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EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL BEHAVIOR ON MILLENNIAL JOB SATISFACTION

Abstract

Leaders are responsible for empowering and driving employees to succeed in challenging times or changes and, ultimately, achieve the best results. One of the biggest dilemmas in today's leaders' agenda is to understand how to manage a diverse multi-generational workforce in which millennials represent a predominant group by far, being completely different from previous generations due to the technology impact. The aim of the paper is to identify which leadership style and behavior affects most positively millennial job satisfaction in a multinational environment, and to understand the differences between millennials and non-millennials. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, known as the MLQ, was answered by 167 representative employees from various multinational corporations, 125 of whom are millennials.

Based on the results, transformational style is strongly correlated with and positively affected by millennial job satisfaction. Moreover, transformational style is a significant predictor of increased millennial satisfaction, and more specifically, idealized attributes and intellectual stimulation are behaviors that have been validated to increase it. On the other hand, individual consideration has been proven to have a productive effect by increasing non-millennial job satisfaction. According to the findings, millennial workforce leaders need to move towards a more transformational style, based on more idealized attributes and an intellectual stimulation approach, if they want to increase their satisfaction and avoid unwanted attrition. Basically, millennials are searching for leaders who trust and embrace innovation, creativity, critical thinking and, most importantly, leaders who also question the status quo.

Keywords

leadership, idealized attributes, intellectual stimulation, millennials, satisfaction

JEL Classification

M10, M12, M54, D23, J28

INTRODUCTION

Companies around the world are experiencing an increasingly 'VUCA' (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment, and they rely on leaders with skillsets to manage personal and emotional challenges (Workley & Jules, 2020). Leaders need to have the ability to adequately drive and manage multigenerational employees (Smaylind & Miller, 2012), and in the coming decade, all teams will be entirely composed by the millennial generation (Mencil & Lester, 2014). This study intends to understand the millennial generation and aims to explain the relationship between a leader and the millennial workforce by identifying which leadership styles and behaviors could create a higher job satisfaction, and also determine the differences across the generations within the studied teams. In fact, millennials have proven to have higher turnover rates than the generation before them (Khalid et al., 2013), and two of the causes for such high turnover rates are low employee satisfaction and wrong leadership behaviors applied. In today's environment, millennial satisfaction becomes even more relevant for every enterprise and leader in order to keep business growth and team stability for the coming years.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Millennials or generation Y terminology stands for the generation born between the early 1980s and early 2000s, which is the newest generation in the actual job market. Millennials' character was impacted by different events such as a global consumerism, a technological revolution, a radicalism and terrorist attacks in Middle East, as well as several financial market crises and subsequent recessions. Millennials are entitled, optimistic, civic minded, impatient, multitasking and team oriented; they experience close parental involvement and value work-life balance (DeVaney, 2015; Stewart et al., 2016). Moreover, millennials are said to value meaningful work, desire continuous learning experiences at work and place a high priority on family life (Becton et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2018). They love instant gratification and expect to develop close relationships with their leaders; these two factors have often been attributed to the coddling their parents gave them as children (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2011). Millennials find comfort in working alone, seek out opportunity and responsibility, and welcome empowerment (Broadbridge et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2018; Stewart et al., 2016). Millennials see themselves as part of a global community where diversity is an advantage, and they consider that their work should make a difference in the world (Simoneaux, 2010). Last but not least, they value making a life over making a living (Ng et al., 2010).

On the other side of the coin, millennials are negatively labeled as the "look at me generation", which implies that they are excessively self-confident and selfish, lacking loyalty and work ethic (Marston, 2009). Millennials are identified as a group that possesses narcissistic tendencies; they often crave attention and affirmation to help them maintain the feelings of encouragement showered on them by "misguided" parents and teachers (Erikson, 2008). Lower (2008) suggests millennials are easily bored and possess a strong sense of entitlement where there is an expectation that others will take care of undesirable duties. Compared to other generations, millennials are less work centric (Families & Work Institute, 2006) and more focused on leisure (Twenge, 2010). If they become dissatisfied with their jobs, they move more quickly than previous generations and quit their jobs more easily (Campione, 2015), so ensuring their satisfaction should be a priority for every

leader in order to take advantage and avoid business disruption.

