Mezmir EA. Qualitative data analysis: An overview of data reduction, data display, and interpretation. Res Human Soc Sci. 2020 Nov 30;10(21):15-27.
22. Statista. Use of social media in the customer journey worldwide 2024, by generation [Internet]. 2025. [Accessed 2025 Jul 5]., Available from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1568072/use-of-social-media-in-the-customer-journey-by-generation/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
23. Chan CK, Lee KK. The AI generation gap: Are Gen Z students more interested in adopting generative AI such as ChatGPT in teaching and learning than their Gen X and millennial generation teachers? Smart Learn Environ. 2023 Nov 15;10(1):60.
24. Browne I. Exploring Reverse Mentoring; "Win-Win" Relationships in the Multi-Generational Workplace. Int J Evid Based Coac Ment, 2021 Jan 2, p. 15.
25. Sruk B. How Millennials are changing organizations and business models-New values, new principles, new culture. In: Dubrovnik Int Econ Meet. 2020 Apr 10;5(1):101-108. Sveučilište u Dubrovniku.
26. Mentorloop. Mentoring Statistics You Need to Know-2025 [Internet], 2025. Available from: https://mentorloop.com/blog/mentoring-statistics/?utm_source=chatgpt.com [Accessed 2025 Jul 5].
27. Bozak A. Instructional Reverse Mentoring: A Practice Proposal for Teachers' Understanding the "Z" and "Alpha" Generations' Learning Perspectives. Online Submiss. 2021;12(43):114-142.
28. Srivastava S, Shyam KC. Reverse Mentoring as Digital Pathway to Growth: A Framework-based Approach. Ind J Train Dev, 2023, p. 69.
29. Malladi NS, Renuka A. Mentorship and Coaching: Cultivating Next-Generation Tech Product Leaders. Int J Sci Res Arch. 2024;13(01):1059-1080.
30. Togetherplatform. Impact of Mentoring on Employee Engagement and Retention: Lessons from CEOs [Internet], 2024. Available from: https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/impact-of-mentoring-on-employee-engagement-and-retention [Accessed 2025 Jul 5].
31. Ingale A. HRM Strategies For Effectively Managing Workplaces With Multiple Generations. SSRN. 2024 Nov 15;5029947.
32. Chaudhary HK, Ahmed MS, Abidi SA. Multi-generational workforce management: Fostering Collaboration, Knowledge Transfer, and Employee Satisfaction across Generations. Rev J Soc Psychol Soc Work. 2025 Apr 26;3(2):813-20.
33. Keerthana Rao C, Karve S, Gupta K. Conceptual Model of Reverse Mentoring. Indian J Train Dev. 2022;52(4):20-29.
34. Adeniyi IS, Al Hamad NM, Adewusi OE, Unachukwu CC, Osawaru B, Onyebuchi CN, *et al*. Organizational culture and leadership development: A human resources

review of trends and best practices. Magna Sci Adv Res Rev. 2024;10(1):243-255.
35. George B, Thomas SA, Sharma A, Reddy DL, Basha SH. The Role of Strategic HRM in Organizational Performance: A Comprehensive Review. Acta Sci Agric. 2024;7(1):645-658.
36. Christou PA. How to use thematic analysis in qualitative research. J Qual Res Tour. 2022 Dec 1;3(2):79-95.