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## Leadership, Millennials, and Job Satisfaction

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### ABSTRACT

Employee turnover is a disruptive and costly phenomenon for organizations. Understanding the causes of turnover and how to mitigate such causes offers a tangible benefit to organizations, especially as it relates to Millennials which are the largest portion of the workforce in 2020. The study herein sought to determine whether Millennial generation employee perceptions of leadership style have an association with job satisfaction for college-educated, full-time employees at a mid-sized professional services firm in the United States. The relationship between perceptions of leadership style and employee job satisfaction were evaluated via a non-experimental quantitative study. The research design was a cross-sectional survey administered to 1,567 participants with 354 usable responses obtained. Data collected via a survey demonstrated there is a statistically significant moderate correlation ( $r_s = .32, p < .01$ ) between perceptions of leadership style and job satisfaction at the scale level and that the relationship is stable regardless of gender, tenure, ethnicity, or age. The findings support previous studies of various generational cohorts and extend the knowledge base specific to a Millennial subgroup. This study extends the body of knowledge related to the Full Range of Leadership Theory and adds information for a specific generational cohort in one industry segment. Implications include opportunities for organizations to implement leadership development programs focused on specific behaviors that will increase employee satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Full Range of Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Passive/Avoidant Leadership, Employee Satisfaction

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## INTRODUCTION

Businesses, both public and private, experienced total voluntary turnover at a rate of 26% on average in 2016 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018) and by the most conservative estimates, turnover costs the employer from 21% of an employee's annual salary (Boushey & Glynn, 2012) to as much as 200% of an employee's annual salary (Allen, et al., 2010). The costs can include direct items such as recruiting costs, lost productivity, training costs, and administrative costs, or indirect costs such as loss of social networks, use of inexperienced staff, insufficient staffing, and decreased morale (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

Scholars have studied the phenomenon of job satisfaction and its impact on voluntary employee turnover since the seminal work of Bills (1925). Hom, et al. (2017) detailed one hundred years of research about turnover from 1917 to the present day. Throughout this history, researchers identified and studied various aspects of turnover and its antecedents. An area of specific interest is how perceptions of leadership style impact millennial's job satisfaction, a critical component of employee turnover.

Past research has shown a strong association between turnover and employee job satisfaction while also highlighting that job satisfaction is one component of turnover that explains only a portion of the variance in turnover (Mobley et al., 1979). Muchinsky and Tuttle (1979) evaluated previous studies grouped by common predictor variables and confirmed that satisfaction was a reliable predictor of turnover. Various studies have demonstrated a relationship between the type of leadership style and the impact it has on employee satisfaction, whether positive for transformational type behaviors, or negative for passive/avoidant behaviors (Alatawi, 2017; Casida & Parker, 2011; Tse, et al., 2013; Wang, et al., 2016). Lavoie-Tremblay, et al. (2010) confirmed the link between turnover and job satisfaction, and they identified specific drivers of job satisfaction which may differ for millennial generation employees. Understanding how the millennial generation perceives leadership style will help organizations develop policies and programs that enhance the workplace to increase job satisfaction for the millennial generation and thereby increase tenure and reduce voluntary employee turnover.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Leadership

Lowney (2003) and Cummings et al. (2010) discussed the outputs of leadership that are visible as recognized leadership activities. Visible activities include establishing direction, aligning people, motivating, and inspiring others, and producing change. These outcomes are the product of an individual filling a leadership role that may or may not directly relate to the actions of the individual. Robbins and Judge (2013) similarly defined leadership as creating a vision for the future and marshaling and inspiring the resources to achieve the vision. Gunderman (2009) related leadership style to emotional intelligence comprised of self-awareness, management of moods, self-motivation, empathy, and the management of relationships which are leadership traits that are unique to the individual. When employees rank individuals by their own leadership perceptions, they are evaluating both the outcome of leadership and the unique qualities of the individual leader.

