NEW GENERATION'S EXPECTATIONS FOR 21ST CENTURY LEADER AND PERCEPTION BY YOUNG EMPLOYEES OF LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract:
The purpose of the paper is to research young employees' attitudes toward leadership in their organizations and gender role in leadership. The study explores what expectations have young people towards leadership behavior and leadership traits. It opted for a quantitative research approach using the descriptive research method. The data was collected with the survey, and the questionnaire was distributed through the Internet. The gathered data was analyzed through MS Excel and SPSS. The research provides empirical insight on the perception of the Georgian young generation to both man and woman leaders. The study results contribute to organizations in their efforts to attract young employees with leadership skills and pave the way for further research of ethical leadership and gender differences in organizational leadership.

Keywords: leader, employee, woman leader, man leader, Georgia

1. Introduction

Effective organizations need effective leaders who yield results and derive sustainable profits for the business.

Organizations recognize that leader characteristics and leadership style influence employees' productivity, performance, and wellbeing, which in turn have an impact on

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turnover or burnout. Besides, leadership plays an essential role in organizational changes, and external environmental fluctuations.

People in leadership positions have the authority to share power equally, ensure career opportunities, and advancement of women (London et al., 2019). Therefore, contemporary organizations have policies and procedures to promote gender equality and equity especially for women and other underrepresented groups.

The aim of this research is to explore the expectations of the young generation towards leadership and analyze their attitude to gender differences in leadership. It also investigates the leader behaviors in organizations and the role of society and culture in leadership.

RQ1: Does effective leadership depend on skills, traits, or behaviors?

RQ2: What behaviors are expected from a leader in an organization?

RQ3: Does gender play a role in leadership?

In the following sections, we present an overview of the relevant literature concerning leadership issues. Then, we explain the research methods and approach to analysis followed by the presentation of research findings. The next section includes the discussion of results, and in the final section, the conclusions, research limitations, and directions for future studies are outlined.

2. Theoretical Background

Usually, the definition of Leadership connotes traits, behaviors, roles, powers, influence, and managing positions (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Based on the research results, McCauley and Palus (2020) argue that leadership is not the action of an individual but rather it is a collective process. While managers try to get work done, leaders are concerned with influencing and convincing people to perform important work (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

According to Maccoby (2008), "*a leader is someone people follow*", and they follow leaders for conscious reasons such as money, power, fear, or other incentives, but also for unconscious reasons that are outside of one's control or awareness. People prefer leaders who promote collaboration, communicate a meaningful purpose, create interactive, participatory context and open culture (Maccoby, 2008).

Today, organizations recognize the leadership capacity as a business function in order to remain competitive, and that successful organizations need effective leaders (Wallace et al., 2021). For this reason, there are several leadership approaches that serve companies as a roadmap to identify qualified, skillful, and competent leaders on the one hand, and on the other hand, to develop leaders with the proper leadership skills.

Northouse describes Skills Approach as the leader's capabilities and competences in problem solving, working with people, and possessing job-related knowledge (Northouse, 2018). Besides, the behavioral approach emphasizes two general types of behavior of a leader: task behaviors that are focused on production, and relationship behaviors oriented on employees (Northouse, 2018).

Furthermore, leadership styles can be directive or supportive. Supportive leadership style highlights social and emotional support to group members, while directive behavior strives for accomplishing goals by diving clear directives, and defining roles (Northouse, 2018).

Servant, transformational, ethical, and authentic leadership concepts focus on followers and are people oriented (Akella & Eid, 2020). Value-based leadership concepts center not only on organizational performance, but also take into account values, emotions, culture, and employees and other stakeholders (Nahavandi, 2015). Furthermore, ethical leadership induces performance quality and reduces job stress (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021).

The studies reveal that transformational leadership increases employee trust and championing behavior especially during organizational changes (Islam et al., 2020). Transformational leadership enhances trusting relations between the leader and follower, reduces employee negative behavior, unwillingness, fear, cynicism (Islam et al., 2020). These results lead to the conclusion that organizations should train leaders in transformational leadership skills before initiating changes in the organizations (Islam et al., 2020).

