

# MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOURS OF GENERATION X AND MILLENNIAL MANAGERS

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## ABSTRACT

*Millennials are slowly getting managerial roles in contemporary organizations resulting in a complex organizational management matrix that is diverse in terms of generations. In particular, generation X managers are increasing finding themselves having to team up with millennials in performing managerial functions. Consequently, it has become necessary for human resource professionals, stakeholders and owners of organizations to understand the managerial behaviours of generation X and millennial managers in an effort of having the unique management talent that is capable of improving organization performance and competitiveness. This study used naturalistic observations to analyze the managerial behaviours of generation X and millennial managers. The study found that generation X managers tend to be technically oriented and have strong adherence to strict performance standards while the millennials are relationship oriented in their task performance. The millennial manager in this study was found to exhibit significant confident behaviours, engage in notable team tasks and to be highly linked in social networks and engage in significant socially oriented behaviours as facilitated by social media technologies as well as other recent technological developments. This study recommends that organizations should develop a hybrid management matrix that is based on the effective exploitation of both generation X management behaviours and millennial managerial behaviours.*

**Keywords:** Management, Behavior, Millennials, Generation X, Leadership Behaviour

## INTRODUCTION

Managerial behaviours for effectiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have become complex owing to both external and internal factors (Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2015). Whereas external complexities capture the outside business environment (political, economic, technological and socio-cultural), internal factors include managerial, leadership and other micro-level variables. With increasing value for talent in organizations, competition for the correct talent pool has increased (Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2015). In this study managerial talent implies managers who exhibit the right behaviours for organizational competitiveness. The business environment has the capacity to nurture or limit talent available for organizations. Business literature acknowledges that the external environment offers both opportunities and limitations to the micro environment. As such Belfo & Sousa, (2016) implored that the technological environment has implications on the effectiveness of leadership and management. Research has observed demographic shifts in present day management in organizations. At present workplaces are composed of both millennials and generation X employees and managers. Debate on managerial behaviours and effectiveness among generation X and millennial managers has widened. This study considered the behaviours of different generations of managers. The study essentially explores the managerial behaviours of millennial managers relative to generation X managers. This is important to inform managerial practices of the generations and how this can impact organizational effectiveness.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Today's workplace, as observed in Belfo & Sousa (2016), is composed of basically three generations, namely: (1) Millennials, (2) generation X and (3) baby boomers. These generations are reflected in both the employees as well as the managers. Such a diverse workforce and managerial team deserve close scrutiny in order to achieve competitiveness in organizations. An appreciation of the behaviours of these managers allows for correct choices in recruitment and staffing challenges to be made in order to promote sustainability in organizations. Managers perform several functions and roles which are necessary in the realization of organization strategies.

Theoretical perspectives on management behaviours have a long history with many prominent contributions emerging after the industrial revolution. The early work of Henri Fayol (1916) on the four main functions of management has dominated management literature over the years. These are: (1) planning, (2) organizing, (3) leading and (4) controlling (Conkright, 2015). Fayol's work considered managerial effectiveness as the degree to which the four functions are executed and reflected in appropriate behaviours. A counter administrative and managerial theory emerged from the work of Henri Mintzberg on the roles of management. Even though Fayol's work has maintained its dominance, Mintzberg's administrative theory has also informed present day managerial practice. Mintzberg found that managers do not perform specific functions but actually perform roles which include interpersonal, informational, decisional and technical (Conkright, 2015). In addition to the essence of the management behaviours associated with the roles and functions of management discussed, managers have also been found to perform a number of leadership roles in which case visionary, transformational, charismatic and transactional leadership behaviours have been found among managers. Charismatic managerial behaviours are a set of personal attributes that creates awe, admiration and a compelling force on followers (Paschen & Dihsmäie, 2014). Consequently, charismatic theories posit that managers are effective because they use a strong compelling personality and other personal attributes. In contrast, the visionary manager is described as one who relies on a powerful vision for effectiveness. Charismatic managerial behaviours include charming and using a strong personality with self-confidence and many other unique attributes. At the same time visionary managers rely on the reliance and communication of a powerful vision while transactional managerial is based on the use of rewards to achieve desired objectives. Lastly, transformational managerial behaviours include behaviours related to changing the status quo and achieving beyond expected performance through buy-in from others and the need to achieve the best in organizations.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted naturalist observations of a generation X manager and a millennial at an organization in the Air Transport sector in South Africa. Naturalist observations were deemed appropriate as it was essential to ensure the managerial behaviours are seen in their natural settings and context. As informed by Ryan (2019) naturalist observations allows for the collection of data in the natural world in which they ordinarily occur. Christensen, Johnson & Turner (2015) explain that naturalist observations are done in real world environments to observe a phenomenon happening in natural settings. Guidelines on what to observe were considered following the event sampling strategy as explained in Christensen, Johnson & Turner (2015). Ryan (2019) provided that naturalist observations imply that the observations may be done without the awareness and informed consent of the subjects. In this case, the managers were simplifying informed that they were being observed for the purpose of learning general management. The particular focus of the study was informed to the managers. Both managers allowed for the observations to proceed with permission from their superiors. The superiors were informed about the particular focus of the study and they consented to the study.