The *Full Range of Leadership Theory* (Bass, 1985) is a widely recognized and accepted model of leadership that has received significant public acclaim (Oberfield, 2014). The FRLT identifies three categories of leadership as transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant.

Antonakis et al. (2003) broadly defined transformational leadership as a leader who is charismatic and helps followers achieve their goals. These attributes incorporate many of the activities that align with Gunderman's (2009) articulation of emotional leadership. The subcomponents of transformational leadership are *idealized influence*, both in attributes and

behaviors, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individual consideration*. These attributes can be summarized as the charisma of the leader, the ability to communicate a compelling vision, the exhibition of logic and reason, and the mentoring capability of the leader.

Researchers have studied transformational leadership extensively. Judge and Piccolo (2004) found that transformational or charismatic leadership has been studied more than all other leadership theories combined between 1990 and 2003. Since inception, transformational leadership has received extensive theoretical and methodological review and has emerged as a dominant leadership theory (Banks et al., 2016).

Transformational leadership has also demonstrated a consistent positive relationship with employee satisfaction. Horwitz et al. (2008) identified significant correlation between the transformational scales of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration with employee satisfaction. Such correlation is consistent with a meta-analysis conducted by Judge and Piccolo (2004) that identified a strong association between the transformational leadership and employee satisfaction. Because transformational leaders predominantly focus on helping followers achieve their goals, it is not surprising that those followers would experience higher satisfaction.

Transactional leadership focuses on setting objectives and achieving defined outcomes (Antonakis, et al., 2003) and was originally described by Weber in 1947 and then expanded on by Bass (1985) and incorporated into the FRLT. The focus on objectives and outcomes is consistent with Lowney's (2003) description of the outcome expectations of leadership but is often more in line with management activities versus leadership. Bass concluded that transactional leadership is a necessary component of achieving organizational objectives but is not the leadership style that will lead an organization to achieve its full potential (Oberfield, 2014). The subcomponents of transactional leadership are *active management by exception*, management provides direction when the desired progress metric is not achieved, and *contingent reward*, when incentives are offered for the achievement of an objective (Bass, 1985).

Previous studies have exhibited (Casida & Parker, 2011; Horwitz et al., 2008; Judge & Piccolo, 2004;) that components of transactional leadership are related to various aspects of employee satisfaction. Trottier et al. (2008) evaluated the relationship between transformational and transactional leadership and employee satisfaction in a study of government employees and found that contingent reward and management by exception are positively associated with employee satisfaction. Similarly, Wells and Peachy (2011) identified that both transformational and transactional leadership styles had a significant inverse association with employee intent to leave.

In contrast to the above, passive/avoidant leadership is comprised of two characteristics, *laissez-faire*, the absence of leadership, and *passive management by exception*, the offer of guidance only after an activity has failed. The absence of leadership is based on a non-response by the leader to follower activity and can include both reward omission and punishment omission (Hinkin et al., 2008). Passive/avoidant leadership has been identified as detrimental to employee satisfaction through various negative workplace outcomes including illegitimate absenteeism (Frooman et al., 2012) and turnover (Raup, 2008). Judge and Piccolo (2004) focused on the *laissez-faire* attribute and found significant negative correlations with both leader effectiveness and follower satisfaction. In a study by Westerlaken and Woods (2013) the FRLT was evaluated against a four-scale structure of psychopathy and demonstrated a meaningful correlation between the passive management styles of passive management by exception and *laissez faire* and the composite psychopathic traits score.

## Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important element of employee retention and is the “most frequently studied variable in organizational behavior research” (Spector, 1997, p. 1). Parvin and Kabir

(2011) reference several different definitions of job satisfaction ranging from how people feel about their jobs, to how much they like their job, to the sum of satisfaction with various components of their job, to how well a job meets their needs. All of these have the common understanding that job satisfaction is uniquely individual, Spector (1997) refers to job satisfaction as an attitudinal variable based on an individual's interpretation of various aspects that equate to their satisfaction. There are various items that contribute to job satisfaction which include, but are not limited to, age, tenure, task identity, variety, and autonomy, and it is a complicated topic to summarize in a single encompassing definition.

