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The Effectiveness of Transformational Leadership: A Qualitative-Based Study on Millennial Perceptions in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article/study is to examine whether the individualistic nature of millennials undermines the efforts of transformational leadership in achieving organizational objectives. **Design/methodology/approach** - The study adopted a qualitative research method with a semi-structured interview approach, using 10 millennial professionals in South Africa. The participants had attained at least two years of work experience across different industries with diverse specialisms. The Interviews were transcribed and a thematic analysis was adopted to analyze the data. **Findings** - The findings revealed that where organizational objectives and millennials aspirations conflict, a leader's ability to creatively manage and motivate millennials to prioritize the organization's goals over their ambitions, will result in a productive outcome for both. Thus, the argument that leaders who show caring dispositions, provide frequent feedback as well as recognize the contribution of millennials; are strategically placed, to lead them in re-orienting their aspirations towards the realization of organizational goals. **Originality/Value** - Although some studies have proposed that follower characteristics may moderate the effectiveness of transformational leadership, there is little/no empirical research to confirm this proposition. However, this study/article contributes to the transformational leadership debate, contending that millennials are organizational asset possessing creative, novel and proactive energy, which should be managed in the broader context of organizational objectives to enhance their welfare and that of the organization respectively.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, millennials, motivation, individualistic nature and 21st century workplace

INTRODUCTION

Within the modern working environment, the workforce are variedly described as Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y (also known as millennials) (Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012; Van Rossem, 2018).

The latest generation to enter the workforce is the millennial generation who continue to enter the workplace at an increasing rate (Dulin, 2008; Stewart et.al, 2017). Inquiry into how this millennials are managed coupled with their expectations of leadership practices, have been examined in some circles (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Anderson et al., 2018). Studies showed that millennials have different attitudes and expectations towards the workplace than previous generations (Anderson et al., 2018; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). For example, Boomers prefer leaders who are dependable and Generation X prefers leaders who are perceptive whilst millennials tend to associate with authenticity (Anderson et al., 2018; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). This raises the question whether current leadership theories and practices are relevant in addressing the expectation of the millennials at the work place.

Transformational leadership style has gained popularity over the years because it adopts different approaches in motivating followers than other leadership styles (Yukl, 1999; Jung, Chow and Wu, 2003). Studies have been conducted about transformational leadership over a wide range of disciplines- the military, business and education (Dvir et al., 2002; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Similarly, there is also a view that transformational leadership spans call-centre agents and senior managers (Grant, 2012; Bayler, 2012; Zhu, Avolio and Walumbwa, 2009). However, those studies have little exploration into transformational leadership from the perspectives of millennials, thus a gap exists in literature warranting this research. Notwithstanding this gap, there are arguments supporting as well as opposing the efficacy of transformational leadership (Masi and Cooke, 2000; Bronkhorst, Steijn and Vermeeren, 2015).

Harvey and Buckley (2002) acknowledged that a paradigm shift is occurring, and that the former management thinking no longer serves the changing landscape of contemporary business needs, especially leadership. Also, outdated and flawed beliefs continue to thrive in management sectors (Buckley et al., 2015). These beliefs are firmly entrenched and posed increasing challenges for management (Buckley et al., 2015). Conversely, there is a recognition in some academic circles proposing the need to re-evaluate current leadership theories and practices in order to offer alternative solutions that are congenial to promoting an environment in which millennials can be led and developed, creatively (Dulin, 2008; Anderson et al., 2018). Thus, as the millennial generation grows so its presence in the workplace deepens, thus organizational leadership needs to adapt its behavior to attract and retain this cohort and nurture them (Anderson et al., 2018; Naim and Lenka, 2018).

In light of the above, this article/study seeks to answer the above question as structured below: Literature review - leading the generational workforce; leadership underpinnings; transformational leadership approach; methodology, methods and analysis; discussion of results; leadership expectations; source of motivation; conflict of interests; millennial motivation; value as well as conclusions with implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a contemporary debate that expectations among millennials regarding leadership practices conflict with organizational values, particularly in South Africa. A generation is typically defined as a group of individuals born within a similar time period and who may share common social experiences (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). Each generation is shaped and influenced by a set of experiences and opportunities that affect their attitudes and behaviors (Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Yi et al., 2015). Studies suggest differences across generations with respect to

work values, work-life balance, teamwork preferences, career expectations and leadership preferences (Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Anderson et al., 2018; Chou, 2012). The Boomers grew up in the era of the civil rights and Women's movements and assassinations of political leaders, including the Vietnam War (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). These events contributed to shape most Boomers as 'results driven' and 'loyal to their employers' (Twenge et al., 2010). Traditionally, the Boomers preferred working in an environment which accommodates private breakaway and collaborative spaces (Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012).

