The role of transformational leadership on millennials’ dedication in level five private hospitals in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The primary intent of this study is to establish the role of transformational governance on millennials’ dedication to level-5 private hospitals in Kenya. A mixed methods study was applied using a cross-sectional exploratory survey design with quantitative and qualitative approaches. The sample comprised millennials and their leaders working in level-5 private hospitals. The sample size was 415 respondents. Five-level multi-stage cluster sampling and purposeful sampling were used. The study findings indicated that individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation influenced millennial dedication. This study has provided actionable insights into leading millennials to safeguard millennial engagement in Kenyan healthcare. Furthermore, to be dedicated, millennials require close monitoring and support. The millennials’ values differ from those of other generations, and they prefer challenges when they get bored with routine work. However, there are two categories of millennials: the older millennials are more responsible and resilient than the younger millennials, who are not dedicated.

Introduction

The global situation has seen the groups of older generations retiring as the millennials promptly take over the entire workforce. It has altered the demographic composition of the workforce. The millennial generation is expected to occupy three-quarters of the workforce in the next decade. Millennials’ work ethics differ significantly from the older generations as they do not regard work as an asset. However, leaders today are not adequately prepared to nurture and mentor millennials.

Transformational leadership was first defined by MacGregor Burns in 1978 as “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, 2019: 264). Transformational leadership (TL) collectively influences the well-being of employees and the organization (Gyensare et al., 2017). Transformational leadership encompasses four diverse elements: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Furthermore, transformational leadership is regarded as the gold standard leadership model due to the nurturing and intrinsic motivation nature in developing followers into leaders in the current workforce (Northouse, 2019). Millennials dominate the present day's workforce to a more considerable extent (Gerard, 2019).

Globally, millennials are the most abundant workforce compared to other generations (Fry, 2018; Forastero et al., 2018). For example, Gulyani and Bhatnagar (2017) predicted that millennials would be 50% of the workforce in 2020. Furthermore, Espinoza and Ukleja (2016) argue that by 2025, millennials will occupy 75% of the workforce. It has been validated by Gerard (2019), who found that millennials occupy the largest share of the healthcare workforce.

The Government of Kenya (GOK) report (2014) in the Kenya Demographic Health Survey revealed that 65.9% of the Kenyan healthcare workforce is millennials. Subsequently, 73.4% of Kenyan healthcare workers are in the private sector (Barnes et al., 2009).
However, there is a high turnover of the millennial generation workforce in the public and private sectors pursuing greener pastures abroad (GOK, 2014). Unlike other generational cohorts, millennials’ priorities and worldviews concerning work values and beliefs differ (Cattermole, 2018; Espinoza & Ukleja, 2016; Papavasilieou & Lyons, 2015). Employment for millennials is not an asset, for it is not unusual for a millennial to leave one job for another at ease (Greatwood, 2016; Tubey et al., 2015). It means that engagement in one organization is not a priority for millennials. Unfortunately, most leaders are not well prepared to build bonds with the millennials and create working environments that enhance engagement (Walden et al., 2017).

Furthermore, transformational leadership remains closely interconnected to employee engagement. In their exploration of the affiliation between employee engagement and leadership style, Popli and Rizvi (2015) concluded that leaders who are perceived to be transformational enhanced employee engagement. Subsequently, transformational leaders establish a favorable psychological milieu that enhances engagement (Gyensare et al., 2017). It is because transformational leaders are nurturers in nature and are perfect mentors. It would be a perfect model fit to lead millennials.

The millennial generation is considered confident and self-expressive compared to other generations (Maier et al., 2015). They expect a positive work culture in excellent facilities and value personal and professional growth (Forastero et al., 2018; Tubey et al., 2015). Working with millennials requires exceptional attention as they value autonomy (Forastero et al., 2018). They must be mentored by role models (Fry, 2018; Maier et al., 2015).

However, millennial workforce engagement has been a concern to many organizations. Engaged employees have three characteristics: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees demonstrate loyalty and enthusiasm while finding meaning in their work (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016; Pandita & Ray, 2018). In addition, such employees make connections with other employees. On the contrary, disengaged employees lack emotional connectedness, are passive at work, and lack meaning in their work (Tripathy, 2019).

The component of dedication in an employee is pivotal in healthcare. Dedication denotes enthusiastic in-depth work involvement (Mitonga-Monga & Hlongwane, 2017; Saks, 2019) and dedicated employees have a high sense of value in their work (Saks, 2019). Dedication predicts if employees are committed to their work; however, leadership significantly influences dedication (Latta, 2019). It may be associated with the deep connections developed with the co-workers and the supervisor giving the employee a sense of security.

In Kenya, millennial healthcare workers are always on the move. They are always searching for ‘greener pastures’ in stable organizations where they are valued. Therefore, this study aims to determine how transformational leadership can influence employee dedication. However, unfortunately, most leaders are not well prepared to build bonds with the millennials and create working environments that enhance engagement (Walden et al., 2017). Developing transformational leaders would offer effective leadership with optimal organizational performance (Soane et al., 2015). Similar quantitative studies have been conducted locally on human resource initiatives that would transform the millennial’s engagement in an entertainment company and expectations upon employment of 4th-year Moi University students respectfully (Mukami & Nyambegera, 2017; Tubey et al., 2015). However, little is known about millennial engagement in the Kenyan Healthcare industry.

