

Leadership styles of South African millennial leaders who lead multigenerational teams
within organisations

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this exploratory research study was to learn more about the lived experiences of South African millennials and to add to the emergent literature on millennial leadership within in the workplace. The study covered four main areas. First, it explored how the leadership styles of millennial leaders were influenced by experiences in their formative years, growing up in post-apartheid South Africa. Second, the study explored conflict resolution strategies that the participants used to resolve generational workplace conflict. Third, the leadership support solicited by the participants was scrutinised. The last area probed the views of the participants in relation to generational stereotypes linked to the millennial cohort.

Research relevance: Generational differences in values, beliefs and attitudes are prevalent in the workplace. It is postulated that millennials hold significantly different views to work, compared to previous generations. Yet, for a generation who constitute more than half of the workforce, little is known about their leadership styles.

Design/methodology/approach: The approach was inductive. The methodological choice was a mono-method qualitative study involving 20 semi-structured virtual interviews with millennials. This method was chosen as it facilitated the collection of rich, lived experiences of the participants.

Key findings: Leadership styles were influenced by historical, social and political experiences in the formative years. These experiences induced generational differences in the workplace which fuelled generational conflict. As a generational cohort, participants favoured harmony over conflict and deployed conflict resolution strategies which embodied trust, objectivity and empathy. Leading multigenerational teams was challenging, particularly with having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace. Participants solicited formal and informal leadership support. Generational stereotypes should be cast with caution.

Implications: The findings offer organisations and learning institutions valuable insights into the factors that influenced the leadership styles of participants, the generational challenges they faced and the support they need to be future fit leaders. These insights provide a base for informed, tailored and relevant support mechanisms to enable future fit leaders.

Keywords: millennial leadership styles, generational workplace conflict, millennial leadership support, South African millennial leaders

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy Change Leadership at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Name:

Signature:

Date: 13 March 2023

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Table of abbreviations and frequently used terms

Affirmative Action	AA
Employment Equity	EE
Generational Cohort Theory	GCT
Gordon Institute of Business Science	GIBS
Human Resources Managers	HRMs
Microsoft Teams	MS Teams
Millennial (n)	M(n) e.g. M10
Non-white	Refers to South African racial groups inclusive of black African, coloured and Indian
Research Question	RQ
United Kingdom	UK
United States of America	USA

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Research Problem

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Generational Differences in the Workplace – Age as a Diversity Factor

The workplace is more diverse now than ever before (Sadler et al., 2020). With this diversity comes complexity (Becker et al., 2022). Age as a diversity factor is the most pronounced form of diversity in the workplace (Becker et al., 2022). Currently, there are at least four generational cohorts integrated into the workforce (Dimock, 2019). The top four generational cohorts, according to Dimock (2019) are Baby Boomers (1946–1964); Generation X / Gen X (1965–1980); Generation Y / Millennial (1981–1996) and Generation Z / Gen Z (1997 onwards).

Generational differences on values, beliefs and attitudes exist due to unique exposure to events during the formative years of that generation (Parry & Urwin, 2011). These unifying experiences predisposes the cohort to adopt similar outlooks (Twenge, 2010). The differing views and beliefs are undoubtedly carried over to the workplace (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). When compared to previous generations, millennials are said to dislike hierarchical reporting structures, they are team centric and prefer collaborative ways of working (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). When it comes to work life balance, they prioritise mental health and personal well-being over organisational targets (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). With increased levels of self-confidence, they challenge the status quo more readily than predecessor leaders. They perceive themselves to be empowering leaders, who desire meaningful work which positively impacts the world as a whole (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021).

1.1.2. Generational Conflict

Millennials are considered to be highly self-confident and more likely to join the leadership ranks at a relatively young age (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004). It is not unlikely that an employee with 15+ years' managerial experience is suddenly overtaken in their career by a younger employee with less work experience and limited leadership exposure, finding themselves being managed either directly or indirectly by a younger person (Cogin, 2012). A total of 58% of Human Resources Managers (HRMs) have reported tension or conflict between employees of differing ages (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). The source of conflict was largely attributed to the varying perspectives held by the different generational groups relating to work ethics and work-life balance.

Gabrielova and Buchko (2021) identified different expectations regarding leadership styles as a high-risk area for conflict within the workplace.

1.1.3. Millennial Leadership Styles

With millennials' dominating the workforce and steadily occupying leadership and even C-Suite positions (Bennet, 2020), Heyns et al. (2019) posited that limited academic research exists that empirically focuses on the leadership styles of millennial managers. As their presence in the workforce becomes more prominent, it is expected that the divide between the millennial cohort and previous cohorts will increase, resulting in inimitable challenges for organisations and leaders alike (Anderson et al., 2017).

In South Africa, the millennial cohort accounts for at least 50% of the workforce (Statistics South Africa, 2020). As a cohort, they have experienced uniquely defining events which impacted their formative years, shaping their views on leadership and their associated leadership styles (Jonck et al., 2017). With limited empirical knowledge regarding the millennial as a leader, the study explores the leadership styles of South African millennial leaders, from a developing country perspective, and how they apply themselves to mitigate the challenges posed by leading multigenerational teams (Jonck et al., 2017).

1.2. Research Problem

The research problem is centred around how growing up in South Africa has influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders (Anderson et al., 2017; Jonck et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2020). Additionally, there is a focus on generational conflict resolution (Lowe et al., 2020; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). The validation of the research problem is largely attributed to the lack of empirical knowledge relating to millennial leaders and their leadership styles when leading multigenerational teams (Heyns et al., 2019).

A plethora of information exists in the literature on how to manage millennials, ways to attract and retain them and leadership qualities they expect from their leaders (Lyons & Kron, 2014). Limited information emerged on how they define their leadership style (Anderson et al., 2017; Heyns et al., 2019). Gabrielova and Buchko (2021) suggested that there is an opportunity to conduct meaningful research in exploring the behaviours, beliefs and attitudes of millennials especially as they progress to fulfilling leadership roles.

1.3. Research Purpose

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to learn more about the participants' lived experiences, and thus add to the emerging literature on millennials as leaders within the workplace while managing multigenerational teams (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Anderson et al., 2017; Heyns et al., 2019; Lowe et al., 2020). Most of the emphasis on leadership development has been largely skewed towards previous generations as opposed to millennials in the workplace (Heyns et al., 2019). Thus, the leadership development, coaching and support for the millennial leader can be considered scarce. Empirical evidence on how millennial leaders define their leadership styles warrants additional research (Heyns et al., 2019). Furthermore, Jonck et al. (2017) suggested that there is a paucity of research pertaining to the generational differences focusing on millennial leaders within the South African context.

1.4. Research Scope

The scope of the research was limited to millennial leaders who managed multigenerational teams. Data inputs from other generational cohorts (Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Z) (Dimock, 2019) were beyond the scope of this research.

1.5. Aims and Objectives of the Research

The research fulfilled the following objectives:

- Explored how growing up in South Africa, influenced the leadership styles of participants.
- Enquired how participant's leadership styles mitigated generational workplace conflict
- Delved into the leadership support solicited by the participants.
- Explored participants views regarding generational stereotypes.

The rationale for the above objectives were supported by the work of Gabrielova and Buchko (2021); Heyns et al. (2019); Jonck et al. (2017); Mahmoud et al. (2021) and Rohrich and Rodriguez (2020).

1.6. Chapter 1 Conclusion

The workforce composition has changed significantly with younger employees holding vastly different views, beliefs and attitudes towards work and leadership. These

millennial leaders are leading more diverse and multigenerational teams than leaders from previous generations. This overwhelming change in the workplace landscape adds an additional layer of leadership complexity for a generationally defined group of leaders who are relatively new to the realms of leadership. The uncertainty of millennial leadership and paucity in the literature warranted further research.

The report is structured as per Figure 1 below.

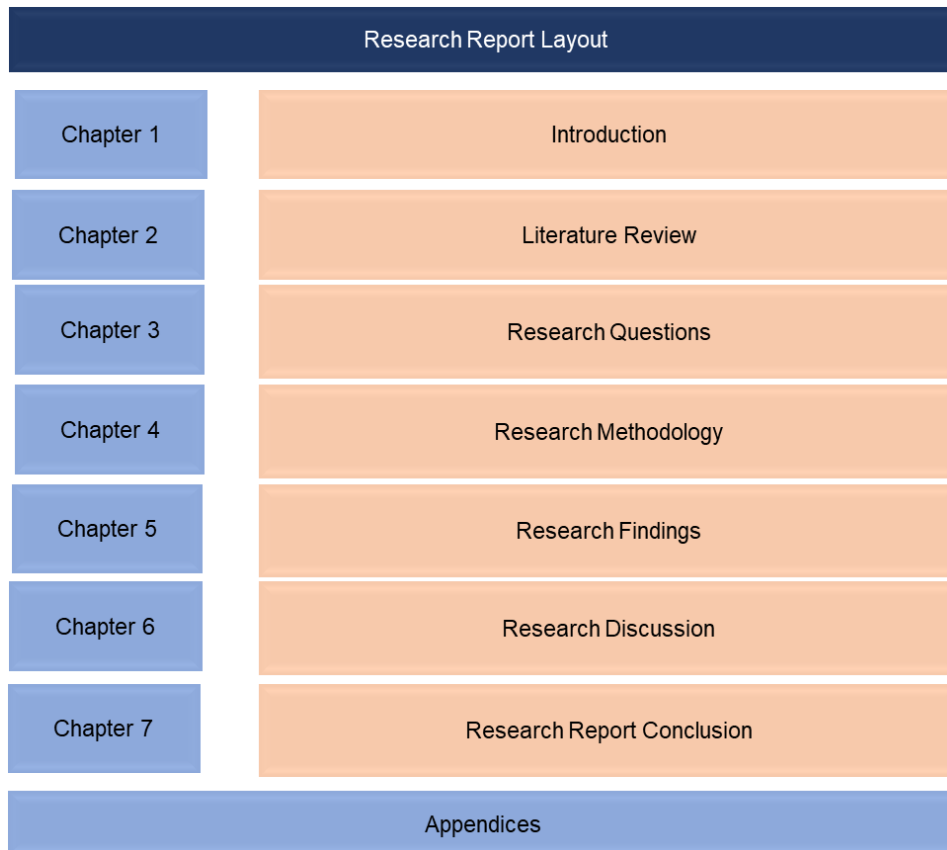


Figure 1 Research report layout

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and background to the research problem. This chapter presents the output of the literature review that was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the available literature related to the research topic. Through the literature review, the researcher identified gaps in the literature, validated the research topic and framed the research questions. A valuable benefit of this process enabled the researcher to avoid duplication and, most importantly, plagiarism (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Figure 2 below outlines the literature review road map for Chapter 2.



Figure 2 Literature review roadmap for Chapter 2

These four themes are not intended to show any relationship between them but rather emphasise their relevance to the research topic.

2.2. Theme 1: Generational Differences/Generational Cohort Theory (GCT)

Generational differences are recognised as a real phenomenon (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Urick et al., 2016). Multiple perspectives exist on what constitutes a generation (Rudolph & Zacher, 2017). For the purposes of this study, generational birth cohort, which is an important and reoccurring theme in generational research, was selected as the core focus for this study. The main reason for choosing this particular viewpoint was the compelling argument that members of a cohort who

were born in a specific time period are exposed to events within that time period which are instrumental in shaping and influencing the values, beliefs and attitudes of those who make up that cohort (Rudolph & Zacher, 2017).

A generational cohort is not purely comprised of individuals who are born within a specific range of birth years (Twenge, 2010). It is postulated that, due to their association to a particular generational cohort, these individuals are predisposed to share common beliefs, values and attitudes (Napoli, 2014). These values, beliefs and attitudes are further influenced by a myriad of factors associated with historical, geographical, economic and social phenomena occurring during their formative years (Parry & Urwin, 2011). The experiences during these formative years are said to form the foundation of beliefs, values and attitudes displayed later in life (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Affiliation to a generational cohort is thus composed of two essential elements, namely year of birth and the individual's ability to identify and connect with historical events which influenced their beliefs, values and attitudes (Parry & Urwin, 2011). The practical application of this theory suggests that millennials, as a generational cohort, share the same values, beliefs and attitudes, which are likely to be different from other generations (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Anderson et al., 2017; Lowe et al.; 2020). The inclusion of this theory in the literature review afforded the researcher the opportunity to explore the differences in the values, beliefs and attitudes of millennial leaders compared to previous generations and to enrich the current literature with findings from a South African millennial leadership perspective.

By reviewing the work of Anderson et al. (2017), Arsenault (2004), Cogin (2012), Deal (2010) and Parry and Urwin (2011), a selection of generational cohort enthusiasts, a significant body of evidence points to different generations having different views relating to beliefs and expectations when it comes to work and leadership. As the workplace comprises individuals of different generations, differences in values, beliefs and attitudes to work and leadership within the workplace are to be expected (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Undoubtedly, each individual brings their own set of values, beliefs and attitudes to the workplace (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014; Anderson et al., 2017; Lowe et al., 2020). In this section of the literature review, emphasis is restricted to the occurrence of workplace diversity as supported by the above-mentioned authors. Details of these differences are expanded upon in another section of the literature review, namely the section on generational stereotypes (Theme Four).

There are at least three major challenges with utilising the GCT as a construct to validate generational differences (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). The first challenge relates to the cohort

naming conventions and associated date ranges. The terms Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y/millennials are consistent across the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). However, in South Africa the naming conventions are replaced with the Apartheid Generation, Struggle Generation and Transition Generation respectively (Ronnie, 2018). Despite general consensus on the naming conventions of the generations, there are noteworthy variations regarding the specific age/date ranges allocated to the years of birth and the cut-off years per generation (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Variations of the cut-off years for the millennial cohort include 1981–1996 (Dimock, 2019) and 1979–1994 (Ng et al., 2010). The implication of this challenge, relating to an overlap in generational birth and cut-off years, questions the validity of differences among individuals based purely on their birth years. The relevance of time as a key contributor or differentiator is thus debatable (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). It begs the question of whether it is realistic to expect that individuals who are born two years apart would fundamentally be different in their views and beliefs, simply because they were born in two different generations.

An extensive literature search on the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) Information Central Knowledge Repository to ascertain the precise and globally accepted cut-off points for each generation did not yield a positive outcome. This finding was very much aligned to the first challenge called out by Lyons and Kuron (2014). Since the generational dates are not consistent and in the absence of a generally accepted generational date range for millennials, the researcher opted for the following generational naming conventions and date ranges: Traditionalists / Silent Generation (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1980), Generation Y / millennials (born 1981–1996) and Generation Z (born 1997 onwards) (Dimock, 2019). Narrowing down and settling on a specific date range for the millennial cohort aided in defining the research sample selection criteria.

The second challenge with relying on the GCT as a construct to validate generational differences is that social, historical, political, economic and geographical circumstances differ among individuals born in the same generational cohort (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). These circumstantial differences further influence the formation of views, beliefs and attitudes (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Thus, even if individuals were born in the same generation, their social, historical, political, economic and geographical circumstances would impact their beliefs, values and attitudes uniquely (Twenge, 2010). Jonck et al. (2017) extended the relevance of circumstantial impacts on generational differences by arguing that being born in the same generational cohort does not mean that all members

of that cohort unanimously share the same beliefs and values. Generational beliefs and values are thus not homogenous within the cohort (Jonck, et al., 2017). Not only are generational differences questionable due to a lack of consensus regarding date ranges and unique circumstantial impacts, but there are also intergenerational differences to contend with (Jonck et al., 2017). This second challenge called out by Lyons and Kuron (2014) added a unique and more complex layer to understanding workplace dynamics (Deal et al., 2010). The lived experiences of these cohorts vary across the nations in relation to political, economic and social experiences (Louw & Steyn, 2021). Considering the life-changing events impacting South African millennials, the research explored how growing up in South Africa has influenced the leadership styles of the research participants (Jonck et al., 2017).

The research methodology associated with generational related topics presents the third challenge related to GCT as a construct to validate generational differences (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). No one method is proven to be superior; however, longitudinal sequential data are considered to have provided the best results, yet most of the research focusing on generational related topics is conducted using cross-sectional research methods (Twenge, 2010). The researcher acknowledged that this research method, according to Lyons and Kuron (2014), does not yield the best results. However, due to time restrictions for this research study, a longitudinal study was not feasible. Rigorous efforts were deployed during the data collection and validation phases of the research to ensure data quality control. Details of the measures deployed are found in Chapter 4.

Given the challenges associated with GCT as a construct to validate generational differences, it is not surprising that authors like Rudolph et al. (2018) advocated for the suspension of the use of generational differences as an exploratory leadership framework and argued in favour of generational identity from a non-cohort perspective. One alternative suggestion includes social identity theory (Rudolph et al., 2018). This theory postulates that people will identify with groups of people based more on similarities and differences where age is not the definitive (Rudolph et al., 2018). This theory is considered to be aligned with GCT and offers an extension beyond focusing on birth years (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014), Anderson et al. (2017), Arsenault (2004), Cogin (2012) and Deal (2011) argued that not enough is known to suggest the dissolution of the GCT. The researcher acknowledged the limitations of GCT and, following on from Al-Asfour and Lettau (2014), Anderson et al. (2017), Arsenault (2004), Cogin (2012), Deal (2011), has taken the stance that until more is known about alternative constructs, from a non-cohort

perspective, generational (birth-year) cohort as a means to refer to different generational cohorts within the workplace would be deployed (Van Rossem, 2019).

GCT Literature Review Summary

Despite its challenges, there are elements of the GCT theory that provide a plausible basis upon which to validate generational differences (Twenge, 2010). The use of birth years and cut-off dates, regardless of not being universally agreed upon, provides a pragmatic approach to segment the world population group (Rudolph & Zacher, 2017). From the literature, it is evident that circumstantial impact on the development of values, beliefs and attitudes to individuals of a particular generation cannot be ignored. The views of Jonck et al. (2017) are once again echoed as a reminder that being born in the same generational cohort does not mean that all members of that cohort unanimously share the same beliefs and values. The research set out to explore this gap in the literature as advocated by Anderson et al. (2017), Arsenault (2004), Cogin (2012), Deal (2011), Parry and Urwin (2011) and Twenge (2010).

2.3. Theme 2: Generational Workplace Conflict

Following on from the premise that generational cohorts encompass differing views, beliefs and attitudes, as covered in the previous section, it is Urick et al. (2016) that extended this notion by adding that generational differences in perceptions and expectations in the workplace contribute to generational workplace conflict (Urick et al., 2016). Millennials, as a generational cohort, hold differing views to work ethics and work-life balance when compared to previous generations, which makes the grounds for generational tension in the workplace munificent (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021; Ho & Yeung, 2020). Age, recognised as a diversity factor in the workplace, impacts multigenerational engagement (Ho & Yeung, 2020). Research conducted established that 58% of HRMs have reported conflict between younger and older employees (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). The source of conflict was largely attributed to the varying perspectives held by the different generational groups relating to ways of working and expectations regarding work-life balance (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). Additional high-risk areas which fuelled workplace conflict included differing generational views on leadership styles and leadership expectations (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). Drawing from the literature covered thus far, the researcher positions the workplace as a complex myriad of diversity which ignites workplace conflict.

The impact of generational workplace conflict not managed adequately leads to an array of adverse consequences (Ho & Yeung, 2020). These include, but are not limited to, ineffective or even negative communication exchanges, inadequate team performances, reduced workplace motivation, lack of trust, disrespect and overall unhappiness in the workplace (Ho & Yeung, 2020). We are reminded by Urick et al. (2016) and Mahmoud et al. (2021) that workplace tension does not always result in negative outcomes. Generational tension, although unpleasant and perhaps even unnecessary, contributes to interesting team dynamics and serves as a catalyst for creative problem-solving and improved innovation (Mahmoud et al., 2021; Urick et al., 2016).

Promoting positive engagement among the different generations in the workplace and intentionally aiming to bring to the surface the positive and constructive aspects of generational workplace diversity, Urick et al. (2016) provided strategies and tactics which can be deployed to assist in the effective management of generational workplace conflict. The exact nature of generational differences which ignite workplace tension varies considerably (Urick et al., 2016). Depending on the source of the generational differences which ignite the workplace tension, one of the following three strategy options, namely achievement-, image- or ego-orientated strategies, may be deployed for effective resolution. The strategies are not exclusively reserved for specific tensions and can be used interchangeably. For each strategy option, Urick et al. (2016) proposes specific tactics. Achievement-orientated strategies deploy communication style and performance proficiency tactics. Image-orientated strategies rely on being visible and managing perceptions related to image tactics. The tactics deployed by ego-orientated strategies are centred around protecting self-interests or the removal of self from a situation to a great enough distance to not be associated with or needed to deal with that tension (Urick et al., 2016). The strategies and tactics are depicted in Figure 3 below.

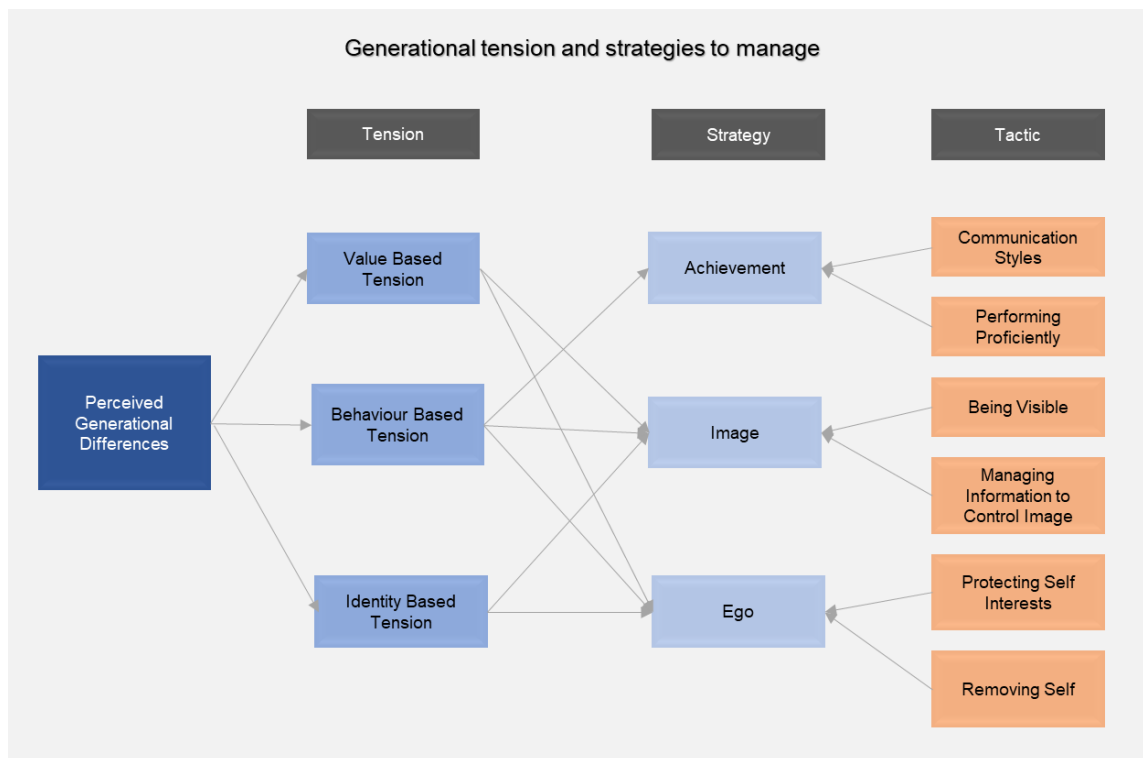


Figure 3 Generational tension and strategies to manage

Source: Adapted from Urick et al. (2016)

These strategies are directed at the resolution of generational-induced tensions and not at any specific generation for deployment. It would be interesting to see how the South African millennial leader participants align to or deviate from this framework.

Generational Workplace Conflict Literature Review Summary

The workplace is a melting pot of diversity, where age as a diversity factor is recognised as influencing workplace dynamics and a likely catalyst for generational workplace conflict. With differing views among generations, in relation to ways of working and leadership expectations, workplace conflict is inevitable. The effective and constructive resolution thereof rests largely with the workplace leaders to resolve. When considering that millennial leaders are relatively new in their leadership roles, their ability to lead and resolve conflict is under scrutiny. The justification for the inclusion of this theme as part of the research study is to explore not only how these relatively young South African millennial leaders are managing the pervasiveness of common generational conflict, but also how they are contending with it as they lead multigenerational teams.

2.4. Theme 3: Leadership Support

In the absence of a standard definition of the term “leadership”, there is agreement amongst scholars that leadership in the workplace is important (Vecchiotti, 2018). Leadership encompasses a value-based process which occurs over a longer term with a specific intent to motivate and influence others to fulfil a shared vision (Vecchiotti, 2018). Literature searches on leadership produced a plethora of results. It is evident that just as leadership theories have evolved from the Great Man Theory to modern-day transformational leadership, so have different leadership styles emerged over time (Nawaz & Khan, 2016). Leadership styles are relevant and impact the leadership journey not only for those who are leading, but also for those who follow (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). To be a leader, followers are a prerequisite (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Followers are not only the direct team reporters but can be found anywhere in the organisation; it is these followers who play a significant role in materialising the vision of the leader (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). New leaders’ leadership styles will have an impact on those who choose to follow them (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

Millennials have moved up the ranks at a steady rate and occupy leadership positions at relatively young ages (Bennet, 2020). Since their occupation of leadership roles is relatively new, the leadership styles of millennials are not widely documented or well known (Anderson et al., 2017; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Galdames & Guihen, 2022; Heyns et al., 2019; Sadler et al., 2020). Prior research on millennials in the workplace predominantly focused on attracting, retaining and keeping them engaged and not much on their leadership capabilities and styles (Martin & Warshawsky, 2017).

There is an abundance of literature available pertaining to leadership theories (behavioural theory, trait theory, contingency theory and emotional intelligence theory) and leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire and, most recently, servant leadership styles, which are covered extensively in business and academia (Nawaz & Khan, 2016). The intension of including leadership as a theme, as part of the literature review here, is not to have a general discussion on the different types of leadership nor to compare leadership styles of millennials to other generations. The intention was to explicitly explore the interpretation of leadership styles of South African millennial leaders, who lead multigenerational teams, based on their experiences and to assess the help they solicited to enhance their leadership capabilities. The gap in literature on millennial leadership styles is validated by Anderson et al. (2017), Gabrielova and Buchko (2021), Galdames and Guihen (2022), Heyns et al. (2019) and

Sadler et al. (2020). This gap in literature on millennial leadership styles further justifies this research study.

When drawing from existing literature on leadership, leadership styles and competencies, it would be interesting to know if the millennial leadership styles and competencies would be the same as existing literature, or perhaps a combination of several leadership styles or competencies or whether we are dealing with something totally different and unique. The impact of enriching this knowledge gap on millennial leadership styles and competencies links back to the dominant size of the millennial cohort within the workplace (Dimock, 2019) and their rapidly increasing presence in leadership roles (Bennet, 2020). With millennials' occupying more than 50% of the South African workforce, understanding this impact has far-reaching consequences not only for business and governments where these millennial leaders reside, but also for those who play significant roles in the academic shaping and development of leaders. We see that the literature is moving away from how to manage this millennial generation to understanding how this generations leads, and the support required for them to be effective and future-fit leaders (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

Leadership Support Literature Review Summary

Based on the age period for millennials, for this study, the oldest millennial turned 41 years in 2022. A large proportion of this cohort either entered leadership positions or occupied leadership positions for a relatively short period of time (Bennet, 2020). Existing leadership theories, styles and competencies provided the backdrop for contextualising the conversations on this topic. However, the focus remained purely exploratory to better understand not only how the participants understood their leadership styles and the leadership support they solicited, but also how their leadership competencies supported them to deal with generational conflict in the workplace.

2.5. Theme 4: Generational Stereotypes

As each generational cohort has its own set of views, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards work (Anderson et al., 2017; Arsenault, 2004; Cogin, 2012; Deal, 2011; Parry, & Urwin, 2011), the popularity of generational stereotypes is vindicated. As a generational cohort, millennials have not been spared criticism in the workplace. Negative stereotypes such as being lazy, impatient, narcissistic, entitled, unfocused, not loyal and tough to manage have followed them for a while (Staruch et al., 2021). Research conducted by Smola and Sutton (2002) found that millennials in the workplace

displayed significantly less organisational loyalty compared to previous generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Millennials have been stereotyped as highly likely to job hop, as opposed to previous generations, who viewed their careers as lifelong employment with a single employer (Ng & Parry, 2016). The implications for organisations and HRMs are that employee attraction, retention, development and engagement will require significant adjustments (Ng & Parry, 2016) if it were to satisfy the demands of the largest portion of the workforce (Dimock, 2019).

These stereotypes sparked debates linked to their leadership capabilities (Staruch et al., 2021). The relevance of reviewing literature on generational stereotypes, for this report, is not to categorically confirm nor disprove the stereotypes. The reasoning for inclusion lies in their rise to leadership roles at a faster rate than previous generations (Bennet, 2020), their significant presence in the workforce at over 50% (Statistics South Africa, 2020) and the expedited trajectory of their leadership presence as they gear up to lead more of the Gen Zs (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021).

Besides the negative stereotypes that follow them around, there is a selection of defining characteristics which set the millennials apart from previous generations (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Figure 4 below illustrates a more positive perspective of this generational cohort. This view is by no means exhaustive. The intent is merely to demonstrate the presence of positive characteristics of the millennial generational cohort.

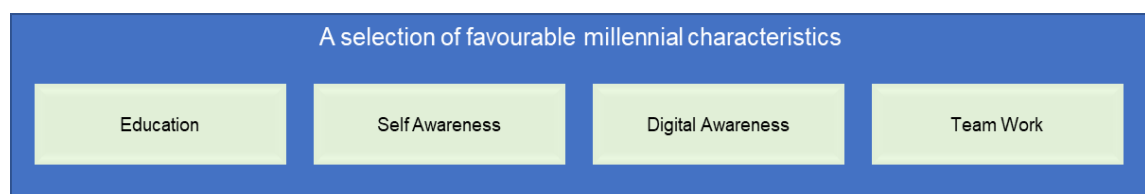


Figure 4 Favourable millennial characteristics

Source: Diagram researcher's own, content sourced from literature as cited in the narrative below.

Below is a further expansion on the positive characteristics.

Education

Millennials are favourably educated and revel in their tech savviness. They are most likely to be the most highly educated within their families (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

Digital Awareness

Millennials are the first generation to have grown up with the internet and have unlimited availability of information and digital resources (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). This does not mean that previous generations do not have the same access to technology and data in the current period, but the difference here is mostly in the utilisation thereof. Millennials are seen to consume digitally available data and information at a much larger scale than previous generations (MacKenzie & Scherer, 2019).

Self-awareness

The millennial cohort displays significant levels of self-confidence and self-esteem in relation to previous generations to such an extent that they may appear narcissistic. These high levels of self-esteem play a key role in questioning and challenging the status quo, much more than previous generations (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). They are more likely to challenge their leaders and retaliate against hierarchical leadership environments which, in turn, could lead to greater conflict within the workplace, including multigenerational teams (Ng & Parry, 2016).

Teamwork

Millennials report a greater sense of comfort working with diverse teams and prefer constructive feedback. They are willing to exceed expectations, but this is done on their own terms (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

Generational Stereotypes Literature Review Summary

The overwhelming negativity associated with millennials as leaders has generated scepticism relating to the leadership capabilities of this generational cohort (Staruch et al., 2021). Just as there are detractors, there are supports who believe they do have the necessary capabilities required to success in leadership roles (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

2.6. Chapter 2 Conclusion

The literature review shed immense light on the research gaps which exist and also on the contradictory viewpoints in relation to the themes identified. Millennials as a generational cohort have specific values, beliefs and attitudes regarding work, which are seemingly significantly different to other generations. These differing views create tension in the workplace. They occupy a dominant space within the workplace and

increasingly take up leadership roles. Yet, elements of leadership for this cohort are not well known. This research study explored the leadership styles from the perspective and interpretations of South African millennial leaders who managed multigenerational teams to expand on current literature and address knowledge gaps where they existed. The literature review process aided in validating the research topic and formulating the research questions which are discussed in the next chapter. Through the literature review, the researcher is reassured of the gap in the relevant research literature and the academic and business value the research adds.