Generation X is shaped by events such as higher rates of divorce, economic uncertainty and organizational downsizing (Twenge et al., 2010). These developments had implications for this generation by making it less committed to an organization since it seeks boundaries between work and family relations (Twenge et al., 2010). With respect to workplace style, this generation values individualistic tendencies and prefers separate spaces and personal workspaces (Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012).

Contrary, born and socialized in an age of technological evolution driven by the internet, and plagued by the financial recession and its association with business collapses, the millennial generation emerged as a unique group of workforce, needing a leadership that understands and is able to motivate them to realize the dual goals of organizational objectives and their personal aspirations (Twenge et al., 2010; Lyons and Kuron, 2014). These events not only formed millennials as 'digital natives', 'tech-savvy' but also earned them the accolade 'quick learners' (Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012). While this generation is recognized for their technological savvy-mindedness and confidence; they are also known for the frequency with which they change employers and employments. Thus, millennials prefer remote workplace style, flexibility, open and fun-oriented spaces, which hardly conform to hierarchical leadership and its structures (Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012).

The preceding debates resonate with the premise that the emergent workforce (millennials) have a set of workplace behaviours and expectations that are different from what past management and organizations have previously encountered (Dulin, 2008; Twenge and Campbell, 2008). Despite similarities across generations, it is often their differences that induce conflicts and problems within the workplace (Twenge and Campbell, 2008; Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012). Appreciating these varying attributes and qualities allow organizations to configure jobs, arrange work conditions and communal spaces that address the peculiar needs of this generation (Twenge et al., 2010; Bennett, Pitt and Price, 2012). To achieve productivity in an organization with millennial workforce requires creative leadership endowed with the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence, to deploy strategic goals in a manner that is sympathetic not only to the growth of the business but also promote the wellbeing of the workforce, beyond the vestiges of traditional management (Ofori and Sarpong, 2020).

LEADING THE GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

The value of having effective leaders in organizations underpins the capability to motivate, support and guide individuals (Grant, 2012; Yukl, 2012; Anderson et al., 2018). To understand millennials' expectation of leadership, it is critical that managerial and intuitive skills are harnessed to explore how leadership expectations can be deployed in harmony with this generations' ambitions (White and Saunders, 2017). According to Sessa et al., (2007) Boomers value leaders who are dependable, diplomatic and have a clear focus. In contrast, Generation X

prefer leaders who are good listeners, recognize their contribution while offering a partnership leadership style (Sessa et al., 2007; Bolden, 2011). However, among the millennial generation, leaders who provide enhanced support, opportunity for individualism coupled with open communication, are the best choice of leadership (Chou, 2012; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010 and Ofori, 2020). Undoubtedly, this characterization of the millennials present unique challenges and opportunities for organizations to deploy novel strategies to achieve intended targets as well as promote the development of this workforce.

The view that Millennials prefer constant feedback should be seen an opportunity for any organization seeking to provide discerning leadership so as to retain such talented group for growth and expansion (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010; Gallup, 2016). Some leaders manage this challenge intelligently by engaging those employees in a collaborative fashion and discuss their expectations through regular meetings, in order to achieve sustainable progress (Gallup, 2016; Twenge and Campbell, 2008). Adversely, without sensible leadership, impatient and over-ambitious millennials may engage in unrealistic and over-ambitions programs intended to gain fast promotion; and as a consequence, derail the organization's prospects (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010; Torsello, 2019). Equally, the millennials preference for open communication may conflict with an organization's objective due to the hierarchical and formal communication processes, existing in the firm (Anderson et al., 2018). Positively, however, the millennials present opportunities for organizations through demonstration of technological prowess which can be creatively harnessed to advance the economic and social wellbeing of the organization (Anderson et al., 2018). Also, there is a suggestion that the millennial generation- which culturally encompass diverse and competitive workforce- represents an asset with which organizations can leverage the global market profitably (Anderson et al., 2018). This calls for creative and discerning leadership prowess able to manage the challenges and opportunities presented by the millennials so as to secure competitive advantage for the organization's future prosperity (Anderson et al., 2018).

The interplay between millennials' expectation of leadership and that of organizational objectives often induces tensions, warranting a review of existing leadership theories; so as to implement policies that promote the developmental needs of the millennials, in light of the 21st century (Anderson et al., 2018). Various perspectives have been proposed to reframe leadership theories and practices with a view to resolve the challenges confronting millennials in the fast changing terrain of workplace dynamics. While Dulin (2008) has suggested that the millennial generation prefers mentoring leadership; Chou (2012) examined leadership-follower styles of millennials, arguing that organizations and managers should structure a workplace that maximize the performance of this cohort. Recently, Anderson et al. (2018) have recommended five of the most commonly used leadership theories which need reframing so as to reflect the management of millennials. The recurring theme of these studies hinged on the premise that millennials have different expectations of leadership as opposed to the boomers (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010; Anderson et al., 2018; Chou, 2012). These studies demonstrated limitations of existing leadership theories and practices; thus, this new research is being conducted with a view to finding the appropriate leadership to manage millennials (Dinh et al., 2014).

