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SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Customizing leadership practices for the millennial workforce: A conceptual framework

Bayan Yousef Farhan^{1*}

Abstract: This study is a critical review of literature to develop a conceptual framework that offers new insights on the complicated interaction between the millennial workforce and leadership competencies. The current study applies contingency approach as a theoretical foundation to answer the question of which leadership practice is suitable for leading the millennial workforce. The study contributes to research on leadership by developing a theoretical framework in which the contingency approach becomes a theoretical basis for the analysis. The analysis investigates the contingent style of leadership needed in different situations. The framework is built on two suggested factors (the millennial workforce and leadership competencies) as a critical means to answer to the question raised. Literature that shows the theoretical interaction between the two factors was used to build this framework, which in turn develops three complementary parallel leadership practices (ethical-tournament, servant-tolerant, and authentic-stringent). The three practices provide a foundation for theoretical development in the field of leadership in order to actively engage, retain, and develop millennials within their current organizations. While the current study provides a theoretical framework, there is a need for empirical work to examine the three proposed practices and examine the relationship between the two suggested factors: the millennial workforce and leadership competencies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Bayan Farhan is an Assistant Professor at the College of Business, Al Ain University since 2015. She holds a Doctorate in Leadership from the University of Calgary, Canada, and MA in Economic Policy and BA in Economics from McMaster University, Canada. Dr. Farhan teaches courses in leadership and management. Her fields of research interest include leadership development, strategic leadership, and economic perspective of leadership. Her research often integrates these areas to explore the leadership effectiveness and consequences of “strategic leadership”. Her current research is on how strategic leadership can make a difference in the time of dominant economic uncertainty and social instability. Also, part of her research has focused on the leadership of higher education, and competition and the use of competitive strategies in the Canadian higher education market. Dr. Farhan has published in leading peer-reviewed journals. She has also presented her work at several academic conferences.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This study applied contingency theory as a theoretical foundation to develop a much-needed framework to address the complexity of the millennial workforce. The research investigated which leadership approach is suitable for leading the millennial workforce, which required a clear understanding of millennial workforce features and leadership competencies. The aim was to develop a leadership framework that motivates the millennial workforce and allows leaders to overcome the challenges of establishing a trust relationship, while keeping millennials to the requirement that they achieve the organization’s goals. The study found that customizing leadership practices in organizations can create a work environment that enables flexibility, and that adopting appropriate practices can keep the millennial workforce motivated and energized. Developing an in-depth understanding of ethical-tournament, servant-tolerant, and authentic-stringent leadership practices is an important requirement for leading a millennial workforce today.

Subjects: Critical Management Studies; Leadership; Human Resource Management; Employment Relations

Keywords: Millennial workforce; contingency approach; ethical–tournament leadership; servant–tolerant leadership; authentic–stringent leadership

1. Introduction

The global market of the 21st century can be described as an ambiguous, changeable, and highly competitive business environment. Generally, the workforce participation rate of millennials or Generation Y (born between 1980 and 2000) is anticipated to increase quickly (LaCore, 2015). The current study contributes to research on leadership by developing a theoretical framework that explains how to lead the millennial workforce and organizations successfully. The study applies contingency theory as a theoretical foundation to develop a framework that is critical in dealing with the complexity of the millennial workforce, who are interested in advancing their own personal profiles, while not being “prepared to sacrifice themselves for their work” (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017, p. 272). A theoretical framework is developed as a key driving force for motivating the millennial workforce, who have been described as smart, flexible, share earned knowledge, collect information quickly, have communication skills, and appreciate diversity and teamwork (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017). “Millennial’s greatest strength is their ability to build relationships and work well with others in a team environment” (Delgado et al., 2020, p. 37). The millennial workers focus on their self-interests, are loyal to themselves, and as such, have a lack of ethics (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017). They have high expectations, a high turnover rate, and less loyalty (LaCore, 2015). The variety and differences among millennials raise a question of which leadership approach is suitable for leading the millennial workforce.

The real challenge is to know which leadership practices could be employed to motivate millennials to use their full capacity, energy, power, ability, and commitment to be an effective part of their organizations. The aim is to develop a leadership framework that motivates the millennial workforce and allows leaders to overcome the challenges of establishing a trust relationship, while keeping millennials to the requirement that they achieve the organization’s goals. The proposed framework must allow effective communication that enhances the millennials’ confidence and belief in themselves. To accomplish this, awareness of the complexity of the millennial workforce and the leaders’ competencies guides the answer to the research question. The need for awareness justifies the need to explore a new leadership framework for an unsettled and uncertain work environment.

2. The study

This conceptual study was based upon critical review and analysis of relevant literature to summarize the common elements of both leadership practice and the millennial workforce that could inform how millennials are led in organizations. The purpose was to develop a practicing leadership framework based on existing knowledge with a critical stance. The critical review stance guided the study, and the contribution of the contingency approach was achieved by, first, a deep understanding of millennial characteristics and leadership competencies, and second, an analysis of the interaction between these two contingency dimensions and evaluation of its effect on leadership practices.

