

Effective Leadership Attributes for Managing Millennials: A Dual-Perspective Approach



Master thesis Human Resource Studies

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Project period: June 2018 – December 2018
Project theme: Leadership towards Millennials

Word count: 14,143

Abstract

Today's organizations face the challenge of managing generational diversity due to the existence of three generations in the workforce: Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and Millennials. Research found that especially Millennials have unique values towards leadership in organizations, compared to previous generations. This research explores what leadership attributes Millennials prefer and which are experienced as effective by both Millennials and leaders. In this research, effective leadership attributes are described as those attributes that either strengthen the relationship between Millennials and leaders or contribute to the performance of Millennials. For this dual-perspective approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six Millennials and six leaders who work in one specific organization but not as pairs. These interviews demonstrated eleven constructs that are found to be effective for managing Millennials. Informal contact is mentioned most often to be effective by both Millennials and leaders, followed by guidance, development of others, absence of hierarchy, empowering, flexibility providing, trust, adaptability, feedback providing and open for new ideas. Although the majority of these constructs are in line with previous literature, the constructs 'adaptability' and 'open for new ideas' are not in line with the prior studies this research was built on. Although this paper describes effective leadership approaches for the generation of Millennials, the results of this research emphasize the importance of individual differences above generational differences. This paper argues that leaders who are able to adapt to individual needs can effectively manage not only Millennials, but every generation.

Keywords: generational diversity, Millennials, values in the workplace, leaders, leadership, preferred leadership attributes, effective leadership attributes, relationship, performance, individual differences.

Introduction

Today's workplace is changing dramatically due to the increasing number of Millennials entering the workforce. In 2030, Millennials will represent 75% of the global workforce and therefore the future of organizations is in their hands (Fubu, 2017; Huyler, Pierre, Ding, Norelus, 2015). The Millennial generation is born between 1980 and 2000 and described as significantly different from previous generations currently in the workforce, namely Baby Boomers and Generation X (Iden, 2016). Millennials are the first who grew up with globalization and digitalization and were raised by extremely involved parents in a safe environment (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Raines, 2002). Millennials differ in the extent of responsibility, hierarchy, job security, flexibility and feedback they need in the workplace, compared to previous generations (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012; Eversole et al., 2012). For example, Millennials seek for continuous feedback in the workplace, while Generation Xers and Baby Boomers are content with monthly feedback (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). In addition, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers value a certain level of hierarchy in the workplace, while most Millennials prefer a flat organizational structure (Raines, 2002).

Although Millennials may have different values in the workplace, it is crucial for organizations to attract and retain this relatively new generation, in order to develop a strong future workforce and remain competitive (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Organizations should ensure that Millennials' values are represented in the organization and can work effectively. Leaders play a key role in this, as their leadership style can have large influence on their satisfaction, engagement and in the end retention (Espinoza, 2012; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). It is found that leaders who match their leadership style to Millennials' values are more likely to establish effective work relationships and contribute to Millennials' performance (Espinoza, 2012; Solaja & Ogunola, 2016; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). In order to understand how leaders can match their leadership attributes effectively, it is important to understand what Millennials value in the workplace and towards leadership.

Previous research described extensively how Millennials grew up and to which values this led in the workplace (Glass, 2007; Ivancevic & Ratkovic, 2010; Mannheim, 1952; McNeil, 2018; Salahuddin, 2010), by using the overarching Theory of Generations of Mannheim (1952). Few years later, researchers identified leadership preferences of Millennials, based on their values in the workplace (Arsenault, 2004; Sessa et al., 2007; Salahuddin, 2010). Although preferred leadership attributes have been explored, there is a gap in existing literature about leadership attributes that are experienced as effective (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Furthermore,

nearly all prior research is quantitative in nature and therefore additional qualitative research is needed to create a deeper understanding of Millennials' leadership preferences (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Qualitative research could help identify not only what leadership attributes are preferred, but also provide underlying reasons why. In addition, the majority of existing research is conducted by the time Millennials were not fully integrated into the workforce yet, which could have led to biased outcomes. Although previous research exists about preferred and effective leadership attributes according to Millennials and leaders separately, no prior research yet took both the Millennials and leader perspective into account in the same study (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

The purpose of this research is to get insight in leadership attributes that are on the one hand preferred by Millennials and on the other hand experienced as effective by both Millennials and leaders. With the help of qualitative research, this dual-perspective approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials, by taking into account the perspectives of both Millennials and leaders. This study is conducted in one specific health technology company and is practically relevant for this organization as it provides insight in not only preferred but also effective leadership attributes. With this insight, leaders of today and the future can gain deeper understanding of how to better manage Millennials, whereby increasing intergenerational cooperation and organizational success. Besides, the insights in this paper can help Millennials in the organization better understand their own values and integrate successfully in the workplace. In this way, the needs of both Millennials and leaders will be met while common goals can still be accomplished.

The research question that this exploratory study will answer is the following:

RQ: What leadership attributes are experienced as effective for managing Millennials?

In order to answer the research question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

SQ1: What leadership attributes are preferred by Millennials?

SQ2: What leadership attributes are experienced as effective by Millennials?

SQ3: What leadership attributes are experienced as effective by leaders?

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Generations

A generation can be described as “an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location and significant life events at critical developmental stages” (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). A generation derives from the reproduction of individuals and designates characteristics of the parent-child relationship (Mannheim, 1952). The founder of the so-called ‘Theory of Generations’ is Karl Mannheim (1952) and uses the ‘social forces perspective’ to explain how generations are formed (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Mannheim, 1952; Parry & Urwin, 2011). This perspective defines a generation as a group of individuals born and raised in the same chronological, social and historical context. Due to this exposure to similar stimuli, generations develop a so called ‘collective memory’, consisting of identical worldviews, beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). The other perspective within the Theory of Generations is the age cohort perspective from Ryder (1965). The difference of this perspective is that it identifies generations by using only a specific time frame, for example 1980 to 2000 in case of Millennials (Parry & Urwin, 2011). It thereby oversees social and historical events when defining generations, which is more practical for most previous researchers as these social and historical events vary per geographical location. Using the age cohort perspective enables researchers to form a sample size from multiple countries (Foster, 2013).

Despite the Theory of Generations of Mannheim (1952) being used by many researchers, there have been discussions about the significance of generational differences regarding to characteristics, traits, and values in the workplace (Wey Smola & Sutton, 2002). For example, Macky, Gardner, and Fosyth (2008) put a critical note on the construct of generations and argue that even though individuals are born within the same age cohort, they might experience the social and historical events in different ways. In other words, they argue that the same events can lead to different characteristics (Macky et al., 2008). Other researchers argue no distinctions based on generations should be made, because every individual, regardless of generation or age, is different and should be treated like that (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). Some researchers pointed out that differences of characteristics and values across generations can be explained by the effect of aging and maturation on individuals within generations, rather than the belongingness to a generation (Rhodes, 1983). The so-called life-cycle effect suggests that traits, characteristics and values of individuals in the workplace

develop as they grow older and enter new life stages (Abramson, 1979). This can be explained by the fact that younger cohorts did not experience the effects of aging and large family responsibilities yet and may therefore possess other characteristics than older cohorts (Dalton, 1977). These critical notes on the significance of generations raise questions about the significance of the effect of generations on values in the workplace. According to Wey Smola and Sutton (2002), aging and maturation do have an effect on traits, but social and historical events within generation cohorts have a larger influence on characteristics and values in the workplace. This is in agreement with Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) and Salahuddin (2010), who argued that generational differences overshadow individual differences.

2.2 Generational diversity

The Theory of Generations (Mannheim, 1952) is applicable to all three generations currently in the workforce, namely Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials (Iden, 2016). According to the social forces perspective within the Theory of Generations (Mannheim, 1952), each generation has its own collective memory, which affects generations' values in general and in the workplace (Ferri-Reed, 2014; Gibson et al., 2009; Salahuddin, 2010). Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 and have been the largest cohort for decades (Angeline, 2011; Gibson et al., 2009; McNeil, 2018). They are known for their strong work ethic with a mentality of making long hours in order to be successful. They prefer face-to-face meetings and do not ask for particular flexibility arrangements. Generation Xers are born between 1965 and 1980 and grew up as the smallest generation, due to the rise of birth control (Glass, 2007; Kian et al., 2013; Salahuddin, 2010). They are characterized by their productive ways of working, by working smarter and not longer hours. They value a work-life balance more than Baby Boomers do and started making use of flexible work arrangements, such as working from home. As this paper focuses on effective leadership for managing Millennials, the section below will discuss the characteristics of this generation in more detail.