Moreover, specific leadership styles - servant, empowering, ethical, charismatic, positively correlates with employee engagement (Li et al., 2021). Furthermore, authentic leaders positively correlate not only with employee performance but also with their quality of life (Audenaert et al., 2021).

The personality traits such as honesty and humility influence leadership style that positively affects employee performance (Ryan Kirkland et al., 2021).

Since leadership affects collective actions, organizations devote special attention to develop leaders and teach them skills that are more likely to impact organizational performance (Wallace et al., 2021). Leadership can be learned by daily routines to transform habits into skills in order to derive more results, foster productivity, and improve organizational performance (Berberick et al., 2017).

Leadership development programs teach leaders how to change behavior, as organizations evaluate leadership effectiveness by competencies and job performance (McCauley & Palus, 2020). Essentially, leadership can serve as a means to increase organizational outcomes by positively influencing employee performance, wellbeing, and job stress (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021). Employees' emotional and physical wellbeing is also highlighted in recent studies (Gigauri, 2021), as it enhances productivity and organizational performance. Studies have demonstrated that leadership style plays an important role in the customer orientation of employees (Ryan Kirkland et al., 2021).

Leaders need social skills to interact with group members, to deal with people with responsibility (Galli, 2021). Communication composing of listening and speaking is one of the essential elements of leadership (Galli, 2021). Currently, leaders spend a large amount of time interacting with their teams through e-mails, phones, messengers, and so forth. But the recent research has found out that overuse of information technologies

impedes the effectiveness of the leadership in an organization as employees still prefer face-to-face communication (Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021).

Additionally, scholars pay special attention to studying gender aspects and cultural factors in leadership. Culture is an important factor for a woman to become a leader (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012). Egalitarian cultures are related to the emergence of women as leaders, while cultural tightness hinders female leadership, as such culture is rigid and even women recognize only men as effective leaders (Toh & Leonardelli, 2012).

Gender bias, stereotypes, social norms, especially in male-dominated fields or organizations serve as barriers to women in the leadership path (Meltzer, 2018), although the studies argue that gender does not largely influence entrepreneurial leadership (Kimbu et al., 2021).

The research confirmed that the public does not see the distinction between men and women in leadership traits, and thinks that both sexes can be equally capable leaders (Pew Research Center, 2015). The studies even have indicated that women score higher than men in many leadership skills such as resilience, taking initiatives, integrity, and honesty (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Interestingly, although they were perceived as more effective, they are still less confident than men leaders (Zenger & Folkman, 2019). Women have to reflect the behavior of men and act like men to achieve success in leadership roles (Sheerin & Garavan, 2021).

Moreover, groups composed mainly of men do not tend to choose men as leaders, and groups with more women do not have women emerge as leaders (Lemoine et al., 2016). Instead, extraversion is critical for leadership, and a woman has more chances to become a leader in a group with more men than women (Lemoine et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, women experience in fact salient but powerful barriers throughout their careers as leaders, especially in male-dominated industries (Meister et al., 2017).

The research on media framing between 2014 and 2016 reported that women are portrayed as not designed to be leaders, while men were framed as the "*heroic model of leadership*" (Sheerin & Garavan, 2021). Likewise, media communicates assumptions and creates expectations about how women leaders should behave, in particular, they have to mirror men, work hard, and show ruthlessness (Sheerin & Garavan, 2021).

Finally, leader traits such as achievement orientation, extraversion, integrity, self-confidence, and honesty are more associated with leadership effectiveness by followers than leaders' sex (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2019).

3. Research Methodology

The quantitative research method was applied for this study to find answered to the research questions. The study was conducted in Georgia between December 2020 and January 2021.

The questionnaire encompassed twelve closed-ended questions including dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions - Single Select and Multi Select

Multiple Choice Questions, Matrix Table Multi Point Scale questions, 5-point Likert rating scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree questions.