To obtain an in-depth understanding of the two contingent dimensions (millennial characteristics and leadership competencies), I reviewed existing research that highlights the two dimensions and used a critical viewpoint according to the logic of which leadership practice is suitable for leading the millennial workforce. I searched for business, management, and leadership journal articles and books with these keywords: *contingency theories, leadership, leadership styles, leadership approaches, leaders’ competencies, millennial characteristics, millennial workforce*. This critical review, coupled with the contingency approach, was used to develop a framework of practicing leadership to propose how leadership practices should be customized to lead the millennial workforce.

This study contributes to the contingency approach by exploring the interaction between the two contingency dimensions to highlight new ways of leading and satisfying millennial needs in organizations. The structure of the paper proceeds as follows: first, it provides readers with a brief overview of the relevant literature to summarize the common elements of leadership competencies and the millennial workforce characteristics. This is followed by an explanation of the theoretical interaction between two factors: leadership competencies and the millennial workforce. The paper then proceeds to develop three complementary leadership practices. It explains how these practices are proposed to result in millennial workforce performance. Then the proposed theoretical framework based on contingency theories is clarified. The paper concludes with a summary and a set of leadership implications for organizations.

3. Review of literature

Many research papers have been written about leadership and have shown the importance of leadership. Harrington et al. (2011) identified leadership as leaders' initiatives to enhance the performance of their organizations through utilizing resources. Indeed, leaders interact with several resources, including human resources, with such as a youthful workforce. Malewska and Sajdak (2014) explained that strategic leadership is about designing and implementing long-term strategies to overcome future uncertainties and help in achieving the goal of continuous development. They also indicated that strategic leadership focuses on continuous improvement through sharing knowledge, and through showing the ability to overcome difficulties and predict and handle the change effectively. Malewska and Sajdak (2014) stressed that strategic leadership shows the ability to overcome uncertainty and deal with unpredicted change in an organization or a market.

This study attempts to contribute to the literature in that it focuses on customizing leadership practices to deal with a changeable work environment. The study identifies leaders as achievers. Achievers look beyond their ability and drive themselves to reach their challenging visions, as well leading themselves beyond their capacity and limitations. The study assumes that achievers or leaders believe in their targets and aims, commit to achieving their vision, and are willing to overcome barriers and challenges. The idea here is that achievers need others to reach the target, and will also motivate others to be achievers. To serve this purpose, one must consider millennials (individuals born between 1980 and 2000), who have become an important part of the global workforce. According to LaCore (2015), within five years, 70 percent of the global workforce will become millennials or Gen Y. This study shows (Table 1, Figure 1) the percentage of participation from the millennial workforce in different markets and industries; the data is obtained from the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).

Figure 1. Participation trend of global labor force by age.

From Table LFS by sex and age —composition [Customized table], by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2019 (<https://stats.oecd.org/#>). In the public domain.

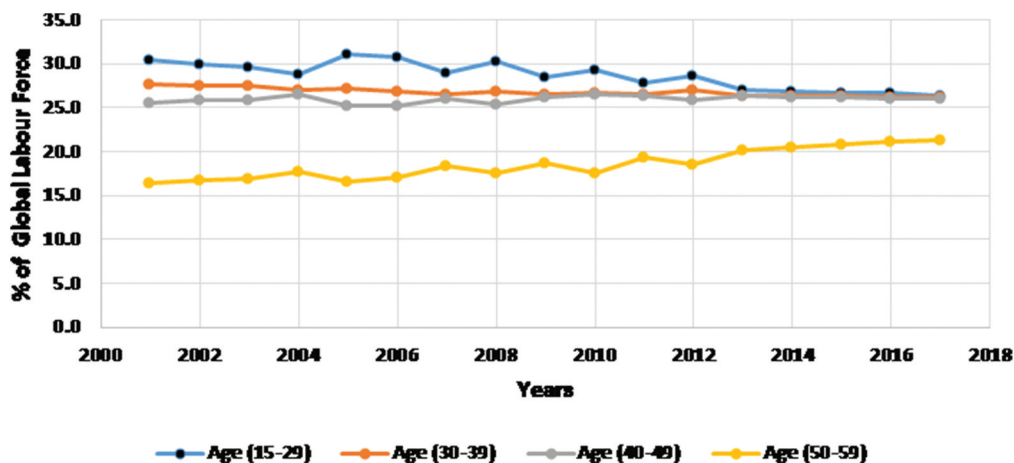


Table 1. Percentage of global labor force by age undefined

Year	Age (15–29)	Age (30–39)	Age (40–49)	Age (50–59)
2001	30.4	27.7	25.6	16.3
2002	30.0	27.6	25.8	16.7
2003	29.7	27.4	25.9	17.0
2004	28.8	27.1	26.5	17.7
2005	31.2	27.1	25.2	16.5
2006	30.8	26.9	25.2	17.1
2007	29.0	26.5	26.1	18.4
2008	30.3	26.8	25.3	17.6
2009	28.5	26.5	26.3	18.8
2010	29.3	26.7	26.5	17.5
2011	27.8	26.5	26.3	19.4
2012	28.6	27.0	25.8	18.6
2013	27.1	26.4	26.3	20.2
2014	26.8	26.4	26.3	20.5
2015	26.7	26.3	26.1	20.9
2016	26.6	26.2	26.1	21.1
2017	26.4	26.3	26.0	21.3

From *Table LFS by sex and age—composition* [Customized table], by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2019 (<https://stats.oecd.org/#>). In the public domain.