Chapter 3: Research Questions

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a critical review of the relevant literature in relation to the research topic. In this chapter, the research questions, the key literary works which influenced the questions, and the context of each question are outlined. To gain a deeper understanding of the research topic, open-ended, exploratory questions which underpinned the research strategy were utilised (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The roadmap below (Figure 5) demonstrates the influence of the literature on the formation of the research questions.



Figure 5 Research questions linked to the literature

The research study comprised of four research questions as expanded upon in the next section.

3.2. Research Questions

3.2.1. Research Question 1 (RQ1)

What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?

Literature influences: RQ1 was largely influenced by the literature on generational differences from Arsenault (2004), Cogin (2012), Gabrielova and Buchko (2021), Heyns

et al. (2019), Parry and Urwin (2011), Ronnie (2018) and Twenge (2010), who encouraged further research on millennial leaders and their leadership styles. The call from Jonck et al. (2017) for a focus on South African millennial leaders greatly resonated with the researcher's desire to explore this topic from a South African context.

RQ1 context: This question explored the social and geographical (South African) influences on millennial leaders stemming from family backgrounds, schooling, social circles, gender and race. Information relating to generational differences in terms of leadership and general ways of working was obtained during this section of the interview.

3.2.2. Research Question 2 (RQ2)

How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?

Literature influences: RQ2 was motivated by the views that generational differences caused workplace conflict and tension as advocated by Ho and Yeung (2020), Gabrielova and Buchko (2021), Mahmoud et al. (2021) and Urick et al. (2016).

RQ2 context: During this part of the interview, participants were encouraged to share examples of workplace tension or conflict they experienced, which they could directly attribute to generational differences. Where there were examples of this generational conflict or tension, participants elaborated on the processes they would follow in order to effectively resolve the tension in the workplace.

3.2.3. Research Question 3 (RQ3)

What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?

Literature influences: Heyns et al. (2019) reminded us that most of the emphasis on leadership development has been largely skewed towards previous generations as opposed to millennials in the workplace. Thus, the leadership development, coaching and support for the millennial leader can be considered scarce. RQ3 explored the support which millennial leaders seek to enhance their leadership effectiveness as guided by Staruch et al. (2021) and Smola and Sutton (2002).

RQ3 context: Taking a step back in time, participants were asked to reflect on the support and advice they wished they had received before entering into leaderships roles, followed by the support they required now in order to be future-fit leaders.

3.2.4. Research Question 4 (RQ4)

What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?

Literature influences: RQ4 was crafted based on the stereotypes associated with the millennial generation as advocated by Anderson et al. (2017), Arsenault (2004), Cugin (2012), Deal (2011) and Parry and Urwin (2011).

RQ4 context: Participants were asked to share their views on how they identified with the stereotypes associated with millennials as a generational cohort.

The research questions formed part of the measurement instrument and the interview guide, which was administered via virtual interviews using MS Teams. The measurement instrument is captured in Appendix 4. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.3. Chapter 3 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the scholarly influence to validate the research questions and included a brief overview of the intent for each question. The next chapter outlines the research methodology that was deployed to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4: Research Design

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 outlined the scholarly validation of the research questions and included a brief overview of the intent for each question. This chapter outlines the research methodology that was deployed to answer the research questions. The roadmap below (Figure 6) outlines the flow of information presented in this chapter.

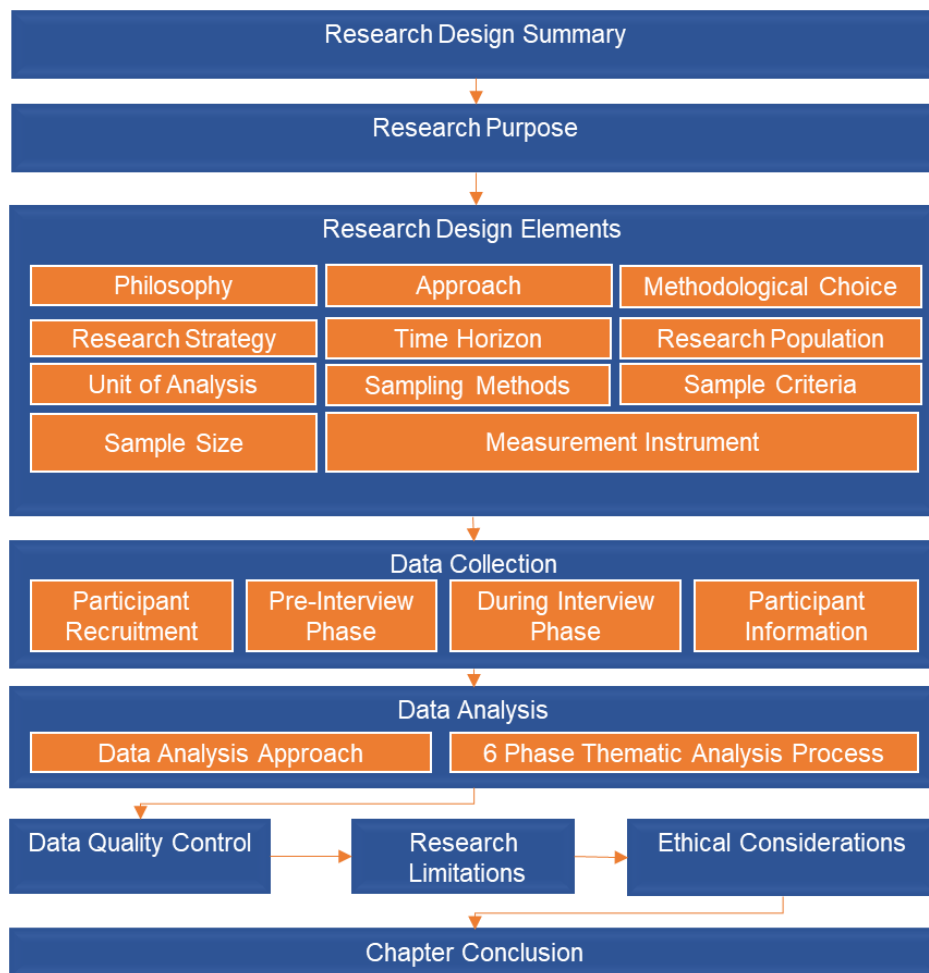


Figure 6 Information flow roadmap in Chapter 4

4.2. Research Design Summary

For ease of reference, a reach design summary is presented below in Table 1. All elements are expanded upon in the section below.

Table 1 Research design summary

Purpose	Exploratory
Philosophy	Interpretivism
Approach	Inductive
Methodological Choice	Mono-method, namely qualitative
Research Strategy	Narrative
Time Horizon	Cross-sectional
Research Population	All South African millennial leaders within South African based organisations
Unit of Analysis	Perceptions of South African millennial leaders about their leadership styles
Sampling Methods	Purposeful/Judgmental sampling as the primary method followed by snowballing, self-selection and convenience sampling
Sample Criteria	Refer to Table 2.
Sample Size	20 Participants
Measurement Instrument	Open-ended questions which formed part of the interview guide administered during the semi-structured interviews conducted virtually using MS Teams

4.3. Research Purpose

The research study aimed to explore and further understand lived experiences of a selection of individuals, namely South African millennial leaders who lead multigenerational teams. Since the focus was on describing the realities of these

millennial leaders, the research was exploratory with a phenomenological undertaking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.4. The Research Philosophy

The research philosophy encompassed a critical analysis of the assumptions and beliefs held by the researcher. These same assumptions and beliefs influenced the research strategy and the data collection methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since the researcher was intimately involved in the data collection, analysis and interpretations, it is not surprising that the findings were influenced by the values, beliefs and experiences of the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Based on previous and current work experiences, the researcher could relate with the research topic on a personal level. However, there were no known conscious biases which unduly impacted the data collection, analysis and interpretation of the findings in the research report.

For this research study, the researcher desired to have a greater understanding of what was happening in organisations, specifically in relation to how South African millennials articulated their leadership styles when leading multigenerational teams. The study was conducted in the participants' natural settings. The researcher focused on the individual's real-life experiences and included the participants' interpretations into the research findings, which were aligned to an interpretivist research philosophy (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.5. Research Approach

The research study focused on the interpretations and meanings that participants attached to events or phenomena. In the absence of a theory that was tested, the researcher directed the research in such a way that it started off with broad generalisations, followed by specific theories and, in so doing, an inductive approach to the research was applied (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.6. Methodological Research Choice

The research study undertook a mono-method, which encompassed qualitative data types (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher desired to explore the richness of the participants' lived experiences, which made a qualitative study more appropriate than a quantitative study. The researcher preferred to work more intensely with fewer research participants than to engage superficially with a larger pool of participants (McCracken, 1988). Data were collected using open-ended questions administered in semi-structured

virtual interviews and analysed building from granular level one codes to more general level three themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.7. Research Strategy

The research strategy was based on a narrative undertaking, where the researcher engaged in semi-structured interviews as the basis for the data collection of the participants' stories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The most compelling reason for this choice was based on the researcher's overwhelming interest in and desire to better understand the unique interpretations of the participants. A semi-structured interview allowed for some structure to guide the interview process, ensuring that responses in relation to the research question were captured, while simultaneously allowing for appropriate flexibility during the interview, to prompt or alter the question sequence and flow, which optimised participant engagement and resulted in the acquisition of relevant and quality responses (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2020).

4.8. Research Time Horizon

Research data were collected between October 2022 and December 2022, making this a cross-sectional research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.9. Research Population

The research population for this research study constituted all South African millennial leaders within South African based organisations (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). However, given the depth and breadth of this population size, including the time constraints within which the research needed to be conducted, the research population was narrowed down as per the sample criteria and sample size documented further below.

4.10. Unit of Analysis

For this research study, the unit of analysis was on the perception that South African millennial leaders have of their leadership styles. Emphasis was placed on the group of millennial leaders, rather than the individuals who make up the group (Bailey, 2018).

4.11. Sampling Method

From the various qualitative sampling techniques appropriate for qualitative research studies, the research study utilised purposeful/judgmental sampling where the researcher purposefully chose participants who met the target population criteria and

who were able to answer the research questions. This aided in driving rigour and credibility during the infancy stages of the research data collection process (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Additional sampling techniques which arose as the research study progressed included snowballing, self-selection and convenience sampling (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.12. Sampling Criteria

Sample criteria were defined to narrow the research sampling scope (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For individuals to be included in the intended research study, they needed to meet all of the below sampling criteria as detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Sampling criteria

Nationality	Participants had to be South African national citizens born between 1981–1996 and who had spent more than 70% of their upbringing in South Africa.
Gender	The research was gender agnostic; however, the researcher attempted to gain a fair representation of participants who identified with male and female gender classifications.
Race	Research participants included candidates across the following South African race groups: black African, white, Indian and coloured (Galal, 2022).
Team leader	Participants had to directly manage multigenerational teams (a mix of older and younger team members of 2+ individuals) for a minimum period of six consecutive months.
Industry	The research study was industry agnostic.
Size of company	Participants were employed in corporate or academic organisations where the number of employees exceeded 500.

4.13. Sampling Size

Determining the adequate sample size for any research is essential (Fofana, 2020). Interviewing a sample that is bigger than required raises ethical concerns regarding the effective use of resources in terms of time and money. Conversely, sampling too few participants highlight ethical and scientific concerns regarding sufficient data collected,

thereby raising questions on the credibility and transferability of the study (Francis et al., 2010).

Taking into consideration the homogenous nature of the group, the exact sample size was dependent on when no new data were obtained, thus signalling potential data saturation reached (Fofana, 2020). It is not known when data saturation may be reached; however, the sample size was guided by Saunders and Lewis (2012) and aimed for 15–20 research interviews. The final number of candidates interviewed totalled 20 participants.

4.14. Measurement Instrument

Primary data were collected using a set of open-ended questions which formed part of the interview guide administered during the semi-structured interviews conducted virtually using MS Teams. Appendix 4 provides details on the interview questions. The main rationale for choosing MS Teams was based on the researcher's level of proficiency and comfort with using virtual online meeting applications.

All sample criteria were confirmed before interview participation to ensure the participants met the sample criteria in relation to the research topic. Interviewing, as the chosen method for data collection, was linked to the researcher's deep desire to better understand the lived experiences of the research sample and the meaning they ascribed to these experiences in relation to the research question (Seidman, 2006). Secondary data collection included document reviews by credible authors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Appendix 3 provides a snapshot of the Consistency Matrix used to capture the authors and align them to their literature topics covered in the research.

4.15. Data Gathering Process

Data collection commenced once the required ethical clearance had been obtained from the Ethics Approval Committee of the GIBS, University of Pretoria. Ethical considerations are discussed further in section 4.20. This section of the chapter covers the recruitment of the research participants, the pre-interview phase, the interview phase, and participant information.

The data collection process was initiated with recruiting and securing participants for the research interviews.

4.15.1. Recruitment of the Research Participants

This section covers the process the researcher followed to secure research participants. At the time of finalising the research topic, the researcher had identified five candidates who agreed to participate in the research study. After each of the interviews, the researcher enquired whether the participants could recommend anyone else who met the criteria and who would be willing to be interviewed. The response rate from this request yielded no positive outcomes. Conscious of the time restrictions for this study, the researcher explored additional channels for participant searches in order to expedite the recruitment of participants.

Figure 7 below outlines the channels and the order in which they were utilised including the results yielded.





CHANNEL	Self identified participants	MPhil CL cohort & MBA electives 	Social media  		Personal phone contacts 
RESULTS YIELDED	5	1	3	1	1

Figure 7 Channels used for finding research participants and results yielded

Upon reflection, the researcher anticipated a greater response rate from LinkedIn, and was reminded of how making assumptions on individuals' desire to participate in interviews and their willingness to make recommendations for leads should not be overstated. The channel that resulted in the most successful output was the channel utilised last. The researcher was once again reminded of how important it is to maintain healthy relationships with those in one's immediate and extended networks.

4.15.2. Pre-interview Phase

Before the interviews could commence, it was necessary to secure mutually beneficial time with the participants and conduct an interview pilot.

Calendar scheduling: Securing dates and times for interviews proved significantly more time-consuming than initially anticipated. Some participants would be travelling or otherwise occupied and would provide provisional dates and times up to two weeks ahead of the initial contact. Another challenge was last minute interview meeting cancellations. Fortunately, these were not many, and the majority of the candidates

availed themselves for the interviews. Three potential candidates requested to postpone their interviews and did not commit to future interview dates. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants which meant significant balancing of work and personal commitments for the researcher. The sample criteria were included in each of the meeting invites shared, as an extra reminder of the research participation requirements. This aided in securing data validity and also gave participants the opportunity to withdraw participation before the interview commenced, in the event they did not meet all requirements.

Interview guides: An interview guide was developed to aid in ensuring that the interviews, as far as possible, were done consistently and standardised across all the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The guide included a list of questions linked to the research topic ensuring the data collection remained aligned to the research topic and to keep the participants and the researcher focused during the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher opted to not share the research questions as a pre-read ahead of the actual interview, to prevent the participants from extensively researching the topic ahead of the interview and thus provide answers which were not authentically their own. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 4.

Interview pilot: A pilot study on the interview guide was conducted with one non-research participant prior to the deployment of the questionnaire. This mock interview was conducted in person. The pilot participant had completed a Master's degree and was well versed with the research data collection requirements. She was able to provide constructive feedback on sentence/question structure, tone and general interview and body language conduct of the researcher. Testing the interview questions as part of a pilot study aided in establishing the content validity, consistency and expected time duration of the interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). From the pilot, it was established that the expected duration of the interview was likely to last between 45–60 minutes. The actual average duration of the interviews was 55 minutes. This pilot process allowed for feedback regarding question structure, interview format and overall instructions which was used to improve and adapt the questions as required. Data from this pilot test were not included in the final research analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.15.3. The Interview Phase

At the start of each interview, the researcher gained consent from all participants to record the interview for transcription purposes. Participants were reminded of the purpose of the study as well as the research topic. The average duration of the interviews

was 55 minutes. The researcher reassured all participants that the information shared would be confidential and only aggregated findings would be documented in the final report. No individual or company names would be mentioned in the final report (Flick, 2018).

Participants were encouraged to regard the session as a psychologically safe space where they could share freely and authentically without any judgment (Silverman, 2020). Participants were reminded that if they did not feel comfortable to answer any specific questions, they were under no obligation to do so (McCracken, 1988). No participant refused to answer any questions or to have any information that they shared be removed from the final report.

The researcher avoided leading, compounded or closed-ended questions as far as possible (Bailey, 2018). A series of email or WhatsApp exchanges between the researcher and the participants before the actual interviews commenced enabled expedited rapport building between the researcher and the participants as early as possible during the actual interview (Bailey, 2018).

The interviews were opened-ended, unbiased and easy for the participants to understand, as established during the pilot interview (Silverman, 2020). Ensuring that the interview questions were easily understood was key to guaranteeing that participants responded to the questions being asked and that they provided relevant and unambiguous information (Silverman, 2020). The interviews were informal, flexible and exploratory. Where applicable, the researcher adjusted or rephrased questions to ensure the correct level of information was obtained, depending on how the participant responded to the questions (McCracken, 1988). Where responses were too high level or ambiguous, participants were prompted to share specific examples relating to their responses. This flexibility allowed the researcher to clarify responses, which led to new lines of thinking or probing for more information (McCracken, 1988). The questions were not solely the research topic, but rather questions to help in answering the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview style utilised was informal and conversational with a specific objective to extract detailed and concrete stories about the participants' experiences (Soklaridis, 2009).

Unobtrusive/obtrusive balance: Participants were informed before the recording started that the researcher would remain as neutral and quiet as possible to avoid adding the views of the researcher to those of the participants' answers and swaying or directing the conversation in a particular way (McCracken, 1988). In essence, the researcher

would stick to asking the interview questions, including probing or clarifying questions only and avoid agreeing or disagreeing with the participants' responses. This was done mostly because the first three participants required affirmation that they were answering in the correct manner. Upon review of all the recordings and transcripts, no participants were significantly influenced or encouraged to respond in any particular manner and all responses were a true reflection of their thinking and experiences.

Interview enrichment from participant feedback: At the end of the third interview, the participant recommended that additional criteria be included to the questions posed by the researcher to enrich the research data. These additional questions were sent to the first three candidates via email for them to either respond via email or to have an additional interview. Two of the three candidates agreed to another interview, while one candidate did not provide additional feedback.

The additional questions included the following:

1. How has growing up in South Africa influenced your leadership style and development? (Things to consider – family situation, parental/elderly/community/school influences).

This question was suggested as a precursor to the original opening question, which was: How would you best describe being a millennial leader in South Africa? (What are the defining characteristics that set you apart from other generations, if any?)

2. How has your gender influenced your leadership development (positively or negatively impacted your leadership development)? What about being female/male influenced how you lead?

The rationale for including a gender element to the research study was to enhance the richness of the data collected and provide an additional data point for cross-referencing amongst the participants.

3. How has your race influenced your leadership development (positively or negatively impacted your leadership development)? What about your race influenced how you lead?

The impact of race, within the South African context, on leadership development provides rich data on how different race groups define their leadership journey and leadership style.

The sincerely authentic, collaborating dialogue and insights gained from this participant via the research interview was a great demonstration of the power of the collective genius, which is more easily encountered in qualitative studies, reaffirming the decision of the researcher to engage in qualitative rather than quantitative studies (McCracken, 1988).

The order in which participants were interviewed was based purely on the mutual availability of the participants and the researcher. Participants worked across varying industries and functional domains. All participants met the sample criteria. They were all millennial as per the age range specified namely born between 1981–1996. They occupied leadership positions within their respective organisations and managed multigenerational teams. All participants were born and raised in South Africa. Three participants, two white males and one white female, lived and worked in the UK for short periods of time and were able to cross-reference work experiences between South Africa and the UK.

All interviews were conducted via MS Teams. The longest interview lasted approximately 79 minutes; the shortest interview was approximately 38 minutes. The average duration for the interviews equated to approximately 56 minutes. No interview information was rejected, thus 20 interviews resulted in 20 transcriptions. Sixteen (16) of the 20 interview transcripts were transcribed using a professional transcribing service provider. The quality and accuracy of the professionally transcribed interviews were cross-referenced to the interview recordings by the researcher. The remaining four transcripts were retrieved from the MS Teams application, as all interviews were recorded and simultaneously transcribed. These transcripts were refined by the researcher. The number of pages transcribed per interview ranged from 16 pages to 58 pages. The interview sequence, participant race, gender, industry, functional domain, interview duration and number of transcribed pages is reflected in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Participant profile information

Interview Sequence	Race	Gender	Industry	Functional Domain	Interview Duration	Number of Pages Transcribed
M1	Black African	Female	FMCG	Marketing	48,24	22
M2	Black African	Female	FMCG	Sales	70,89	26
M3	Black African	Female	FMCG	IT	73,55	25
M4	White	Male	FMCG	IT	40,19	25
M5	Black African	Male	FMCG	IT	55,11	24
M6	Indian	Male	Logistics	Finance	45,57	23
M7	White	Female	Recruitment	HR	58,29	16
M8	Coloured	Female	FMCG	Marketing	57,2	28
M9	White	Female	Technology	IT	53,54	27
M10	White	Female	Education	Strategy	39,43	22
M11	Coloured	Female	FMCG	Supply Chain	58,31	31
M12	Black African	Female	Education	Procurement	49,13	19
M13	Indian	Male	Telecommunication	Finance	55,3	21
M14	Indian	Female	Energy	Legal	72,23	39
M15	Coloured	Female	Beverages	IT	48,25	27
M16	Indian	Female	Beverages	Marketing	52,29	28
M17	Coloured	Male	Education	Marketing	66,32	39
M18	Coloured	Male	Energy	Supply Chain	79,03	58
M19	White	Male	FMCG	Supply Chain	54,26	29
M20	Indian	Male	Energy	Chief Executive Officer	38,12	28
Average					55,8	27,85

The data collection process required constant rigour from the researcher to secure participants, schedule the interviews and timeously remind participants to attend the interviews. Conducting the initial set of interviews was at times emotionally exhausting for the researcher, especially when there were two interviews conducted in one day or interviews were scheduled consecutively for more than two days. The interviewer dealt with interview fatigue by scheduling sufficient breaks between the interviews (McCracken, 1988).

The next section of this chapter covers the data analysis approach followed by data quality control.

4.16. Data Analysis Process

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim directly from MS Teams. These transcripts required a significant amount of time for data cleansing to remove repetitive words and correct colloquial or vernacular language to reflect the responses in a more coherent manner (Friese, 2019). The researcher opted to utilise the services of a professional transcriber. Upon receipt of the signed non-disclosure agreement, the audio-visual files were shared with them where they proceeded to transcribe the recordings and provided transcripts which were easier and quicker to review and analyse. Of the 20 interview transcripts, 16 were professionally transcribed. The remaining four MS Teams transcripts were utilised as produced on the platform. Utilising

a professional transcribing service did not result in perfect transcripts (Friese, 2019). There were areas which were inaudible for the transcriber, or colloquial language was not understood, which the transcriber missed. A thorough review of the professionally transcribed interviews was conducted by the researcher (Friese, 2019). This process ensured a second review of the transcripts before they were loaded onto ATLAS.ti for coding. Utilising professional transcribers certainly reduced the amount of time needed to clean up the MS Teams transcripts, but this did not negate the amount of time spent on analysing or intimately working with the data (Friese, 2019). Professionally transcribed documents enabled additional and constructive time allocated to data analysis versus time dedicated to data clean up. No interview was rejected; thus, all 20 interviews were transcribed.

Data collected from the interview transcripts were analysed using ATLAS.ti. and simultaneously captured in Microsoft Excel together with the corresponding quotes. As new codes were generated per participant, these were recorded in the Excel document in order to capture the rate of new code generation. The Excel document allowed for the tracking of new code generation, which made it possible to graphically depict data saturation (Figure 8). The use of a digital tool enabled easier identification of deviant cases and quicker detection of errors, which improved reliability (Friese, 2019). The software was used to sort and structure the data to aid in identifying patterns and themes (Friese, 2019). It also limited code proliferation, a common error conducted by researchers, as identified by Saldana (2016). Even though computer software was used to aid in data analysis, the researcher took full accountability and responsibility for the actual analysis and interpretation of the information obtained (Saldana, 2016).

Figure 8 below illustrates the rate of new codes generated based on participant interviews. The slow rate at which codes were generated, for instance, in four cases it was zero, signalled to the researcher that the sample size of 20 was adequate (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

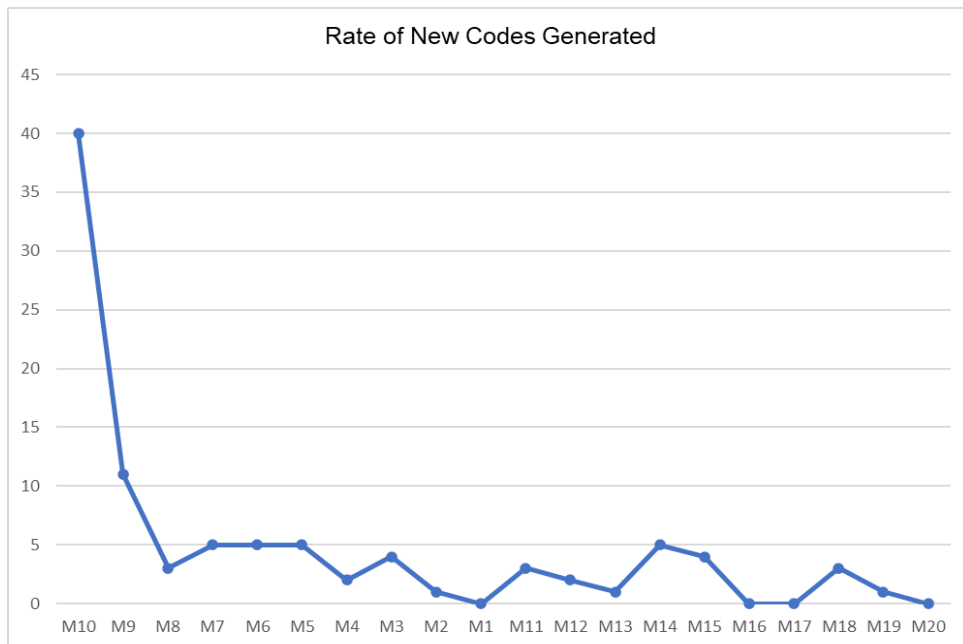


Figure 8 Rate of new codes generated

Data analysis effectively commenced once all 20 interview transcripts had been coded. After watching at least five different tutorials on coding data, the researcher was reminded that coding is only one way to analyse qualitative data, and no one specific coding method was necessarily the right way to code (Saldana, 2016). The researcher proceeded to link the data to the research questions and then back to the data deploying thematic analysis (Saldana, 2016). Thematic analysis was chosen for the flexible approach to analysing the data it allowed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All codes were peer-reviewed and approved by the research supervisor. Coded data aided in articulating the meaning of the data (Friese, 2019). Thematic analysis supported pattern identification while describing the data in significant detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six-phase thematic analysis approach advocated by Braun and Clark (2006) was deployed. The high-level process deployed by the researcher is represented in Figure 9 below.

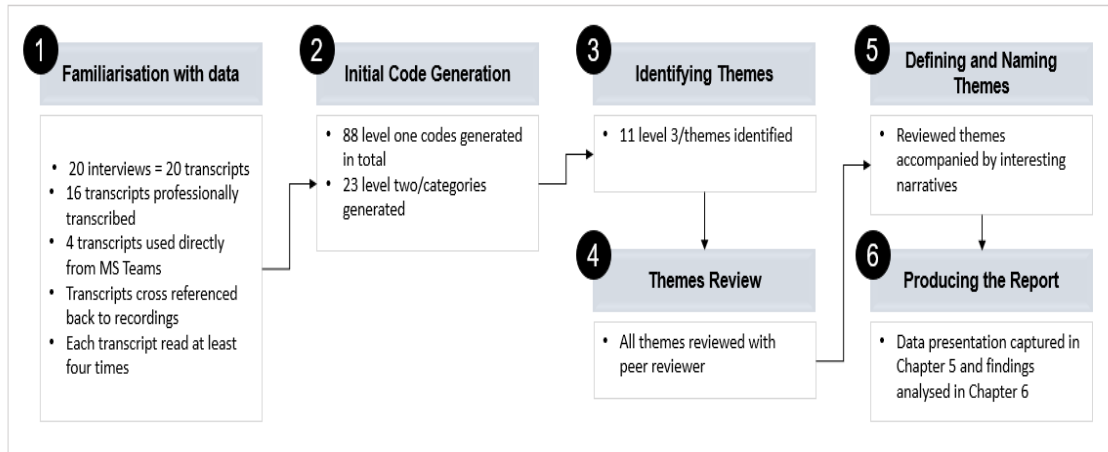


Figure 9 Thematic analysis approach

4.17. The Six-phase Thematic Analysis Approach

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

The researcher actively and repeatedly read to understand the data with the intentional search for meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each transcript was reviewed at least four times. This enabled the researcher to know the data quite intimately (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher continuously cross-referenced the interview transcripts back to the original interview recording to ensure the data were accurately captured (Anderson et al., 2014).

Phase 2: Initial code generation

An initial set of codes was developed based on the data reviewed and that which was interesting to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher generated as many codes as possible, within a reasonable timeframe, to not rule out any interesting or potentially future relevant codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each code generated tied back to the research question which the data needed to answer. Codes were generated on three levels, namely level one (most granular level), level two (categories) and level three (themes). Due to the significant amount of time spent working repetitively on the same set of information, the researcher suffered from coding fatigue and was forced to take timed breaks from coding the data (Friese, 2019). During these timed breaks, the researcher's attention was redirected to other chapters of the research report.

Phase 3: Identifying themes

An extensive list of granular codes, namely level one codes, were generated per research question (Friese, 2019). The level one codes were analysed and reviewed and rolled up into level two categories (Friese, 2019). Upon further interrogation of the categories, the level two categories warranted further refinement, which resulted in level three codes, also referred to as themes (Friese, 2019). All initial miscellaneous codes were allocated to a category and a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Figure 10 below is a diagrammatic representation of the coding refinement process deployed by the researcher.

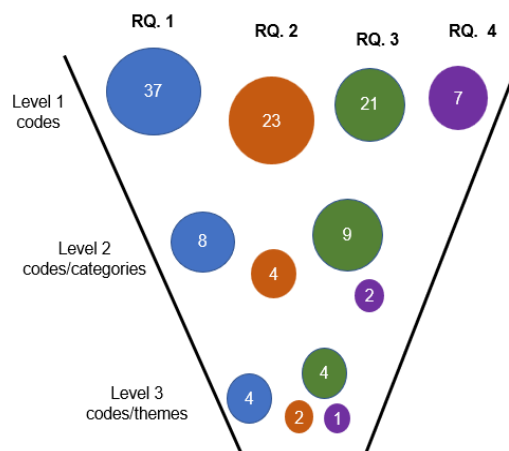


Figure 10 Diagram showing coding refining process

Source: Author's own

Phase 4: Themes review

With clearly distinguished themes, the researcher proceeded to apply a two-level review process to further refine the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At level one, the researcher reviewed all the themes to identify clear patterns. Only once this pattern had been established did the researcher move onto the next level (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At level two, the researcher pursued an intensive process of re-reading the entire data set to ensure that each theme was still relevant. Reading the entire data set allowed for the coding of additional themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher was conscious of not spending too much time on additional coding, so as to avoid unearthing outcomes that were not beneficial to the research report. The output from this phase ensured that the researcher was well versed with the various themes and that they were aligned to the overall story that the data were telling (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Further review and refinement of the themes continued during this phase. These refined themes were accompanied by interesting narratives which were rich in explaining their relevance to the data collected (Friese, 2019). The researcher deemed the themes to be relevant and hold significant value in relation to the data collected as they fully aligned to the research topic (Friese, 2019). The themes were important and relevant but not complex enough to warrant the need for sub-themes. This phase of the process yielded clearly defined themes with rich narratives which were succinct and contained self-explanatory theme names (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All themes were peer-reviewed and approved by the research supervisor. Table 4 captures the level three codes/themes for each of the RQs. The numbers in brackets indicate the occurrence of the theme linked to the level one and two codes. Appendix 5 – 8 outlines the code names for level one to three per research question.