In addition, the managers were all about to leave the organization. While the generation X manager was retiring from service, the millennial manager was actually changing career path and they were all willing to allow learning to be done on their behaviours as part of their exit wishes. As such the ethical requirements of the naturalistic observations were met. In observing the managerial roles of the managers, the study was informed by the work of Mintzberg's managerial roles which offered a lens to analyze the managerial behaviours of the selected managers. As such, it was presumed that managerial behaviours can be considered in respect of their decisional, interpersonal as well as informational roles. As such an observational recording sheet was developed to identify the main scheduled tasks that the managers perform and the general behaviours that the managers exhibited in performing the tasks. The findings of the study are provided in the following sections.

## FINDINGS

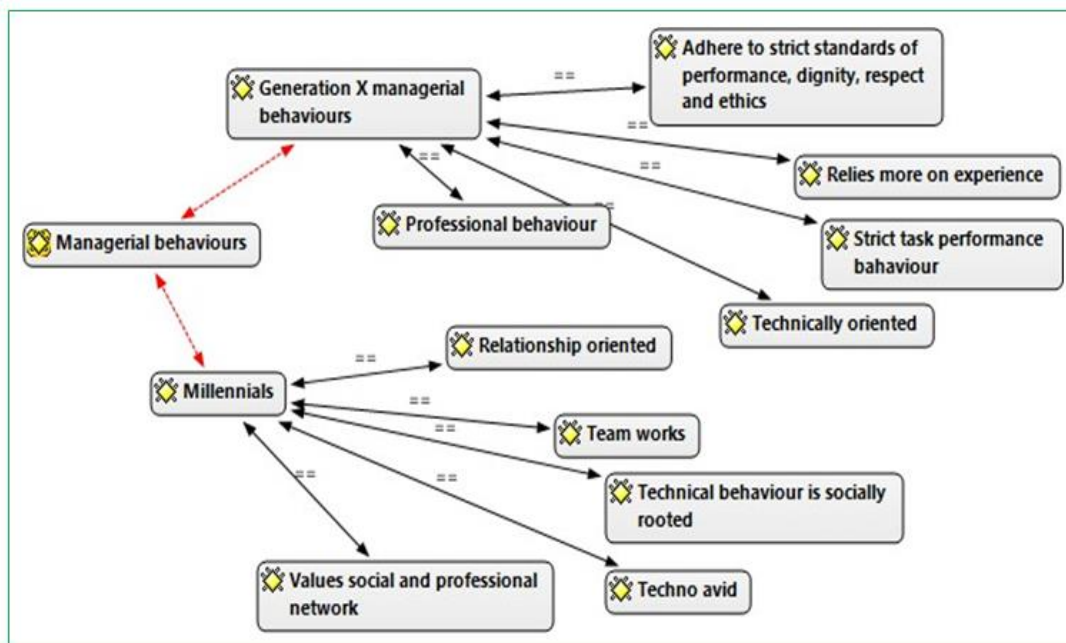
The study confirmed general literature assertion as provided by Fayol that managers perform various functions which include planning, organizing, controlling and leading as well as performing Mintzberg's managerial roles which are classified as interpersonal, decisional as well as information roles. The observations conducted revealed that managers perform roles which included meeting with stakeholders such and customers, suppliers, local government and other officials. Managers were also found to have scheduled meetings with their superiors, subordinates as well as general staff meetings. It was found that managers are often involved in meetings as part of their scheduled tasks. The study also found that managers are faced with the task of responding to a wide array of emails on various tasks involving the organizations. The managers in this study were also found to perform decisional roles on matters brought to them in crisis situations as well as other complex scenarios that arise in organizations. Managers also performed monitoring and evaluation tasks as well as preparing reports. A great part of managerial work was also found to involve problem solving, providing information as well as advising subordinates on various issues affecting the organization. The behaviours exhibited by managers in performing their various scheduled tasks were recorded as observed. Table 1 provides a recording sheet showing the various scheduled tasks of the managers and the behaviours that they demonstrated while performing the scheduled tasks.

<b>Scheduled task</b>	<b>Generation X Manager</b>	<b>Milennial manager</b>
Meeting a stakeholder (an important customer, supplier, local authority official etc)	Welcomed clients. Where possible greets using African totems. Created close interpersonal relationships. Conducted long meetings with the stakeholders. Professionally dressed and spoke with stakeholders. Also put on the professional suit	Displayed wit and friendliness with brief use of ordinary language jargon and some slang
Meeting with organizational superiors	Formal meetings were preferred in which the manager presented with dignity and humility	Kept in touch with supervisors on the internet, social media and other web platforms. Most meetings with superiors were done virtually
Formal meeting with a subordinate	Demonstrated technical efficiency, subordinate with queries were often asked to look on the walls of the office where three big boards hung inscribed with the question, 'What have you done better today, far much better than yesterday.' Always emphasizes on performing beyond expectations,	Meetings with subordinate were less formal. The professional distance was not well maintained. Topical issues such as soccer results, rising musicians or international news will be spoken before the actual discussions. Formal discussions