Global Labor Force includes Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, OECD countries, Colombia, Costa Rica, Lithuania, Brazil, China India, Indonesia, Russian Federation, South Africa.

Analyzing the relevant literature and the theoretical interaction between the two factors can serve the purpose of proposing a framework that can improve both leadership ability and how one learns to be an effective leader. This is due to the fact that millennials observe themselves as leaders and, if they are given the opportunity, they have the ability to deal with and overcome the leadership position challenges (Onorato et al., 2018). Proper training and experience will help millennials to be effective leaders to all generations (Delgado et al., 2020). Furthermore, the interaction allows for the recognition of leadership competencies and their effect on the millennial workforce. This is needed, as millennials have been described as active, energetic, social, flexible individuals, open to improving their skills and experience (LaCore, 2015). Also, millennials work hard to achieve financial security, and they look to develop their professional lives (LaCore, 2015). Therefore, the interaction between the two factors to build a new framework underlines that leadership competencies can be developed to overcome the challenges of the millennial workforce. Leadership competencies were discussed by Svensson et al. (2005), who suggested that leaders need to be persistent and resilient when dealing with uncertainty and difficulties. Norzailan et al. (2016) described leaders as those who have strategic thinking skills and lead with morality, who are motivated and motivate others, who are creative and encourage the creativity of others, and who are competent and improve the competencies of others. Scholars (Mastrangelo et al., 2004; McBean, 2013) stressed that leadership characteristics such as intelligence, decisive, compassion, organizational skills, ambition, morality, and honest can influence performance in organizations. Indeed, literature underlines a lot of leadership competencies, but this study investigates common competencies that explain leaders' professional and personal characteristics including eloquence, solemnity, trustworthiness, belief and persistent, consciousness, and being knowledgeable. The interaction between leadership competencies and the millennial workforce shows a new concept of how to lead and motivate the millennial workforce effectively.

The study addresses the role of leadership competencies when leading a millennial workforce. Arguably, leadership that considers millennials' abilities, willingness, and capabilities can transform organizations in previously unseen ways. The interaction between the two suggests relevant factors is discussed below and attempts to emphasize how to motivate millennials and keep them in their organizations, as well as how to meet the organization's growth and survival requirements.

The Interaction between Leadership Competencies of Eloquence, Solemnity, and Trustworthiness and the Millennial Workforce. Eloquent leaders are able to communicate effectively by selecting appropriate words and topic. They communicate with clear voices and use specific language impressively and persuasively to convey their vision or truth. Arguably, the effectiveness of future leaders depends on their ability to communicate articulately and reliably. This is because millennials, De Vos et al. (2003) described, depend on socialization processes to improve their competence in organizations. Also, the use of expressive language and the subjects and topics that leaders use to interact with millennials can be seen as a tool to motivate them. This is because millennials, as described by Meng et al. (2017), show lack of motivation, respect, loyalty; show a high level of self-interest, confidence, team-oriented, multi-task players; and are technologically savvy. Thus, leaders need to avoid ambiguity in communication and the use of unfamiliar words, as this helps millennials to understand the message. Indeed, communication and language skills are essential for leadership, since millennials prefer direct and honest communication (Ferri-Reed, 2014), and they are also active, energetic, and social (LaCore, 2015). Millennials want to be encouraged to think critically and realistically by managers (Delgado et al., 2020, p. 37). Consequently, to lead them effectively, as suggested by LaCore (2015), leaders need to motivate them by setting clear expectations and giving clear guidelines and feedback.

Solemnity, as another leadership competence, can be seen as critical in leading millennials effectively. This is because leaders' solemnity is characterized by having an acceptable level of self-confidence and self-esteem; it is a belief in and support for the right way and the rejection of the wrong one. This leaders' dignity can motivate the millennial workers, who focus on their individual goals rather than the organizational goals (Campion, 2015), by setting clear expectations and giving clear guidelines and feedback (LaCore, 2015). Solemnity shows the leader's serious-mindedness, the result of having a strongly ethical personality. Respect for these qualities serves to motivate millennials who are "self-centered, unmotivated, disrespectful, self-confident, and disloyal" (Meng et al., 2017, p. 70).