Table 4 Level three codes/themes per RQ

RQ	Level 3 Codes/Themes
RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?	Leadership Competencies and Adaptability (135)
	Social Biases and Discrimination (83)
	Personal Value System (82)
	Personal History (45)
RQ2: How do Millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?	Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)
	Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)
RQ3: What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?	Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)
	Leader of Self (11)
	Leading Teams (8)
	Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)
RQ4: What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk	Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)

Phase 6: Producing the report

Phases 1–5 primed the researcher in producing the final report, which captured the complexity of the research data collected and ultimately validated the merit of the

research analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research findings are presented in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the key findings are cross-referenced to the literature review in Chapter 2, while Chapter 3 provides the basis for the findings analysis discussion.

4.18. Data Quality Control

The quality of any research conducted is largely dependent on the extent to which the work is deemed trustworthy (Stenfors et al., 2020). The following markers were identified to support the researcher in achieving superior qualitative quality research outcomes: credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and reflexivity (Stenfors et al., 2020). Table 5 below outlines the markers and the ways in which the researcher was able to achieve these (Stenfors et al., 2020).

Table 5 Markers used to improve research quality

MARKER	HOW THE RESEARCH ACHIEVED THIS
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theory related to the research and literature review was based on highly credible and peer-reviewed articles or highly regarded expert published authors. A consistency matrix was completed to facilitate the development of a golden thread across the research literature and the research topic. Refer to Appendix 3 for a snapshot of the consistency matrix. • The research questions were well aligned to the research topic. • The data collection process adhered to the ethics requirements. • The data collection process was systematic and consistent. • A reliable coding system was used, namely ATLAS.ti. • The data analysis process and outcomes were reviewed for accuracy and relevance by a research supervisor. • Research components of the framework, such as sampling strategy, size of data and analytical processes followed, were deemed appropriate as per the research supervisor. • Transcripts were thoroughly checked for mistakes and cross-referenced back to the original recordings. • Wording and meaning of the codes were applied in alignment with the research supervisor.
Dependability	<p>The researcher articulated the research process in such a way that other researchers are able to follow the process with absolute clarity, regardless of the research findings.</p> <p>Cross-referencing of literature in Chapter 2 with detailed findings in Chapter 6 were actioned.</p>

Conformability	<p>All interviews were conducted using MS Teams.</p> <p>All transcripts were cross-referenced to recordings.</p> <p>The researcher made adequate use of quotes and applied the number of quotes per research question consistently across Chapter 5.</p> <p>Participants were referenced according to their interview sequence.</p>
Transferability	<p>Sufficient details are supplied that described the research context and settings with unmistakable evidence of how the research environment impacted and influenced the final outcomes.</p> <p>The interview protocol was standardised and consistently applied.</p> <p>Purposive sampling was utilised.</p> <p>Detailed representation of the data is described in Chapter 5.</p>
Reflexivity	<p>The researcher adequately explained how reflexivity was incorporated and addressed throughout the research process. This was conducted at the start of each interview and re-emphasised at the end of each interview.</p>

Source: Author's own notes adapted from Stenfors et al. (2020)

The researcher deployed additional steps, as advocated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), which enhanced the research quality. The steps included data triangulation, rich descriptions which facilitated shared experiences with the readers, researcher bias clarification at every point necessary throughout the research process, capturing of conflicting information to avoid a one-sided view, peer debriefing with knowledgeable subject matter experts and an external editor for checking the presentation of the data rather than the content.

The data quality steps as advocated by Creswell and Creswell (2018) are discussed next.

Triangulation: The researcher cross-referenced various sources, such as peer-reviewed journal articles, credible authors (books) and subject matter experts (e.g. research-appointed supervisor) to validate the codes, categories and themes developed.

Rich description of findings: The researcher conveyed the findings of the research in such a way that the readers were able to imagine a shared experience with the researcher and the participants.

Researcher bias clarification: The researcher captured any bias as transparently as possible, especially in terms of background, age, gender and culture in the report.

Conflicting information: The researcher was as authentic as possible, and thus included not only favourable information to positively skew the outcomes but also alternative viewpoints held by the participants.

Peer debriefing: To ensure that the findings resonated with those who read it, a peer debriefer was utilised to assess and question key elements of the study.

External editor: An external, professional editor was commissioned to objectively audit the final report. The editor was trained on qualitative research methods but was not acquainted with the research topic.

4.19. Limitations of the Research Design and Methods

The elements which the researcher had no control over, namely the research limitations, are listed below. The researcher chose to make these limitations known to avoid the research being undermined (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The research limitations included the following:

- Limited data collected at a particular point in time, namely cross-sectional research, meant that the results of the research findings would potentially vary if the same research were to be conducted at a different point in time (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Due to the time limitations for this research study, there were no mitigating actions for this limitation.
- Research findings were restricted to the millennial leaders who participated in the interviews and did not include comparative findings from other generational cohorts since the unit of analysis was millennial leaders. Comparative inputs could corroborate or dispel findings across the generations.
- There was significant consensus on the naming convention which defined the generations, but the specific age ranges allocated to the years of birth and the cut-off years per generation varied. Variations of the cut-off years included 1979–1994 (Ng et al., 2010). For this research, a millennial referred to individuals born

between 1981–1996 (Dimock, 2019). The generational cohort date ranges were based on empirical information; however, a different set of generational cohort birth and cut-off ranges could yield different results.

- Thematic analysis was applied to the data collected. Subjective descriptions of the codes were defined, based on the researcher's interpretation of the data. Even through the codes and subsequent themes were peer-reviewed, a different researcher or peer reviewer may interpret the findings differently.

4.20. The Ethical Considerations

Data collection commenced only once the required ethical clearance had been obtained from the Ethics Approval Committee of the GIBS, University of Pretoria. Refer to Appendix 1 for Ethics Approval confirmation. Each participant was informed that they would be required to formally consent to participate in the research data collection process. Consent was obtained via email confirmation or through verbal consent as captured in the transcripts. Appendix 2 reflects an example of the written consent form shared. Participation in all interviews was done voluntarily. Every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of participants not only to ensure their anonymity but also to enhance the quality of data inputs.

No unintentional harm was placed on interview participants through the types of questions asked and their right to data privacy was respected. Participants had the right to stop the interview process at any time and choose for their inputs to be excluded from the final report without any form of judgment or persuasion or coercion from the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). No participant exercised this right. The data were made anonymous and stored on a password-protected computer as well as a password-protected folder on a personal OneDrive account to prevent loss of data.

4.21. Chapter 4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the major research design elements were elaborated upon, detailing the research methodology applied. Granular details on how the researcher collected the data were captured, providing rich insights which were easy to understand and could easily be replicated in future studies. After the collection of data, the researcher clarified the data analysis approach, which too provided explicit details which could easily be replicated in future studies. Strategies to ensure the control of data quality were specified based on scholarly guidelines. As with all research assignments, there are limitations, and the researcher chose to make the limitations of this study known to reduce any

scepticism associated with the study. The study adhered to the required ethical approvals and data collection commenced only once this approval had been obtained. Following on from how the data were collected and analysed, the next chapter presents a rich and insightful set of research findings.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 outlined the research methodology that was deployed to answer the research questions set out in Chapter 3. This chapter captures the primary findings obtained from the 20 participant interviews in the form of semi-structured virtual interviews based on open-ended questions. The research study set out to gain a deeper understanding of the leadership styles of South African leaders born between 1981–1996, also referred to as millennials. Table 2 captures the sampling criteria applied, while Table 3 provides the participant details. The study deployed both deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive approaches were used to explore South African millennial leaders as a generational cohort from a GCT perspective. Additionally, inductive methods were used to explore the commonly held stereotypes associated with millennials, as well as to identify any emerging themes associated with factors which influenced the leadership styles of South African millennial leaders in light of their being born in South Africa.

A recap of the research questions as outlined in Chapter 3 is given below:

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?

This question explored the social influences stemming from family backgrounds, schooling, social circles, gender and race. Information relating to generational differences in terms of leadership and general ways of working were also obtained during this part of the interview.

RQ2: How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?

In this part of the interview, participants were encouraged to share examples of workplace tension or conflict they experienced, which they could directly attribute to generational differences. Where there were examples of this generational conflict or tension, participants elaborated on the processes they would follow in order to effectively resolve the tension in the workplace. They shared leadership qualities that worked in their favour as well as those qualities which in some instances hindered effective conflict resolution.

RQ3: What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?

Here, participants were asked to reflect on the support and advice they wished they had received before entering into leaderships roles, followed by the support they required now in order to be future-fit leaders.

RQ4: What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?

For the last question, participants were asked to share their views on how they identified with the stereotypes associated with millennials as portrayed in the literature.

The next section of this chapter provides details on the participant information and further information relating to the interview details. The findings from the interviews follows hereafter.

5.2. Participant Information

A total of 20 interviews were conducted with an equal split in terms of South African race groups: black African, white, Indian and coloured (Galal, 2022). The gender split was slightly more skewed towards female participants with a total of 12 females and 8 males. The skew in gender profiles was purely attributed to the availability of participants. The split in terms of racial representation was purposeful and actively pursued when recruiting participants. The researcher intended to have equal representation across each race group and enhance data collection credibility. In order to protect the identity of participants, their names were replaced with interview identifiers, namely millennial or M(n) where n represented the sequence in which they were interviewed. The participant gender and racial split is reflected in Figure 11 below.

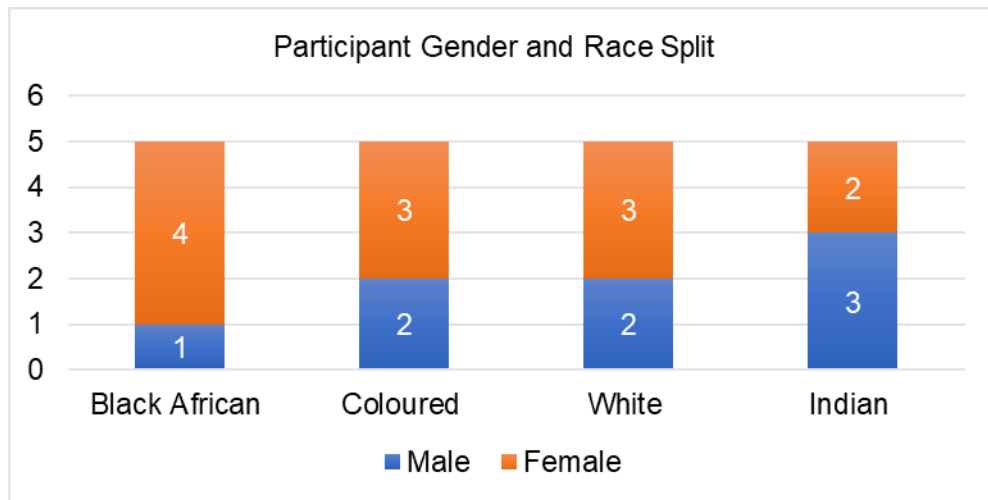


Figure 11 Participant gender and race split

Participant M10 was arbitrarily selected as the first transcript to be coded. This transcript initially generated 42 codes. After code refinement and mergers, the final quotes from M10 resulted in 40 codes. Interviews were subsequently coded in descending numerical order from M9 to M1 and then in ascending order from M11 to M20. M9 yielded the second-highest number of new codes with M16, M17 and M20 yielding zero new codes. The participant interview coding sequence and new code generation rate are captured in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Participant interview coding sequence and new code generation rate

Coding Sequence	Race	Gender	Industry	Functional Domain	Interview Duration	Number of Pages Transcribed	Number of Codes	New Codes
M10	White	Female	Education	Strategy	39,43	22	40	40
M9	White	Female	Technology	IT	53,54	26	35	11
M8	Coloured	Female	FMCG	Marketing	57,2	25	29	3
M7	White	Female	Recruitment	HR	58,29	25	32	5
M6	Indian	Male	Logistics	Finance	45,57	24	29	5
M5	Black African	Male	FMCG	IT	55,11	23	21	5
M4	White	Male	FMCG	IT	40,19	16	25	2
M3	Black African	Female	FMCG	IT	73,55	28	30	4
M2	Black African	Female	FMCG	Sales	70,89	27	26	1
M1	Black African	Female	FMCG	Marketing	48,24	22	20	0
M11	Coloured	Female	FMCG	Supply Chain	58,31	31	22	3
M12	Black African	Female	Education	Procurement	49,13	19	20	2
M13	Indian	Male	Telecommunication	Finance	55,3	21	19	1
M14	Indian	Female	Energy	Legal	72,23	39	42	5
M15	Coloured	Female	Beverages	IT	48,25	27	36	4
M16	Indian	Female	Beverages	Marketing	52,29	28	26	0
M17	Coloured	Male	Education	Marketing	66,32	39	16	0
M18	Coloured	Male	Energy	Supply Chain	79,03	58	39	3
M19	White	Male	FMCG	Supply Chain	54,26	29	20	1
M20	Indian	Male	Energy	Chief Executive Officer	38,12	28	26	0
Average					55,8	27,85	27,7	

This rate of new code generation was also used to highlight the point at which new code generation was significantly low, signalling possible data saturation. Figure 12 shows the generation of codes per participant based on the coding sequence of the transcripts and including the rate of new codes per participant.

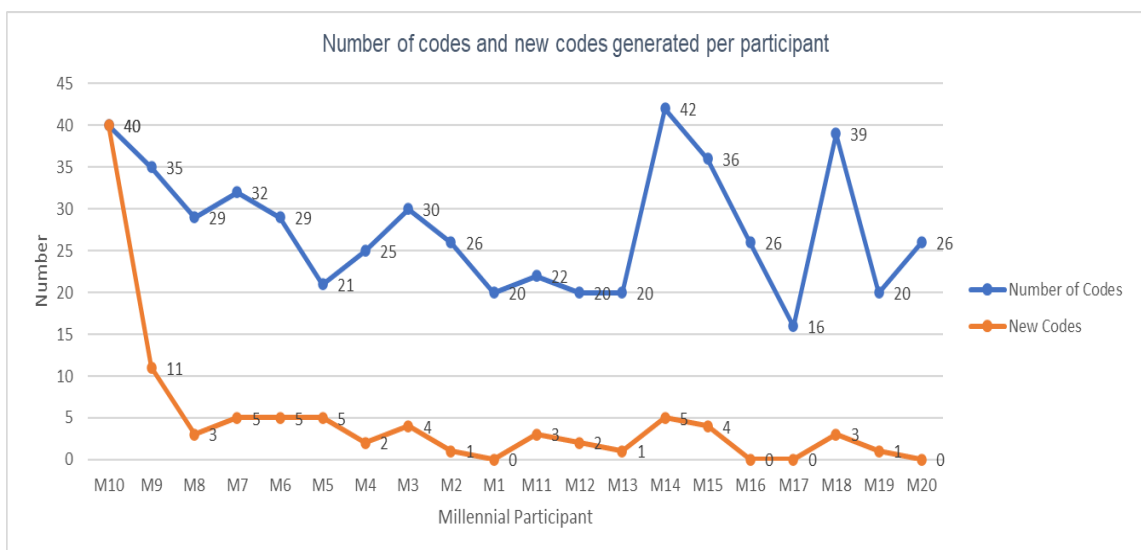


Figure 12 Codes generated and rate of new code generation per participant

The next section of this chapter provides a summary of the interview findings. The 20 transcribed interviews were coded using three levels of codes. Each code was linked to a research question. Table 7 below provides details of the number of codes per RQ on all three levels. Appendices 5 to 8 capture the details of the code names from level one to level three for all research questions, including the frequency of each code. The findings are presented based on the level three codes/themes per RQ and the top three recurring level one codes per theme.

Table 7 Codes per research question

RESEARCH QUESTIONS		NUMBER OF CODES (Level 1)	NUMBER OF CODES (Level 2)	NUMBER OF CODES (Level 3)
RQ 1	What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?	37	8	4
RQ 2	How do Millennial leaders address generational tension/conflict in the workplace	23	4	2
RQ 3	What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?	21	9	4
RQ 4	What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?	7	2	1
TOTAL		88	23	11

The roadmap below (Figure 13) outlines the flow of how the findings are presented throughout this chapter. For each RQ there are two tables. The first table presents the frequency of the level one codes, the code names and frequency thereof for levels two and three. Only the frequencies of the level one codes are listed in Table 1 as there are too many to list for the entire research question. The second table shares level one–three code names and frequency, per theme. Listing the level one and two code names contextualises the rationale behind the level three naming descriptions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the RQs and associated themes and level one codes.

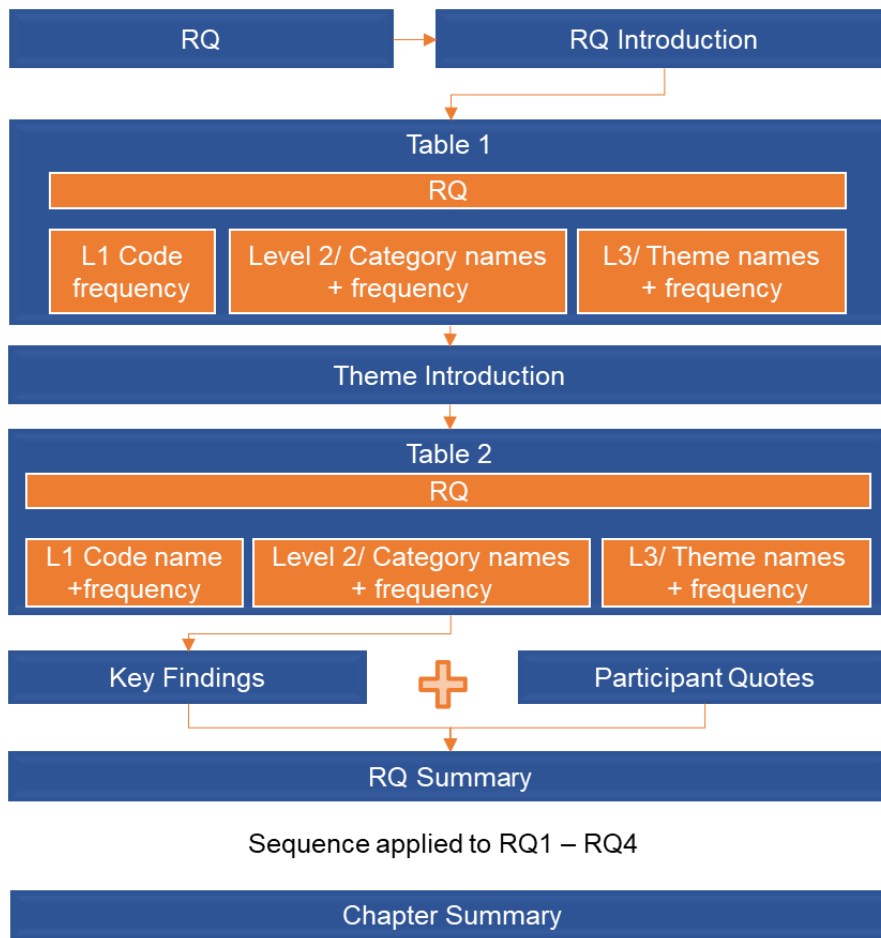


Figure 13 Data presentation roadmap

Each theme is supported with supporting participant quotations. At the end of each quote, the participant identifier is mentioned, including the participant’s gender and race. This provides additional context for the quote. A legend for the participant identifier, race and gender is outlined in Table 8.

Table 8 Participant identifier, race and gender legend

B = Black African	C = Coloured	I = Indian	W = White
M(n) = Millennial participant identifier	F = Female	M = Male	

5.3. Presentation of the Research Findings per Theme, per RQ

5.3.1. RQ1 Findings Introduction

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?

The quote below best epitomised the general views shared by the participants in response to RQ1.

“South Africa is quite a diverse nation, so everyone is influenced by their cultural backgrounds, their beliefs, how they were brought up in different homes. That basically moulds the person you are and also moulds the way you behave at work.” M1 (B.F)

The findings revealed that participants shared four common themes which influenced their leadership development and styles which they attributed to their upbringing in South Africa.

In decreasing order of frequency, the themes for RQ1 will be discussed as follows:

1. Theme 1: Leadership competencies
2. Theme 2: Social biases and discrimination in the workplace
3. Theme 3: Personal value system
4. Theme 4: Personal history

Table 9 depicts the number of codes at level one analysis, followed by the code names and frequency for levels two and three analyses, for RQ1.

Table 9 Level one code count and level two and three code names and frequency for RQ1

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?		
Number of Level One Codes	Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
135	Focus on interpersonal skills (83)	Leadership Competencies (135)
	Adjusting to working with different generations (52)	
83	Overcoming bias of others and self (83)	Social Biases and Discrimination (83)
82	Personal Values (21)	Personal Value System (82)
	Leading by example (38)	
	Managing perceptions in terms of competence (23)	
45	Exposure to Diversity (20)	Personal History (45)
	Access to resources and people (25)	

5.3.2. RQ1 Theme 1: Leadership Competencies

The highest occurring theme for RQ1 centred around leadership competencies of millennial leaders in South Africa. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 10 below. The top three level one codes which will be expanded upon are highlighted in the table.

Table 10 RQ1 Theme 1 – Leadership competencies

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?							
Level One Codes						Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
Recognising that leading people is tough and requires grit and determination (11)	The ability to adapt leadership styles to meet individual needs (21)	Flexibility and Agility (9)	Open to change (1)	Being the Twitter Generation we don't take things too personal (2)	Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes (28)	Focus on interpersonal skills (83)	Leadership Competencies (135)
Open to taking risks (2)	Needing to deal with ambiguity (1)	Micromanaging (2)		The need for creating inclusive environments (5)	Transformation Leadership (1)		
Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace (48)	Reverse Mentoring (4)					Adjusting to working with different generations (52)	

The key findings of RQ1 Theme 1 (Leadership competencies) are discussed next.

5.3.2.1 Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace

All participants led multigenerational teams, where team members were both older and younger than they were. They all indicated that leading and managing younger generations required a different leadership style to leading older generations. The most demanding leadership requirement pertained to how objectives were relayed and how deliverables and timings thereof were communicated and managed. Leadership styles had to be adapted not only at the generational level, but also at the individual level, which consumed time and impacted overall workplace productivity. Below are illustrative quotations.

“So, with your older people you have to have factual conversations. With the younger ones it is more listen first, gauge where they are, and have a fluid conversation. At least, hopefully, you get to the end goal in that conversation, or try lead the conversation to the end goal, so the person sees and understands this is why we are doing this.” M2 (B.F)

“For older team members, I do struggle to adapt my leadership style, because I think they are very set in their ways, and it is their way or the highway. But when it comes to younger people, I am a lot more adaptable, and I try work around the individual.” M8 (C.F)

“The bigger the team, the more challenging because each person connects very differently. You have to tap into how to connect with each person in order to unlock the best potential out of them ... I look at my own journey and I have had to adjust my style. I think I have adjusted it four times.” M2 (B,F)

Not only was significant workplace diversity a factor to contend with, but prominent generational differences too. Straddling the younger and older generations meant constant leadership style adjustment and adaptability.

5.3.2.2 Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes

Fourteen (14) participants indicated that collaborative relationship building was an important component of their leadership style, which was less evident in previous generation leaders. Older leaders placed higher emphasis on deliverables and relationships followed based on the quality of work delivered. Below are illustrative quotations.

“It is a little bit Ubuntu like in the sense of acknowledging the greater need for the team in success as opposed to my individual success and my individual performance and obviously with that building on the collaborative element, the case of wanting to see those around me succeed and helping them, building them up”. M6 (I.M)

“We are a lot more people-centric than what it was in the past. In the past, everything was company-centric, and loyalty played a big part.” M4 (W.M)

“A lot of collaborative leadership is required. You cannot do the whole top-down approach. I have found it to be most ineffective.” M2 (B.F)

It was evident that the participant leadership styles were influenced by collaboration, relationship building, empathy and trust, which superseded a focus on task performance.

5.3.2.3 The ability to adapt leadership styles to meet individual needs.

Each participant held their own values, beliefs and expectations relating to work and leadership. They proclaimed that these differences were dissimilar to those from other generations. Participants were required to adapt their leadership styles to meet the needs of individual team members. Below are illustrative quotations.

“In leadership, you need to adapt to your audience, because you need to lead and manage in a way that works for them and that will appeal to them.” M6 (I.M)

“It does influence my leadership style, because with different people in the team from different generations you have to almost understand what makes them tick.”

M1 (B.F)

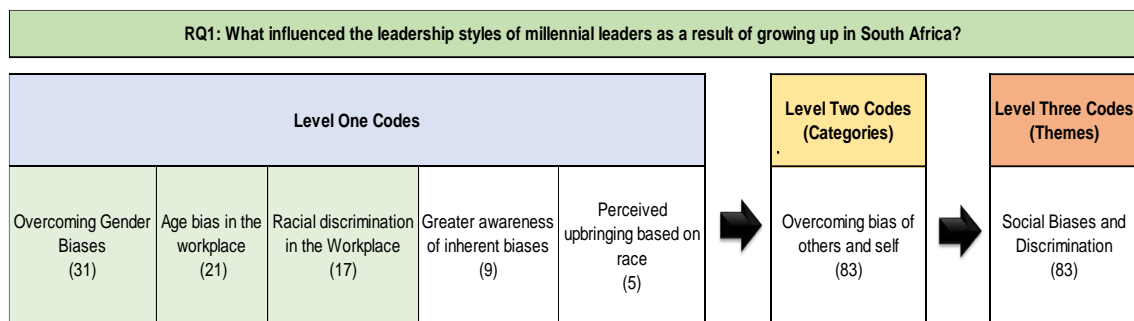
“Even my weekly one-on-ones with them are completely different because they each need something different from me.” M3 (B.F)

Adapting leadership styles was regarded as a necessary requirement for them to increase their followship. The greater the followship, the greater probability of team success.

5.3.3. RQ1 Theme 2: Social Biases and Discrimination in the Workplace

The second highest occurring theme for RQ1 centred around social biases and discrimination to which many of the participants were exposed. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 11 below.

Table 11 RQ1 Theme 2 – Social biases and discrimination in the workplace



The key findings of RQ1 Theme 2 (Social biases and discrimination in the workplace) are discussed next.

5.3.3.1 Overcoming gender bias

Exposure to some form of social bias or discrimination in the workplace influenced the leadership styles of these participants. All 12 female participants indicated that they had experienced some form of gender discrimination in the workplace. Five female participants worked in historically male-dominated industries or functional roles such as Supply Chain, IT, Sales and Distribution, and Legal, which amplified the levels of gender discrimination they experienced. An example of how gender discrimination manifested in the workplace included their team members’ bypassing them and consulting male

counterparts. Variations of this example were mentioned several times. Female participants expressed explicit views on having to work harder than their male counterparts to demonstrate functional competence in the workplace. Male participants were oblivious to negative gender discrimination in the workplace. One male participant shared that his gender actually worked in his favour. Below are illustrative quotations.

“I have to say that I think it unfortunately advances me being male and I’m moving up the ranks faster.” M20 (I.M)

“People underestimate us. It has meant that I have to fight to earn some trust so that people are willing to accept that I am capable of doing the job.” M9 (W.F)

“You will say something, and it gets dismissed and a man will say the exact same thing and then the opinion is heard.” M15 (C.F)

Interestingly, participant exposure to gender bias was prevalent among all females across all race groups. Regardless of their level of seniority, all females had to work harder to prove their worth compared to male colleagues, even where they were more senior than the males.

5.3.3.2 Age bias in the workplace

Millennial leaders are considered young leaders and are increasingly occupying more leadership roles within organisations. However, their presence in these roles is met with varying degrees of scepticism from the older generation. All female participants indicated some form of negative exposure to age bias in the workplace where at least two males indicated no negative experiences related to age bias in the workplace. Below are illustrative quotations.

“I still get passed off with comments about you are as young as my daughter, *wat weet jy?* [What do you know?]” M11 (C.M)

“My age does limit me. They will very quickly go to someone older, just purely based on my age and not come to me first. Even though I do have the knowledge, but they have assumed because I am young I would not know as much as the older person does.” M7 (W.F)

“I have never had negative feedback regarding my age.” M13 (I.M)

From the responses it is clear that being female in the workplace is tough. Being a young female, leading older males, is even tougher. The parent/child dynamic is not easy to avoid. This is especially so where older men compare having a younger female manager as equivalent to reporting to their daughter. Female participants faced age and gender discrimination more intensely than the male participants.

5.3.3.3 *Racial discrimination in the workplace*

Findings from this theme highlighted the racial challenges that these participants still face today. All non-white participants narrated experiences related to racial discrimination during their formative years and also as leaders today within the workplace. White participants, on the other hand, were extra vigilant about what they said and how they behaved in the workplace, ensuring all actions and words were politically correct, so as to not ignite any unintentional racial tension. Below are illustrative quotations.

“In the South Africa dynamic anything could be perceived in the wrong manner. I am very conscious of what I say and how I say it because it might be perceived wrong.” M4 (W.M)

“Someone who came in basically at the same time also coming in from external, same level of experience, but in their whiteness you could tell that the stakeholders were listening to them more as though they knew something better.” M3 (B.F)

“You could see from the interaction from the people that I engaged with. When they thought I was white and how that interaction changed when they realised I wasn’t.” M17 (C.M)

In South Africa, millennials are also referred to as the Born Free Generation. They were born in an apartheid-free South Africa. It was envisaged that they would not be exposed to the same levels of racial segregation and discrimination experienced by previous generations within South Africa. However, participants have indicated that racial discrimination is still very prevalent within their organisations. All participants grappled with historic and systemic challenges.

5.3.4. *RQ1 Theme 3: Personal Value System*

The third highest occurring theme for RQ1 centred around the personal values of the participants. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 12 below.

Table 12 RQ1 Theme 3 – Personal value system

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?							
Level One Codes						Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
The importance of trust (2)	The importance of respect (14)	Being Transparent (2)	The value of authentic leadership (1)	Not shying away from displaying and sharing vulnerabilities (2)		Personal Values (21)	Personal Value System (82)
Being a beacon of hope and inspiration to the younger generation (6)	Empowering others (7)	Having room to self identify (3)	Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age (12)	Iconic black south African political leaders (1)	Dominant female influences growing up (8)	Leading by example (38)	
Feeling like there is zero room for failure (9)	Having to work harder to prove yourself more (5)	Raised to believe that hard work leads to success (4)	Building confidence over time (4)			Managing perceptions in terms of competence (23)	

The key findings of RQ1 Theme 3 (Personal value system) are discussed next.

5.3.4.1 The importance of respect

Participants attributed elements of their personal values which were nurtured during their formative years as key influencers of their leadership development journey. Surprisingly, respect for elders was mentioned the most. Elderly respect was instilled as a childhood value across all participants. All non-white participants struggled with being seen as disrespectful to their elders, where they were required to performance manage them or where they voiced differing opinions. Non-white females expressed higher levels of discomfort than the male participants. One white male participant shared the same sentiment on the need to show respect to older individuals in the workplace. Below are illustrative quotations.

“At home we were brought up that you should respect your elders and their word is final. And there is always this tension at work where even if you do not believe in something, it is sometimes difficult to voice it because it will seem as though you are being disrespectful to an elder.” M1 (B.F)

“In the South African context, I have always been very respectful to senior leaders and that is probably the way that I have been brought up. It has thus been a case of observe first and then contribute, rather than be forceful from a leadership perspective.” M4 (W.M)

“Being born in South Africa, you naturally have that consciousness and that awareness that you should have a certain level of respect for the older generation regardless of you being their manager” M14 (I.F)

Navigating the balance of being respectful with performance delivery, participants mentioned trust, authenticity, transparency, high quality work ethic, empowering others and the desire to succeed as additional key contributors to the leadership styles.

5.3.4.2 Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age.

Participants acknowledged age as a diversity factor, which influenced leadership styles, but did not think that it was the main influencer. They attributed factors such as personality, race, culture, social status among the many factors which, together with age, collectively influenced leadership styles.

“I do not think there is a difference in leadership style, necessarily, by age. I think there is a difference in style in terms of personalities.” M3 (B.F)

“I am of the view that your personality also influences the type of leadership style that you have. Your journey, your upbringing, your career, it is not just age. Age is a component of it, but it is not the driving force.” M11 (C.F)

“I do not think age defines your leadership style. I think your leadership style has more to do with you as a person.” M14 (I.F)

As much as they belonged to the same generational cohort, participants concurred that even among themselves their leadership styles differed. They were made aware of these differences when they compared their individual leadership styles to their peers. Thus, age was not at the core of their leadership style.

