

# Influence of Behavioural Training on Interpersonal Competence with Reference to Generation X Managers

Prof S. Ganesan, Ph.D.\*  
Director General, Suguna Spark Business School, Coimbatore  
Mail: dg@sugunaspark.in

Dr. R.Krishnamurthi'  
Corporate Trainer, IMPACT, Coimbatore.  
Mail: krishnatrg@yahoo.in

## Abstract

“Generation X” is phrase that has gained entry into modern management literature. Generation X managers are expected to shoulder leadership responsibilities to steer future organizations towards excellence. However, not much research work has been carried out in Indian context to study the characteristics and preferences of Generation X and influence behavioural training on their interpersonal competence. Hence a study was conducted to study the influence of behavioural training on the interpersonal competence of Generation X managers. Data for the study were collected from 243 Generation X managers from a population of 353. The respondents were from nine companies that belonged to seven manufacturing industries. This paper presents the profile of Generation X managers, establishes the need of the study, the methodology adapted to collect the data for the study and discusses the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** Generation X, Interpersonal Competence, Behavioural Training

## Introduction

Generation X (Gen X) can be traced back to Douglas Coupland (1991) who wrote about late boomers and gave them the title ‘Generation X’. The usage of the name can also be attributed to media that popularised the phrase during the mid 1990s. Generation X, also known as “baby busters”, have grown up in times of rapid changes. Hurt more by parental divorce, and having witnessed corporate downsizing firsthand, they tend to be independent, cynical and do not expect the security of long-term employment says Cascio (2003). They began to project an image of a generation of people who were angry, cynical, frustrated and unmotivated.

A review of the literature on Gen X revealed that there is no single accepted age range for individuals born after the Baby Boomers. According to Cannon (1997), the label ‘Generation X’ is coined from the Canadian novelist Douglas Coupland’s 1991 novel *Generation X* and Strauss and Howe (1991) put Generation X birth years from 1961 to 1981. Tulgan (1995) reported that the age range of Gen X was from 1963 to 1981. According to Collins (2000) some researchers marked Gen X as people born between 1960 and 1979. Much of the literature, according to McShane and Von Glinov (2005), accepts that Generation X employees are those born between 1965 and 1975. For this study, the age range between 1965 and 1977 as identified by Cascio (2003) was considered.

## Need of the Study

A study by the Institute of Management Accountants found that ‘interpersonal skills’ were most important for success as professional accountants. Professional accounting practices, claimed Akers and Porter (2003), had placed little emphasis on behavioral issues such as interpersonal relationships although human behavior underlined most of what was written and taught about professional accounting. Lacey (1982) found that the ability called ‘Interpersonal Competence’ was particularly important in white collar and managerial positions where most work hours were spent working with others. A study by Williams and Sternberg (1998) showed that interpersonal skills and group member compatibility were indispensable to performance. It is understood, from the literature survey, that people could be trained to be interpersonally competent. It was decided to carry out a study to find the correlation between the hours of behavioural training programmes undergone by Gen X managers and the levels of their IC and also the differences in levels among the various dimensions of IC.

Interpersonal Competence (IC) is defined by Buhrmester and Wittenberg (1988) as: “Relating well to all kinds of people (both within and across groups) regardless of level, inside or outside of organization, building effective relationships, using tact and diplomacy when dealing with and interacting with others, working effectively with others to achieve common goals.” Chris Argyris emphasized the importance of interpersonal competence in the workplace in 1962. What he envisioned is relevant even in the present day workplace. “Without interpersonal competence or a ‘psychologically safe’ environment, the organization is a breeding ground for mistrust,

intergroup conflict, rigidity and so on, which in turn lead to a decrease in organizational success in problem solving.”

Behavioural Training included programmes on: Assertiveness, Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership, Listening, Managerial Skills, Mentoring, Motivation, Neuro Linguistic Programming, People Management, Personal Effectiveness, Positive Mental Attitude, Stress Management, Team work and Transactional Analysis. The respondents were requested to mention the hours of the above said programmes attended by them till then.