The study indicates that leaders' solemnity reveals an optimistic personality that can be associated with their positivity and visionary ability. Also, a leader's solemnity supports goodness and honesty in both their personal and professional life. This is particularly appropriate since millennials, according to Arrendo Trapero et al. (2017), are not hard-working people and are unwilling to handle overtime work. At the same time, the negative stereotype regarding the millennial workforce shows their lack of motivation and that they are "disloyal, even devoid of ethics" (p. 273). Millennials give significant weight to positive and open communication, and are willing to share ideas, opinions, and information with others (Hall, 2016). Indeed, the perfect way to be trusted and beloved by millennials is to build a trust relationship and share information with them without having a hidden agenda (Hall, 2016). This is interesting, and leaders' consideration of morality can be seen as a cornerstone for leadership practices, as millennials give value to teamwork and knowledge sharing (Onorato et al., 2018).

Trustworthiness cannot be ignored by leadership practices as there is a need to show their positive ethical attitude to enhance millennials' trust and loyalty. This is to motivate millennials who are focusing on increasing their connections, networks, improving their experiences, and learning new skills (LaCore, 2015). Trustworthiness is a serious issue for millennials who are, as described by Ertas (2015), "socially conscious, and interested in helping others and solving the

problems of the world” (p. 404). The general assumption is that future leadership practices should attract millennials to trust them by having a trustworthy relationship. The virtue of having this kind of relationship is to motivate millennials to love their leaders and trust them. Indeed, having courteous, genial, and trustworthy leadership can be observed to be a strategic key for motivating and supporting the millennial workforce. This is because millennials see themselves as individuals who can depend on themselves, but not on the group, to reach their goals (Campione, 2015).

The interaction between leadership competencies of eloquence, solemnity, and trustworthiness and the millennial workforce presents the need for ethical-tournament leadership. Having this leadership practice can shed light on the importance of communication and the use of proper words and language. This is also important to convey the millennials’ vision, improve millennials’ ability to establish trust relationships, and enhance millennials’ standard of care. Ethical-tournament leadership practice can enhance leaders’ ability to provide millennials with confidence and belief in themselves, and their persistence to achieve their vision as achievers (More explanation about ethical-tournament leadership will be provided in the results and implications section).

The Interaction between Leadership Competencies of Belief and Persistent and the Millennial Workforce. Having certain competencies is not enough without having the belief and persistence to reach specific desires. Arguably, leaders believe in the vision as true and real; and the saying “together we can achieve more” is key for achievers. This holds true regardless of whether the leaders are being eloquent and fluent or not. In other words, leaders’ persistence and willingness to reach goals is based on their strong belief in themselves and their goals. Leaders’ beliefs can motivate them to work with full persistence and this is reflected in the millennial workforce. This is important since Campione (2015) stressed that “millennials place less value on work for its own sake ... and express less interest in working hard ... millennials are less work-centric and more family-centric ... and more focused on leisure” (p. 62). Leadership competencies of belief and persistence, arguably, are strongly linked to the survival and growth of the organization, which could be essential in leading millennials who have “lower empathy, declining concern for others, ... [and lower] concern of community” (Ertas, 2015, p. 404). An interesting point was highlighted by Campione (2015), that millennials’ top priorities are status, respect, and money. Millennials focus on their own goals that reflect their own lifestyle goals instead of their organizational goals. They prefer a short-cut since they cannot go through traditional channels to reach their dreams (Campione, 2015). This explains why the emotional effect of leaders’ beliefs and persistence can motivate millennials to be achievers.

On the other hand, Wesner and Miller (2008) confirmed that millennials, as productive employees and technology users, are expecting the same from their leaders. Research (Campione, 2015) has suggested that individualistic traits such as self-esteem, assertiveness, and narcissism exist among millennials. This supports the idea that leaders’ beliefs, decisiveness, and confidence are essential to leading the millennial workforce, since millennials, as discussed by Kuron et al. (2015), are significantly influenced by leaders’ feedback in that it strongly affects their self-efficacy, beliefs, and expectations. One can argue that showing leaders’ persistence and assertiveness serves the purpose of leading millennials effectively. This is because the millennial workforce, as described by Campione (2015), are risk-averse individuals, and “have difficulty dealing with ambiguity and nuance, they often require a clear path to success with clearly defined rubrics and well-defined expectations and constant feedback from their supervisors” (p. 63). This explains why millennials need leaders who “constantly think, reflect and analyze all viewpoints and relationships that border their organization so that the organization’s affluence is promoted and sustained” (Sarfaz, 2017, p. 41).

However, this discussion shows that leadership competencies of belief and persistence and its interaction with the millennial workforce highlights the importance of employing an authentic-stringent leadership practice. Indeed, leaders cannot succeed without the strong belief in the truth of their visions and being persistently enthusiastic to achieve the vision. Enthusiasm can be seen as a key factor for authentic-stringent leadership and becomes an engine to motivate millennials to believe in the same vision and encourage them to work to achieve it. Authentic leadership, as discussed by Long (2020), shows consideration and influences employees' commitments and attitudes. Arguably, the successful implication of this practice (authentic-stringent leadership) requires leading with a clear conscience and leading by practical and emotional intelligence. This is because millennials strongly believe in work-life balance and family relationships, as well as there being a high value among the millennial workforce for helping others, especially those in need (Bannon et al., 2011). More explanation of authentic-stringent leadership will be seen in the Results and Implications section.

