Generational difference on the leadership competencies for the 21st century: a literature review

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Abstract: The study reviews the leadership literature on millennials and older generations to clarify to what extent generations differ on their view of the expected leadership competencies for the 21st century. An integrative review was conducted and searches were performed in electronic databases using a set of criteria to select 54 articles for this study. This review reveals that younger and older generations are much more similar than different. However, older generations effectively pinpoint specific new required competences. The study is useful for practitioners to avoid, implementing HR practices and policies that favour one generation over another. Practitioners should focus on the fit of their leaders to our fast-changing world, helping them develop needed competencies by designing adapted HR policies.

Keywords: generational difference; leadership; millennials; 21st century; competencies.

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1   Introduction

Dynamic socio-economic, technological, digital and financial factors are driving organisations to remodel the leadership competencies to adjust to new enterprise requirements in this fast-changing era (Chambers et al., 2010). To ensure success in this endeavour, practitioners can rely on numerous studies that discuss leadership skills for the 21st century. With more millennials taking over the workplace (Lewis and Wescott, 2017), the popular press and a growing number of scholars are advising practitioners to consider required future leadership competencies from the millennial perspective (Andersen et al., 2017). Researchers argue that leadership competencies discussed in the current leadership literature are based on the accounts of older generations, and are not

suitable to managing the younger generation (Faller and Gogek, 2019; Srinivasan, 2012; Succi, 2015). Since the beginning of the 21st century a growing number of studies discussing leadership from the millennial point of view has been published, giving more support to the generally accepted view that there are significant generational differences in leadership expectations (Bayan, 2021). However, there is growing confusion in the field for two main reasons. First, a strand of literature against generational difference in the perception of leadership is emerging (Real et al., 2010; Rudolph and Zacher, 2018; Wang, 2020). Second, studies that look at the millennial perspective are diverse and scattered, barely addressing the full scope of competencies required. Furthermore, few studies review generational differences on leadership for the 21st century. To help reduce inter-generational conflicts among workers, and better recruit and retain young talents (Forastero et al., 2018; Salahuddin, 2010), more studies are needed on generational differences (Putriastuti and Stasi, 2019). Reducing inter-generational conflicts is essential for organisations because conflicts in the workplace lead to poor performance, low productivity, employees and customers dissatisfaction (Matta and Fares, 2021).

This paper reviews the literature on leadership to identify if there are generational differences in expected competencies for leadership in the 21st century. For this work, competencies are said to be composed of: knowledge, skills, personal characteristics, self-concepts, traits and motives (Vazirani, 2010).

2   Generation defined

As Kupperschmidt (2000, p.66) defined, "a generation is an identifiable group that shares birth years, age and significant life events at critical development stages". Most studies assert that because each generational group experiences different life events during their development, these life events shape their belief systems and values differently (Srinivasan, 2012; Succi, 2015), resulting in different perceptions of a phenomenon. Therefore, it is commonly agreed in the literature that young people born between 1980–2000, referred to as millennials, (Heyns et al., 2019; Twenge and Campbell, 2008), perceive leadership differently than older generations. Older generations are identified as the Boomers, and the GenX. For Smith and Nichols (2015), age of birth are explained as follow: for boomers between 1943 and 1960 and for GenX between 1961 and 1979. Millennials are the generation born into a highly globalised world, a period in which rapid changes in information and communication technology (Tortorella et al., 2019) have taken place. It is also argued that millennials are perceived as more team-oriented, more technically savvy, and more concerned with a search for fulfillment (Anderson et al., 2017) than previous generations. In addition, millennials seem to have a different approach to work, as they look for more work-life balance, are eager to change employers, seek instant coaching, and want more opportunities to contribute and collaborate (Anderson et al., 2017).

3   Millennial perspective on leadership literature

Since millennials started to enter the workplace in the late 1990s, a dominant strand of leadership literature has emerged. Several researchers (Bayan, 2021; Miller, 2019; Succi, 2015) assert that available literature on leadership was not suited for millennials because

it was based on the of older generations. There is a general agreement in the mainstream media and in the research community that millennials – having grown up in a context different from previous generations – have developed a different perspective and maintain different expectations of leadership (Twenge and Campbell, 2008; Forastero et al., 2018). Therefore, there is a need to conduct more research on millennials' perception of leadership (Bayan, 2021). However, the research conclusions on millennials and leadership are very diverse and dispersed. The study groups vary highly, including millennials who did not enter the workforce yet and are still in high school, millennials who are still in subordinate positions, and those who are already in leadership positions (Gabriel et al., 2020). The age range used to define millennials also vary from researcher to researcher for example, Srinivasan (2012) refers to date of birth ranging from 1981 to 1990, while Penny (2011) focuses on people born between 1980 and 2000. Also, millennial perspective on leadership is studied over different topics such as preferred leadership styles (Succi, 2015), preferred leadership values (Sessa et al., 2007) expected leadership behaviours and skills (Bresman, 2015). Millennial leadership preference is also studied over a variety of perspectives, for instance from that of the health-care sector (Maiers, 2017) or the building industry (Real et al., 2010).

