Millennials: Entitled Networking Business Leaders

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ABSTRACT
Millennials are the young emerging workforce. Virtual workplaces led by young business leaders are replacing the brick and mortar leaders in the developed world. In the global marketplace, local, regional, and multinational firms delegate virtual business leaders to address company transactions. An essential component in the competitive global environment, millennial business leaders may shape comparative advantage, especially in the Middle East and North African Area (MENA). This case study focuses on the emergence of millennial leadership inside virtual teams. The aim of this paper is twofold: (1) whether the organizational structure impacts millennials’ authority as the team leader and (2) whether structure influences the team members’ perception of their leaders’ entitlement attitude. Participants were selected and teamed up as virtual business units. From the research analysis, it was found that millennial leaders emerge from business units Moreover, leaders may use authority and may have an entitlement attitude. Recommendations were made based on the results and implications.

Keywords: Leadership, Millennials, Entitlement, Authority, Virtual Communication

1. INTRODUCTION
Millennials, technology, and organizational structures are focal in third millennium business management, especially critical in the Middle East and North African front given globalization, liberalization, and emerging democratization. Research has found that millennials are the young emerging workforce; they are entitled; and they network 24/7. Studies have found that young entrepreneurs have played a vital role in shaping Middle East and North African (MENA) business growth: Between 2002 and 2010, foreign investment exploded in the Arabian Gulf influencing the industrial and organizational climate (Kalayci and Adtan, 2012; Toone, 2012). Millennials are said to be energized and technologically adept as a human resource, using social media to network business objectives. Nonetheless, effectively leading and managing a business is challenging, whether interacting face-to-face or online, especially when the business leader is neither sufficiently experienced nor assigned but emerges. Furthermore, millennial business leaders who exploit fast-changing opportunities may require a different range of core competencies than those in traditional structures given their sense of entitlement.
2. RELATED WORKS
Studies have shown that business leaders’ awareness of rapidly changing environments teeming with opportunities and threats generate competitive survival strategies. Many traditional business organizations seem to be eroding, defunct, bringing with them high uncertainty avoidance and resistance to adapt, yet millennials are change agents as leaders in the international marketplace in which multinational business strategy implements procedure using broader flatter organizations. New structural design mechanisms are built to ensure leaner more flexible coordination and control (Maney, Hamm and O’Brien, 2011; Goleman, 2006; Drucker, 1996). The opportunities for and need of virtual organizations has grown with the combination of increasing globalisation and widespread developments in information communication and technology (ICT) (Hill and Hernandez_Requejo, 2011). For those who are flexible enough to create, innovate, adapt and/or engage in change management, opportunities for business growth and development abound (Kinicke and Fugate, 2012; Kets De Vries, 2010; Beaver and Hutchings, 2005; Farren and Kaye, 1996; Drucker, 1985). Millenial executives as virtual business team leaders look for methods and tools that can help them sustain competitiveness; many are able to reinvent themselves. Research studies have shown that millennials leaders understand that today’s organizations whether traditional or decentralized, bureaucratic or boundaryless (Welch and Welch, 2007) are networks (Shirky, 2008; Handy, 1996) much more than a structure to be quantitatively designed, measured, and controlled. Young yet versatile with a mindset that is open rather than closed to the “inner and outer sphere (Goethe),” Millennials generate organizational structures that require both or either of a forceful or enabling leader contingent on the context and the emotional economy (Kellerman, 2010; Kaplan and Kaiser, 2006; Goleman, 2006). One of the most common changes made in organizations is the development of teams (Robbins, 2011; Elloy, 2008; Osburn and Moran, 2000) whereby virtual teams are groups of employees dispersed in time and geography who, collaboratively through interdependent work tasks, generate a product/service using ICT (Zivick, 2012). Researchers note that virtual leaders must develop a strong portfolio of technical, interpersonal, and conceptual skills appropriate for managing the virtual organizational structure (Bass and Bass, 2010) whose framework is quite similar to traditional ones though supported and driven by online leadership. Moreover, research studies have also shown that in a leaderless autonomous work team context leadership behaviour is necessary to move the team forward (Zigurs, 2003). Reliance on a leader who “emerges” is essential for the team as the “leader” seems to “fit” the responsibilities: in addition,
she/he is selected because of proven competence (Erez, Lepine and Elms, 2002).