With this backdrop, this study aims to evaluate and explore the millennials’ experiences in their organizations and how they relate with their leaders and provide actionable insights to safeguard millennial engagement in four level 5 hospitals in Kenya using a mixed methodology study.

Furthermore, the philosophical underpinning used was epistemological applying positivism paradigm in the quantitative dimension and phenomenology paradigm in the qualitative dimension of the research. The sample comprised millennials and their leaders working in level - 5 private hospitals. The sample size was 415 respondents. Five-level multi-stage cluster sampling and purposeful sampling were used. Quantitative data was collected using a modified Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire for transformational leadership extended Utrecht Work Engagement (UWES) scale 9 - item tool for millennial engagement. Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions incorporating an interview schedule and open-ended questions. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25 was used to analyze the data. Bivariate analysis determined the relationship between independent and dependent variables using a multiple linear regression model. Qualitative data were analyzed using the Atlas.ti 7 Software to identify patterns and common themes.

This paper is organized as follows: following the introduction, a second part is a literature review with theoretical and empirical studies that shed light on the linkage between theory and practice. The third part introduces the background information on research and methodology. Following the analysis and findings section of the study, finally, authors conclude with key points, recommendations, future research directions, and limitations.
Literature review

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Transformational leadership

Downton coined the ideology of transformational leadership. It has been the most studied model in different disciplines of leadership that runs through a continuum between “laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership” (Yaghi, 2017, p. 244). As the name denotes, transformational governance is a practice that enhances vicissitudes and transforms individuals in an organization. Bass (1995) described transformational leadership as a superior leadership model which stirs the followers to a higher level of motivation, hence, promoting organizational commitment. Furthermore, transformational leadership presents the followers with an inspirational vision that motivates them to work towards achieving the organizational vision by creating connections with the followers. They, therefore, perform beyond their expectations (Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010).

Transformational leadership has been associated with effective leadership (Soane et al., 2015). Transformational leadership would be recommended in an African setup due to its strategic, collaborative, and ethical nature (Shava & Heystek, 2021). In line with this, the followers are transformed in values, emotions, ethics, and standards, which in the long-term influence followers to exceed their expectations (Northouse, 2019). It is because the transformation process involves a close-knit relationship between the follower and the leader. Leaders engage with developing a morally right relationship of the duo while paying attention to followers to realize their full potential (Northouse, 2019). The creation of a safe psychological climate enabled by TL plays a pivotal role in effective leadership by transforming the working environment (Khan et al., 2018). It further creates a safe, innovative environment (Matzler et al., 2015) through process innovation. It enhances performance (Yang & Yang, 2019). The nature of TL has influenced the leadership practice by being uncomfortable with the status quo. It provokes and stirs followers to develop confidence and high self-esteem (Matzler et al., 2015).

Transformational leadership consists of four diverse constructs: “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration” (Northouse, 2019, p. 3538). It exemplifies the transformation leadership model, which posits that applying the four TL constructs in performance goes beyond expectation (Northouse, 2019). The four dimensions of TL influence employees' job satisfaction positively. It is the hallmark of worker retention and optimal performance (Khan et al., 2018; Puni et al., 2018).

While all the TL dimensions support job satisfaction, the highest correlation coefficient is demonstrated in individualized consideration and idealized influence as forecasters of job satisfaction (Puni et al., 2018). It could be associated with the autonomy a follower gains from being empowered through individualized attention from the leader.

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence denotes the emotive expressive element in leadership in a morally and ethically upright leader who is an exemplar to the employees. Such leaders are visionary and charismatic and have a large following (Northouse, 2019). Leaders with idealized influence often model their values and views to their followers. It is passed to the followers as they expect their followers to be committed to their beliefs. Idealized influence has been associated with organizational engagement, which is demonstrated by the act of going the extra mile. It is exemplified when the organization changes (Faupel & Süß, 2018). Idealized influence indirectly enhances employee desire to remain in an organization. It enforces extra-role behavior, clarifies the leader’s strong sense of purpose, and exemplifies consistency in applying its values.

Leaders who value idealized influence enforce innovations (Berraires & Abidine, 2019). Such leaders impact the self-renewal of their followers (Boukamcha, 2019). Millennials who value innovation and are restless to change jobs would thrive under an idealized influence leader who has a collective sense of mission. Such leaders look out for coaching needs in their organizations and provide goal-oriented personal and professional development that enhances followers' engagement (Puni et al., 2018). Idealized influence leaders provide focused challenges to their followers to articulate their learning. Achieving this requires building trust between the leader and the followers.

Transformational leadership is one predictor of job satisfaction (Puni et al., 2018). It influences employee engagement in the idealized influence characteristic of building trust with the followers. Idealized influence leaders are more concerned with their followers’ beliefs; hence, they pay more attention to their followers’ particular needs (Berraires & Abidine, 2019). The dimension of idealized influence has not gone uncriticized. Dartey-Baah and Addo (2019) identified that, while idealized influence leaders are charismatic and visionary, they are perceived by their followers to have negative organizational support. It could be associated with the idealized influence of leaders’ commitment to their beliefs and the fact that they consider moral and ethical practices in their work. These may differ from those of their followers.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation in a leader enhances team spirit while communicating high expectations to the followers leading to excellent team performance (Northouse, 2019). Leaders who are inspirational focus on the followers’ professional development. They stimulate them intellectually towards exemplary performance (Berraires & El Abidine, 2019). Inspirational motivation enhances
workplace positive culture development. It also enhances a deep psychological attachment to the work, the peers, and the organizational values and nurtures a creative environment (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017; Sandvik et al., 2018). Subsequently, it inspires followers to challenge the status quo while providing happiness at work (Berraires & Abidine, 2019; Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). The expression of happiness by employees at work denotes employee commitment. Leaders who instigate happiness at work instill confidence in their followers to achieve their goals. They challenge the status quo, which calls them to set high standards while aspiring to an exciting and optimistic future. Such leaders take heed of their followers’ concerns about carrying organizational support (Darrey-Baah & Addo, 2019).