	beating personal benchmarks, changing the status quo through creative ways and being innovative.	were often broken as attention is put to the phone for some minutes. Meetings were often short with a promise to finish them virtually through social media, an email or telephone.
General staff meeting	Staff meeting agendas were rigidly set and followed and professionalism was expected in all meetings	Meetings less formal. Some of them was conducted as whatsapp groups or online chat and on other virtual platforms
Responding to strategic business mail	Business mail was strictly responded in the manner in which they were received with strict adherence to timelines and deadlines	Telephone calls and social media discussions were often preferred in responding to strategic business mails
Making decisions on critical matters affecting the organisations	Traditional experience based decisions and general insights were the chief decision making strategies	Data analysis procedures, data mining and machine intelligence were often adopted to facilitate decision making
Representing the organization in several fora	Is well travelled and has represented the organization in person. Enjoyed attending many forums and meeting external officials where he displayed significant etiquette and professionalism	Seemed to prefer virtual interaction and posted many organizational issues for others to see. Represented virtually
Solving routine problems	Routine problems were solved easily using experience. Did not like new things. All problems were treated as recurring	Was creative and innovative in problem solving. Trying to do internet researches to find other better ways of handling routine problems
Providing information to both internal and external stakeholders	Seemed to be secretive in many issues and relied on professional and formalized information provision to stakeholders	Heavy media presence was maintained including the use of various media platforms to provide information
Preparation of reports	Preferred both an electronic report and a hard copy. Report preparation was often delegated	Use of Microsoft packages and software for preparation of reports was often used
Providing advice to senior management	Formalized discussions and advisory sessions were organized. Sessions were often long	The manager kept personal numbers of superiors and often relied on social media platforms as well as phone calls to advise superiors as necessary
Perform monitoring and evaluation tasks	Close physical monitoring of were often preferred. Moved with a clip board to record issues observed	Sometimes this was done using photographs taken by a mobile phone and analyzed on a computer.

The findings of this study, as presented in Table1 suggest that millennials tend to value interpersonal interactions and have a less formal approach in how they relate and link with others in the organization. This was shown by a less formal language as well as a less regard to professional language in handling organizational communication. Krivova (2015) commented that the behavior of managers is influenced by their personalities as well as their environment. This study provided evidence that Millennials have a different personality from generation X managers. This study found that millennials have a versatile personality characterized by affinity for close interpersonal ties characterized by unbounded behavior in communication and in interacting with others. In contrast, generation X managers tend to be strict on adhering to certain traditional standards. Their interaction with stakeholders, colleagues and their superiors was found to be full of respect and strict reference to principles of respect, dignity and professional conduct. This study concurs with the work of Bogosian & Rousseau, (2017) who found that millennials value such traits as multi-tasking, confidence, flexibility and esteem. There was also a major difference in relation to the decision making styles of the generational

managers. The study found that generation X managers seemed be more aligned to intuition and experience based decision making styles while the millennial managers relied more on data analytics, computer aided decision making systems as well as data mining strategies. This seems to be consistent with the increased use of information technology tools as well as artificial intelligence systems. At the same time the generation X managers found to relate to their wide experience in the making of decisions and solving problems. The study also found that generation X managers were did not value media as much as the melennials who were found to be well linked on the media with significance reliance on various platforms and would prefer virtual interactions and communication. In many cases the generation X manager was found to prefer more secrecy in conduct and in organizational information while the millennial was found to have a higher disposition towards presence on the various media platforms available for communication. In the end, the study concluded that generation X managers tend to exhibit more technically oriented behaviours while millenials were more relationship oriented. These findings are summed up in Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1**  
**SUMMARY OF MANAGERIAL BEHAVIOURS OF GENERATION X AND MILLENNIAL MANAGERS**

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the comparative behaviours of generation X managers and millennial managers. It was found that the generation X manager tends to be more tasks and professional oriented relative to the millennial manager who was found to be relationship oriented and displayed more social behavior in performing scheduled managerial tasks. The study point to the strength of technical managerial behaviours among generation X managers as opposed to soft and techno based behaviours that seem to be exhibited by millennial managers. As such, it can be concluded that a hybrid management based organizational scenario that is based on both millennials and generation X managers could be important. However, it may be important for further research to be conducted on the ease with millennial managers and generation X managers can work together harmoniously without conflict.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the results found in this study, there can be organization specific behaviours that are established by organizational cultures which create a different situation from the one in many organizations. Therefore organizations are recommended to analyze their cultures and have specific ways of creating specific behaviours that they want managers in their organizations to portray. In addition it appears from this study that the behaviours of the different generations of managers is important and there could be need to create hybrid organizational situations characterized by the behaviours from both the generation X managers as well millennial managers to allow for fusion of behaviours.

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