The Likert-type items were used to measure perceived leadership skills and behavior as well as attitudes of young workers to their leaders.

The questions aimed to establish the younger generations' evaluation of gender differences in leadership.

The questionnaire was prepared in Google Forms and distributed through the Internet. The target audience was young people residing in Georgia who have been studying and working. The results were analyzed through MS Excel and SPSS with descriptive statistics.

4. Research Results

The 84 young people took part in the survey. The survey participants were Georgian students aged between 18 to 25 years old who have jobs, and hence they represent the new generation of workers entering the job market.

Among the survey participants, 43% were men (n=36), and 57% were women (n=48).

The majority of respondents work for private companies (n= 29), but also in the public sector for governmental agencies (n=23), and in the nonprofit sector for nonprofit/ nongovernmental organizations (n=6). 13% of the respondents are self-employed (n=11), and 6% are entrepreneurs (n=5) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Industry of Participants
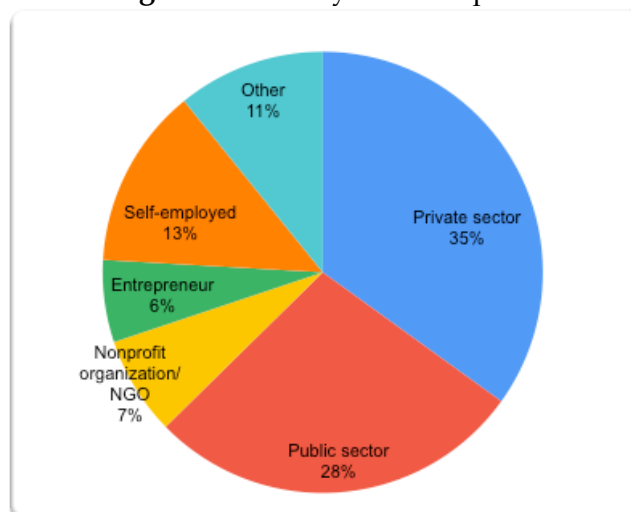
The survey respondents (n=56) confirm that the gender of a leader does not play any role (Figure 2). Interestingly, the responses among those who prefer a woman as a leader and those who prefer a man leader are distributed equally, 14 and 14 respectively.

Figure 2: Preference Gender of a Leader
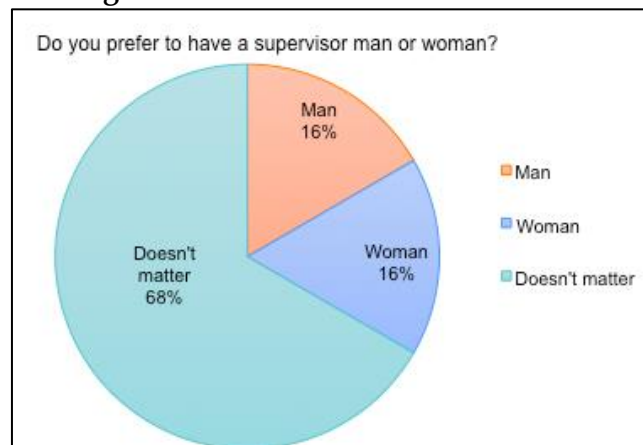
The study participants are mainly satisfied with the leadership skills in their organizations. 19 of them are very satisfied, and 27 are satisfied with the leadership skills. They think that their leaders possess the skills needed for leading (Figure 3). Only 8% of the respondents are not satisfied (n=7), and 11% are very dissatisfied with it (n=9). However, 22 students (26%) consider the leadership in their organizations neutral or average.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with Leadership Skills

The participants in the survey responded to a Multi-select multiple-choice question with the option to select all answers that apply regarding the qualities a leader must possess in an organization (Figure 4). They believe that a leader should be ready to help (12%, n=36) and be agreeable (11%, n=35). The leaders should recognize the achievements of employees (11%, n=35), and communicate effectively (10%, n=31). Besides, a leader needs to set a good example with their behaviors for their employees (11%, n=34) and create organizational culture (10%, n=30). The respondents consider that the leader represents the vision and goals of the organization (10%, n=32), and sets high standards and expectations (8%, n=24). Moreover, they suppose that leaders make decisions (9%, n=27), and get results (8%, n=26).