Millennials will be a major asset for each organization and their success, and they may need leaders with transformational attributes that can boost their capacities and increase their satisfaction (Wilford, 2020). Leaders who follow synergy, mutual respect, communication, and delegation to achieve individual and organizational objectives are said to be transformational leaders (Khan et al., 2020). In fact, the transformational style is originated from "The Full-range Model of Leadership" (Bass & Avolio, 1994). To define overall spectrum of leadership styles and their subdivisions, Bass and Avolio (2004) defined nine leadership items, which constitute the transformational, transactional and passive-avoidance styles.

A leader who applies transformational style is capable of creating commitment, loyalty and transmitting a future vision towards the common objectives of the organization (Baker, 2013; Bass, 1985; Wilford, 2020). There is empirical evidence of a positive relationship between transformational leadership and improved employee productivity; and that consequently leads to positive organizational results like employee satisfaction (Burriss et al., 2014; Caldwell et al., 2011; Yang, 2009). The transformational style and its behavior have more than 40 years of studies, and it keeps being an actively and validated researched leadership theory for today's challenges (Day & Antonakis, 2012; Dinh et al., 2014; Northouse, 2019). The transformational style has five main factors, known as 5Is (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The first factor – idealized attributes – represents a leader who has a high confidence level and bidirectional trust with her/his team. The second factor – idealized behavior – portrays a leader who has integrity in each decision and action with her/his team and employees. The third factor – inspirational motivation – depicts a leader who has the ability to inspire others and make them believe in her/him. The fourth factor – intellectual stimulation – describes a leader who has the skills to advocate intelligence and encourage problem solving mentality, and, finally, the fifth factor – individualized consideration – characterizes a leader who has the ability to recognize and promote individuality among teams. A recent study demonstrated that applying transformational behaviors can boost positively work engagement and organization outcomes in multinational environments (Valldeneu

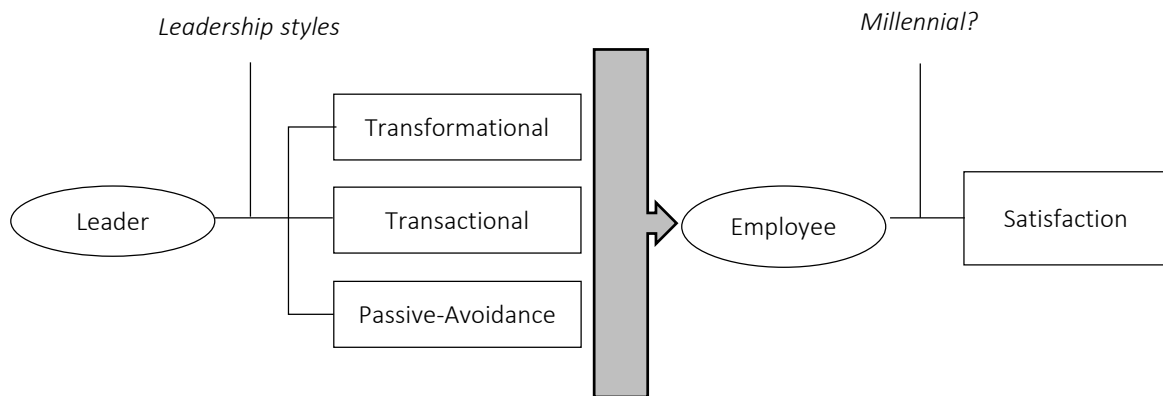
et al., 2021). However, there are no data yet on what kind of transformational leadership behavior is responsible for keeping satisfaction high among millennials. Such information would be extremely useful in the current environment, taking into account the increasing weight of the millennial generation workforce in multinational companies and the link between their job (dis)satisfaction and high turnover rates. To fill such a knowledge gap and help leaders and managers in multinational companies, the study sets out to understand which leadership style and

specific behaviors have a significant correlation with, and encourage a positive increase in millennial job satisfaction. Based on the literature review and the full-range model of leadership, a theoretical framework was created (Figure 1).

An extensive framework was created (Figure 2) to investigate transformational behavior in more depth.

