

How do Millennial leaders make sense of their leadership positions?

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Abstract

This study is looking into the notion of millennial leadership discussing and examining key aspects used to define the concept of contemporary management. The research investigates the administrative practices of leaders currently operating within the hyper-active labour market, specifically focusing on the high-tech industry.

By examining the incentives millennial leaders identify as their motivation for pursuing and retaining management positions and exploring the day-to-day practices the respondents apply within their workplace environment, the research is aiming at providing a better understanding on the perception millennial leaders have of their leadership positions and the powerful implementations these influence roles possess.

The study has a qualitative exploratory nature and uses semi structured in-depth interviews as the main research method for data collection. From a methodological perspective, a constructivist grounded theory approach has been taken and applied to the process of data collection and analysis.

One of the main claims the research makes is that the management style millennial leaders are applying within their workplace environment, is heavily influenced by the transformational leadership approach, even though it sometimes displays tendencies towards more modern management patterns by incorporating more ethical and democratic values, making the style more suitable to the more contemporary and competitive market. The research also proposes that millennial leaders are exhibiting more power related instinct motivations towards their decision to pursue and retain management positions. The research claims that millennial leaders today understand and view their leadership positions more as an opportunity for even further professional development, rather than as the end goal of their professional careers.

The research examined the responses of eleven participants, therefore future studies may use the methodological model of the current research to examine millennial leadership, its specific practices and the leaders' identification of the motivations they have when going into management positions in even further details. The findings of the research provide an outlook of how the new generation leaders perceive their management roles and address the millennial conceptualization of the power dynamic within the workplace environment in real organizational settings. The implications of the current study will be discussed in further details throughout the text.

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Millennial, Power, Management, Motivation

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1. Introduction

Living in a world where change and development are constant processes within the business sphere, leadership practices make no difference and go through similar processes. It is argued that this transformation comes as a result of the new workforce operating currently within the labour market. The millennials, also referred to as Net Generation (NetGen) or Gen-Y, are often described as the prominent population in the current labour market and often credited with bringing change to the established business corporate culture scenery. In this context, a better understanding of the notions of power and influence in the workplace is needed. As to be able to conceptually capture the transformational processes occurring, one needs to carefully examine the values and characteristics millennials bring to the operational enterprise traditions as well as to take into account the role that the notion of purpose plays in the professional life of millennial leaders. Moreover, one needs to be able to anticipate the direction management practices may take given a potential shift in power perceptions within a business establishment. The aim of this research is to examine the power and purpose dynamics within a workplace, specifically focusing on millennial leaders and their role in this process. Examining data from millennials that currently hold a leadership positions in organizations that operate within the tech industry this research aims to capture their understanding of the importance and the obligations of their leadership roles also in the light of their personal objectives. Since statistics show that the technology – software industry is the predominant market attracting millennials due to its “job and income growth, impressive perks and deeper sense of purpose” (Tockey, 2017, para. 6), the current research focuses on this specific operational field. The research is addressing the power and purpose dynamics of millennial leadership focusing on the notions of communication, collaboration and the responsibility of leadership roles. The research is seeking to address and to also identify the intrinsic source of millennial leaders’ behaviour at the workplace that may potentially be primarily defined by purpose or by the pursuit of power.

This research is aiming at investigating the values and the work-related practices millennials are bringing to the labour market and to understand how this state of affairs questions and challenges well-established leadership theories and their practices. The research will examine the respondents’ intrinsic motives of determining their leadership actions and the leadership approaches they are taking. Moreover, the research will look into how millennial leaders manage leader-employee relationships, in regard to the distinguishing traits and abilities they bring to the labour market, including the notions of creativity, organizational motivation and team development. The research will also examine how millennial leaders recognize and identify the nature of the leader-employee relationships within their organization and are their leadership

styles guided by the invisible influences of purposefulness, the implemented dynamics of authority a leadership position brings along or a different factor, such as the previous experience of leadership practices or guidance by a mentor or a role model. Therefore, the research aims to answer the following research question: How do millennial leaders make sense of their leadership positions? The research will elaborate on the research problem and narrow down the scope by investigating what is it that motivate millennials to pursue and keep leadership positions reflecting on the notions of power and purpose. In order to simplify and narrow down the scope of the main research problem, the research addresses the following sub-research questions: How millennial leaders describe their leadership style? and What is the motivation behind millennial leaders pursue and retention of leadership positions?

The sub-question: What is the motivation behind millennial leaders pursue and retention of leadership positions? will provide a better understanding on the motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to pursue leadership positions, the millennial leaders' organizational commitment and satisfaction and the millennial leaders' outlook on the power-purpose dynamic. The second sub-research question: How millennial leaders describe their leadership style? will discuss the concepts of the organizational incorporation of the values millennial leaders are bringing to the table, the cognitive and emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment and the respondents' outlook on valuable leadership approaches. Finally, the current study will provide a better understanding on the question: How do millennial leaders make sense of their leadership positions? by discussing the workplace interactions and the leader-follower dynamic, by keeping in mind the knowledge of the already discussed notions and how all the information interrelated altogether.

1.1 Research problem

With the ever-changing global economy, the business world is facing developments and new challenges every day. According to a study presented by the organization of Duke Corporate Education (O'Driscoll & Bleak, 2013), since 2008's financial crisis the world of business is now identified as an "environment dominated by interdependence, complexity and unpredictability" (para. 1). These notions, followed by the fast pace of innovation and social dynamic, had forever changed the believes many leaders had on how the leadership context is framed. Nowadays "challenges are less predictable, and knowledge is less reliable" (O'Driscoll & Bleak, 2013, para. 3). According to the O'Driscoll and Bleak's research (2013), that examined the opinions of numerous CEOs of global organizations, the pace in which this shift of the context of leadership is moving is unpredictable, therefore as the research (O'Driscoll & Bleak, 2013) explains it is nearly impossible

for leaders to predict what sort of challenges will their organizations have to face. The research's (O'Driscoll & Bleak, 2013) outcomes were published five years ago, therefore it is possible to argue that since the nature of change is ever-accelerating the leadership models, currently used, can be regarded as no longer applicable.

If one takes these above-mentioned considerations, they will be able to recognize the negative effects that may follow the inapplicable context of the leadership approaches, both for the leaders themselves and for the organization. Such outcomes may be described as diminishing of authority, organizational demotivation, miscommunication, decrease in organizational control and increase in responsibilities and stress. Those are some of the many negative effects that may appear within an organization if a proper leadership approach is not adopted. The O'Driscoll & Bleak's research (2013), however is providing a silver lining saying that as soon as leaders realize the reality of the fast-changing business dynamics, they will be able to make sense of the situation and "invoke the appropriate set of resources and capabilities to take collective action to achieve the desired outcome" (para.49).

What this current research is examining are the respondents' understanding of the capabilities and resources they are using within their day-to-day working environment, as well as conceptualizing what motivates the respondents' adoption of such approaches. It is important to examine this question, as one needs to be fully aware of the motivations and the level of awareness millennial leaders have when going into leadership positions, as to tune around the statement "challenges are less predictable, and knowledge is less reliable" (O'Driscoll & Bleak, 2013, para. 3) when describing the modern business environment.

1.2 Scientific relevance

From a scientific perspective, it is worth investigating the understanding of modern-day leaders on their management positions, as it provides an outlook of how the new generation leaders perceive their roles, in relation to communication and organizational practices and notions of authority, motivation and inspiration. What existing theory has been focusing thus far on is primarily the performance nature behind leadership practice (Bass, 1996; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Yulk, 1999), meaning the behavioural traits and characteristics of the leader and the effects they have on the leader-follower relationship. Moreover, most of the academic sources and articles from the popular press (Hamill, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2007; Tolbuze, 2008) discuss the management techniques organizations and leaders need to adopt in order to meet the specific needs and demands of the generation at hand. They also discuss the steps leaders need to make in order to harness the power of millennial workforce. However, academics have not examined what is the

meaning of power as a social process (Sturm & Antonakis, 2015) given that the notion of purpose is increasingly gaining in importance and it can be argued that it is reshaping the future of management. Little attention has been paid to the rationale and motivations that lie behind the aspirations of millennials to take on leadership positions as well. Moreover, it would be beneficial to examine millennial leaders, since millennials are the predominant workforce operating at the moment (Fry, 2018). To the researcher's knowledge at this moment in time, there is a lack of literature investigating specifically millennial leaders and their in-depth understanding of the power roles they occupy. It can be argued that it is important to research the motivations millennials have in pursuing leadership position and the perception they have on leadership roles, as to gain a better understanding of their actions and the approaches they take while in a managing role.

1.3 Social relevance

Having in mind the topic and the nature of the research, there are several important social interests justifying why this research is worthwhile to be conducted. To begin, since the Net Generation is steadily taking over much of the job positions worldwide, this research will bring insight into how the concepts of power and leadership are understood by this generation and how these understandings relate to management practices in organizations. According to the popular press (Myatt, 2012; Nicholson, 2016) poor leadership practices are one of the predominant reasons for the failure of organisations globally. Businesses should recognise the problem and take steps in solving it. However, without academic background the process of realising the bottom line of the issue can take a while. This research would offer insights into the dynamics of leadership nowadays and propose a different take on the power relations within a company.

The second reason to practically justify this research is that the workforce represented by the millennial generation will arguably bring a "fundamental shift in the way we think about management and workplace engagement" (Case, 2015), meaning that it is believed that this generation would bring a massive change in the traditional well-established corporate culture, urging the business world to re-envision its ideas, values and management approaches. The research is examining current millennial leaders and provide their distinctive understandings of their position, the employee-leader interconnection and how they perceive the power they possess due to their position. The research could also be beneficial for companies which are targeting millennials as their main workforce helping them understand the outlooks and beliefs of the generation that is being examined.

It has been argued that a successful leader can influence and motivate their employees to perform better within an organization but also make the employees fully engaged with the leader's

vision and motivations due to their clarity of communication (Barrett, 2006; Gary, 2002). This is the third reason why this research is examining the millennial leadership styles, focusing on the communication and knowledge sharing approaches adopted by millennial leaders. Within the leadership and management framework, the notion of communication is a key concept that determines and enhances successful leadership practices. Essentially, the research is examining how millennial leaders use their generational communication characteristics, as to enhance the employee-leader relationship and convey a clear message to their followers. Findings may inform employee-leader relationships in real organizational settings.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The ever-changing image of leadership

The business landscape is an ever-developing and growing mechanism therefore, leaders need to either learn how to adapt and evolve their business in order to stay relevant and competitive, or let their business die. As Keene (2000) points out, “change is seen as necessary merely to survive; transformation is required to thrive and constant need for reinvention is needed to secure long-term success” (p.15). In the hyper competitive labour market nowadays, leaders and their businesses face the never-ending challenge for constant inventiveness and innovation. The need and thirst for creative and responsible leaders is constantly increasing, so much that today the notion of a successful leader and what that concept entails, can be regarded through a kaleidoscope of understandings and interpretations. This research is examining the notion of power, through the eyes of the leaders themselves, how they make sense of the accomplishment they have achieved, and what motivated them in pursuing such leadership positions; related to this last point is the notion of purpose as well.

In order to construct a comprehensive theoretical structure that would help the study to examine the understanding millennial leaders have of their positions, one needs to explore the complex organizational models of leadership theory. The overview of the theoretical background on leadership theory provided in this chapter will enable the reader to differentiate the classical approaches from the more recent approaches that have been built upon them. The chapter is about examining the evolution of these leadership approaches also in the light of the changing workforce within the labour market.

2.1.1 Classical approaches of leadership theory

There are many academics (Bass, 1996; Smola & Sutton, 2002) who have discussed the notion of leadership considering the importance the notion has on social relations across various fields of study. Over the years, academics have theorized the notion of leadership considering approaches and perspectives such as the Leader-Member exchange theory, Charismatic Leadership and Invisible Leadership, all of which will be discussed in further detail below.

In the past academics have put emphasis on the concepts of behaviour and attitude when discussing the effectiveness of the leadership theories (Yulk, 1999). Some approaches include the “path-goal theory” (House & Mitchell, 1974) and the Leader-Member exchange theory (LMX)

(Graen & Cashman, 1975). The path goal theory is a model that defines a leader's management style in a way that would be suitable and beneficial for both the employees and the organizational regulations and will contribute to the achieving of a preestablished goal (House & Mitchell, 1974). It is a theory in which an individual (the leader) will operate in a specific manner based on the assumption that this operational manner will be followed by the other individuals (employees and colleagues), creating a path, leading to a certain outcome or goal (House & Mitchell, 1974).

As for LMX theory, it is an approach that focuses on the relationship between the leader and their employees, suggesting that the quality of that relationship can influence the employees' work performance. At a later stage, academics began to conceptualize approaches that were focusing more on the relationship between values and emotions rather than the traditional leadership's mechanism of action. Early theories such as the path-goal theory and the LMX theory conceptualized the leader-follower relationship as an outlet for providing professional direction or support (Evans, 1970). In comparison, the approaches shaped later on emphasized a certain appeal towards more intellectual values, such as motivation and moral purpose (Shamir, House & Arthur., 1993).

In the early 1980s the transformational leadership approach (Bass, 1996) was introduced, capturing the attention of the academics. The transformational leadership approach (Bass, 1996) aimed at the significance of the leader's effect on their followers and the management style used in the process. A successful transformational leader had to gain their employees' "trust, admiration, loyalty and respect" (Yulk, 1999, p. 277) as to transcend the initial expectations of their employees and "their own self-interest for the sake of the organization" (Yulk, 1999, p.277). Transformational leadership required the understanding of the dynamic between the leader and the employees as an influential exchange, where the leader is able to inspire their employees "to transcend self-interest for the greater good of their units and organizations in order to achieve optimal levels of performance" (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2003, p.265). The effectiveness of this approach, some may argue, is due to the practices that it incorporates. Such practices include "inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and idealized influence (charisma)" (Yulk, 1999, p.277).

It can be argued that the notion of mentoring plays a key role within the transformational leadership approach. The origin of the word mentor comes from the Greek mythology (Shea, 1997). In the Odyssey, Mentor was a character, trusted with the difficult and important responsibility of raising Odysseus' son, when he left for the Trojan war (Shea, 1997). Due to the relationship between the characters and the nature of the communication between them the character's name- Mentor, was adopted in the English language as a term for an individual who is responsible and accountable, as well as a person who bestows wisdom and knowledge on less experienced

individuals (Shea, 1997). Nowadays this notion has been theorised as an interaction and a relationship established on the social exchange between individuals (Boyer, 2003). Theory suggests that mentorship is beneficial especially regarding teamwork, motivation and is assumed to increase the level of competency and proficiency of individuals being mentored (Messmer, 2003). Additionally, it is suggested that the relationship between the mentor and the mentee can be regarded as extremely important, since it can shape the management style of the mentee (Zaleznik, 1977). According to the 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey, millennials believe that business finds leadership skills as the most important attribute a professional should possess. However, the survey also discusses that “millennials believe businesses are not doing enough to bridge the gap to ensure a new generation of business leaders is created” (Deloitte, 2016, p.6). The current research explores the notion of mentorship and what respondents find important and valuable characterwise in a successful leader and examines whether there was an individual who they looked up to and who motivated them to pursue such power roles. The Deloitte survey (Deloitte, 2016) found that out of the 7,700 millennials who were questioned 61% identified that they have a mentor, 94% of who declare that their mentor provides them with valuable advice. This notion of mentorship can be regarded as an essential element of the motivation behind millennial leadership, which is the focus of one of the sub-research questions: what is the motivation behind millennial leaders pursue and retention of leadership positions? Therefore, the current research asks respondents to identify what is the most important lesson they have learned and how is that lesson valuable for them now, in order to examine what role does the notion of mentorship have on the respondents’ motivation to pursue leadership position.