LEADERSHIP UNDERPINNINGS

Leadership research spans various academic frontiers encompassing behavioral, traits, contingency models and transformational theories (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Dinh et al., 2014). Behavioral leadership theories aimed to explore aspects of leadership characteristics which motivate employees towards organizational goals (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Early studies sought to investigate concrete leadership behaviors that were effective in inspiring employees against those which are not (Yukl, 1989; Van Seters and Field, 1990). Conversely, trait leadership centered on the personal attributes that develop and shape the individual to assume leadership responsibilities or positions (Yukl, 1989; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). For example, early theories posited that individuals who possess traits such as: abundant energy, foresight, intelligence and persuasion are best candidates for leadership responsibilities (Yukl, 1989). On that premise, it has been stated that certain traits distinguished leaders from followers (Colbert et al., 2012). However, inconsistent results and subjective judgments from those various studies render that view untenable due to the difficulty in comparing those results across disciplines (Colbert et al., 2012; Yukl, 1989).

Contingency theories state that effective leadership is based on situational challenges (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014); and it examines how situations may define leadership in light of making critical decisions to resolve problems or to address the needs of followers (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015; Goleman, 2000; Sharma and Kirkman, 2015). Thus, Contingency theory recognizes that leadership is not a simple phenomenon as previous leadership theories suggest; but rather, entails various aspects of the subject (Van Seters and Field, 1990). Besides the above, those theories had been criticized due to the ambiguity of propositions and lack of explanations with respect to the different leadership styles and their impact on employees and organizational needs (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Transformational leadership theories emerged as evolutionary to the century-old versions. At its core, it seeks to influence followers through the agency of inspirational behavioral traits; namely: communicating a compelling vision, making followers aware of task outcomes, inspiring confidence whilst appealing to core values and emotional sentiments (Yizhong et al., 2019). The above elements undergird transformational leadership as an appealing and motivating force that induce followers to transcend their self-interest; so as, to acknowledge and perform organizational goals or policies, enthusiastically (Bass, 1999; Grant, 2012). Primarily, transformational leadership seeks to build follower commitment to organizational goals and objectives by empowering them to achieve both, concurrently (Mittal, 2015).

Some studies have explored the effectiveness of transformational leadership in relation to millennials. As a distinguishing feature, millennials require managerial support, including a sense of purpose at work and open communication styles. Transformational leadership has been recognized as an ideal leadership style that may address the needs of the millennial cohort in respect of the preceding discussion (Anderson et al., 2018; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). Although authoritative leadership styles are suitable for boomers; it has been stated, that such leadership is incapable of addressing the emergent needs of the current generation and its workplace. Often, this leadership style fails to achieve its intended objective because it morphs into an oppressive tool (Goleman, 2000). Thus, the millennial generation is keen to question the status-quo as antagonist to transformational leaders, which represent inspirational, valuable and ethical leadership (Twenge and Campbell, 2008). For these reasons, millennials

are likely to respond favorably to encouragement, challenging goals and creative thinking that transformational leadership embody (Bayler, 2012; Anderson et al., 2018). Consequently, this study aims to contribute valuably to expand the leadership debate by exploring millennials perceptions in the context of transformational leadership.

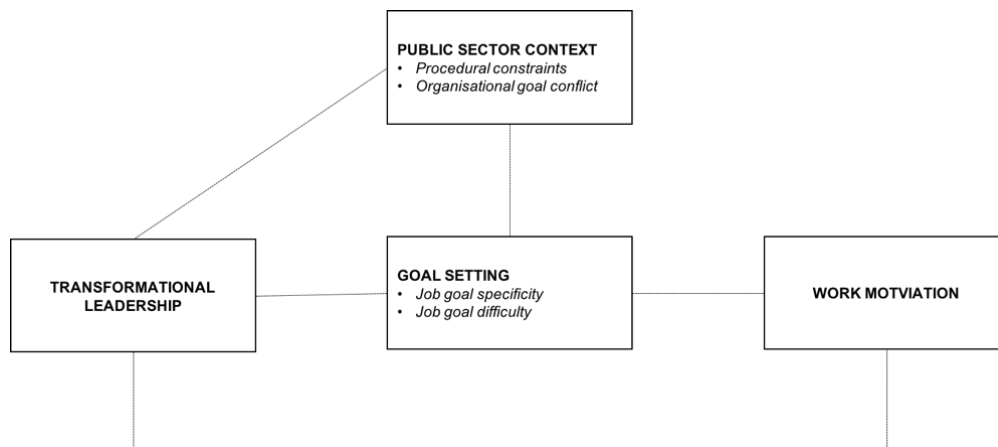
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Transformational leadership theories gained currency in the late 1980s (Gregory et. al, 2004; Dinh et al., 2014). The seminal work of Burns (Seligman, 1980), redefined leadership in an attempt to understand its significance in political contexts. First, the author introduced the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership (Seligman, 1980). Burns posited that transformational leadership prides itself at the highest echelon of leadership theories, stating that it pulls followers and leaders towards achieving a common goal (Seligman, 1980, p.155). Bass (1985), extended the concept of transformational leadership to business organizations and proposed that transformational leaders have the prowess to broaden, raise and change the self-interests tendencies of their followers to converge with a group's objectives. Accordingly, Bass (1990) also proposed that as organizations face continual disruption and uncertainty, transformational leadership skills are well suited to stem the tide. When faced with demands of change and renewal, Bass (1990) further explained that transformational leadership behaviors grant firms the flexibility to meet the changing environmental needs.