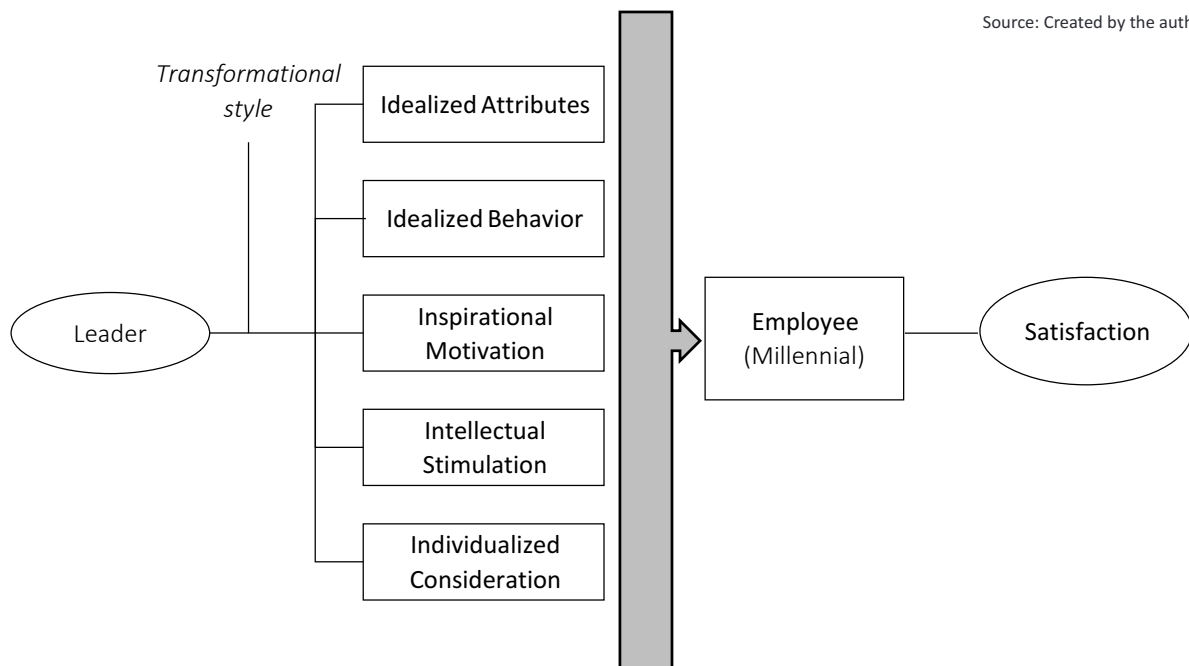
The objective of this study is to prove whether the transformational style has the most positive im-

Source: Created by the authors.



Note. Independent variables: Transformational, Transactional and Passive-Avoidance Styles. Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



Source: Created by the authors.

Note. Independent variables: Idealized attributes, Idealized behavior, Inspirational motivation, Intellectual stimulation and Individualized consideration. Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction.

Figure 2. Transformational framework

pact on millennial job satisfaction compared to transactional and passive-avoidance styles. In case the correlation was confirmed, as previous literature suggested, two subsequent tasks were defined: one task was to understand which of the specific transformational behaviors are related positively to millennial job satisfaction and can therefore predict better outcomes, and another task was to identify differences between Millennials and Non-Millennials regarding job satisfaction.

2. METHOD

In 2019, a 45-question web-based MLQ survey from Bass and Avolio (2004) was distributed to a multicultural workforce of different multinational corporations. The answers referred to the employee's first-line manager or local leader. Respondents selected discrete Likert-type scale choices (scale of 5), which provided quantifiable data to measure the degree of their perceptions among the variables. The study described the relationship between the employees' perceptions of their immediate leader's transformational leadership (Antonakis & House, 2002; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 2004) and the employees' perception of their own satisfaction. Five main behaviors of transformational leadership were assessed: Idealized Attributes, Idealized Behavior, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individual Consideration. Out of the 45 questions in the MLQ, the concrete case study analyzed 22 questions focused only on the transformational leadership style. Twenty questions were established in order to evaluate the transformational leadership behaviors (4 questions for every behavior) and two questions to evaluate employee job satisfaction.

MLQ surveys were obtained from 167 employees, 125 of them were born between 1980 and 2000 (millennials). This sample is rather balanced in gender and is relatively young. This workforce

has an advance level of education: 38% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree, 55% have a master's degree, and 1% have a doctorate. Besides showing certain stability in their present company, employees of the sample have some prior working background with different enterprises: 64% of them have worked in at least 3 enterprises. Spain is the country with more answerers (25). All the answerers are from multinational companies or corporations.

The IBM SPSS Statistics v23 software program was used to collect and analyze the survey data and conduct a precise investigation. Cronbach's alpha was needed to determine the reliability scale. In this study, every variable was greater than 78%, which means that the framework showed consistency. Moreover, correlation and regression analyses were used to determine the effects of leadership styles and their behaviors on millennials.