The notion of charisma, as discussed before, has a huge influence in the context of discussions about the transformational leadership theory. Empirical results from studies that examine charismatic leadership indicate that leaders who have adopted the charismatic leadership approach have regarded an increase in the “follower self-esteem” as well as an increase within the “trust and confidence in the leader and follower intrinsic motivation” (Shamir et al., 1993, p.577). Moreover, leaders who have adopted the charismatic leadership approach have received “higher performance ratings, have more satisfied and more highly motivated followers, and are viewed as more effective leaders by their superiors and followers than others in positions of leadership” (Shamir et al., 1993, p.578). As important to consider how effective the approach is it can be argued that is even more important to consider the actual practices behind the charismatic leadership approach. What specific actions can millennial leaders take to enhance the effective benefits of transformational leadership. As mentioned in the introduction, one of the sub-research questions is focusing on the millennial leadership styles: How millennial leaders describe their leadership style? The current research is regarding leader-employee relationship, in particular focusing on how

millennial leaders are making sense of transformational leadership in actual practice and of the communication benefits it provides. The current study examines the respondents' opinions on notions such as affirmation and assertion, and what actions they take in ensuring the development of their employees, and to maintain their motivation.

The current study will examine the data from the respondents correlating to the transformational leadership practice (Bass, 1996) and its characteristics and approaches, such as inspirational motivation, intellectual and monetary incentives and charisma (Yulk, 1999) in order to provide an answer to the sub-research question: How millennial leaders describe their leadership style?

2.1.2 Twenty-first century leadership

Hamill (2013) discusses leadership nowadays providing a practical understanding on what drives leadership practices today. He examines the work of Pink (2009) who claims that the drive for action nowadays is the notion of motivation. He identifies three significant aspects behind what motivates people within the labour market: "autonomy, mastery and purpose" (Hamill, 2013, p.235). Autonomy is what he describes as the process of authorizing people to follow their interest and ideas. The assumption that people will work for what they believe in is the type of leadership practice that drives creativity and development within an organization. The second aspect is mastery or the practice of "allowing people to have the satisfaction of getting better" (Hamill, 2013, p.235) at what they do. Pink (2003) suggests that an effective leadership practice would be to acknowledge and actively praise the improvement of one's employees as that would motivate them to surpass expectations and would create a more motivational environment within the workplace. The third aspect is purpose - the feeling of interconnectivity with an ideal that goes "beyond money and growth for growth's sake" (Hamill, 2013, p.236). Leaders need to reach out to their employees using assertion and affirmation providing an aim for their organization. That objective needs to be oriented towards giving the employees a common direction of action and creating a collective community. Moreover, the notion of purpose is the crucial concept that inspired the development of the "invisible leadership" theory (Hickman & Sorenson, 2013) which is one of the contemporary leadership approaches discussed today. This millennial theory is regarding the notion of common purpose as central for effective leadership practices within an organization. The approach is defined by Hickman and Sorenson (2013) as a leadership process where it is not any specific leader but the common idea and aspiration that inspires people to act towards that idea. They also regard that common purpose, as the reason needed for any leadership practices to exist rather than it being a "product of leadership" (Hannah, 2013, p.760), as regarded in more classical approaches of

leadership theory. Therefore, this approach of leadership theory emphasizes less on the relationship between leader and employee but rather more their shared agreement to achieve a common ideal, which itself acts as the invisible leader.

Nonetheless, considering the current economic and political environment the invisible leadership approach had met criticism. Hannah (2013) examines the approach saying that the relationships within the approach at hand can be regarded as recursive in reality, in a sense that within actual practice leadership activities are what influence the goal, which consecutively promotes more intimate and instinctive leadership practices. Hannah (2013) also suggests that in actual practice there is a need for someone to fill in the leadership role, as to impose certain regulations or management control. That person in power will influence and navigate the style in which employees interact with one another and the leader himself, as to reach the common purpose.

The current research is exploring these notions of commonality and collectiveness examining the leaders' thoughts on what are the core values of the company and comparing them to their personal values as leaders. By doing that, the current research is aiming at gaining a better understanding on whether millennial leaders recognize the existence of the invisible notion of purpose (Hickman & Sorenson, 2013) and how this notion shapes their personal leadership agenda. This research is also focusing on the approach of invisible leadership further in the analysis, in order to conceptualize whether the notion of purpose is considered important and crucial for millennial leaders and what roles inspiration and motivation play within the way they practice their leadership positions. The aim of the current research is to explore a line of reasoning that would relate in a way to the modern leadership approaches, and possibly even show new elements of individual operation that have not been discussed thus far within modern leadership theory.

2.1.3 A hybrid leadership approach

Even though nowadays the concept of leadership may differ in many ways from the traditional approaches this is not an excuse to completely disregard and overlook the long-established classical approaches towards leadership practices. As Zhang and Fjermestad (2006) suggests it is a valuable tactic to consider examining leadership theory through a "hybrid approach using multiple theories" (p.277). This application contributes to a more in-depth understanding of the concepts of leadership and leadership practices. According to the authors, the already well established empirical results that the traditional leadership approaches had accumulated can be in fact used and are not irrelevant to the modern twenty first century leadership operations. What Zhang and Fjermestad (2006) examined, for instance, was the application of this hybrid approach in regard to

companies where a virtual team leadership was used. Keeping in mind that the context of this study is represented by the high-tech industry, it is worth examining the outcomes of Zhang and Fjermestad's hybrid approach (2006) when such approach is placed within the management dynamic, since leadership nowadays can be practiced distantly, via various connection and communication platforms. Leader, especially operating within the high-tech industry need to learn the essential elements when leading a virtual team from a distance.

This study, in particular, examines the leadership approaches of leaders who need to juggle the responsibilities of interacting with an in-house team, as well as sometimes be in the position where they need to be the mediators and the superiors in interactions between people outside of the company, such as freelancers hired by the company's customers. In such cases they need to be able to work and communicate properly with a virtual team. In its essence a virtual team is identifiable as an organizational team, using the majority of the features of a traditionally established one, for example the goal of the organization, the roles of each individual and the duties and responsibilities of each team member. The authors examine some unique characteristics of virtual team, such as the distance and the communication nature, applying traditional leadership approaches in this specific context in order to find the outcome of this implication. The authors, (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006) focused on two specific traditional approaches, namely the contingency theory and the leader traits theory; they focused primarily on what the outcomes were given that they applied these theories in virtual team environment.

The contingency theory, discussed originally by Fiedler (1967), separated the style of leaders into two divisions: task-oriented and relationship-oriented. The success of the style depended on the "contextual and situational factors of: leader-member relationship, task structure and position power" (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006, p.277). In a virtual team environment, the contingency theory would be complicated by various factors such as "ethnic, national and organizational backgrounds, the complexity and confusion of communication and increased possibilities of various temporal and spatial virtual work arrangements" (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006, p. 278). Therefore, four distances may be regarded in the application of the approach in the virtual team context- physical distance, communicational distance, organizational distance and cultural distance. In this specific study the researcher will draw examples from the data, in order to address only the communicational and organizational distances, since due to these two distances a number of relevant challenges may arise before the leader. Some of those challenges include the need for the leader to make extra effort in order to make the virtual employees feel as valuable and functional as the in-house team, as well as the leader needs to put in extra effort to win the trust and respect of the virtual employees. Another challenge, due to the physical distance, is the difficulties in

leader-employee interactions. It will be interesting to examine whether the respondents experience any of these challenges and if so how they act towards solving them.

The leader traits theory focuses on the specific characteristic that differentiate the leader from its followers, such as experience, responsibilities, skills and values (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Moreover, the theory is regarded by the relationship between the leader and its employees in more social situations, and some important leadership traits have been recognised, such as “intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, sociability, etc. (Stogdill, 1948). Unfortunately, the leader traits theory had not been applied much in the virtual team context, therefore one can only speculate what some of the challenges may be in the application of this approach. However, some authors believe that since proper communication is key within the approach, in regard to all of the mentioned characteristics above, a successful virtual team leader should be able to show good communication skills, as for approach to be effective in this context. Throughout the application, the authors recognize three traits needed for the success of the approach: “communication competency, environmental alertness and influence power” (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006, p. 282). This particular research will focus only on the communication competency and the influence power, due to the nature of the research problem.

Since the current study is examining notions such as the organizational communication and social mediation between a leader and their followers in unique contexts, in which the leader might be faced with having to assert their power role to people outside of the company, the implications of the Zhang and Fjermestad’s hybrid approach may show beneficial in examining the difficulties a leader might experience in the communication with colleagues not operating in the same office space as the leader, as well as the challenges of engaging and motivating people separated in distance.

2.2 Beware: Millennials in the workplace

According to Catalyst (2017) by “2025, millennials will comprise three-quarters of the global workforce”. That information may seem ages away, considering the fast-changing world we live in, however according to Pew Research Center, as of 2017, millennials are the predominant workforce in the labour market in the United States (2018). Since the millennial generation is steadily growing and taking over the labour market, the business world is seeing and facing the impact this generation is making. There is a shift within the contemporary workplace landscape and business need to reform its leadership and management approach by gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning attached to power and purpose by millennial leaders working in environments (e.g. high-tech industry) that are also changing very fast.

2.2.1 Generational characteristics of millennials

Examining Millennials within the workplace, academics have pointed out potential stereotypes such as that this generation consists of people who lack loyalty and work ethic (Pew Research Center, 2007) and are self-centred and untrustworthy. Some argue this is because that extraordinary group of people have been given much more attention while growing up in comparison to previous generations, that they have developed senses of self-confidence, empowerment and hopefulness to undertake and exceed in various personal and organizational endeavours (Mora & Balda, 2011, p.14). This perspective comes from the fact that this generation had been exposed to various unique and uncommon circumstances, foreign to generations before them. For instance, even though the majority of the millennials have not experienced major emotional trauma in their lives, Deloitte is reporting that millennials' biggest concerns are terrorism and cultural conflicts (Deloitte, 2017). The popular press (Fairbanks, 2017) believes that the turning point was the attack on 9/11, which was broadcasted live and sparked the great anxiety this generation is experiencing regarding war, terrorism and political conflicts. This fear might be the reasoning behind the results Deloitte published that show that in only one third of the countries that participated in the research believe that social progress is made and that the respondents expect to be happier in comparison to their parents. Additionally, this generation faced different economic factors in comparison to the generations before. With the 2008 market crash millennials were faced with the consequences of the "worst collapse since the stock market crash of 1929" (Better Markets, 2015, para. 2). Consequences such as the highest unemployment in modern history, underpayment and student loan debts. According to Deloitte (2017), unemployment and income inequality are some of the key issues millennials in both mature and emerging markets are concerned of. Last but not least, millennials have been raised in a personal environment that shaped them as what academics have described as entitled, self-absorbed and highly self-confident (Deloitte 2017). Due to the fact that this generation had been raised by parents who overprotected and watched over them throughout their childhood and even in some cases after that, the stereotypes following the millennial generation are sometimes overly exaggerated to an extent where they can be harmful to the generation's professional future (Deloitte 2017). Nevertheless, the millennials possess specific generational characteristics that not only differentiate them from previous generations but are regarded as the ones that define their potential for growth, innovation and development.

Millennials as digital natives

The generation at hand have been described by theory, and the popular press, as "digitally native" (Premsky, 2001), being brought up in time when there was significant boom in technological

innovations and developments. They have been effortlessly navigating their way through processes such as information sharing, data management, digital content creation and social networking practices that academics argue shaped the way millennials process information (Mora & Balda, 2011, p.14; Prensky, 2001) and the way they perceive and handle social and business interactions. (Thomson & Gregory, 2012). For example, according to Pew Research Center (2010), millennials tend to turn to technology and the internet when uncertain how to face or properly communicate a problem with their colleagues. Employers have noted that in such cases their employees turn to professional social media platforms, with the intention of “seeking a solution more efficiently” (Bannon et al., 2011, p. 62). As in comparison to other generations that cannot be considered digitally native, millennials appear to demonstrate much higher strength in activities such as multitasking or obtaining relevant digital information, as well as blocking unwanted distractions (Tapscott, 2010).

Millennials: the self-centred generation?

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) examine millennials at the workplace focusing on aspects such as organizational communication, social mediation among other members of the company and professional possibilities and expectations. They discuss millennials’ passion for leadership positions in a unique way. By citing a Pew Research Centre (2007) study, Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) regard millennials’ aspirations for “high personal achievement” (p. 234) as an effect from the pressure previous generations have importuned on them. According to theory (Ramey, 2008), the millennial generation feels pressured to accomplish a professional goal due to their parents’ passionate and intense urge to integrate and socialize. Driven by their parents urge for professional success and by the high recognition leadership positions get from the labour market, many millennials might experience more egocentric aspirations towards leadership or management. Theory (Sadaghiani & Myers, 2009) regards those desires within millennials concluding that one needs more than motivation for personal gain to “be able to effectively work for followers when most needed” (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2009, p.234). Sadaghiani & Myers (2010) followed up on their statements on selfishness among millennials with another research examining parents’ viewpoint on “emphasizing egoism over altruism in socialization communication about leadership” (p. 243). The results showed that “parents of Millennials do talk about and encourage egoism and valuing extrinsic benefits, but they also talk about and encourage altruism in leadership” (Sadaghiani & Myers, 2009, p. 24), meaning that millennials will actively pursue leadership positions and will probably communicate selflessness and concern to followers, however just like previous generations they will seek bonuses and rewards for the work they are doing. The current research examines the notions of selfishness

and the pursue of high personal achievement among millennial leaders by examining the participants' views on their professional motivation for retention of their positions. The study asks the respondents to identify what is success for them, as well as to provide a definition on power and consider the management approaches a leader led by power may take, in comparison to one led by the notion of purpose. The current study is incorporating the understanding of the respondents on these notions, in order to answer the sub-research question of: What is the motivation behind millennial leaders pursue and retention of leadership positions? That question needs to be examined, in order for better understanding to be provided of the intrinsic inspirations millennials have regarding professional development and growth.

However, while some academics regard millennials as egotistical and self-indulgent others regard them in a more positive way- valuing volunteer work and seeking the sense of community and inclusiveness (Jacobson, 2007). If looked through the notion of leadership and management it can be argued that millennials value open communication on all levels with peers or supervisors in the workplace environment (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Because of their upbringings, previous studies suggest that millennials do not show intimidation based on "seniority, age, or status" (Mora & Balda, 2011, p.15) within workplace environment. According to Curtis (2010) the millennial generation is expecting bidirectional communication and interaction within all levels of a company or organization. Millennials can show tendencies of unwillingness to participate or follow "corporate policies, in particular with regard to information technology" (Mora & Balda, 2011, p.15) if they believe such communication does not exist. On the other hand, the generation is strongly motivated if they are able to operate and communicate freely within an organization which results in maximization of their professional exertion as well as may prove beneficial in the element of trust and loyalty towards the organization, its structure and its purpose (Hewlett et al., 2009). Therefore, this study explores the notion of workplace interactions, addressing the nature of the communication between the respondents and their colleagues in a similar position, subordinates and superiors, in order to provide a better understanding of what millennial leaders consider valuable and necessary in work sociability, the organization's communication structure and the flow of information regarding all levels of the company's hierarchy.