2.2.1 Millennials

Millennials are born between 1980 and 2000 and are currently already the largest generation in the workforce (McNeil, 2018). Despite there may be various individual differences within the Millennial generation, the majority of researchers claim that Millennials in general differ significantly from previous generations (McNeil, 2018). For example, research

has shown differences between Millennials and previous generations in motivation, work-life balance, technological knowledge, job mobility and need for feedback (Ferri-Reed, 2014; Gibson et al., 2009; Salahuddin, 2010). The collective memory of Millennials was established due to the social and historical events that took place in the time span of 1980 to 2000. Millennials were raised by extremely involved parents whose lives were all about their children (Bada & Moura, 2011; Salahuddin, 2010), making Millennials view the relationship with their parents as a peer relationship, rather than a parent-child relationship (Kyles, 2005). For this reason, they see the world without hierarchy (Stein, 2013) and want leaders who relate to them as peers as well (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008; Kyles, 2005). This is in line with Schawbel (2016), who stated that Millennials are more focused on collaboration and equality, whereas Baby Boomers and Generation Xers view organizations in the context of hierarchy. They value personal contact with their leader and want to feel appreciated for their effort by a relationship that is based on trust, respect, and inclusion (Nelson, 2007). Due to the attention most Millennials received from their parents, they tend to ask for more attention and guidance in the workplace than Baby Boomers and Generation Xers (Salahuddin, 2010). Furthermore, Millennials were often praised for their effort by their parents, regardless of their output or achievements (Thompson & Gregory, 2012), which led to a high level of confidence, a strong sense of self, optimism and the belief that they can do anything (Glass, 2007; Salahuddin, 2010). As a result, Millennials often have an optimistic attitude towards challenging assignments and want to receive a high level of responsibility to show what they have learned (Martin, 2005). Millennials are often ambitious, development-oriented (Raines, 2002) and ask for continuous feedback in order to understand how they can further improve their performance (Ferri-Reed, 2014). They can be impatient, prefer to achieve results from day one (Raines, 2002) and are tended to focus on jumping on the next opportunity instead of getting the most out of the current situation (McNeil, 2018). Millennials feel like staying at one company for a long time is missing out on other opportunities for development and are therefore not loyal towards their employer (McNeil, 2018).

As digital natives, Millennials are the first who grew up with technology such as internet, email, computer games and social media platforms (Gibson et al., 2009). This ability to be connected 24/7 created a need for flexibility in the workplace with respect to working hours and location. Millennials expect the opportunity to work from everywhere at any time in order to balance personal life with a professional career (Smith, 2010). Millennials are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as meaningful work and fulfillment, rather than extrinsic

rewards such as salary and bonuses (Twenge et al., 2010). They want to work in an organization that makes the world a better place and are attracted by companies that have a clear vision and mission that improves peoples' life (Glass, 2007; Kyles, 2005; Martin, 2005). A lack of meaning in their job can lead to dissatisfaction and eventually the decision to leave the organization (Raines, 2002). In sum, Millennials may be impatient, disloyal, self-centered and attention seeking, but are also ambitious, confident, goal-oriented, collaborative, and flexible in the workplace. According to Ferri-Reed (2014) the so-called Millennial Effect will "lift organizations to higher levels of productivity, creativity, and effectiveness" (p. 13).

2.3 Leadership for managing Millennials

Leadership is often defined as the ability of an individual to motivate others in order to achieve individual and organizational goals (House & Shamir, 1993). A leadership aspect that has recently become important for leaders is dealing with the multigenerational workforce, currently consisting of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials (Iden, 2016). It is found that leaders who are effective at managing a multigenerational workforce are able to match their leadership style to the different values of generations (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). This is in line with contingent leadership, assuming that leaders are effective when they match their leadership style to the situation (Egglestonl, & Bhagat, 1993). Contingent leadership is found to increase commitment, motivation, and collaboration across generations (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016). This makes that leaders play a key role in the overall satisfaction and retention of Millennials in organizations.

With the help of the Theory of Generations (Mannheim, 1952) it was previously reasoned that Millennials have different values in the workplace than previous generations, due to the similar stimuli they experienced from 1980 to 2000 (Salahuddin, 2010). These values in the workplace yield different perceptions of leadership, which manifest themselves in different preferred leadership attributes and styles (Zemke et al., 1999). In other words, Millennials want to be managed differently than previous generations. In this paper, a distinction is made between preferred and effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials. Preferred leadership attributes are described in this paper as those that are desired by Millennials based on their values in general and in the workplace. Effective leadership attributes are those that either increase Millennials' performance or strengthen the relationship between Millennials and leaders. This definition is based on previous literature that emphasizes the role of leaders to

increase the follower's performance (House & Shamir, 1993). Thereby, more and more research is pointing to the effectiveness of relationship-based leadership for managing Millennials (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). As Millennials are the largest generation in the workforce (McNeil, 2018), it is important to understand what kind of leadership attributes they prefer and which are experienced as effective (Sessa et al., 2007).

2.3.1 Preferred leadership attributes from a Millennial perspective

Previous studies examined leadership preferences of Millennials by using different research methods (Arsenault, 2004; Dulin, 2008; Salahuddin, 2010; Sessa et al., 2007). Although the majority of previous research is quantitative in nature, the study of Dulin (2008) included qualitative research in the form of interviews with large focus groups besides quantitative research. This research explored leadership preferences of Millennials and found five core themes: competence, interpersonal relations, management of others, self-management, and communication. In other words, Millennials prefer their leader to be competent enough by being intelligent, professional, and knowledgeable (Dulin, 2008; Michalek & Long, 2013). They want a leader who works well with others, by being friendly, respectful, approachable and providing constructive feedback. Management of others means that the leader is able to create a positive work environment on the work floor (Dulin, 2008). Self-management refers to the "command over one's own behavior and thoughts" (p. 51), which is reflected in being a good example figure and being able to control emotions (Dulin, 2008). Finally, communication was described as a core theme, as Millennials in this study found it important to have a leader who speaks with confidence, passion and persuasion (Dulin, 2008). The second method of research was quantitative in the form of a survey that was used to confirm these five core themes, which it did significantly (Dulin, 2008).

Other researchers such as Arsenault (2004), Salahuddin (2010) and Sessa et al. (2007) all used quantitative research by using a questionnaire in which Millennials ranked leadership attributes based on their preferences. The leadership attributes in these questionnaires are based on pre-determined lists of leadership constructs. The findings of these three similar studies can be found in Table 1 (Arsenault, 2004; Salahuddin, 2010; Sessa et al., 2007). First, the study of Arsenault (2004), used constructs of the Checklist of Admired Leaders from Pierce and Newstrom (2000) with the ten most mentioned characteristics from this checklist as a basis for the study. Millennials ranked these 10 constructs based on their experiences and preferences in

a leader. According to this study, Millennials value honesty the most in a leader, followed by determination, loyalty, competence, ambition, inspiring, caring, self-confident, forward-looking, and imagination. Second, the study of Salahuddin (2010) used the exact same pre-determined leadership attributes from the Checklist of Admired Leaders (Pierce & Newstrom, 2000). As a consequence, the constructs that were found in this study were the same as those in the study of Arsenault (2004), however somewhat placed in a different order. Third, the study of Sessa et al. (2007) had a similar design as the study of Arsenault (2004) and Salahuddin (2010), but used a survey in which Millennials were asked to rank 12 from the 40 leadership attributes that they found most important. In this study, Millennials valued dedication the most, followed by listening, focused, encouraging, optimism, dependable, trusted, experienced, supportive, trusting, creative, and honest. According to this study, Millennials want a dedicated leader who cares about them by listening to, encouraging and supporting them (Sessa et al., 2007).

Table 1: Leadership attributes preferred by Millennials

Ranking	Arsenault (2004)	Salahuddin (2010)	Sessa et al. (2007)
1	Honesty	Competence	Dedication
2	Competence	Determination	Listening
3	Determination	Self-control	Focusing
4	Loyalty	Honesty	Encouraging
5	Ambitious	Forward-looking	Optimism
6	Inspiration	Loyalty	Dependable
7	Caring	Inspiration	Trusted
8	Forward-looking	Ambitious	Experienced
9	Self-confident	Imagination	Supporting
10	Imagination	Caring	Trusting
11			Creative
12			Honest

Note: Retrieved from Arsenault (2004), Salahuddin (2010 and Sessa et al. (2007).

Besides the leadership attributes preferred by Millennials, researchers also explored more general leadership styles that Millennials prefer. Bransford (2010) found that Millennials' preference for ideological leadership is significantly larger than among previous generations. In line with this, several researchers agreed upon transformational leadership as being the best fit to managing the values, needs and expectations of Millennials in the workplace (Balda &

Mora, 2011; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Transformational leadership is centered around the relationship and engagement between the leader and follower and meeting individual needs (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Due to the fact that Millennials were raised by involved parents, they are used to close relationships in which they have a clear voice (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Therefore, they prefer to be managed by a relationship-based leadership style that places their needs as most important (Balda & Mora, 2011). This style involves coaching, mentoring, providing feedback on a frequent basis and development of skills (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Other researchers (Solaja & Ogunola, 2016) found that a combination of democratic and autocratic leadership style works best for this generation, since Millennials want to be involved in decision making to show their potential, but also value a certain level of guidance by having defined work procedures.