Conceptually, transformational leadership falls under four categories; namely: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1995). Individualized consideration depends on the leaders' understanding and developmental needs of followers whilst personalizing interactions through support, which assume the form of coaching and mentoring (Bass, 1999; Grant 2012). With Intellectual stimulation, leaders encourage followers to question the status-quo and think strategically to become more creative and innovative towards the organization as well as seek their developmental needs (Grant 2012; Jung, Chow and Wu, 2003). Idealized influence is the ability to communicate a sense of purpose to the followers in order to earn their respect (Grant, 2012). Inspirational motivation deals with the articulation of a captivating vision and the proposition of measures to achieve them (Bass, 1999; Grant 2012). These approaches suggest that transformational leadership has the capacity to improve the followers' personal growth, independence and empowerment within the context of organizational objectives (Kark, Shamir and Chen, 2003).

There is however an opposing argument that transformational leadership may not be effective in certain situations as advanced in preceding sections above (Avolio et al. 2004; Katou, 2015). Thus, this article seeks to examine the proposed effectiveness of transformational leadership through the prism of qualitative research with a view to expand the knowledge base towards developing the subject.

Figure 1, below is a conceptual model proposed by Bronkhorst, Steijn and Vermeeren (2015), showing the relationship between transformational leadership, goal setting and motivation.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model
(Bronkhorst, Steijn and Vermeeren, 2015)**

Although the study did not consider individualistic tendencies of followers, this current study seeks to explore the tendencies of followers.

Anderson et al. (2018) posited that the individualistic nature of millennials may diminish the efficacy of transformational leadership; however, some researchers have suggested that millennials are more individualistic than their previous generations (Twenge et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010). For example, they explained that millennials place less value on team-oriented outcomes; rather than their individualistic, unique traits and ambitions (Campione, 2015). This poses a challenge for management as individualistic tendencies may promote an attitude of 'win at all costs' (Twenge and Campbell, 2008; Twenge, 2010). The transformational leadership theory recognizes the role of individualized traits as a source of potential contribution to organizational growth; yet, it is difficult to explain how transcending one's own self-interest for the sake of an organization can be achieved in an environment where the former is given priority over organizational needs (Anderson et al. 2018). This explains the significance of adopting Bronkhorst et.al (2015) conceptual model in this study.

The issue of Millennials may have received some scholarly attention, but still, there is limited empirical evidence about millennials than any other generation (Twenge et al., 2010). While the most recent study by Anderson et al. (2018) posited various propositions, it lacked empirical data to validate those propositions. Though previous theoretical models may have shown a positive link between transformational leadership and motivation, these studies have not explored the impact of individualistic follower tendencies on motivation. Thus, the absence of the follower characteristics in transformational leadership studies creates a gap in motivational and transformational leadership theory. For these reasons, this study aims to build on the current theory of transformational leadership to examine whether the individualistic nature of millennials makes transformational leadership less effective in motivating millennials to conform their aspirations to the organizational objectives. As the Boomer workforce approaches retiring age, understanding the leadership expectations of millennials, the newest cohort to enter the work terrain, becomes increasingly important (Twenge, 2010). This understanding will enable managers to effectively lead this cohort whilst planning to address the changing needs of the 21st-century workplace (Twenge et al., 2010; Anderson et al., 2018).

METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND ANALYSIS

This study/article adopted qualitative -interpretivist methodology as the appropriate method for investigating the effectiveness of leadership ‘through the eyes’ of a millennial workforce. The study was based on real- life experiences, with the data collected from participants’ having knowledge and understanding of their own situation. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which were then transcribed. The Participants were purposefully contacted by the authors to participate in a semi- structured interview (Bryman, 2016). Emails of solicitation were sent to prospective participants. In some situations, telephone calls were made personally by the authors to explain the aim of the investigations to respondents. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were assured that confidentiality would be maintained and that the findings would be anonymous. This practice conforms to recommendations by Jansick (2001) that researchers should consult participants to be studied throughout the research process.