Millennials and the work-life balance

In their discussion on millennials in the workplace Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) also elaborate on the fact that many Millennials would be more likely to follow the "work-life balance", which is a notion discussed by many academics before (Carless & Wintle, 2007; Smola & Sutton, 2002). The notion describes the likelihood of choosing a career path that will enable one to both enjoy the

flexibility of one's profession and live a healthy stress free and enjoyable lifestyle. According to the Pew Research Center (2010) the personal values millennials are showing are surprisingly reflecting the ones that previous generations have shown. All generational groups display high importance when it comes to family life, while money and fame do not register as important. To millennials, being a good parent registers as a priority (Pew Research Center 2010). More than half of the examined respondents chose this option among many others, including being successful in a high paying career (Pew Research Center 2010). It has been regarded that some millennials would prefer to maintain healthy personal relationships and sacrifice high pressure career positions in the name of their quest for work-life balance. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that millennials would demand more realistic working hours, considering the technological advances available today, transforming the office nine to five work into more conventional time frame. The study explores the respondents' organizational commitment and satisfaction, in order to gain a better understanding on what do millennial leaders prioritize, considering the power positions they occupy.

Generational differences in the workplace

However, the generational differences displayed within the work values of the Net Generation, in comparison to the rest of the workforce currently operating within the labour market, has been examined by academics and described in some cases as problematic (Smola & Sutton, 2002). It is argued that tension within the workplace may be caused by generational differences of work values. Such tension may cost the millennials the respect and trust of some of their colleagues. These generational differences are evaluated based on the "cognitive or emotional reactions to various aspects of work" (Kowske et al., 2010, p.267). It has been examined that in comparison to previous generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) millennials exhibit higher "commitment due to feelings of obligation" to the organization and lower "commitment due to high cost of living" (Davis et al., 2006; Kowske et al., 2010, p. 278). Within a work environment where communication and information exchange are happening between different generations, these generational work values may cause poor job performance and satisfaction (Clampitt, 2012). Tolbize (2008) categorises the generational differences within work values in several categories and examines how the different generations compare with each other. Some of the categories this research is concerned about are - attitudes towards work, communication and respect and training and learning. Since this research is examining millennial leaders, the theoretical background provided above will be focused mainly on the characteristics millennials are displaying, in order for a theoretical base to be build which will be used in the discussion chapter of this research. Moreover, examining the power relationships may shed a light on these aspects discussed above and thus the

purpose of the current study to examine the generational characteristics of the respondents and their attitude towards the powerful positions they hold.

Beginning with conceptualizing the millennials' attitudes towards work, the author suggests that there is an ongoing debate claiming, "younger generations do not work as hard as previous ones" (Tolbize, 2008, p.5), classifying them as somewhat uninterested and uncommitted to the job. However, the work ethic noticeably increased among younger employees, according to the study. The perceptions of the millennial generation are built in regard to many factors, such as educational background or income level. In comparison to previous generations, that have been described as "process orientated", millennials are characterized as result-focused, flexible regarding working hours and as their responsibilities are finished in due time, millennials are regarded as good at managing their time.

In cases where millennials need to work with other generations, most conflicts arise from misconception and misunderstanding of the values millennials are displaying. Therefore, an effective communication needs to be the key aim in such cases. Within this specific research many of the respondents were working in companies where they needed to respond and communicate with people from different generations. Tolbize (2008) argues that if one is in a power position, which is the case for the respondents in this study, one needs to "give people the benefit of the doubt and avoid making decision based on assumptions" (p.13). In addition, the author suggests if unsure about an issue communicate directly with the personal and approach with respect, no matter the age.

Examining the concepts of training and learning Tolbuze (2008) points out that with different generations the processes of training and learning differ as well. According to the study all generations favour learning soft skills while working, however the methodology differs. For example, millennials prefer "assessment and feedback" when learning, and no dot favour specific pre-set instructions. Regarding hard skills, in comparison to older generations who "like skills straining in their areas of expertise" (Tolbuze, 2008, p.14), millennials prefer training aimed at more superior expertise, such as leadership and management.

The research examines the cognitive and emotional reaction of millennial leaders to various aspect within the work environment, including the possible generational differences of work values, as well as the communication issues one might experience and the challenges their specific power role may possess in regard to them exercising their authority. The research asks the respondents to identify what they find most challenging within their current position, as well as investigates the actions the leaders take in solving these challenges. This discussion is important key part in answering the sub-research question of: How millennial leaders describe their leadership style?

2.2.2 Millennials in charge: the shifting dynamics of leadership in the workplace

There has been quite the debate of what businesses should do to incorporate the values and traits millennials are bringing to the table. Many academics have regarded cases where an organization have decided to embark on a mission of changing their business model accordingly to both meet up with the new workforce on the market as well as encourage collaboration and engagement with all the generations in the organization. However, as some have noted (Mora & Balda, 2011) they have failed because they “put new wine into old wineskins”- integrating certain attributes millennials offer, but “attempting to squeeze them into classical team models or top-down management hierarchies” (p.17).

Nevertheless, there are examples of companies which were able to recognize, change or build up a completely new business structures and test their progress with millennials as their workforce. A lot of those companies happen to be extremely successful high-tech companies, which it may come as no surprise considering the fact that many of them are the main providers of positions highly desired by the NetGen. Companies such as Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Tesla not only appeal to the millennials because of their innovative vision and practices, but also because these companies embody this generation’s values and desires towards a business - an organization that is not afraid to embrace big ideas and one that aspires greatness, not only for the individual but for the common good. These companies have already made the change from the classical management approaches to the twenty-first century leadership and management style. These management modifications may translate into future model alterations when building an even more innovative organizations. It can be argued that management in the twenty-first century is defined by the knowledge sharing and knowledge management practices within an organization (Crawford et al., 2003; Klenke, 1994). Leadership practices and management models are arguably closely affiliated with the concept of personal innovation and innovative leadership (Crawford et al., 2003). Nowadays businesses and leadership practices are dependent on the constant and rapid change in technological innovation and progression, therefore leaders and organizations need to understand and adapt to the change in order to remain productive and in a position of power and authority. As discussed above millennials bring numerous various outlooks, values and performance practices to the workplace. The current research examines the millennial leadership styles considering the notion of communication, employee engagement and collaboration. This generation is famous for being digitally native, therefore the communication and knowledge sharing strategies millennial leaders use are considered to be extremely different from the already established ones. According to theory millennials not only insist and look for a regular and transparent communication among the people they work with, but also collect and distribute

information quickly and effortlessly (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Therefore, it can be argued that while in leadership positions, millennials would promote and use an open two-way communication and encourage more cooperative interactions among their employees. Previous studies have already discussed such leader-follower relationship styles regarding the involvement and engagement employees show in important processes. Regarding these leader-follower relationships academics established a leadership approach that highlights these exchanges calling it participative or democratic leadership. Democratic leadership is an approach where the leader provides the opportunity for the employees to freely participate and contribute with ideas and suggestions within the decision-making process. However, the final decision is still made by the leader himself. It is a management method that incorporates democratic values and the transformational leadership approach (Howe & Strauss, 2007). According to literature millennials show interest in collaborative communicative style. Gursoy, Maier and Chi (2008) discuss that this generation has shown interest and investment towards working in a group where people express their ideas through brainstorming sessions. Academics explain that strategy of work is inspirational for people who lack experience and creativity saying that being part of a team where one is free and encouraged to share their thoughts is not only profitable for the team's creativity, but also individually constructive (Myer & Sadaghiani, 2010). Furthermore, collaborative communicative approaches enhance the comprehension of the notions of collective intelligence and information sharing among employees, as they feel part of a community, which increases communication flow among employees (Bruffee, 1993). Moreover, academics argue that this collaborative strategy inspires millennials to display significantly higher levels of trust in the company they are working at, as well as desire for more collaborative effort and personal development (Howe & Strauss, 2007). The research is examining whether the participants adopt such leadership practices within their organizations or they use different management approaches when trying to engage and motivate their employees. The research is interested in examining how do millennial leaders make sense of the leadership strategies they use on a daily basis and which of those strategies do they find the most beneficial and useful for the overall performance of the organization.

Nevertheless, there are some global surveys, questioning millennials, that show that a big percentage of the generation believes that collaborative strategies are less efficient and state that they experience better results if there is a competitive element involved in the process (Glocalities, 2014). According to a Glocalities (2014) millennials can be regarded as competitive, career driven and ambitious. The research states that thirty-two percent of the questioned millennials agree with the statement "competing with each other leads to better results than working together" (Glocalities, 2014, p.6). The research provides a rationale behind that statement by saying that millennials need to have a strong competitive mindset due to the "demands of the free market

economy” (Glocalities, 2014, p.6) they are operating and competing in. The research also points out that nearly fifty percent of the millennial respondents believe that their life contentment depends on their professional career and therefore they constantly strive for higher career positions. These results may prompt the employees to start question the power relation between them and their leaders due to the collaborative approach’s conceptions of open expression and communication (Mushonga & Torrance, 2008). Regarding the theoretical sources, as well as the interview data from millennial leaders, this study is examining whether millennial leaders use any sort of collaborative approaches in actual practice, as well as explores the perception such approaches might have on the operational outcomes both for the team, as well as for the leader’s authority role.

3. Method

3.1 Research design

Since this research has an exploratory nature examining millennial leadership and the shifting dynamics of leadership practices nowadays, the researcher found it most appropriate to use qualitative methodology throughout the process for a few reasons. First of all, considering the fact that the research is examining a topic that is exploring individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards their management positions, the information obtained using qualitative methodology would provide a better more detailed understanding on the concepts examined. Additionally, since the notion of millennial leadership is yet to be explored in its entirety and complexity, the qualitative methodology is beneficial in providing data that would also uncover promising directions for potential studies. The effectiveness of the qualitative methodology when examining various social phenomena has been regarded by numerous scholars within the academic field (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2000). Qualitative methods have been regarded as adaptable and tractable in their core. The collection of data, as well as the analysis of data within a qualitative research can be continuously tailored accordingly to emerging results and findings. Qualitative methodology offers a descriptive approach towards the field of interest. Meaning the collected information from the participants is not limited by prepossessed questions or preconceived categories, and therefore can be as detailed as possible bringing rich and relevant views on the social and cultural topic at hand (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research enables the researcher to depict and define a specific phenomenon that had been regarded by academics from various points of views providing the researcher with the opportunity to compare and interconnect different views and abstracts of the data with one another. Using qualitative methodology is beneficial regarding the topic at hand and produces accurate and well rooted results (Patton, 2002).

The research uses in-depth semi-structured interviews as the main approach in data collection throughout the process. This methodology combines "structure with flexibility" (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003, p.141). As to ease the process for both the researcher and the interviewee, the in-depth interviews followed a certain interview guide, which gave general understanding of the key themes and topics the researcher is examining (Legard et al., 2003, p.141). Nevertheless, since this research is looking at examining real-life leadership practices the interviews with the participants were not fully structured, as to enable the researcher to gather the data she needed regarding the individual answers of each of the respondents. In-depth interviews were beneficial due to their interactive nature as well. In comparison to other methods of data collection

interviews have been regarded as a form of “conversation with a purpose” (Webb & Webb, 1975, p.130), which in their fundamentality are aiming at enhancing the understanding of issues within the social world. The rationale behind the sampling strategy was based on the methodology of grounded theory, which was used as well throughout the research. Each respondent was interviewed individually, so that they were not influenced by the other respondents. An audio file was created for each of the respondents. The interviews lasted between 30 to 50 minutes, depending on the respondent’s answers and willingness to elaborate on specific questions.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

The current research gathered data from a specific target group that best fit within the research question and the aim of the study. Keeping in mind the theory presented in the previous chapter, such as the notions of millennials being digitally native and well versed in technological innovation and current modes of communication, the research targeted a specific setting of examination. Essentially, the research was focused on millennial leaders holding a leadership position in an organization that operates within the high-tech industry.

The respondents were people that occupy a leadership position within their high-tech organization, either project leaders, managers, supervisors or the owner of the organization. Moreover, since the research question is examining millennial leaders, the participants needed to be a part of that generation, therefore being born between the early 1980s and 2000. Based on its nature the research relied on data gathered from a theoretical purposive sample of 11 people (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Theoretical sampling is an approach that is designed to produce “theory that is grounded in the data” (Glaser, 1979, p.36). Since the research is using purposive sample the researcher relied on her personal network, as to reach the participants. Qualitative researches usually use the methodology of purposeful sampling as “to enhance understanding of the information-rich case” (Sandelowski, 2000; Patton, 1990).

The interviewees were contacted in advance and asked to participate in the research via email or through social media platforms (Facebook & Skype). In the first step of the process the researcher provided brief explanation on the nature and the topic of the research, explaining to the respondents that the research is looking into millennial leadership and explaining why each individual was contacted and how would their participation be beneficial to the research. In the second step of the process, the researcher contacted the respondents, again via social media, in order to schedule individual interviews with each of the respondents. More additional information was provided regarding the nature of the interview itself, including information on anonymity, the

duration of the interview and the procedure of archiving the interview audios. An exact meeting was scheduled with each of the respondents based on the respondents' availability. In the third step the actual interview was conducted. Before the start of the interview the interviewees provided with a consent form, which can be found under Appendix A, a general description of the process of the interview was explained again, and a description of the study was given as well. The respondents were informed that their answers were in no way judged, criticized or evaluated, and that they were based on the respondents' personal knowledge and experience as leaders. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded and stored as audio files. Later on, the interviews were transcribed, and in two of the cases translated from Bulgarian to English.

3.3 Operationalization

Since the interviews were conducted individually, following the semi-structured interview guide presented in Appendix B, the researcher had the freedom to adapt the questions coherently regarding the individual answers of the respondents. In some cases, in which the interviewer deemed necessary some of the questions were omitted or the researcher probed the respondents for more detailed information. The main concepts that were discussed during the interview process have been examined in the theoretical framework chapter.

The interview guide followed a sequence of questions, arranged in several theme sections including: exploring the respondents' outlook on millennial leadership, exploring the motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to undertake such power roles, exploring the organizational incorporation of the values millennials are bringing to the table, exploring the cognitive and emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment, millennial leaders' organizational commitment and satisfaction, workplace interactions, exploring the leader-follower dynamic and exploring the notions of power and purpose. Additionally, the interview guide included a few questions that prompted the respondents to provide advice for other millennials who would consider going into management and prompted the interviewees to deliberate why should anyone be led by them, pointing out the qualities and values the respondents believe are the most effective within their position. The guide also included an ice-breaker game at the very start of the interview, that was designed to put the participant at ease, activate and stimulate their thought process and initiate a smooth conversation in which the participant can express their opinions freely and candidly. The game was a quick association game, giving the respondents words, such as leadership, business, power, purpose, communication, etc.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

After the data from the respondents was collected the researcher transcribed each of the audio files. Since the researcher interviewed participants from her native country there was a possibility for the interviews to be conducted in the interviewee's native language. There were two respondent who did not feel comfortable participating in an interview in which the questions and answers were given in English, therefore interviewer provided the option of conducting the interviews in the participants' native language and later on the researcher translated and transcribed the interviews.