2.3.2 Effective leadership attributes from a leader perspective

Although the majority of studies about effective leadership attributes for Millennials focus on the Millennial perspective, the studies of Espinoza, Ukleja, and Rusch (2011) and Espinoza (2012) explored effective leadership attributes from a leader perspective. The study of Espinoza et al. (2011) is qualitative in nature and used semi-structured interviews to explore the differentiators between effective and challenged leaders regarding the management of Millennials. In 30 organizations, three effective and three challenged leaders from multiple generations were identified and asked about how they perceive working with Millennials, while measuring on six concepts: locus of control, self-efficacy, confidence, power, energy, and success. The results in this study show that effective leaders have an internal locus of control in combination with a high level of self-efficacy (Espinoza et al., 2011). Internal locus of control refers to an individual's believe that he or she can control and influence factors in life (Judge & Bono, 2002). Subsequently, leaders with this characteristic can manage Millennials effectively, because they believe they can influence the Millennial's perception of leadership. Furthermore, leaders with a high level of self-efficacy are successful, because they believe in their own capability of success at managing Millennials (Espinoza, 2012). On the contrary, leaders who experience challenges with managing Millennials often have a so called 'bias of experience', meaning that they tend to treat their subordinates as how they were managed by their leader when they were the same age. This bias disables leaders to emphasize with the needs of Millennials and to adapt their leadership towards them (Espinoza, 2012). In the same line, McNeil (2018) pointed out that effective leaders pay attention to what Millennials need, rather

than assume what they need. In contrast to the research of Espinoza (2012), the current study does not make a distinction between effective and challenged leaders regarding managing Millennials.

Method

3.1 Research design

The design of this research is qualitative in order to meet the need for deeper insight in preferred and effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials. On the one hand, the Millennial perspective is taken into account, because understanding of their values in the workplace and towards leadership is crucial in order to increase effective cooperation. Furthermore, the perspective of leaders is taken into account since they are identified as key in the establishment of this effective cooperation (Espinoza, 2012; Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2011). Since the previous findings about effective leadership attributes are rather inconsistent, this research is exploratory in nature. The level of analysis is centered on the individual level, because the focus of this research is on the individual Millennial and leader. Data collection is conducted through semi-structured interviews, which enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the research question and help to answer a 'why' question (Fylan, 2005), which fits this study. Open-ended questions were used in order to give participants the opportunity to explain their underlying reasons and thoughts. The interviews were held in English and Dutch, face-to-face and via Skype. Since the interviews took place at one specific moment in time, this study is a cross-sectional study.

3.2 Sample

Participants within this study are selected in one specific organization by using a non-probability sample technique, as participants were not randomly selected. The specific organization is an international leading company in health technology. The selection of Millennial participants is done based on cluster sampling, which means that the total population of Millennials in the specific organization was subdivided in two parts: Millennials who are born between 1980 and 1990 and Millennials who are born between 1991 and 2000. Three Millennials in each group are selected, which can be seen in Table 2. In addition, three females and three males were participating in the Millennial sample. Furthermore, leader

participants were selected based on the criteria that they have worked with Millennials before or do in their current role. In the past, this could have been within or outside the current team or organization. In the leader sample, gender and age were taken into account in order to attain a representative sample. Subsequently, female and male leaders from all three generations, namely Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials, were selected in order to gather a representative sample. Although not shown in Table 2 due to privacy, participants' organizational function of leader participants were taken into account, in order to represent different point of views. In order to avoid socially desirable answers, participants that are unrelated to each other were interviewed, rather than pairs who work together. Since the data is collected within one specific organization, it should be taken into account that results deriving from this research are difficult to generalize to other organizations outside this. It has been made sure that the detailed results of individual employees are and will not be shared with managers from this particular. The only data that can be shared contains results cannot be tracked down to a particular employee, such as visualizations or percentages. No results on individual level will be shared.

Table 2: Demographical characteristics of the sample

Respondent number (n=12)	Group	Year of birth	Gender	Years of employment at the current organization
1	Millennial	1991	Male	6
2	Millennial	1992	Female	3,5
3	Millennial	1995	Female	1
4	Millennial	1986	Female	7
5	Millennial	1990	Male	4,5
6	Millennial	1983	Male	9
7	Leader	1978	Male	19
8	Leader	1974	Male	25
9	Leader	1965	Male	36
10	Leader	1984	Male	14
11.	Leader	1968	Female	31
12	Leader	1982	Female	15

3.3 Instruments

Due to the distinctive approaches of qualitative research, there are several methods that can be used for collecting the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Examples of main instruments are evidence of documents and records, observations and interviews (Gillham, 2000). The most suitable instrument for this study were semi-structured interviews, because interviewing enables the researcher to enter into the perspective of the participants and to understand underlying experiences, reasons, and thoughts (Fylan, 2005; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Simultaneously, a topic list helps to cover all the main topics of this research (Fylan, 2005). In other words, a topic list allows the researcher to focus on the most important subjects, while being able to go into detail when seemed relevant (Fylan, 2005). An advantage of this flexibility is that follow-up questions may help the researcher to obtain a more precise and comprehensive understanding of the participant's reasons and thoughts (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The topic list was developed beforehand as can be seen in Appendix 1 and is based on a thorough literature review. For the purpose of this study, it has been decided to use one-to-one interviews instead of group interviews, in order to increase trust and reduce the likelihood of socially desirable answers.

Due to the uniqueness of each interview it is almost impossible to replicate findings, making the achievement of reliability a challenge. The level of reliability was ensured as much as possible by following a topic list during the interviews, which decreases the interviewer bias. Moreover, the effort was made to make the research as transparent as possible by providing the respondents beforehand with information about the research process. Further, the validity of data was maximized by reflecting the respondent's true thoughts, emotions, and opinions in his or her answers (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In order to avoid misunderstandings, follow-up questions were used to explore the actual meaning of the respondent. After each interview, a brief summary was be send to the participant in order to check whether he or she was understood correctly. This member check increases the validity because it stimulates the participant to put forward his or her actual meaning. Moreover, the validity in this study was maximized by the avoidance of leading questions and predetermined beliefs of irrelevant topics, through which the researcher's objectivity was able to increase. In this way, respondents may have felt the freedom to provide honest answers. Anonymization of names and confidential use of answers was assured to all participants, which is also advantageous for receiving honest answers.

3.4 Procedure

Several steps were involved in the procedure of data collection. First, the design of the topic list was made and the research sample was composed. Based on the criteria of Millennials and leaders, a number of 12 individuals was selected and approached via email to set a date and time for the interview. According to Morse (1994), a minimal number of six participants in each sub group is needed in order to get a representative sample. After six interviews per sub-group, the point of exaggeration was reached in both sub-groups and no further interviews were held. It was expected that the response rate on these invitations would be relatively high, since people in general experience this as an interesting topic to talk about. The interviews with both Millennials and leaders were practiced in advance, in order to get used to the process of interviewing. Beforehand, all participants were provided with the necessary information about the study, followed by a form on which they had to sign for informed consent. Hereafter, they were asked some introduction questions about the participant's birth year, position and job tenure within the organization. Each participant was kindly asked for permission to record the interview, where after it was stressed that participants' names and answers remain anonymous and confidential. At the end of each interview, all participants were thanked for contributing to the findings of this study. After each interview, recordings were transcribed and analyzed, where after data could be interpreted.

3.5 Analysis

The recorded interviews were typed out and divided into two subgroups: group one as being Millennials and group two as being leaders. The program QDA Miner Lite was used in order to analyze the interviews. The process of analysis started with open coding, in which every interview was analyzed separately. In this process of iterative comparison, every phrase was studied and labeled with an adequate code. Assumed was that the leadership attributes in Table 1 constituted as basis for the codes, but this qualitative research allowed for additional codes when seemed relevant. This process of open coding was followed by axial coding, described as the process in which codes are sorted and relabeled into conceptual categories (Saldana, 2015). Besides these processes of open and axial coding, there was a process of selective coding, which is also called 'theoretical coding (Saldana, 2015). This process of coding involves grouping all other codes into an overarching code (Boeije, 2002; Saldana, 2015). In this process some codes were merged into each other, due to substantive similarities. In addition, some codes were

renamed when seemed relevant. Codes were listed and ranked based on amount of participants that mentioned the construct. When at least half of the total participants in a category (n=6), the code was formed as construct. Finally, the total amount of mentions of such a particular code was numerated in order to give more insight in the constructs.

Results

4.1 The Millennial perspective

The results in this paper concentrate on Millennials and leaders separately. Regarding the Millennial perspective, it will be first discussed what values they have in the workplace, which can be seen in Table 3. These preferred leadership attributes are listed, ranked and compared to previous literature, as shown in Table 4. In addition, results related to effective leadership according to Millennials are listed and ranked in Table 5.

