

A META-ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT OF GENERATION Z THROUGH THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE

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Abstract: *This study aims to assess the extent to which transformational leadership can facilitate the success of employee development initiatives among Generation Z employees. It employs a quantitative meta-analytical approach to synthesize the results from 31 publications retrieved from reliable databases to achieve its research aim. The findings unveil an underlying correlation between the priorities of transformational leadership and the preferences of Generation Z employees. Consequently, this study supports the hypothesis that transformational leadership influences the effectiveness of personnel development initiatives for Generation Z employees positively. Nonetheless, the study has limitations since it uses secondary data sources and an indirect research approach. Future researchers should conduct empirical studies to gather and assess primary data on the topic. This approach will allow them to build upon this research findings while minimizing potential biases.*

Keywords: *transformational leadership, personnel development, Generation Z, employee motivation, employee engagement*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary firms are exposed to constant and dynamic changes in the business environment. Consequently, they must adopt suitable strategies to navigate and thrive through these changes. Recognizing this aspect, many organizational leaders prioritize personnel development – a human resource tool that ensures that employees are equipped with the necessary soft and hard skills, hence enabling them to adapt and excel in the evolving landscape (Cherono 2017). However, employees of different generations may respond differently to various leadership approaches and development initiatives. Currently, many organizations focus on Generation Z employees, who have transformed the way firms solve problems, communicate, and operate (Racolța-Paini & Irini 2021). Generation Z, which comprises individuals born between 1995 and 2010, is gradually overtaking millennials in the workforce (Entina et al. 2021; Bonner 2023). However, Generation Z employees have more demands than prior generations, making it challenging to lead them efficiently (Racolța-Paini & Irini 2021). Research attributes their demanding nature to their distinct desire to transform the workforce rather than accept things as they are.¹ Therefore, leading them through personnel development initiatives requires a tailored and adaptive approach. Notably, the transformational leadership style aligns well with the needs of Generation Z employees. Moreover, the effectiveness of this approach in promoting employee engagement and leading organizations through challenges and changes is

supported by the research. This facet makes a model suitable for organizations aiming to maximize the potential of their Generation Z workforce. Nonetheless, it is vital to conduct further research to unveil how transformational leadership impacts the success of personnel development initiatives among Generation Z employees.

Research Aim and Approach. Considering the significance of the topic, this study primarily aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the transformational leadership style in driving successful personnel development initiatives among Generation Z employees. Previous research has not discussed the relationship between transformational leadership and personnel development among Generation Z individuals. However, the research shows that Generation Z individuals hold workplace preferences and expectations that can impact the effectiveness of employee development strategies targeting the members of this generation.¹ For instance, being born and raised in a digital age, most Generation Z employees prefer digital engagement tools (Benitez-Marquez et al. 2022; Bonner 2023). Other preferences in the workplace include workplace flexibility in work arrangements and learning schedules, prioritization of career growth opportunities, emphasis on creativity and acquisition of new skills, preference for challenging and impactful projects, desire for regular performance feedback, coaching, mentoring, and autonomy in setting personal goals (Kirchmayer & Fratričová 2020; Barhate & Dirani 2022; Magano et al. 2020; Hernandez-de-Menendez et al. 2020; Chillakuri 2020). In order to engage Generation Z employees in personnel development, leaders must ensure that their employee development initiatives take their preferences into account. This approach would enable them to maximize the impacts of personnel development efforts. Thus, to attain its aim, this research will primarily focus on unveiling how transformational leadership can contribute to addressing Generation Z employees' unique preferences and expectations in their personnel development initiatives. This approach will enable to comprehensively assess the relationship between transformational leadership and personnel development among Generation Z employees.

Research Gap. Much research has been conducted on the role of transformational leaders in propelling organizational success and employee satisfaction among Generation Z. These studies support the alignment of transformational leaders' values with Generation Z's aspirations and work preferences, highlighting transformational leadership as the most preferred style among individuals in this generation (Dwidienawati et al. 2022; Gabrielova & Buchko 2021). However, there is a gap in research focusing on the relationship between transformational leadership and personnel development among Generation Z individuals. Further, previous studies did not assess how transformational leaders facilitate personnel development among Generation Z employees. The above gaps emphasize the need for more targeted research to unveil the potential of transformational leadership in facilitating the professional and overall development of Generation Z employees.