After the interviews were transcribed in their entirety, the researcher began the coding process. The researcher used inductive thematic analysis to code the gathered data. The themes were "developed based on an underlying theory from the field or the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding process followed the phases Braun and Clarke (2006) developed, beginning with step one: familiarization with the transcribed data. During this phase the researcher emerged herself in the data, reading several times the data and noting initial ideas and codes. In the second phase the researcher began to generate codes across the data and sorting up the data in a systematic fashion throughout the entire data set. The third phase consisted of the researcher pairing up codes across the data into themes, which derived from the already discussed theory. Seven themes were identified, including: organizational incorporation of the values millennial leaders are bringing to the table, cognitive and emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment, respondents' outlook on valuable leadership approaches, motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to pursue leadership positions, millennial leaders' organizational commitment and satisfaction, millennial leaders' outlook on the power-purpose dynamic and workplace interactions and the leader-follower dynamic. A sample of the coding table can be found under Appendix C. After the themes were created the researcher identified samples in the form of quotations from the respondents' data that she found most suitable and beneficial to include in the results chapter as to best address the ongoing analysis of the research questions.

3.5 Validity and reliability

While the notions of validity and reliability are regarded separate within a quantitative research academics tend to consider them simultaneously within a qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Validity and reliability in this type of research are mostly referring to the tenability of the researcher and the "ability and effort" (Golafshani, 2003, p.600) they used throughout the process. To ensure

the validity and reliability of the research the study provides information of the research design and the sampling procedures that were applied within the research. Having discussed the strengths of using a qualitative approach to this research the researcher is aware of the limitations of the approach.

Considering the sample methodology, the research would not be representative of all millennial leaders. In addition, since the research is examining millennial leaders within the high-tech market the results may not be representative for all fields of operation. Nevertheless, the results may prove beneficial to the overall understanding on millennial leadership. Moreover, the research may provide a structure that could enable future research endeavours focused on millennial leadership.

4. Results

In order to answer the main research question: How do millennial leaders make sense of their leadership positions? the researcher coded the gathered interview data into seven key themes: Cognitive and emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment, Motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to pursue leadership positions, Organizational incorporation of the values millennial leaders are bringing to the table, Respondents' outlook on valuable leadership approaches, Millennial leaders' organizational commitment and satisfaction, Millennial leaders' outlook on the power-purpose dynamic and Workplace interactions and the leader-follower dynamic. Taken as a whole, the researcher believes these seven themes are reflecting on the general overview of millennial leadership as seen and experienced by the respondents. Each theme is examined separately, discussing the thematic codes that appeared in the data in further detail in relation to the already discussed theoretical framework, as well as which theme is valuable in the attempt of the researcher to provide an answer to the theme's corresponding sub-research question.

4.1 Motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to pursue leadership positions

When asked whether there was someone or something that inspired them to pursue leadership positions some respondents pointed out that they have been looking up to find inspiration in the face of powerful individuals, including successful entrepreneurs, feminist icons and some even mention personal inspirations such as their family and friends. One of the respondents elaborated by saying:

"I am a huge feminist, and I am constantly inspired by people such as Michelle Obama or Roxane Gay. I am inspired by the way they are pursuing their leadership position and by the way they are leading with love, but also with a lot of reasoning behind their actions, that is something that is very inspiring to me. Also, the fact that Michelle Obama is not only the first lady, but she is also involved in different activities such as non-profit organizations and creating her business next to her husband. So, her leadership position makes her a great example that I like to follow" (female, digital marketing manager).

Another respondent pointed out that Elon Musk and Richard Branson have been the idols he studied and the reason for his inspiration to start his own company. One of the lessons he learned from the Tesla's founder was: "If you want to do something, just keep trying, something will fail but don't give up, and things will happen, and this will keep motivating you to develop even more" (male, entrepreneur). The reasoning behind examining the notion of role modelling is to study how

is the concept of inspirational motivation which is considered to play a key role within the charismatic leadership approach connected and displayed within the collected data from the interviewees. This inspirational motivation, as shown in the data can be provided from people close to one's personal circle. One of the interviewees said that she was inspired by her father, who since she can remember had had a leadership position, and she was inspired by how he handled the responsibilities he had throughout the years. Another respondent pointed out that for him the inspiration to pursue leadership came from the mentors he had when he started in the company he currently is holding a leadership position at:

"When I was hired , my role was more of a back role, as an assistant, so I had to be mentored by someone, which was quite a lucky case for me, because I was able to work with people that actually know a lot and have a lot of experience ...it is really important and it really matters who you are actually working with, because this can actually turn your professional life in a specific way. I have had people who have showed me that it makes sense to pursue a leadership career because being responsible for a team or a larger task, and not just doing an operation job is something that makes the difference at the end of the day. Because being the leader goes hand in hand with actually creating something and making a difference in the company or the organization you are working in" (male, pre-sales consultant).

Another common code derived from the data was the concept of freedom the interviewees are seeking, going into leadership positions. One of them, who managed to create and develop his own start-up business pointed out that he and his partners were attracted to the idea of creating their own company, where they would be able to display their passion and knowledge and develop their experience without being restricted by the organizational limitations of a bigger corporation: "Because we had much more knowledge in comparison to the others from our course, we realize we could develop much more than them, so we decided that if we do it on our own, without being pressured by the responsibilities of a huge corporation, and we realized we could create and develop a product of our own, rather than creating or working on different project for other companies" (male, entrepreneur).

A very common code developed from the data that provides an insight behind the reasoning and motivation of the interviewees in retaining leadership position was the notion of the tangible result from their work. The feeling of accomplishment the leaders get when they managed to develop an idea and see the final product or result from it is one of the predominant motivating mechanisms the respondents identified. One of them elaborated by saying:

"The result, and the fact that it makes me feel important to someone, that I have contributed to

achieve something. My work has been created in my mind with my knowledge and later this has led to some results. Of course, the result is the point of measurement to see where you are. When I see where I am according to my results, this is how I see how beneficial I am to someone. To feel that I contributed to someone is really important for me and this is what it drives me at my current position” (female, digital marketing and advertising manager).

Some of the respondents also identified the drive for creation as another related motivation for retention of their leadership position.

Another common code developed from the data was the opportunity for self-development and professional growth. The majority of the respondents recognized the benefits their position is providing regarding the build-up of their career knowledge and experience. As one of the respondents put it when asked what is the motivation behind him staying at this position:

“Opportunities...I started in my current job when the company was really small, and I have been there for four years, and I can see the company growing and growing, and this motivates me because I can see we are developing and I see more opportunities. I was given a lot of chances to prove myself and I see a lot of room for improvement. My bosses are telling me improve this and improve that and I am curious if I become better, I want to become better” (male, project manager).

Another common code the notion of creating a valuable network of people, that may prove to be beneficial for the further development of the leader as well as favourable in regard to the workplace environment. Many of the respondents said that what motivates them to stay at their current position is the people who they work with:

“First of all, there are a lot of people that I really enjoy working with, for example there are a lot of Stanford and Harvard graduates in our company, so that means they have extremely large network of people and large knowledge of things, and just seeing how these people think or even write email to someone makes me really curious about how I can become such a person and how can I educate myself even more” (female, digital marketing manager).

In addition, some of the respondents, as discussed before, have created really close relations with their colleagues, and some mentioned these affiliations as a part of their motivation for retention: “maybe why I am staying in this position is because of my team and my colleagues. We are a real close team, and if there are problems: personal, business or corporate, these problems get us even closer” (female, senior project manager).

Another sub-theme that derived from the data was the respondent's perception of success. The researcher asked the interviewees what success looks like for them, in order to be able to analyse the respondents' future ambitions and aspirations. The data produces several codes, including personal and professional legacy and recognition, life balance as well as some material aspects. Most of the interviewees wanted to get the recognition from their peers and superiors in the field of operation. One of them elaborated by saying:

"Success for me is becoming an expert in my field. That involves a lot of learning and growing and meeting different people, not only career wise but also people wise, how to react in certain situations and how to develop yourself in situations where you will be perceived as a good leader" (female, digital marketing manager).

One interviewee (male, pre-sales consultant) mentioned that success is strictly individual, and it varies depending on the outlook of the respondent. For him success is having both personal legacy, in the face of family and children, as well as professional legacy in the face of the ideas he managed to develop into finalized products or services. Some of course, mentioned that success for them is the satisfaction they experience going to the workplace and creating and developing themselves, however as one of the respondents pointed out, with this the other material benefits may come as well: "I just want to be satisfied with what I am doing, and I want to be satisfied with the people I am working with. I want to have a space for improvement. And maybe if you have this the other benefits will come- money, power and more" (male, project manager).

The final sub-theme explored within the current study is the notion of competition. As discussed before this concept had been regarded by academics before considering the role it plays within the millennial generation. Therefore, the current research decided to question what role competition plays within the respondents' workplace environment and whether they consider themselves a competitive people. Surprisingly, opposite to the theory, the respondents do not believe that competition within the workplace is healthy and profitable for the organizational environment. The big majority of the interviewees identified competition as damaging, one of whom said:

"I think it is more damaging...the disadvantages are more, because we are working on one final product, you have to work in a team. You cannot say I will be better than this guy and I am going to work on his job harder, that does not work like that in my company. It creates a negative environment" (male, project manager).

However, some of the respondents mentioned that there is no direct competition between the

employees of their organizations, however they believe that competition should exist on a personal level. What some of them meant is that in order for one's personal development one needs to constantly be challenging themselves and compete with different tasks and challenges, one respondent elaborated:

"To compete with someone else is a bit superficial, but to compete with yourself is the best option. I am not competing with my colleagues, I am considering them as levels to reach. I need to work extra hard to reach them. This makes me go further and I see them like an example" (male, entrepreneur).

Another provided a different outlook by saying: "I like to race with myself, not with other people, there will always be someone better than you, better employee, better looking, more intelligent, it is up to you how you look at it. If you want to be like him fair, that can be an inspiration, but I try to race myself, and not with my colleagues" (male, project manager). Only one respondent identified competition as a key element within their work environment however, again he made the distinguish and identified the notion not as direct competition but more as a challenge one needs to face: "Huge role! Competition is actually the key. If you are not the competitive type you are out of the game. You are competing with each challenge" (male, pre-sales consultant).

4.2 Millennial leaders' outlook on the power-purpose dynamic

When asked how they define the notion of power the majority of the respondents defined it regarded from the aspect of possessing certain responsibilities. The respondents believe that being in a powerful position one should be conscious of what may come from that powerful position, such as the authority one may possess over their employees, the obligations for both the people they work with but also for the organization's wellbeing, and the commitment they make when accepting the concept of power. One of the respondents commented:

"You have to be responsible when you have a certain power, but if you are smart and if you have a lot of power you will be able to distribute it in a smart way. The power itself brings a lot of opportunities, but if you are not ready to have this power, you might get lost. So, power is something you need to be careful with and know when to apply it" (male, pre-sales consultant).

Another common identification of the notion was connected with the concept of freedom. Some of the respondents explained that they believe power brings one the freedom they need to be able to take the right direction on specific challenges:

"Power for me is the freedom to make certain decisions, and the freedom to influence other people in a certain way, without using the concept of manipulation again. Power as having the right

communication skills to talk to people, so you can collaborate together, and you can do most productive job that is beneficial to the company. And be a good professional in order to create a good environment for yourself and your employees” (female, digital-marketing manager).

Another common code among the participants was the identification of power with the notion of respect, authority and trust. Some respondents, however identified the notion with more material ideas, such as money and an entity one should invest it.

When asked to provide a definition on the notion of purpose, some of the respondents had an issue identifying what purpose was. The researcher had to provide an additional explanation based on the broadly accepted definition of the word. The researcher explained that the notion can be both regarded in the context of individual purpose or goal or organizational purpose. A common code derived from the data examining the notion of purpose within the context of organizational development. Some of the respondents believe that the purpose of their organizations is to expand, both economically and as a working environment by trying new management approaches and being creative and innovative, with one of the respondents commenting:

“I believe as a company we want to be number one in what we do and to be as innovative as possible, so that we can reach new clients and the new clients could differentiate us, and we do that by being innovative and having the experience and the quality” (female, senior project manager).

Another respondent elaborated even further by saying: “(The purpose is) to change the directions, until we are at the right path, because we have been operating on the current market for years now and we have been working with clients for a while, and we are developing, but not in a fully optimized way, as we want it, that is why we are constantly making little changes” (male, entrepreneur). Another common code that derived from the data identifying the notion in more personal manner was the concept of legacy. Two of the respondents commented on the topic, one of which elaborated:

“The purpose is to wake up every morning and to know why you are going where you need to go. Your life is not that long at the end, so it is really up to you to know what the purpose is in your life. If the purpose is to have a family- leadership is not for you, if you have the personal motivation and the purpose to grow and develop yourself as an individual, and at the best-case scenario to leave a legacy, then push yourself to be a leader” (male, pre-sales consultant).

Different codes that derived from the data included innovation and feeling of achievement. One responded commented that based on her knowledge of the generational values millennials possess,

the notion of purpose does not play a big role in their life. She elaborated by saying:

“Purpose for millennials in my opinion is very blurry notion. We have a very short attention span and we also need to satisfy our needs very quickly, and the moment we feel we are not appreciated in a certain company or we do not grow in a certain company we shift gears and direction, so we can prove we are constantly running and we are constantly looking to find a new challenge and new adventure, just because we are not satisfied. Purpose in terms of something more specific I don't think this exist in the millennial world” (female, digital-marketing manager).

The current study examined the respondents' opinions on leadership approaches taken by leaders led by power and the ones by leaders led by the notion of purpose. Some of the respondents believe that leaders nowadays are not completely motivated solely by only one of the notions. The interviewees believe that the leadership drive comes from instinct motivations that derive from both the concepts of power and purpose. One of the interviewees explained: “I have not met anyone who can be described as totally led by power or purpose, it is always in the middle. In my case it is the same, aiming at one goal, to finish the specific product or project” (female, digital marketing and advertising manager). Another respondent added on the matter: “If you are a leader with power and you apply it but don't know why it is not okay. To be a leader you need both, you cannot have only power or only purpose, for me it does not make sense. Otherwise it is a vicious circle” (male, pre-sales consultant). Other respondents, however managed to differentiate the two notions and the leadership styles they believe are exercised by leaders led by power and purpose: “Yes, these who are led by power are only interested by money and what is the fastest route to those money, they don't care about what they leave behind, and people led by purpose they have a goal and they invest more time and energy into it and they are much more motivated” (female, senior project manager). Another one added on the manner saying:

“If you just seek power and you want to be the boss and not do the work, that is recipe for disaster because at the end you want to be helpful and you want to motivate your team, if you treat them like nothing and you just barking orders on them they will do some things but there will be no room for innovation, and the purpose - man of purpose is the man who will succeed” (male, entrepreneur).