The Interaction between Leadership Competencies of Consciousness and Knowledgeable and the Millennial Workforce. Today, the millennial workforce is the best-educated generation who grew up with technology, and they can demonstrate their technological expertise and the positive use of it (Wesner & Miller, 2008). Millennials, as confirmed by Bannon et al. (2011), are advanced in using technology, educated and knowledgeable individuals, and respect diversity in comparison to previous generations. This explains the need for consciousness and knowledgeable leadership. Indeed, there is a need for leadership that show it is fully conscious of millennial workforce features and also fully knowledgeable about work-related difficulties. This is because millennials, as stated by Bannon et al. (2011), have the ability to simultaneously deal with many tasks at the same time. It also necessary for leadership to show proficiency in numerous business and industry experiences. That is because millennials can collect data quickly and connect collected data together (Bannon et al., 2011). The study indicates that leading millennials requires educated knowledgeable expert leaders who are able to respond to millennials' workforce expectations consciously and manage them practically and emotionally.

Arguably, leadership needs to show it is fully conscious about the work environment at a national and a global level, and show its creative ability, responsibility, and practical and emotional intelligences. As well, millennials have demonstrated their ability to improve their experience and willingness to build friendship with people not only in their organization but also with others in different countries (Bannon et al., 2011). They observe the world as a small village, and they are able to build online friend relationships and believe in their effect on producing better ideas and finding the best solutions (Bannon et al., 2011). Interestingly, millennials have a strong preference for a diverse work environment as a result of playing videogames. As discussed by Bannon et al. (2011), online live games improve millennials mental and social ability in advance, and have a significant effect on improving their decision-making and problem-solving skills, helping them in analyzing their alternatives and making decisions quickly. Without doubt, leadership cannot ignore millennials' ability to use technology and its effect on improving millennials' time usage and online relationships.

This study suggests that the awareness of millennials communication (social) and technological (practical) abilities is a major issue for the implementation of participative and shared leadership. This is to maintain open communication with them and allow for sharing knowledge and experience. In an organization, maintaining open lines of communication allows millennials in the workforce to share their opinions, views, and initiatives. Arguably, this is a useful tool when leading millennials who have grown up in an environment that encourages creativity and curiosity to produce better ideas and solutions (Wesner & Miller, 2008). However, the implementation of shared leadership can be encouraged while being

conscious of the fact that millennials appreciate and enjoy teamwork and show tolerance in dealing with others when compared to previous generations (Smith & Nichols, 2015). Teamwork encourages millennials' participation and reap the benefits of all the expert expertise and creative creativity.

While baby boomers have complaints against millennials, such as “millennials expressing opinions and making greater demands than their more elder and ‘experienced’ counterparts” (Smith & Nichols, 2015, p. 41), this study has a positive thought regarding their complaints. It is because shared leadership allows millennials to express their opinions freely and engage in communicative activities and also in activities viewed as leadership functions. Millennials' “Look at Me” attitude, as described by Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), supports the positive view of shared leadership and participative practice of information flow and knowledge. Shared leadership allows leaders to motivate millennials by focusing on their attitude of “Look at Me” to improve those descriptors such as “impatient, lacking in work ethic, self-important, and disloyal” (Smith & Nichols, 2015, p. 41). In addition, encouraging employees' participation and creativity can reduce stress among them and enhance their open-mindedness (Bennett et al., 2012). One can accept that participative practice can improve millennials' satisfaction and make the work environment more acceptable. According to Bannon et al. (2011), millennials are open to people and to new experience and opportunities due to their attitudes towards education, social responsibility, work-life balance, and their high standard of ethics. At the same time, leadership that encourages the adoption of a participative approach becomes essential to building a trust relationship with millennials who appreciate learning. According to Ruiz and Davis (2017), millennials need to be engaged and involved when it comes to learning. In organizations, building a trust relationship has a positive effect on the retention rate of educated millennials.

However, the interaction between leadership competencies of consciousness and knowledgeable and the millennial workforce addresses the need for servant-tolerant leadership practice. This leadership practice is appropriate since good leaders, as discussed by Ruiz and Davis (2017), build close relationships with employees and meet their emotional needs. Also, this is to understand how to lead millennials who think that business leaders “do not like or trust them, would not involve them in decision that impact their work, and do not realize that they have a lot to offer” (LaCore, 2015, p. 155). Servant-tolerant leadership practice can improve employees' satisfaction and, in turn, their performance, which can be reflected in retaining talented employees (Brewer, 2010). It also improves employees' attitudes towards improving their creativity and serving their organizations properly, which have a positive effect on productivity (Brewer, 2010). More explanation about servant-tolerant leadership practice is given in the next section.