Research Question and Hypothesis. Considering the above aspects, this study will be guided by the following research question: How do transformational leaders contribute to the professional development of Generation Z employees? Past research supports that Generation Z has a positive attitude toward transformational leaders as opposed to other leadership styles with their distinctive traits (Dwidienawati et al. 2022; Gabrielova & Buchko 2021). This finding indicates a high likelihood that transformational leaders conform to the expectations and preferences of Generation Z individuals in the workplace. Considering previous research, it can be hypothesized that transformational leadership positively influences the effectiveness of personnel development initiatives for Generation Z employees. This research systematically tests this hypothesis by examining if transformational leaders possess the qualities and practices that resonate with the unique preferences and expectations of Generation Z employees and how these factors can contribute to their professional development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a quantitative meta-analytical approach to test the research hypothesis. This approach aims to synthesize findings from multiple studies and, consequently, offer a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of how transformational leadership can impact personnel development among Generation Z employees. The articles used in this study were obtained from an extensive literature search on three primary databases – EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected due to their comprehensive coverage of scholarly literature in business management (Hamid 2019). The primary search phrase for this research was ‘transformational leadership,’ which was used in conjunction with the secondary search terms and phrases, including ‘digital engagement,’ ‘workplace flexibility,’ ‘career growth,’ ‘innovation,’ ‘creativity,’ ‘challenging projects,’ ‘feedback,’ and ‘employee autonomy’. The inclusion criteria necessitated the selection of only peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, and reports published between 2020 and 2024. These criteria aimed to enhance the credibility and validity of the selected pool, which are vital factors in ensuring the overall relevance and reliability of the study (Post et al. 2020). After being subjected to the inclusion criteria, only 31 articles were chosen for the analysis. The selected articles were systematically and statistically analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The obtained findings are presented and explained in detail in the following sections of this report.

RESULTS

The meta-analytical approach assessed the alignment of the transformational leadership style with Generation Z leadership preferences. The main variables used to evaluate this relationship included digital engagement strategies, workplace autonomy, workplace flexibility, emphasis on creating career growth opportunities, focus on innovation, creativity, and new skills development, priority on issuing challenging projects, and emphasis on feedback, coaching, and mentoring. Table 1 presents the results of the meta-analysis, highlighting the number and frequency of positive correlations between transformational leadership and each specified variable.

Table 1. Research Findings

Statement	Count (f)	Frequency (f/n); n=31	Percentage frequency = ((f/n) *100) %
1.1. Transformational leaders emphasize digital engagement methods	5	0.161290	16.12903
1.2. Transformational leaders uphold overall workplace flexibility	6	0.193548	19.35484
1.3. Transformational leaders prioritize creating career growth opportunities for their employees	4	0.129032	12.90323
1.4. Transformational leaders emphasize building innovation, creativity, and new skills acquisition among employees	5	0.161290	16.12903
1.5. Transformational leaders typically give their employees challenging, yet manageable projects	3	0.096774	9.677419
1.6. Transformational leaders prioritize effective and consistent performance feedback, coaching, and mentoring	8	0.258065	25.80645
1.7. Transformational leaders give their followers considerable autonomy in the workplace	4	0.129032	12.90323

