EARLY MILLENNIAL MANAGERS VERSUS MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES

2000 Kuşağı Yöneticileri 2000 Kuşağı Çalışanlarına Karşı

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ABSTRACT

Three questions were developed in accordance with the subject and purpose of the study. Are opposing attitudes and criticisms common among early millennial managers toward millennial employees? Is it common among early millennial managers to dislike being called millennials or to refuse to be millennials? Is it common among early millennial managers to tend to claim that they have qualities similar to those of the previous generation? Through the purposive sampling technique, a sample of 61 managers, born in 1982 and 1983, was determined. One-on-one interviews were conducted with the managers. The findings of the study revealed that 1- Opposing attitudes (criticisms) were common among early millennial managers toward millennial employees, 2- It was common among early millennial managers to dislike being called millennials or to refuse to be millennials, 3- It was common among early millennial managers to tend to claim that they had managerial qualities similar to those of the previous generation; and therefore, the study presented a result that supported our observations in the beginning.

Keywords: Millennial managers, millennial employees, management, generation, early millennials

ÖZET

Araştırmanın konusuna ve amacına uygun olarak üç soru geliştirildi. Erken millennials yöneticileri arasında millennials çalışanlarına karşıt tutumlar ve eleştiriler yaygın mıdır? Erken millennials yöneticileri arasında, millennials olarak anılıyor olmaktan memnun olmayan veya millennials olmayı reddedenler yaygın mıdır? Erken millennials yöneticileri arasında, önceki kuşağın özelliklerine benzer özellikler taşıdığını öne süren eğilimler yaygın mıdır? Amaçlı örnekleme tekniğiyle, 1982 ve 1983 doğumlu, 61 yöneticiden oluşan bir örneklem belirlendi. Yöneticiler ile birebir mülakat yapıldı. Araştırmanın bulguları; 1- Erken millennials yöneticileri arasında millennials çalışanlarına karşıt tutumların (eleştirilerin) yaygın olduğunu, 2- Erken millennials yöneticileri arasında, millennials olarak anılıyor olmaktan memnun olmayan veya millennials olmayı reddedenlerin yaygın olduğunu 3- Erken millennials yöneticiler arasında, önceki kuşağın yönetici özelliklerine benzer özellikler taşıdığını öne süren eğilimlerin yaygın olduğunu ve dolayısıyla bizi araştırmaya iten gözlemlerimizi destekleyen bir sonucu ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Millennials yöneticileri, millennials çalışanları, yönetim, kuşak, Erken millennials

1. INTRODUCTION

The informatics revolution has created a new generation. In academic or popular literature, this generation has been referred to as the Internet or net generation, the iGeneration, generation 2000, millennials, and since 1993 as generation Y ("À la recherche de", 2012). In the academic and popular publications on Millennials, there seems to be no consensus regarding the birth years of this generation and the era in which members came of age (Pichault & Pleyers, 2010); for example, it indicates the period between 1979 and 1994 according to Smola and Sutton (2002) and Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), the period 1982-2000 for Sulaiman and Al-Muscati (2017), the period 1981-2000 for Gursoy, Maier, and Chi (2008), the period 1980-2000 for Deal and Levenson (2015), the period 1981-2003 for Troksa (2016, p.56), the period 1981-1999 for Rollot (2012, p.1), the period 1979-1999 for Pralong (n.d.), and the period between 1982 and the early 2000s for Anderson, Buchko, and Buchko (2016).

Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory has been an important inspiration in the design of this research; following this theory, 1- the term millennials was preferred, 2- those who were born between 1982 and 2004 were accepted as millennials ("Generations in History", n.d.).

Most of the opinions on Millennials are generally expressed by consultants or executives through the media (Bouchez, 2011; Maxwell, Ogden & Broadbridge, 2010); hence these views are not academic studies. Most of the criticisms about Millennials are made by older generations. Older generations constantly criticize millennials, with which they have close relationships, for their specific intellectual

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and behavioral characteristics and conflicts occur between millennials and older generations on a scale unprecedented throughout the history of generations. These conflicts occur between parents and children within the family, between teachers and students at school, between managers and employees in the workplace.

The process that generated the research subject started mainly with our observations. In our conversations with young adults, some similar reactions among early millennials (older millennials) caught our attention. Interestingly, those showing these reactions were millennials and they were criticizing millennials, but it was still more amazing that they decisively expressed that they denied being members of this generation, before or after criticizing millennials. After interviewing early millennial academicians from immediate circles to see how common this situation could be, and later observing the reactions of denying and refusing to see themselves as millennials, we decided that this subject was worth investigating.