Leaders with inspirational motivation are innovative and have what it takes to venture into new businesses (Boukamcha, 2019). Inspirational motivation leaders also promote exploratory innovation. They, too, articulate a compelling vision to their followers (Berraires & Abidine, 2019). It goes a long way in support of organizational learning, which continues proactivity in their followers (Khalifa & Ayoubi, 2015). Inspirational leaders seek learning opportunities for their followers and motivate them. They work towards success and are driven by purpose and meaning. It is reciprocated by followers who devote their efforts to their tasks, reinforcing continual learning. In turn, followers perceive organizational support (Darrey-Baah & Addo, 2019). In line with this, leaders who inspire followers continuously encourage them to achieve organizational goals.

**Intellectual Stimulation**

Intellectual stimulation encompasses the extent to which those in leadership solicit ideas from the followers and stimulate innovations and creativity while altering the followers’ value beliefs (Northouse, 2019). Leaders with intellectual stimulation trigger and support creativity and innovation in their followers. They challenge the status quo and create a problem-solving muscle (Sandvik et al., 2018). It is exemplified in their flexibility and diverse problem-solving-seeking behavior (Brouer et al., 2016). It implies that such leaders are always re-innovating processes in the organization. It is an element preferred by millennials. Intellectual stimulation triggers innovativeness and self-renewal (Boukamcha, 2019).

The leader with intellectual stimulation facilitates the followers' professional and personal growth. It propagates retention in the organization. It is influenced by the fact that leaders intellectually stimulate their followers. Subsequently, this forms a creative environment in the organization (Sandvik et al., 2018). Leaders are always seeking and innovating new ways of performing tasks due to the creative environment. Intellectual stimulation provokes the followers’ curiosity to learn more (Berraires & Abidine, 2019). Intellectually stimulating leaders encourage non-traditional ways to explore problems as such leaders challenge ancient thinking. They encourage newer ways of thinking, enforcing professional growth support (Brouer et al., 2016). Intellectual stimulating leaders would be ideal for leading millennials. They would encourage them to express new ideas. Millennials were born with technology in their hands; hence, they would add value to innovation.

In a healthcare setting, intellectual stimulation is often used to troubleshoot emergencies where professionals think on their feet and reflect on action. Intellectual stimulation reasoning triggers mentorship in high-level creativity in decision-making and problem-solving emergencies (Arnold et al., 2016). The emergency requires reflection on action. Intellectual stimulation is often aroused to make sound decisions to save lives. In line with this, the leader has to use evidence-based reasoning rather than arbitral or opinionated thinking to solve problems. It is supported by Soane et al. (2015), who consider leaders who intellectually stimulate followers to be influential. It is affiliated with such leaders' characteristics of continually re-examining critical assumptions and their appropriateness, hence, questioning the status quo.

**Individualized Consideration**

Individualized consideration embodies leaders who provide personalized attention to their followers through coaching, bringing their followers to self-actualization (Northouse, 2019). Such leaders want to identify their followers’ learning needs and actualize them. The leader is cognizant of the followers’ strengths and weaknesses and develops them appropriately. These leaders offer to develop their followers after considering their abilities and inabilities through coaching. Leaders who offer individualized consideration take note of the uniqueness of their followers and nurture them.

The leader’s focus on followers builds a psychological engagement with the work and the organization. In line with this, flexible leaders can provide individualized consideration, thereby enhancing growth in the followers (Brouer et al., 2016). Leaders who apply individualized consideration create an environment that values and appreciates followers and motivates them to take risks (Barraires & El Abidine, 2019). It is to develop the followers' strengths at an individual level. Relationship building is enhanced between the leader and the follower. It encourages them to grow professionally and to stay in the organization longer.

Leaders who offer individualized consideration to their followers develop leadership skills through coaching (Shava & Heystek, 2021). This leader further promotes the followers' personal development through mentorship. Subsequently, in extreme work situations where decision-making is crucial, intellectual stimulation often supports individualized consideration (Arnold et al., 2016). Individualized attention develops followers to attain proficiency levels in competence building.

Individualized influence develops followers. Khalifa and Ayoubi (2015) investigated the individualized influence on organizational learning and found no statistical significance in the relationship between the two concepts. Notwithstanding this, the dimensions of transformational leadership cannot function independently but work in synergy comprehensively. Weiß and Süß (2016) studied one
element of TL: idealized influence. They concluded that transformational leaders are unlikely to overcommit themselves to work. In essence, the TL constructs synergize to offer effective leadership.