Adding to the complexity is the uniquely individual nature of job satisfaction and the number of elements that impact satisfaction for each individual that are not specifically related. Spector (1997) evaluated the intercorrelations among the nine subscales of the *Job Satisfaction Survey* (pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, communication) and identified relatively small correlations ranging from  $r = .10$  to  $r = .58$  with 30 of the 36 measurements falling below .50 (all significant at  $p < .001$ ). While compensation may be the primary driver of satisfaction for one employee, another employee may care very little about pay, instead deriving their satisfaction from the nature of the work they perform.

The first published paper establishing a link between job satisfaction and turnover appeared in 1955 (Weitz & Nuchols, 1955). A considerable amount of research has since been conducted relating to turnover and its various antecedents, including job satisfaction as one of the most prominent determinants. Griffeth et al. (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of 67 studies and over 24,000 observations related to employee job satisfaction and turnover and found as job satisfaction increases, turnover decreases.

Employee job satisfaction as a standalone topic is uniquely personal and can be based on any number of precursors, or events, that change in their relative level of importance to an individual over time. While organizations cannot control for every aspect that impacts employee satisfaction, it is clear from the research that organizations can influence some of the items, for instance leadership behaviors.

## **Generation**

Salahuddin (2011) suggested that generational norms have an impact on leadership style and identified four generations in the workplace as follows: (a) Veterans born between 1922 and 1943, (b) the Baby Boomers, 1943 – 1960, (c) Generation X, 1960 – 1980, and (d) the *Nexters* born between 1980 and 2000. Salahuddin (2011) identified character traits for each generation that impact their leadership style. Veterans are command and control oriented and support a hierarchy while Baby Boomers embrace consensus building and work ethic. Baby Boomers heavily influenced Generation X who base their leadership style on fairness, competence, and straightforwardness. Nexters, referred to as Millennials herein, are concerned with ethics and core values (Salahuddin, 2011). Lavoie-Tremblay et al. (2010) identified specific criteria that influence job satisfaction in Millennials such as the need for recognition, stability in work assignments, flexibility in job scheduling, the desire to be challenged, access to training, and consistent coaching and feedback.

Millennials continue to express different values than previous generations (Lyons & Kuron, 2014), placing more emphasis on leisure values and less importance on workplace centrality (Twenge et al., 2010; Wray-Lake et al., 2011). Liking their manager is a key determinant in Millennial commitment and one study found that when Millennial employee needs are not met, they are more likely to leave the organization than previous generations (Lu & Gursoy, 2016). Employee age (Spector, 1997) and embeddedness (Swider et al., 2011) may also contribute to turnover consistent with findings from Hom et al. (2008) that relate turnover to skill accumulation and tenure rather than to generational traits (2008). Tetteh et al. (2021) studied the relative poverty

of the Millennial generation in relation to previous generations as a factor impacting increased mobility as employees pursue higher compensation. Declining altruism and increasing individualism compared to prior generations is an additional Millennial trait (Anderson et al., 2017).

Although studies suggest there may be a difference between generations and the workplace outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to turnover, other studies have displayed little difference. For instance, Costanza, et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the linkage between generation and workplace outcomes and found no meaningful correlation. Their research suggested there are broad norms that differ by generation as it relates to what employees need from leadership and what aspects impact their job satisfaction, just that the outcome was not significantly different by generation. Alternatively, Park and Gursoy (2012) found there is a measurable difference between Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Millennials in relationship to work engagement with younger employees—Millennials, demonstrating lower engagement than either Generation X or Baby Boomers. This is consistent with the discussion by Spector (1997), and Hom et al. (2008), that age and job satisfaction are correlated.