Studies have shown that whether assigned or emergent, leadership, mediated by technology, implements the same tasks/performances and builds the same relationship functions online as traditional organizations do though due to availability of information, dispersion of the team, and permanence of the communication some differences exist (Avolio and Kahai, 2001). Research has shown that team functional issues as task completion may be more difficult to resolve. In addition, studies showed that use of authority is at times used laterally rather than hierarchically (Glucker and Schrott, 2007). Virtual leaders may have additional issues to handle stemming from the online context (Nicholson et al., 2007).

Millennials are the emerging workforce. Born between 1980 and 1999, they are educated, sociable, civic-minded, have a sense of morality and diversity, are well-travelled, and technologically sophisticated (Pew Research Center, 2010; Brokaw, 1998; Strauss and Howe, 1991). They are independent, hard working, and entrepreneurial. These personality characteristics were shaped by the first fifteen years of the millennials’ life that served as the foundation for their expectations and impacted their behavior. The new leader on the business frontlines is less process and outcome oriented and less money focused. Millennials balance family life with their work life, a witness of and probably a testament to their parents being downsized. Their world is wired and connected: computers, cell-phones, I-pods, I-pads, DVDs, and cable TV. Having grown up with technology, this generation has an ICT confidence and tenacity unlike others, awakened by and aware of world events 24/7 (Akhras, 2012a). More importantly, millennials want to be challenged in life and at work; easily bored with routine streamlined work processes (US Department of Education). This Spawned Generation, Generation Whatever (Christen in Payment, 2009, p.23) may seek creative challenging tasks, working perseverant and consistently to win (Crampton and Hodge, 2007), mainly driven by personal concerns.

Research has shown that millennial, like all other generations, may have issues that need to be resolved, chief among which is their sense of entitlement: They perceive themselves as the first, and they must consistently be considered as the first (Twenge, 2006). Studies have found that millennials’ entitlement is related to their socialization and their level of their internet connectivity and networking dependency. Although brought up by different generations of parents, research has shown that similar parenting and socialization skills enriched millennials: children were expected to excel and have a high sense of achievement. Promoting self-esteem was part of their elementary education; moreover, parents also excessively praised childrens’ assignments (Trzesniewski and Donnellan,
2010; U.S. Department of Education). Millennials’ childhood was highly scheduled with choice-overload and resultant stress-overload (Gleeson, 2007), maybe they are better seen as an Accelerated Generation. Entitlement in the work environment may also have sprung from the fact that millennials have been socialized in a world of instant information and social networking 24/7 where events are celebrated round-the-clock. As such, researchers have found that millennials thrive well in work-related contexts supported by positive as well as continuous instant feedback (Demirdjian, 2012; Cisco Connected World Report, 2011; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013; Scheck, 2012; Silbergh and Lennon, 2006). Moreover, it has also been noted that millennials tend to work well with others, collaborating, bringing to the work context, a de-cublized work space (Kapoor and Solomon, 2013; Zopiaris, Krambia-Kapardis and Varnavas, 2012; Lowe, Levitt and Wilson, 2008). Researchers have noted that not only do millennials search for and combine frequent positive open communication, but they also share it (Marston, 2007; Howe and Straus, 2007).

Millennial leaders play a critical role in MENA business world. Given the review drawn from the literature, this research study seeks to determine whether the organizational structure impacts millennials’ authority as the team leader and whether being “virtual” influences the team members’ perception of their leaders’ entitlement attitude in both the assigned-leader and the emergent-leader teams.