Transformational leadership does not offer a specific prescribed behavior. Instead, it provokes the followers' thinking to communicate ideas, inspirations, and innovations while considering personal concerns (Arnold et al., 2016). TL demonstrates high-level modeling skills with effective and open communication (Brandit & Uusi-Kakkuri, 2016). It is influenced by transformational leaders’ emotional intelligence, enhancing work engagement (Brandit & Uusi-Kakkuri, 2016; Mencl et al., 2016). As a result, transformational leaders are highly esteemed and listen to their followers’ ideas. Given this, esteemed leaders would be the game changers in healthcare settings.

**Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement**

Transformational leadership has been identified as the most dominating form of management that has a stimulating effect on followers (Azim et al., 2019). This is perpetuated by the supportive organizational climate created by the transformational leaders that enhances a greater magnitude of latitude in employee creativity and innovative, supportive behavior. It culminates in workplace harmony. Popli and Rizvi (2015), in their investigation of the connection between workers, engagement, and leadership style, concluded that leaders who are perceived to be transformational enhanced employee engagement more than transactional leadership. Transformational leaders were equally engaged in their work. Transformational governance remains positively linked to employee engagement because transformational leaders create a positive psychological environment (Gyensare et al., 2017). It reduces the propensity for employee turnover. Employees who experience a friendly environment reciprocate by staying in the organization longer. Mitonga-Monga and Hlongwane (2017) report a high tendency of employee engagement and productivity in employees working under supportive leadership styles. It can be associated with followers’ intrinsic motivation under transformational leaders. Transformational leaders not only support their followers but develop them. They have teams that are more engaged and responsive. Leaders who perpetuate stable organizations influence employees to develop vigour and absorption, the engagement constructs (Meskelis & Whittington, 2020).

Leaders who treat their followers exceptionally rather than embracing a collective strategy demonstrate the capability of developing a group of engaged followers with high service orientation levels that positively influence employees’ performance and productivity (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). In line with this, millennials who value autonomy and individualized treatment would thrive under transformational leaders. Another quality that supports employee engagement is leaders' humor. Humor has been associated with employees' positive emotions. Therefore, it perpetuates employee engagement (Goswami et al., 2016). TL has been associated with cheerful humor with followers' positive emotions leading to employee engagement (Goswami et al., 2016). The greatest challenge is creating a supportive environment for millennials to ensure millennial engagement.

Creating an environment where millennials can thrive requires transformational leadership. It is because millennials have grown up in stable, structured homes supervised by helicopter parents (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Millennials are responsive to nurturing leaders who have high levels of integrity. It matches transformational leadership, which prompts working closely with their followers, culminating in a compelling impact to exceed their organizational goals (Azim et al., 2019). Despite transformational governance remaining associated with effective leadership, it has not gone without criticism. For example, transformational leadership has several weaknesses on the dearth of clarity in the constructs due to the expansive coverage of various features and activities. Another criticism is how the measurement of transformational leadership is done. Still, the style suffers from heroic leadership bias.

Moreover, transformational leadership is prone to abuse (Northouse, 2019). Nevertheless, its benefits outweigh the weaknesses as it has been extensively studied, qualitatively and quantitatively, positively impacting the followers. Transformational leadership spells out how leaders can front-change, while governance is not the leader’s sole responsibility but includes the follower.

Transformational leadership views leadership extensively as opposed to being transactional. It emphasizes the followers' values and morals. Empirically, TL has been identified as an effective form of leadership (Northouse, 2019). In line with this, TL has also been linked with work engagement in millennials, as they require mentorship and inspiration from their leaders (Bodenhausen & Curtis, 2016). Furthermore, millennials require instant feedback and teamwork. It works well with transformational leadership.

**Millennial dedication**

Human resource has become the most valued asset in organizations today. Getting dedicated employees is treasurable in any organization. The return on investment is highest when the employees are dedicated (Yang & Matz-Costa, 2017). Dedicated employees have a high sense of value in their work (Saks, 2019). Dedication predicts if employees are committed to their work.

In this volatile, unpredictable, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) world, millennials regard staying in one job for a long as a failure (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Employment is not an asset for them. It is not unusual for them to leave one job for another (Greatwood, 2016; Tubey et al., 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to understand generational differences and the variances in their employment worldview (Sarraf et al., 2017). The most significant concern is if other generation cohorts understand the millennials at their workplace and their future engagement at work. The reason is that each generation is unique in its view of work engagement. It is a product of values and experiences in their lives (Sarraf et al., 2017). At the same time, different ages of leaders have varying
impacts on employee engagement. Leaders who are superior in age to their followers lead to higher employee dedication (Yang & Matz - Costa, 2017).

Diverse reasons dictate dedication for millennials. To keep millennials on the job requires growth, recognition, and awards while maintaining flexible working hours (Sjabadyni & Mustika, 2018). Millennials with high decision-making autonomy are more dedicated (Forastero et al., 2018). Work-life balance and effective, transparent communication with adequate information flow have increasingly become predictors for millennial attraction and engagement (Maier et al., 2015; Mukami & Nyambegera, 2017; Walden et al., 2017). The connection created by communication develops deep employee commitment. Millennials value comprehensive performance feedback, which culminates in employee engagement (Jha et al., 2018; Ruiz & Davis, 2017; Walden et al., 2017). They seek to be heard (Jha et al., 2018). Building a relationship with leaders is pivotal for millennials' dedication (Heo et al., 2018; Ruiz & Davis, 2017). The kind of relationship that a millennial develops in the organization determines their retention (Walden et al., 2017). It is associated with millennials thriving in a stable organizational culture where they perceive a sense of belonging (Cattermole, 2018; Jha et al., 2018). They appreciate recognition and awards (Jha et al., 2018; Walden et al., 2017), which enhances talent management. Millennial engagement and hence the dedication to work depends on the millennial personal gain and advancement goals (Jha et al., 2018; Ruiz & Davis, 2017). Millennials are focused and ambitious, and they loathe micromanagement and risk-taking. Work must be enjoyable for them to be dedicated (Jha et al., 2018; Ruiz & Davis, 2017). Employee engagement requires high personal life engagement. The hierarchy of needs is met first (Greatwood, 2016). Employers should invest in the millennials to gain employee engagement (Greatwood, 2016). Low levels of millennial engagement end in high turnover (Fry, 2018).