### Methodology

Data for this research study were collected from 243 respondents who were born between 1965 and 1977. There were in managerial positions in nine manufacturing companies. ‘Interpersonal Competence’ questionnaire designed by the Researcher was used to measure the interpersonal competence of the respondents. The instrument comprised 83 items with five point scale ranging from ‘Very Strongly Disagree (1 point) to ‘Very Strongly Agree’ (5 points). Hence, minimum and maximum scores were 83 and 415 respectively.

### Discussions

The respondents were grouped into three levels based on the mean scores of the hours of training programmes attended by them.

Table 1.1 IC With Reference To Behavioural Training Programmes

Levels	Number of Respondents				Mean Values
	Training Attended	%	IC Scores	%	
Low	42	17.28	28	11.52	247.42
Medium	160	65.85	176	72.43	288.98
High	41	16.87	39	16.05	322.54
Total	243	100	243	100	-

42 respondents, as shown in Table 1.1, belonged to group ‘Low’ as per the number of hours of training programmes attended. But 28 respondents belonged to group ‘Low’ according to their mean scores of IC. 41 respondents belonged to group ‘High’ as per the number of hours of training programmes attended. But 39 respondents belonged to group ‘High’ as per their mean scores of EI. This shows that ‘Low’ became further low and ‘High’ remained high. The frequency details show correlation between hours of training and IC. The mean values of IC show that there was positive correlation between hours of training attended by the respondents and their IC. A hypothesis was formulated to verify the correlation statistically. It was: ‘There is correlation between the hours of behavioural training programmes attended by Gen X managers and their IC.’

**NH:** Gen X managers who attended varied hours of behavioural training programmes have same level of IC.

**AH:** Gen X managers who attended varied hours of behavioural training programmes do not have same level of IC.

The hours of behavioural training programmes attended by the respondents had an influence on their IC. To verify the validity of this statement, the present study factored the respondents into three groups as High, Medium and Low based on the mean values and standard deviations of the hours of behavioural training programmes attended by them. ANOVA test was applied to verify the significance in differences among the groups.

Table 1.2 Analysis Of Variance In IC Among Training Groups

Attribute	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Result
<b>IC</b>						
Between Groups	52627.83	2	26313.91	36.04	0.000	<0.05- hypothesis rejected
Within Groups	175217.40	240	730.07			
Total	227845.23	242				

From the analysis of the result of ANOVA test, as given in Table 1.2, it is concluded that there was correlation between the hours of behavioural training programmes attended by the respondents and their IC as the difference

in values within the groups is significant. Since the difference was significant the null hypothesis ‘Gen X managers who attended varied hours of behavioural training programmes have same level of IC’ was rejected. Post-Hoc analysis was conducted to find out the differences in IC within the groups –Highest, Medium and Lowest- and whether the correlation was positive or negative.

From the Post-Hoc analysis, as given in Table 1.3, the following results are derived. Respondents from the group that had attended the maximum hours of behavioural training programmes (High) had significantly higher level of IC than the respondents who belonged to the groups Medium and Low. Though differences existed in IC among the respondents from other groups, they were not significant.

Table 1.3 Differences In IC Among Training Groups

Attribute	Group	M.D	Sig.	Result
Interpersonal Competence	High			< 0.05- difference is significant
	Low	35.11*	0.000	
	Medium	33.55*		

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

So, it is concluded that there is a positive correlation between the hours of training attended by Gen X managers and their IC. An extensive literature survey of previous research works revealed that there was positive correlation between training programmes and the levels of IC. Many research studies substantiated the correlation between training and relationship building. Bob Wall’s (2007) principle of leadership training is an element of a successful leadership programme that includes teaching leaders how to develop close relationships with their direct reports. The finding of this research study, training had an influence on interpersonal relationships on Gen X managers, is in line with the views of previous research studies.

### Conclusion

It was established by the study that there was positive correlation between behavioural training and IC of the respondents. The group that attended maximum number of hours of training had the highest IC and the group that attended the minimum number of hours of training had the lowest IC. So, it is concluded that Gen X managers are receptive to training on Interpersonal Competence.

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