5.3.4.3 Feeling like there is zero room for failure.

Because they are young and have less work experience than the older team members they lead, millennials constantly had to prove their worth, which meant working harder than anyone else. They were afforded one chance to make a good impression despite the ever-present expectation that they would fail due to lack of experience. All participants expressed some notion of having zero room for failure and having to work exceptionally hard to prove themselves worthy of their leadership positions. Below are illustrative quotations.

“It is not an assumption immediately that you know what you are talking about, and I feel like I often have to prove it.” M9 (W.F)

“You have to constantly be on top of things, on top of your game, so you do not get the negative perceptions of dropping balls. If you drop any balls, it is ... oh, of course, she is young, what does she really know, or this position was too big for her in the first place.” M1 (B.F)

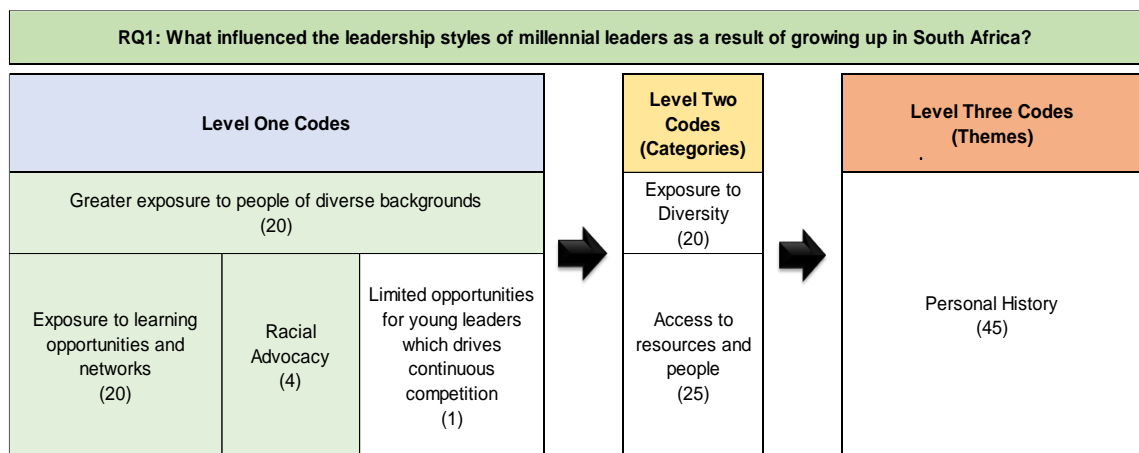
“It does feel as if the bar is higher upfront to prove yourself and once you have done that, it levels out but it always feels a little bit like there is no room for failure because if you fail, your age is going to be blamed for it.” M10 (W.F)

Not only are they young but their competency levels are met with such high levels of skepticism that they were forced to constantly prove that they were worthy of being in the roles they fulfil. There was limited leeway for failing forward.

5.3.5. RQ1 Theme 4: Personal History

The last theme for RQ1 embodies how personal backgrounds and upbringing have moulded and shaped the leadership styles of the participants. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 13 below.

Table 13 RQ1 Theme 4 – Personal history



The key findings of RQ1 Theme 4 (Personal history) are discussed next.

5.3.5.1 Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds

Participants undeniably agreed that growing up in South Africa had an influence on their leadership development. Three participants had the opportunity to work abroad, while several other participants worked with colleagues from the rest of Africa. This exposure to other cultures provided an invaluable platform for these participants to compare their South Africa experience to the rest of the world.

“You would literally have all the clans, although they were segregated, but there were moments where there was a meeting of minds and, as such, that was a powerful way of building and solidifying different characteristics within my leadership skills style.” M5 (B.M)

“It is not like diversity is something new that I have to deal with now; suddenly having a mixed race or mixed gender team. That was standard life. So, it is not something new.” M13 (I.M)

“I never experienced apartheid as my parents would have. The South Africa I experienced was the diverse, we are all together South Africa.” M13 (I.M)

A particularly novel finding was the impact of significant exposure to diversity while growing up and the impact thereof on their leadership styles. This exposure to diversity enriched their adaptability to lead diverse teams which they found was substantially greater than the exposure to diversity and adaptability of previous generations and, in some cases, other countries. They regarded this exposure to diversity as one key element that made them different to leaders from previous generations.

5.3.5.2 Exposure to learning opportunities and networks

Participants acknowledged that as much as they were born and raised in an apartheid-free South Africa, the access to or the lack of access to social networks and academic opportunities varied. This had an influence on their leadership development, which ultimately influenced their style of leadership as they progressed in their careers. Below are illustrative quotations.

“I was very bright at school and was kind of on the fast track, high performer lane, so I grew up with a very strong level of confidence and belief in duty, in my desire to do things. There’s the classic access to education arguments and just having had that, that training that you would call a second order benefit, right? That’s a second order benefit and those definitely help.” M19 (W.M)

“The most profound moment in my education of early years is probably my choice of high school and for me it was less about the school and more about the circles which that school allows you to enter into.” M10 (W.F)

“I had to get funding from the government to proceed. And that already puts us on the back foot when we go into these workspaces.” M8 (C.F)

The findings indicated a significant gap in educational opportunities for a majority of the black African, coloured and Indian participants. These participants felt less confident in the workplace, compared to their white counterparts. The social networks mentioned referred to the white, mostly male, leaders in the workplace who were also referred to as the White Brotherhood, who looked out for their race group peers. Career advancement was seen to be largely race-driven, fuelled by having a good education and knowing someone who knew someone.

5.3.5.3 Racial advocacy

Participants with limited access to social networks and academic opportunities were most prevalent across the black African, coloured and Indian race groups. These race groups proposed that not having these opportunities had a negative impact on their confidence levels and increased self-doubt, especially in the beginning stages of their career progression. Some participants indicated that racial advocacy was necessary for career progression of black African, coloured and Indian leaders today. Below are illustrative quotations.

“I think a lot of people of colour who make it in corporate South Africa have an advocate for them in the boardroom, having people who would mention their name in the room and actively pursue opportunities for that individual.” M15 (C.F)

“I just believe that being a coloured, it's just so much harder to position yourself as an intelligent person and you're fighting with people who have this brotherhood going, you know? And I'm talking about white males.” M18 (C.M)

“Definitely massive advantages there because who was in leadership were white people, right? So, knowing how to get access and navigate the rules, massive benefit and that got me certain positions.” M19 (W.M)

Theme 4 reminds us that as much as a group of individuals may be unified in their belonging to the same generational cohort, there are many factors which collectively and distinctly make them unique.

5.4. RQ1 Summary

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?

There was general consensus among the participants that growing up in South Africa influenced their leadership development and leadership styles. Their exposure to significant diversity and transformation during their formative years laid the foundation for how they showed up as leaders today. They did not find the level of workplace diversity overly surprising or uncommon versus the more homogenous team dynamics which older generation leaders experienced in prior years. Table 14 below captures the top three level one codes and themes for RQ1 as discussed in the previous section. Key highlights from the detailed findings are shared below.

From these findings, it was particularly interesting how challenging and time-consuming having to straddle two generations in the workplace was for the participants. Having to adapt their leadership styles to suit individual needs was an exceptionally novel finding.

Another enlightening finding was the extent of gender discrimination experienced by the female participants. The researcher expected to hear more about ageism, as opposed to the participants' being discriminated against so intensely for being inexperienced and female. Participants found it easier to relate to the younger generations and also to manage them more purposefully, versus the rigid older generation team members.

The most surprising finding was their struggle with not wanting to be seen as disrespectful to their older direct reports. Having to performance manage older employees placed an unforeseen level of complexity on their leadership remit.

Racial discrimination was expected; what was noteworthy was the level of self-awareness and what the researcher interpreted as self-restraint practised by white participants. This group of participants were so afraid to say or do anything that could fuel racial tension. This made the researcher wonder about the extent of their leadership authenticity and the additional strain this placed on these participants. Interestingly, black African participants felt that their career progress relied on white decision makers; white participants felt marginalised and overlooked and considered black Africans to be favoured for career progression opportunities above them.

Table 14 RQ1 Top three level one codes and themes

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Leadership Competencies (135)	Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace (48)	Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes (28)	The ability to adapt leadership styles to meet individual needs (21)
Social Biases and Discrimination (83)	Overcoming Gender Biases (31)	Age bias in the workplace (21)	Racial discrimination in the Workplace (17)
Personal Value System (82)	The importance of respect (14)	Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age (12)	Feeling like there is zero room for failure (9)
Personal History (45)	Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds (20)	Exposure to learning opportunities and networks (20)	Racial Advocacy (4)

Additional findings which did not feature in the top three level one codes, but were deemed as interesting findings, included the following.

Reverse-mentoring: Despite their views on the older generations as rigid and inflexible, there was recognition from participants that the experience of the older generation mattered and there was value in learning from them. Participants also recognised an opportunity for them to enhance the tech savviness of the older generation. They presented opportunities for mutual beneficial relationships.

Twitter generation: Being part of the Twitter generation implied that there was little to no room to take every negative comment personally. As the generation who ranked highly in the consumption of digital data and exposure to social network platforms, millennials were used to criticism on these platforms. They were either giving, receiving or observing constant critic. This added grit to their leadership styles.

Beacon of hope to the younger generation: Also referred to as the Born Frees, due to their being born post-apartheid, they carried a burden of being the change agents of the future for their generation and also the next. Others looked up to them. Other millennials see these young people in leadership roles, and they are inspired. The burden this placed on the shoulders of non-white participants was not expected to be so profound.

Question 1 set out to understand and explore what influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa, which was answered by the findings represented in the above sections.

5.5. RQ2 Findings Introduction

RQ2: How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?

Upon review of the interview recordings, the researcher noted that all participants displayed changes in body language and tone when they spoke about conflict and the need for empathy. All participants authentically acknowledged the need for empathy and how important it was to each of them. The quote below is short but succinctly embodies a profound sentiment shared across the participants.

“Being empathetic and objective is important when resolving conflict.” M20 (I.M)

The findings indicated that the participants shared two common themes which enabled them to address workplace tension and conflict as indicated in Table 15 below.

In decreasing order of frequency, the themes for RQ1 will be discussed as follows:

Theme 1: Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity, equity and inclusion.

Theme 2: Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind.

Table 15 below depicts the number of codes at level one analysis followed by the code names and frequency for levels two and three analyses for RQ2.

Table 15 Level one code count and level two and three code names and frequency for RQ2

RQ2. How do Millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?		
Number of Level One Codes	Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
83	Being firm but fair (41)	Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)
	Balancing the innovative and creative with the tried and tested. (42)	
42	Being able to connect with others (10)	Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)
	Creating safe spaces (32)	

5.5.1. RQ2 Theme 1: Being Assertive and Decisive while Enabling Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The highest occurring theme for RQ2 centred around the need to be assertive and decisive while enabling diversity, equity and inclusion for the team. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 16 below.

Table 16 Level one code count and level two and three code names and frequency for RQ2

RQ2. HOW DO MILLENNIAL LEADERS ADDRESS GENERATIONAL TENSION/CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE?							
Level One Codes							
Balancing empathy with reality (12)	Stand your ground (5)	Tolerance coupled with assertiveness (1)	Boundary setting (8)	Open to challenging the status quo (3)	Balancing traditional values in terms of elderly respect and older generational insubordination in the workplace (4)	Direct one on one resolution (6)	Open to bringing in support reinforcements (2)
Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams (19)				Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams (23)			
				Level Two Codes (Categories)		Level Three Codes (Themes)	
				Being firm but fair (41)		Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)	
				Balancing the innovative and creative with the tried and tested. (42)			

The key findings of RQ2 Theme 1 (Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity, equity and inclusion) are discussed next.

5.5.1.1 Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams

Participants noted that workplace tension and conflict, due to generational differences, were prevalent in the workplace. As the leader, they were laden with the role of peacekeeper. They were expected to take the higher ground and required to navigate

the negative impacts of leading multigenerational teams. The older generation were generally not open to change while the younger generation, despite being easier to work with, required significant amounts of coaching and mentoring. Below are illustrative quotations.

“Too many views or too many opinions, which can sometimes stagnate efficiency and stagnate performance.” M6 (I.M)

“It is extremely difficult to get everyone on the same page and becomes nearly impossible to create a high performing team.” M13 (I.M)

“They are so set in their ways that it is very hard to change their point of view.” M8 (C.F)

Workplace tension and conflict were inevitable. The participants had to manage these in ways that they remained assertive in their leadership, without alienating anyone. It was important that an enabling work environment was established to foster healthy working relationships.

5.5.1.2 Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams

Despite the challenges associated with being a millennial leader and having to navigate the negative impacts of leading multigenerational teams, participants attested to celebrating the positives of leading multigenerational teams as it enriched their personal leadership development journey and that of the collective unit as a whole. Below are illustrative quotations.

“I would not have it any other way, I would be so bored. The knowledge they bring is so different. I think I would not have those experiences or those thoughts or those opinions if everyone was the same.” M7 (W.F)

“It is different viewpoints. I think there is an absolute positive in that. There is the experience piece as well, where younger people might have the great and energetic ideas, where the older generations can give what actually works and what has not worked.” M4 (W.M)

“I think you grow as a person like you never thought you would, because you have to dig very deep within ourselves to deal with these different or these dynamic situations that you have.” M14 (I.F)

All participants attested to choosing multigenerational teams over homogeneity, any day. Creative problem-solving and innovation, coupled with experience and structure, made for a more fun work environment. They embraced workplace diversity and the benefits it promoted.

5.5.1.3 *Balancing empathy with reality*

Participants mostly relied on empathy when dealing with workplace tension and conflict. They undertook to deeply understand the perspectives of the other person and had no interest in proving the other person wrong but sought peaceful resolution above all else. One participant noted that her natural leadership style was not centred around empathy and, due to her overcompensation, would appear to be too nice. Below are illustrative quotations.

“I tend to be very empathetic.” M10 (W.F)

“Being deeply empathetic.” M3 (B.F)

“I think I am too nice sometimes.” M16 (I.F)

Balancing empathy with reality was deployed as a means to distil workplace tension while simultaneously ensuring that the work still progressed. Participants recognised the need to be firm but fair in their undertakings to conflict resolution, so as to avoid situations where team members felt victimised, leading to disengagement and low levels of motivation. When conflict arose, they would address it immediately and directly rather than in group forums.

5.5.2. *RQ2 Theme 2: Building Relationships with Establishing Psychological Safety in Mind*

Participants shared the need for building and maintaining healthy relationships within the workplace which would enable their teams to feel safe and free to share openly and engage authentically. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 17 below.

Table 17 RQ2 Theme 2 – Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind

RQ2. HOW DO MILLENNIAL LEADERS ADDRESS GENERATIONAL TENSION/CONFLICT IN THE WORKPLACE?									
Level One Codes								Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
Being approachable with no hierarchical boundaries (1)	Self awareness and open to feedback (3)	Allowing yourself to show up vulnerable (1)	Correct use of humour (2)	Having an open mindset (4)				Being able to connect with others (10)	Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)
Choosing harmony over conflict (8)	Patience (1)	Remain calm (2)	Good listening skills (2)	Create an environment of understanding (1)	Being inclusive (4)	Gaining trust as early as possible (4)	Stick to the facts (10)	Creating safe spaces (32)	

The key findings of RQ2 Theme (Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind) are discussed next.

5.5.2.1 Stick to the facts

When conflict arose, participants would remain as objective as far as possible while simultaneously promoting team cohesion. They would address tension firmly and directly avoiding group conflict resolution.

“I try and remove the emotion and bring it back to the workplace setting.” M18 (C.M)

“You have to be super objective. If you look at the facts from a business perspective or from a technical perspective, there's a clear way forward.” M20 (I.M)

“Stick to the facts at hand.” M6 (I.M)

They worked hard to ensure that conflict and tension were not a recurring part of their work-life, but recognised that when it did occur, there were strategies they needed to deploy to resolve the tension. The strategies would depend on the source of conflict, but, in most instances, sticking to the facts is what they relied on quite heavily.

5.5.2.2 Choosing harmony over conflict

Participants were in general agreement that as much as they did not enjoy workplace conflict and chose harmonious working environments over the tension, they were tasked with addressing the conflict in ways that promoted psychological safety.

“It's always important to actually take that calmer kind of view.” M5 (B.M)

“It is wanting harmony in the team, because really who wants conflict?” M1 (B.F)

“I know I do not thrive in conflict, but to manage the conflict has never been an issue.” M4 (W.M)

There was an affinity for choosing harmony over conflict among the participants. They avoided conflict but, when necessary, they addressed it firmly but fairly. They refrained from hierarchical power plays but would enforce it when required.

5.5.2.3 Having an open mindset

Participants viewed an open mindset as a key asset in helping them tackle workplace conflict. In the absence of preconceived ideas and judgments, they were able to grow as leaders and not be confined to their way of thinking all the time. They valued the ability to grow as leaders.

“Don't go in there with preconceived ideas about a person or place judgment.”
M18 (C.M)

“Do not cast aspersions, hold judgment or preconceived ideas.” M19 (W.M)

“I am always open to learning. When someone tries to teach me another point of view, I would not just disregard it.” M8 (C.F)

Findings from the last theme for RQ2 highlighted that participant's greatly acknowledged the need for building relationships and that this was always evolving. Providing psychological safety was considered a much-needed requirement for healthy team dynamics and overall team cohesion.

5.6. RQ2 Summary

RQ 2: How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?

Participants were in agreement that generational conflict was prevalent in the workplace. When asked about age-specific conflict, they mostly narrated stories of older team members' not wanting to report to them. The greater the age gap between the leader and the older team member, the higher the potential for conflict. Tension levels were

intensified when older, more experienced individuals found themselves having to report to a younger leader. Table 18 below captures the top three level one codes and themes for RQ2 as discussed in the previous section. Key highlights from the detailed findings are shared below.

Participants shared examples which emphasised the generational differences between themselves, the Gen Xs and the Gen Zs. They complained about the negative impacts that having to manage diverse teams meant, yet they all emphatically agreed that they would rather manage a diverse team than have a more homogenous team. The unpleasant challenges they faced were countered by positive outputs such as enhanced creativity and some levels of positive tension which these agile, open-minded participants welcomed as a personal learning and growth challenge.

From these findings, it was evident that the participants placed empathy at the centre of their conflict resolution strategies. They relied heavily on this component of their leadership styles. Empathy as an important leadership quality was expected. What was interesting was the consistency of the weighting applied across all the participants. It was not only that they understood it to be important, but they believed it and authentically advocated for it.

In moments of conflict, participants opted to keep matters factual, and not engage on an emotional level. This finding peaked the researcher’s curiosity to want to know more about the consistency of this being applied in the workplace. The researcher is interested to know whether they consistently apply high levels of emotional maturity fostered on factual conversations and, in so doing, limit irrational emotional debates, despite being regarded as narcissistic at times. As much as participants chose peace over conflict, they were mostly comfortable to address the conflict head on to avoid unnecessary escalations.

Table 18 RQ2 top three level one codes and themes

RQ2. How do Millennial leaders address generational tension/conflict in the workplace			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)	Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams (23)	Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams (19)	Balancing empathy with reality (12)
Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)	Stick to the facts (10)	Choosing harmony over conflict (8)	Having an open mindset (4)

The most compelling justifications for their leadership approaches to generational conflict was based on their overwhelming desire for collaborative, psychologically safe, fair and harmonious work environments. They wanted their teams to share openly and authentically. They wanted them to feel safe. They wanted them to feel like they belonged, and they were valued. The expected outcomes were not only a more engaged team, but a higher performing team.

Additional findings which did not feature in the top three level one codes, but were deemed as interesting findings, included the following:

Self-awareness and open to feedback: Participants mostly engaged in formal or informal learning activities which helped them to improve their levels of self-awareness. It was important to them to better understand how they responded to situations and also to make them aware of their blind spots. They valued feedback more than leaders from older generations.

Gaining trust as early as possible: They described having one chance to gain the trust of their peers and teams. This was important, because if they failed at that first attempt, their leadership inadequacies were validated by initial expectations that they would fail, and their leadership journey marred.

Good listening skills: It was highlighted that listening to understand and not merely to react was a critical skill. Listening well ensured they were able to interpret and analyse better and ask the right questions. This was an interesting finding in that they are often portrayed as a generation who is arrogant and think that they know all the answers.

Question 2 sought to understand how millennial leaders who manage mixed-aged teams go about handling workplace conflict linked to age differences. This was answered by the findings represented in the above sections.

5.7. RQ3 Findings Introduction

RQ3: What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?

Listening to the participants talk about the advice that they wish they knew at the outset of their leadership journey, the researcher identified similar views on self-imposed high standards for performance delivery. The quote below echoed deeply and widely across the feelings and thoughts during this section of the interviews.

“Don't be so hard in yourself.” M18 (C.M)

The findings indicated that the participants shared four common themes in relation to the past support they wish they had as well as future ongoing support for the future. Table 19 below depicts the number of codes at level one analysis and the code names and frequency for levels two and three analyses for RQ3.

In decreasing order of frequency, the themes for RQ3 will be discussed as follows:

1. Theme 1: Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments
2. Theme 2: Leader of self
3. Theme 3: Leader of teams
4. Theme 4: Personal branding and managing resistance

Table 19 Level one code count and level two and three code names and frequency for RQ3

RQ3.WHAT SUPPORT DO MILLENNIAL LEADERS NEED IN ORDER TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE AS THEY PIONEER THROUGH THE REALMS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?		
Number of Level One Codes	Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
30	Formal and informal learning and development opportunities (25)	Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)
	Appropriate level of support (5)	
11	Develop personal psychology (3)	Leader of Self (11)
	Don't put undue pressure on yourself (8)	
8	Effective Team Communication (2)	Leading Teams (8)
	Leadership is about people (2)	
	Enabling effective Group Dynamics (4)	
6	How to build credibility with others (3)	Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)
	There will be dissenters (3)	

5.7.1. RQ3 Theme 1: Continuous Learning and Transformation within Enabling Work Environments

As millennials increasingly occupy leadership roles, RQ3 set to explore the advice they wished they had received prior to occupying these leadership roles, coupled with any additional support they desired going forward. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 20 below.

Table 20 RQ3 Theme 1 – Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments.

RQ3.WHAT SUPPORT DO MILLENNIAL LEADERS NEED IN ORDER TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE AS THEY PIONEER THROUGH THE REALMS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT?						
Level Two Codes (Categories)						
Tangible and practical leadership courses (4)	Continuous learning versus unlearning (1)	Masterclasses by the older generation (2)	What are the tactical tools that I need to have in my toolkit (4)	Mentorship and Coaching (8)	Time Management (1)	Millennial leadership communities (5)
Having a safety net (3)			Line manager support (2)			
				Level Two Codes (Categories)		Level Three Codes (Themes)
				Formal and informal learning and development opportunities (25)		Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)
				Appropriate level of support (5)		

The key findings of RQ3 Theme 1 (Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environment) are discussed next.

5.7.1.1 Mentorship and coaching

Mentoring and coaching received the highest reference when participants were asked what support they desired to enhance their leadership journey. All participants were aware of mentoring and coaching as support mechanisms, but only two participants mentioned that they were effectively mentored or coached from the early stages of their leadership journey. Interestingly, these two participants were male.

“They help you be the best version of you, which is great.” M13 (I.M)

“Mentoring specifically, and coaching is always helpful.” M4 (W.M)

“I think more formal structures around mentorship and coaching would be really helpful.” M10 (W.F.)

There was a general sense that participants did not know the most appropriate avenues available for engaging mentors or coaches. Mentoring and coaching were also used interchangeably. There appeared to be an expectation or reliance on the organisation to make these services available, rather than explore them independently.

5.7.1.2 Millennial leadership communities

Participants desired millennial leadership communities or associations where they would be able to sound-board off peers rather than always having to be mentored or coached by the older generation. They envisaged structured forums where millennial leaders were able to meet regularly and share their experiences and challenges and solicit advice from like-minded peers.

“I definitely think there was a lack of millennial leaders or a lack of communities that allow for millennial leaders to connect.” M7 (W.F)

“We need to be given a platform to unlearn certain behaviours.” M5 (B.M)

“It really does help that I have colleagues that are in my age group that I can touch base with.” M16 (I.F)

A particularly interesting finding was on the need to unlearn certain behaviours and thoughts to make room for new ways of addressing leadership challenges. An example given concerned the notion that individuals did not have to physically be working in the office to prove their productivity. Participants stated that their Gen X or Baby Boomer leaders preferred teams to be in the office and did not encourage working from home or the practice of working from anywhere. The notion that productivity and work outputs were not defined to office spaces required re-evaluation.

5.7.1.3 Tangible and practical leadership courses

The majority of the participants were exposed to formal leadership and development opportunities within their organisation. They expressed the need for more tangible and practical leadership development opportunities, as many of the leadership courses were based on homogeneous working groups and did not sufficiently address the extreme diversity experienced in organisations in South Africa. There were at least two participants who received no formal leadership training before entering leadership roles.

“I would have appreciated some training. I went into a leadership position with no training.” M8 (C.F)

“I participated in a fair number of leadership courses, and I find them very theoretical as opposed to tangible and practical.” M10 (W.F)

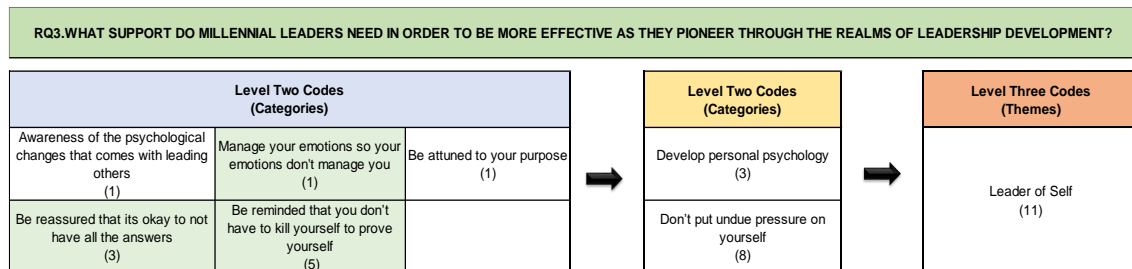
“To be perfectly honest, the more leadership training and tools provided to develop good leaders, the better that leader becomes.” M16 (I.F)

The biggest criticism regarding the formal leadership programmes from those who were exposed to them cited a lack of practical applications to problem-solving. They found these courses too theoretical and, in most cases, outdated to the demands and challenges of the modern-day workplace.

5.7.2. RQ3 Theme 2: Leader of Self

Participants recognised that their ability to effectively lead others greatly hinged on their ability to manage their own journey of leadership self-discovery. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 21 below.

Table 21 RQ3 Theme 2 – Leader of self



5.7.2.1 Be reminded that you do not have to kill yourself to prove yourself

When asked what advice they wished they had received earlier on in their leadership journey, the majority of the participants wished that leaders at that time would have given them the reassurance that, as young leaders, they did not need to overexert themselves in needing to prove their worth. Also, they wished they had known that taking the time to balance their personal needs with work requirements was a necessary requirement. Instead, participants spent the majority of their initial leadership years neglecting their personal health and the needs of those around them at times to ensure career success.

“Work-life balance and the importance of that is something I wish I had learnt sooner and not trying to kill yourself in the process.” M9 (W.F)

“Everyone is winging it.” M15 (C.F)

“I stopped believing that I needed to kill everything I did in order to be good enough or to be worthy.” M14 (I.F)

Due to the initial self-inflicted personal neglect, many of the participants are more determined now to safeguard their mental and physical wellbeing. They admit to still being ambitious and driven by success, but not at all costs. They are more mindful of their decisions when it comes to work demands.

5.7.2.2 Be assured that it is okay to not have all the answers

Motivated to be successful, having to overcome all the generational biases and needing to prove themselves to eradicate professional doubt, participants, in their early career days, held the view that being a leader meant having to know all the answers. They regarded knowledge gaps as a sign of weakness and incompetence. They placed immense pressure on themselves to not appear incompetent through the presence of any knowledge gaps. What they learnt over time was that even the leaders they had admired then did not have all the answers. These leaders, however, shared their experiences and knowledge gaps only much later on. Participants wished that the leaders they had looked up to had reassured them much sooner that not knowing everything would not end their careers and leadership journeys.

“Especially in my early stages of managing people, when someone comes to me, I cannot say I do not know. So, that is definitely something which I wish I had known earlier.” M6 (I.M.)

“You don't have to be the expert.” M20 (I.M)

“There is liberation in not caring, and I am not saying do not care about your work. I am saying do not care about are they going to fire me? Is this wrong? Am I doing this right? You have to let go, and I wish I had done that when I was younger.” M14 (I.F).

Participants felt robbed of being able to savour and just enjoy their leadership journeys. Instead, their leadership journeys were tainted with fears of short-lived careers based on unjustified thoughts of needing to be the most knowledgeable person in the room.

5.7.2.3 Manage your emotions so your emotions do not manage you

An interesting response from one of the participants related to having to manage emotions in the workplace. The display of emotional outbursts increased workplace conflict. As a leader, there is an expectation that a person should be in control of how they manage their emotions.

“Manage your emotions so your emotions don't manage you.” M19 (W.M)

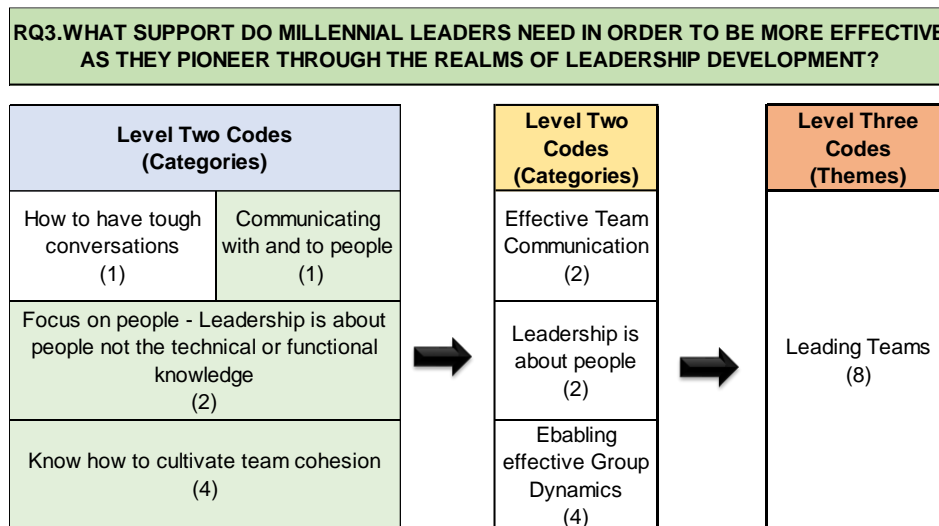
What made this comment interesting was the thought it sparked about being your authentic self in the workplace, but also needing to adhere to the written and unwritten rules of the workplace. This participant wished that someone had forewarned him about

managing his emotional reactions in the workplace irrespective of his natural and authentic inclination to be emotionally expressive.

5.7.3. RQ3 Theme 3: Leading Teams

Participants indicated that they needed assistance with leading teams. The multi-aged, diverse nature of teams in the workforce today was a phenomenon that they were not sure of how to navigate with ease. They mentioned that leadership, for them, was less about the functional competence they possessed and more about their ability to be a leader and to lead their teams. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme is captured in Table 22 below.

Table 22 RQ3 Theme 3 – Leading teams



The key findings of RQ3 Theme 3 (Leading teams) are discussed next.

5.7.3.1 Know how to cultivate team cohesion

Being in the middle of two generations, the participants were able to relate to either group on different topics. Social media topics seemed to be common and more relatable between the participants and the younger generation. Family matters or hobbies were common conversational topics with the older generations. Participants struggled with cultivating team cohesion as the diversity and team dynamics were more complex than before.

“Team culture is something that I always needed help with.” M4 (W.M)

“Building an environment where you can get people that know what they're doing to work well together and get the best out of a team.” M20 (I.M)

“You are literally forced to pull to each and every person's different needs.” M2 (B.F)

A great challenge for the participants was enabling cross-generational team cohesion in the absence of the participant having to be the common role player. As much as the teams were diverse, they were also very polarised; it was not easy for participants to break down the barriers. They recognised this as a challenge, as they understood the value of positive team dynamics.