In line with this, leadership plays a significant role in millennials' dedication. Because intrinsic motivation is vital in millennials' engagement, strategies aligned with millennial professional development are greatly interested (Gong et al., 2018). The organization must have a philosophy that recognizes the diversity of variant generations to meet the needs of all generations (Sarrafi et al., 2017). This will prepare leadership for millennial dynamism and delink from the traditional leadership methods. It will turn to integrative leadership to accommodate the millennials (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Rather than developing leadership lifts created by generation gaps, leaders should work towards discovering the millennial strengths and utilizing them appropriately (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Devising ways for millennial growth to achieve a high passion for work would greatly help (Gulyani & Bhatnagar, 2017). For millennials to develop dedication, leadership support plays a pivotal role. Rewards and work flexibility influence vigor and absorption (Kassa & Raju, 2015). Creating an innovative environment for millennials will give a competitive advantage to any organization (Kassa & Raju, 2015). Millennials are easily demotivated by unfair treatment at work, lack of growth opportunities, and bureaucracy (Forastero et al., 2018; Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015; Tubey et al., 2015).

Millennials yearn for quick financial stability (Forastero et al., 2018; Greatwood, 2016; Mukami & Nyambegera, 2017). While they value autonomy and career growth (Forastero et al., 2018), autonomy and career development negatively affect millennials' engagement (Mukami & Nyambegera, 2017). It could be associated with the difference in the study locations and population. Millennials have a high need for instant gratification (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Besides, they want to feel the immediate impact of their work (Cattermole, 2018).

It is worth noting that the significance of tasks allocated to the millennials positively affects their dedication (Mukami & Nyambegera, 2017). Tasks allocated to millennials must be effectual and meaningful. While employee engagement has been positively associated with the organizational bottom line, millennials take pride when their thoughts and ideas are considered more than the organizational bottom line, unlike the baby boomers (Bateh, 2018; Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Millennials detest organizational citizenship habits (Gong et al., 2018). The sense of belonging in organizations and relationship building with leadership is pivotal in millennial engagement (Tubey et al., 2015). Millennials are motivated by rewards, recognition, and flexible hours to work (van Eck & Burger, 2018). While millennials are described as self-centered, narcissistic, and materialistic, there is a need to develop engagement platforms like leadership mentoring, being transparent while providing them with information that they require, embracing connectivity while providing an environment where they provide solutions that they can own (Cattermole, 2018; Zhao, 2018).

**Research and Methods**

**Research paradigm**

The philosophical paradigm used in this research was dual-phased as predetermined by the nature of the mixed methodology research. In the quantitative dimension of the study, the philosophical underpinning was epistemological, applying the positivism paradigm, which is deductive. In the qualitative dimension of the study, phenomenology applying the interpretivism paradigm, which was inductive, was used.

The qualitative arm, the phenomenological approach, aimed at gaining deeper meaning of the daily experiences of the millennials and their leaders. The focus was to make meaning of the millennials’ experience in their organizations and leadership. The assumption was that the experiences of the millennials in the organization determine their work behavior.
Method approach
The research assumed a mixed-method strategy. First, the study used qualitative data to validate the quantitative data, which was more predominant. It gave the research more ground for generalization.

Research design
A cross-sectional research design was adopted to answer the research questions, which entailed collecting data simultaneously. The cross-sectional design facilitated qualitative and quantitative data collection while describing the status of the phenomena. Because a mixed methodology approach was used, quantitative data was acquired in the first phase, and qualitative data were acquired in the second phase to explain the quantitative data.

Study settings
This research was a multisite study conducted in four-level five private hospitals in Kenya. Level five hospitals offer specialized services in different disciplines, including medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, and dental. Therefore, they offer emergency and tertiary care and training for healthcare personnel. Three hospitals are in Nairobi County, and the other is in Nyeri county.

Study population
The population under study were the millennials and their leaders working in the four-level five private hospitals in Kenya. The millennials encompass individuals who were born between 1980-2000.

The study included millennials who were in permanent employment working in the organization for over six months. The investigation studied the first-line managers/leaders who led the millennials included in the study. These are the leaders whom the millennials directly reported to during the exploration.

Samples selected
The sample size included 350 millennials. The Cochran-powered formula for sample size estimation was used to obtain the sample size. The sample included 80% of the clinical staff and 20% of the non-clinical staff. Proportionate allocation was used to allocate the sample size to individual hospitals to determine the sample size from each institution, considering the total sample size was 350. A total of the 60 leaders were purposefully studied from the four-level five private hospitals.