3. RESULTS

Calculating the mean of perceived leadership styles shows that transformational style has the highest mean (3.68) for millennials and (3.63) non-millennials compared to transactional and passive-avoidance styles. Employees perceived the use of transformational style, which according to the literature, improves business outcomes and satisfaction.

Table 1 shows the bivariate Pearson correlation outcomes. Transformational and transactional styles are strongly correlated with job satisfaction ($p < .01$) with minimal differences between generations. In contrast, passive-avoidance style is negatively correlated with job satisfaction across generations ($p < .01$). Transformational style is the most positively correlated with job satisfaction in millennial and non-millennial generations, thus, a deeper analysis on the transformational behaviors is needed.

Table 1. Bivariate Pearson correlation: Leadership styles and job satisfaction ($N = 167$)

Leadership Styles	Millennial Job Satisfaction		Non-Millennial Job Satisfaction	
	Pearson	Sig. (bilateral)	Pearson	Sig. (bilateral)
Transformational	.850 ^a	.000	.871 ^a	.000
Transactional	.475 ^a	.000	.356 ^a	.000
Passive-Avoidance	-.527 ^a	.000	-.460 ^a	.000

Note: Field data, 2019. ^a Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Millennial bivariate Pearson correlation: Transformational behaviors and job satisfaction ($N = 125$)

Transformational behaviors	Job Satisfaction	
	Pearson	Sig. (bilateral)
Idealized Attributes	.817 ^a	.000
Idealized Behavior	.730 ^a	.000
Inspirational Motivation	.727 ^a	.000
Intellectual Stimulation	.734 ^a	.000
Individual Consideration	.777 ^a	.000

Note: Field data, 2019. ^a Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Non-millennial bivariate Pearson correlation: Transformational behaviors and job satisfaction ($N = 42$)

Transformational behaviors	Job Satisfaction	
	Pearson	Sig. (bilateral)
Idealized Attributes	.751 ^a	.000
Idealized Behavior	.671 ^a	.000
Inspirational Motivation	.761 ^a	.000
Intellectual Stimulation	.736 ^a	.000
Individual Consideration	.838 ^a	.000

Note: Field data, 2019. ^a Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Mean calculation of the perceived transformational behaviors (5I's) shows that inspirational motivation has the highest mean for millennials (3.93) and non-millennials (3.85). The respondents perceive a prevalent use of inspirational motivation by their leaders in front of adversities and organizational challenges. All other behaviors are also well represented, which means that companies have a high culture of transformational behaviors.

Table 2 presents the results of a bivariate Pearson correlation focused on transformational behaviors. All the transformational behaviors are positively and strongly related with overall satisfaction ($p < .01$). Idealized attributes is the dimension most positively related with job satisfaction within the millennial generation.

Table 3 shows the bivariate correlation with the non-millennial ($N = 42$) respondents, all the transformational behaviors are also strongly and positively correlated, but in this case, individual consideration is the highest one.

ANOVA analysis proves that the model has power to predict millennial and non-millennial employee satisfaction from all the transformational behaviors (F -statistics is $p < .01$).

Table 4 shows the millennial regression coefficient outcomes. The outcomes show, firstly, that the idealized attributes dimension significantly encourages a positive increase in job satisfaction, with standardized $\beta = .45$, ($p < .01$). Secondly, intellectual stimulation significantly encourages a positive increase in job satisfac-

Table 4. Millennial regression coefficients ($N = 125$)

Transformational behaviors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.439	.278		-1.580	.117		
Idealized Attributes	.512	.111	.450	4.614	.000	.229	4.367
Idealized Behavior	-.038	.120	-.029	-.315	.754	.255	3.923
Inspirational Motivation	.154	.116	.109	1.325	.188	.322	3.107
Intellectual Stimulation	.291	.105	.218	2.766	.007	.351	2.852
Individual Consideration	.242	.109	.199	2.220	.028	.271	3.689

Note: Field data, 2019. Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction.

Table 5. Non-millennial regression coefficients ($N = 42$)

Transformational behaviors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.247	.363		.681	.500		
Idealized Attributes	.120	.139	.114	.869	.391	.344	2.903
Idealized Behavior	.001	.143	.001	.007	.995	.402	2.490
Inspirational Motivation	.240	.133	.233	1.808	.079	.359	2.789
Intellectual Stimulation	.224	.125	.208	1.790	.082	.438	2.281
Individual Consideration	.449	.140	.441	3.201	.003	.313	3.197

Note: Field data, 2019. Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction.

tion, with standardized $\beta = .22$ ($p < .01$). Finally, individual consideration, idealized behavior and inspirational motivation are not determinative ($p > .01$). In addition, multicollinearity is not appraised amongst the independent variables (tolerance $> .1$, variation inflation factors [VIF] < 10.0).