This research sought answers to the following questions: 1- Are opposing attitudes (criticisms) common among early millennial managers toward millennial employees? 2- Is it common among early millennial managers to dislike being called millennials or to refuse to be millennials? 3- Is it common among early millennial managers to tend to claim that they have qualities similar to those of the previous generation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Concept of Generations

Generations refer to age groups, but it does not just correspond to age. The generations can come across each other anywhere; they coexist in society and they work together in companies. Looking at a company within the context of generations is a way of highlighting the differences between managers and employees. Rahim (2010) stated that there might be incompatibilities and disagreements (conflicts) within organizations, between individuals and/or groups (p.167). Based on the views of Platteau and Hondeghem (2010), it can be said that the conflicts between the managers and employees of a company, who are members of different generations, are a specific type of intergroup conflict. In the face of changing environments and new conditions, a new generation is more curious and fast in learning new behaviors than previous generations. Generations' adaptation to the shared environment they live in will not be to the same extent, and differences will arise between the value judgments of successive generations.

In the light of the commentaries by Mannheim (1952, p.290), Wohl (1979, p.210), Jaeger (1985), Kerzter (1983), Spitzer (1973), Rintala (1963), Corsten (1999), White (2013), and Strauss and Howe (1991, p.60), the concept of generation is defined as the cohorts of people born in the same date range and living in similar conditions and who witness similar events and share similar experiences, and unite in a cultural lexicon and a new understanding.

2.2. Millennials

The term Millennials was first coined by Howe and Strauss. The birth year span of this generation is parallel to the informatics revolution; naturally, they use information technologies better compared to previous generations. Howe and Strauss (2007) described Millennials as the first adults of the new millennium, born in 1982-2004. Nowadays, millennials are the ones that use social network sites (SNSs) and smartphones the most all over the world and spend maximum time on the internet via their mobile devices (Silver, 2019). Their connections with information technologies make millennials' behavioral patterns unique in every field. When the first millennial university graduates joined the workforce in 2004, it was noticed that due to their intense use of SNSs, their collaborative skills improved and they were prone to teamwork (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Glass, 2007), and considered team success superior to personal gains (Deal, Altman & Rogelbberg, 2010).

In their research, Cennamo and Gardner (2008) found that millennial employees had different work values than employees of the previous generation, expecting minimal control, more autonomy and freedom, good relationships with superiors, and immediate feedback from their supervisors. Millennials' immediate feedback demand is one of Martin's (2005) findings. According to Anderson, Buchko, and Buchko (2016), although millennials have high expectations of feedback, they have difficulty to accept negative feedback.

The findings of Anitha and Aruna (2016) showed that mentoring and teamwork were important for the millennial generation employees in terms of mutual information sharing.

Millennials want jobs with flexible working hours where they can wear comfortable clothes and have fun at work (Loughlin, 2001), they are not concerned about confidentiality and prefer having meetings in informal spaces (Joy & Haynes, 2011), they prefer to work mobile in the workplace (Haynes, 2011), they expect to rise rapidly through career path (Kowske, Rasch & Wiley 2010; PwC, n.d.), a good work-life balance (leisure time) is more important to them than financial reward (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015; D'Netto, 2011; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010).

Both older and younger generations complain that there is a lack of respect towards them in the workplace. What older generations expect from millennials is to respect the scalar chain relationship (authority), to do what is told because of their experience, and to give more weight to their opinions. Whereas, generation Y does not believe in unquestionable respect and expects older generations to listen to their opinions (Tolbize, 2008). Millennials want a leader who listens well, supports, and personally cares about them (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal & Brown, 2007).

It is a quite common view that there is so much conflict between older and younger generations in the business and working world, generation Y employees are disrespectful, disloyal and distrustful of their superiors, they dress very informally at work, and they want all development through their computers (Deal, 2007, p.2).

Compared to previous generations, millennials are less committed to their organizations and more likely to leave (Lub, Bijvank, Bal, Blomme & Schalk, 2012; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Findings of Singh and Gupta (2014) showed that it was hard to keep millennials in the organization.

According to Wazieres, a professional manager, millennials exhibit characteristics different from the previous generation in terms of business mentality, professional relations, and expectations, in business life and company. This generation is less attached to the job and the organization they work for, and they do not hesitate to quit the company when their expectations are not met. Companies must, therefore, offer them real career development prospects if they want to keep these young people within the company. It seems obligatory to make new arrangements in hierarchical relationships as well. These young employees are constantly looking for meaning; therefore, managers must not only be the people who give orders but also the people who justify themselves on the necessity and validity of the task. Respect is no longer obtained through title or function but through efficiency. Young people expect their managers to provide quick and regular feedback on their work. The Internet has changed the superior-subordinate relationship. With the development of multi-directional, transverse relationship possibilities, young people can be more successful in business and working relations based on teamwork (Politi, 2010).