Sampling methods
Multi-stage cluster sampling method was used in the quantitative data in four stages, while in the qualitative arm of the research, purposeful sampling was used. Stage one entailed identifying all private hospitals in Kenya. In the second step, all level-5 private hospitals in Kenya were identified as the primary sampling of the unit. In stage three, systematic sampling was done to identify the four hospitals picked as four clusters. Data from the medical board stipulates 5,257 health care facilities in Kenya; 29 are level five hospitals, 16 of which are private hospitals. Of the 16 hospitals, 10 (62.5%) are situated in Nairobi County, while 6 (37.5%) are distributed in other counties. Next, systematic sampling was done to identify the actual hospitals that were studied, and three hospitals in Nairobi County and one in Nyeri county were picked. For anonymity, they will be referred to hospitals A, B, C, and D. Systematic sampling was done from the clusters in stage four, and the millennials who met the study criteria were identified.

Data collection methods
Quantitative data was collected using a modified Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) for transformational leadership, and an extended Utrecht Work Engagement (UWES) scale 9-item tool was used to study millennial engagement. The tools were tested for reliability and validity.

Reliability
Cronbach’s alpha was utilized to assess the consistency of the data for each construct in transformational governance and millennial engagement. Individual constructs of transformational governance were tested, and Cronbach alpha delineated as follows; idealized influence 0.915, inspiration motivation 0.933, intellectual stimulation 0.943, and individualized consideration 0.940. Further, on the Utrecht Work Engagement (UWES) scale, nine constructs were tested for reliability: vigor was 0.918, dedication construct was 0.888, and absorption was 0.822. It indicated that the tools were consistent. On the open-ended questions, the following question was posed “In your opinion, to what extent does your leader influence your enthusiasm for your work?”

Validity
Furthermore, convergent validity was tested using Pearson’s correlation matrix for all the constructs of transformational leadership using inter-element correlation. Idealized influence validity ranged from 0.607 – 0.72 (p<0.01), inspirational motivation 0.606 to 0.764 (<0.001), intellectual stimulation 0.631 to 0.78 (p<0.01), and individualized consideration 0.604 to 0.773 (p<0.01). Pearson’s correlation for the Utrecht Work Engagement (UWES) scale 9 vigor ranged from 0.603 to 0.849 (p<0.01), dedication 0.404 to
0.821 (p<0.01) and absorption 0.327 to 0.883 (p<0.01). All the tools were fit to measure transformational leadership, engagement, and organizational culture respectfully.

Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions using an interview schedule with open-ended questions. The focus group discussion was done on a recorded closed audio/visual zoom meeting.

Research ethics
All the research subjects offered informed consent before the study after acquiring all the information regarding the exploration. Ethical approval was granted by Pan African Christian (PAC) University. Further, ethical approval was issued by the institutional research board (IRB) in three hospitals that were studied. Finally, ethical approval was granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The hospitals were coded, and pseudo names were used when reporting qualitative data to safeguard confidentiality and anonymity.

Data management and analysis
Quantitative data was cleaned and coded. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data to synthesize and make inferences from the data. Mean scores, standard deviation, and correlation were calculated for all the variables. Frequency distributions were used to express the numeric data in tables. The qualitative data in the visual audio device was listened to and transcribed. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyze quantitative data for descriptive and inferential data. The descriptive data described the study concepts by calculating the mean scores, standard deviations, frequencies, dispersions, and correlation coefficients. In inferential data, the bivariate analysis determined the relationship between independent and dependent variables using a multiple regression model. Hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression. Qualitative data was analyzed using the Atlas.ti 7 Software to identify patterns and the common themes that were used to validate the quantitative data.

Analysis and Findings
Of the 415 questionnaires, 349 were issued to the millennials and 65 to the leaders. A total of 231 millennials and 60 leaders gave their responses. Collectively, 291 respondents gave their feedback making a response rate of 70.1%. A total of 11.7% of respondents came from hospital A, 20% from hospital B, 35% from hospital C, and 33.3% from hospital D. The characteristics of the millenial respondents are delineated in Table 1.

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<td>Female</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>69.70 - 81.14</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age in years</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-24yrs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.71 - 8.90</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29yrs</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>27.70 - 40.26</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-34yrs</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>33.46 - 46.45</td>
<td>0.0024</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-40yrs</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>10.41 - 19.96</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;40yrs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.68 - 10.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>73.88 - 84.65</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-clinical</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>15.85 - 26.12</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>44.80 - 58.12</td>
<td>0.693</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Diploma</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>11.16 - 20.92</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>22.14 - 34.41</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.40 - 8.36</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>56.63 - 69.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>29.74 - 42.48</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.01 - 2.39</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.01 - 2.39</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years worked in the current organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The larger population of the respondents are females, 75.8%, while males were 24.2%, while 73.6% of the millennials were aged between 24-34 years. Further, 54% of the millennials were diploma holders, while 79.7% of the millennials were clinical staff and 20.3% were non-clinical staff. Furthermore, 58% of the millennials have worked in the current organization for less than five years.

**Millennials’ opinion on dedication**

On dedication, millennials’ opinion was sought. On the extent to which leaders influence enthusiasm at work among the millennials, the majority (65.9%) of the millennials indicated positive outcomes, especially at work 76-100% of the time. Further, 13 (5.6%) of the millennials reported that their leaders influence their enthusiasm at work 26 to 50% of the time. On the other hand, only 4 (1.7%) reported that their leaders influence their enthusiasm at work 0-25% of the time.