Figure 4: Qualities and Characteristics of a Leader

To the question "In your opinion, how often an employee should get help from a leader when performing work?" the vast majority of survey participants responded that an employee should get help always from a leader during the work process (85%, n=71), and 14% of the respondents suppose that a leader should assist sometimes (n=12). Only one respondent thinks that the leader should help a worker rarely, and nobody feels that a leader should never assist when workers perform their jobs.

The study participants indicated behaviors they expect from a leader in their organizations. The majority of them prefer supportive (n=32) and relationship (employee-oriented) behavior (n=31). The 17 young employees prefer task-oriented behavior, and only 4 - directive leadership behavior to ensure getting tasks and instructions clearly (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Preferred Leadership Behavior
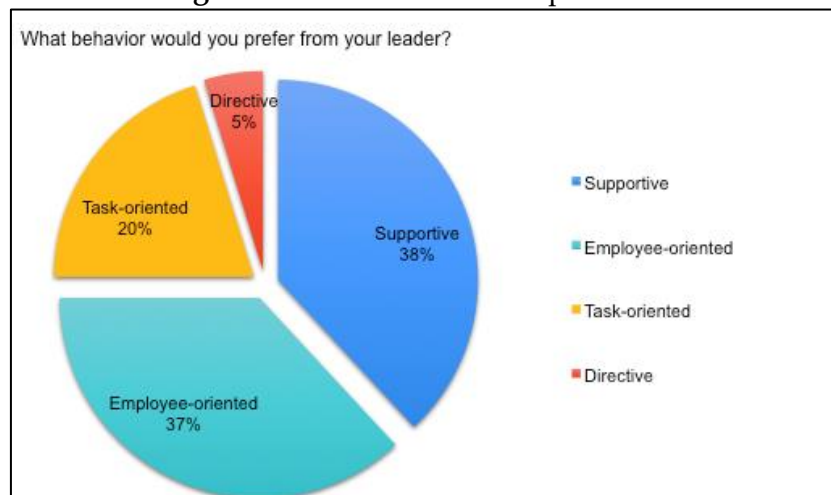
In addition, the respondents reflected on the question of whether leadership skills are innate or learned. The students taking part in the survey think that it is possible to learn leadership (n=40), but mainly it is an inherent trait (n=44) (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Attitude towards Leadership