4. Analysis and discussion

A contingency approach explains how leaders manage the relationship with employees since “not all behaviors will be effective with all subordinates” (Nahavandi, 2015, p. 81). This highlights the importance of a contingency approach and explains how leadership exhibits different styles in different situations (Yukl, 2013). In this study, a contingency approach is utilized to propose a theoretical framework that advances our knowledge of leadership practices, shows effective ways of influencing the millennial workforce, and deals with potential obstacles when leading them. The framework presents three pragmatic complementary leadership practices to overcoming the challenge of how to lead, motivate, and keep valuable employees, given that 57% of millennials in the workforce are willing to leave their job and find other opportunities (Bannon et al., 2011). It is also of value because, as Ferri-Reed (2014) confirmed in an empirical study, 73% of leaders believe that it is easy for millennial employees to leave their job.

The proposed framework stands on three pragmatic complementary leadership practices: servant-tolerant leadership, authentic-stringent leadership, and ethical-tournament leadership. The three practices highlight the argument that millennials can be motivated practically or emotionally. Emotional motivation depends on how they trust and love their leaders. Practical motivation depends on leaders' ability to discuss things with them to serve the target of understanding. Thus, to lead a millennial workforce, leaders need to improve and utilize their emotional intelligence and practical intelligence together. For example, emotional intelligence explains the effectiveness of being kind, fair, honest, humble, brave, generous, sincere, and conscientious. Practical intelligence explains people's decisiveness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, and competence that have been used to deal with obstacles and challenges.

Features such as being kind and humble can encourage family-work environment since millennials, according to Meng et al. (2017), are worried about work-life balance. Arguably, this requires the first suggested practice of servant-tolerant leadership, since they are committing to serve, encourage, and listen to employees, and to be aware of the importance of ethics (Palumbo, 2016). Servant leaders observe employees' needs as their top priorities and serve without looking for return (Setyaningrum et al., 2020). While servant leadership focuses on improving employees' wellbeing and offering meaningful work for them (Palumbo, 2016), tolerant leadership can meet millennials' need for job security as a high priority (Ertas, 2015). Some scholars (Song, 2018) have supported the practice and discussed how servant leadership is a process of forgiveness that sheds light on the importance of acceptance and empathy to help employees to be engaged and committed. Leaders who adopt a servant leadership practice and "aim to treat their employees like family and make workforce fun" (Mahapatra & Virani, 2017, p. 44) are vital to motivate the millennial workforce; as well, tolerant leadership attitudes can lead to growth and help to meet the challenges that organizations face (Kehat, 2012). One can assume that servant-tolerant leadership practice needs to show fairness and to be merciful when leading millennials, and also must fully exhibit fair treatment to avoid any potential negative effects among them. Arguably, to be part of the team and to enhance millennials' satisfaction, servant-tolerant leadership needs to demonstrate an attitude of caring and being friendly through listening and discussing things together. Servant leadership "is based on ethical and caring behaviour, and enhances employee growth while enhancing the overall awareness and quality of organizational life" (Setyaningrum et al., 2020, p. 904).

Returning to the key idea of having emotional and practical intelligence is important when explaining the proposed framework. Being kind and trustworthy and believing in one's vision is important for leadership since millennials are "the most ethically and racially diverse and the most educated generation in the history" (Ertas, 2015, p. 404). Also, showing that one is brave and conscientious can help to lead millennials who are not able to recognize their goals and have low focus on making long-term plans (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017). At the same time, the argument that millennials have lower "concern for others, concern for community, ... and social capital" (Ertas, 2015, p. 404) supports the need for ethical-tournament leadership practice to motivate them to be more empathetic. The proposed approach of ethical-tournament leadership requires leaders to show their humility, honesty, loyalty, chivalry, courage, and business acumen. Also, leaders who adopt the practice of ethical-tournament leadership should show strictness, keenness, and acuity, and be bent on doing the right and fair thing. This leadership practice motivates millennials since they prefer and react well to direct and honest communication (Ferri-Reed, 2014). Ethical leaders focus on increasing the awareness of the benefit of conducting ethical behavior and the cost of ignoring ethics within an organization "which, in turn, contributes to organizational members' commitments to their organizations and less turnover intention as a whole" (Theriou et al., 2020, p. 959). Indeed, the adoption of ethical-tournament leadership practice can be developed to motivate the millennial workforce, since they give high weight to their social responsibility which explains millennials' ability to give and be engaged (Ertas, 2015). Furthermore, ethical leaders need to share the power that they have, clarify others' roles, and be fair to retain millennials, as discussed by De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2008).