**The leaders’ opinion on millennials’ dedication**

When the leader’s opinion was sought in a focused group discussion concerning the millennials’ dedication, leaders felt that for the millennials to perform, they must be frequently monitored, supervised and supported. They perceived the millennials as selfish to some extent and only living for themselves at the expense of everyone they were working with. In a healthcare organization setting, the supervisors believe that if the millennials feel that they are not cared for, they may, in turn, not care for the patients who are the main clients.

> Millennials are not always engaged. They have to be closely monitored and supervised. They require much support to be focused and to be dedicated. They have to be reminded all the time of their duties and responsibilities. As their supervisor, you must exercise much patience with them as they need support. They exist for themselves. They need to be cared for in order for them to care for the patients ... (Leaders FGD Participant)

While millennials reported they are partially engaged, some leaders view the millennials in a positive light. To them, they believe the millennials have just been misunderstood for a very long time. They believe millennials possess much energy, and if this energy can be utilized well, it can contribute positively to organizational growth and development. However, this prerequisite is that the millennials’ voices must be heard. They must be involved in decision-making both involving them and the health facilities. They should also be allowed to have flexible schedules when it comes to working schedules. They believe that denying them flex schedules drives millennials to unethical practices such as getting illegal sick offs. Regarding dedication, the leaders felt there should be fairness in the promotions so that millennials do not feel left out.

> The millennials are just misunderstood. The values they have grown up with are very different from those of their leaders. The times are different. The world is a global village, and the desire to go to other parts of the world is just natural. Values change over time, especially societal values. We are no longer keen on being loyal to an employer... The influence of technology is here with us ... I think people need to understand the millennials from where they are coming from. (Leaders’ FGD Participant)

**The influence of transformational leadership on dedication in millennials**

The constructs of transformational governance, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, were regressed against millennials’ dedication. The findings are illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Transformational leadership constructs on dedication in millennials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>VIF</th>
<th>Hypothesis Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>10.744</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealized influence</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1.454</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.697</td>
<td>1.505</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>1.365</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>1.928</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized consideration</td>
<td>2.326</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>1.921</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only individualized consideration was statistically significant when transformational leadership constructs were regressed against dedication (t=2.326, p=0.021). However, when idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation were dropped from the model, intellectual stimulation became highly statistically significant (t= 4.158, p<0.001). Therefore, the whole model partially rejected the hypothesis by individualized consideration (t=2.326, p=0.021). The variance of inflation factor (VIF) for the individual predictors ranged from 1.454 – 1.928, indicating that the variables used in the model were not highly correlated.

In the focused group discussion, the millennials were asked whether their leader influenced their dedication. Despite widespread condemnation that the millennials are selfish and that everything revolves around them, in their own words, the millennials disputed this and confirmed that they enjoy what they do and derive satisfaction in what they do. It has, in turn, made them remain in their workstations, and nothing can make them leave. This resonates with the observation of some leaders and supervisors that some millennials are committed to their work and are ready to even multi-task when necessary. One of the millennials responded as follows:
The love of children keeps me going. I work in the pediatric department and enjoy looking after the children. Some leaders commend us when they see one's potential and they even push us to achieve more. This push helps and makes a difference. A leader who knows his/ her followers is always protective of his/ her staff. (Millennial FGD Participant).

Frequent changes in jobs characterize millennials. As soon as they feel dissatisfied in one organization, they hop to the next, hoping to find what they never got in their previous posting. The statement “looking for greener pastures” captures the millennials’ outlook toward the job market more than any other generation at the workplace.

In the focused group discussion, one of the millennials stated that;

“We like challenges. We always look forward to new challenges. We get bored quickly when we stay put for a long time. Doing one thing over and over again bores us. Allowing us to think outside the box, innovate new ways of doing things and solving problems, and allowing us to do tasks in our ways is what excites and drives us (Millennial FGD Participant).

In addition, there are those leaders who group the millennials into two groups: The older millennials and the younger millennials. The leaders and supervisors feel that the older millennials are more engaged in their work and respect authority, unlike the younger millennials, who are always restless and have no respect. The younger millennials believe that there must be negotiations where they also contribute before any decision is made. They do not believe in decisions being made in their absence, and then they are expected to carry out and implement the decisions. It points to the fact that most millennials distrust their leaders’ ability to make sound decisions. They do not view them as ideal leaders or role models. One of the leaders stated;

““There are two categories of millennials: the young and the older millennials. Older millennials are more responsible and resilient and listen to their leaders, while younger millennials are not engaged. They do not help once they have done their duties. They are technologically savvy and are always on social media. If a client is speaking to them, they answer the call and are not sensitive to the surrounding. They have to be pushed to meet deadlines.” (Leaders’ FGD Participant).

Leadership practice implications

Upon the analysis of the study, fundamental implications were identified in methodological, theoretical, conceptual, academic, and leadership practice. The study underscores the importance of a mixed methodology study for data validation on the methodological implications. Concerning theoretical implications, the study underscores the diversity of use of leadership and cultural and generational cohort theories to synthesize the phenomena studied. On the theoretical implication, this study offers in-depth insights for reference on millennial engagement. Finally, this study offers fundamental approaches to leading millennials and retaining them in this Volatile Unpredictable Complex Ambiguous (VUCA) world.

The study underscores the need for leaders to treat millennials as individuals. While the millennials prefer autonomy and to be involved in complex decision-making, they must be mentored and supported in their organizations to be engaged. Furthermore, the study underpins the need to alter leadership practice where leaders espouse their values and follow them hence modeling the millennials.