A research conducted by a company providing multinational professional consulting services investigated and compared the expectations, perspectives, and approaches of millennial managers and employees in business life. The findings showed that there were differences between the two groups belonging to the same generation: millennial employees, compared to millennial managers, lean more towards changing jobs; millennial managers have difficulty in managing them due to the characteristics of millennial employees such as impatience, high expectations, and overconfidence; millennial managers criticize millennial employees because of their indifferent behaviors, being hard to please, and excessive demand of taking initiative (Akkuş, 2015).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The participants of this research were selected among the managers working within a group of companies. While determining the sample of the research, the purposive sampling technique (Tongco, 2007) was utilized. The sample of the study was composed of managers (early millennials) from different managerial levels, born in 1982 and 1983. The research was conducted in 2018. Of the 68 managers participating in the interview, 28 were women (41%), 40 were men (59%).

3.2. Procedure

Interviews with managers were designed and performed by one of the authors of this article. The author had also served as a human resources specialist within the group of companies where the research was conducted and is very experienced with interviewing. First of all, human resources records were examined, and 72 managers born in 1982 and 1983, who could be informants, were selected. They were informed that they would be consulted about business mentality and workplace behaviors of millennial employees, and the opinions received would constitute the data of a scientific study. 68 managers agreed to meet face-to-face concerning this issue. The research data were acquired from the managers through individual interviews, one of the qualitative research techniques. Notes were taken during the interviews. The average length of the interviews was around 20 minutes. The managers who attended the interviews were first asked the following descriptive question: In a superior-subordinate relationship, you naturally observe the millennial employees. Which negative characteristics of them stand out which you do not like; or which behaviors that strain your management practices draw your attention? The millennial managers who made negative descriptions and opinions about millennial employees in response to this question were asked a second question: Which and how much of the descriptions or behavioral characteristics that you mentioned for millennial employees do you have? Some managers answered this question, "I do not have these characteristics"; on the other hand, some managers strongly denied being millennial, saying "No! I cannot be millennial; my characteristics are closer to generation X". During the interviews with 68 managers, seven managers were eliminated for reasons such as reluctant participation, drifting away from the topic, and withdrawing from participation.

3.3. Analysis and Results

As a result of the interviews, 14 managers out of 61 millennial managers did not give any negative feedback on the millennial employees. The common statement of 10 managers among these 14 managers was that "I have the characteristics of my generation". The positive opinions of millennials managers about millennial employees have no significance in terms of the purpose of the research; hence, it was decided that there was no need to include the details of the common statement.

The notes taken during the one-on-one interviews with the managers were analyzed by taking into account the warnings of Krippendorff (2004, p.32). As a result of the analysis, from among the answers to the first question, 15 descriptions of 47 millennial managers, which reflect the negative opinions about millennial employees, were identified and shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Negative descriptions of millennial managers about millennial employees

Rank	Description	Frequency	Percent
1	Impatient	10	18.6
2	Ignoring hierarchy	6	11.1
3	Vainly self-confident	6	11.1
4	Malcontent	6	11.1
5	Undisciplined	5	9.3
6	Out of order	5	9.3
7	Smartphone addict	3	5.6
8	Asocial	2	3.7
9	Stubborn	2	3.7
10	Indecisive	2	3.7
11	Disloyal to the workplace	2	3.7
12	Arrogant	2	3.7
13	Unable to communicate	1	1.9
14	Doesn't focus on work	1	1.9
15	Doesn't obtain authority	1	1.9

In the ranking of negative characteristics reported by millennial managers about millennial employees, the description "impatient" was uttered by ten managers. These ten managers expressed that millennial employees, unlike previous generation employees, had a desire to rise quickly and get promoted in a short time, they wanted to be managers shortly, they could quit the company without hesitation if their demands were not met, and that they were not patient on these matters. Six managers made the description "ignoring hierarchy"; these managers stated that millennial employees frequently questioned the authority, did not

want to obey the authority, and conveyed the problems they encountered to the top management without sharing it with their managers. Six managers reported that even though millennial employees seemed self-confident, they had difficulty in understanding the reasons for their self-confident appearance; they uttered the descriptions of baseless, meaningless, and "vainly self-confident". Six managers made the description "malcontent"; these managers stated that millennial employees' requests were too many and endless, wanted to work flexibly, wanted to be praised, they had high expectations but did not try to achieve. Five managers made the description "undisciplined"; these managers reported that millennial employees came to work in informal clothes, did not like working, came to the office sleepless, and did not listen to advice. Five managers made the description "out of order"; these managers stated that millennial employees' behaviors were out of order, they wanted to behave as they wish in the workplace, wanted more freedom, and requested unsuitable jobs and positions. Three managers made the description "smartphone addict"; these managers stated that millennial employees were active and well organized in social media via the internet and mobile phones but were unable to reflect these talents to business life, and did not lay their smartphones aside in the workplace.