The majority of the respondents agree that power comes with purpose, therefore they believe that for a successful leader it is important to have the vision, in a form of purpose, and the power in a form of authority and respect. One of them elaborated:

“Me personally, I am not someone who is pursuing power, because I think that power comes with

purpose. If you know your purpose you are powerful, and you know you are trying to achieve this goal of yours and you are sure in your actions and become better and better in time and you have a better leadership perspective in where you want to be and that gives you the power, but power by itself is impossible. I do not understand what someone led by only power is trying to achieve” (female, digital-marketing manager).

4.3 Millennial leaders’ organizational commitment and satisfaction

The study asked the respondents to identify the advantages of their positions and leadership roles. Several common codes developed from the data, including the freedom the position provides the respondents. One of the respondents, who have their own start-up company, elaborated on the notion: “For me is that I am my own boss, I take my own decisions, I don’t wait for someone to tell me what to do and I mechanically do it” (male, entrepreneur). Another interviewee, however views that notion of freedom as both an advantage and a challenge, since the more freedom the position offers the leader the more responsibility the leader gets. She elaborated:

“Some of the advantages I have is that I have a lot of power to make different decisions. It comes with pros and cons, of course, learning how to make decisions on your own, but also most importantly learning how to accept the consequences is really important, and I have failed so many times and there have been so many discussions after that how I can improve my work with either the agency or with someone else that I have been working with, but all these failures are just great starting points for new learning experiences and this is what I admire most, because if I am not given these responsibilities then I am not going to learn and I am not going to grow, and this is something that is very important to me”(female, digital-marketing manager).

Another advantage the leaders identified was the opportunity they have to personally develop, by facing new challenges. As discussed before professional development demonstrated to be advantage millennial leaders are putting high value on, therefore it came as no surprise that when asked to identify the biggest advantage the concept of developing was a predominant code within the data. One of the respondents commented by saying:

“I think that I can develop personally a lot and for my personal career it is a really big step to have a leading position. And there are more challenges for me on a different level, I have very different tasks, leadership tasks that are good for my development” (female, Head of Administration and Exhaustive assistant to the COO).

Another respondent commented, saying that facing new challenges keeps him motivated and interested in the job his organization is doing: “I am working on different things every day, which is

quite common for jobs like mine. Since we are a small team, and everyone has their responsibilities, each day you have to do something you have never done before. And you are facing situations that you have never faced before, so it is an advantage because it is interesting” (male, entrepreneur).

Discussing the disadvantages, the respondents identified a few common codes, including bad communication, lack of work-life balance and some management issues discussed when an acquisition of a company occurs. One of the predominant disadvantage identified by the respondents was the pressure of the responsibilities, especially since all the interviewees are millennials, with not much working experience, and for most of them these positions are the first management positions they had had. One of the interviewees elaborated:

“The responsibilities you take at such age are very stressful, I would say. And yes, when you are young you accept things and pressure easier, but also you put a lot of drama into it, because of the lack of experience and the wide point of view” (female, digital marketing and advertising manager).

Another respondent commented: “the main disadvantage is the stress, working with a lot of people and working with a lot of responsibilities everything is really stressful and there is no room for mistakes, which is a bit too much sometimes” (male, project manager). Some of the other respondents identified the feeling of not being appreciated as a disadvantage, since this may lead to demotivation, as discussed before: “As I told you I rarely get thank you from my bosses or clients or other departments, but when there is an issue some people may take advantage of this and sort of beat you up for the mistakes” (female, senior project manager).

When asked to what extent do the respondents believe they are satisfied with their positions, the majority said they are satisfied with their current job, one respondent commenting:

“I am satisfied, I have worked so much and have reached the furthest possible position. This position I have at the moment is a position that is personalized, you decide, and you have the responsibility of the department and projects and so on. I have the freedom to do my job properly” (female, senior project manager).

Some of the participants however said that at there are times when they do not feel completely satisfied with what they are doing or that they do not feel that there are any further prospects for development at this position. As one of the respondents elaborated:

“Well, I could be more satisfied for sure, just because of the fact that recently I realized that I stopped growing in my current position, and this is something important for me to develop myself and learn new things. At the moment I realized, I am doing the same thing over and over again

every day, and I am not happy about it" (female, digital-marketing manager).

There were no respondents who said they were completely dissatisfied with their current position or the company they are working at.

When the researcher asked the respondents what actions they can take in increasing their satisfaction with their current position, the respondents identified a few common approaches, including using more creative mechanisms in approaching and doing their day to day job: "We are so mobile we can always find a different approach to do our work" as well as "Maybe applying diversity and proving to yourself that you can do the work in a different manner can improve my satisfaction with myself and with the company as well" (female, digital-marketing and advertising manager). Another respondent added on the topic by suggesting incorporating fun elements in the office space, so that people could take short mental breaks:

"I can try to make the atmosphere more enjoyable. Well we can do something for fun to add something into the office, like a game or something, to get our minds off the problem for a second so you are more relaxed, and you find solutions in the natural way" (male, entrepreneur).

The main approach the respondents identified was the notion of push oneself even further and challenge oneself even more in order to develop their knowledge and experience. As one of the interviewees commented: "It depends on me, because I am working in such an industry that is developing every day I find challenges every day as well" (female, digital-marketing and advertising manager). Another respondent elaborated a little bit more by saying that since he has the leadership position, his satisfaction depends on his employees' satisfaction:

"...everything with us is pretty connected, if I want to improve, the people I am responsible need to improve too, if they are going bad I am doing bad, so first I need to focus on their performance. If they are doing really good, that will affect me, and I will get boosted, and I will see results from them. If I am doing this thing people from higher position will notice this, so everything is pretty connected" (male, project manager).

When asked whether the organization can take some actions towards improving his satisfaction the respondent implied that if they give him more responsibilities he will feel more accomplished with his job, and that will improve his satisfaction even more. The other respondents identified different approaches and actions their organizations can take towards improving their employees' satisfaction. Some of the codes that derived from the data included salary raise, more frequent personal reviews and one on one meetings with the superiors and better communication. However, the predominant code was the notion of providing incentives to the employees. The respondents

believe that providing their staff members with little stimulus, such as a praise for a job well done, would boost the motivation of the team, brighten the working environment and increase the level of satisfaction the employees.

4.4 Cognitive and emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment

The current research began identifying various problematics within the respondent's work environment by asking the respondents to comment what do they find most challenging within their current position. Understandably the answer varied based on the respondents' positions, experience and area of operation within the company. However, several common codes were detected, including the challenge of staying motivated and the issue they experienced of their employees resisting their authority, due to generational bias. Two of the respondents described the most challenging part of their current position regarding issues they personally faced during the time their companies were going through an organizational transition. One of the respondents elaborated on the issue of maintaining the needed motivation by providing an example of her company being acquired by a bigger organization, saying:

"Well, two years ago, we got acquired by a bigger company from Frankfurt, so we ended up working with our competitors, so we needed to change out management style, our protocols and basically everything, to fit to the mother company. I had much more work and responsibilities than before the acquisition, and of course our other office which was in Hamburg got a lot of work as well, but our office in Aachen received much more disadvantages than the other office, so that was a huge shock at the beginning until we realized that we are developing as a company, but at the beginning we were extremely unmotivated. We had to work according to the bigger company's rules and regulations and tasks that we were used to do in five minutes let's say now took thirty minutes, and it is a big change to accumulate to" (female, senior project manager).

Academics have regarded the processes of acquisition and mergers of organizations throughout the years, focusing on the issues managers and leaders face in motivating and reassuring the wellbeing of their employees. Some of the most common issues, as experienced by the participant, are unclear organizational roles and responsibilities, poor organizational integration and different work environment clashes (Ashkenas, DeMonaco & Francis, 1998; Buono, 1989; Marks & Mirvis, 1999; Post, 1994). A 2015 KPMG study indicated that 83% of all mergers and acquisitions fail, due to various organizational issues and the leaders' inability and lack of knowledge on how to act during this transition (Armstrong, 2015). Academics describe the role of leadership focusing on the three phases of the merger and acquisition process: the pre-combination, combination and post-combination phase, specifically discussing how motivation and proper communication are the key

factors in maintaining a normal and productive work environment for you and your employees during the process (Thach & Neyman, 2001). According to theory leaders need to increase the communication to their team in most cases to a “magnitude of triple what it may have been in the past” (Thach & Neyman, 2001, p. 148) in order to ensure that each employee is being heard and understood, since every employee would experience the transition differently “based upon their individual circumstances and needs” (p. 148). Additionally, theory suggests that leaders should maintain a two-way communication not only towards the people they manage, but also to their superiors who operate in upper management. There needs to be a multidirectional communication flow on the implication of the transition, on the direction of the company and the personal implications employees may experience. When the respondent was asked if she had a support system to turn to if unsure what actions to take in approaching these challenges she said that she can always turn to her CEOs, if she is ever in doubt. The other respondent whom company got acquired by an American corporation (female, digital-marketing manager) pointed out a similar challenge she was facing in regard to the post-combination phase of the transition. She elaborated by saying:

“...we were a private company from The Netherlands and now we are owned by an American company, so there are a lot of contacts with the US constantly, but also a lot of decisions I make need to be approved by the US. Above me I have my manager and the CEO of the company. All of these decisions need to go to the CEO to be approved, even though he sometimes can be not educated enough or even if he doesn't know anything about a certain situation... and when for example there are some things that are super relevant for the company but have not been approved because for example there is not enough budget... this thing it is extremely annoying because I have worked for that a lot and have put so much effort in providing reasoning on why we should buy this digital tool or something like that” (female, digital-marketing manager).

Even though the respondent was faced with the complex notion of budget allocation and resource planning one can argue she experienced an example of internal demotivation due to the failure of communication to her superiors what she believed would be beneficial for the further development of the organizational performance. In today's competitive market, organizations are looking for people who are inspired towards motivation and driven by growth and development. Therefore, motivation is the crucial aspect in employee retention and talent performance. No matter the economic and work environment every organization is aiming at creating a company structure that would immerse the employees into an atmosphere of engagement where they would want to contribute with their talents, knowledge and experience. In the case of the participants, where they are faced with the significant challenge of demotivation, they are questioning whether those organizations are the right place for their leadership capabilities, saying:

“I have worked so much and have reached the furthest possible position, below the CEO, there is no more development from here on, which is good at one side... However, on the other side that is it? Recently I have been thinking so what is next...” (female, senior project manager) and “...for me it is really something very important to grow within a company, and the moment I feel the situation is not going well, I either try and find new way to grow and learn new things or I just move positions” (female, digital-marketing manager). When asked what actions they took to overcome this challenge of demotivation one of the interviewees (female, digital-marketing manager) said that demotivation was an occurring problem with her. When she was faced with this issue the previous year she managed to overcome it by requesting and participating in training courses organized by her company:

“Last year, I was not entirely happy again with my position I asked for a training course that I can do to be more relevant to the industry but also more beneficial to the company and when I gave the right reasoning they paid for my course and this was perfect for me, because I went a little bit up in my responsibilities and such things really motivate me” (female, digital-marketing manager).

The other interviewee provided a similar outlook on the matter of motivational mechanism by saying: “You have to show appreciation. And I am talking about the little things, I am not expecting to have a raise every time I do my job properly, but an email saying well done or good job goes a long way. For example, a client that I did a project for a few year ago, gave the team a concert tickets, which is not a massive thing, but still shows appreciation and respect” (female, senior project manager). Positive incentives have proven to increase motivation within the workplace environment and the employees productivity (Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Lazear, 2000). Providing positive incentives, not only monetary but non-financial ones, such as praise and recognition or job enrichment proved to be beneficial in the discusses cases. In addition to the above presented cases some of the other respondents identified the increase of content and nature of responsibilities and the freedom to develop and grow as non-monetary incentives provided to them as a result of them retaining their leadership position.

Another big challenge some of the respondents had faced while in their leadership positions is the issue of resisting authority. Several respondents pointed out that they have been experiencing some sort of resistance from their employees due to their age, their approach or lack of working experience in comparison the people they manage. One respondent elaborated on the issue by saying:

“As I mentioned before, one of the things I find challenging is that the older generations are very hard to be led, because they also have their own ego, and the fact that some of them have been

with this company for fifteen years and more makes them dinosaurs in a way. They cannot be touched, and they cannot be led in a way. They sometimes are like: who are you? You have been in this company for two years and you do not know anything. It is really hard sometimes to use different approaches to either explain them how to do something or lead them in a different direction” (female, digital-marketing manager).

Such generational differences, as explained in the theoretical framework can be extremely damaging for one’s authority within the work environment. As another interviewee pointed out she often needs to justify herself more in the communication process in order to feel as respected as her older colleagues: “Well, sometimes I do have to prove myself...that is something I learned and maybe it's because of the age because in comparison to the others I am a lot younger, so that is something I had to learn” (female, Head of Administration and Exhaustive assistant to the COO). After being asked if she experiences any problems interacting with her older colleagues she said: “I don't find it difficult to communicate them, but I feel that I have to prove myself more to be appreciated” (female, Head of Administration and Exhaustive assistant to the COO). According to Martin and Tuglan (2002) the concept of authority differentiates considering different generations. They examine millennials concluding that this generation is highly respectful of people with authority, however in order to earn the respect of their employees when exercising their authority, the leaders of this generation need to put much more effort as to gain the credibility they need from employees from previous generations. When asked how they approach this challenge the interviewees pointed out that proper communication is key. The interviewees elaborated on the problem by saying that they are trying to face the situation using different approaches. Some of them believe that if they know their directives are for the best interest for both the employees and the organization they administrate their authority in a straightforward manner: “regarding the people from my company... I tell them straight what I need and what are their responsibilities” (female, senior project manager) and “I try to give myself time, for example if I see there is something that tries to get between what my target is and what the employees think I try to give myself time and think together and come back with a solution. Maybe I can find a compromise maybe I just have to tell them okay that is the job and you just have to do it, in some cases that is the case”(male, project manager). However, the majority of the interviewees believe that respectable leadership should be exercised via proper communication, which the majority describes as being open, honest and trustworthy. Most of the respondents say that open communication is the key aspect mechanism they apply when interacting with their employees. When asked what approaches she takes towards the issue of authority resisting one respondent said she tries to provide enough credible information in various manner in order to show her team the right

direction:

“I have been trying to find different and creative way how to engage them. I have given presentations, audio lessons, or some kind of video in order to show them in a creative way what are the benefits of using this (new technology). It is really hard. It is interesting to do that and lead them in the right direction, but it is required a lot of effort and a lot of seeing things from their perspective and walking in their shoes, for them to start believing in the new ways and start believing in your cause” (female, digital-marketing manager).

Since the interviewees are millennial leaders who need to manage and work closely with people with a lot more experience than themselves, the current research asked if they have a support system to lean on if unsure how to tackle this challenge of resistance. Most of the respondents said that they are lucky enough to have some sort of a supervisor or superior above them who would provide them with advice if needed: “I am happy that I can say I can go to my boss as well. He is kind of open and I feel fine because he knows that I am still new as well so for me it is really good that I can go to him for an advice” (female, Head of Administration and Exhaustive assistant to the COO). Some of them even mentioned that they can rely for an advice on colleagues in a similar position:

“The good think in our company is that we are communicating every day and we give each other different opinions on different topics, the thing is that you can really tell there are really outlined profiles in the different teams and when there is a specific thing you are not aware of there is definitely someone who is more experienced in that, so instead of banging my head against the wall, I just need to ask. And I don't really have problems with that, because of the company's culture of being responsible because we are learning every single day, especially in the sphere we are developing so yes there is definitely someone to talk to” (male, pre-sales consultant).