One can accept that spreading the culture of ethics in an organization, as confirmed by DeConinck et al. (2016), has a positive effect on employees' satisfaction, ethical behavior, supervisory trust, and organizational commitment. The positive impact of an ethical climate on employees' attitudes and performance in organizations was also confirmed by Lu and Lin (2014). They explained the importance of being a role model and stressed that a leader should have and show a high standard of ethics that direct leader's actions and decisions, in other words, talk the talk and walk the walk. At the same time, the adoption of ethical-tournament leadership practice plays a key role in motivating employees since millennials, as discussed by Ferri-Reed (2014), perform well within open transparent organizations in which information is publicized and the organization's problems and conflicts are acknowledged by all employees. Indeed, this requires courageous leaders who show their passion, enthusiasm towards what they believe in, and confidence to do the right thing. In addition, because millennials are just interested in achieving their personal goals, as stressed by Arrendo Trapero et al. (2017), one can assume that ethical-tournament leadership is essential to motivate them. Ethical leaders, as confirmed by Armin and Peus (2020), concern employees' well-being, show their fairness and justness, and treat employees with respect.

Finally, because the millennial workforce can be motivated practically through showing decisiveness, enthusiasm, assertiveness, and competence, the third practice of authentic-stringent leadership is essential here. The paper indicates that authentic-stringent leadership focuses directly on specific goals and how to reach these goals, regardless of barriers and obstacles. Authentic-stringent leadership, arguably, has confidence in overcoming challenges and observes them as things that can be managed. This leadership practice motivates the millennial workforce, who bring significant enthusiasm to their work environment in that they show their ability for hard work, their willingness for collaboration and teamwork, and their strong commitment to their superiors' visions and values (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017). Authentic-stringent leadership practice can be effective in leading millennials since they, according to Arrendo Trapero et al. (2017), are enthusiastic to work hard and complete their tasks regardless of time and location. Authentic-stringent leadership practice motivates millennials who are achievement-oriented and willing to contribute to their organizations' improvement and development (Meng et al., 2017).

Arguably, authentic-stringent leadership shows the importance of performing without bias, and building open professional relationships with millennials, and that will be reflected in their loyalty. This is because millennials "are loyal to their families and friends, as well as to themselves, as a replacement for being loyal to corporations" (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017, p. 273). In addition, authentic-stringent leadership practice exemplifies the ability to set a plan, strategize, and consult with millennials, as discussed by Arrendo Trapero et al. (2017), who are willing to show their competencies and have high expectations about themselves. One can argue that authentic-stringent leaders can motivate millennials by encouraging them through showing how their efforts contribute positively to their professional and personal life in the long and short term (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017). At the same time, millennials who exhibit "narcissism, materialism" (Ertas, 2015, p. 404) arguably need this practice of leadership to be motivated and engaged. This is because authentic leaders, as discussed by Joo and Nimon (2014), have a high level of self-confidence and self-acceptance that allows them to guide and build positive relationship with employees. Authentic leaders, as discussed by Ribeiro et al. (2020), helps employees to fulfill their potential by encouraging their creativity, enhancing their emotional engagement to their organization, and focusing on transparency and faithfulness.

This paper identifies authentic-stringent leaders as those who have a strong belief in themselves, and also considers the importance of consultation and communication. This, indeed, serves millennials who have high expectations and desire significant benefits and adjustments from their workplace (Arrendo Trapero et al., 2017). This is appropriate since an

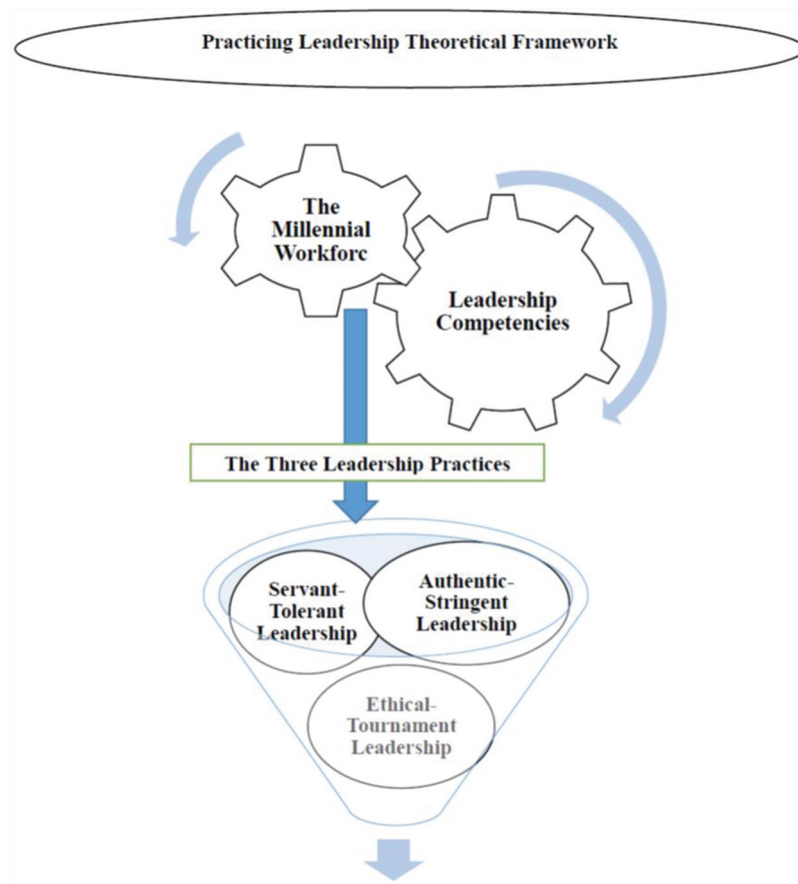
“authentic leader is not only future-oriented and gives priority to helping employees become leaders but is also confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent and moral/ethical” (Joo & Nimon, 2014, p. 571). This description explains the need for authentic-stringent leadership that meets millennials need for personal recognition. Authentic-stringent leadership approach is suitable to guide millennials who care about their well-being and growth. Furthermore, Mohammadpour et al. (2017) described authentic leaders as those who have high self-awareness of their values, thoughts, and behavior. According to Ribeiro et al. (2020), employees have high commitments to perform well and achieve their organization’s goals if they identify their leader as authentic. This study proposes that the parallel combination of authentic-stringent leadership requires those who have strong beliefs in their vision, strong trust in their ability, and a strong attitude towards ethical behavior and decisions. This gives them a clear path as achievers who strongly support and do the right thing.