4   Existing reviews on generational difference on leadership

In the last few years, the need to bring clarity to generational differences on leadership perception has led to a growing number of published reviews. Some reviews focused-on differences in leadership preferences and expectations (Heyns et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2021) while others studied what it takes to increase millennials' satisfaction and retention in the workplace, in comparison to older generations (Keith, 2021). Few studies investigated generational differences in term of expected leadership styles (Bako, 2018; Folarin, 2021) or compiled a set of practices or approaches to leadership adapted specifically to leading millennials (Bayan, 2021; Wang, 2020). When addressing leadership styles, preferences or expectations, the reviews argue for what could be included in leadership competencies. For instance, the review proposed by Bayan (2021) discusses a set of competencies related to three leadership theories: ethical, authentic and servant leadership. The work of Heynes et al., (2019) concentrates on the application of a collaborative leadership style and the adaptation of flatter hierarchies in organisations. Singh et al. (2020) focused mostly on generational difference in work value and how it impacts job satisfaction and productivity. Other reviews of generational difference in leadership are conducted with the purpose of increasing the performance of a multi-generational workforce and of multigenerational teams (Burton et al., 2019). Furthermore, existing reviews on generational difference and leadership tend to focus on one specific group of professionals or on a specific industry, such as academic librarians (Heynes, 2019), health-care professionals (Keith, 2021) or the automotive industry (Tortorella et al., 2019). Despite the growing number of reviews on generational differences in leadership, the results are inconclusive. Several scholars claim that there are significant differences among generations, while others argue that there are many more similarities (Guzmán et al., 2010; Real et al, 2010; Rudolph and Zacher, 2018; Wang, 2020). There is a need for more studies in order to provide conclusive evidence on the subject (Real et al, 2010). Furthermore, reviews that study generational difference with regard to a full range of required leadership competencies are scarce. The full range

of competencies, as defined by Vizirani (2010) and Longmore et al. (2018). Further investigation of the literature is necessary to determine whether millennials and older generations have a different view on the competencies needed for leadership in the 21st century.

5 The needed competencies for leadership in the 21st century literature

The body of literature on the leadership for the 21st century is confusing and lacks homogeneity with regard to the number and type of required competencies, as well as with regard to the terminology used to describe these competencies (Ngayo Fotso, 2021). However, multiple strands are emerging. The first type of literature studies leadership for the 21st century by focusing on changes brought about by new information communication technologies and increased globalisation (Voogt and Roblin, 2010). This type of literature tends to argue that millennials are better equipped than older generations to lead in the new environment because they were born into and grew up in it, making them more able to understand and better equipped to deal with new leadership requirements (Bayan, 2021).

The second type of literature tends to demonstrate that leadership requirements have always evolved within the constantly changing environment, starting with the great men theory and continuing to recent publications (Ngayo Fotso, 2021). This literature asserts that leadership needs to fit the following changes: new technologies, globalisation, demographic changes, digitalisation, the sustainability agenda, financialisation and the recurrence of crisis (Ngayo Fotso, 2021). Studies within this group of literature are often based on accounts of senior professionals, which leads some scholars to claim that the findings in these studies do not encompass the view of millennials nor define competencies with which to effectively lead them (Succi, 2015).

The last group of literature is composed of studies that focus on one specific aspect of leadership in the 21st century, such as: how to lead millennials in the 21st century; how to lead in an increasingly digital world; how lead in a world in crisis; how to be a strategic leader (Ngayo Fotso, 2021). However, research within this group of literature is also based on the accounts of senior practitioners, and thus seen as not relevant for millennials.

6 Methodology

This study uses the integrative literature review methodology so as to include a variety of empirical and non-empirical studies using different designs, and data sources. The integrative methodology is ideal for this study because there is a need to have a comprehensive understanding of the issue (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005).

6.1 Literature search

To search relevant published studies, Whittemore and Knafl (2005) recommend using electronic databases, keywords that focus on the problem and to apply inclusion and exclusion criteria. For this review, peer-reviewed studies written in English were retrieved from 6 electronic databases (Swisscovery, Emerald, Google Scholar, Proquest,

Leadership Quarterly, Science Direct). Studies published between 2000 and 2021 were targeted. The following keywords were used: Leadership, generational difference, millennials, youth leadership, adult leadership, competencies, and 21st century.