Table 1 above presents findings from the 31 articles that were used to inform this analysis. It shows that 5 research articles (16.12903%) support the assertion that transformational leaders prioritize digital engagement methods among their employees (Henderikx & Stiffers 2022; Matsunage 2024; Schiuma et al. 2022; Bhalla et al. 2021; Philip 2021; Khasawneh 2020). Moreover, it shows that 6 articles (19.35484%) emphasize transformational leaders' emphasis on flexibility in the workplace (Gomes et al. 2021; Lan & Chen 2020; Kotamena et al. 2020; Coun et al. 2019; McCormick et al. 2019; Henderikx & Stiffers 2022). Further, 4 articles (12.90323%) provide evidence supporting the claim that transformational leaders prioritize creating career growth opportunities for their employees (Monje-Amor et al. 2020; Caniëlset al. 2018; Gyanchandani 2017; Watts & Corrie 2022). Additionally, 5 research articles (16.12903%) confirm the importance placed by transformational leaders on building innovation, creativity, and new skills acquisition among their employees (Saleem & Mahmood 2018; Mohamed 2016; Akdere & Egan 2020; Watts & Corrie 2022; Gyanchandani 2017). Apart from this, 3 research articles (9.677419%) highlight that transformational leaders typically assign challenging yet manageable projects to their employees (Schiuma et al. 2022; Khasawneh 2020; Adhyke et al. 2023). Regarding performance management, 8 research articles (25.80645%) support the assertion that transformational leaders prioritize effective and consistent performance feedback, coaching, and mentoring (Susanto & Santwiri 2022; Lee & Ding 2020; Bastari & Ali 2020; Terblanche 2022; Watts & Corrie 2022; Rahawarin et al. 2020; Gong & Li 2022; Kao et al. 2021). Finally, 4 research articles (12.90323%) indicate that transformational leaders advocate for considerable autonomy for their followers in the workplace (Du Plessis et al. 2020; Chua & Ayoko 2021; Schermuly & Meyer 2020; Hannah et al. 2020). Overall, these results support that transformational leaders uphold employee development aspects that align with the expectations and preferences of Generation Z employees.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to unveil the efficacy of transformational leadership in driving successful personnel development initiatives among Generation Z employees. Personnel development focuses on enhancing the personal, professional, and social traits of staff members to support long-term and short-term organizational objectives. It is a complex task that requires leaders to support their employees' learning processes to ensure that their workforce meets the current needs of the business.³ Therefore, leaders must adopt effective strategies to facilitate the success of their personnel development initiatives (Babchinska 2022; Hughey 2019). Notably, staff motivation is a significant determinant of success since it affects employees' engagement levels in personal development initiatives. It enhances personal growth initiative among staff members, resulting in increased commitment to self-improvement and achieving organizational goals (Sristava & Singh 2020). This aspect makes it fundamental for leaders to align their initiatives with their employees' motivational factors and aspirations.

Generation Z employees, who comprise a significant portion of the modern workforce, have unique needs and expectations that determine their level of motivation and engagement in organizational activities. Their needs and priorities include technological integration, autonomy, flexibility, career growth opportunities, innovation, creativity, new skills development, challenging tasks, and efficient feedback, coaching and mentoring. This aspect implies that, in order to enhance their motivation, leaders must adapt their strategies to align with their specific requirements. Notably, transformational leaders possess essential behavioral features, which makes them exceptional leaders. They support their subordinates' interests, promote their personal growth and self-esteem, stimulate and inspire them, and encourage them to surpass short-term individual

interests (Gryazeva-Dobshinskaya et al. 2018). The above characteristics show that transformational leadership prioritizes employee motivation, satisfaction, and long-term development. This study provided insight into how this leadership type can impact the motivation levels of Generation Z employees in personnel development initiatives through its priorities and strategies.

The findings from the meta-analysis provide valuable insights regarding the alignment of transformational leadership priorities and approaches with Generation Z employees' preferences and expectations. A notable frequency of occurrences in the analyzed literature supported each variable under discussion. For example, transformational leaders' emphasis on digital engagement strategies was supported by 16.12903% of the analyzed literature. Other variables, namely workplace flexibility, career growth opportunities, innovation, creativity, challenging projects, performance feedback, coaching and mentoring, and workplace autonomy, also demonstrated substantial frequencies of occurrences, which are 19.35484%, 12.90323%, 16.12903%, 9.677419%, 25.80645%, and 12.90323%, respectively. The above findings imply a consistent acknowledgment in the existing literature on the alignment of transformational leadership priorities with Generation Z employees' preferences and expectations.