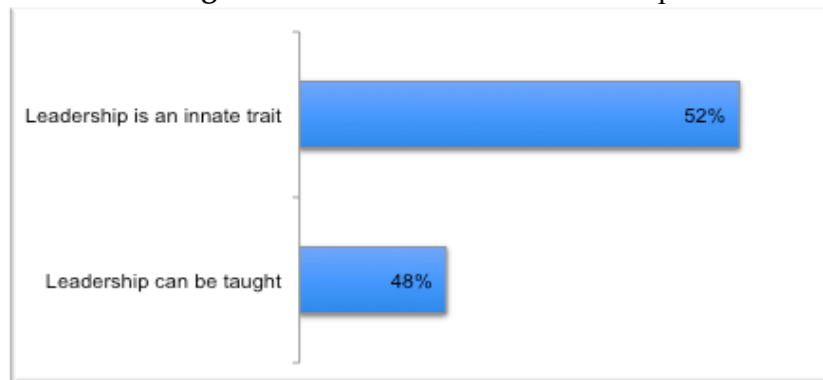
The young employees responded to the question concerning their perception of themselves as leaders (Figure 7). The majority of them agree with the statement that they are leaders by positions in their organizations (30%, n=34), and 25% (n=21) agree, and 10% (n=8) strongly agree that they are leaders, although they do not hold a leadership position officially.
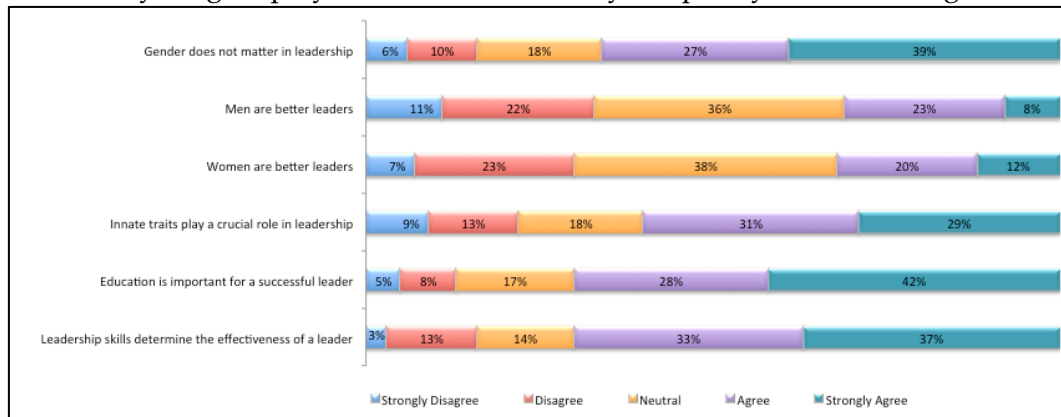
Figure 7: Respondents Attitude Towards Themselves as Leaders
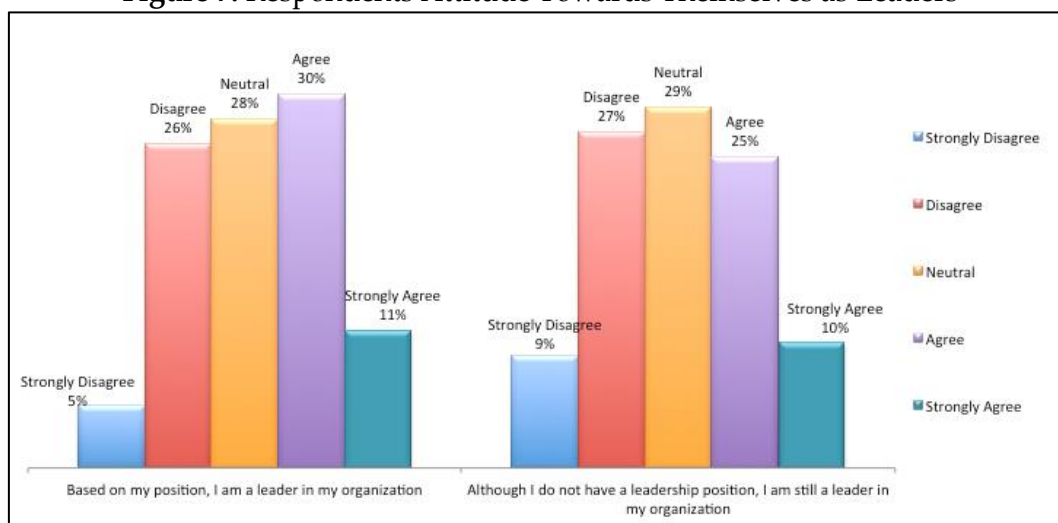
The survey respondents indicated the degree to which they agree with the various statements concerning their perception towards male and female leaders (Figure 8). The respondents agree (27%, n=23) and strongly agree (39%, n=33) that gender does not matter in leadership, while 10 of them strongly agree (12%) that women are better leaders and 19 participants agree (23%) that men are better leaders. Besides, they believe that education is essential to become a successful leader (strongly agree n=35, agree n=24), but also innate traits play an important role (strongly agree n=24, agree n=26). The respondents strongly agree (n=31) or agree (n=28) that leadership skills determine how effective a leader will be.