4.1.1 Values of Millennials in the workplace

Based on open-ended questions, results show six core values of Millennials in the workplace, yet unrelated to leadership preferences. As can be seen in Table 3, development opportunities are most valued by Millennials, followed by flexibility, personal relationships, making a difference, feedback and respect. In Table 3 these results can be found together with the number of participants who mentioned a certain aspect and the number of mentions in total.

Table 3: Values, needs and expectations of Millennials in the workplace

Rank	Notion	Number of participants (n = 6)	Number of mentions
1	Development opportunities	5	11
2	Flexibility	4	10
3	Personal relationships	4	8
4	Making a difference	4	8
5	Feedback	3	4
6	Respect	3	3

Development opportunities. Participants stated they want to develop themselves continuously throughout their career. This need for development is caused by a high level of ambition, the aim to become better and to reach the expected performance levels. One respondent mentioned: *“I strive for excellence and want to become better, so therefore I need to continuously develop”*. Participants mentioned they expect development opportunities on both a professional and personal level. One participant explicitly mentioned that he values professional development both inside and outside his current job, in order to step out of his comfort zone and be broadly compatible.

Flexibility. Another valued aspect by Millennials in the workplace is flexibility. In contrast to previous generations, one Millennial stated: *“I expect that work adapts to me, rather than the other way around”*. Millennials indicated they need multiple ways of flexibility in their job, for example flexibility in working hours and workplace. One participant said: *“I do not need to be supervised for at what time I check in at work”*. Millennials want to decide for themselves when to arrive at work and when to leave, taking into account their personal appointments and travel hours.

Personal relationships. As is stated in literature, personal relationships are an important aspect in the day-to-day work of Millennials. These same results can also be derived from this research, with four participants mentioning to value an informal culture in which employees connect with each other on a personal level. This includes sharing information about each other’s lives and personal circumstances in order to get to know the persons they work with. Doing something outside work or celebrating success together were mentioned as examples to create personal relationships with co-workers. Multiple participants mentioned that a lack of hierarchy made it easier to connect with people from a higher level in the organization. Treating others by being friendly, inclusive and showing respect is required to build personal relationships, according to the participants.

Making a difference. Millennial workers want to make a difference in the team, organization and even in the world. One participant described: *“I want to contribute to society by focusing on topics in my work that really add value”*. In line with this, another participant stated: *“I do not want to do things just for the sake of doing it; they need to add value. It is fine when I have to do something I do not want, but then I want to be able to see the purpose of doing it.”* Multiple participants mentioned that it can be hard to make a difference within a large organization and sometimes struggle with that.

Feedback. The aspect of feedback in the workplace was already mentioned as a way to increase development. Especially constructive feedback is valued for developing their strengths or weaknesses. One participant mentioned that he often proactively asks for feedback in order to be able to work on this development aspects. Negative feedback on the contrary is not so much valued and was found to be difficult for Millennials in this study. Furthermore, positive feedback in the form of appreciation tells them that they deliver good work or are heading in the right direction and is therefore also highly valued.

Respect. Three participants stated that they expect other people to treat each other with respect and having respect for all ethnic backgrounds. One participant stated: *“I think it is important not to make a distinction based on gender, age or ethnic background. You feel most comfortable when you can be yourself in the workplace”*.

4.1.2 Preferred leadership attributes by Millennials

Whereas the previous section described Millennials’ values in the workplace, this section illustrates Millennials’ leadership preferences. The three studies of Arsenault (2004), Salahuddin (2010) and Sessa et al. (2007) explored Millennials’ leadership preferences and have been used as a starting point for the present study by using the same constructs. Although these previous studies are all quantitative in nature, this qualitative study allowed for the inclusion of additional constructs when they seemed relevant. Table 4 shows which leadership attributes are most preferred by participants of this study, compared to previous studies (Arsenault, 2004; Salahuddin, 2010; Sessa et al., 2007).

The leadership attribute that is most preferred by Millennials is ‘development of others’, which can be described as the leader’s involvement in the development of Millennials. Also caring was found to be highly preferred, followed by empowering, transparent, communicative, guidance, informal contact, competence, trusting, absence of hierarchy, feedback providing and inspirational. What is remarkable is that the majority of these twelve preferred leadership attributes found in this study are not in line with previous studies. For example, development of others is not indicated by Arsenault (2004), Salahuddin (2010) or Sessa et al. (2007) to be preferred by Millennials. The same goes for empowering, transparent, communicative, guidance, informal contact, absence of hierarchy and feedback providing. One construct that can be linked to previous research is ‘transparent’, as it has much overlap with the construct of ‘honesty’ in the studies of Arsenault (2004) and Salahuddin (2010).

Table 4: Preferred leadership attributes from previous studies, compared with this study

Ranking	Arsenault (2004)	Salahuddin (2010)	Sessa et al. (2007)	Preferred leadership attributes in this study (N=6)
1	Honesty	Competence	Dedication	Development of others*
2	Competence	Determination	Listening	Caring
3	Determination	Self-control	Focusing	Empowering*
4	Loyalty	Honesty	Encouraging	Transparent*
5	Ambitious	Forward-looking	Optimism	Communicative*
6	Inspiration	Loyalty	Dependable	Guidance*
7	Caring	Inspiration	Trusted	Informal contact*
8	Forward-looking	Ambitious	Experienced	Competence
9	Self-confident	Imagination	Supporting	Trusting
10	Imagination	Caring	Trusting	Absence of hierarchy*
11			Creative	Feedback providing*
12			Honest	Inspirational

* Deviating from previous research

4.1.3 Effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials

Besides leadership attributes that are preferred by Millennials, this study also explored leadership attributes that are effective for managing Millennials. In Table 5, these attributes are shown from a Millennial perspective. As previously indicated in this paper, effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials are described as those attributes that either strengthen the relationship between leader and Millennial or increase Millennials' performance. As can be seen, informal contact is mentioned most often as being an effective leadership attribute. This construct is followed by absence of hierarchy, development of others, empowering, feedback providing, guidance, flexibility providing and trusting. Notable is that the construct of 'flexibility providing' was not mentioned in previous research as a preferred leadership attribute in this study.

Table 5: Effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials

Rank	Notion	Number of participants (n = 6)	Number of mentions
1	Informal contact	6	17
2	Absence of hierarchy	5	10
3	Development of others	4	8
4	Empowering	4	7
5	Feedback providing	4	7
6	Guidance	3	6
7	Flexibility providing	3	5
8	Trusting	3	4

Note: these results are from a Millennial perspective only.

Informal contact. Millennials value having informal contact with their leader, rather than only business-related contact. They want a relationship that is built on informal contact in combination with trust and a personal connection. One participant said: “*I do not want a leader to consider me as an FTE, but as a person*”. Examples of informal contact that have been mentioned are sharing personal information, showing genuine interest, making jokes and drinking a beer after work together. Millennials experience informal contact with the leader as an investment in them as a person, which yields feelings of appreciation and being more than just a subordinate. All six Millennial participants indicated that having a relationship beyond work strengthens their relationship with the leader.

Besides, informal contact is found to strengthen the performance of Millennials. Informal contact stimulates the exchange of personal information that would not have been shared in a strictly formal relationship. On the one hand, Millennials can use this extra information in order to learn and in this way increase their performance. On the other hand, leaders can use this extra information to detect the strengths and weaknesses of the Millennial, which can increase Millennials’ performance.

Absence of hierarchy. Down to earth and being equal to other employees are ways in which participants expressed their preference for little or no hierarchy in a leader. One participant described: “*A leader must not have the feeling to be better just because of having a higher corporate grade*”. Preferably, the relationship between with the leader is based on complete equality, according to Millennials. Participants stated that absence of hierarchy would

strengthen the relationship with a leader. When there is little or no hierarchy, respondents experience a lower barrier to share personal information, which enables the Millennial to relate more to the leader. As a result, a personal connection and effective work relationship can be established.

Absence of hierarchy is also found to increase Millennials' performance. Due to a lower barrier between leaders and Millennials, the Millennial is exposed to more information, which increases the performance. In addition, hierarchy is often very time-consuming due to the many layers and communication paths. One participant therefore stated that he would work more efficient with little hierarchy.

Development of others. This leadership attribute was found to contribute to Millennials' performance. Millennials indicated they need opportunities for development and they expect leaders to provide these for them. In addition, Millennials want to be challenged by their leader, however not so much that they lose control. Participants mentioned they value it if their leader coaches him or her in order to become better. The leader is seen as a role model and participants mentioned they would like to learn from them.

Another aspect that is included in this notion is career pathing. Millennials in this study would like their leader to support them in shaping their career. A Millennial that just started her career mentioned that she values a leader who supports her in finding tasks she enjoys. Another and more professional experienced Millennial mentioned: *"I want a manager who lets me develop into a certain role, explains me how to do so and helps me to get there"*. Another participant explains that he values conversations that are beyond the content of work and focus on his career development.