According to Laureani and Antony (2017), a leader's priorities and traits tend to manifest consistently across all their initiatives within an organization. For example, if a leader values flexibility, they are highly likely to ensure that this value is evident in all aspects of the organization. They will ensure that flexibility is upheld not only in workflow structures but also in additional aspects, such as personnel development initiatives. This aspect means that the alignment between transformational leadership priorities and Generation Z employees' preferences, as revealed in this study's findings, surpasses single initiatives. Moreover, this alignment is reflected in their personnel development initiatives. For example, their preference for autonomy in decision-making may translate into personalized development plans for employees, which facilitate self-directed goal-setting and learning activities. Similarly, these leaders' emphasis on career development opportunities implies that most of their personnel development initiatives will focus on enhancing employees' skills and competencies in ways that directly contribute to their career advancement. The above approaches acknowledge Generation Z's preference for autonomy and purposeful professional development, hence empowering them to be committed to their personal, social, and professional growth. Thus, the research findings highlight a correlation between transformational leadership priorities and Generation Z's motivational factors. In line with Laureani and Antony's (2017) assertion, this correlation is likely to be reflected in the leaders' personnel development initiatives. Therefore, it can be asserted that transformational leadership influences the motivation and engagement of Generation Z employees in personnel development initiatives positively, resulting in favorable outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study primarily aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of transformational leadership in driving effective personnel development among Generation Z employees. The results suggest that transformational leadership has the potential to influence the motivation and engagement of Generation Z employees in personnel development initiatives positively, thus leading to favorable outcomes for both individuals and organizations. As a result, the hypothesis that transformational leadership influences the effectiveness of personnel development initiatives for Generation Z employees positively is confirmed. While this research has achieved its aim, it has limitations that compromise its credibility and reliability. First, its reliance on secondary data sources increased its susceptibility to the biases made by previous researchers. Another primary limitation pertains to its indirect approach in responding to the research question. The study focused on identifying the alignment between transformational leadership priorities and Generation Z's preferences. However,

it did not measure the impact of transformational leadership on the effectiveness of personnel development initiatives directly. This approach was attributed to the lack of literature and established frameworks linking the research variables. Therefore, future researchers should conduct empirical studies on organizations to collect and analyze primary data. This aspect would enable a more direct examination of the relationship between the research variables while minimizing the potential biases attributed to relying on secondary data sources solely.

NOTES

¹ Prossack, A. (2019, September 30). *Struggling to retain millennials and Gen Z? Here are 4 reasons why*. Forbes [viewed 12 February 2024]. Available from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashiraprossack1/2019/09/30/retain-millennials-genz/>.

² Lanier, K. (2023, August 14). *Generation Z: How to attract, retain and engage the fastest-growing workforce generation*. HR Dive [viewed 12 February 2024]. Available from: <https://www.hrdive.com/spons/generation-z-how-to-attract-retain-and-engage-the-fastest-growing-workfo/690455/#:~:text=Learning%20and%20skill%20development%3A%20More,new%20skills%20on%20the%20job>.

³ Hughey, K. (2019). *The Impact of Leadership on Successful Staff Development*. Linked In [viewed 12 February 2024]. Available from: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-leadership-successful-staff-development-dana-m-nassar/>.

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МЕТА-АНАЛИЗ НА РАЗВИТИЕТО НА ПЕРСОНАЛА НА ПОКОЛЕНИЕ Z ЧРЕЗ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИОННИЯ ЛИДЕРСКИ СТИЛ

Резюме: Целта на това проучване е да се оцени степента, в която трансформационното лидерство може да улесни успеха на инициативите за развитие на служителите сред служителите от поколението Z. За да се постигне целта на изследването, в него се използва количествен метааналитичен подход за обобщаване на резултатите от 31 публикации, които са извлечени от надеждни бази данни. Констатациите разкриват основна връзка между приоритетите на трансформационното лидерство и предпочитанията на служителите от поколението Z. Следователно това изследване подкрепя хипотезата, че трансформационното лидерство влияе положително върху ефективността на инициативите за развитие на персонала на служителите от поколението Z. Въпреки това изследването има ограничения, тъй като използва вторични източници на данни и непряк изследователски подход. Бъдещите изследователи следва да проведат емпирични изследвания за събиране и оценка на първични данни по темата. Този подход може да им позволи да надградят резултатите от това изследване, като същевременно минимизират потенциалните пристрастия.

Ключови думи: трансформационно лидерство, развитие на персонала, поколение Z, мотивация на служителите, ангажираност на служителите

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