In order to elaborate even further on the cognitive and emotional reaction towards various aspects of the work environment of the millennial leaders the researcher questioned them what are some of the issues they may face on a day to day basis, in order to differentiate what aspects they find more challenging and what issues they consider as a foundation of knowledge and experience building in comparison to issues they may be faced on a daily basis as a not as challenging but yet educational hurdles. Some of the most common codes the researcher detected within the data were the challenges of time-management, stakeholder communication and the problematic dynamic of professional-personal relations.

Time-management was one of the most common day to day challenges pointed out by the

interviewees. The time-management issue consisted of the notion of the work-life balance as well as the respondents explained: “Well on a daily basis it is time-management...time management is the main problem. Because there is a lot of things going on and If you jump from one thing to another you are you're not making any progress for the day” (male, entrepreneur). All of the entrepreneur interviewees, who created their own organizations pointed out that proper time-management was the most challenging concept they experience throughout their day to day work:

“Well usually it is time management. It is hard to juggle my personal life and my work responsibilities, sometimes 24 hours are not enough, I either need to cut down my sleep or in some cases something else. The plus in being a part of a big corporation is that you have a set work time, you finish work at 6 let's say, but here, as a small enterprise that is not the case, especially because of the position I am in” and “Sometimes it is challenging to have a proper time management and a proper schedule, simply because it is hard to prioritize what is the bigger work. So yes, I think that I need to start working on my time management, because I am often working over hours and it is simply my fault” (male, entrepreneur).

However, interestingly they pointed out that they would not want to work for a bigger corporation, with preestablished working hours, because they enjoy the freedom they have to explore avenues they are interested in. However, this is a concept that will be discussed further in detail below under the Millennials organizational commitment and satisfaction theme.

Another common code the researcher detected was the code of stakeholder communication and finding the proper manner in approaching various stakeholders. Many of the interviewees point out that communicating with their clients is a big problem for them due to the clients' inconsistent demands or their unawareness of the procedures and mechanisms of the required demand. One of the interviewees says:

“Talking with clients, because some clients what a thing, that they don't know exactly and have no idea of how it should be made, and therefore it is really hard to communicate the idea of what you think you want and what actually you want. It is one of the most difficult parts in my job” (male, entrepreneur).

This issue brings alongside much challenging task of communicating the needs and wants of one's client to one's team. When asked what actions the leaders take when faced with such challenge many of them said that they try to be calm and collective when communicating with clients, since the clients are the main source of revenue therefore extremely important to the development of the company:

“Well, I try to stay calm, and say okay this is what the customer wants and I try to do my best to satisfy this, but on the other hand I also try and talk to the customer and explain to him the situation, saying okay yesterday you said one thing and today something else, and I try to explain to him our position and maybe at the end there is a solution to the problem” (female, senior account manager).

The last predominant code that came out from the data was the sometimes-problematic dynamic between maintaining the separation between personal and professional relationships. As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter millennial leaders value open and honest workplace environment in which often professional relations may turn into personal friendships outside the office. In almost all of the cases the respondents categorized their interactions with their colleagues with similar position and the people they manage as friendly and authentic. Authenticity came up quite a few times, the interviewees are inclined to act as natural as possible with their employees, in order to keep a more easy-going and therefore more productive environment. Some of the interviewees described their relations with their colleagues as close friends, one of them said: “Maybe friendship is the most appropriate word, we try to be friends first and then colleagues. We know each other for years and this can show in our communication” (male, entrepreneur). However, some interviewees described a problematic within that on first glance desirable office dynamic:

“The main problem is being too friendly with them at some point you are becoming friends with them outside the office and sometimes they make mistakes and you have to criticize them and this is hard to go and tell them these things. It's a bit scary because the people you have connection with can react like ‘are you kidding me or why are you talking to me like that’...this is hard” (male, project manager).

What the leaders do in these situations according to the data is being as honest and objective as possible, trying to properly communicate the problem with the people they manage and try to maintain the good tone by simultaneously exercising their authority.

4.5 Workplace interactions and the leader-follower dynamic

When the researcher asked the respondents to identify and describe their interactions with their subordinates the responded agreed that a proper communication is a key factor for a successful and beneficial workplace environment. A few common codes developed from the data, the predominant one being a communication in a friendly nature. One of the respondents elaborated on the topic, identifying a pattern that the other respondents recognized as well, which is that the friendly communication within a working environment should be based on mutual respect:

“The fact that you are a leader, or a manager does make you superior to other people but does not allow you to act in a way that is manipulative to people or act in a way that is very demanding. This is not the way that it should be, and I am trying to improve myself all the time. The people that are working on my account, because they are younger like me I, have an extremely friendly relationship with, but also when it comes to work we are really precise, and if there is a mistake I don't mind telling them there is a mistake. Trying to keep communication as clear and precise as possible and not really glorifying yourself as a person who is above others is the most important factor in leadership. And if people recognize that they appreciate and respect you even more” (female, digital-marketing manager).

Another respondent commented as well saying: “I keep the friendly tone with them as well, I don't know if that is the right strategy or not, but I act the way I want people to act towards me, so I believe the friendly tone is really important, especially for new people that come to the company or to the team, in that way they get more comfortable and relaxed, gets the information required more easily and works better, rather than acting in a more authoritarian way, like showing authority and acting like the boss” (female, senior project manager). Another common code among the respondents is the notion of open and authentic communication, one of the interviewees described the notion as follows:

“The department I am managing is located in one big office space. I quite like it, you can share and hear new information easily, therefore you know the information momentarily, and can take the certain measures. And this thing also made us a solid team, it brought us close, and most of them I consider as friends. We talk not only about business things but a lot about personal things as well, we go out for drinks and meals, give each other advices and so on” (female, senior project manager).

Another interviewee build up on the code of open communication, by providing a different spin on it, saying that in order to have a proper interactions with the people one manages, they need to be as diplomatic and precise with the way they communicate with their subordinates: “From time to time it is too much to ask a lot from someone, but I think that the proper language you use to address someone may actually make this person do a lot for you. So, what I am tending to do is try and explain things in a diplomatic way and also try to tell this person how this task can be done by them and how would that be beneficial for their improvement. Especially if it is something new that has to be created by scratch” (male, pre-sales consultant).

When examining their interaction with their superiors the respondents tend to describe the communication nature in a similar manner as they did with their subordinates. Similar codes

derived from the data, including communication in a friendly manner, respect, open communication and authentic communication. The majority of the respondents identified their interactions with their superiors build on mutual respect towards one another, as well as honesty and understanding. One of the respondents elaborated by saying:

“I respect them, because I put myself in their shoes every day. I know what it takes to achieve what we have, and I really talk to them with respect. Also, I am a friendly person, some of them I consider friends, some colleagues, but I always approach them with a good manner and a friendly tone” (female, digital marketing and advertising manager).

Another respondent commented as well on the manner: “I am a very open minded and directed person, so I do not feel afraid to say what is not working or what is bad for the company, so I think at least the managers I have really appreciate that, so I would say we have very close, I would say not professional neither personal relationship, but is something in between. They really appreciate me being honest about things and I think that really helps commit more to people than trying to find sneaky ways how to tell someone something is not working, when you can be direct and tell them, rather than sending more effort, energy and hustle” (female, digital-marketing manager).

The codes that derived from the data regarding the interactions with colleagues on a similar position were not far from the ones discussed above. Most of the respondents identified their interactions with their colleagues as friendly, respectful and categorized the communication as open and authentic. In addition, the data from some of the respondent developed a new code regarding the notion of networking. Some of the respondents, who need to work with people outside of their companies, such as freelancers (that the respondents identified as colleagues), feel that communicating in a pleasant nature is beneficial for creating a business network of professionals, which may be of use in any future endeavours: “I try to be more friendly because I think that way we create more meaningful connection, so if there is a problem along the way we can freely talk about it. But in the meantime, we have contacts with them and it is business and not friendship” (male, entrepreneur).

When asked how they encourage the development of their teams or the people they manage, the respondents identified two main codes, which include trying new approaches and providing positive incentives. One of the respondents elaborated by saying:

“What we usually do in our company, is we hold small workshops for people interested in various activities. Also, we finance the employees who are interested in developing their skills that they need for the job, for instance language skills or programming skills and so on, the company provides

a budget for such endeavours. For me that is a motivation and encouragement for development enough, both you as an employee win with your personal development as well the company wins, because it uses your skills" (female, senior project manager).

When asked what actions they take in keeping their employees motivated, the respondents identified a few approaches they take, including goal setting, creativity and open communication. One of the respondents elaborated:

"By maintaining the same corporate culture that I maintain in myself. You can see that the whole company is growing so you are motivated to grow as well. Weekly meeting, setting goals, and just guiding them if something goes wrong. Of course, there is always this person, who does not want to cooperate or do his or her job, and a part of being a leader is to try and make this person cooperate and stay in the team" (male, pre-sales consultant).

Some of the interviewees identified the notion of authenticity in communication as an approach in motivating their employees by saying: "You have to be a little bit personal, in order to be likeable and you have to be very clear on what you expect from your team. The moment you become a robot the people would not be motivated, and people would not do the things that they are going for you, so I really try to be creative in my approaches and try to be interesting in how you provide them with support and feedback and information. They need to see that they have your support and you are an important particle of the wheel and they feel motivated" (female, digital-marketing manager) and "I try to be open and authentic as I said before. I talk to them and I try to make them feel comfortable coming to me and talking to me if they have problems. We do some stuff, like I said it is a mixture between a friendship and colleagues, sometimes you go out after work, and that is maybe a good thing to motivate them" (female, Head of Administration and Executive assistant to the COO).

Finally, the researcher asked the interviewees to try and imagine how would their employees would describe them as leaders. Most of the leaders described themselves as authentic in their interactions with their colleagues, as one of them commented:

"I really think these people see in me what I see in myself. Because I am completely aware of who I am, so I do not create different images in their eyes. Of course, I can control the things they see in me, but I want them to see me for who I really am" (female, digital marketing and advertising manager).

Another common identification was open-minded, followed by honest and responsible. Some of the leaders described themselves as hard-working and determined as well saying: "They will describe

me as a very serious person, and maybe they don't like the fact that when it comes to work I want things get done and not to waste time. But on the other hand, I think they will describe me as a pretty open person, because I can talk to anyone about anything, no matter personal or business manner" (male, entrepreneur).

4.6 Respondents' outlook on valuable leadership approaches

The researcher asked the interviewees to identify what characteristics they find important within a successful leader. Some of the most cited valuable facets were proper communication, tolerance, possession of vision for the future of the company and open-mindedness. Most of the respondents value a leader who would handle any problem with a proper approach, calmness and collectiveness. Since most of interviewees pointed out the ability to communicate correctly as the key ability of a successful leader, one of the respondents elaborated by connecting this notion with another characteristic some of the interviewees found important, the approaching manner of a leader towards its followers:

"He must know how to bring the team together, first of all. To be able to communicate properly with the people he manages, but also to keep his distance, you do not have to be a huge friend with everyone, he must reach a level where the respect he gets from his colleagues is a bigger reward than the friendship with them" (male, entrepreneur).

This authoritative approach towards leadership came up from the data a few times, slightly contradicting the theory of millennial leadership in which, as discussed before, millennials tend to not disobey and disregards authority and organizational hierarchy and are inclined to seek more horizontally structured systems of operation. The respondent continues by saying: "Sometimes this authority gets blurry, because there are cases where you are the leader, but you keep personal relationships with your team and you may lose that respect you need to be the leader. Personal close friendship relationships discredit the concept of authority" (male, entrepreneur). Another interviewee touched upon the subject by commenting:

"I think you need to be straightforward, to communicate what you want and what you need your employees to do, you have to be open and you have to explain a lot why you may make some decision for example. And you need to be kind of direct if that is the right word. You have to get the respect of the employees. Know what you want and know why you want it" (female, Head of Administration and Exhaustive assistant to the COO).

Another characteristic that the interviewees pointed out was that a successful leader today has to be able to inspire and motivate its employees. As one of the respondents elaborated: "Also, I have

read a very interesting quote that says in the beginning you should not aim to work for a company, you should aim to work for a person. Because this is the person who will build in a way your perceptions of the whole industry and if you choose a specific professional path in your life, you should consider investing in people rather than the company's name or the brand" (female, digital-marketing and advertising manager). Another respondent commented on the topic by discussing the notion of charisma discussed in the theoretical chapter by saying: "To be a leader is to have a certain charisma, that can affect positively on people, either verbally or providing an example, but the idea is that that person consciously or subconsciously can affect them" (male, entrepreneur). Finally, the respondents identified plenty of characteristics of a successful leader today, however, one code stood up as a predominant. The concepts of tolerance and understanding seem to be important aspects of successful leadership today. One of the respondents commented by giving as an example the previous chief communication officer of the company she is working at:

"...the most important quality is people management skills, so just the idea that he knows how to respect each and every individual within the company, knows how to speak to them...Even if there is hard situation, he would approach it in a very careful way, and he will not blame anyone for it, but he would try to find a solution how everyone can gather together and solve this problem" (female, digital-marketing manager).

Another interviewee added on the topic by saying: "Well first of all a leader should always think about its team and about its position in a way that this leader is actually managing people and because the people you are leading are human living beings you need to put yourself in the position of the people you are leading, which leads to the logic that if you want to be a leader you really need to understand who you are actually leading and for what purpose. Once you have done that you are already in the good direction to establish a functional team, because after than the resources that is your team are people that need to be addressed in a personal way, because otherwise achieving your goals will be simply impossible" (male, pre-sales consultant).

When asked what characteristics the respondents need to possess in order to be successful in their current positions the codes that derived from the data were not as different as the ones discussed previously. Some of the most predominant values expected from the interviewees were to be responsible, to possess good communication skills, to be patient and understanding towards the people one manages. The notion of responsibility was identified by the majority of the interviewees in one form or another. Some of the respondents believed that being a responsible leader means to be well organized, while others believed that a good leader should be accountable for the mistakes of their team while sharing the success with them, one respondent commented:

“Well, for my position I need to be able to organize my work and projects and to have all the time to overview the whole project, but also to have the time to overview the work and the task of the team members. I always need to have the right overview of the work we are doing” (female, senior account manager). Another interviewee elaborated by saying: “Well the most important is that when I do something I go all in, no matter the consequences. My actions are set in stone in a way, because I have done them, and therefore I wanted to achieve them in my full consciousness. I have never said oh I did that by mistake and to hide from the responsibilities and the outcomes that may come from my actions” (male, entrepreneur). Another common code was the ability for proper communication the respondents were expected to possess, as one of the leaders mentioned: “I would say that I realize the key is to talk to each other, here in our company we have meetings and we talk about things that are going well and not good...it is just a conversation, about other companies and projects and when you are open minded and talk to each other it is the key to everything” (female, project manager).