5.7.3.2 Focus on people – Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge

Adequate functional knowledge is seen as a necessary requirement for entry into any role. Participants recognised that at the start of their careers, functional expertise is what carried them through and aided in career progression. Only as they progressed in leadership roles and leading teams did they recognise the role that people management played. By then, it was too late.

“Leadership is managing people that is your core focus.” M11 (C.F)

“I had a manager that never spoke to me, just emailed me. And she was the worst, she was the absolute worst. I knew that that was not the kind of manager I wanted to be.” M14 (I.F)

Participants wished that they had been made aware of the central role that people management played, and that the competencies required had been developed earlier in their careers, regardless of whether they were people leaders or not.

5.7.3.3 Communicating with and to people

Even though only one participant explicitly mentioned communication as a support requirement, the researcher deemed it important to note. The role that effective communication plays can sometimes be underrated. The importance of communication in this research is particularly relevant, considering the varied preferences of communication styles across the generations. The options are plentiful, namely WhatsApp, email, face-to-face and social media to name a few.

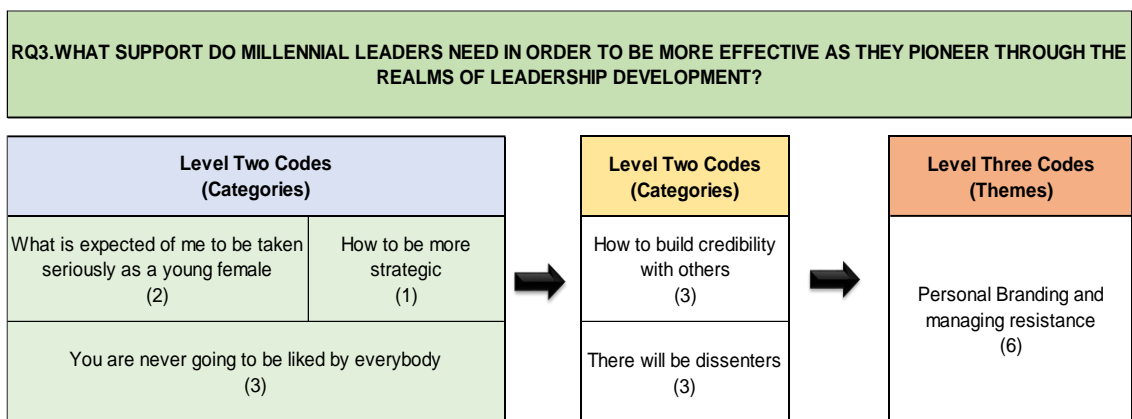
“Ultimately, we are dealing with people, and it is about understanding people and communicating with people and communicating to people.” M6 (I.M)

The message being communicated, the channels used, how the message/tone was received and subsequently interpreted, coupled with the response generated, directly impacts the workplace dynamics. Mastering the art of effective communication was considered essential in the workplace.

5.7.4. RQ 3 Theme 4: Personal Branding and Managing Resistance

The last theme for RQ3 looks at how leaders needed to be cognisant of the leadership image they projected and how they dealt with dissenters. The level one and two codes which influenced the classification of the level three theme are captured in Table 23 below.

Table 23 RQ3 Theme 4 – Personal branding and managing resistance



The key themes under RQ3 Theme 4 (Personal branding and managing resistance) are discussed next.

5.7.4.1 You are never going to be liked by everybody

Participants acknowledged that external perceptions played a significant part in how they were perceived within the work environment and these perceptions impacted their ability to influence and garner followers. They were aware that how they were perceived had a direct impact on the followers they were able to attract.

“You are never going to be liked by everybody.” M12 (B.F)

“And a lot of the stuff that we have to overcome is really the soft stuff. Being confident in who you are and being able to bring your unique experience and your

own nuances to the workplace without thinking that you need to fit into a specific mould.” M15 (C.F)

“My younger self would do things to make you like me. Whereas the older I get, the less I have the need to do that.” M16 (I.F)

Participants recognised that external perceptions were important and needed to be managed effectively. They sought help in mastering effective ways to promote positive perceptions and manage the dissenters.

5.7.4.2 What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female?

It was surprising to the researcher that this sentiment was not iterated many times across more of the female participants, considering the extent of gender discrimination suffered by the female participants.

“What is expected of me to be taken seriously?” M10 (W.F)

Even though mentioned only once, this statement echoed volumes, as it translated into a desperate plea for wanting to be acknowledged not only as a leader, but also as a leader who happened to be female.

5.7.4.3 How to be more strategic

One participant mentioned a support requirement which would enable her to be more strategic in the workplace. It was intriguing that this was the only support requirement which was geared towards a functional requirement.

“Strategic thinking.” M9 (W.F)

The low occurrence of this kind of support request, namely a functional/technical requirement, was interpreted as a reflection of how the need for non-functional and people management support significantly outweighed the need for functional/technical support.

5.8. RQ 3 Summary

RQ3: What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?

When asked what it was like to be a millennial leader in South Africa, participants described being the youngest, the only female, the only black African, coloured or Indian in the boardroom as lonely. They declared that they worked hard to earn their place in the corporate world but were not always given the leadership guidance and support needed to lead people. Their functional competence paved the way for their career growth, but they were thrust into leadership roles with limited people management support. They needed help and support to not only improve their own leadership development, but to enhance the leadership impacts on those they led. Table 24 below captures the top three level one codes and themes for RQ3 as discussed in the previous section. Key highlights from the detailed findings are shared below.

Interestingly, participants desired traditional forms of coaching and mentorship support. It was surprising that they did not mention more digitally geared platforms as the desired platform for learning. Instead, they were open to guidance and learning from the older generation. Formal training was considered valuable, provided it addressed tactical solutions which were not based on the old ways of working trying to address new challenges. They expressed an overwhelming gap in practical skills required for day-to-day millennial leadership.

A thought-provoking finding was the request for peer community networks, where they could bounce ideas off peers. This generation increasingly occupied leadership roles, but the rate of collective rise to these roles meant that peer networks were scarce. They emphasised that some challenges they faced would benefit from peer insights. They were tired of always having to rely on older generation leaders for answers to modern challenges.

Contrary to popular belief, they worked hard and self-imposed high standards of delivery. These high standards resulted in unnecessary pressure to not fail only to find out that previous leaders were not necessarily more knowledgeable, but rather they groomed their leadership skills over time, whereas there was an expectation on the millennial leader, to be perfect immediately. They looked for reassurance that it was okay to not

know the answers immediately and that not knowing did not imply being a failure. They saw no room for failure.

For the participants, people were at the core of leadership. With teams evolving from a more homogenous composition which the previous generation leaders were more accustomed to managing, these leaders sought guidance on how to best navigate the vastly different team dynamics they were faced with to enhance team cohesion and overall team performance.

Table 24 RQ3 top three level one codes and themes

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)	Mentorship and Coaching (8)	Tangible and practical leadership courses (4)	What are the tactical tools that I need to have in my toolkit (4)
Leader of Self (11)	Be reminded that you don't have to kill yourself to prove yourself (5)	Be reassured that its ok to not have all the answers (3)	Be attuned to your purpose (1)
Leading Teams (8)	Know how to cultivate team cohesion (4)	Focus on people - Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge (2)	Communicating with and to people (1)
Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)	You are never going to be liked by everybody (3)	What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female (2)	How to be more strategic (1)

Additional findings which did not feature in the top three level one codes, but were deemed as interesting findings, included the following.

Line manager support: Participants sought reassurance that it was acceptable to not be the perfect leader immediately. They believed that their rise to leadership was not always accompanied with the necessary level of line manager support. The same managers who promoted them were the same managers who did not always support them.

Masterclasses by the older generation: This novel finding was based on appreciation and admiration of the knowledge and experience of the older generations, which was deemed necessary and important. However, they described the older leaders as not open to knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer.

RQ3 sought to explore the workplace support millennial leaders sought to help them be future-fit leaders. Relevant responses were captured from the findings.

RQ4: What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?

5.9. RQ4 Findings Introduction

Participants were largely aware of the stereotypes associated with their generation. As much as participants shared what they viewed as vast leadership differences between the millennial generation and the previous generation, many did acknowledge the important role the previous generation played in laying the foundation for their leadership journey. The quote below emphasises this notion quite emphatically.

“It is not possible that we could completely transition from being trained by a generation that is well put and professional and strict, and we become very fickle. It is not possible. You cannot lose those values; those were the groundings to our leadership.” M1 (B.F)

The findings indicated that the participants shared one common theme linked to their views on millennial stereotypes.

The only level three code discussed below is:

1. Theme 1: Stereotypes exist at the individual level.

Table 25 below depicts the number of codes at level one analysis and the code names and frequency for levels two and three analyses for RQ4.

Table 25 Level one code count and level two and three code names and frequency for RQ4

RQ4. What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk		
Number of Level One Codes	Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
16	Assigning labels to individuals or groups is a common phenomenon (16)	Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)
9	Not all Millennials are the same (9)	

Table 26 below provides details of the level one and two code names which influenced the classification of the level three theme.

Table 26 RQ4 Theme – Stereotypes exist at the individual level

RQ4. What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?					
Level One Codes				Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
They are job hoppers (7)	They have higher expectations on organisations (1)	They are entitled (1)	The younger generation is lazy (7)	Assigning labels to individuals or groups is a common phenomenon (16)	Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)
You should not paint all Millennials with the same brush (5)	What are the stereotypes? (2)	Age is just a number (2)		Not all Millennials are the same (9)	

5.9.1. RQ4 Theme 1 Key Findings: Leading Teams

5.9.1.1 They are job hoppers

All participants were familiar with the millennial stereotype of job hopping, namely chasing higher salaries and fancy job titles. One participant called out that she was not a job hopper herself, but witnessed this among peers, where millennials moved around frequently because they were not aligned with the organisational culture of the organisations in which they were. The justification for job hopping was linked to misalignment of the individual’s purpose to that of the organisation. One female participant proudly declared her job hopping as a means to improve her financial independence. According to her, she worked hard and deserved more.

“I myself have not jumped from organisation to organisation and I have not experienced many of my peers to have done the same either.” M10 (W.F)

“It is true that we are comfortable to hop, but it is not always about the title. It is about the breadth of experience and feeling like you are making an impact and adding value.” M2 (B.F)

“I think most of the time they do that is because they are frustrated with their working environments. They are trying to find a place where they fit in.” M12 (B.F)

Where participants themselves were not job hoppers, they based their loyalty on having meaningful work, and did not see the need to move. Participants, irrespective of whether they job hopped or not, did not see this activity as negative in any way. They did not promote nor condemn it.

5.9.1.2 The younger generation is lazy

All participants strongly disagreed with being called lazy. It did not make sense to them that a work hard work ethic which was instilled upon them during their formative years resulted in their being seen as lazy.

“I think that the younger generation is lazy because that is such a global thought, and it is not always true.” M9 (W.F)

“It is not possible that we could completely transition from being trained by a generation that is well put and professional and strict, and we become very fickle. It is not possible. You cannot lose those values; those were the groundings to your leadership.” M1 (B.F)

“The truth is they actually do work hard if it is something that really drives the purpose for them.” M4 (W.M)

They saw themselves as ambitious and prepared to work hard for career success. Just because they valued work-life balance more than previous generation leaders did not make them lazy.

5.9.1.3 You should not paint all millennials with the same brush

It was interesting that a few participants did not relate with the term “millennial” and wanted to know whether it was what they were. Some participants were aware of the popular stereotypes, but they all felt strongly that stereotypes should not be applied in broad strokes across an entire generation.

“I do believe my generation is very different, but even if we form part of the same generation, we are very different.” M7 (W.F)

“Within the millennial leadership space, there is a very diverse view and approach and part of that is individual driven.” M6 (I.M)

“I think we are just a bunch of misunderstood people that are just trying to live our lives and figure it out for ourselves”. M16 (I.F)

It was humorous to hear how the participants referred to the Gen Zs as lazy, who claimed to work smarter over working harder. Ironically, this generation, who claimed it unfair to paint an entire generation with the same brush, seemed to be doing exactly that.

5.10. RQ4: Summary

RQ4 Summary: What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?

Stereotypes are socially constructed assumptions associated with individuals or groups. They have positive or negative connotations. As expected, it is the negative stereotypes that receive the most attention. Millennials as a generational cohort were not exempt from negative stereotypes in the workplace. Table 27 below captures the top three level one codes and themes for RQ4 as discussed in the previous section. Key highlights from the detailed findings are shared below.

Participants acknowledged that millennial job hopping was prevalent, but the reasons for moving organisations were not always monetary related. Participants shed light on why they or their peers engaged in frequent job changes. The most compelling reason was attributed to their not feeling like they belonged. Where there was a major disconnect between the individual's workplace expectations or company culture, or lack of meaningful work, they would simply leave.

Participants vehemently disagreed to being labelled as lazy. They considered themselves exceptionally hard workers, not only because this was a personal value instilled upon them during their formative years, but, even more so, as they regarded themselves as ambitious and constantly competed for success. How could a generation who had to work harder than other generations, to prove their worth, be the lazy ones, they wanted to know rhetorically. It was humorous to hear the millennial participants refer to the younger generation, Gen Zs, as the lazy ones who deployed shortcuts under the premise of working smarter and not harder.

Interestingly, some participants applied the common millennial stereotypes to the Gen Zs. There was a unanimous view that, as much the stereotypes were plausible and were prevalent in the millennial generational cohort, it was not acceptable to generalise across the entire cohort. There was consensus that where these stereotypes did exist, it was at the individual level and not across the cohort as a whole.

Table 27 RQ1 top three level one codes and themes

RQ4. What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)	They are job hoppers (7)	The younger generation is lazy (7)	You should not paint all Millennials with the same brush (5)

No new information relating to millennial generational stereotypes was uncovered through the findings. RQ4 explored the generational stereotypes associated with millennial leaders. Responses to this question were captured from the findings.

5.11. RQ1–4 Summary

All 11 themes and the top three level one codes across the four RQs were presented in this chapter. A summary of the questions, themes and top three level one codes is captured in Table 28 below.

Table 28 Summary of themes and top three level one codes per RQ

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Leadership Competencies (135)	Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace (48)	Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes (28)	The ability to adapt leaderships styles to meet individual needs (21)
Social Biases and Discrimination (83)	Overcoming Gender Biases (31)	Age bias in the workplace (21)	Racial discrimination in the Workplace (17)
Personal Value System (82)	The importance of respect (14)	Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age (12)	Feeling like there is zero room for failure (9)
Personal History (45)	Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds (20)	Exposure to learning opportunities and networks (20)	Racial Advocacy (4)
RQ2. How do Millennial leaders address generational tension/conflict in the workplace			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)	Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams (23)	Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams (19)	Balancing empathy with reality (12)
Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)	Stick to the facts (10)	Choosing harmony over conflict (8)	Having an open mindset (4)
RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)	Mentorship and Coaching (8)	Tangible and practical leadership courses (4)	What are the tactical tools that I need to have in my toolkit (4)
Leader of Self (11)	Be reminded that you don't have to kill yourself to prove yourself (5)	Be reassured that its ok to not have all the answers (3)	Be attuned to your purpose (1)
Leading Teams (8)	Know how to cultivate team cohesion (4)	Focus on people - Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge (2)	Communicating with and to people (1)
Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)	You are never going to be liked by everybody (3)	What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female (2)	How to be more strategic (1)
RQ4. What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)	They are job hoppers (7)	The younger generation is lazy (7)	You should not paint all Millennials with the same brush (5)

5.12. Chapter 5 Conclusion

The research findings answered the four research questions and fulfilled the research objectives as originally set out. That is, the research:

- Explored how growing up in South Africa, influenced the leadership styles of participants;
- Enquired how participant’s leadership styles mitigated generational workplace conflict;
- Delved into the leadership support solicited by the participants; and
- Explored participants views regarding generational stereotypes.

This chapter presented rich findings from all 20 participant interviews. At least one supporting quotation per participant was referenced. This demonstrated not only the

richness of the data collected but also the relevance of the participant experiences to the research questions.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

6.1. Outline of the Discussion

In Chapter 5, the key findings and supporting quotes from the 20 research interviews were presented. This chapter cross-references the key findings in Chapter 5 with key insights from the literature review outlined in Chapter 2. The research questions set out in Chapter 3 provided the basis for the analysis and discussion of this section.

All 11 themes and the top three level one codes per theme, from Chapter 5, are discussed in this chapter. Both similarities and differences between the literature and the findings are captured throughout the chapter. The researcher identified literature gaps where they arose.

Figure 14 below provides a reminder of the research topic, the constructs discussed in Chapter 2, the RQs from Chapter 3 and a diagrammatic representation of how the findings link back to the literature.

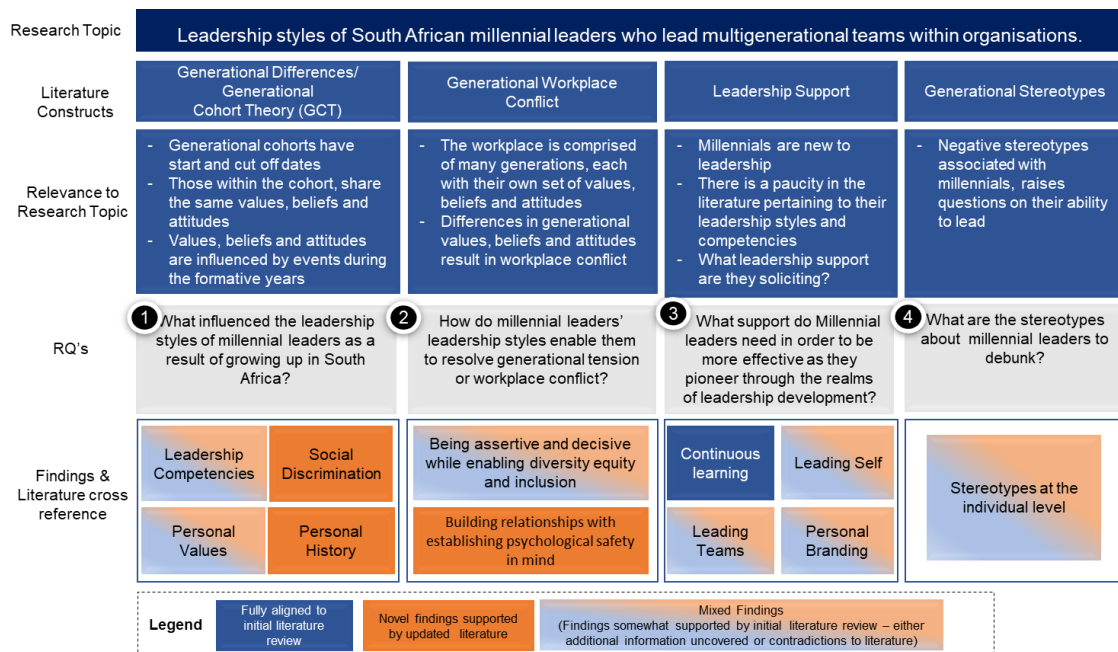


Figure 14 Linking the findings to the RQs and the literature constructs

Source: Diagram researchers own.

The roadmap in Figure 15 below outlines how information is presented in this chapter.

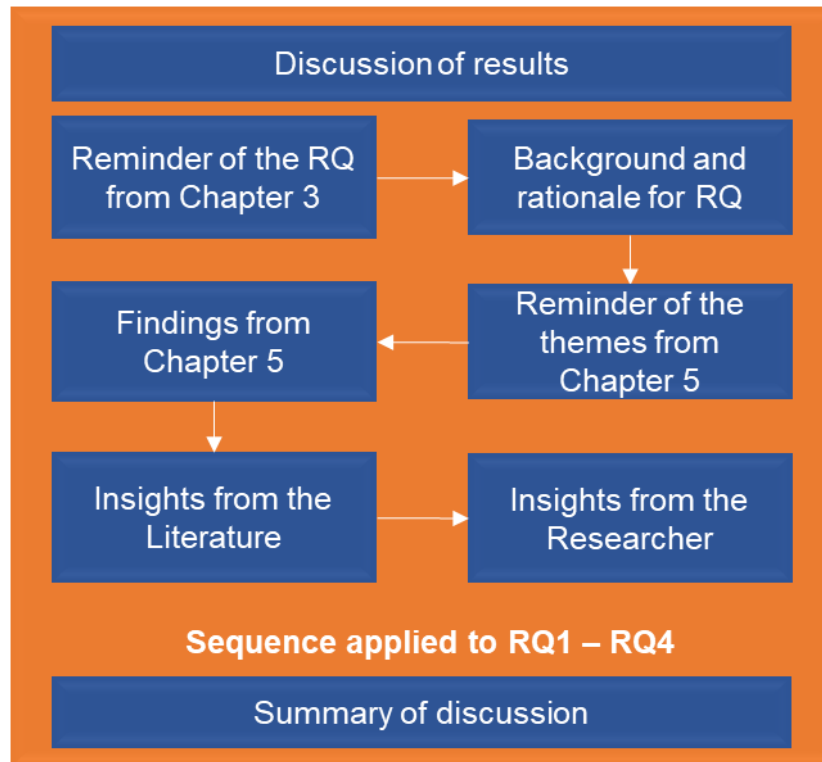


Figure 15 Discussion of results roadmap

6.2. Discussion of Results

6.2.1. Discussion of Results for RQ1

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?

6.2.1.1 RQ1 rationale

The GCT postulates that commonly held generational beliefs, values and attitudes are formed as a result of exposure to historical, social and economic experiences shared by that generational cohort (Twenge, 2010). These experiences, during the formative years, are said to form the foundation of beliefs, values and attitudes displayed later on in life (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). As a generational cohort (Twenge, 2010), South African millennials were exposed to life-changing events in their formative years (Jonck et al., 2017; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Gabrielova and Buchko (2021) highlighted a gap in the literature on the leadership styles of millennials. The call from Jonck et al. (2017) for a focus on South African millennial leaders greatly resonated with the researcher's desire to explore this topic within the South African context. In response to the above-mentioned

literature gaps, RQ1 set out to explore what influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa.

Table 29 below captures the four themes and the top three level one codes which influenced the participant's leadership styles as a result of growing up in South Africa. These four themes were:

1. Leadership Competencies
2. Social Biases and Discrimination
3. Personal Value Systems
4. Personal History

Table 29 RQ1 themes and top three level one codes

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Leadership Competencies (135)	Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace (48)	Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes (28)	The ability to adapt leaderships styles to meet individual needs (21)
Social Biases and Discrimination (83)	Gender Biases (31)	Age bias in the workplace (21)	Racial discrimination in the Workplace (17)
Personal Value System (82)	The importance of respect (14)	Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age (12)	Feeling like there is zero room for failure (9)
Personal History (45)	Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds (20)	Exposure to learning opportunities and networks (20)	Racial Advocacy (4)

Table 30 captures the theme that influenced the participant's leadership styles the most and the associated top three level one codes.

Table 30 RQ1 Theme 1 of 4: Leadership competencies

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Leadership Competencies (135)	Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace (48)	Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes (28)	The ability to adapt leaderships styles to meet individual needs (21)

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ1 Theme 1 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher.

6.2.1.2 RQ1 Theme 1 of 4: Leadership competencies

Participants acknowledged that their leadership styles, as a result of growing up in South Africa, were mostly influenced by their leadership competencies. The top three factors influencing their leadership competencies were:

1. Straddling older and younger generations in the workplace
2. Choosing collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes
3. Adapting leaderships styles

i.) Straddling older and younger generations in the workplace

The first factor associated with Theme 1 related to the participants' having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace. The prevalence of this finding was largely attributed to diversity and generational differences in the workplace. Participants found it extremely challenging and time-consuming having to manage multigenerational teams. They viewed the diversity in South African workplaces as being significantly higher than in other countries. Participants reported that younger generations required a different leadership style to the older generations. The most demanding leadership requirement pertained to how objectives were relayed and how deliverables and timings thereof were communicated and managed. Younger generations required more of a coaching and mentoring style of leading. They also required more guidance and support, as opposed to the older generation who responded favourably to fact-based conversations. The younger generations were described as more motivated and eager to perform required tasks, whereas older generations frequently questioned the necessity for tasks especially when it differed to how they would have completed it in the past.

With workplace diversity considered to be more prevalent than ever before (Sadler et al., 2020), it is reasonable to infer that increased workplace diversity led to increased leadership challenges, which required tailored leadership styles to meet the individual needs of team members. The plight of the participants' struggle with diversity management is made plausible, with South Africa being rated among the top 20 diverse countries in the world (Alesina et al., 2003). It was also suggested that differences in values, beliefs and attitudes related to work manifested in different approaches and preferences to ways of working (Anderson et al., 2017). Further to this notion, it could reasonably be expected that tailored leadership styles could hamper team efficiencies.

The younger generation, Gen Z, were found to be more relatable than the older generation team members; the participants were closer in age to the Gen Zs than to the Gen Xs. The younger generation were eager to learn while the older generation were considered rigid and set in their ways. Social media platforms were a common area of interest between the younger millennial leaders and the Gen Zs. Interestingly, there were three participants who were closer in age to the Gen Xs, who mentioned that they appreciated the structure and proactive nature of the older generation versus the reactive stance of the Gen Zs. The scholarly work of Gabrielova and Buchko (2021) posited that the leadership styles of millennial leaders are more attuned to the leadership preferences of Gen Z.

The research findings and the previous literature align on the multitude of diversity and generational differences in the workplace. There appears to be congruence on the notion that workplace diversity brings with it the need for tailored leadership styles which influenced the leadership styles of the participants. The high prevalence of diversity within the South African workplace added an extra layer of leadership complexity for the participants.

ii.) Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes

The second factor associated with Theme 1 related to how collaboration and teamwork were prioritised over tasks and outcomes. Compared to older generation leaders, participants preferred collaborative working relationships over task delivery. They viewed their relationship with team members and senior leaders more as a peer relationship than a hierarchical manager subordinate relationship. Older generation leaders preferred to focus on task delivery first and allowed relationships to form based on work performance. Participants regarded this way of working as hierarchical with a top-down approach to achieving work outputs. This way of working was considered to promote individual competition among team members, as opposed to fostering team cohesion. For older generation leaders, trust had to be earned and was a prerequisite for relationship building. This was not the case for the participants where trust was a key component of their leadership styles and was bestowed upon teams regardless of their work performance. TikTok videos by Lambert (n.d) and Morss (2022) were shared with participants to demonstrate the generational differences in a humorous way.

Millennial leaders did not value hierarchical power and top-down management approaches to work as much as the older generations and, therefore, they appreciated teamwork and peer collaboration over task delivery (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

Millennials valued group success over individual success in the workplace and preferred people-centric ways of working over workplace competition with team members (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

The literature corroborates the study's findings in that differences in leadership styles were demonstrated to exist between how the participants led their teams versus the older generation leaders. The higher emphasis was placed on trust, teamwork and collaboration versus top-down management practices. Participants did not expect teams to earn their trust in order to drive team collaboration.

iii.) Adapting leaderships styles

The third and last factor associated with Theme 1 centred around how millennial leaders had to adapt their leadership styles due to generational diversity in the workplace. A one-size-fits-all leadership style simply would not work for these participants as it might have worked in the past with a more homogenous workforce. Participants relied heavily on their ability to adapt their leadership styles to meet the individual needs of their teams. Participants classified their leadership styles as situational and would be adapted depending on the needs from individuals.

Not only are millennials seen to be adaptive, but they are also considered agile with the ability to transition relatively quickly (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). These characteristics from the literature, in relation to millennials, are not specific to their leadership styles. However, it is plausible to infer that adaptability and agility were applied to their leadership styles. Coupled with their affiliation for collaborative and team-centric approaches to teams, their ability to adapt their leadership styles appears probable (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

The literature on millennial leadership styles does not explicitly reference their ability to adapt leadership styles to meet the needs of teams. However, from the findings and suggestions from the literature, it is not unreasonable to expect that leadership style adaptability is necessary, especially within the diverse workplace, and that the participants were able to meet this requirement.

Moving on to Theme 2 of 4 for RQ1, Table 31 captures the theme that influenced the participant's leadership styles the second highest, including the associated top three level one codes.

6.2.1.3 RQ1 Theme 2 of 4: Social bias and discrimination

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ1 Theme 2 in relation to the literature (Table 31). It then includes further insights from the researcher.

Table 31 RQ1 Theme 2 of 4: Social biases and discrimination

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Social Biases and Discrimination (83)	Gender Biases (31)	Age bias in the workplace (21)	Racial discrimination in the Workplace (17)

The second theme to emerge from the findings related to social biases which the participants acknowledged had influenced their leadership styles as a result of growing up in South Africa. The top three factors related to social biases in the workplace were:

1. Gender biases
1. Age biases
2. Racial discrimination

i.) Gender biases

The social bias that influenced the leadership styles of participants the most related to gender bias. Gender biases were more common towards females than males. Female participants expressed explicit views that their leadership styles were directly influenced by gender biases, as they had to work harder than their male counterparts to demonstrate functional competence in the workplace. Male participants did not report awareness of gender disparity in leadership and career development and reported no impact on their leadership styles as a result of gender discrimination. There were male participants who reported that their gender may have favoured their career progression. Gender discrimination appeared to be prevalent for females across all race groups.

Gender discrimination in the workplace has been around for decades (Sinden, 2017). Despite claims by the South African government that policies have been instituted to address gender discrimination in the workplace, men still overshadow females in senior level positions (Matotoka & Odeku, 2021). The policies that were intended to drive greater female equity included the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998), the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (53 of 2003) and the National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality of 2000 (Sinden, 2017). When looking at

the representation of women in senior roles in the workplace as a key metric for policy success, it would appear that these policies have yielded insufficient results, since the representation of women in the workplace was still significantly underrepresented (Sinden, 2017).

The literature was not explicit on gender discrimination geared at millennial leaders; however, the prevalence of discrimination based on gender, as a diversity factor, was supported by the literature. The prevalence of gender discrimination skewed towards women; how this may affect their leadership styles and overall experiences in the workplace was aligned to the literature. The exact reasons for these policies not being effective was deemed out of scope for this research and is possibly a consideration for future research.

ii.) Age bias in the workplace

Following gender bias, age bias was the next most prominent bias to influence participants' leadership styles. Being the youngest person in a senior level engagement/meeting was not uncommon for the participants. They were familiar with hearing remarks from older generations about their being young and having limited professional experience in relation to the seniority of the roles they occupied. Age discrimination was not unfamiliar to them. Interestingly, the remarks to male participants suggested positive achievement. Where older males reported to younger female participants, or the senior leaders were male, females were told they did not have the experience or knowledge skillset for the role. It was suggested they were unknowledgeable and were compared to the young daughters of the male team members or senior leaders. Female leaders found that their leadership styles unintentionally took on a more masculine tone when dealing with male team members. Male participants did not recall any negative influence on their leadership styles as a result of age biases. On the contrary, positive feedback about being young in a leadership position increased their motivation and engagement in the workplace.

Age as a diversity factor is the most pronounced form of diversity in the workplace (Becker et al., 2022). Literature on age discrimination in the workplace was skewed towards ageism, where the older generations were negatively discriminated against due to their age (Bratt et al., 2018). Reports on younger people experiencing age discrimination were suggested to have grown but remain currently limited (Bratt et al., 2018; Weirich, 2017). The literature informs us of the prevalence of age discrimination in the workplace.

The findings and the literature align on age as a diversity factor to contend with in the workplace. From the findings, the prevalence of age discrimination associated to both the younger and older generation was not surprising to the researcher. What was most intriguing was the extent of age discrimination and derogatory experiences of the female participants and how this influenced their leadership styles where they felt compelled to amend the tone of their leadership styles when dealing with male team members. Being compared to a young child and being unknowledgeable was pervasive. The literature informs us of the prevalence of age discrimination in the workplace for all generations, making the impact on leadership styles for the participants plausible. The extent to which age discrimination may be coupled with other forms of discrimination was not within the scope of this study. However, the results of such a study could enrich the knowledge gap on leadership styles of millennial leaders even further.

iii.) Racial discrimination in the workplace

The third highest occurring social bias that participants were faced with was racial discrimination in the workplace. Black African, coloured and Indian participants reported that they were capable and competent for the roles they occupied, despite always contending with being undermined due to their racial identities. For the participants, the notion that they were not good enough meant that they often self-doubted their capabilities. The effect on their leadership styles meant that they often questioned whether they were deserving of their roles. They found themselves checking and double-checking their actions and their decisions, and continuously sought feedback just to ensure they were doing fine as leaders. They found this to be a distraction on actually leading versus always having to check on leadership performance and leadership authenticity. White participants reported discriminatory experiences, suggesting that they perceived to be overlooked for senior positions since racial inequalities of the past needed to be addressed.