Job embeddedness may be part of what leads to higher engagement for the employees of Generation X or the Baby Boomers who have more tenure. Job embeddedness incorporates the ties the employee has to the organization through their relationships with other individuals and the institution itself, how comfortable the employee fits into the organization, and the cost, both psychological and material, the employee would incur by leaving the job (Swider et al., 2011). One element that positively influences job embeddedness is tenure (Abelson & Guion, 1987; Forrester, 2019; Singh et al., 2018). A meta-analysis conducted by Ng and Feldman (2010) demonstrated that employee tenure led to embeddedness lending credence to the idea that people of Generation X or the Baby Boom have higher engagement simply because they had been on the job longer. Studies suggest that increased satisfaction with age may stem from either the changing nature of worker expectation over time as older workers are more satisfied with their jobs because they expect less, or workers who have been on the job longer have deeper skills and thus better jobs than younger workers (Clark et al., 1996; Wright & Hamilton, 1978).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Leadership theories, employee satisfaction, and turnover are complex interrelated concepts and have multiple contributing aspects. Two hypotheses were evaluated to determine the relationship between the perceptions of leadership style of the Millennial generation and how those perceptions are associated with job satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 was there is a significant relationship between perceptions of leadership style and job satisfaction for Millennial employees. Hypothesis 2 was that the relationship between perceptions of leadership style and job satisfaction for Millennial employees will be consistent between genders, age groups, and ethnicities regardless of tenure.

### **Participants and Procedures**

The study population ( $N = 1,567$ ) consisted of all Millennial generation employees in good standing at the time of the study (October 2019) within a 3,000-person United States based, mid-sized risk consulting firm geographically dispersed across 23 offices in major cities representing all regions of the United States. All participants were college educated, graduated with grade point averages above 3.0, and earned degrees clustered around accounting, finance, management information services or computer science. The organization tracks annual turnover via the Human Resources Department and employee engagement through a non-scientific annual survey.

Data collection was via an anonymous electronic survey. Participants received a link to the electronic survey distributed through the internal corporate email system and completed the survey over a three-week timeframe. Of the 1,567 surveys distributed, 506 participants responded of which 354 (22% of population) were complete and usable. The demographics of the usable responses were 51% male, 49% female; 75% White, 25% non-White; 41% born before 1990, 59% born 1990 or after; and 63% had tenure less than five years while 37% had five years of tenure or more. The survey was conducted in the Fall of 2019 at which time the job market was robust with unemployment at 3.5% nationally (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

## **Survey Development**

The survey was a combination of two previously published instruments, the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 2004) based on Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) and the *Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire* (MSQ) from Vocational Psychology Research, University of Minnesota (Weiss, 1967). Scholarly studies routinely use FRLT and recognize it as a leading model of leadership (Bass, 1985; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Oberfield, 2014) and the MSQ is one of several common frameworks used to assess satisfaction (Spector, 1997).

The MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 2004) is comprised of 36 items used to evaluate the independent variable of perceptions of leadership style defined as employee views of leader behaviors of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant. The original MLQ was divided into nine discrete components with five subscales of transformational leadership, two subscales of transactional leadership, and two subscales of passive/avoidant leadership. The MSQ short form is comprised of 20 items to evaluate employee affect. The modified instrument gathered additional demographic information used in the statistical analysis including age, gender, ethnicity, and tenure.

## **Variables**

The dependent variable of job satisfaction is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). The independent variable of perceptions of leadership style refers to employee views of their individual leader’s behaviors. These are the explicit and implicit actions performed by a leader as viewed by the employee (Newstrom & Davis, 1993) also referred to as perceptions of behavior by Bass and Avolio (2004). The control variable is generational cohort defined as the Millennial generation, or those born between the years of 1981 and 1997 (Fry, 2018).

# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## **Validity and Reliability**

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization on the modified instrument to determine the fundamental factor structure of items loading on their a priori scales tested for construct validity (Fraser, 1977, 1998; Hase & Goldberg, 1967; Pereira et al., 2018; Walker, 2018; Walker & Fraser, 2005). Prior to performing the factor analysis, Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2$  (1540) = 10325.99,  $p < .01$ ) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO = .93) validated the dataset was appropriate to factor (Field, 2013; Stevens, 1992; Walker & Madden, 2009).

The factor analysis resulted in the removal of five items (one each from Individualized Attributes, Idealized Influence - Behavior, Inspirational Motivation, Management by Exception - Passive, and Laissez Faire) that fell below the cutoff value of .45 (Comrey & Lee, 1992; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) on their a priori subscale within the original MLQ. Fourteen items that

fell below the cutoff value of .45 were removed from the MSQ instrument. The contingent reward subscale loaded stronger on the scale of transformational leadership rather than on its a priori scale of transactional leadership. Table 1 presents the rotated component matrix that resulted from the factor analysis. The association between contingent reward and transformational leadership is consistent with prior findings (Judge & Piccolo, 2004) that evidenced strong correlation between contingent reward and transformational leadership, also supported by the original discussion in Bass and Avolio (1993) regarding the augmentation effect.

**Table 1**  
***Rotated Component Matrix for the Refined MLQ/MSQ***

Item/Subscale	Factor Loading by Scale			
	Transformational	Transactional	Passive/Avoidant	MSQ
IA	.76			
IA	.73			
IA	.78			
IB	.48			
IB	.59			
IB	.54			
IM	.55			
IM	.55			
IM	.61			
IS	.71			
IS	.65			
IS	.73			
IS	.71			
IC	.73			
IC	.73			
IC	.57			
IC	.83			
CR	.72			
CR	.53			
CR	.54			
CR	.69			
MBEA		.69		
MBEA		.69		
MBEA		.75		
MBEA		.79		
MBEP			.61	
MBEP			.72	
MBEP			.52	
LF			.70	
LF			.72	
LF			.67	
MSQ				.45
MSQ				.67
MSQ				.80
MSQ				.80
MSQ				.69
MSQ				.46

Items loading below .45 removed. Where the subscales are: IA = Idealized Influence – Attributes, IB = Idealized Influence – Behaviors, IM = Inspirational Motivation, IS = Intellectual Stimulation, IC = Individual Consideration, CR = Contingent Reward, MBEA = Management by Exception – Active, MBEP = Management by Exception – Passive, LF = Laissez Faire

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient demonstrated the reliability of the modified instrument (Field, 2013) where the entire instrument alpha was .89 exceeding the typically accepted cutoff value of .70 (Nunnally, 1978) and each refined scale demonstrated a coefficient ranging from .74 to .96 as noted in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Coefficient Alpha after Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Scale	$\alpha$	<i>N</i>
Refined Leadership	.88	31
Transformational	.96	21
Transactional	.74	4
Passive/Avoidant	.81	6
Refined Satisfaction	.82	6

### Hypothesis Testing

A simple correlation analysis to determine whether the perceptions of leadership style were correlated with job satisfaction evaluated hypothesis one (Field, 2013; Jones & Rudd, 2008; Rothfelder et al., 2012). Table 3 displays the results of a Spearman’s correlation coefficient analysis demonstrating the extent of the associations between the dependent variable of satisfaction and independent variables.

**Table 3**  
**Correlation between Leadership and Satisfaction**

Scale/Subscale	$r_s$
Leadership (MLQ)	.32*
Transformational	.41*
Idealized Influence – Attributes	.35*
Idealized Influence – Behaviors	.32*
Intellectual Stimulation	.38*
Inspirational Motivation	.30*
Individual Consideration	.33*
Contingent Reward	.40*
Transactional	.10
Management by Exception – Active	.10
Passive Avoidant	-.18*
Management by Exception – Passive	-.17*
Laissez Faire	-.18*