When asked how they define the notion of leadership most of the interviewees identified the notion by using anthropomorphism, giving the notion a human-like qualities. Therefore, the predominant codes developed from the data were similar to these from the previous sub-themes, including defining the notion with the possession of proper communication abilities, some defined it as a responsibility and an ability to direct a group of individuals towards a specific goal. In addition, some of them described it with words such as direction, purpose, motivation and example. For instance, one of the respondents commented by saying:

“Basically, this is the example you are giving to the others. Since you are born you are looking up to others, your teachers, your family, your friends, and you are taking the good things sometimes the bad things, so leadership is giving a good example to others and by going this achieving your goals” (male, project manager).

Another respondent used more in-depth explanation of the notion by saying: “Leadership can be defined in many ways, but of course there is not a single definition of leadership and in my opinion leadership is when you know how to make people do certain things in a way that you as a leader think it is best, but that means that you are a leader when you lead people in the right direction, or at least the direction you think is the right one and then to kind of persuade these people to follow you, that is leadership. And of course, there are certain types of leadership, it can be manipulative leadership, or leadership by design and of course leadership by example” (female, digital-marketing manager). She went on saying that she prefers to use the leadership by example practices in her professional role, in order to both learn from and teach her employees how to operate within the

workplace environment in a more creative and innovative way.

Finally, the current study asked the respondents to provide advice, based on their personal knowledge and experience, for people who are considering going into leadership positions in the future. Again, the codes developed from the data were not that different from the codes discussed thus far, including being open-minded, responsible and understanding towards the people you manage. Some new codes emerged however; the notion of trust appeared when some of the respondents commented that it is important to win the trust of your employees, by being authentic and responsive. One of them elaborated:

“Trust people. Trust is very important part of a good leader’s characteristic. A leader should be fast thinking and action-oriented person, who takes the decision that would be beneficial for the company, but also to be able to trust your team and to trust them to give you their decisions, which sometimes can be even better, because it is often that those people will not be so into the business itself and they may be more open minded and can think of alternative solutions” (female, digital marketing and advertising manager).

In addition, a common advice that the respondents provided was that going into leadership can be a stressful process, and one needs to have the patience and the will to do so. One of the interviewees commented on the topic: “Patience, most likely you will need to go a pretty long way before you go into leadership position. But the good thing is that you have time, because you are young. And you can take this time and think what you want to do, because if you do things that don't make sense for you and that you don't want to develop them there is no point in being a leader as well. So first make the decision of what you want to do, be patient, work hard and hopefully there will be people in more superior position that will value this hard work, if not change the place” (male, pre-sales consultant).

4.7 Organizational incorporation of the values millennial leaders are bringing to the table

It is important to explore what millennial leaders value personally and how these values fit into their organization’s ethical principles of operation. Beginning with what the respondents identified as their personal core values there were several codes that derived from the data, including the already discussed work-life balance and the notions of valuable network and personal development. One of the respondents elaborated by saying:

“Well actually in a modern company I do not think you should have any limits on your vision and ambitions. Here in my company I completely align with the core values, the company has never put any limitations on my desires, ambitions and suggestions” (female, digital marketing and

advertising manager).

Some of the interviewees believe that the organization's core values are build up by the employees, in a sense that the company's vision is determined by the people who make that vision a reality: "In our company, which I consider to be a modern one, we build the values, this company is this type that lets its employees build the values it represents" (female, digital marketing and advertising manager). Another respondent however, made the opposite remark, by saying that he believes the direction and the vision of an organization must be aligned with the vision of the leaders and it is not necessary to agree with every single aspect of an organization's ethical operations:

"So, from time to time my visions may not match with the ones of the company but at the end of the day those may be the decisions that will continue to develop us. So, it actually from most of the time it does not matter what I think, because there are people who think better and those are the leaders. The leader does not need to care about every opinion in the room because the leader needs to know what needs to be done" (male, pre-sales consultant).

When the respondents were asked if their organization's core values align with their individual agenda, most of the interviewees responded that they believe such alignment is an important key concept that they take into consideration:

"In my opinion the organization's core values should be aligned with everyone in the company, not only with the management team, but also with all the employees there. And this would show if they enjoy the work they are doing and if they enjoy going to work. Because it is difficult to go and work for eight hours if you do not want to go there and if you do not like it" (male, entrepreneur).

When asked to what extend do they believe such alignment exist, some of the interviewees said their agendas fully align with the organization's vision. However, there were two respondents who did not believe such alignment was in its full extend. One of them elaborated, by saying:

"It would be nice if they were, I would say, but that is not the case all the time. I see this in my company, with other people in management positions who do not care about the purpose of the company, and care only about their own which is money. And it is really sad, because first of all there are no consequences for them and second of all if they gave a hundred percent of themselves we would have been the best in the market" (female, senior project manager).

Another respondent believes that such alignment is not extremely necessary, as long as there is a good organizational communication in regard to the direction of the company: "I think it is not necessary to have a common goal (alignment between personal agenda and organization's

purpose) and it is hard to always achieve this common goal, but they try to communicate what is the goal of the business and then the employees can connect with each other" (female, Head of Administration and Exhaustive assistant to the COO).

The current study also explores the millennial leader's perspectives on the consequences of misalignment between one's personal agenda and the organization's core values. The data developed some common codes such as communication issues, employee dissatisfaction and frustration with the leader. One of the interviewees elaborated on the employee dissatisfaction by saying: "Problems with the people. Some people may find a different job with a different company... and without employees the company is nothing, it is just management" (male, entrepreneur). Such misalignment may mature in demotivation, which as discussed before is one of the key challenges the respondents were faced with throughout their professional development.

Finally, the current research examines the notion of creativity and how important is this concept for the leaders' perceptions of their leadership styles. The current research also asks the participants to elaborate on the action they take towards encouraging creativity within their workplace environment. Three main codes were developed from the data, including the notion of creativity as a driving force, as a method of self-representation and as a key organizational value. One of participants commented on the notion saying: "It is very important because creative thinking is what drives all things forward. With creativity and brainstorming you solve the problems and find a path to follow" (male, entrepreneur). Another respondent regarded creativity from a different perspective, as a method of differentiation: "In terms of business conception, to be a more successful business it is all in the differentiation. To be creative is something super individual but also super beneficial for a company. Thinking creatively is the way I sell myself to my managers, my ideas and my suggestions" (female, digital marketing and advertising manager). When asked how they contribute to the process and trigger creativity the respondents had different opinions and methodologies. Some pointed out that creativity is a natural attribute that cannot be forced, therefore being authentic with your communication to your team and being appreciative towards them might spark the creative outburst. Another leader commented saying that he tries to contribute by holding a brainstorming sessions or mind mapping sessions to motivate his employees, and another respondent elaborated by saying that looking at competition might help with the team creativity: "With reviewing and being interested in a lot of competitive products, because the more I examine and look at already existing products the newer ideas come to my mind" (male, entrepreneur).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 General Discussion

The aim of the research was to identify how millennial leaders make sense of their leadership positions, by answering the sub-questions: What motivates millennials to pursue and retain leadership positions? and How do millennial leaders describe their leadership style? After introducing the key notions and theories in the theoretical framework and examining the respondents' data, classified in seven key themes, this chapter is focusing on discussing the findings from the data in regard to the already discussed theory, in order for the research to provide a better understanding on the questions asked.

What the study found in regard to the research questions is that millennial leaders' instinct motivation for pursuing and retaining management position is influenced by the notion of power rather than the concept of purpose. Moreover, the research claims that the management style of millennial leaders is influenced by the transformational leadership approach. However, millennial leaders sometimes display tendencies towards more modern management patterns by incorporating more ethical and democratic values, making the style more suitable to the more contemporary and competitive market. Last but not least, as a whole millennial leaders nowadays are conscious of the importance and responsibilities of their management roles, and they understand their leadership positions more as an opportunity for even further professional development, rather than as the end goal of their professional careers.

5.1.1 What is the motivation behind millennial leaders pursue and retention of leadership position?

The theoretical framework chapter introduced the transformational leadership approach and the mechanisms it is using to ensure its effectiveness, including the influential exchange between a leader and their employees focusing on practices such as motivation, influence and mentorship (Antonakis et al., 2003; Bass, 1996; Yukl, 1999). As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, the notion of mentorship is considered to be one of the key intellectual motivation for modern leaders, increasing their levels of competency and proficiency (Messmer, 2003). Since one of the sub-research questions was focused on the motivation behind millennial leadership, the current study examined the to what extend the respondents were motivated and influenced by a mentor to pursue their role. The results from the data suggest that the notion of mentorship is in fact a present and active concept within the millennial leaders' motivation of pursuing leadership roles. The respondents identified that they have been influenced by external influences, such as role models in the sphere of leadership, as well as entrepreneurship and social movements. The notion

of mentorship, a sense of supervision by the respondents' superiors, proved to be an element from the external motivation of the respondents as well, with people mentioning that their supervisors played a key role in the process of them going into leadership positions. As the results showed, a significant number of the respondents are highlighting the examples of success and accomplishments when identifying their motivation for going into leadership, therefore the research argues in the future the respondents might showcase a desire to be external motivators to their employees as well, making the mechanism of mentorship and the effects of idolized influence not only parts of the transformational leadership approach, but key elements of the millennial leadership practice as well.

Moreover, while discussing the motivations behind millennials pursue and retention of leadership positions, it is important to point out that internal motivations proved to be as important to millennial leaders as external one. The need for development and professional growth were the most common factors the respondents identified as motivational factors. The notion of development can be examined from two points of view- through the lens of power and the concept of purpose. Therefore, in order to differentiate the perspectives, the current study is categorizing the notion, labelling it as leader development, which falls into to category of power and leadership development which falls down into the category of purpose. Leader development emphasizes on the individual's abilities, skills and personal knowledge and some it may be argued leaders view it as a notion for competitive advantage and differentiation (McCall, 1998; Vicere & Fulmer, 1998). The notion's abilities can be argued foster the leader's personal power, which can be regarded as a crucial leadership requirement (Zand, 1997). On the other hand, leadership development is regarded as the ability of building valuable building networked relations among individuals within an organizational setting, which would "enhance cooperation and resource exchange in creating organizational value" (Bouty, 2000; Day, 2001; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). This can be regarded as a commitment towards an organizational purpose, which not only develops the leader's personal competence, but the interpersonal capabilities of the organization. In order to determine in which context was the notion of development identified by the respondents the research asked them to elaborate on what success means to them, as the researcher believes that motivation is the enabler for future success. As discussed in the results chapter, most of the respondents identified success as possessing personal professional legacy and recognition. These success factors can be regarded through the domain of leader development and leader's success, which falls under the power category. Therefore, what this research is claiming, based on the data from the respondents is that the notion of power motivates millennial leaders more actively and substantially in comparison the notion of purpose. As discussed in the theoretical chapter the notion of purpose as the key

motivation (Hickman & Sorenson, 2013) meets its fair share of criticism (Hannah, 2013), due to the competitive economic labour market organizations operate nowadays. What is suggested (Hannah, 2013) is that in actual practice the leadership role needs to be filled in by a responsible and success driven individual, who would exercise the authority and the power trusted to him to establish and impose certain regulations or management control. Based on the data this research agrees with the claims Hannah (2013) is proposing towards the power-purpose dynamic. However, what is interesting is that the millennial leaders, who took part in the research, may not be aware of their instinct motivations, as it comes apparent that they classify the notion of purpose as the leading within the power-purpose dynamic. As discussed in the results chapter most of the respondents identified the notion of power deriving from the notion of purpose, claiming that a leader led by the notion of power would not be as successful, as they would not be working for the common good (the purpose of the company). Another suggestion discussed in the theoretical framework chapter was that millennial leaders might be motivated by the notion of competition. However, as the results showed competition does not play a big role within the respondents working environment, as they believe it is unhealthy to compete with your colleagues, but rather to challenge yourself in order to actively develop professionally and personally.

Therefore, what the research is proposes is that millennial leaders nowadays are in fact led by the instinct motivation of possessing power and authority, even though they might not be aware of their inherit inclination or might not be willing to admit it publicly. Future studies may follow different research designs in examining these issues of unawareness or reluctance and hesitation of millennials leaders to accept and announce the actual reasoning for their pursuit of leadership positions.

In order to answer the second part of the sub-research question what would the motivation behind millennial leaders pursue and retention of leadership positions be, the research examined the level of organizational commitment and satisfaction of the respondents in order to identify whether the respondents are inclined to retain their leadership positions based on different motivational factors, aside from the already discussed ones. In order to find the level of satisfaction the research asked the respondents to identify the advantages and disadvantages of their current positions. As discussed in the results chapter the main code that was developed from the data was the notion of leader development and professional growth. This comes as no surprise, considering that this was the main motivation leading the leaders when they decided to go into management and leadership positions. Additionally, the notion of freedom was identified as an advantage by the respondents, in a sense that the respondents valued not only the consequences of the notion of freedom that may be regarded, such as a more stable work-life balance, or flexible working hours,

but also the ability to be as independent as possible in shaping and building their professional experience. Again, the notion of freedom in that sense can be categorized into the power category. Examining the disadvantages, the respondents identified some codes that did not necessarily depended on their leadership capabilities, such as management issues when an organization is acquired and issues with the communication flow within the organization. What the research proposes is that millennial leaders feel frustrated when it comes to issues which they cannot control with the power they possess.

Considering both the advantages and the disadvantages the researcher asked the respondents to comment on the level of satisfaction they have with their positions in order to identify the respondents' motivation of retaining the positions they currently hold. There was no mention of dissatisfaction, and most of the respondents identified the opportunity of professional development and career growth as the main reasons they feel satisfied of their current position. If the notion of leader development is again regarded through the context of power, the research believes that the idea of power is the key motivation behind millennial leaders retention of leadership positions.

5.1.2 How do millennial leaders describe their leadership style?

In order to provide an answer to the second sub-research question the research had focused on identifying the key concepts of leadership, that influence the leaders' management style. Defining a leader's management style can be regarded as a complex task, what is even harder is defining a generation's preferred leadership style. Therefore, after identifying some of the most important academic concepts and theories in the theoretical framework chapter, the current research is conceptualizing how millennial leaders describe their leadership style, using the respondents' data, as well as the already discussed theories.

Begging with the cognitive and emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment the researcher believes that the notion of leadership can be influenced by the leader's intellectual perceptions of the challenging elements of the working environment they are emerged in. The research examined what do millennial leaders find most challenging and what actions they take in solving these challenges. As discussed in the results chapter one of the challenges the respondents identified was the resistance of authority due to the generational bias. In solving this challenge, the respondents tended to use the operational characteristics of the transformational leadership approach, such as charisma, trustworthiness and transparency. This may be contributed by the fact that since the respondents were millennials, open-communication, inclusiveness and selflessness are some of the generational characteristics (Jacobson, 2007) used in the identification

of the generation. Another challenge identified by the respondents was the issue of demotivation. As discussed in the theoretical framework, the notion of motivation is crucial to a leader's performance and satisfaction, and if a leader is faced with the issue of demotivation, this may be harmful to their personal development and may lead to bigger problems, such as miscommunication, decrease in organizational control and increase in responsibilities and stress. As the data displayed, nowadays millennial leaders are faced with this challenge, making the notion of demotivation one of the biggest issues to millennial leadership. The respondents identified that the effect of the use of positive incentives, such as the show of appreciation, recognition, training opportunities, and of course some monetary incentives, such as bonuses and salary raise, is believed to be beneficial when discussing the notion of performance motivation. The use of rewards and incentives within the workplace has been proven as successful mechanism and a key element in some of the more traditional leadership approaches, showing to have a beneficial effect on the employees' productivity, satisfaction and organizational participation. Nevertheless, the notion of providing positive incentives can be regarded as a motivational mechanism within the transformational leadership approach as well, if the leader employs various influential strategies and practices in increasing the employees' performance and satisfaction rates. Therefore, what the research suggests is that when faced with the problem of demotivation, the millennial leaders tend to apply the beneficial mechanisms of the transformational leadership approach as well.