The participants selected had to meet the requirements of being born between 1980 and 2000 and had at least two years of prior working experience. The limitations of the previous study was that its selected sample had no prior work experience and thus had unrealistic expectations of the workplace and of managers (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010; Dulin, 2008). That explains the rationale for selecting a sample with at least 2 years of work experience, which would guarantee the quality and relevancy of the data. In all, a total of 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted by the authors; whilst, the interviews were audio-taped with participants’ permission and lasted 45 minutes to an hour. Qualitative data analysis was engaged to analyze, interpret and explain the data within the social context of the study (Fossey et al., 2002). Also, a thematic analysis was used to analyze the data by engaging six stages or phases to a thematic analysis (Bryman, 2016). Figure 2 below provides a summary of the six stages adopted in the thematic analysis.



**Figure 2: Six stages of Thematic Analysis
(Bryman, 2016)**

Following below is the steps adopted in the thematic analysis for this study:

1. Verbal data from interviews was transcribed into written format, personal identifiers were anonymized whilst the data was analyzed for understanding. This was achieved by reading the transcribed text, line by line.
2. The transcriptions were worked through systematically with any interesting patterns that emerged from the data well noted. This resulted in more than fifty labels or codes that represented transformational leadership from a millennial perspective.
3. The identified codes were grouped into different themes.
4. The initial codes and themes were refined so that the codes and themes were focused to support the research question.
5. Common concepts were examined to develop sub-themes whilst the appropriateness of sub-themes were reviewed.

6. A discussion of the findings was written up and outlined in the designated chapter. Table 3 below provides a view of the final list of codes, corresponding theme and brief description of each theme.

Table 3: Final List of Codes and Themes

Code	Theme	Description	Sub-theme
Flexible Include you Sets example Inspiring Sets vision Help Support Guidance Available Sets direction Listens Assist	1. Leadership Expectations	Leadership expectations from a millennial point of view	a) Support b) Inclusive c) Exemplar
Connections Brainstorm Bounce ideas Align New ideas Adapt Space Perspective Confidence Solutions Vision	2. Transformational Leadership and Motivation	How transformational leadership behaviours influence follower motivation	a) Follower Importance b) Leader Behaviour c) Motivation
Related Balance Understand Not satisfied Personal buy-in Demotivated Resign	3. Value of Organisational Goals	The value that millennials placed on organisational goals	a) Alignment b) Conflict c) Resolution

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section discusses the results with all personal identifiers anonymized whilst participants' responses denoted as 'P'.

Leadership Expectations

The analysis revealed that millennials valued leaders who possess leadership and managerial qualities/attributes; such as: facilitators of growth, ability to nurture individual ambitions, those with exemplar traits and role model qualities. These responses suggest that millennials appreciate leaders who are supportive, who engender employee collaboration as well as those displaying authentic leadership skills (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010; Gallup, 2016; Twenge and Campbell, 2008).

Support

The Interviewees described support in terms of leaders who are open and willing to assist employees to achieve their goals and who also make the time to provide guidance. A Participant noted that:

"...understand what my goals were and what my aspirations were and how that leader was able to assist me..." 'p'.

The importance of support was described by the participants using words such as 'build skills', 'confidence', and 'guiding' sound board 'and' development opportunities' These views suggest that for millennials support is critical to ensuring professional growth and development. The Participants also stated that support would enabled them to carry out tasks confidently. These findings reinforce the premise that the millennial generation desire enhanced support from managers (Chou, 2012; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010).

Inclusiveness

The analysis revealed that participants appreciated leaders who were able to craft a vision to inspire and include followers on a path towards development within organizational objectives. In this context, a participant remarked:

"...make sure everyone in the organization is aligned to what the company vision is and where it is going. And people at all levels of the company know what they are working towards and how their role plays a part in heading towards that target..." 'p'.

The Interviewees also stated that a sense of inclusiveness may lead to sharing ideas openly and also provide them with a sense of ownership and accountability in achieving organizational outcomes. These findings reiterate the importance of providing opportunities for millennial followers to collaborate with organizational leadership to realize their potential in the workplace (Gallup, 2016; Twenge and Campbell, 2008).

Exemplar

As a positive example for followers, the participants have shown in this study that leaders who demonstrate a sense of encouragement in the course of dealing with employees serve as role models and inspiration to the sub-ordinates, in an organization (Jung, Chow and Wu, 2003). Thus, millennials preferred leaders who initiate programs that appeal to their aspirations as well as engage them, as described in the statement following:

“...it sets a standard whereby the team can aspire to kind of mimic the actions when it comes to behaviors of that leader...” ‘p’.

The Participants also stated that the role model behavior often revealed leaders as unassuming thereby allowing followers to emulate those qualities so as to develop themselves in the leadership’s image. This finding also affirms that millennials tend to value authentic leaders (Anderson et al., 2018; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). Conversely, the interviewees also stated that leaders who exhibit a ‘dictatorship’ or ‘aggressive’ leadership style, were not considered good leaders:

“...so not a lot of shouting, this is my way, not a lot of do what I tell you to do but just what do you think, where do you want to go, how can we do this together, how can we pull people in, how can we work together...” ‘p’.