Empowering. Participants indicated they want to be empowered and receive responsibility in their work. They want to be enabled to work independently without the leader taking over. Three participants mentioned to prefer a so-called 'macro-management', which was explained as having the overview of what is happening as a leader, while not going into detail. Participants indicated to feel more responsible for the end product and therefore work harder to achieve a good result when they receive empowerment from their leader. Participants mentioned they are more willing to work and continue to work for the team, because they feel that their contribution is taken seriously when they are empowered. As a result, empowerment leads to an increase of the Millennials' performance. Although an empowering leader is highly valued by the participants in this study, participants all stress they do not want too much

empowerment, because they would get lost. They prefer a healthy balance between empowerment and guidance.

Feedback providing. Feedback providing was indicated as useful to build a strong relationship with a Millennial. On the one hand, Millennials appreciate to receive constructive and positive feedback in order to develop themselves. A participant points out that constructive feedback motivates him work harder, which increases his performance. Furthermore, participants stated that positive feedback and appreciation of a good job also contribute to their performance, because they are more motivated to keep up the good work. Another participant explicitly mentioned that she does not like to receive negative feedback, because that “*crushes her motivation*”.

Guidance. Guidance from the leader is not only found to be a valued leadership attribute, but an effective one. Millennials indicated to feel overwhelmed sometimes by receiving responsibilities, working independently and getting empowered for executing their job. They indicate to value a certain amount of guidance that is in balance with empowerment. One participant said: “*I want my leader to let me know that I always have him or her to go back to*”. It is found that providing guidance strengthens the relationship with Millennials, because Millennials experience feelings of security, appreciation and trust towards leaders. Besides, guidance also increases the performance of Millennials, as it provides guidelines and information to the Millennials that they can use to work towards their goals. This construct distinct itself from the construct of ‘development of others’, because guidance is more seen as a passive way of being a back-up to the Millennials, while development of others is described as an active involvement in the development of Millennials.

Flexibility providing. What has been discussed earlier is that Millennials value, need and expect flexibility in the workplace. This study shows that Millennials also want their leader to be flexible and provide flexibility regarding their job. They want their leader to let them decide for themselves when and where to work and how to perform their task. One participant mentioned that this contributes to his performance by saying: “*Flexibility is important for me because it enables me to work when I want and when I have enough energy, instead of when my leader expects me to work. Such flexibility increases my performance*”. Another participant stated that when her leader provides her with flexibility she feels more secure while performing her tasks, because she otherwise has the feeling that some is controlling her.

Trusting. A leader who is trusting is highly valued by Millennials. “*I need a leader who trusts me with the work I am doing*”, mentioned one participant. The aspect of trust has often been mentioned in combination with empowerment, but is not defined in the same way. Whereas empowerment can be described as receiving ownership and responsibility through task delegation by a leader, trust is more the belief of the leader that the Millennial is doing a good job. These constructs are related because trust is needed to empower the Millennial. Trust is strengthening the relationship between leader and Millennial, because a personal connection can be established.

4.2 The leader perspective

Besides the perspective of Millennials, the leader perspective has been taken into account when exploring effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials. Based on open-ended questions, two different results are described in this section. First, the Millennial characteristics according to leaders can be seen in Table 6. Second, leadership attributes that leaders have experienced as effective for managing Millennials are described, of which the results can be seen in Table 7.

4.2.1 Leaders’ view on Millennial characteristics

According to this study, leaders recognize a high level of development-orientation in Millennials. They experience Millennials as highly ambitious and aiming for continuous development and improving themselves. Furthermore, leaders mentioned a desire of flexibility in for example working hours and workplace as a characteristic. Leaders indicated to experience Millennials sometimes as impatient, because they want quick results and tend to jump on other tasks before finishing previous tasks. In addition, Millennials are found to be digital-savvy as they grew up with computers and internet. Finally, leaders very much recognized the need for a balance between work and life for Millennials. One leader also described this work-life balance more as a work-life integration.

Table 6: Millennial characteristic according to leaders

Rank	Notion	Number of participants (n = 6)	Number of mentions
1	Development-oriented	5	11
2	Flexibility desiring	3	6
3	Impatient	3	5
4	Digital	3	4
5	Work-life balance	2	5

4.2.2 Effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials

Informal contact was already found to be the most effective leadership attribute according to Millennials, but also leaders ranked this leadership attribute the highest. Informal contact is then followed by guidance, adaptability, development of others, flexibility providing, trust, open for new ideas, empowering and absence of hierarchy. These results are shown in Table 7 and are explained in more detail below.

Table 7: Effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials

Rank	Notion	Number of participants (n = 6)	Number of mentions
1	Informal contact	5	16
2	Guidance	5	13
3	Adaptability	5	8
4	Development of others	4	8
5	Flexibility providing	4	8
6	Trusting	4	7
7	Open for new ideas	4	5
8	Empowering	3	7
9	Absence of hierarchy	3	6

Note. This is from a leader perspective

Informal contact. Leaders indicated informal contact to be effective for managing Millennials. According to leaders, the goal of informal contact is to get to know the Millennial and connect on a personal level. One participant explained why informal contact with

Millennials is so important to her: *“For a Millennial, work and private life are often intermingled. By showing interest besides work as well, a better relationship can be built with the Millennial.”* Leaders experience informal contact as an investment in the Millennial, which increases personal connection and yields an effective work relationship. According to leaders, informal contact strengthens the relationship with the Millennial, because Millennials would feel more human instead of just an FTE.

Informal contact is also found to increase Millennials’ performance, because leaders can explore strengths and weaknesses of Millennials by engaging in formal contact. On the one hand, this knowledge can be used to develop strengths and on the other hand to develop the weaknesses of Millennials, whereby increasing their performance. Another participant indicated that she uses informal contact in order to explore what the person gets energized from and how the person works effectively. This knowledge can be used by the leader for adapting the management style to the individual Millennial and thereby contributing to the Millennial’s performance. An aspect that is related to informal contact is absence of hierarchy, as engaging in informal contact with a Millennial decreases the hierarchal barrier according to participants.

Guidance. According to leaders, Millennials often experience feelings of insecurity due to little experience in the workplace and therefore need a certain amount of guidance. One participant mentioned: *“Without guidance, Millennials get lost.”* Another participant said: *“It feels like they need more guidance than other generations”*. Leaders mentioned three ways to guide Millennials: expressing clear expectations and responsibilities, being a source of information and engaging in frequent contact. Guidance hereby contributes to both the relationship and performance of Millennials.

Furthermore, leaders indicated they try to find a balance between guidance and empowerment. This means that they offer guidance to a certain point and then empower the Millennial to decide how to perform a certain task. One participant explained: *“I provide them with enough explanation and just enough tools, where after I let them decide when and how to use it.”* In sum, guidance is found to be an important aspect for managing Millennials, but in balance with empowerment. Leaders also indicated that the amount of guidance depends on the Millennials’ experience in the organizational field and the amount of self-assurance in the job. The construct of guidance can therefore be linked to the construct of adaptability, which is discussed hereafter.

Adaptability. This construct can be described as the ability to adapt to individual needs in the workplace. The majority of leaders indicated that although Millennials might be one generation, there are still many different individual needs in the workplace. One leader said: *“For one of the Millennials in my team it works best to give him space, while another one prefers to give me daily updates.”* When leaders are able to adapt their management style, they can better meet the individual demands of Millennials and thereby maximize individual performance. One leader explains how he adapts to the individual Millennial: *“I engage in a conversation with every one of them, I try to find his or her internal motivators and build around that. I try to find someone’s strengths, thereby maximizing the individual performance.”* For a leader to be able to adapt to individual needs, people skills and empathy are needed to understand the other person’s experience.

Development of others. Leaders they are involved in the development of their Millennial workers. The majority of leaders identified to implement coaching in their management style in order to support Millennials in their development. Examples of coaching topics are how to prioritize tasks or how to behave in meetings. When leaders help to develop Millennials in this way, Millennials acquire new skills and knowledge that they can use in order to increase their performance. One leader mentioned reversed coaching as an effective way to develop Millennials, which can be explained as coaching in which the Millennial is coaching the leader on aspects of choice. This type of coaching would help both the leader and Millennial to develop.

Flexibility providing. When the leader provides flexibility towards the Millennial in the form of working hours and workplace, this was experienced as beneficial for the relationship with that Millennial. One leader mentioned that the private and professional lives of Millennials are often intermingled. In order to combine these two, offering flexibility is key in order to engage them as a leader. By doing this, Millennials will experience feelings of appreciation because they are enabled to combine their work and private lives. As a result, an effective work relationship can be established. Being able to combine work and private lives also contributes to Millennials’ performance, as they do not have to choose anymore between work or life and thus can achieve better performance results.