South African millennials, born during post-apartheid South Africa, are also referred to as the Born Free Generation; they are so termed as they were expected to be free of the racial discrimination that would typically be associated with apartheid (Ndimande, 2013). This is not the case as they remain victims of this legacy system as the country continues the arduous task of decolonisation (Oyedemi, 2021; Mayer et al., 2019). A literature search on racial discrimination in the South African workplace is bountiful; however, specific references to racial discrimination experienced by millennial leaders were scarce (Jonck et al., 2017). Imposter syndrome negatively affected professionals who did not feel confident or worthy of the positions they occupied in the workplace (Gallagher,

2019). Middle management and senior management positions are still largely occupied by white South Africans, and males in particular (Sinden, 2017).

In terms of the political history of South Africa, the experiences of the participants in relation to racial discrimination was not unexpected and the findings mostly align with the literature. The influence on leadership styles appeared to be evident, where participants had to navigate self-doubt with acceptance of their worthiness for the leadership roles they occupied. A particularly rich and novel finding was the extensive levels of diversity that participants were exposed to during their formative years, which somehow did not alleviate the racial discrimination they contend with today.

Moving on to Theme 3 of 4 for RQ1, Table 32 captures the theme that ranked third for influencing the participants' leadership styles, including the associated top three level one codes.

6.2.1.4 RQ1 Theme 3 of 4: Personal value system

The next section of this chapter will discuss the top three level one codes for RQ1 Theme 3 in relation to the literature and include further insights from the researcher (Table 32).

Table 32 RQ1 Theme 3 of 4: Personal value system

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Personal Value System (82)	The importance of respect (14)	Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age (12)	Feeling like there is zero room for failure (9)

The third theme for RQ1 included personal values that the participants identified as essential influencers to their leadership styles. The top three personal values were:

1. Respect
2. Leadership is about personal style
3. Zero room for failure

i.) The importance of respect

The highest-ranking personal value which influenced the leadership styles of participants, as a result of growing up in South Africa, was attributed to respect for elders. Participants attributed this component of their personal values, which were nurtured during their formative years, as a key influencer to their leadership development journey. Black African, coloured and Indian participants struggled with being seen as disrespectful when having to performance manage older team members. Female participants across these race groups appeared to struggle with this more than the male participants across all race groups. The importance of elderly respect was positioned as a particularly African phenomenon used to rationalise the participants struggle with managing older team members. Obligatory elderly respect from a cultural perspective introduced a parent/child dynamic into the leader/team member work environment. This dynamic saw millennial leaders altering their leadership styles when dealing with older team members to demonstrate extra levels of respect. They described their leadership styles as more conscientious and serious with older team members than with the younger generations. It was not that they did not respect the younger team members, but the leadership style with younger team members was considered more informal and relaxed.

In the literature, millennials are characterised as narcissistic, self-centred and entitled (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). However, despite the criticism, there are counterviews suggesting that they also display positive leadership qualities which are centred around empathy, collaborative engagements, honesty and authenticity and that they are open to diversity (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). From the contradictory views on millennial leaders, it may be inferred that they are not as narcissistic and self-centred as reported.

The literature suggests both supportive and opposing views on the characteristics of millennials in the workplace. On the one hand, they are portrayed as non-caring and egotistical; on the other hand, they are seen as caring, mindful and respectful of their elders. The findings suggest millennials are grounded in their upbringing and respect their elders. With the paucity in literature on South African millennials in the workplace, this finding was deemed particularly intriguing by the researcher.

ii.) Leadership is about personal style

The second-highest ranking factor associated with Theme 3 related to leadership styles viewed as individualistic rather than defined in a particular way by merely belonging to a particular generational cohort. When asked how age, in terms of being a relatively young

leader, influenced their leadership style, participants held the view that age, as a diversity factor, was not the driving force that influenced their leadership styles. In addition to age, individual personality was mentioned as a factor that influenced their leadership styles the most. Thus, belonging to a particular generational cohort was not at the core of leadership style development for these participants. Over and above age and individual personality, race, culture, social status, education, religion and gender were also mentioned as factors that influenced their leadership styles.

With a paucity in the literature on the definitive leadership styles of millennial leaders (Heyns et al., 2019), it was not possible to reference specific literature on millennial leadership styles in a meaningful manner. It was possible to infer from popular millennial characteristics, namely stereotypes, that millennial leadership styles indeed varied from individual to individual due to the contradictory nature of these stereotypes identified. An example to illustrate this contradiction was that millennials were suggested to be lazy (Staruch et al., 2021) but there were also suggestions that they were ambitious (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

The findings, supported by the literature, propose that generational beliefs and values are not homogenous within a generational cohort and thus age cannot be the only factor which influences beliefs and attitudes to work and leadership styles. This brings to mind a question, for the researcher, on which factors are more influential than others, or whether they are equally weighted.

iii.) Zero room for failure

The third and last factor for Theme 3 pertained to how participants viewed failure and how their upbringing influenced the belief that failure was not an option for consideration. Not only were participants considered too young for the positions they occupied, but their competency levels were met with high levels of skepticism that they were forced to constantly prove that they were worthy of being in the roles they fulfilled. Any failure on their part would be attributed to not having sufficient experience to manage the responsibilities and functional requirements of the job. They expressed an overwhelming need to succeed, which infiltrated their leadership styles. Many of the participants, especially the black African, coloured and Indian participants, articulated an intense need to succeed and to improve their career, social and financial statuses, as compared to their ancestors. Growing up in post-apartheid South Africa, with the lingering effects of apartheid, there was a deep sense of leadership styles infused with historical detrimination.

A popular negative stereotype about millennials was that they appeared to be apathetic and arrogant (Staruch et al., 2021). Contrary views reported that they were willing to exceed expectations, but this was done on their own terms (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Since South African millennials were exposed to life-changing events in their formative years (Jonck et al., 2017; Lyons & Kuron, 2014), it is reasonable to anticipate that these events affected their attitudes to work and leadership (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Examples of these life-changing events pertaining to work are discussed in section 6.1.2.5 below.

The literature and the findings are somewhat aligned. The findings suggest millennial leader participants who desired success were prepared to work hard for it, based on a work ethic instilled during their formative years. The only caveat is that they wanted to be more in control of how their success was achieved. The literature considers the impact and influence of life-changing events on attitudes to work and leadership, and it acknowledges that the specifics of these events and the associated influence would differ based on the details. In this instance, the participants demonstrated sheer determination to succeed as part of their leadership styles, which was carried over from their formative years as a result of growing in in post-apartheid South Africa.

The final theme for RQ1 and the corresponding top three level one codes are captured in Table 33 below.

6.2.1.5 RQ1 Theme 4 of 4: Personal history

The next section of the chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ1 Theme 4 in relation to the literature. It includes further insights from the researcher.

Table 33 RQ1 Theme 4 of 4: Personal history

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Personal History (45)	Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds (20)	Exposure to learning opportunities and networks (20)	Racial Advocacy (4)

The final theme for RQ1 related to how personal backgrounds and experiences in the formative years influenced the leadership styles of participants as a result of growing up in South Africa. The top three factors were:

1. Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds
2. Exposure to learning opportunities and networks

3. Racial advocacy

i.) Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds

The factor from their personal backgrounds, in relation to growing up in South Africa, which had the highest influence on leadership styles of participants was their exposure to diversity during their formative years. The findings suggested that participant exposure to significant diversity and transformation during their formative years primed them for the diversity they encountered in the workplace and positively influenced their leadership development and their leadership styles. They did not find the level of workplace diversity overwhelming or uncommon compared to the more homogenous team dynamics which the older generation leaders may have experienced in prior years.

Experiences and events during the formative years are said to form the foundation of beliefs, values and attitudes displayed later on in life (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Jonck et al. (2017), Mayer et al. (2019), Ndimande (2013) and Oyedemi (2021) provided some examples of events which may have influenced leadership development and styles of the South African millennial leader. These examples were workplace- and background-related and not exhaustive by any means. They included being born in non-rationally segregated post-apartheid South Africa, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (75 of 1997) and the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) (Jonck et al., 2017; Mayer et al., 2019; Ndimande, 2013; Oyedemi, 2021). Millennial leaders reported a greater sense of comfort working with diverse teams than the older generations (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

In this study, the findings concur with the notion that events in the formative years were capable of influencing the attitudes, values and beliefs of individuals. What was not clear was the exact nature of the influence and the pertinence thereof from one individual to the another. When considering that these millennial leaders were exposed to life-changing events during their formative years, it is plausible to infer an influence on leadership styles as a result of growing up in post-apartheid South Africa as evident in the participant feedback.

ii.) Exposure to learning opportunities and networks

The second-highest rated factor from their personal backgrounds was centred on exposure to learning opportunities and networks, or the lack thereof, during their formative years. Several of the black African, coloured and Indian participants perceived their white South African peers as more confident in the workplace. This perception was

built on the notion that these peers were exposed to leading educational institutions and had access to influential networks while growing up, which positively influenced their leadership styles. Even where black African participants had exposure to leading education and empowering resources, they did not view themselves equally confident and self-assured in the workplace. Black African, coloured and Indian participants reported that, due to their self-perceived lack of self-confidence, they would embrace leadership roles with less vigour than their white counterparts would. They did not view their leadership styles as containing the same level of self-confidence as their white peers.

Diverse social, economic and political circumstances disparately affected millennials in South Africa during their formative years. These imbalances were largely derived from the apartheid system, and with particular reference to education (Ndimande, 2013). The effects of educational segregation and lack of quality education, through the Bantu Education System, one of the most repressive systems in South Africa, haunts some South Africans even today (Ndimande, 2013). How individuals perceived their racial identity significantly influenced how they viewed their participation in the world and their association and views of others (Gordon, 2018). Imposter syndrome negatively affected professionals who did not feel confident or worthy of the positions they occupied in the workplace (Gallagher, 2019).

The scholarly perception that events experienced during the formative years had the potential to influence individuals later in life was supported by the findings of the participants. They related to their schooling experiences and how these still steer leadership styles in the workplace today. The literature enriches our thinking on the possibility of these events and their influences.

iii.) Racial advocacy

The last factor linked to their personal backgrounds, as influencing their leadership styles, was related to racial advocacy in the workplace. White South African participants reflected on being overlooked for employment or career progression due to EE requirements. Coloured and Indian participants mentioned being overlooked for employment or career progression opportunities, not because they fell outside of the EE remit, but simply because they were not black African. One Indian male participant mentioned that there was a time when being Indian worked in his favour and his career progressed significantly compared to black African peers. However, according to him, the situation has reversed. Females across all race groups suffered extensively on all

three fronts of gender, race and age discrimination. In contrast to the white participants, black African participants regarded the decision-makers in corporate South Africa as a brotherhood of white leaders and suggested that career progress of black Africans happened largely as a result of corporate advocacy by other black African leaders. From the findings, it appeared that leadership styles, influenced by racial inferences, affected participants differently, depending on the race group they identified.

South African millennials are also referred to as the Born Frees, implying that they were born in post-apartheid South Africa and are free of the historical shackles of apartheid, but this is not the case (Oyedemi, 2021). The effects of apartheid in a post-apartheid era are widespread and no racial group is exempt (Mayer et al., 2019). With a paucity in the literature on the impact of the events of these formative year on leadership, and even less so on millennial leaders, it is Jonck et al. (2017) who suggested the influence on leadership is prevalent but requires further investigation.

Regarding the political landscape of South Africa and its racially charged history, the inferences to racially fuelled experiences were expected. Literature on what is generally referred to as reverse racism is prevalent. There is a paucity on the notion of racial advocacy. However, it is plausible to infer the occurrence thereof, yet the prevalence thereof and the associated success linked to it lacks empirical support.

6.2.1.6 RQ1 discussion of results summary

As depicted in Figure 16, the findings for RQ1 are largely supported by the literature. Nuances were found mostly where the literature was not specific to the millennial cohort in relation to the participants. Novel findings on how participants' leadership styles were influenced as a result of growing up in South Africa were identified. What was mostly gleaned from the findings, in relation to the literature, was the interconnected nature of the factors that were linked to the construct. These findings may be used to extend the literature on leadership styles of millennials from a South African perspective.

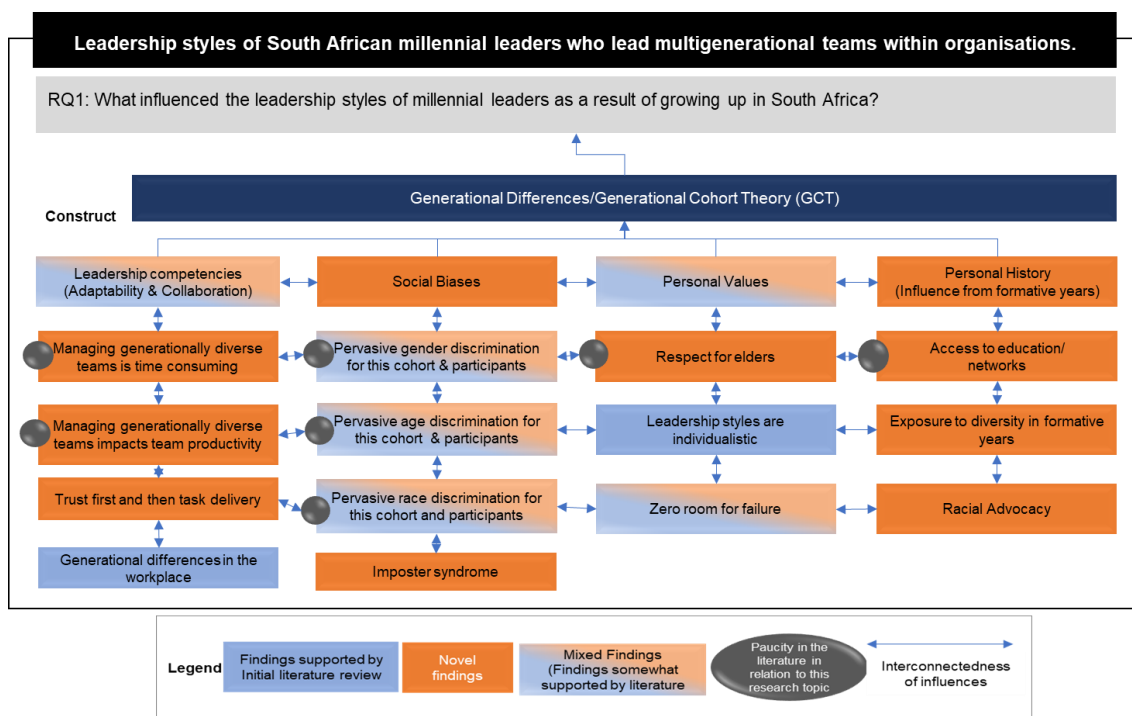


Figure 16 RQ1 discussion of results summary

Source: Diagram researcher's own, inputs derived from findings corroborated with the literature

The next section of this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature, for RQ2.

6.2.2. Discussion of Results for RQ2

RQ2: How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?

6.2.2.1 RQ2 rationale

It was suggested that the millennial generational cohort held differing opinions regarding work and leadership compared to other generations (Urlick et al., 2016). It was also postulated that these differences in workplace opinions and leadership contributed to generational workplace conflict (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Ho & Yeung, 2020). The consequence of generational workplace conflict not being managed adequately led to an array of adverse consequences (Ho & Yeung, 2020). These included, but was not limited to, ineffective or even negative communication exchanges, inadequate team performances, reduced workplace motivation, lack of trust, disrespect and overall

unhappiness in the workplace (Ho & Yeung, 2020). RQ2 set out to explore how millennial leaders attempted to resolve generational tension in the workplace and how their leadership styles aided in this respect.

Table 34 below captures the two themes and the top three level one codes for each theme, which aided in conflict resolution. These two themes were:

1. Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion
2. Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind

Table 34 RQ2 themes and top three level one codes

RQ2. How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)	Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams (23)	Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams (19)	Balancing empathy with reality (12)
Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)	Stick to the facts (10)	Choosing harmony over conflict (8)	Having an open mindset (4)

Table 35 captures the leadership quality that participants mostly relied upon for conflict resolution.

Table 35 RQ2 Theme 1 of 2: Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion

RQ2. How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)	Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams (23)	Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams (19)	Balancing empathy with reality (12)

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ2 Theme 1 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher.

6.2.2.2 RQ2 Theme 1 of 2: Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion

Participants relayed that being assertive and decisive was a necessary leadership quality for conflict resolution. The top three factors influencing this theme included:

1. Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams
2. Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams
3. Balancing empathy with reality

i.) Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams

The leadership style component that the participants mostly relied upon when dealing with workplace conflict involved navigating what they regarded as the negative aspects of having to lead multigenerational teams. Tension and conflict, due to generational differences, were prevalent in the workplace. When participants were asked about the negative aspects related to leading multigenerational teams, they spoke about the rigidity of the older generation and the laissez-faire attitudes of the younger generations. They complained about the need to establish meaningful relationships with each team member, which consumed time and could affect work performance and outputs. Participants were of the view that they had to manage conflict in ways that they remained assertive in their leadership, yet without alienating anyone. It was important that an enabling work environment was established to foster healthy working relationships.

The literature suggested that since the workplace was composed of different generations, generational differences in team dynamics may provide the potential for workplace conflict (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). The high-risk areas which were considered to fuel workplace conflict related to differing generational views on leadership styles and leadership expectations (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). Depending on how they were managed, it could lead to positive or negative outcomes on workplace engagements. If managed correctly, positive outcomes could include increased employee motivation and engagement (Mahmoud et. al., 2021).

The literature and the findings align with the prevalence of generational differences which potentially fuelled workplace conflict. A novel finding on conflict resolution was the need for increased levels of assertiveness required by the participants as a means to ensure constructive team engagements.

ii.) Celebrating the positive influences of multigenerational teams

The second-highest ranking factor for Theme 1 related to the positive aspects of having to lead multigenerational teams. Despite the perceived negativity of leading multigenerational teams, participants were in agreement that they would not have it any other way. They chose to acknowledge that the benefits of multigenerational diversity outweighed the negatives. They celebrated the positives that diversity offered. Participants considered diversity as a fuel for creativity and innovation. The participant

leaders chose harmony over conflict and optimism above all else; they valued the heterogeneity a multigenerational team offered.

Urick et al. (2016) and Mahmoud et al. (2021) insinuated that workplace tension does not always result in negative outcomes but could contribute to interesting team dynamics and be a potential catalyst for creative problem-solving and improved innovation (Mahmoud et al., 2021; Urick et al., 2016). The caveat, however, is on how the tension is managed. Mismanagement thereof could have ripple effects of negative outcomes (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

The literature and the findings are congruent on the positive contributions that diverse multigenerational teams bring to the workplace. In addition to claims from the participants that the positives of multigenerational diversity outweigh the negatives, it would be interesting to investigate the degree to which this is evident. One would therefore explore the creativity of homogenous teams versus heterogenous teams.

iii.) Balancing empathy with reality

The last factor for discussion for RQ2 Theme 1 involved having to balance empathy in ways that ensured the work was still delivered. Participants mentioned that they mostly relied on empathy when dealing with workplace tension and conflict. They tried their utmost to understand the perspectives of the other person first, without making preconceived decisions or judgments. Being empathetic was not a natural quality for all participants, and some had to work harder at it than others. They also needed to balance empathy with reality to distil workplace tension and to ensure the work progressed. Participants recognised the need to be firm, but fair, in their undertakings to conflict resolution to avoid situations where team members felt victimised and potentially leads to disengagement and low levels of motivation. When conflict arose, they would address it immediately and directly rather than in group forums.

The potential effect of generational workplace conflict not being managed adequately leads to an array of adverse consequences (Ho & Yeung, 2020). These include, but are not limited to, ineffective or even negative communication exchanges, inadequate team performances, reduced workplace motivation, lack of trust, disrespect and overall unhappiness in the workplace (Ho & Yeung, 2020). Millennials are said to display positive leadership qualities which are centred around empathy, collaborative engagements and authenticity, and being open to diversity (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

The extent to which the literature supports the findings is somewhat shallow. The findings suggest that empathy is a highly prominent component of the leadership styles of the participants. However, this level of prominence is not echoed in the literature, where it is merely recognised that it may exist.

Moving on to Theme 2 of 2 for RQ2, Table 36 captures the theme which ranked second highest.

6.2.2.3 RQ2 Theme 2 of 2: Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ2 Theme 2 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher (Table 36).

Table 36 RQ2 Theme 2 of 2: Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind

RQ2. How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)	Stick to the facts (10)	Choosing harmony over conflict (8)	Having an open mindset (4)

The second theme to emerge from the findings related to building relationships with team members as a means of establishing psychological safety. The top three factors related to this theme included:

1. Sticking to the facts
2. Choosing harmony over conflict
3. Having an open mindset

i.) Sticking to the facts

Workplace tension and conflict appeared to be inevitable. This required continuous efforts from the participants to ensure that conflict and tension were not a debilitating factor in their work-life. Where it did occur, they would deploy conflict resolution strategies to resolve the tension. The strategies would depend on the source of conflict, but in most instances sticking to the facts is what they relied on quite heavily.

Literature on conflict management and resolution was bountiful. It was Urick et al. (2016) who suggested three strategies and six tactics which were specifically geared at the effective management of generational workplace conflict. The strategies were not

exclusively reserved for specific tensions and could be applied interchangeably (Urick et al., 2016). As much as these strategies were not aimed at millennial leaders specifically, the relevance for inclusion in the literature review was based on the resolution of multigenerational tension in the workplace, to which the participants were exposed.

There is somewhat alignment between the findings and the strategies proposed in the literature on multigenerational conflict resolution. Sticking to facts and keeping conversation's objective and factual are inferred to be incorporated into the communication styles tactic. Participants referenced instances where they relied on previous achievements as a means to demonstrate competence and gain trust. They also spoke about being visible and managing perceptions related to their leadership capabilities. The strategy and tactics which were not highly prevalent in the findings related to ego and having to protect self-interests or removal of self from a conflict situation, as depicted in Figure 17.

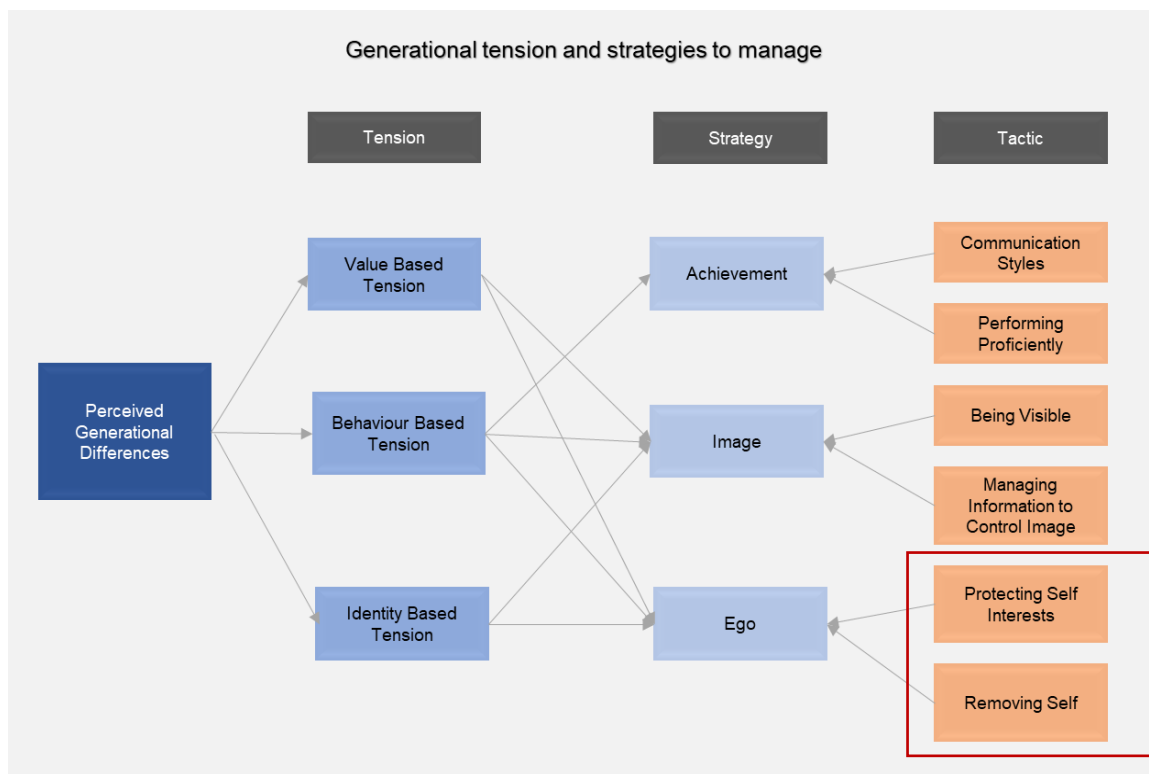


Figure 17 Multigenerational conflict resolution strategies

Source: Adapted from Urick et al. (2016)

ii.) Choosing harmony over conflict

Participants were in general agreement that, as much as they did not enjoy workplace conflict and chose harmonious working environments over the tension, they were tasked

with addressing the conflict in ways that promoted psychological safety. Participants viewed an open mindset as a key asset in helping them tackle workplace conflict. In the absence of preconceived ideas and judgments, they were able to grow as leaders and not be confined to their individual ways of thinking all the time. They valued the ability to grow as leaders.

Millennials are said to prefer collaborative and team-centric ways of working (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Psychologically safe spaces are said to allow for the sharing of information, decision-making and risk-taking, free of judgment and ridicule (Edmondson, 1999), which is necessary for constructive and quality decision-making and team cohesion (Zhou & Vredenburg, 2020).

There is congruence between the literature and the findings on the desire for harmonious work environments based on collaborative ways of working. Where the literature is not explicit, it pertains to the ways in which collaboration and team-centric environments are enforced. In this instance, the findings provide rich insights into some of the ways, referencing psychologically safe spaces as key for how they prefer to engage with their teams.

iii.) Having an open mindset

Participants viewed an open mindset as a key asset in helping them tackle workplace conflict. In the absence of preconceived ideas and judgments, they were able to grow as leaders and not be confined to restrictive ways of thinking. They welcomed their leadership styles to grow and evolve.

Interestingly, Urick et al. (2016) suggested that prior knowledge of generational stereotypes could influence individuals' behaviour even before any formal contact is made. Depending on the stereotypes and the individual's views on these stereotypes, the interaction, when it happened, could be positive or negative (Urick et al., 2016).

Drawing on their propensity for collaborative styles of working, valuing diversity and personal growth, it is not surprising that the participants favoured an open mindset over preconceived judgmental behaviour. Inferring from the literature and the findings, the researcher can plausibly envisage conflict resolution centred on peacekeeping from a neutral base. However, the ease and frequency of setting aside preconceived views to take on a neutral stance is not well defined.

6.2.2.4 RQ2 discussion of results summary

As depicted in Figure 18, the findings for RQ2 are largely supported by the literature. Nuances were found mostly where the literature was not specific to the millennial cohort in relation to the participants. Novel findings on how participants resolved workplace conflict were identified. What was mostly gleaned from the findings, in relation to the literature, was the interconnected nature of the factors which were linked to the construct. These findings could be used to extend the literature on leadership styles of millennials, from a South African perspective.

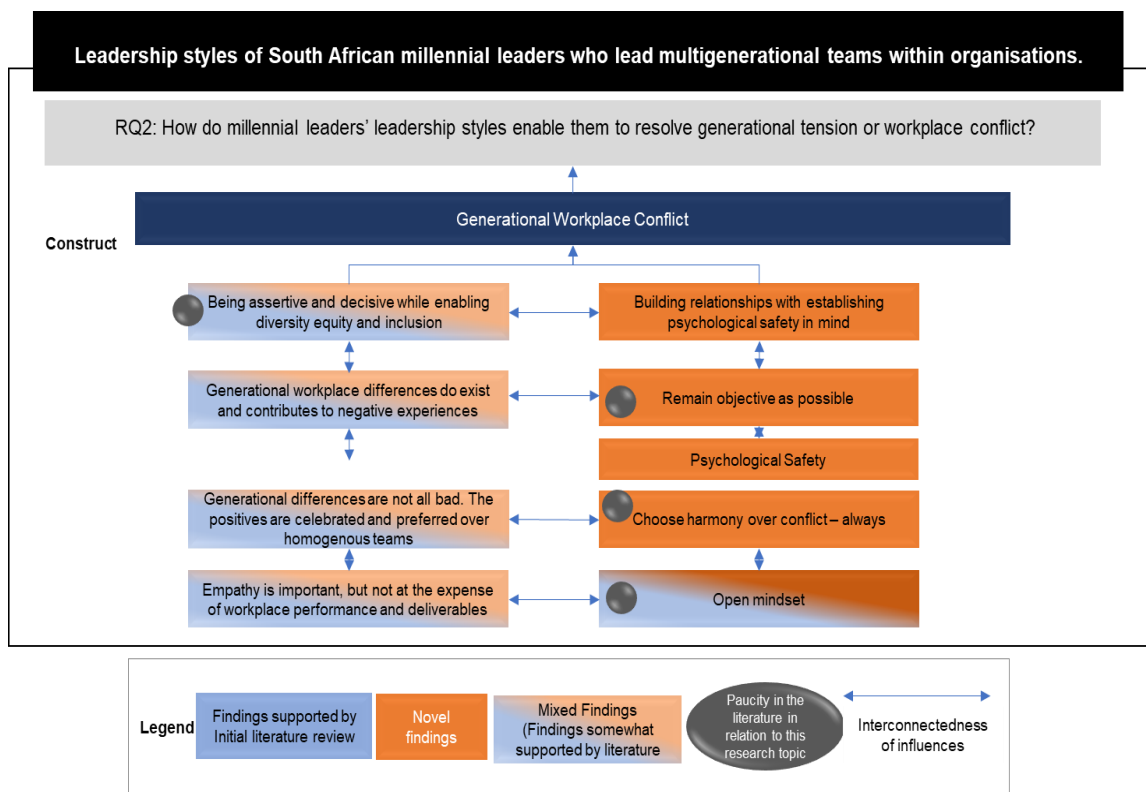


Figure 18 RQ2 discussion of results summary

Source: Diagram researchers own, inputs derived from findings corroborated with the literature

The next section of this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature for RQ3.

6.2.3. Discussion of Results for RQ3

RQ3 What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?

6.2.3.1 RQ3 rationale

Millennial leaders are considered relatively new to leadership; thus, the literature on leadership development, coaching and support can be considered scarce (Heyns et al., 2019). RQ3 sought to explore the literature gap pertaining to the support requirements for participants as members of the millennial generational cohort.

Table 37 below captures the four themes and the top three level one codes per theme, which outlined the leadership support solicited by the participants. These four themes were:

1. Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments
2. Leader of self
3. Leading teams
4. Personal branding and managing resistance

Table 37 RQ3 themes and top three level one codes

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)	Mentorship and Coaching (8)	Millennial leadership communities (5)	Tangible and practical leadership courses (4)
Leader of Self (11)	Be reminded that you don't have to kill yourself to prove yourself (5)	Be reassured that its ok to not have all the answers (3)	Manage your emotions so your emotions don't manage you. (1)
Leading Teams (8)	Know how to cultivate team cohesion (4)	Focus on people - Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge (2)	Communicating with and to people (1)
Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)	You are never going to be liked by everybody (3)	What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female (2)	How to be more strategic (1)

Table 38 captures the theme which ranked the highest in terms of the solicited leadership support, including the top three level one codes.

Table 38 RQ3 Theme 1 of 4: Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)	Mentorship and Coaching (8)	Millennial leadership communities (5)	Tangible and practical leadership courses (4)

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ3 Theme 1 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher.