The Participants therefore indicated that dictatorial kind of leadership experience undermines employees’ confidence and consequently make them uninspired at their jobs. This finding underlines the fact ineffective leadership can be detrimental to the organizational prosperity and inimical to employee’s morale (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Yukl, 2012).

A source of motivation

The studies have shown that transformational leadership behaviors induce confidence and empowerment by motivating followers (Kark, Shamir and Chen, 2003; Grant, 2012). The Interviewees explained the importance of transformational leadership behaviors that is critical in influencing and motivating them to develop and achieve their aspiration in the workplace.

Follower importance

The Interviewees also stated that leaders who reinforce their personal sense of purpose, and nurture them to acquire a creative and innovative skills are admirable leaders. They remarked that:

“...it’s important because you don’t know what you don’t know. If you’re always just doing things on your own then you’re never really going to learn anything new or challenge your thinking because, it’s hard to do that on your own, you need other people to like push you and ask questions that you wouldn’t have thought of...” ‘p’.

They recognized that the support received from leaders enabled them to confidently deliver timely outcomes as well as learn new ways of solving problems. Most of the participants regarded creativity, innovativeness, problem-solving and adaptable attributes as some of the qualities provided by leaders to help millennials attain open-mindedness, in the workplace. They also explained that work or responsibility assigned them should ‘make real impact in society’ and not just contribute to profits.

Leader Behavior

The data also revealed that the types of behaviors that leaders exhibit in developing follower potential; include: ability to encourage innovation, creativity, reinforce personal sense of purpose and motivate followers towards shared goals. A participant stated:

“...allowing me the space to go and just put together my own ideas and plans and how’s that going to impact the organization that is like really great.”

The Participants described leader behaviors in terms of ‘encourages me to talk to them’, ‘bounce ideas’, ‘connections’ and ‘brainstorm’. These kinds of behaviors ordinarily re-orient followers to focus on the outcome of tasks as well as affirm their confidence (Yukl, 1999; Grant, 2012). In this respect, the participants shared a view that leaders who genuinely provided them space, time and encouragement, contributed significantly in developing their potential to be innovative and creative towards the workplace and organizational goals.

Motivation

The Participants shared ideas about how leadership behaviors motivated followers by stating that:

“It allows you to dig deeper and come up with, I think better solutions.”

“...I often find that you, you go extra without really realizing...” ‘p’.

The followers felt motivated to deliver beyond their mandated responsibilities where they are being motivated by transformational leaders within the workplace. These findings support the fact that effective, creative and inspiring leadership attributes play enormous role in motivating individuals at the workplace (Grant, 2012; Yukl, 2012; Anderson et al., 2018; Ofori, 2020). Interestingly, the Participants reported that they were generally motivated to exceed their targets where leadership encouraged them to think and adopt different strategies in the course of working; thus, this allowed them to share in and align with the organization’s values and vision easily.

Value of Organizational Goals

The ability to craft captivating organizational vision in order to engage employees to realize their aspirations is one of the four behaviors found in transformational leaders (Grant 2012; Ofori, 2020). Against this background, the Participants were asked to discuss their views regarding the importance of organizational goals.

Alignment

The prowess to communicate a compelling vision which focuses on followers as well as draw them to align their aspirations with organizational objectives; in essence, is a quality of transformational leadership that advances the process to realize a common target (Grant, 2012). The Participants expressed how they felt about organizational goals; remarking that:

“...there’s a very fine balance because eventually you being paid to deliver for the company at the end of the day, but at the same time it’s sort of important to align the two.” ‘p’.

“I also think if you just put all of your own personal things before the company then I think the company will just get disenchanted with you and you’ll probably need to move on and find something else. So, I think it’s about finding balance” ‘9’.

Although the Participants recognized the importance of organizational goals in dictating strategies for profit; they also stated the significance of how such values should be promoted in light of the followers’ aspirations so as to achieve an outcome that addresses the interests of both. Thus, Campione’s (2015) proposition that millennials value being treated as individuals and integral to organizations’ growth find relevance in Anderson et al. (2018), arguing that

when millennials' individualistic tendencies are competently managed it contributes to advance organizational growth rather than diminishing it.

Conflict of interest

The analysis provided further insight about how the participants reacted when organizational and personal goals conflicted. The Interviewee remarked in this context that:

"...but if there's, yah a misalignment between my personal goals and the organization's goals then it's going to be one of those scenarios where 'ah maybe this isn't the right place for me.'" 'p'.

"...it did become a thing of I was just not getting what I wanted from things and I moved on. That was the case of the organization just wanted me to just sit and sh^t up and just push out code. Uhm, I felt professionally and personally I had a lot more to give..." 'P'.