Figure 8: Level of agreement and disagreement about the attitude
of young employees towards leaders by Frequency and Percentage

The surveyed respondents specified their attitude towards a woman as a successful leader. The vast majority of them either agree (n=25) or strongly agree (n=24) that women can be successful leaders should they have the appropriate power (Figure 9). Moreover, they indicated that a successful leader should have a relevant position in the organization and proper support from the management. Furthermore, the respondents strongly agree (n=37) or agree (n=26) that a woman needs to have the appropriate education to become a successful leader.

Figure 9: Respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with
the statements concerning female leaders in Numbers (Frequency, n=84)
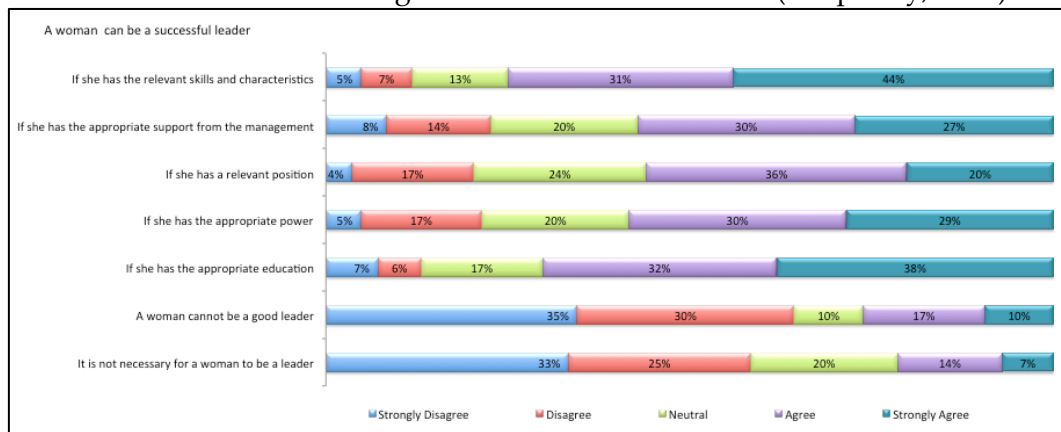
As expected, 29 participants strongly disagree and 25 disagree with the statement that a woman cannot be a strong leader. Neither agree nor disagree or express neutral position to this statement only 8 respondents. Further, the study participants disagree (n=21) or strongly disagree (n=28) with the following statement "It is not necessary for a woman to be a leader". On the contrary, 12 of them agreed with it, and 17 are neutral.

Additionally, the survey also interested in the opinions of the participants about male leaders (Figure 10). The surveyed persons do not believe that all men are leaders, or men do not need to learn leadership. They disagree (n=21) or strongly disagree (n=21)

with the statement that men have more chances to become leaders. However, twenty of them agreed with this statement.

Figure 10: Respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with
the statements concerning male leaders in Numbers (Frequency, n=84)
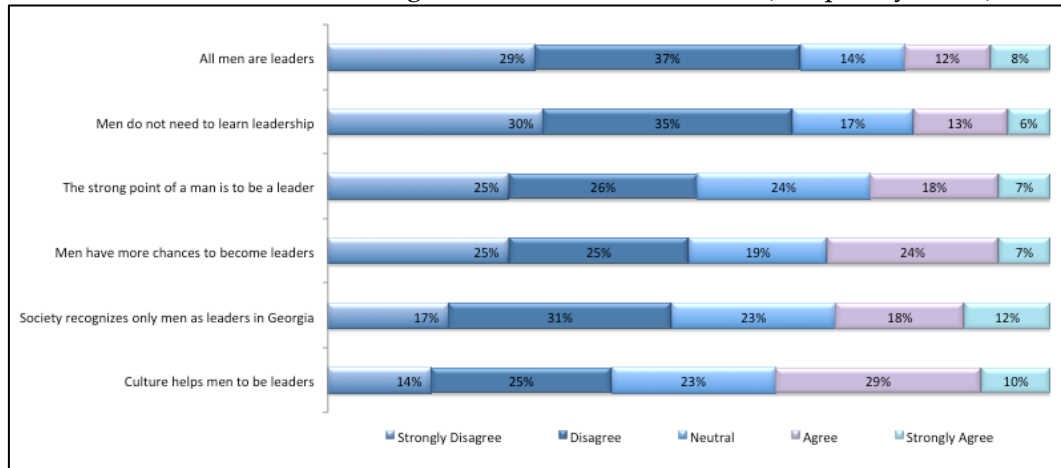
However, part of the respondents agrees (n=15) that society recognizes only men as leaders in Georgia, while 26 of them disagree with this statement. Besides, they do not agree (n=21) that culture helps men to become leaders, whereas 24 participants still think that this statement is true.