6.2.3.2 RQ3 Theme 1 of 4: Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments

Participants identified the following three areas as key leadership support areas linked to their continuous learning and transformation journey:

1. Mentorship and coaching
2. Millennial leadership communities
3. Tangible and practical leadership courses

i.) Mentorship and coaching

Mentoring and coaching were the most highly rated support mechanisms desired by the participants, including those who had not received mentoring and coaching before. There were at least two participants who received no formal leadership training before entering leadership roles and they considered themselves suffering because of that. Mentoring and coaching were used interchangeably, despite being different practices. Participants appeared to be unaware of the most appropriate avenues available for acquiring a mentor or coach. Participants relied on their organisations to make these services available, rather than explore them independently. An additional support requirement voiced was in the form of peer millennial communities where they could relate and converse with like-minded leaders. Participants saw value in reverse-mentoring opportunities, as these were considered mutually beneficial.

The literature on leadership development, coaching and support for the millennial leader can be considered scarce (Heyns et al., 2019). Where there is a lack of mentoring or coaching support for millennial leaders, they tend to be unprepared for leadership roles (Urick et al., 2016). Reverse-mentoring, due to its mutually beneficial objectives, allows for enhanced collaboration and improved engagements within multigenerational teams

(Gadomska-Lila, 2020; Garg et al., 2021). The older generation can use this platform to impart valuable experiential knowledge while young millennials leaders can upskill older generations on current requirements through reverse-mentoring (Urlick et al., 2016).

Millennial leaders may be considered arrogant and over-confident, but they are in need of leadership, help and support. Although they are willing to raise their hands and ask for help, they are not always exactly sure of where and how to solicit this help from. Their propensity for teamwork enabled them to appreciate the value of shared learning versus trying to do everything on their own, even if it meant teaming up with the older generation.

ii.) Millennial leadership communities

The second-highest ranking factor for this theme was the request for millennial leadership communities. Participants proposed that they respected the experience of the older generation and expressed value in being able to learn from them. However, they expressed the need for millennial leadership communities or associations where they could sound-board off peers rather than always having to be mentored or coached by the older generation. They envisaged structured forums where millennial leaders were able to meet regularly and share their experiences and challenges and solicit advice from like-minded peers. A particularly interesting finding was on the need to unlearn certain behaviours and thoughts, typically acquired from older generation leaders, to make room for new ways of addressing leadership challenges. The notion that productivity and work outputs were not defined to office spaces was shared as an example of the workplace beliefs and attitudes which required re-evaluation.

Peer mentoring is not an entirely new concept and has been investigated many times as an alternative to traditional mentoring of older mentors and younger mentees (Marcinkus Murphy, 2012). It is suggested that peer relationships, in the absence of the perceived hierarchical relationship of an older mentor and a younger mentee, enables a greater sense of ease and comfort when collaborating and engaging (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Traditional mentoring may be considered more of a one-way relationship, whereas peer mentoring is perceived more as a two-way and mutually beneficial relationship (Kram & Isabella, 1985)

The literature and the findings align on the need for some form of mentoring and coaching support for millennial leaders. The literature perused for this study predominantly referred to traditional forms of mentorship as a means of leadership support for millennials. Peer mentoring, despite not being a new concept, was not widely mentioned in the literature.

The request for peer engagements appears logical, given the proposed mutually beneficial nature of this type of mentoring. The researcher considers peer mentoring forums an attractive additional form of mentor support. The notion of unlearning certain behaviours, attitudes and beliefs was of particular interest. Further investigation of those elements to unlearn could enrich the literature on millennial leadership.

iii.) Tangible and practical leadership courses

The last factor for this theme was a request for tangible and practical leadership courses. Despite exposure to formal leadership development opportunities within their organisations, participants expressed the need for more tangible ways of managing the abundance of diversity elements experienced in organisations in South Africa. Participants implied that leadership courses they attended were largely based on outdated workplace environments and certainly did not cover the leadership requirements for millennials or Gen Zs in the modern workplace.

Managerial training is a prerequisite for millennials to succeed in their roles (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Fortunately, continuous learning through ongoing professional support is highly valued by the millennial generation (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Millennials appear to rely on training and development as a means of support, which fuels engagement in the workplace (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).

The literature and the findings align on the need for continuous learning and development opportunities for millennial leaders. However, both the findings and the literature remain somewhat vague on exactly what would translate into tangible and practical solutions to meet their learning and development requirements, as they continue to forge along in their leadership quests in a multigenerational workplace. No new or seemingly interesting alternatives to leadership support were uncovered.

Moving on to Theme 2 of 4 for RQ3, Table 39 captures the theme that ranked the second highest in terms of the solicited leadership support, including the top three level one codes.

6.2.3.3 RQ3 Theme 2 of 4: Leader of self

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ3 Theme 2 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher.

Table 39 RQ2 Theme 2 of 4: Leader of Self

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Leader of Self (11)	Be reminded that you don't have to kill yourself to prove yourself (5)	Be reassured that its ok to not have all the answers (3)	Manage your emotions so your emotions don't manage you. (1)

The second theme to emerge from the findings related to self-leadership. The top three factors linked to this theme included:

1. Be reminded that you do not have to kill yourself to prove yourself
2. Be reassured that it is okay to not have all the answers
3. Manage your emotions so your emotions do not manage you

i.) Be reminded that you do not have to kill yourself to prove yourself

The factor which featured the most in relation to this theme was on the need to not overexert oneself as a means to prove one's worth. When asked what advice they wished they had received earlier on in their leadership journey, the majority of the participants wished that leaders at that time would have given them the reassurance that, as young leaders, they did not need to overexert themselves in needing to prove their worth. Furthermore, that taking the time to balance their personal needs with work requirements was a necessary and justified requirement. Instead, participants spent the majority of their initial leadership years neglecting their personal health at times.

Millennials may be perceived as entitled and narcissistic (Staruch et al., 2021), from which it may be inferred that they were less likely to demonstrate a work ethic that encompassed working hard to prove their worth. However, contrary views report that they are willing to exceed expectations, as long as they are in control of the terms that govern the work efforts which contribute to their success (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

The literature provided contrary views on the work ethic of millennials. It is plausible to surmise from the literature and the findings that, where participants deemed themselves to be ambitious, they were willing to work hard, but depending on where they were in their leadership journey, they were more inclined to dictate how they would go about achieving their success.

ii.) Be reassured that it is okay to not have all the answers

The second-highest ranking factor for this theme was reassurance that not knowing all the answers was acceptable. Motivated to be successful, having to overcome all the social and generational biases and the need to prove themselves to eradicate professional doubt, participants in their early career days held the view that being a leader meant having to know all the answers. They regarded knowledge gaps as a sign of weakness and incompetence. They placed immense pressure on themselves to not appear incompetent through the presence of any knowledge gaps.

Millennials are suggested to be narcissistic and arrogant (Staruch et al., 2021). However, contrary views report that they also require constant feedback and greater line manager support (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

The findings and the literature are somewhat contradictory, where a seemingly know-it-all generation is also depicted as needing constant feedback and support, implying low levels of self-confidence. The findings suggest higher levels of assurance are required than what may be depicted in the literature.

iii.) Manage your emotions so your emotions do not manage you

The last theme for this theme was an interesting response from one of the participants, which related to having to manage emotions in the workplace. Leadership, for him, was associated with emotional control in the workplace. This finding sparked a thought about being authentic in the workplace, but also about needing to adhere to the written and unwritten rules of the workplace.

It was suggested that the millennial cohort displayed significant levels of self-confidence and self-esteem in relation to previous generations. These high levels of self-esteem played a key role in their questioning and challenging the status quo, much more than previous generations (Twenge, & Campbell, 2008). They were more likely to challenge their leaders and retaliate against hierarchical leadership environments, which in turn could lead to greater conflict within the workplace among multigenerational teams (Ng & Parry, 2016).

There appears to be alignment on the temperament of millennials who are comfortable to challenge the status quo, but caution was drawn to how this could be done in the workplace to not encourage workplace conflict.

Moving on to Theme 3 of 4 for RQ3, Table 40 captures the third-highest ranking theme and the associated top three level one codes.

6.2.3.4 RQ3 Theme 3 of 4: Leader of teams

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ3 Theme 3 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher.

Table 40 RQ3 Theme 3 of 4: Leader of teams

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Leading Teams (8)	Know how to cultivate team cohesion (4)	Focus on people - Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge (2)	Communicating with and to people (1)

Participants highlighted that they needed support in leading teams. The top three areas associated with this theme included:

1. Know how to cultivate team cohesion
2. Focus on people – Leadership is about people, not the technical or functional knowledge
3. Communicating with and to people

i.) Know how to cultivate team cohesion

The most prevalent factor for this theme was the participants’ request for help with cultivating team cohesion. They proposed that they were not uncomfortable with the levels of diversity in the workplace, but they struggled with bridging the diversity divide between the generations. They considered themselves stuck in the middle of essentially two generations. They saw themselves as the mediator between the two groups; in their absence, there was little team cohesion.

The literature suggests that millennials prefer collaboration and thrive in diverse work environments (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). However, as their occupation of leadership roles is relatively new, the leadership styles of millennials are not widely documented or well known (Anderson et al., 2017; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Galdames & Guihen, 2022; Heyns et al., 2019; Sadler et al., 2020). Prior research on millennials in the workplace predominantly focused on attracting, retaining and keeping them engaged and not much on their leadership capabilities and styles (Martin & Warshawsky, 2017).

As they are relatively new to leading teams, it is not surprising that they would solicit support in this area.

The literature informs us of conditions under which millennials prefer to work and where they are likely to thrive, which include collaboration and diversity. What is not garnered from the literature, yet posed as a cry for help from the participants, is how to enable and promote collaboration and team cohesion within a diverse workforce, from the perspective of the millennial leader. A response to how they as leaders could enable cross-generational team cohesion was not obtained from the literature review for this research. This may be a consideration for future research.

ii.) Focus on people – Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge

The second-highest ranking factor for this theme involved the reflection of participants who wished that they had been made aware of the central role that people management played, and that they had been adequately prepared for managing people earlier in their careers. In the early stages of their careers, they focused on functional competencies instead.

With millennials' dominating the workforce and steadily occupying leadership and even C-Suite positions (Bennet, 2020), Heyns et. al. (2019) posited that there was limited academic research that focused on the leadership styles of millennial managers. The paucity in the literature highlighted the lack of empirical knowledge which addressed the leadership support sought by millennials.

The literature and the findings align on the relatively new occupation of millennials in leadership roles in the workplace, which could infer that they were not adequately trained and thus required support in this area. This notion was supported by at least two participants who claimed to not have received any formal leadership training before entering into leadership roles.

iii.) Communicating with and to people

The last factor for this theme involved effective communication. Even though only one participant explicitly mentioned communication as a support requirement, the researcher deemed it important to note since the role that effective communication played was underrated. The importance of communication in this research was particularly relevant, considering the varied preferences of communication styles across the generations. The

options were plentiful, namely WhatsApp messages, email, face-to-face communication and social media to name a few. Each generation has communication channel preferences.

It is suggested that the interpersonal skills of millennials have deteriorated largely as a result of technologically enabled platforms, of which they also happen to be the highest consumers (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Success as a millennial leader was dependent on improved communication abilities (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

It was surprising that communication as an explicit requirement for support appeared only once. This was despite indirect references made throughout the interviews on how the generations communicated differently and how this influenced team engagements and overall team performance and cohesion.

The last theme for RQ3 and the top three level one codes are captured in Table 41 below.

6.2.3.5 RQ3 Theme 4 of 4: Personal branding and managing resistance

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ3 Theme 4 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher.

Table 41 RQ3 Theme 4 of 4: Personal branding and managing resistance

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)	You are never going to be liked by everybody (3)	What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female (2)	How to be more strategic (1)

The last theme to emerge from the findings centred around the value of managing personal leadership brands as a means to increase followship. The top three areas associated with this theme included:

- 1) You are never going to be liked by everybody
- 2) What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female?
- 3) How to be more strategic

i.) You are never going to be liked by everybody

Ranking the highest factor, participants acknowledged that external perceptions played a significant part in how they were perceived within the work environment and how these perceptions swayed their ability to influence and garner followers. They were aware that how they were perceived had a direct bearing on the followers they were able to attract. Participants recognised that external perceptions were important and needed to be managed effectively. They sought help in mastering effective ways to promote positive perceptions and manage the dissenters.

Leadership encompasses a value-based process that occurs over a longer term with a specific intent to motivate and influence others to fulfil a shared vision (Vecchiotti, 2011). Leadership styles are relevant and influence the leadership journey not only for those who are leading, but also for those who follow (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Followers play a significant role in materialising the vision of the leader (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

Participants were acutely aware that how they were perceived as leaders had a direct bearing on their leadership journey and career progression. As corroborated by the literature, they recognised the need to manage the leadership impressions they created. Precisely how millennials could positively influence dissenters was not explicit in the literature review for this study.

ii.) What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female?

The second-highest occurrence for this theme was on being taken seriously as a female. In this section of the interview, participants were asked about the leadership support they needed and there was one request which pertained to the need to be taken seriously based on gender identification. Female participants appeared to grapple with gender discrimination, which was addressed in an earlier section where they spoke more explicitly about having to work harder to prove their competence and capabilities.

As previously mentioned (section 6.2.1.3), gender discrimination in the workplace is a global phenomenon and is suggested to have been around for decades (Sinden, 2017). Various initiatives are claimed to have been implemented by the South African government to address inequalities in a post-apartheid society. However, evidence to suggest that gender discrimination in particular has been adequately addressed is lacking (Sinden, 2017).

The literature and the findings are in agreement in terms of gender discrimination in the workplace. Disparity arose in the relevance to millennial leaders specifically. It was surprising to the researcher that this call for help was not iterated many times across more of the female participants, considering the extent of gender discrimination suffered by the female participants. Despite only mentioned once, this statement echoed volumes, as it translated into a desperate plea for wanting to be acknowledged as not only as a leader but a leader who happened to be female.

iii.) How to be more strategic

The last factor for this theme related to one participant who mentioned a support requirement that would enable her to be more strategic in the workplace. It was intriguing that this was the only support requirement that was geared towards a functional/technical requirement and not directly focused on people management.

With their recent rise to senior leadership (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020) and a gap in the literature on their leadership capabilities (Heyns et al., 2019), not much is known about their leadership capabilities (Martin & Warshawsky, 2017).

The literature is not explicit on the technical capabilities of millennial leaders. The low occurrence of this kind of support request, namely a functional/technical requirement, was interpreted as a reflection of how the need for non-functional and people management support significantly outweighed the need for functional/technical support.

6.2.3.6 RQ3 Discussion of results summary

As depicted in Figure 19, the findings for RQ3 are largely supported by the literature. Nuances were found mostly where the literature was not specific to the millennial cohort in relation to the participants. Novel findings were identified. What was mostly gleaned from the findings, in relation to the literature, was the interconnected nature of the factors which were linked to the construct. These findings could be used to extend the literature on leadership styles of millennials from a South African perspective.

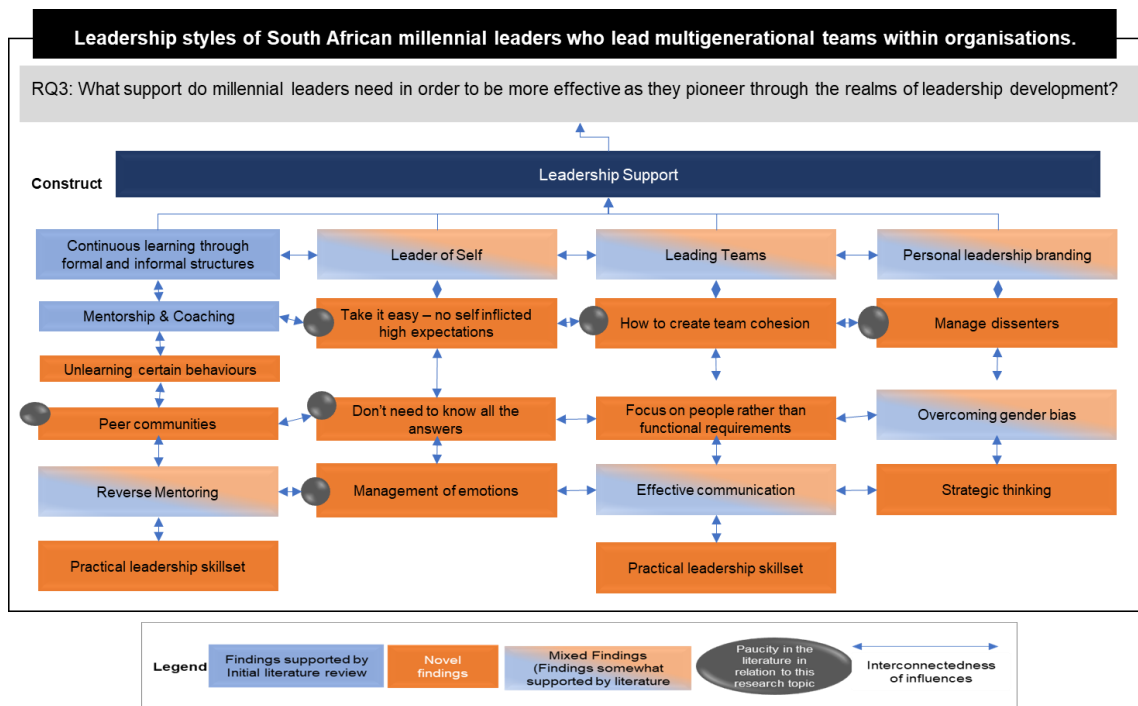


Figure 19 RQ3 discussion of results summary

Source: Diagram researchers own, inputs derived from findings corroborated with the literature

The next section of this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature for RQ4.

6.2.4. Discussion of Results for RQ4

RQ4: What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?

6.2.4.1 RQ4 rationale

Millennials, as a generational cohort, have attracted favourable and unfavourable stereotypes (Anderson et al., 2017; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Staruch et al., 2021), which have followed them into the workplace. RQ4 set out to understand the views of

participants on the popular stereotypes associated with the millennial generational cohort.

Table 42 below captures the only theme identified for RQ4 and the corresponding top three level one codes. The theme was:

1. Stereotypes exist at the individual level

Table 42 RQ4: theme and top three level one code

RQ4. What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?			
Level Three Codes (Themes)	Top 3 Level One Codes		
Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)	They are job hoppers (7)	The younger generation is lazy (7)	You should not paint all Millennials with the same brush (5)

The next section of this chapter discusses the top three level one codes for RQ4 Theme 1 in relation to the literature and includes further insights from the researcher. The top three codes were:

1. They are job hoppers
2. The younger generation is lazy
3. You should not paint all millennials with the same brush

i.) They are job hoppers

One of the top-ranking stereotypes identified by participants was on job hopping. Participants acknowledged that millennial job hopping was prevalent, but the reasons for moving organisations were not always monetary related. The most compelling reason was attributed to their not feeling that they belonged. Where there was a major disconnect between the individual’s workplace expectations company culture or lack of meaningful work, they would simply leave. They were confident in their abilities to secure employment elsewhere.

They are favourably educated and most likely to be the most highly educated within their families (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Research conducted by Smola and Sutton (2002) found that millennials in the workplace displayed significantly less organisational loyalty when compared to previous generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). They have been stereotyped as highly likely to job hop, as opposed to previous generations, who viewed their careers as lifelong employment with a single employer (Ng & Parry, 2016).

The literature and the findings align on the high-level view that job hopping as a phenomenon may be more prevalent in this generational cohort than previous generations. The literature focuses on the stereotype of job hopping, without necessarily delving into the root cause for job hopping. It may be inferred that job hopping is possible due to their favourable education; however, this was not empirically investigated. A gap in the literature review for this study existed on the factors which influenced rapid changing of jobs in relation to this cohort.

ii.) The younger generation is lazy

The second-highest ranked stereotype was associated with the millennial generation being classified as lazy. Participants vehemently disagreed to being labelled as lazy. They considered themselves as exceptionally hard workers, not only because this was a personal value instilled upon them during their formative years, but, even more so, they regarded themselves as ambitious and constantly competed for success. It did not make sense to them how a generation who had to work harder than other generations, to prove their worth, be considered as the lazy ones.

Popular views that millennials may be regarded as lazy (Staruch et al., 2021) are contradicted by views reporting that they are seen to be ambitious and willing to exceed expectations (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

The literature provides contradictory insights into the characteristics of millennials. The findings from the participants contradict a popular view regarding their work ethic. It may be inferred that their stance on working from anywhere, and not being confined to office spaces, while focusing on mental wellbeing and work-life balance, is misconstrued as being lazy. However, this was not empirically investigated. It may also be that those who made those judgments are likely to form part of a generation who believed that productivity was limited to working in the office and having face-to-face meetings.

iii.) You should not paint all millennials with the same brush

The final factor for this theme pertained to millennials' suggesting that the stereotypes do not apply to all members of the cohort. Participants identified with certain stereotypes and not with others. Where they did not have a personal connection with a stereotype, they acknowledged that it was prevalent among their millennial peers. For the most part, they acknowledge that generational stereotypes did exist. However, they felt strongly that stereotypes should not be applied in broad strokes across an entire generation.

Despite being born in the same generation, social, historical, political, economic and geographical circumstances differed among individuals (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). These circumstantial differences influenced their beliefs, values and attitudes uniquely (Twenge, 2010; Jonck et al., 2017). Thus, being born in the same generational cohort does not mean that all members of that cohort unanimously shared homogenous beliefs and values (Jonck, et al., 2017).

The findings and the literature align not only on the existence of generational stereotypes, but also on the notion that, in some instances, they may be true, and in other instances not. Contradictory literature reports on the popular stereotypes associated with millennials demonstrate how these stereotypes were not universally applicable to each individual within a generational cohort.

6.2.4.2 RQ4 discussion of results summary

As depicted in Figure 20, the findings for RQ4 are somewhat supported by the literature. Nuances were found mostly where the literature was not specific to the millennial cohort or where there were contradictions in the literature. No novel findings were identified. What was mostly gleaned from the findings, in relation to the literature, was the interconnected nature of the factors which were linked to the construct.

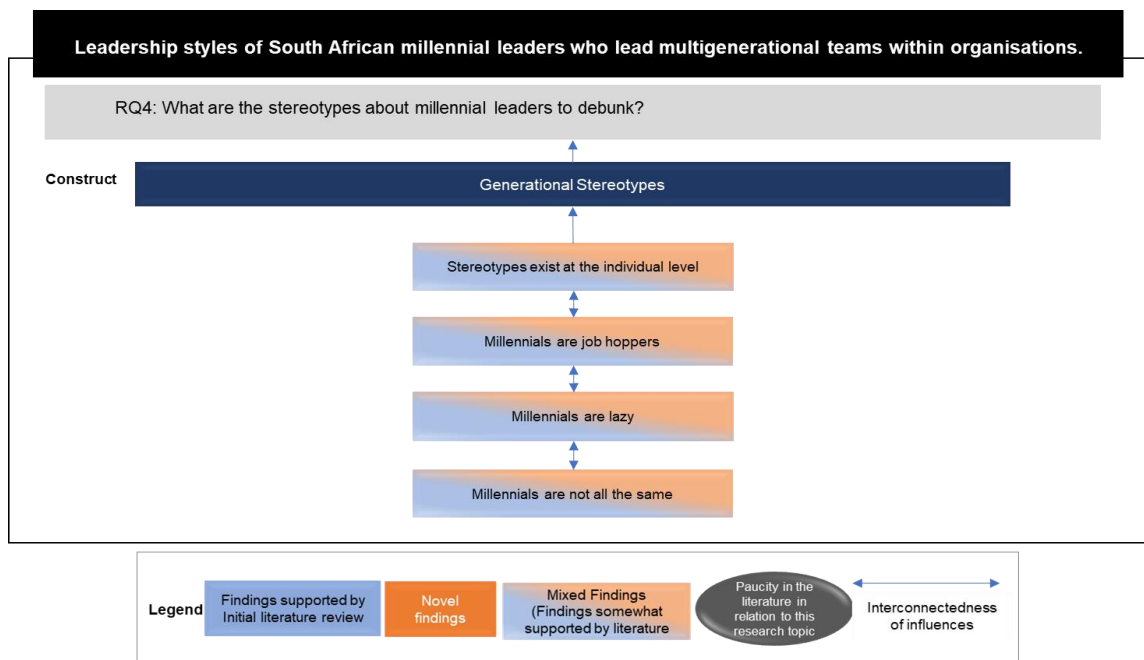


Figure 20 RQ4 discussion of results summary

Source: Diagram researcher's own, inputs derived from findings corroborated with the literature

The next section of this chapter outlines the integrative discussion of the findings.

6.3. Integrative Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Leadership and therefore leadership styles were considered important. The influence on leadership styles, as a result of growing up in South Africa, was largely supported by the literature. Nuances in knowledge gaps and novel findings were uncovered through this study and the findings could be used to enrich the knowledge base of millennial leaders' leadership styles from a South African perspective. Figure 21 depicts the complexity and interconnectedness of the factors which influenced the leadership styles of the participants, based on the research findings. The findings were accumulated per RQ and the interconnectedness of the constructs. The themes and the lower-level details were revealed through the discussion of the findings in relation to the literature throughout this chapter. In conclusion, the researcher infers that not only were participants' leadership styles influenced as a result of growing up in South Africa, but those factors which largely influenced their leadership styles were also more interrelated and connected than was anticipated at the onset of the research journey.

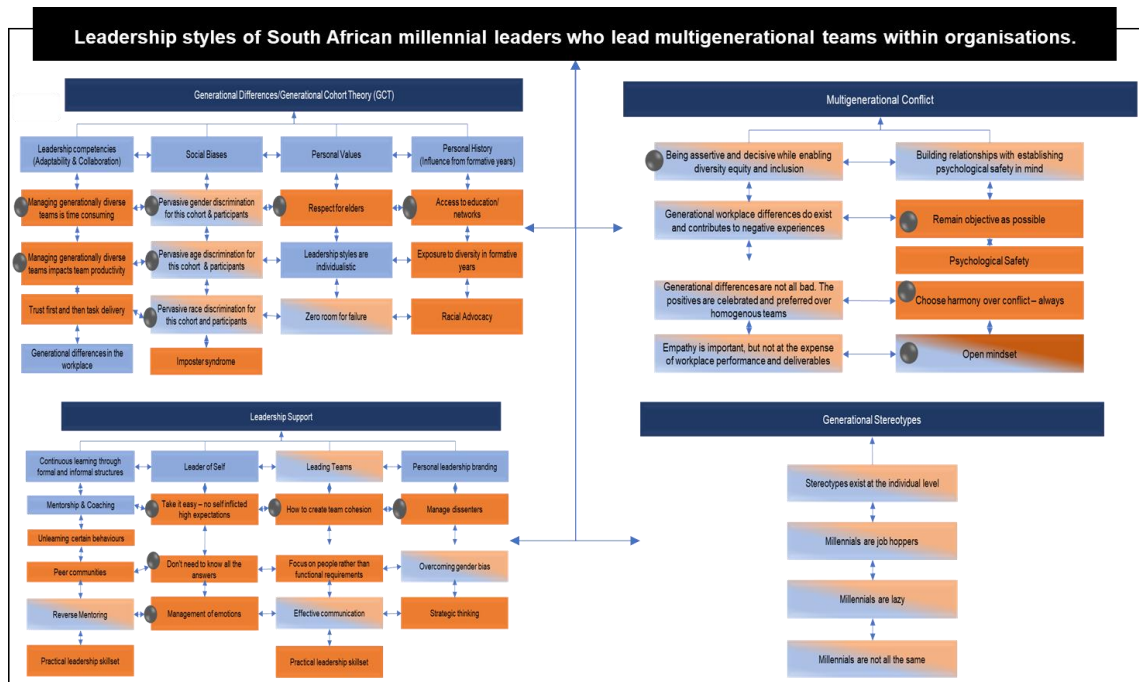


Figure 21 Complexity and interconnectedness of factors influencing leadership styles of millennial leaders

Source: Diagram researcher's own, inputs derived from findings corroborated with the literature

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

In South Africa, the millennial cohort accounts for at least 50% of the workforce (Statistics South Africa, 2020), yet the academic research on the leadership styles of millennial leaders is considered scant (Heyns et al., 2019). Increased workplace diversity and generational differences are said to enhance workplace tension (Urlick et al., 2016). With their growing presence in the workforce, an increase in workplace challenges was anticipated (Anderson et al., 2017). With limited empirical knowledge on the millennial leader, the study explored the leadership styles of South African millennial leaders and how they applied themselves to mitigate the challenges posed by leading multigenerational teams (Jonck et al., 2017). This chapter outlines the research outcomes and the theoretical conclusions for each of the four RQs. Figure 22 below outlines the flow of information in this chapter.

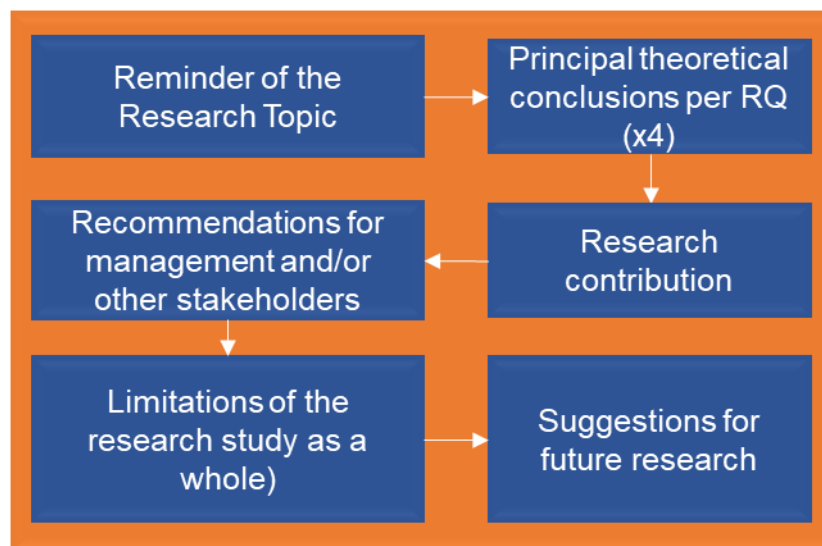


Figure 22 Roadmap of information flow for Chapter 7

7.2. Reminder of the research topic and research problem

Figure 23 below outlines the research topic and the research problem.

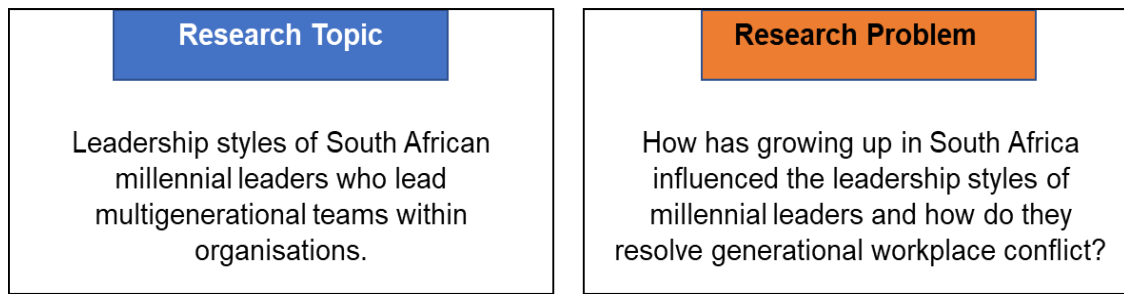


Figure 23 Reminder of research topic and research problem

The next section of this chapter covers the principal theoretical conclusions per RQ.

7.3. Principal Theoretical Conclusions

7.3.1. *The theoretical conclusions for RQ1*

RQ1: What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?

RQ1 explored the social and geographical (South African) influences on millennial leadership styles of participants stemming from their lived experiences. Generational differences related to leadership and general ways of working were also investigated. The study identified four leading areas which influenced the leadership styles of the participants as depicted in Figure 24 below.