From the above remarks, it can be discerned, that where conflict exists between organizational goals and millennials' aspirations, the consequence could be dire for the former if it is badly managed. This is because the employees may resort to strategies to disrupt the stability of the business due to loss of interest or motivation. Thus, a transformational leadership imbued with emotional intelligence is needed to manage conflicts so as to achieve both objectives, harmoniously.

Millennial Motivation

In the absence of empirical evidence about this cohort, it might be difficult to understand them so as to devise strategies to motivate them professionally (Twenge et al., 2010).

Care

From the analysis, the participants described leaders as individuals who invested time to know followers, understand their expectations and willing to support them accordingly. The Participants shared views on the unique actions millennials expect to see in leadership so as to be motivated. One Participant stated that:

"...I think if you care you going to understand what I want from life and where I want to go professionally, and you going to try, within the context of your leadership or organization, enable that." '9'.

This view confirms the proposition that leaders who have the prowess to appeal to the core values and emotional needs of millennials are effective in gaining their attention and respect (Yukl, 1999; Grant, 2012).

Feedback

The ability to provide sound feedback in respect of the followers' vision constitutes an aspect of motivation in the eyes of the millennials. In this context the interviewees remarked:

"...I kind of expect a leader to be continuously giving me feedback whether it's positive or developmental I like working with a leader that will do that..." 'p'.

"...constructive feedback, could be good or bad. Could be whenever something is done well to recognize it like give me pointers or it could be done better." 'p'.

The Interviewees stated that leaders who could direct them toward opportunities of growth, provide constructive feedback and challenge them to develop their unique expertise within the workplace are considered sources motivation. This insight resonates with the fact that millennials value supervisors who provide them with constant and creative feedback to enhance themselves (Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010; Twenge and Campbell, 2008).

Value

The millennials stated that where leadership recognizes their opinions and include them in the strategic development of organizational objectives and processes, they feel valued and respected in the workplace. When these actions are demonstrated, the participants explained that it engenders in them a higher level of motivation. Thus, they reflected by saying, that:

“...show some sort of recognition for work that is delivered...”

“Make me feel like my opinion is worth listening to I guess, not necessarily doing everything that I say or agreeing with me but being willing to have the conversation and ask my point of view.” ‘p’.

The implication of this statement is that leaders who promote open communication/dialogue with the millennials at the workplace, create their sense of worth, value and recognition thereby motivating them (Anderson et al., 2018; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons, 2010). As outlined in the literature review, the proposed conceptual framework is predicated on a combination of existing literature. Drawing on the proposed conceptual model, figure 4 below, it summarizes the findings of this study in a visual and comprehensive manner.