Discussion

This study’s findings indicate that about seventy-four percent of the millennials are aged between twenty-four to thirty-four years, while fifty-eight percent of the millennials have worked in the current organization for less than five years. Chandra and Singh (2020) identified age as a critical factor in talent retention, demonstrating that older employees stay longer in organizations than younger employees. It could be explained by the fact that millennials are young and restless. In the focused group discussion, one of the leaders stated concerning millennials: “They are always looking for jobs out of the country. They are always printing documents to facilitate their migration.” In line with this, millennials regard staying in one job as a career failure (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015). Therefore, employment is not an asset for them, and it is not unusual for them to leave one job for another (Greatwood, 2016; Tubey et al., 2015).

Furthermore, millennials reported that their leaders largely influenced their enthusiasm to work by sixty-five percent seventy-six to a hundred percent of the time. The explanation of high levels of enthusiasm in the millennials influenced by leaders is likely associated with role modeling by the leaders. Building an organization with engaged employees begins with having the right leaders, who are engaged, in place (Romans & Tobaben, 2016). Furthermore, transformational leaders are associated with developing dedicated followers (Lee et al., 2021). Therefore, leaders have to be dedicated to developing followers who are dedicated.

Subsequently, millennials treated as individuals rather than collectively are dedicated to their work. Similarly, when millennials are intellectually motivated, they are dedicated. It implies that millennials perceived their leaders as value-based and inspired their followers to dedication. Furthermore, millennials are not contented with the status quo, so leaders who intellectually stimulate millennials would be preferred. It is supported by the investigation of Latta (2019), who argued that leadership influences dedication.
Furthermore, supportive supervisors influence dedication (Awais et al., 2018). Similarly, millennials prefer to be treated as individuals. Leaders who deal with millennials as individuals can identify their strengths and weaknesses. They would exploit the millennials’ strengths and mentor them in areas of weakness.

An engaged employee is resilient, dedicated, fully immersed, and engrossed in their work. Subsequently, millennials thrive in an innovative environment where they work in teams and are recognized and appreciated. Therefore, millennials get bored quickly and must constantly be challenged to keep them engaged at work. Creating a culture of innovativeness would enhance their engagement.

The study established that millennials are into two categories; older and younger. The older millennials were said to listen more to their leaders. On the contrary, the younger millennials were fixated on their ideas and had to be pushed to accomplish their work. However, leaders who create stable organizations influence millennials to develop engagement with their work (Meskelis & Whittington, 2020). Consequently, millennials’ dedication and resilience have been positively influenced by more transformational leaders who offer mentorship and coaching (Miller & Miller, 2020). Therefore, leaders who coach their followers have a high propensity to influence millennials’ dedication.

Furthermore, in their systematic review on barriers to millennial nurse retention, McClain et al. (2022) established the common barriers as the relationships the millennials build with their leaders and environmental matter. These would include factors like work flexibility at work and the collaborations built within the teams. These would positively or negatively affect retention, which is akin to dedication.

Conclusions

Individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation were the primary determinants of dedication. On individualized consideration, the results indicated that leaders listened to the millennials as individuals. Regarding intellectual stimulation, the results indicated that leaders suggested new ways of dealing with complex problems. Furthermore, most leaders encouraged non-traditional thinking to solve problems and were uncomfortable with the status quo. Therefore, the leaders influenced the millennials’ enthusiasm to work. In addition, the leaders demonstrated exemplary role models. Millennials are also more at home with leadership characterized by openness, honesty, assertiveness, and smooth communication flow.

Furthermore, to be dedicated, Millennials require close monitoring and support. These values differ from other generations; they prefer challenges and get bored with routine work. However, there are two categories of millennials; the older millennials are more responsible and resilient than the younger millennials, which are not dedicated. In addition, millennials believe that mistakes are inevitable, and the leader should advocate for the millennials.

In sum, millennials are a unique population who are driven by reward and appreciation. They prefer to be treated as individuals while valuing mentorship and support. Role models in millennials’ life influence their engagement. Furthermore, millennial dedication requires leaders to create time to spend coaching and mentoring them. Millennials would thrive in an environment where they are challenged in decision-making while avoiding routine activities.

Furthermore, leaders should distinguish the strengths of millennials and utilize them to increase productivity and improve performance. It will ultimately create an engaged millennial. In the healthcare industry in Kenya, there is a dire need for dedicated health professionals to improve healthcare delivery.

The results revealed that millennials prefer leaders who are role models and who are uncomfortable with the status quo. In line with this, millennials must be challenged to create new ideas culminating in dedication to their work. Millennials would be more dedicated if non-traditional methods were used in problem-solving to provoke their innovation and creativity. Therefore, leaders should consider treating millennials as individuals with openness, honesty, assertiveness, and a smooth flow of communication. It would be prudent to extend this study by separating the younger and the older millennials and further study the younger generations, especially generations Y and Z.

The study highlights the influences of transformational leadership on the dedication of the millennial generation. In addition, the findings help the leaders deal with millennials while working in healthcare organizations. However, due to the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, the focus group discussions were held virtually; therefore, it was difficult to read the non-verbal cues during the discussions.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were obtained for this study. All the research subjects offered informed consent before the study after acquiring all the information regarding the exploration. Ethical approval was granted by Pan African Christian (PAC) University

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.
Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References


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