\* $p < .01$

Table 3 outlines that at the scale level of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant, moderate correlation exists between the general transformational leadership scale and satisfaction ( $r_s = .41, p < .01$ ). There is a statistically significant inverse weak correlation between the passive/avoidant scale and employee satisfaction indicating employees are less satisfied when they perceive their leaders as passive/avoidant ( $r_s = -.18, p < .01$ ), and no statistically significant correlation between the transactional leadership scale and satisfaction. The relationship at the leadership instrument level is positive and weak with statistical significance ( $r_s = .32, p <$

.01). Transformational leadership has a stronger relationship with employee satisfaction than transactional, and passive/avoidant has a negative relationship indicating that satisfaction varies based on perceived leadership behaviors. Such a gradient is consistent with the meta-analytic results reported by Judge and Piccolo (2004) and supports hypothesis one that there is a significant relationship between perceptions of leadership style and job satisfaction for Millennial employees.

Additionally, the range of the relationship between the leadership scales of transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant and satisfaction is sizeable from  $r_s = -.18$  to  $.41$  representing a substantial change demonstrating fluctuation in satisfaction as perceptions of leadership behaviors change.

Hypothesis two was analyzed via the four moderator variables of age, gender, ethnicity, and tenure to determine the effect these had on the relationship established in hypothesis one. An evaluation of the variance inflation factors (VIF) (Field, 2013; Kromrey & Rendina-Gobioff, 2002) determined the data were suitable for the regression analysis. Acceptable values of collinearity ranged from 1.02 to 3.41. Table 4 presents the VIF for each item.

**Table 4**  
*Variance Inflation Factors (VIF)*

Variable	VIF
Age	1.30
Gender	1.04
Ethnicity	1.02
Tenure	1.27
Leadership	1.02
Transformational	1.34
Idealized Influence – Attributes	3.41
Idealized Influence – Behaviors	2.30
Intellectual Stimulation	2.95
Inspirational Motivation	2.77
Individual Consideration	3.15
Contingent Reward	3.27
Transactional	1.02
Management by Exception – Active	1.02
Passive/Avoidant	1.32
Management by Exception – Passive	1.81
Laissez Faire	1.76

A multiple regression analysis to explore the independent variables’ relationship to job satisfaction (Fraser, 1977, 1998; Stevens, 1992; Walker, 2018; Walker & Fraser, 2005) yielded the following results.

**Table 5**  
*Multiple Regression of Demographic Variables, Leadership Scales, Leadership Instrument, and Satisfaction*

Independent Variable (s)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	$\beta$
Age	.59	.492	.017	.025
Gender	.51	.501	.059	.081
Ethnicity	.75	.431	.139*	.093
Tenure	.37	.484	.059	.069
Transformational	3.75	.888	.438*	.398
Transactional	3.01	.916	.094*	.079
Passive/Avoidant	1.91	.822	-.240*	-.053

Leadership	3.24	.599	.342*	.001
Multiple Correlation ( <i>R</i> )				.465
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>				.217

\**p* < .05, *N* = 354

Table 5 presents the mean (*M*), standard deviation (*SD*), simple correlation (*r*), and standardized correlation coefficient (*β*) of the relationship between satisfaction and the four demographic variables and the three leadership scales and the leadership instrument.

The regression indicates that the model is a better predictor of employee satisfaction than using the mean value of satisfaction alone ( $F(8,345) = 11.93, p < .001$ ). All demographic variables are positive, and all are insignificant with *p* values greater than .05. While correlation exists between the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, and tenure with employee job satisfaction, they have no statistically significant impact on employee job satisfaction. Hypothesis two is supported that perceptions of leadership style as they relate to employee job satisfaction are stable between age groups, ethnicities, and gender regardless of tenure.