Trusting. Leaders indicated that Millennials need to be able to trust the leader in order to build a work relationship. When a leader creates trust with the Millennial, a personal connection is more likely to be developed, which yields an effective work relationship. One participant indicated: *“I think trust is the building block of every relationship”*. Another

participant mentioned: *“Millennials like to share a lot of personal information and I think trust is needed for that.”* Another leader mentioned to build an individual trust-level with every employee by using empathy and informal contact in order to be able to think from the other person’s perspective.

Open to new ideas. When leaders are open to new ideas or ways of working, they give Millennials space to express their opinion and stimulate Millennials to innovate and continuously improve. One leader indicated: *“When you are not open to new ideas as a leader, you will never innovate.”* Leaders also pointed out that by being open to new ideas, they trigger the intrinsic motivation of Millennials. Innovation, continuous improvement and intrinsic motivation all increase Millennials’ performance according to participants. One leader acknowledged that some managers might experience difficulties with being open to new ideas, because people are naturally against change. *“However, the new approaches and ideas of Millennials are often very clever and well-conceived.”*

Empowering. Three leaders indicated to use empowerment for managing Millennials, which involves giving ownership and responsibilities towards the Millennial. A leader mentioned to give her workers some guidelines, however not too much in order to let them fill in the rest themselves. Another leader mentioned to give Millennials ownership of a whole job package rather than separate tasks, in order to show them the overview and increase their learning opportunity. For this process of empowerment, trust in the Millennial is mentioned as a prerequisite. The feeling of receiving ownership and responsibility increases the motivation to work harder and to succeed. In addition, creativeness and innovation are stimulated. Subsequently, performance can be increased.

Absence of hierarchy. Leaders in this study indicated that the absence of hierarchy with the Millennial stimulates the establishment and enforcement of a work relationship. One leader mentioned: *“I do not want my Millennial workers to be afraid of me. On the contrary, I want them to feel no barrier between us.”* In addition, three leaders indicated that they find it important to be approachable for Millennials. With little hierarchy there is a low barrier between the two parties, which stimulates sharing personal information and strengthens the relationship. A leader indicated: *“I stimulate Millennials to approach me whenever they need. I want them to share everything they want, because I think this creates transparency and an effective relationship.”* In addition, a low hierarchical barrier stimulates Millennials and leaders to share information and exchange learning opportunities. Due to this, Millennials can gain more knowledge and skills, which increases their performance.

4.3 Two perspectives: Millennials and leaders

In this study, leadership attributes are explored from a two perspectives. In Table 8, an overview is provided of effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials, according to Millennials and leaders. As can be seen, informal contact is indicated most often by both for being an effective leadership attribute. Remarkable is that Millennials mentioned absence of hierarchy more often than while leaders as an effective leadership attribute. The same goes for empowering, which is mentioned more often by Millennials than leaders. What is also interesting, is that ‘feedback providing’ was only mentioned by Millennials, not by leaders. On the contrary, ‘adaptability’ and ‘open for new ideas’ were only mentioned by leaders, not by Millennials.

Table 8: Effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials from both a Millennial and leader perspective

Rank	Notions Millennials (n=6)	Notions Leaders (n=6)
1	Informal contact	Informal contact
2	Absence of hierarchy	Guidance
3	Development of others	Adaptability
4	Empowering	Development of others
5	Feedback providing	Flexibility providing
6	Guidance	Trusting
7	Flexibility providing	Open for new ideas
8	Trusting	Empowering
9		Absence of hierarchy

In Table 9, all effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials are listed and ranked based on the number of participants that mentioned the construct. According to both Millennials and leaders, informal contact is the most effective attribute, followed by guidance, development of others, absence of hierarchy, empowering, flexibility providing, trust, adaptability, feedback and open for new ideas.

Table 9: Effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials from a dual-perspective

Rank	Notion	Number of participants (n = 12)	Number of mentions
1	Informal contact	11	33
2	Guidance	8	19
3	Development of others	8	16
4	Absence of hierarchy	7	16
5	Empowering	7	14
6	Flexibility providing	7	13
7	Trust	7	11
8	Adaptability**	5	8
9	Feedback providing*	4	7
10	Open for new ideas**	4	5

* Only mentioned by Millennials

** Only mentioned by leaders

4.4 Other results

Individual differences. A notable result is that all six leaders indicated that generational differences in the workplace are less existing and therefore less important than individual differences. One leader indicated: *“I look how people are on an individual level and not to what generation they belong.”* Leaders indicated they adapt to the individual, rather than to the characteristics of a generation. This makes that leaders need to be able to sense and understand what the individual Millennials wants, in order to adapt the management style. A leader indicated: *“Managing people is custom work, since everyone is different.”* Such individual differences are mainly focused on the way of working and the amount of guidance versus empowerment is preferred, according to leaders. For example, some individuals prefer to have a high amount of empowerment and work very efficiently at home. Others prefer to work in the office with weekly check-ins with their manager. These individual differences can be linked to the construct of adaptability, as leaders emphasize to adapt to individual values rather than generational belonging. In order to understand how individuals want to be managed, leaders indicated to engage in a one-on-one conversation with their subordinates and ask them what they prefer from the leader and how they want to be managed. In addition, leaders indicated to

receive or proactively ask for feedback on their management style, which helps leaders to better adapt to the individual.

Life cycle theory. This theory was described earlier in this paper and suggests that individual values in the workplace develop as they grow older and enter new life stages (Abramson, 1979). Younger cohorts such as Millennials did not experience the effect of aging and having large family responsibilities yet and therefore may have other values in the workplace than previous generations. Four of six leaders indicated that values of individuals depend on the life-cycle they are in, rather than the generation they belong to. One leader indicated: “A younger generation obviously wants other things in the workplace than older generations. Millennials have just finished school and do not have kids yet. They value other aspects in the workplace than individuals who have grandchildren and will retire in a couple of years.” Leaders indicated to doubt specific Millennial characteristics such as ambition, flexibility and work-life balance. A participant mentioned: “I feel that Millennial characteristics such as ambition also applied to my generation when I was around the age of 25, so I am not sure if Millennials are so special.”

Discussion

This qualitative study aims to answer the question what leadership attributes are experienced as effective for managing Millennials. In order to answer these questions, this research first explored leadership attributes that are preferred by Millennials in the workplace. Millennials listed twelve leadership attributes they prefer: development of others, caring, empowering, transparent, communicative, guidance, informal contact, competence, trusting, absence of hierarchy, feedback providing and inspirational. Second, this research explored leadership attributes effective for managing Millennials from two perspectives. Millennials and leaders together listed eleven leadership attributes that they experience as effective for either strengthening the relationship or increasing Millennials’ performance. Informal contact was ranked highest, followed by guidance, development of others, absence of hierarchy, empowering, flexibility providing, trust, adaptability, feedback providing and open for new ideas.

Remarkable is that the majority of leadership attributes found to be preferred by Millennials are not in line with the prior studies this research was built on. For example, development of others is found to be the most valued leadership attribute by Millennials, but

does not occur in the studies of Arsenault (2004), Salahuddin (2010) and Sessa et al. (2007). The same applies to empowering, transparent, feedback providing, guidance, informal contact, absence of hierarchy and flexibility providing. A possible explanation for this is that these articles used pre-determined constructs derived from the Checklist of Admired Leaders from Pierce and Newstrom (2000). No other constructs were added to the checklist, in contrast to this research where constructs were added when relevant. In addition, the articles of Arsenault (2004), Salahuddin (2010) and Sessa et al. (2007) were conducted when Millennials were not fully integrated in the workforce yet. Millennials were 10 to 30 years old when the latest study of Salahuddin (2010) was published, which means that not even half of the Millennial generation had entered the workforce yet when these studies were conducted. The results of these studies are therefore based on a small representation of the Millennial generation. As generations follow each other fluently, there may be differences between the older and younger Millennials regarding leadership preferences, meaning that previous studies may lean towards results that also have been found in generation studies about Generation X (Raines, 2002).

Regarding effective leadership attributes, Millennials and leaders both indicated the following constructs: informal contact, guidance, development of others, absence of hierarchy, empowering, flexibility providing and trust. The majority of these results are in line with expectations prior to this research. Research stated that Millennials want their leader to involve in their development by a mentoring role very development-oriented (McNeil, 2018), see the world without hierarchy (Schawbel, 2016; Stein, 2013) and value a high level of responsibility and empowerment (Martin, 2005; Raines, 2002) while simultaneously receiving guidance from their leader (Salahuddin, 2010). Furthermore, the construct 'flexibility providing' is in line with previous research as Smith (2010) stated that Millennials want to receive flexibility in order to balance their personal and professional lives. Finally, previous research showed that Millennials want to have an informal relationship with their leader with a high level of trust (Dulin, 2008; Nelson, 2007). It was surprising however that 'informal contact' was mentioned most often by both Millennials and leaders, as this may indicate that informal contact is most effective for managing Millennials. Besides these common constructs, there are several constructs mentioned by only Millennials or leaders. For example, Millennials added the construct 'feedback providing', whereas leaders did not mention this construct. This may indicate that leaders do not acknowledge this high need for feedback yet. This can be explained by the fact that Millennials are the first generation that have a need for continuous feedback (Nolan, 2015). Whereas previous generations are used to receiving monthly or even yearly feedback,

Millennials want continuous feedback in order to understand how they can further improve and develop themselves (Ferri-Reed, 2014). Leaders often manage others as they have been managed themselves and may therefore not acknowledge Millennials' need for continuous feedback. This tendency of leaders to manage other people as they have been managed themselves is called 'bias of experience' (Espinoza, 2012). This bias can cause discrepancies between the way Millennials want to be managed and the way leaders actually manage Millennials.