5. Discussion

The conducted study revealed that the young generation of employees aged 18 to 25 years old does not consider gender as an important factor in leadership. They do not prefer a man or a woman as a leader, but rather skills and behaviors of leaders are crucial in organizations.

Moreover, the respondents are satisfied with their leaders at the moment. They believe that a leader should be agreeable, ready to help employees during the working process and communicate effectively. Naturally, communication is a significant quality of a leader to deal with followers (e.g. Galli, 2021; Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021).

The respondents underline the importance of a leader who creates organizational culture, sets standards and expectations, reaches decisions and achieves results, represents organizational vision and objectives.

Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the young employees prefer leaders with supportive and employee-oriented behavior, rather than task-oriented and directive leadership styles. They favor those leaders in organizations who concern for people rather than having concern only for production. These findings dovetail with other research highlighting supporting and people-oriented leadership styles of a leader with collaborating, interactive, and participatory behavior (e.g. Maccoby, 2008; Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021; Ryan Kirkland et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Audenaert et al., 2021).

Interestingly, surveyed young employees reckon leadership can be both: an innate, inherent trait and a skill that can be learned and taught. The literature discussed above also emphasizes the leadership development programs to teach leaders the necessary skills that correspond to the organizational goals and strategy (e.g. Wallace et al., 2021; Berberick et al., 2017).

The young employees believe to be leaders in their organizations either by official position or without it. These findings suggest that they consider themselves as leaders or potential leaders.

The literature accentuated the prominence of female leaders (e.g. Toh & Leonardelli, 2012; Meltzer, 2018; Kimbu et al., 2021; Pew Research Center, 2015; Northouse, 2018; Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2019). The study results confirm that men and women leaders are equally qualified to lead. The respondents emphasize that neither men nor women are better leaders, and gender does not play any role in the leadership process. Instead, education and innate traits are important to become a successful leader. The participants consider female leaders to become successful if they had appropriate power, authority, and education, hold relevant positions in organizations and enjoy the support of the top management. The respondents do not think that a woman does not have to be a leader. Simultaneously, they do not think that men are inborn leaders or they do not need to learn leadership skills. On the contrary, men do not naturally have more chances to become leaders, and leadership skill is not necessarily their strengths. The surveyed students who are new employees strongly believe that not every man is a leader.

The study results demonstrate that the new generation does not believe culture helps men to become leaders, which paves the way for women to try to be leaders and fight for it. This means that everyone has a chance to be a leader despite the gender.
Thus, the research results suggest that companies should take into consideration the leadership behavior in their organizations in order to attract new employees and retain them as well as to increase job satisfaction and productivity.

6. Conclusions

The paper aimed at finding out the expectations of the young generation towards leaders in organizations. The research has shown that leadership is of great importance for job satisfaction and improved performance.

The study findings indicate that, to date, young workers stress the significance of supportive leadership behavior. Besides, the results emphasize that the gender of a leader is not essential for new employees, but rather leadership skills, traits, and behavior play a key role to motivate workers and increase performance.

Our findings raise an important practical issue for the leadership perception of young employees, and expectations of the new generation to leaders in organizations.

The presented study will help professionals and researchers alike to understand the preferences and attitudes of young employees who are entering the job market towards leadership and to manage their organizations accordingly.

Future research would benefit from examining the leadership styles of male and female leaders in different organizational contexts with larger samples of young employees.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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