The regression model with non-millennials ($N = 42$) (Table 5) shows that individual consideration significantly encourages a positive increase in job satisfaction, the other behaviors were not conclusive ($p > .01$).

4. DISCUSSION

This study seeks to acknowledge which leadership style and specific behaviors are correlated with a positive increase in millennials' job satisfaction, and to which degree. All in all, correlation analysis shows that transformational style and, per consequence, all transformational behaviors (5Is) have a strong and positive correlation with job satisfaction among millennials and non-millennials. The study is in line with general previous findings showing that positive transformational leadership behavior leads to the feeling of job fit and en-

ures high job satisfaction levels (Miao et al., 2011). Other pieces of empirical evidence also show that transformational leadership is strongly correlated with employee work outcomes such as lower turnover rates, higher level of productivity, employee satisfaction, creativity, development, goal attainment and follower well-being (Eisenbeiß & Boerner, 2013; Rahmisyari, 2015). This study contributes to expanding the benefits of transformational theories and better understanding the millennial generation.

Multiple regression analysis indicates that idealized attributes and intellectual stimulation encourage a significantly positive increase in millennial satisfaction, while individual consideration encourages a significantly positive increase in non-millennial job satisfaction. The study detected differences across generations.

Based on the research, a leader who manages a millennial workforce must exhibit transformational behaviors, preferably idealized attributes or intellectual stimulation behaviors, to help millennial employees feel more satisfied with their current jobs. The other behaviors were not conclusive and cannot be validated in this study.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to determine the relationship or correlation between leadership styles and millennial job satisfaction. Based on the results from this study, the transformational leadership model has the most significant positive influence on overall millennial satisfaction rates. Once the correlation was confirmed, one task was to determine which specific transformational leadership behaviors are the most related and are able to predict a positive influence on millennial job satisfaction. The results show that idealized attributes and intellectual stimulation are good predictors to promote millennial job satisfaction. Leaders or managers who want to incorporate these two behaviors need to build relationships

that bring trust and positive intimacy with coworkers while avoiding decentralized decisions, which could generate disbelief and attrition. Leaders may need to improve their ability to catalyze intelligence and bring questioning on the table, which can help avoid negative situations such as those described as “hiding the elephant in the room”.

Finally, the last task was to determine the difference between job satisfaction among millennials and non-millennials. The findings showed that both millennials and non-millennials can benefit more from transformational leadership styles compared to transactional and passive-avoidance styles. However, when analyzing the effects of the specific transformational behavior in both generations, differences were noted. On the one hand, idealized attributes and idealized stimulation were proved to be valid predictors for job satisfaction among millennials. On the other hand, individual consideration was proved to be a valid predictor for job satisfaction among non-millennials. For all the other transformational behaviors, results were not conclusive to be valid predictors for job satisfaction.

The data in this study were obtained in 2019. Even though the results obtained are valid nowadays, in a future study it would be interesting to administer again the questionnaire to the same sample at different time points, including a post COVID-19 situation. This approach would help confirm the results of the present study and determine whether there could be any evolution in millennial satisfaction that would require fine tuning leadership practices in multinational companies.

All in all, this study implies leadership as a strong factor influencing job satisfaction, having the transformational style, and specifically idealized attributes and idealized stimulation, the most positive outcomes among the millennial generation. Thus, one could say millennials do not quit their jobs, they mainly quit their boss.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Marc Valldeneu.

Data curation: Marc Valldeneu.

Formal analysis: Marc Valldeneu.

Funding acquisition: Marc Valldeneu.

Investigation: Marc Valldeneu.

Methodology: Marc Valldeneu.

Project administration: Marc Valldeneu.

Resources: Marc Valldeneu.

Software: Marc Valldeneu.

Supervision: Marc Valldeneu, Xavier Ferràs, Elisenda Tarrats.

Validation: Marc Valldeneu, Xavier Ferràs, Elisenda Tarrats.

Visualization: Marc Valldeneu.

Writing – original draft: Marc Valldeneu.

Writing – review & editing: Marc Valldeneu, Xavier Ferràs, Elisenda Tarrats.

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