## Discussion

The results of the analysis reflect that a statistically significant weak correlation between the dependent variable of employee job satisfaction and perceptions of leadership style does exist. The results also demonstrate that correlation improves to “moderate” if evaluated at the scale versus the subscale level for the transformational scale of leadership which is consistent with current literature regarding the Full Range of Leadership Theory (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Adding in the demographic variables of age, gender, ethnicity, and tenure, a multiple regression yielded very little difference in the predictability of the model indicating that the impact of these variables was not significant. The overall conclusion is that the employee base is generally satisfied, that employee job satisfaction is related to perceptions of leadership style, that the participants observe more transformational behaviors than transactional, and more transactional than passive/avoidant, and that demographics among the Millennial generation do not have much impact on how perceptions of leadership effect employee job satisfaction. These results support both hypotheses as valid.

There were certain delimitations to the study. A select group of Millennial employees in a single consulting company with similar qualities comprised the population evaluated. All have college degrees clustered around accounting, finance, and management information systems and most were in their first job after graduation from college. Additionally, as the company under study is a matrix organization, a management style where each individual can report up through multiple units of the company simultaneously, the leader who the employee evaluated could be from various levels or roles. For instance, the employee’s leader could be a business unit leader, a regional leader, a market leader, or a project leader. Because of the complex reporting lines and leadership structure, the study may not be generalizable to other geographies, industries, or populations of employees.

The survey format caused some limitations. The results identified whether there was an association between perceived leadership styles and job satisfaction. The study did not provide information on why such an association exists. Furthermore, because the results were based on employee perceptions of their leader, the actual leadership style of the individual the participant rated may differ from how the participant perceives their leadership style. The ability to link the actual leadership style to the perceived leadership style was beyond the scope of this study. Additionally, this was a cross-sectional survey conducted over a three-week period. If an employee had a singular bad experience, or a bad day, the survey results may reflect their current mood and not truly be indicative of their overall satisfaction. Liu et al. (2012) evaluated the longitudinal nature of satisfaction and how it relates to turnover and demonstrated that the change in job

satisfaction over time, whether positive or negative, had a significant impact on the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover beyond a point in time satisfaction measure.

## CONCLUSION

Employee job satisfaction is a multi-faceted construct that is integral to retaining a productive workforce. Leadership characteristics are a significant influence on employee job satisfaction and can impact an employee's decision to remain with the organization, or to seek employment elsewhere. Demonstrating that behaviors do matter is important to leaders because behaviors can be both taught and changed. Organizations that have a desire to improve their employee job satisfaction have a path to do so by understanding how their employees perceive their leaders and actively engaging leaders to evolve specific behaviors.

Considerable research has established the association between job satisfaction and leadership. This study expanded the existing literature by demonstrating that the type of perceived leadership style had an association with millennial generation employee job satisfaction.

As organizations learn from studies such as this one, they can participate in the benefits by undertaking specific activities to improve leadership behaviors which will impact employee satisfaction and therefore reduce turnover. The reduction in turnover is the tangible, practical benefit that can result from a focus on leader behaviors potentially saving organizations considerable non-productive costs.

Generational specifics deserve more study as related to perceptions of leadership. While this study confirmed many previous findings, the associations were not as strong as those presented in previous literature. This could be due to the changing nature of work attitudes between generations, how people respond to surveys, or other issues currently unknown. Future studies could delve deeper into the demographic options to understand why the results reflect some variation among constituencies.

Additional research could be conducted with supplementary scales to evaluate the underlying components that associate with satisfaction, for example, pay, work assignment, work life balance, travel, fringe benefits, and other workplace characteristics to understand if a relationship exists for specific elements of satisfaction with the defined leadership behaviors. Quantitative studies, while good at understanding how people feel about a topic at a given point in time, need the balance of qualitative studies to understand why certain leadership behaviors relate to satisfaction and go beyond establishing the relationship that they do. Qualitative studies could expand our understanding of why followers react to certain behaviors. Studies could also explore behaviors from the leader's perspective to understand what type of leadership behaviors they believe they are exhibiting and what they are doing to exhibit them. While there is no shortage of additional ways to look at the problem of employee turnover, satisfaction, and organizational leadership, we now have a window through which to view one generational cohort in today's multifaceted business milieu.

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