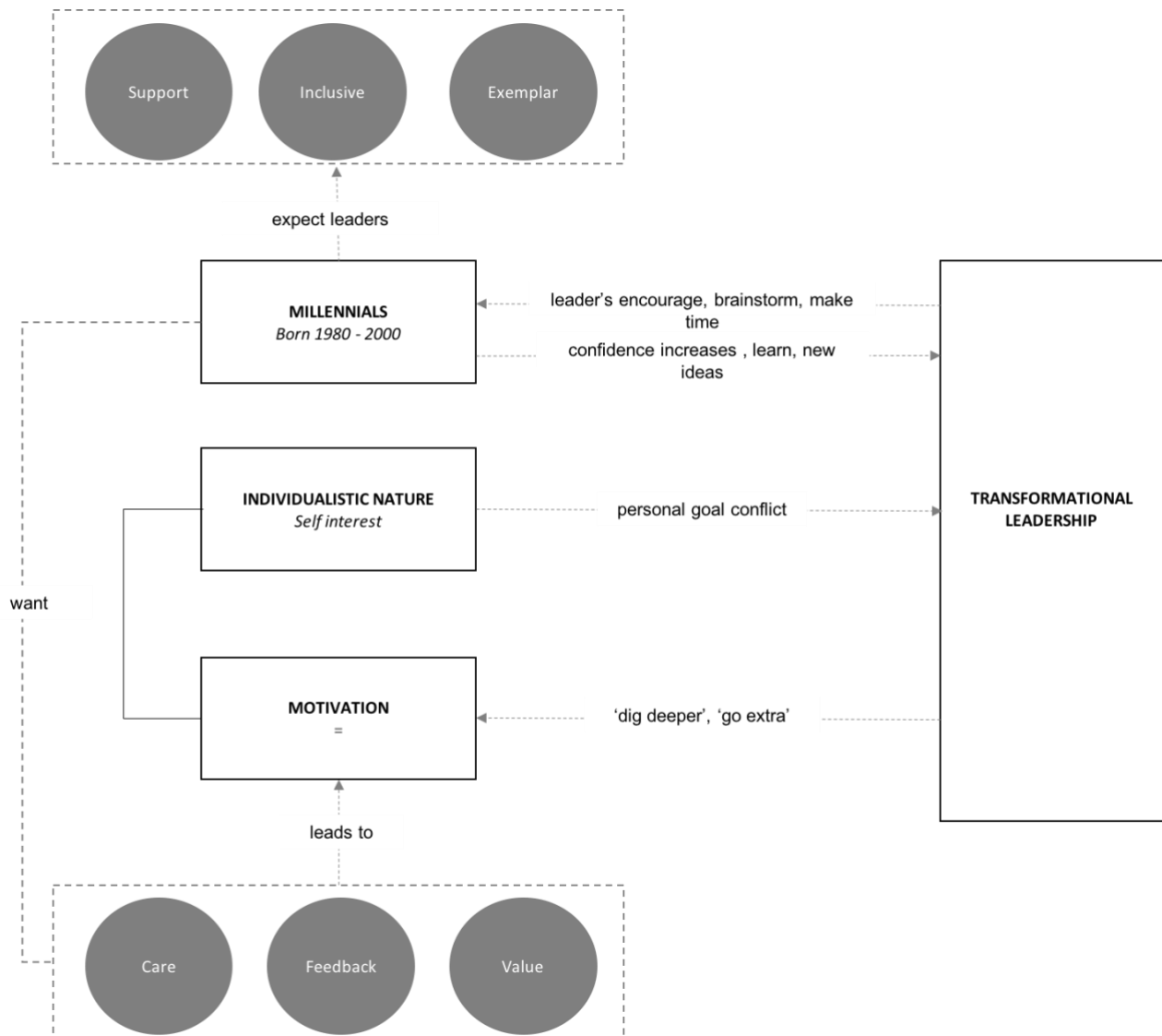


Figure 4: Amended Proposed Framework

This amended framework, illustrates the point that millennials expect leadership to support and include them in all facets of organizational strategic planning; so that, they can develop their unique talents, skills and abilities, to contribute productively in the workplace. These objectives can be realized where transformational leadership demonstrate openness; which include: brainstorming of ideas, making time for frank discussions and motivating followers to achieve workplace and personal aspirations concurrently. However, this also suggests that individualistic traits of millennials –personal goals/aspirations- may conflict with organizational goals to undermine the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Therefore, leaders should endeavor to understand the peculiar needs of followers by creatively aligning them with strategies to achieve organizational goals. Thus, understanding what motivates millennials is crucial in teasing them to sacrifice their personal aspirations in the interests of the company. So, leaders with the capacity to care and provide frequent constructive feedback whilst also valuing and recognizing follower contributions may be able to motivate millennials more successfully. Conversely, failure to adequately articulate a compelling vision linked to

personal goals, as the participants remarked, may result in millennials resigning or abdicating responsibilities to the detriment of an organization.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This article/study contributes to the body of knowledge by examining leadership from the perspectives of the millennials. It argues that a leadership with a strategic vision to merge the aspirations and developmental needs of millennials, in the context of organizational objectives, will achieve a lasting impact on the workforce and society. The article also engaged participants who had two years of work experience across industries; as a sample, to investigate the millennials' expectations of leadership at the workplace.

This study also adapts Bronkhorst, Steijn and Vermeeren's (2015) model to the individualistic tendencies of followers. These findings proposed a conceptual model to the existing literature by illustrating how the individualistic tendencies of millennials may lessen the effectiveness of transformational leadership where followers' personal goals are not creatively aligned with organizational objectives. The results also revealed that millennials want to be treated as individuals and motivated to achieve organizational in a substantive fashion.

Contrary, millennials do not appreciate 'aggressive' or 'dictatorial' leadership approaches. Thus, managers who exhibit hostile leadership styles may demotivate millennials thereby undercutting overall employee satisfaction. This reinforces the proposition that millennials prefer transformative leadership behaviors (Bolden, 2011); and also, participants are motivated and encouraged by leaders who provide constructive feedback in the workplace.

Notwithstanding the contribution of this study to the perceptions of millennials on transformative leadership, there are equally limitations as follow. First, the analysis and results emerged from the authors' interpretation of the data and therefore may contain some human errors, biases or inaccuracies. To overcome these limitations, future researchers should consider engaging multiple researchers to code the data; in order, to maintain objectivity and reduce biases. Second, in terms of transferability of the knowledge/results, it must be noted that the results are confined to a group of millennials and thus caution should be exercised in transferring the results to other populations. Third, the number of participants in this sample is small (10); so, future research endeavor should adopt a larger sample size to create additional themes. Fourth, future research project could also be broadened to cover millennials from different continents and industries. This may increase transferability of knowledge and produce different results/outcomes. Lastly, this research primarily focused on examining millennials' perspectives on leadership, however, as this group of workforce progresses to assume management positions, it may be interesting to study them as leaders in their own spheres.

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