4. METHODOLOGY
This section covers the purpose of the study, the research questions, the participants, the procedures used in the study, the research design, rubrics, and analysis of data used.

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to determine whether the organizational structure influences team members’ perception of their leader’s application of authority and their entitlement attitude.

Research Questions

- Hypothesis One: In terms of online group transactions, virtual business team members with emergent leaders perceive significantly more authority being applied by the leader than do virtual teams with assigned leaders
- Hypothesis Two: In terms of online group transactions, virtual business team members whose leaders emerge
perceive significantly more use of an “entitlement” attitude by the leader than do virtual teams with assigned leaders.

Participants

The participants who attend two graduate level business courses at the faculty of business administration and economics are selected as participants. The sum total of students is 60: 34 are male; 26 are female; and 31 work in domestic and international companies. All participants attend the Fall Semester at a private English speaking university in the Middle East and North African Area (MENA).

Procedure

In this research design, the participants are assigned a graded team project across the academic semester. The participants are placed in virtual teams of five members. Each team is to work on tasks on the internet. The team project is to be developed by all the members of the team who are to meet regularly on the team blog in order to achieve their assigned team objective. The blogs are generated by the course leader who is the blog administrator.

- During the sixth week of a fifteen week semester, the participants are placed in formal teams and told to meet to discuss the project and how and when they will work together.
- During the seventh week, the formal teams are divide into two categories: assigned team leader and no assigned team leader. Thus, three teams had an assigned leader (AL) and three did not.
- During the eighth week, the participants as virtual team members are told to collaborate on the blog, synchronously or asynchronously, in order to personalize their blog, adding IT features to enhance and facilitate online communication.
- During the ninth week, the participants are given the first task on the group project. This is to be performed by each team member, individually. The task is submitted on the team blog.
- During the eleventh and twelfth week of a fifteen week semester, the team participants have a collaborative task. All need to work together, synchronously or asynchronously, to complete the task. The second task must be submitted as one assignment online.
- During the thirteenth week, the final task is to be completed. The team participants are to finalize the graded team project. It is to be submitted online.
- During fifteen week, all the participants are to fill out a survey (See Appendix One).
The Research Design, Rubrics, and Analysis of Data

The research is conducted as an experimental design with mixed method. Two main areas are probed—conditions that lead to the emergence of virtual business team leaders and comparative performance following the emergence of the leader. Rubrics were generated to measure each context. Data was analyzed using Levine’s test for equality of variance and independent t-tests.

Rubric to Assess Perception of Authority

- The first rubric is paired three times with Hypothesis One—In terms of online group transactions, virtual business team members with emergent leaders perceive significantly more authority being applied by the leader than do virtual teams with assigned leaders. On the Likert Scale (1 is non-existence and 5 is regularly applied) points reflect the participants’ perception of the leader’s application of authority (see Figure 1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.0-2.0 points</th>
<th>3.0 points</th>
<th>4.0-5.0 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When leader is not perceived as applying authority.</td>
<td>When leader is perceived as applying a moderate level of authority.</td>
<td>When leader is perceived as regularly applying authority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Rubric to Assess Perception of Authority Application

Rubric to Assess Perception of Entitlement:

- The second rubric is paired with Hypothesis Two which states that in terms of online group transactions, virtual business team members whose leaders emerge perceive significantly more use of an “entitlement” attitude by the leader than do virtual teams with assigned leaders. Thus, the rubric evaluates the attitude of entitlement reflected by the virtual business team leader’s on the Likert Scale (1 is non-existence and 5 is regularly applied) (see Figure 2 below).
1.0-2.0 points
When the leader is perceived as not having an attitude of entitlement.

3.0 points
When the leader is perceived as having the inception of an attitude of entitlement.

4.0-5.0 points
When the leader is perceived as having an attitude of entitlement.