Besides Millennials adding the construct 'feedback providing', leaders added two effective leadership constructs that were not mentioned by Millennials: 'open to new ideas' and 'adaptability'. The construct 'open to new ideas' is mentioned by leaders as they experience new approaches and ways of working with the arrival of Millennials in the workplace. As Millennials are the first who grew up with computers and internet, they are digital savvy and innovation-oriented, making that they have a different mindset than previous generations and thereby introduce new approaches and ways of working in the current workplace (Gibson et al., 2009). Leaders in this study acknowledged that these new approaches are often very effective and therefore being open to these new ideas is effective too. The fact that this construct was not mentioned by Millennials can be explained by previous researchers who describe Millennials as the most open-minded generation so far (Main 2013; Raines, 2002). Whereas this open-mindedness comes naturally to Millennials, leaders indicated they consciously have to remind themselves to be open to new ideas. This makes that leaders added this construct and Millennials did not. Another construct that was not mentioned by Millennials is 'adaptability'. This construct can be described as adapting to the different needs of employees in the workplace. Since leaders often manage multiple and thereby different employees, they face a variety of values. This variety of values creates the awareness that the same approach is not effective for everyone, making that they acknowledge the need to adapt to their followers. Millennials may not recognize that other employees have different values and that leaders have to adapt to these, as they are in general self-centered and focus more on themselves than on others (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Besides the finding that some constructs were mentioned by only Millennials or leaders, there is some difference in the ranking of effective leadership attributes between Millennials and leaders. For example, all Millennials indicated 'absence of hierarchy' as effective, compared to just half of the leaders. Although both may experience this construct as effective, this may imply that Millennials experience this construct as more effective than leaders.

According to Arsenault (2004), leaders from older generations are more likely to use hierarchy than leaders from younger generations. Older generations may therefore not recognize the effectiveness of 'absence of hierarchy' for managing Millennials. This would mean that the bias of experience plays a role here as well (Arsenault, 2004). This research sample contains leaders from all generations that are currently in the workforce, which are Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials (Iden, 2016). It was indeed found in this study that leaders from older generations mentioned 'absence of hierarchy' less often than leaders from younger generations. Other constructs that are ranked differently by Millennials and leaders are 'guidance' and 'empowerment'. Although Millennials and leaders agree upon the effectiveness of a balance between these two constructs, Millennials ranked 'empowerment' higher, whereas leaders ranked 'guidance' higher. This finding can be explained by the fact that on the one hand, Millennials want to receive a large amount of responsibility as they feel like they can handle it (Raines, 2002) and therefore rank empowerment higher. On the other hand, leaders can be hesitant to use empowerment as they have a desire to remain in control over the outcome and therefore lean more towards guidance than empowerment (Conger, 1989).

An unexpected outcome of this research is that leaders do not acknowledge generational differences as much as previously literature would suggest. Some leaders even indicated to not experience generational difference at all and to not perceive Millennials as significantly different from other generations. These same leaders indicated to experience more individual differences and emphasized that they adapt their leadership style to individuals rather than to generations. They emphasize that it is important for a leader to identify what individuals value in the workplace, which calls for a more personal approach to leadership. The majority of leaders indicated that they expect these individual differences to stem from the different life cycles individuals are in. For example, Millennials with kids value other things in the workplace than Millennials who do not have kids yet. Besides having kids, reaching the retirement age is an example of an important life stage. According to Abramson (1979), values in the workplace do not vary per generation, but change in accordance to the life cycle individuals go through. This perspective on generations requires a more personal approach towards leadership. These results partly negate the generational issue and set a critical note on previous literature about generational preferences for leadership. The more personal approach towards leadership resembles the ideas presented by Deals (2007), who goes one step further and states that all generations have similar values, but just express them differently. Everyone wants to be respected, to be trusted, to develop themselves and to have a coach, however in different ways.

These different ways of expressing values are according to Deals (2007) not based on generational differences, but rather on individual differences. The message of this book is that one should not generalize based on generations, but should think from the other person's perspectives in order to identify individual values. This is in agreement with the statement of Solaja and Ogunola (2016) that effective leaders are those "who adopt contingency in their leadership style in order to match their actions to the individual values of their followers" (p. 53). Hereby, they acknowledge that leadership should focus on the individual rather than generational belonging.

The finding of a more individual rather than a generational leadership approach is in line with the construct of 'adaptability', in this paper described as the ability to adapt to individual needs in the workplace. Leaders indicated that in order to engage with their followers, they adapt their leadership style to the individual needs within the team. By doing this, leaders can find individual motivations whereby strengths can be enhanced and performance can be maximized. The underlying leadership style in line with this is transformational leadership, which emphasizes the relationship and engagement between leader and follower, by meeting individual needs and motivators (Avolio, & Bass, (1995). This leadership style involves mentoring, providing feedback and developing the followers' skills. Participants indirectly expressed their preference and experience of effectiveness for this particular leadership style. On the one hand, Millennials in this study indicated they find it important to have a strong relationship with their leader, which is based on trust and a connection. It was indicated they want their leader to be their mentor, who helps developing their skills and provides them with feedback. On the other hand, leaders indicated to focus more on individuals rather than generations, because this increases individuals' motivation, engagement and performance. Besides transformational leadership, a more recent leadership style that fits the workplace values of Millennials is inclusive leadership. This style not only embraces individual differences but also aims to leverage these differences for obtaining competitive advantage (Kugelmass, 2003). This style emphasizes the inclusion of every individual in order to enable them to maximize their performance (Kugelmass, 2003). Due to the finding of individual differences to be more important than generational differences, this style is also likely to meet the variety of Millennials' values.

Limitations and future research

An important limitation of this study is the sample. All respondents in this study are employed at the same organization. The effect of this could be that respondents answered questions from a certain perspective due to their work environment (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This limitation has been minimized by careful construction of the sample and taking into account demographic characteristics. A representative sample was composed with respondents who differ in terms of age, gender and job function. Due to the particular industry this organization is functioning in however, the findings are only representative for this organization or, tentatively, different organizations in this industry. In addition, the sample size consisting of twelve participants is relatively small for generalizing results to the entire population within this organization. Due to this under-representation of subgroups there is a potential bias in the outcomes (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). For example, due to the small sample size saturation might not have been reached, which negatively impacts the validity of this study (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Generalizations that derive from this study should therefore be carefully considered.

Although this research is qualitative in nature, it involves a quantitative element as the amount of mentioned is numerated and ranked accordingly. A limitation could be that the frequency of constructs being mentions do not reflect the true importance of such a construct, which decreases the validity of this research. Another possible limitation of this study involves the research instrument. Semi-structured interviews allow some freedom to deviate from the topic in order to get to a deeper understanding of a particular situation. This freedom could be a limitation, since it might influence the reliability of this study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This limitation was minimized however by the use of a topic list, which ensured the covering of the most important topics (Fylan, 2005). For future research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research is recommended. On the one hand, qualitative research allows for a rich and comprehensive understanding of preferred and effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials. On the other hand, quantitative research can provide insight in the ranking of these attributes and yields more valid results compared to qualitative research. It would be interesting for future research to use semi-structured interviews in order to explore preferred and effective leadership attributes, where after a survey can be used in order to confirm and rank these results. An additional possible limitation of using qualitative research is that Millennials might have forgotten to mention a certain construct as preferred or effective, as no pre-determined list was showed and no leading questions were asked.

Furthermore, the chance of social desirable answers can be a possible limitation of this study. Millennials might have felt the tendency to answer questions that are favorable towards their leaders or others within the specific organization. This limitation was minimized by the guarantee of anonymization and confidentiality. It was made clear to every participant that their answers would not be shared with members from the organization. In addition, the decision was made to not interview Millennials and leaders who work together as leader and follower, as this could only increase the tendency for social desirable answers. It would be interesting for future research to interview such pairs of Millennials and leaders in order to explore preferred and effective leadership attributes. Such interviews could yield interesting outcomes and maybe an even deeper understanding of preferred and effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials. By facilitating a dialogue between Millennials and leaders, generational gaps can be directly detected with less interpretation of a researcher. Millennials and leaders can discuss what works effectively and what does not, which could lead to concrete solutions for diminishing the generational gap and decreasing tensions and conflicts, making it highly relevant for practice. However, there would be a higher risk for socially desirable answers by interviewing pairs, as Millennials and leaders have insight in each other's' answers. This risk should be minimized, which can be done by for example assuring that there are no right or wrong answers and that there will be no consequences for both parties based on the answers. In addition, the purpose of increasing the intergenerational cooperation between leader and Millennial should be made clear. In addition, participants might see it as an opportunity to strengthen their leader-follower relationship.