Ten managers who described millennial employees as "impatient" made the descriptions "undisciplined, stubborn, arrogant, indecisive, vainly self-confident, smartphone addict, ignoring hierarchy, out of order, malcontent" as well. Six managers who described millennial employees as "ignoring hierarchy" made the descriptions "impatient, undisciplined, and out of order" as well. Six managers who described millennial employees as "vainly self-confident" made the descriptions "impatient, malcontent" as well. Six managers who described millennial employees as "malcontent" made the descriptions "impatient, vainly self-confident, indecisive, and disloyal to the workplace" as well. Five managers who described millennial employees as "undisciplined" made the descriptions "impatient, ignoring hierarchy, out of order, arrogant" as well. Five managers who described millennial employees as "out of order" made the descriptions "impatient, ignoring hierarchy, undisciplined" as well.

Let us remember the second question that we asked the millennial managers who made negative descriptions about millennial employees, and their answers: Which and how much of the descriptions or behavioral characteristics that you mentioned for millennial employees do you have? Some managers answered this question, "I do not have these characteristics"; on the other hand, some managers strongly denied being millennial, saying "No! I cannot be millennial; my characteristics are closer to generation X". 32 millennial managers denied being millennials and stated that they had characteristics close to those of the previous generation. In the statements of 1/3 of 32 millennial managers, implications that disdain, underestimate, humiliate and ironize millennial employees were noticed.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that 1- Opposing attitudes (criticisms) were common among early millennial managers toward millennial employees, 2- It was common among early millennial managers to dislike being called millennials or to refuse to be millennials, 3- It was common among early millennial managers to tend to claim that they had managerial qualities similar to those of the previous generation; and therefore, the study presented a result that supported our observations in the beginning.

The principles of management are the fundamental pillars that guide managers and managerial implementation activities. Three descriptions among the findings are remarkable in that they reflect the three of Fayol's (Fayol, 1917, p.26) principles of management: hierarchy, discipline, and order. Let us mention the expression "... which behaviors that strain your management practices ...", in the first question asked to the managers. When composing this question, we thought about identifying the millennial employees' behaviors that damage the management principles from the viewpoint of millennial managers. In future studies, the sample could be expanded, and all of the management principles and/or managerial functions could be taken into consideration. The target population of the study could be millennial managers from creative and conservative business lines.

Some findings of this research support the results of the previous studies. Among the research outcomes, the finding revealing that millennial employees come to the office in informal clothes supports Deal's (2007, p.2) views and Loughlin's (2001) findings. The finding of this research, which reveals that millennial employees have a desire to rise quickly and get promoted in a short time (impatient), supports

Kowske, Rasch and Wiley's (2010) and PwC's (n.d.) findings. The finding of this research, which reveals that millennial employees frequently question authority and do not want to obey the authority, supports Tolbize's (2008) findings. The finding of this research, which shows that millennial employees are disloyal to their workplaces, supports the findings of Lub, Bijvank, Bal, Blomme, and Schalk (2012) and Thompson and Gregory (2012). The research finding concerning that millennial employees can quit the company without hesitation (impatient) if their demands are no longer met supports Wazieres' (Politi, 2010) observations.

In recent years, we can witness the views of millennial employees who refuse to be labeled as millennials due to the excessive negative portraying at the workplace (Hitchcock, 2016). In this study, we detected that millennial managers denied being millennials.

Millennials took on managerial positions between 2014 and 2016. Therefore, studies on millennial managers are very new. Is it possible that millennials became similar to previous generations when they became managers? It can be assumed that there are specific underlying reasons for their managerial qualities to show previous generation characteristics. Millennial managers may have realized the importance of collaboration with older generation employees to achieve a change. If there are older generations among their subordinates, it could be a strategy to look like them. Thus, they might have aimed to establish a trust relationship among themselves. Millennial managers may have been impressed by the knowledge and experience of previous generation managers and influenced by their opinions on millennial employees. From the perspective of millennial managers, it is essential to understand the older generation employees. Millennial managers must prove that they are reliable; they must eliminate common negative impressions about their generation, for example, they are expected to start first in the morning and leave last in the evening; they can be a role model for older generation employees only in this way. All these topics are worthy of investigation. Finally, this research is original with its subject, research questions, and findings, and it has the quality to contribute to the development of theory and practice.

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