Figure 2: Rubric to Assess Perception of Entitlement

5. RESULTS
Based on the data analyzed, the section below discusses the results of the analysis in line with the literature reviewed.

The first hypothesis which stated that in terms of online group transactions, virtual business team members with emergent leaders perceive significantly more authority being applied by the leader than do virtual teams with assigned leaders was supported: three different tasks that were performed by the six virtual teams were evaluated (Task One: T=2.834 df (36), Sig(1 tailed)=0.004<0.05; Task Two: T= 2.408,df(58), Sig(1 tailed)+0.0095<0.05; Task Three: T=7.405, df(30), Sig (1 tailed)+0.000<0.05) (See Appendix One). Emergent leaders played a dominant role: They stepped forward to take over and directed the team to success (See Figure 1: Rubric to Assess Perception of Authority Application). The MENA Millennial leaders held themselves responsible to ensure the tasks were completed in terms of path and alignment while others in the team were responsive to being led as has been noted by other practitioner-researchers (Oh, 2012; Blanchard, 1996, p.86; Covey, 1996, pp. 152-3).

Business leaders held the four members in their team accountable for their performance. In the six teams, the level of contribution of different members was not of equal measure meaning that in three of the teams, a team leader emerged applying authority to promote performance, communication, and interdependence while in the other three teams the assigned leaders directed performance. Virtual leaders have to consistently deal with maintaining hierarchical order and compliance online (Zivick, 2012). In the United Arab Emirates, teams have been a key component in delivering strategic goals in successful project-based companies where it was found team leaders and members played a responsible role in task performance (Randeree and Ninan, 2011). Tasks may need to be executed in a coordinated fashion for project completion (Kinicke and Fugate, 2012), and the interrelationship
between leadership and virtual teamwork and the members themselves was necessary in the six virtual teams (Carte, Chidambaram and Becker, 2006, p. 340). Studies show virtual teams need leaders with skills and personalities able to handle identical work-related problems online in a manner at times different from traditional co-located teams (Avolio and Kahai, 2001). In this study, e-mail, mobile texting as well as face-to-face interaction were used as channels of communication. Similar to leaders in traditional teams, the face-to-face conversation on accountability may need to be done in a one-to-one manner using teleconferencing or video-conferencing (See Appendix One). When the leaders authoritatively directed, the team responded and the project was completed: In effect, emergent leaders applied more authority in each of the three tasks.

The second hypothesis which stated that in terms of online group transactions, virtual business team members whose leaders emerge perceive significantly more use of an “entitlement” attitude by the leader than do virtual teams with assigned leaders was supported \( (T = 7.450, df (30) , \text{Sig (1 tailed)} = 0.000 < 0.05 \text{ level of significance}) \) (See Appendix One). Within the three teams who were not assigned a team leader, the emergent team leaders were perceived as entitled (See Figure 2: Rubric to Assess Perception of Entitlement).

Research studies have found that Millennials eschew linear trajectory (Gillespie, 2012), taking advantage of an opportunity to be “the trophy on the shelf.” The most entitled Millennial seems to have stepped forward and led the team as was noted by team members (See Appendix One). The leaders’ sense of self-esteem may have played a role as has been noted in other research studies (Trzesniewski and Donnellan, 2010; U.S. Department of Education). In this study, the leaders wanted to be challenged at work. Mundane work bores the Millennial leader (Edmonds and Turner, 2005). The Spawned Generation craves challenging tasks and is driven to win (Payment, 2009, p.23; Crampton and Hodge, 2007). Some of the emergent leaders may have tried to “de-cubicize” the work space (Kapoor and Solomon, 2013; Zopiaris, Krambia-Kapardis and Varnavas, 2012), when they livened up the blog by adding IT features to it or when they sent supportive emails or mobile-texts to the members of the team (See Appendix One). As such, the Millennials, as the emergent business leader in their virtual team, worked in their own way to generate a work-related-context supported by positive as well as instant feedback (Demirdjian, 2012; Cisco Connected World Report, 2011; U.S. Department of Commerce; Silbergh and Lennon, 2006).
In short, the business team leaders in this study using information media understood that not all team members are as goal oriented or entitled as they. Given their need to excel, authority, mainly as a hierarchical tool rather than a lateral tool, was used to achieve assigned team directives issued by top level managers superior to them on the chain of command. Different technological channels of communication were tapped into to ensure team objectives were performed.