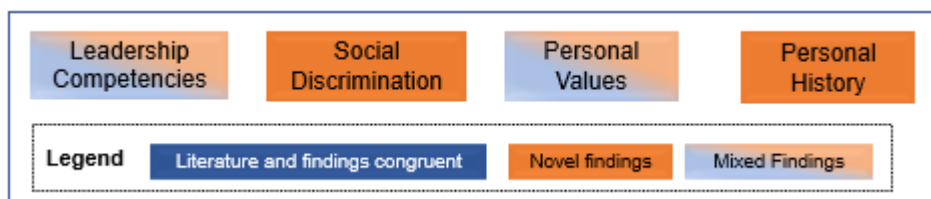


Figure 24 Influences on leadership

7.3.1.1 *Leadership competencies*

The high level of workplace diversity within the South African context (Alesina et al., 2003) exacerbated leadership complexities for the participants (Jonck et al., 2017). Distinct generational differences were prevalent in the workplace and influenced the leadership styles of the participants (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Urick et al., 2016). Due to the diverse nature of the workforce (Sadler et al., 2020) and

the heterogeneity of teams, participants relied heavily on their leadership competencies which enabled them to adapt their leadership styles to meet individual team members' needs.

7.3.1.2 Social discrimination

A paucity in the literature on the leadership styles of millennial leaders was evident (Anderson et al., 2017; Heyns et al., 2019). However, the findings highlighted additional gaps pertaining to the influence of social discriminatory elements which affected the leadership styles of the participants. Literature on age, gender and racial discrimination within the South African workplace context was abundantly available (Bratt et al., 2018; Ndimande, 2013; Oyedemi, 2021), yet literature pertaining directly to the millennial cohort was scarce. The pervasiveness of age discrimination, overlaid with gender and racial discrimination as experienced by the participants was profound.

7.3.1.3 Personal values

The personal characteristics of millennials as a generational cohort were contradictory. In some instances, they were perceived as lazy and narcissistic (Staruch et al., 2021), while other reports portrayed them to be ambitious and willing to exceed expectations (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Despite the contradictory reports, they displayed positive leadership qualities which centred around empathy, collaborative engagements, honesty, authenticity, high levels of self-confidence and being open to diversity (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Identifying as a member of the millennial generational cohort did not necessarily mean that they shared the same views, beliefs or displayed standardised leadership styles (Jonck et al., 2017). The dilemma of upholding respect for elders in the workplace while maintaining workplace performance standards was an unexpected factor that influenced the leadership styles of participants.

7.3.1.4 Personal history

Exposure to events and experiences during their formative years influenced the formation of generational values, beliefs and attitudes (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Generationally held views, beliefs and attitudes were carried over to the workplace and swayed the leadership styles of the participants (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). The pervasive experiences relating to education and favourable networks, especially in the South African context, should not be underestimated.

7.3.2. The theoretical conclusions for RQ2

RQ2: How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension or workplace conflict?

This question sought to explore qualities linked to millennial leaders' leadership styles that enabled them to adequately resolve generational workplace conflict. The findings from this study revealed that generational conflict was prevalent in the workplace and participants relied on various strategies to resolve this conflict. The study uncovered two dominant leadership qualities that aided generational conflict resolution for the participants, as depicted in Figure 25 below.

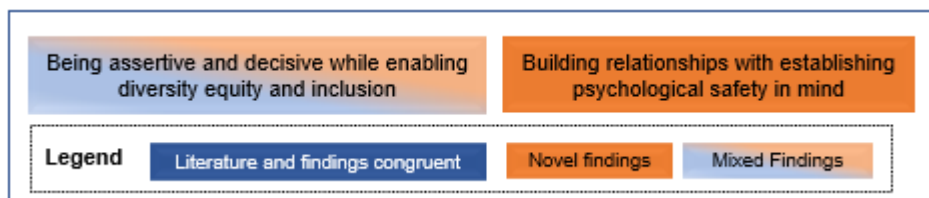


Figure 25 RQ2 multigenerational conflict in the workplace

7.3.2.1 Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion

Conflict due to generational differences occurred in the workplace (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). Differing expectations regarding leadership styles were identified as a high-risk conflict area within the workplace (Gabriellova & Buchko, 2021). Millennial leaders relied on their high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004) to demonstrate assertive and decisive leadership practices when dealing with workplace conflict (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Being assertive and decisive enabled these leaders to navigate the negative elements of multigenerational teams, while simultaneously celebrating the positive effects that generational diversity afforded. Empathy was core to their leadership style when dealing with workplace conflict.

7.3.2.2 Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind

High levels of individual engagement, authentic sharing and team cohesion were unlikely to exist in environments where there were ridicule and judgment (Zhou & Vredenburgh, 2020). Millennial leaders not only preferred collaborative and team-centric ways of working (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020), they also endeavoured to provide psychologically safe spaces to boost harmonious work environments. Where generational conflict arose, they deployed conflict resolution strategies which embodied objectivity.

7.3.3. The theoretical conclusions for RQ3

RQ3: What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?

This question explored the advice participants wished they had received at the start of their leadership journeys, overlaid with the support they envisaged they required now in order to be future-fit leaders. The study revealed four leading areas of support requirements, as depicted in Figure 26 below.

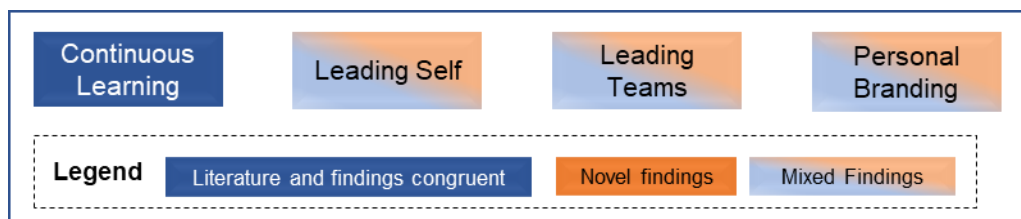


Figure 26 Millennial leader support requirements

7.3.3.1 Continuous learning

It is anticipated that millennial leaders would not succeed without the necessary training and leadership development support (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Participants demonstrated ambition and recognised the importance of ongoing professional support (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). They appreciated, what may be considered as, traditional training and development support in the form of mentoring and coaching. Surprisingly, they also sought support in the form of peer communities. No previously unidentified forms of leadership support were identified.

7.3.3.2 Leader of self

Arrogant and lazy were prominent descriptors for the millennial cohort (Staruch et al., 2021), yet there were reports that they valued success, were hard working and had a work ethic based on values groomed during their formative years. Failure was not an option they identified with favourably (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020); however, they needed reassurance that they would be supported in their leadership endeavours and that it was acceptable to not strive for leadership perfection at all costs.

7.3.3.3 Leading teams

With a preference for collaborative and team-centric ways of working (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020), additional leadership support was implored not only based on their

relatively newness to the realms of leadership (Galdames & Guihen, 2022) but also because bridging the gap between the generations posed challenges in fostering effective team cohesion.

7.3.3.4 Personal branding and managing resistance

The acknowledgement by the participants that leadership styles influenced leader followership validated the need for managing a personal leadership image to establish trust, demonstrate capabilities and increase followship as a means of achieving greater success of realising a shared vision (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020).

7.3.4. The theoretical conclusions for RQ4

RQ4: What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?

This question explored the participants' views on generational stereotypes associated with the millennial cohort. The study identified one consistent view, as depicted in Figure 27 below.

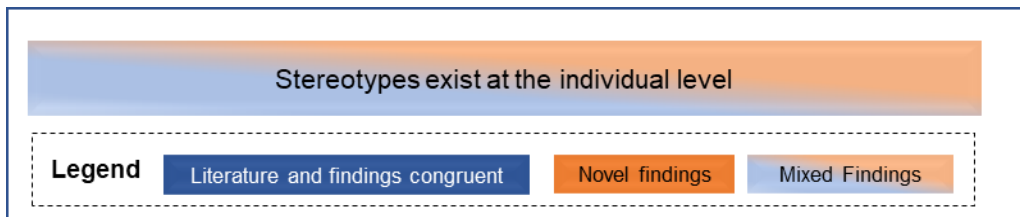


Figure 27 RQ4 generational stereotypes

7.3.4.1 Stereotypes exist at the individual level

Socially constructed stereotypes referencing the millennial cohort were rampant (Staruch et al., 2021). There were negative and positive assumptions made for this cohort (Smola & Sutton, 2002), of which many were commonly known. An interesting perception was the application of millennial stereotypes to the younger generation. This sentiment amplified the notion that despite being classified as a member of a particular generational cohort, it did not guarantee that all members of that group upheld the same views, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours towards work (Anderson et al., 2017; Jonck et al., 2017; Staruch et al., 2021).

Following on from the theoretical conclusions for each of the RQs, the next section of this chapter outlines the areas where this research study has contributed to the literature.

7.4. Research Contributions

This study contributed to the emergent literature on generational literature pertaining to millennial leaders in the South African workplace. There were four specific areas of the literature which were influenced, namely:

1. GCT and generational workplace differences
2. Generational workplace conflict
3. Leadership support/development
4. Generational stereotypes

7.4.1. GCT And Generational Workplace Differences

7.4.1.1 Literature congruence

Findings from the study concurred that participants acknowledged and identified with the terminology applied to generational cohorts as a means of grouping themselves and those they managed (Twenge, 2010). Aligned to the theory on generational differences (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021), participants also demonstrated different views, beliefs and attitudes in relation to ways of working and leadership when compared to other generations.

7.4.1.2 Literature extension

The literature on GCT and generational workplace differences may be extended to specific influences on leadership styles, with particular reference to growing up in South Africa. These influences related predominantly to leadership competencies, social discrimination, the influence of specific geographical and historical events and the personal values instilled in the formative years. Rich findings in these four areas added to the paucity in literature on the leadership styles of millennial leaders (Martin & Warshawsky, 2017).

7.4.2. Generational Workplace Conflict

7.4.2.1 Literature congruence

The findings and the literature aligned with the prevalence of workplace conflict, influenced by generational differences (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Despite the occurrences of this conflict, the findings demonstrated that participants preferred

collaborative and team-centric work environments, as supported by the literature (Mahmoud et al., 2021).

7.4.2.2 Literature extension

The literature on generational conflict resolution strategies may be extended to the details of the strategies and tactics that were deployed by participants (Urick et al., 2016). The exceptional tactics deployed by the participants included elements related to assertiveness, objectivity and psychological safety, which were not widely present in the literature review for this study.

7.4.3. Leadership Support/Development

7.4.3.1 Literature congruence

Since practical leadership development programmes were predominantly targeted at previous generations, the literature on leadership development, coaching and support for the millennial leader was scarce (Heyns et al., 2019). The literature and the findings align, not on the specific support solicited, but on the inference that because practical support for this generational cohort of leaders was scarce, it is expected that they would solicit leadership support.

7.4.3.2 Literature extension

Despite not being a new leadership support mechanism, the request for peer mentorship communities (Marcinkus Murphy, 2012) was considered an interesting extension to the literature pertaining to millennial leadership support options. This specific form of leadership support for this cohort was not widely encountered in the literature review for this research.

7.4.4. Generational Stereotypes

7.4.4.1 Literature congruence

Findings from the research suggested that generational stereotypes are present (Staruch et al., 2021). However, they are not unilaterally applicable to each member of that specific generational cohort. The research findings and literature align on the existence of these stereotypes and also on the individual application of these stereotypes.

7.4.4.2 Literature extension

New stereotypes for this generation were not uncovered. Interestingly, participants projected stereotypes associated with the millennial cohort to the Gen Zs. This practice amplified the essence of stereotypes which are centred on social construction and how easily they could be applied or misdirected.

Following on from the evidently rich contributions to generational literature, the next section of this chapter outlines recommendations for application by academic institutions and organisations.

7.5. Recommendations for Academic and Management Stakeholders

This research study was conducted with participants who occupied roles in corporate and academic institutions across South Africa. Findings from this study will benefit both academic and corporate institutions.

7.5.1. Academic Institutions/Scholars/ Researchers

7.5.1.1 Leadership development programmes

Not only was there a paucity in empirical evidence pertaining to the leadership styles of millennial leaders, but the scarcity in information was further extended to millennial leaders in South Africa (Martin & Warshawsk, 2017). Local and international academic institutions would benefit from incorporating these rich findings into their leadership development courses. Courses pertaining to the millennial leader, as well as the teams of the millennial leader, would benefit from these findings. The top ten South African business schools (Neumann, 2022) and the top ten globally accredited business schools (Papadopoulus, 2023) as depicted below in Figures 28 and Figure 29 respectively are illustrative examples of the types of institutions who would benefit from this research. The institutions depicted below are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but it is merely to demonstrate where this information could be deployed further. The findings not only add to the millennial leadership literature gap, but also enrich leadership context for South African millennial leaders. Since the findings revealed explicit requests for leadership support, these institutions are favourably placed to heed the call for help and provide the practical leadership toolkit requirements which participants sought.



Figure 28 Top ten South African academic institutions

Source: Neumann (2022). Logos retrieved from a Google search. Figure compilation researcher's own.

Rank	Business School	Country
1	The Wharton School	US
2	London Business School	UK
3	MIT Sloan School of Management	US
4	Harvard Business School	US
5	Saïd Business School	UK
6	Columbia Business School	US
7	Stanford Graduate School of Business	US
8	INSEAD (European Institute of Business Administration)	France
9	Haas School of Business	US
10	Yale School of Management	US

Figure 29 Extract of top ten international business schools

Source: Papadopoulus (2023).

7.5.2. Organisations

There are four leading areas where organisations would benefit from this study. These include:

1. Managing generational diversity and leadership style adaptability
2. Social discrimination in the workplace
3. Generational workplace conflict
4. Leadership support

7.5.2.1 Managing Generational Diversity and Leadership Style Adaptability

The findings show that generational differences are prevalent in the workplace (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021) and the millennial leaders take strain in having to straddle between the older and the younger generations. Their experiences with having to adapt their leadership styles to suit individual needs are found to be tedious and time-consuming. Organisations would benefit from a deeper understanding of these leadership challenges and exploring ways in which these could be alleviated. Not only would the leaders benefit from improved leadership deployment and team dynamics, but overall team and organisational performance would improve.

7.5.2.2 Social discrimination in the workplace

Participant experiences associated with social discrimination in the workplace were rife. Gender discrimination toward female participants was most rampant (Sinden, 2017), followed by age discrimination. Organisations would benefit from interventions specifically addressing gender and age discrimination towards females. The parent-child dynamic, which was relayed through the findings, should be eliminated. Varying perspectives on racial discrimination prevailed across all gender and racial groups. Initiatives to address racially discriminatory practices, whether real or perceived, remains a top priority for organisations.

7.5.2.3 Generational workplace conflict

Conflict attributed to generational differences was prevalent in the workplace (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Participants struggled with overcoming generational barriers, more so where there were older males reporting to younger females. These experiences overlapped with gender and age discrimination in the workplace. Strategic and focused social engagements and interactions which promote multigenerational team cohesion crossing the age and gender divide are encouraged. Organisations and their workforce would benefit from improved harmony and collaboration in the workplace.

7.5.2.4 Leadership support

Both formal and informal leadership support were solicited by the participants. They were mostly unaware of the channels available to pursue mentoring or coaching opportunities, despite these resources being available in their organisations. Peer mentoring, not a new form of mentoring support, was requested as a leadership support mechanism. Participants were tired of relying on the older generation for advice, which they

considered outdated for some of the modern-day workplace challenges. Organisations would benefit from making formal and informal support opportunities more readily available or making known where and how these resources could be attained. Without the necessary leadership support, the quality of leadership suffers, not only for the leader, but also for those being led. Benefits from these recommendations would be evident throughout the organisation. Organisations could capitalise on their onboarding and performance management processes to enhance awareness of formal and informal support mechanisms. Line managers also need to be educated on the need for providing a leadership safety net, which they may take for granted as a support requirement for millennial leaders.

7.5.2.5 Managing social stereotypes

Stereotypes, not only generational but also gender- and race-related, exist in the workplace (Rohrich & Rodriguez, 2020). Negative stereotypes could potentially sway performance management practices in organisations, where the genuine need for support could be clouded by preconceived negative social biases. Training and enhanced awareness on how to dispel negative stereotypes could benefit organisations and improve the working environment.

Benefits from the study are evident to various stakeholders; however, there are limitations to the study which require mentioning. These limitations are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

7.6. Limitations of the Research Study

In order to mitigate the reliability or the findings (Friese, 2019), the following limitations pertaining to the research study as a whole are outlined below:

- Limitations of the research methodology as outlined in Chapter 4 are repeated here.
- Limited data collected at a particular point in time, namely cross-sectional research, meant that the results of the research findings would potentially vary if the same research were to be conducted at a different point in time (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Due to the time limitations for this research study, there were no mitigating actions for this limitation.
- Research findings were restricted to the millennial leaders who participated in the interviews and did not include comparative findings from other generational

cohorts since the unit of analysis was millennial leaders. Comparative inputs could corroborate or dispel findings across the generations.

- There was significant consensus on the naming convention which defined the generations, but the specific age ranges allocated to the years of birth and the cut-off years per generation varied. Variations of the cut-off years included 1979–1994 (Ng et al., 2010). For this research, a millennial referred to individuals born between 1981–1996 (Dimock, 2019). The generational cohort date ranges were based on empirical information; however, a different set of generational cohort birth and cut-off ranges could yield different results.
 - Thematic analysis was applied to the data collected. Subjective descriptions of the codes were defined, based on the researcher's interpretation of the data. Even though the codes and subsequent themes were peer-reviewed, a different researcher or peer reviewer may interpret the findings differently.
- All participants were leaders of multigenerational teams; however, the participants' leadership and team management years of experience varied across the sample. The feedback on managing multigenerational teams could differ if the leadership experiences were relatively the same across participants.
 - The multigenerational team sizes managed by the participants varied across the sample. In some instances, it was a team of two and in other instances, it was in excess of five. It is envisaged that, were the team sizes relatively the same, the responses could differ.
 - The male-to-female ratio of participants was unintentionally skewed towards female participants. A difference in findings with equal gender representation is unknown.
 - The exact ages of participants were not documented. It was confirmed that they met the age criteria of being born between 1981–1996. Variations in ages were identified through the interview process, confirming a spread of ages across the participants. Using the specified birth dates of 1981–1996, the oldest participant turned 41 and the youngest participant turned 26 in 2022. The age gap between the oldest and the youngest participant would be 15 years. It is uncertain if a sample of participants closer in age on the 15-year spectrum would yield different results.

The above-mentioned limitations of the research study did not negatively impact the reliability of the findings in any way. In considering the time limitations for this study and the rich findings uncovered, there were areas which warranted further investigation. These additional research areas were deemed out of scope for this study; however, if pursued, they would enrich the literature even further.

7.7. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research topics emerged due to the limitations of the study or as a result of the rich findings which would further benefit individuals and business/academic entities. Areas for future research consideration include:

1. Generational differences and workplace conflict
2. Millennial leadership support
3. Generation Z

7.7.1. Generational Differences and Workplace Conflict

Participants alluded that those experiences associated with exposure or lack thereof due to favourable education and enabling resources or networks during their formative years, from a South African perspective, impacted their leadership styles. A deeper understanding of how these experiences unfolded and the specific influence on their leadership styles is suggested for this cohort. Additionally, the ways in which they mitigated negative influences could further enrich generational literature associated with the South African millennial leader.

It was suggested that having to lead multigenerational teams and constantly adjusting leadership styles to meet the needs of individual team members resulted in reduced productivity of the leader and also of the team. A deeper understanding of the perceived negative influence on productivity linked to leading multigenerational teams is suggested, with the intention of improving workforce productivity.

Participants and team members are struggling with bridging the generational gap between the older and the younger generations to foster greater team cohesion. Explorative investigations with mixed generational teams could provide practical answers to this challenge, from a multigenerational perspective.

7.7.2. Millennial Leadership Support

A call for leadership support was echoed among all participants. Over and above the request for traditional mentoring and coaching support, there was a call for practical tools and skills needed daily in a workplace with modern-day challenges. It was beyond the scope of this project to explore the details of what these practical skills would involve. Further investigation on these practical and tangible leadership requirements would enhance the leadership quality of this generational cohort of leaders.

Peer leadership communities were requested as a means of soliciting advice from like-minded leaders. A study to validate the effectiveness of such communities could benefit this group of leaders and potentially expedite the prevalence of such groups, if deemed empirically viable.

7.7.3. Generation Z

This study focused on the millennial leader, while taking their recent rise to leadership roles into account. However, the next generation, namely Gen Zs, are steadily entering the workplace and have already influenced the diversity and workforce dynamics. Proactive studies on the leadership requirements and support for this generation provide a head start to enable them early on in their leadership journey.

7.8. Concluding Remarks

Literature popularising the millennial cohort was abundant. The depiction of this cohort as unique to the workplace compared to previous generations is not uncommon. Noticing a rise of millennial leaders into leadership positions, the researcher was intrigued with the leadership styles of this generation. A subsequent literature review on their leadership styles identified a gap in the literature. The research study set out to contribute to this literature gap and also include a perspective of the South African millennial leader. At the onset of the study, various constructs were identified as key contributors to the influence on leadership styles of the participants. Through thematic analysis of the data and subsequent discussion thereof in relation to the literature, the interconnectedness of the findings was uncovered. The study contributed to generational literature from a South African millennial leader perspective and amplified the interconnectedness and unique contributions of the participants.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Confirmation

Ethical Clearance Approved External Inbox x

GIBS

Masters Research <MastersResearch@gibs.co.za>
to me, Masters ▾

Mon, 12 Sept 2022, 11:29



**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear [REDACTED]

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Appendix 2: Example of Participant Consent Form



To whom it may concern,

I am conducting research on the Leadership styles of millennial leaders who lead multigenerational teams within organisations. Our interview is expected to last 60 minutes and will help us understand the following:

1. How does being a South African Millennial leader, leading multigenerational teams, influence leadership styles?
2. How do Millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational differences (tension) in the workplace?

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. By signing this letter, you are indicating that you have given permission for:

- The interview to be recorded;
- The recording to be transcribed by a third-party transcriber, who will be subject to a standard non-disclosure agreement;
- Verbatim quotations from the interview may be used in the report, provided they are not identified with your name or that of your organisation;
- The data to be used as part of a report that will be publicly available once the examination process has been completed; and
- All data to be reported and stored without identifiers.

If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name:

Email:

Phone:

Research Supervisor name:

Email:

Phone:

Signature of participant : _____

Date : _____

Signature of researcher : _____

Date : _____

Appendix 3: Snapshot of Consistency Matrix

Research problem	Research Purpose	Research Objective	Lit Review / Theory	Main Research Qs/ HOs/ Propositions	Interview sub questions	Data Collection Tool	Analysis Method
<p>There is limited empirical knowledge defining the leadership styles of Millennial leaders. They are increasingly occupying leadership roles, and based on their significantly different behaviour, views and beliefs related to work, when compared to previous generations, it warrants further research into how these Millennial leaders define their leadership styles. More so, when they are leading multigenerational teams.</p>	<p>This research study will add to the gap in empirical knowledge relating to the leadership styles of Millennial leaders who lead multigenerational teams.</p> <p>Findings from this research will enrich recruitment, engagement and retention of the Millennial leader who manages multigenerational teams.</p> <p>Findings from this research can be used as input to the development and improvement of future leadership frameworks and training for the Millennial leader who manages multigenerational team teams.</p>	<p>Objective 1: Understand how Millennial leaders describe their leadership style.</p> <p>Objective 2: Exploring the attitudes, behaviours and beliefs of Millennial leaders in relation to work and leadership styles.</p>	<p>Al-Asfour & Lettau (2014) Leadership Styles</p> <p>Anderson et al. (2017) Leadership Styles</p> <p>Arsenault (2004) Generational Differences</p> <p>Bennett (2020) Leadership Styles</p> <p>Codrington & Grant-Marshall(2004) Generational Differences</p> <p>Cogin (2012) Generational Differences</p> <p>Costanza & Finkelstein (2015) Generational Differences</p> <p>Deal & Rogelberg (2010) Generational Differences</p> <p>Gabrielova & Buchko (2021) Leadership Styles</p> <p>Heyns et al. (2019) Leadership Styles</p> <p>Jonck & Sobayeni (2017) Generational Differences</p> <p>Parry & Urwin (2011) Generational Differences</p> <p>Ronnie (2018) Generational Differences</p> <p>Twenge, (2010) Generational Differences</p>	<p>Research Question 1: How does being a South African Millennial leader, leading multigenerational teams, influence leadership styles?</p>	<p>1.How would you best describe, being a Millennial leader, in South Africa? (What are the defining characteristics that set you apart from other generations, if any?)</p> <p>2.How would you describe the leadership styles of those older than yourself?</p> <p>3.How would you describe your own leadership style?</p> <p>4.What would you say are the key differences between your leadership style, and that of someone older than you?</p> <p>5.Have you ever faced criticism for being a Millennial leader? (Has your leadership been questioned or criticised because of your age?)</p> <p>6.Do you think that age plays a significant role in leadership style?</p> <p>7.Do you have to adapt your leadership style for older vs younger team members? If so, please elaborate?</p>	<p>Qualitative Methodology</p> <p>Semi-structured interview with South African Millennial leader</p>	<p>Digital coding and analysis tool ATLAS.ti</p> <p>Including thematic analysis</p>

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule Questions

RESEARCH QUESTION	SUB-QUESTIONS
<p>1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?</p>	<p>1.1 How has growing up in South Africa influenced your leadership style and development? (Things to consider – family situation, community, school, academic opportunities, friends etc, influences)</p> <p>1.2 How would you best describe, being a Millennial leader, in South Africa? (What are the defining characteristics that set you apart from other generations, if any?)</p> <p>1.3 How would you describe the leadership styles of those older than yourself?</p> <p>1.4 How would you describe your own leadership style?</p> <p>1.5 Have you ever faced criticism for being a Millennial leader? (Has your leadership been questioned or criticised because of your age?)</p> <p>1.6 Do you think that age plays a significant role in leadership style?</p> <p>1.7 Do you have to adapt your leadership style for older vs younger team members? If so, please elaborate?</p> <p>1.8 How has your gender influenced your leadership development (positively or negatively influenced your leadership development). What about being female/male influenced how you lead?</p> <p>1.9 How has your race influenced your leadership development (positively or negatively influenced your leadership development). What about your race influenced how you lead?</p> <p>•</p>
<p>2. How do millennial leaders' leadership styles enable them to resolve generational tension/workplace conflict?</p>	<p>1.3 Have you experienced tension/conflict/resistance from your team, due to your age?</p>

	<p>1.4 Which qualities, in relation to your leadership style, do you think helps you best when managing workplace conflict?</p> <p>1.5 Which qualities, in relation to your leadership style, do you think prevents you from managing workplace conflict?</p> <p>1.6 What are the positives of leading a multigenerational team?</p> <p>1.7 What are the negatives of leading a multigenerational team?</p>
<p>2. What support do millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>2.3 What do you wish someone had shared with you before you entered into a leadership position. What do you wish you knew then/previously versus what you know now?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>2.4 What support do you think Millennial leaders (young leaders like yourself) need in order to lead more effective. (What support do you need now, in order to be more effective)</p>
<p>3. What are the stereotypes about millennial leaders to debunk?</p>	<p>3.3 Is there any myth or stereotype that you think needs to be expelled? (Concerning Millennial leaders)</p> <p>3.4 Is there anything that we did not explicitly cover in the session today, which you feel should be included, considering the research problem, objectives, and questions?</p>

Appendix 5: Code List RQ1

RQ1. What influenced the leadership styles of millennial leaders as a result of growing up in South Africa?												
Level One Codes										Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)	
Greater exposure to people of diverse backgrounds (20)										Exposure to Diversity (20)	Personal History (45)	
Exposure to learning opportunities and networks (20)	Racial Advocacy (4)	Limited opportunities for young leaders which drives continuous competition (1)								Access to resources and people (25)		
Overcoming Gender Biases (31)	Age bias in the workplace (21)	Racial discrimination in the Workplace (17)	Greater awareness of inherent biases (9)	Perceived upbringing based on race (5)							Overcoming bias of others and self (83)	Social Biases and Discrimination (83)
Recognising that leading people is tough and requires grit and determination (11)	The ability to adapt leaderships styles to meet individual needs (21)	Flexibility and Agility (9)	Open to taking risks (2)	Needing to deal with ambiguity (1)	Open to change (1)	Micromanaging (2)	Being the Twitter Generation we don't take things too personal (2)	The need for creating inclusive environments (5)	Collaboration and relationships over tasks and outcomes (28)	Transformation Leadership (1)	Focus on interpersonal skills (83)	Leadership Competencies (135)
Having to straddle older and younger generations in the workplace (48)	Reverse Mentoring (4)									Adjusting to working with different generations (52)		
The importance of trust (2)	The importance of respect (14)	Being Transparent (2)	The value of authentic leadership (1)	Not shying away from displaying and sharing vulnerabilities (2)							Personal Values (21)	Personal Value System (82)
Being a beacon of hope and inspiration to the younger generation (6)	Empowering others (7)	Having room to self identify (3)	Leadership is about personal style rather than race or age (12)	Iconic black south African political leaders (1)	Dominant female influences growing up (8)					Leading by example (38)		
Feeling like there is zero room for failure (9)	Having to work harder to prove yourself more (5)	Raised to believe that hard work leads to success (4)	Building confidence over time (4)							Managing perceptions in terms of competence (23)		

Appendix 6: Code List RQ2

RQ2. How do Millennial leaders address generational tension/conflict in the workplace									
Level One Codes								Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
Being approachable with no hierarchical boundaries (1)	Self awareness and open to feedback (3)	Allowing yourself to show up vulnerable (1)	Correct use of humour (2)	Having an open mindset (4)				Being able to connect with others (10)	Building relationships with establishing psychological safety in mind (42)
Choosing harmony over conflict (8)	Patience (1)	Remain calm (2)	Good listening skills (2)	Create an environment of understanding (1)	Being inclusive (4)	Gaining trust as early as possible (4)	Stick to the facts (10)	Creating safe spaces (32)	
Balancing empathy with reality (12)	Stand your ground (5)	Tolerance coupled with assertiveness (1)	Boundary setting (8)	Open to challenging the status quo (3)	Balancing traditional values in terms of elderly respect and older generational insubordination in the workplace (4)	Direct one on one resolution (6)	Open to bringing in support reinforcements (2)	Being firm but fair (41)	Being assertive and decisive while enabling diversity equity and inclusion (83)
Celebrating the positive impacts of multigenerational teams (19)	Navigating the negative impacts of multigenerational teams (23)							Balancing the innovative and creative with the tried and tested. (42)	

Appendix 7: Code List RQ3

RQ3. What support do Millennial leaders need in order to be more effective as they pioneer through the realms of leadership development?								
Level One Codes							Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
How to have tough conversations (1)	Communicating with and to people (1)						Effective Team Communication (2)	Leading Teams (8)
Focus on people - Leadership is about people not the technical or functional knowledge (2)							Leadership is about people (2)	
Know how to cultivate team cohesion (4)							Enabling effective Group Dynamics (4)	
What is expected of me to be taken seriously as a young female (2)	How to be more strategic (1)						How to build credibility with others (3)	Personal Branding and managing resistance (6)
You are never going to be liked by everybody (3)							There will be dissenters (3)	
Awareness of the psychological changes that comes with leading others (1)	Manage your emotions so your emotions don't manage you (1)	Be attuned to your purpose (1)					Develop personal psychology (3)	Leader of Self (11)
Be reassured that its ok to not have all the answers (3)	Be reminded that you don't have to kill yourself to proof yourself (5)						Don't put undue pressure on yourself (8)	
Tangible and practical leadership courses (4)	Continuous learning versus unlearning (1)	Masterclasses by the older generation (2)	What are the tactical tools that I need to have in my toolkit (4)	Mentorship and Coaching (8)	Time Management (1)	Millennial leadership communities (5)	Formal and informal learning and development opportunities (25)	Continuous learning and transformation within enabling work environments (30)
Having a safety net (3)	Line manager support (2)						Appropriate level of support (5)	

Appendix 8: Code List RQ4

RQ4. Concluding questions: What are your views on the Millennial stereotypes?					
Level One Codes				Level Two Codes (Categories)	Level Three Codes (Themes)
They are job hoppers (7)	They have higher expectations on organisations (1)	They are entitled (1)	The younger generation is lazy (7)	Assigning labels to individuals or groups is a common phenomenon (16)	Stereotypes exist at the individual level (25)
You should not paint all Millennials with the same brush (5)	What are the stereotypes? (2)	Age is just a number (2)		Not all Millennials are the same (9)	