The research questioned millennial leaders who, due to the nature of the organizations they work at, need to communicate and interact with people who are not part of the in-house team, but are situated in offices distant to the work space of the respondent. Such cases included organizations who were either acquired by a bigger company, or organizations who need to incorporate the work of an outside professionals within their projects, such as freelancers. In these cases, the leader-employee interactions are compromised due to the physical distance between the members of the interaction, but also due to the communicational and organizational distances. It was expected that in such cases the respondents would identify a line of communication or management issues, however there was only one example of communication difficulty, however the issue was rather due to other organizational aspects such as budget allocation and not due to factors such as organizational background or geographical arrangements (Zhang & Fjermestad, 2006). What the research identified is that the respondents did not differ in the manner they lead the people who were not part of the in-house team. The respondents commented that they tend to interact with the virtual team in a more professional but still friendly way, as the respondents recognized that these people are still part of their network environment, despite situated in different office space. Moreover, the respondents identified that transparency and open-

communication are again crucial elements of the leadership approach they take within a virtual team environment, which are regarded to be parts of the transformational leadership approach. Therefore, even though the effectiveness of the use of a hybrid leadership approach had been proven to be obvious by academics (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006), the respondents of the current study did not identify an example where they needed to use such leadership approach within their day to day working environment. Even though the leaders were not aware of the leadership approach they were using in their day to day environment, they actively emphasized that proper communication is crucial part of their management style, which is the next concept the researcher looked into in the attempt in gaining a better understanding of the perception millennial leaders have on their leadership style.

The workplace interactions and the leader-follower dynamic are important notions when discussing and identifying the styles millennial leaders are using in their day to day management activities. As discussed in the theoretical chapter the notions of communication and workplace interactions are critical not only for information exchange, but rather they are the foundations of any effective leadership style. Within the results chapter, the notions were examined thoroughly, regarding the leaders' interactions with their colleagues who have similar positions, their subordinates and their superiors. The predominant motive within the data identified by the respondents is the use of open, authentic and friendly communication, build on the mutual trust and respect between the communication parties. The current study argues that the respondents use a more modern take of the transformational leadership approach when regarding the notions of organizational communication and workplace interactions. The current study believes due to the generational characteristics of millennials the leaders from that generation use an approach called authentic leadership. The approach itself is described as incorporation of the qualities of transformational leadership with additional ethical values (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa & May, 2004). The authentic leader is seen to be self-aware, honest and "possessing integrity demonstrated through transparency in their actions, resulting in fair and balanced decisions, or doing what is right and fair for' both the leader and their followers" (Lloyd-Walker & Walker, 2011, p.383; Avolio et al., 2004). Moreover, the research regards the use of the mechanisms of authentic leadership within leader-follower dynamic between the respondents and their employees. The approach is characterized with the notions of team-development and team-motivation. As discussed in the results the leaders were asked to identify the actions they take towards the notions of team-motivation and team-development. The concepts of creativity, authenticity and encouraging open two-way communication came up as the most used methods by the leaders. Therefore, since authentic leadership is also identified as an approach that is aiming at "enabling

follower success through supporting their development (Lloyd-Walker & Walker, 2011, p. 383; Avolio & Gardner, 2005), the research argues that the nature of the leader-follower dynamic between the respondents and their employees is defined by the authentic leadership approach as well.

Moreover, in order to examine the perception millennial leaders are having on their leadership style, the research examined what do the respondents believe are the most valuable characteristics a millennial leader should possess and what is their identification on the most important values they need to possess in the current position. The respondents believe that in order to be a successful leader nowadays, valuable for the development of one's professional growth, but also for the development of the organization one is operating at, they should possess the abilities and skills of proper communication, tolerance, creativity and collectiveness. The leader should be visionary, charismatic and motivational, but also responsible in his actions and authoritative in his interactions with his followers. All of the qualities have been identified by the respondents in their characterization of the leader figure. All of these qualities have also been identified as notions connected in the depiction of the transformational leadership approach. Therefore, the research proposes the assumption that millennial leaders nowadays are subconsciously following an invisible management path, leading them in reality to use an individual leadership style, that can be characterized and described with the operational mechanisms of the transformational leadership approach.

Last but not least, defining the leadership style of millennial leaders one needs to regard the leaders' perceptions on the alignment between their personal agenda and the organization's vision. The respondents were quite in agreement when defining their personal agendas, which were the already discussed notions of personal development, work-life balance and creation of valuable network. However, the respondents were divided when it came to the notion of the purpose of the organization and its core values. Some respondents believed that the core values of an organization were built by the employees operating in it, and others were determined that the leader is the one who needs to establish the vision and values of the company. Even though the respondents did not agree on who is responsible for the organization's goal, almost all of them identified that such alignment is important for the wellbeing and growth of the company, and the satisfaction of its employees. Since the notion of alignment is a process from transformational leadership, the current study believes that once again the respondents subconsciously and intuitively identified their leadership style with the transformational leadership approach.

Considering the examination of the key concepts of leadership and how they define a leader's management style, the research believes that millennial leaders are influenced by the

effectiveness of the transformational leadership approach, and its mechanism, including open communication, honesty, charisma, authenticity and motivation. However, it should be noted that due to the sample size of the participants the research cannot make general assumption for all millennial leaders.

5.1.3 How do millennial leaders make sense of their leadership positions?

Finally, the main aim of the research was to examine the sense millennial leaders have of their management positions. The study interviewed eleven millennial leaders, asking them open questions on various notions connected to the leadership concept. The questions were designed to prompt the respondents to share what does the power position they are holding means to them, and what sense do they make of these roles. After continuous research on the key notions, approaches, mechanisms and abilities of leadership, the research managed to regard the concept in an academic manner, enabling the reader to emerge into theoretical details of what leadership is and what makes a great leader nowadays, according to theory. However, since the aim of the research is to see how millennial leaders, currently operating and exercising their management roles within the labour market, makes sense of the notion of leadership, the theoretical information was not sufficient to answer this question. From the interviews conducted with the respondents the researcher was able to conceptualize the understanding millennial leaders have of their positions.

What the researcher claims, based on the general essence of the interviews and the nature of expression the respondents have, is that millennial leaders perceive leadership as the logical progression of their life. They are well-aware of the economic and business environment they operate in, knowing that organizations seek new and fresh ideas and outlooks, therefore they take on leadership roles without the hesitation of whether they are ready, knowledgeable enough or experienced enough, because they look at failure in a positive manner, as a learning opportunity. They believe to be determined, success-driven and strong minded, yet well-aware of the responsibilities they have towards the people they manage and towards the organization they operate in. For millennials leadership is another opportunity to prove what they are capable of and enjoy the benefits it provides, such as financial security, authority, network expansion and most importantly prospect for even further development. The research claims that a leadership position for millennial is not the end goal, it is just a vehicle for development they use along the way.

5.2 Implications and Limitations

What the research focuses on is the lack of theoretical examination on the topic of millennial leadership and the understanding millennials have of their power positions. The current study makes specific claims addressing the notion of motivation, what aspires millennials to pursue

management roles nowadays and how do millennial leaders identify their leadership style. The current study examines theoretical data as well as data from current millennial leaders, adding to what is discussed by many academics (Tokey, 2017; Hickman & Sorenson, 2013; Hamill, 2013) that the notion of purpose is the central aspect for both inspiration and effective leadership within an organization. The data provides a slightly different outlook on the academics' claims. The data shows that millennial leaders today do believe that the notion of purpose is the one that should guide a leaders' actions, however contrary to what the respondents claim personal power is what drives the millennials nowadays.

The claims the study makes do need to be examined in further details. Some implications for further research have been introduced throughout the discussion chapter such as the examination of the issue of unawareness or reluctance and hesitation of millennials leaders to accept and announce the actual reasoning for their pursuit of leadership positions. In addition, the current research makes claims that the millennial leadership style nowadays is influenced by the characteristics of transformational leadership approach, despite the fact of the leaders' unawareness of this influence. Future research may examine the perception of millennial leaders on the ways they are shifting and bringing change to the already established management approaches, and how they envision the future of leadership and management.

When considering the results and the implications of the current study, it is important to keep in mind some inherent limitations of the research design and the research execution. First of all, considering the methodology, specifically the conducted interviews, more participants could have been approached, from more diverse demographic background, in order for the researcher to gather and generate more diverse information on the topic. It must be noted that the current research is examining data from only eleven respondents, which is not sufficient enough sample for a broad generalization of millennial leadership. Additionally, it must be noted that 75% of the sample are respondents who operate in a specific country. Therefore, the results of the research cannot be considered as representative regarding millennial leadership practices on a global scale. Then, considering the conduction of the interviews, more time could have been devoted to the pretesting process so that the researcher could have worked on adding additional probing questions in case of lack of participation from the interviewees' side.

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7. Appendix

Appendix A. - Consent form

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Viktorija S. Videlova



videlovaviktorija@gmail.com | 472604vv@student.eur.nl



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+44 7784405965

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about millennial leadership. The purpose of the study is to understand how millennial leaders make sense of their leadership style and practices.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed. In general terms the questions of the interview will be related to the topic of millennial leadership, to how millennials define leadership, to their motivations of pursuing leadership positions and to how they make sense of their leadership style and practices, to the responsibilities and the opportunities such roles provides.

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a video recorder for the interview.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

A. As far as I can tell, there are no risks associated with participating in this research. Yet, you are free to decide whether I should use your name or other identifying information (such as your gender, job position) not in the study. If you prefer, I will make sure that you cannot be identified, by using pseudonym, general identification only mentioning age and gender, etc.

I will use the material from the interviews exclusively for academic work.

TIME INVOLVEMENT

Your participation in this study will take approximately 50 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

PAYMENTS

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact (anonymously, if you wish) Dr. Nicoleta Bălău- Lecturer in the Department of Media & Communication of the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication (balau@eshcc.eur.nl).

SIGNING THE CONSENT FORM

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name	Signature	Date
		11/04/2018

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name	Signature	Date
		11/04/2018

Please return this form to the researcher.

Appendix B. – Interview Guide

The interview will begin with a quick association exercise in order to put the participant at ease, activate and stimulate their thought process and initiate a smooth conversation in which the participant can express their opinions freely and candidly. Some of the words included in the exercise would be: leadership, management, business, passion, vision, team, mentor, communication, purpose, power.

Questions and themes.

Exploring the respondents' outlook on millennial leadership: their incentive and rationale for pursuing leadership roles

1. How do you define leadership?
2. What does success look like for you?
3. What are the most important characteristics of a successful leader today?
4. What are some of the most important values you think are needed in your current position?
5. What are some of the most important values you are expected to demonstrate in your current position?

Exploring the motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to undertake such power roles and their vision on the future of their careers

6. Can you explain what motivates you in your current position?
 - a. Which of these motivations make you consider keeping your current position for a long(er) time?
7. What or who inspired and encouraged you to pursue this position?
8. What is the most important leadership lesson you learned that contributed to your current professional achievement?
 - a. How is this lesson valuable for you now?

Innovative leadership: exploring the organizational incorporation of the values millennials are bringing to the table

9. To what extent are the organization's core values aligned with your personal vision?
 - a. How important do you believe is the alignment of the organization's core values with a leader's personal vision?
 - b. Can you explain your reasoning for that?

10. What would be the consequences of a misalignment between the organization's core values and a leader's vision?
- How would you act upon these consequences?
 - Do you see any conflict in case of a misalignment?
 - Can you explain your reasoning?

Exploring the cognitive or emotional reactions to various aspects of the work environment

11. What do you find most challenging within your current position?
12. What do you find least challenging within your current position?
- What other professional challenges you face, on a daily basis, in your current position?
 - What kind of actions do you take in solving any of these professional challenges?
 - What do you do if you are unsure how to deal with any of these professional challenges?

Millennial leaders' organizational commitment and satisfaction: exploring the notions of work - life balance and the generational differences displayed within the work values of the Net Generation

13. What would you say are some of the advantages associated with your current position?
14. What about the disadvantages?
- Considering both the advantages and disadvantages how satisfied are you with your current position?
 - What do you think your organization can do to improve your satisfaction with your current position?
 - What actions can you take towards improving your satisfaction with your current position?

Workplace interaction: exploring the organizational communication and the social mediation among other members of the company

15. How would you describe your interactions with colleagues in similar positions as you?
16. How would you describe your interactions with your subordinates?
17. How would you describe your interactions with your superiors?
18. How do you think your colleagues in similar leadership positions will describe you?
- How about your subordinates?
 - How about your superiors?

The leader - follower dynamic: exploring the approaches of inspirational charismatic leadership and notions such as interconnectivity, assertion and affirmation.

19. How do you keep your team motivated despite obstacles or pushbacks you might face?
20. What role does competition play within your working environment?
 - a. Do you consider yourself a competitive person?
 - b. Why would you say that is?
21. How do you encourage the development of your team?

Power or purpose

22. In your opinion, what should millennial leaders prioritize: power or purpose? Why power/purpose?
 - a. What is your definition of power?
 - i. How would you describe a millennial leader driven by power at work?
 - b. What is your definition of purpose?
 - i. How would you describe a millennial leader driven by purpose at work?

Additional Questions

23. How important is creative thinking to your organization?
 - a. How are you contributing to this process?
24. Other than your title, why would anyone be led by you?
25. What advice would you give other millennials who are considering going into leadership positions?

Appendix C. - A sample of the coding frame

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective codes
Authority	Interactions with colleagues Interactions with superiors Interactions with subordinates	Workplace interactions
Communication in a friendly manner		
Gender difference		
Generational difference		
Need for approval		
Small incentives		
Need for proper explanation		
Networking		
Open/Honest communication		
Open minded		
Respectful		
Team player		
Sometimes tense		
Contribution	Cause of motivation	Motivations and aspirations behind the respondents' desire to pursue leadership positions
Drive for creation		
Failure as motivation		
Finished result		
Freedom		
Further professional development	Motivation for retention of current position	
Happiness		
Idols/Motivators		
Knowledge		
Legacy	Motivation for pursue of leadership role	
Material purpose		
Natural drive		
Network		
Opportunities	Success	
Recognition		
The creative process		
To omit future restrictions/ limitations		

Being appreciative	Team development	The leader-follower dynamic
Being authentic		
Being creative		
Explain what is the goal		
Keeping yourself motivated		
Need for proper communication	Team motivation	
Open communication		
Provide incentives		
Setting goals		
Trying new approaches		
Working together		