As this research found evidence for a more individual-based leadership approach rather than a generation-based leadership approach, it would be interesting for future research to further explore such an individual-based approach in relation to individual and organizational effectiveness. In previous research, transformational research has been extensively investigated (Balda & Mora, 2011; Thompson & Gregory, 2012) and based on the outcomes of this research, transformational leadership would be a valuable starting point. Based on the results of this research, it is also expected that the construct of 'adaptability' plays a large role in this and may be a possible mediator or moderator between generational diversity and leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, the so-called 'bias of experience' is expected to at least partly cause differences regarding preferred and effective leadership attributes according to on the one hand Millennials and on the other hand leaders. This bias leads to assumptions of leaders about how Millennials want to be managed and withholds leaders from engaging in a conversation in order

to explore how Millennials actually want to be managed. It would be interesting for future research to further examine the role of this bias in intergenerational leadership. Interesting questions are for example how this bias can influence a leader's leadership style and what factors can diminish this bias.

Theoretical and practical implications

This study has several theoretical implications, since the majority of previous literature is based on quantitative studies that take the perspective of either Millennials or leaders into account regarding effective leadership attributes. The qualitative nature of this research allowed for a deeper insight in leadership attributes that are not only preferred but also experienced as effective, which brings more focus and direction to the existing literature about leadership attributes for managing Millennials. For example, future research could focus on the leadership attributes that in this study are found to be effective for managing Millennials, rather than on those that are preferred. Besides examining what leadership attributes are preferred and effective, this qualitative study also explored why these are preferred and effective for managing Millennials. Whereas the majority of previous literature is quantitative in nature, underlying explanations were often reasoned without concrete findings. These underlying explanations allow future researchers to explore possible moderators or mediators for the results in this study. Another theoretical implication of this study is the dual-perspective approach in this research design, as no previous study was conducted in the same way before. This research builds upon prior studies that take only perspective into account, but by taking a dual-perspective approach it provides insight in the gap that exists between leaders and Millennials regarding workplace values. This insight creates interesting opportunities for future research to determine other possible gaps between Millennials' and leaders' experience of effective leadership attributes.

Besides theoretical implications, this study has some practical implications for the organization this study was conducted in. In general, there is alignment of leadership attributes between Millennials and leaders, meaning that leaders within this organization may be well qualified for managing Millennials. Practically important for this organization is the one leadership attribute that was mentioned by Millennials but not by leaders, as this may indicate that leaders can develop themselves on this aspect. The one construct that was mentioned by Millennials but not by leaders is 'feedback providing', meaning that leaders do not seem to acknowledge the need for continuous feedback of Millennials yet. It is recommended for this

organization to create a culture in which providing continuous feedback is the norm. In order to create such a culture, the importance of feedback should be emphasized across the organization. When this importance is clear, leaders should receive tools in order to maximize the effect of feedback on individual and organizational success. As Millennials indicated they do not value negative feedback but rather constructive and positive feedback, it is recommended that leaders receive training on how to provide specifically these two kinds of feedback. For example, leaders could learn how to formulate feedback in such a way that Millennials experience it as constructive. In order to embed continuous feedback even more in the organizational culture it is recommended that the organization takes a look at its performance management cycle, which includes the feedback process. For example, continuous feedback could be reflected in the organization by the implementation of a 360 degrees feedback system. In this process feedback is gathered from not only the leader, but also from colleagues and subordinates, resulting in higher effectiveness (Thach, 2002).

In addition to the importance of feedback, results in this study emphasize a leadership style that is based on an individual approach rather than a generational approach. Although Millennials might have some overlapping values towards leadership, the organization and its leaders should keep in mind that many different preferences occur within this generation. The organization may stimulate its leaders to use an individual approach towards leadership. Adaptability is crucial in this as it enables leaders to adapt to their followers' individual needs. More specifically, leaders could engage with their employees in one-on-one conversations in order to explore and understand individual motivations and values. In this way, the leader can better meet the individual needs of his or her employees. A leadership style in line with this is transformational leadership, as this style is centered around individual motivations, engagement and the relationship between leader and follower (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). It is therefore recommended for this organization to appoint employees in leadership positions who are or can develop towards a transformational leader.

Conclusion

Some researchers argued that Millennials are significantly different from other generations and therefore should be managed with an appropriate style. This exploratory and qualitative study aimed to answer the question what leadership attributes are preferred by Millennials and effective for managing Millennials. Millennials want and can be managed effectively by leaders who are involved in their development and consider them as a person by having informal contact besides business related contact. In addition, leaders who empower Millennials but also provide guidance when they need it are likely to be preferred and effective. Furthermore, a leader is preferred and experienced as effective when he or she provides flexibility and feedback, is open for new ideas and can adapt to his or her followers. Although the majority of constructs is identified by both, Millennials and leaders disagreed about some constructs. For example, only Millennials listed feedback providing, whereas only leaders listed 'open to new ideas' and 'adaptability'. Furthermore, the constructs 'absence of hierarchy', 'guidance' and 'empowerment' were ranked differently by the two parties. These differences in constructs and rankings can be explained by the so-called 'bias of experience' that causes a discrepancy in the way Millennials want to be managed and how they are actually managed by leaders.

Although this paper found effective leadership attributes for managing Millennials, in particular leaders emphasized the importance of individual differences above generational differences in the workplace. Although managing generations can be seen as a starting point for effectively managing today's diverse workforce, leaders should consider managing individuals instead. This paper argues that leaders who are able to adapt to the individual needs of their followers can effectively manage not only Millennials, but all generations.

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Appendix I

Topic guide interviews Millennials

Background information

1. In what year are you born?
2. For how long do you have working experience in general?
3. What is your experience with working with other generations?

Work values, needs, and expectations

4. Describe a few aspects that you find most important in the workplace.
 - a. Why do you find these aspects most important?
 - b. To what extent do you feel that these aspects is belonging to the Millennial generation?
5. Have you ever experienced differences between you and previous generations in the workplace?
 - a. If yes, did you experience such differences with your previous or current leader?
 - i. If yes, how did this situation look like?
 - ii. If yes, how did you handle this situation?
 - iii. If yes, to what extent did you see this as a challenge in your work?
 - b. If not, why?

Experience of leadership

6. How would you define a good leader?
 - a. Why do you feel that a person like that is a good leader?
7. What characteristics should a leader possess according to you?
 - a. Why do you feel that a leader should possess these characteristics?
8. Describe a personal situation in which someone provided a good example of leadership
 - a. Why did you perceive this as a good example?

Leadership in relation to own performance

9. To what type of leader do feel comfortable around?

- a. Why do you feel comfortable around that type of leader?
10. What can a leader do in order to strengthen the relationship with you?
- a. Why would this strengthen the relationship?
11. What can a leader do for you in order to increase your performance?
- a. Why would this increase your performance?

Topic guide interviews leaders

Background information

1. For how long do you have work experience?
2. To what extent were you able to work with Millennials in these years?
3. How have you perceive working with Millennials in these years?

Experience with other generations

4. What do you find the most striking characteristic of Millennials?
 - a. To what extent do you see this characteristic as *positive*?
 - i. Why do you see this characteristic as positive?
 - b. To what extent do you see this characteristic as *negative*?
 - i. Why do you see this characteristic as negative?
5. Describe your experiences with leading/managing Millennials
 - a. How do you perceive managing Millennials?
6. Do you experience the Millennial generation as different than previous generations?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - i. Do you think that Millennials need to be managed differently than previous generations?
 - b. If not, why not?
 - i. Do you think that Millennials can be managed as any other generation?
7. Did you ever had the feeling you needed to adapt your leadership style towards a Millennial?
 - a. If yes, why did you think that you needed to adapt your leadership style?
 - b. If yes, in what way did you adapt your leadership style?
 - c. To what extent was this adaption effective for what you wanted to achieve?

- d. If not, to what extent do you manage Millennials the same as any other generation?

Leadership and effective cooperation

8. What leadership aspects work in general for Millennials?
9. What leadership aspects do not work in general for Millennials?
10. Describe a situation in which your leadership contributed to a better relationship with a Millennial.
 - a. What leadership aspect did you use for this?
 - b. In what way became this relationship better?
11. Can you describe a situation in which your leadership contributed to the performance of a Millennial?
 - a. What leadership aspect did you use for this?
 - b. In what way became the performance better?