6. CONCLUSIONS
Two conclusions were arrived at as a result of the study: virtual business team members perceive that their leaders apply authority to ensure that team goals are met; moreover, virtual business team members perceive their leaders as entitled, full of self-esteem, confident in their competence and their precedence in the business team.

The research study found that some of the Millennials also known as MySpace Generation, dot.com Generation, the Internet Generation, the Great Generation, Generation Y, the “Yes” generation, Nexters, and the Digital generation may be perceived as entitled business leaders. They are comfortable in a flexible virtual work-related environment which they perceive as boundaryless (Welch and Welch, 2007). There, they network 24/7, at times applying authority to achieve team objectives. Millennial business leaders in the Middle East North African Area (MENA) today may be seen as enthusiastic, engaged, inclusive, sociable, achievers, and curious as other Millennials are (Pew Research Center, 2010; Everett, 2011; Lippmann, Bulanda and Wagenaar, 2009).

The limitations found in the research conducted may have stemmed from the sample selected as it was a convenience sample (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006). The generalizability of the findings is limited given the absence of random sampling as well as similar nationality, field of specialization, and uneven gender distribution. The student sample was composed of more males to females. An additional limitation was the sample’s lack of personal access to the internet as the factor of expense is an overriding issue in some developing countries. For those participants who had access, the lack of efficiency, speed, and intuitiveness of local digital services may be perceived as another limitation imposed on the sample in terms of their tolerance to the poor quality of the IT service. These factors have been observed by other practitioner researchers as obstacles to participants’ performance (Akhras, 2012b; Jenkins, 2006).

To conclude, this small scale research study found that young leaders proved to be effective manager by applying authority. Pragmatically,
organizational culture proved to be hierarchical. Nonetheless, globalization, liberalization, democratization are changing the make-up of the political economic landscape as direct investment through multinational business corporation may infuse Western culture (Praveen Parboteach & Cullen, 2012; Toone, 2012; Kalayci and Adtan, 2012; Hill and Hernandez_Requejo, 2011). As a practitioner-researcher, I believe that further research ought to be conducted in other business institutions in the MENA in order to determine whether the finding arrived at in this small scale study (Bates, 2005) are similar to others in the region. It is recommended that further research be conducted in order to better understand the nature and role of millennials as the emergent or assigned new generation of post-information technology leader.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Survey

Please fill out the following survey related to the team you belonged to. Answer all the questions posed honestly. On the Likert scale below, 1 represents no authority, 3 moderate application of authority whereas 5 represents appropriate application of authority).

The information you provided on the survey remains confidential.

1. In the team you belonged to, did one of the team members emerge as a leader?
   Yes----- No-----
   Who was it?-----

2. Circle whichever personality characteristics the team leader reflected interacting on the team project
   a. Assertive
   b. Diligent/Conscientiousness with respect to task completion
   c. Flexible
   d. Taking full charge of task completion
   e. Supportive
   f. Communicative on different IT media 24/7
   g. Dominant

3. How much authority did the team leader exercise when you completed task one of the team project, adding IT features to the blog? 1 3 5

4. How much authority did the team leader exercise when you worked on completing task two of the team project, the collaborative work on the team project? 1 3 5

5. How much authority did the team leader exercise when you and your team mates completed task three, completion of the team project? 1 3 5

6. Based on the leader’s behavior within the team, how much of an entitlement attitude did s/he display? 1 3 5

7. In the space provided below, describe the team leader’s behavior.

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