5. Practicing leadership: A framework

A practicing leadership conceptual framework is proposed considering the analysis of theoretical interaction between the two factors: leadership competencies and millennials characteristics. The analysis proposes a theoretical framework that is intended to formulate a model of practicing leadership to overcome the challenge of uncertainty in the work environment. The proposed framework can add to an understanding of the complexity of the millennial workforce and contribute to customizing leadership practices. The framework is based on the contingency theory, which focuses on the benefits of employing different leadership styles to organize, lead, and make decisions in organizations (Fiedler, 1978). Fiedler’s (1978) theory explained the importance of interaction among group members as a key requirement to perform a task and achieve a goal. Fiedler’s theory addressed three situational elements as key to accomplish a task: the leader’s position power, the structure of the task, and the interpersonal relationships between leader and members (Miner, 2005). In this study, the third situational element became the base in the proposed framework because it reflects the relationship between the leader and the group members that describes members’ reactions to the leader. Contingency theory, as outlined by Yukl (2013), explains the effect of situation on leaders’ behavior and how they change their behavior to meet the situation needs. “Contingency theories can also be either descriptive or prescriptive. A descriptive contingency theory may explain how leader behavior typically varies from one situation to another, whereas a prescriptive contingency theory may specify the most effective behavior in each type of situation” (Yukl, 2013, p. 40). Kusumawati et al. (2020) explained contingency and stated that managers determine the best methods and procedures of management in each case and situation; in other words, “Different situations require different managerial reactions” (p. 346). In this study, the contingency approach is a theoretical basis for developing a framework that clarifies a contingent style of leadership needed in different situations. It shows the interaction between two factors as a critical means to describe the best way for leaders to act and adjust their behavior in the proper way.

The significance of this study is to add to the understanding of the contribution of specific leadership practices on the millennial workforce, and to build a theoretical framework to address the issue. As shown in Figure 2, the interaction between two relevant factors (leadership competencies and the millennial workforce) is the basis on which to propose a new framework. The framework serves the purpose of enhancing millennial workforce satisfaction and motivation, as well as reforming, consolidating, and improving the concept of leadership. The interaction between the two factors contributes a new framework of complementary parallel leadership practices (ethical-tournament, servant-tolerant, authentic-stringent). The three practices are proposed to enhance the link between leadership effectiveness and millennial workforce achievements.

Figure 2. Practicing leadership framework.



The framework is derived from two interrelated factors. The two factors are addressed in the previous section and, arguably, there is a close link between leadership competencies and the millennial workforce.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to develop a practicing leadership framework that drives the millennial workforce and leads them effectively. Developing a new theoretical framework that answers the research question of which leadership approach is suitable for leading the millennial workforce requires a clear understanding of millennial workforce features and leadership competencies. Therefore, the theoretical framework is discussed based on the contingency approach and derived from the interaction between two contingency factors: leadership competencies and the millennial workforce. It explains the link between the two suggested factors and indicates that the dynamic leadership competencies motivate the millennial workforce in an organization. Customizing leadership practices in organizations can create a work environment that enables flexibility, as well as adopting the appropriate practices that serve the purpose of keeping the millennial workforce motivated and energized. Developing an in-depth understanding of ethical-tournament, servant-tolerant, authentic-stringent leadership practices is an important requirement for leading a millennial workforce today.

While the current study provides a theoretical framework, it would be useful to apply it in several organizations worldwide. The differences among organizations might cause them to integrate or separate implementation of the study's proposed practices as a viable tool to fit a different workforce sphere. The implementation of proposed practicing leadership framework by scholars or/and leaders

in organizations can add value to their organizations' effectiveness, which is critical for their continuous process of leading a millennial workforce. For future research, there is a need for empirical work to examine the framework of practicing leadership, and to work on examining the relationship between the two suggested factors: the millennial workforce and leadership competencies. Indeed, researchers and scholars can add value to this study through testing and experimentation.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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