Figure 1   Flowchart of literature search process (see online version for colours)
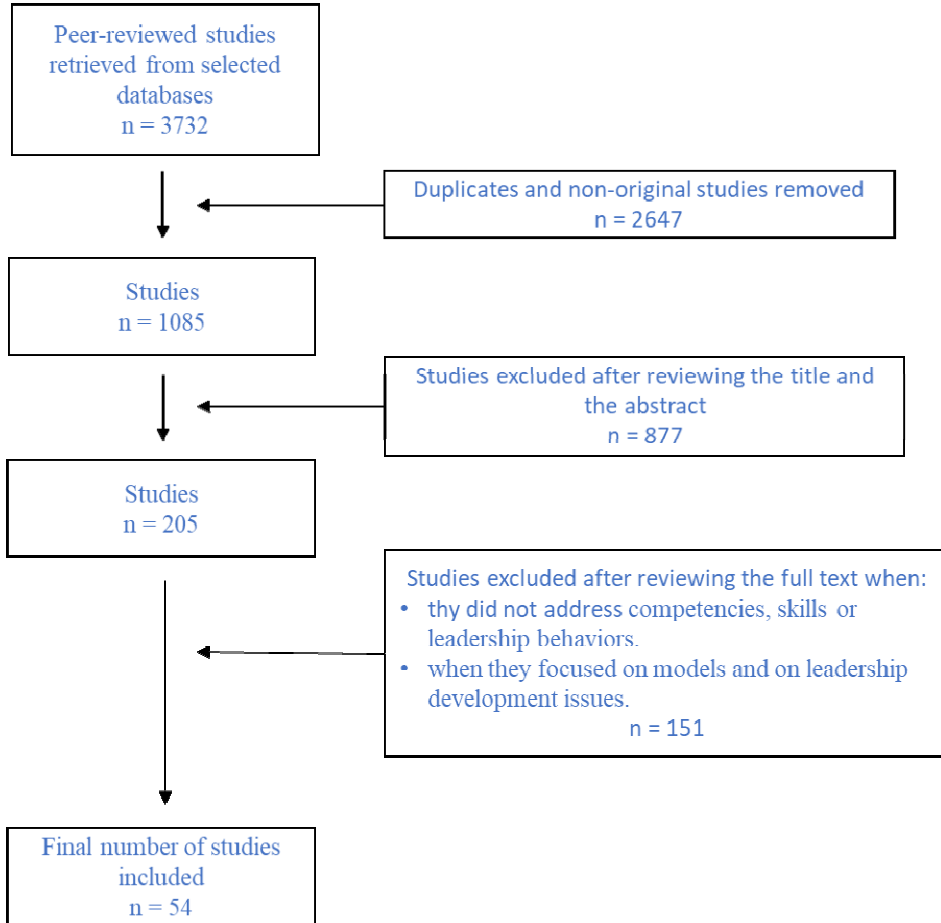
6.2   Inclusion criteria

Articles were considered if they clearly discussed leadership competencies from a generational perspective and made a clear distinction between millennials and older generations.

6.3   Exclusion criteria

Excluded studies did not:

1   meet the inclusion criteria

2   address competencies, skills or behaviours

3   focus on a generation or generational difference.

From the 3,732 articles retrieved in the initial stage of research, 1,085 remained after removing duplicates and non-original articles. After evaluating the remaining articles based on the titles and the abstracts, only 205 articles were eligible for further screening. In the last stage of screening, the full texts were reviewed, resulting in the exclusion of those which did not focus on competencies, skills or behaviours, but on models and on leadership development issues. Finally, 54 original articles were selected for the study.

6.4   *Data evaluation*

From Whittemore and Knafl (2005) argued that the quality evaluation of included articles is not essential for an integrative review. However, to increase the quality of this review, only articles published in peer reviewed articles were considered.

6.5   *Data analysis*

After the collection of relevant articles, a codebook was developed using MAXQDA, a software for qualitative data analysis. The code book was developed in a deductive approach using the 18 leadership competencies for the 21st century identified by Ngayo Fotso (2021). However, we also considered the inductive approach by adding competencies not present in Ngayo Fotso's (2021) list, thus adjusting the code book until saturation was reached.

Table 1   The list of 18 required leadership competencies for the 21st century

Adaptability and flexiblity	Values	Cognitive Skills	Transformational ability social skills	Communication skills	Human orientation
Organisation skills	Ability to handle complexity	Knowledge	Global Leadership	Collaborative Leadership Style	Customer centric skills
Digital competence	Competence for financialisation	Sustainabiliry Competence	Crisis management	Self-awareness	Social skills

Source: Ngayo Fotso (2021)

7   Findings

Overall, this review highlights that there are many similarities and few differences between the views of millennials and older generations on competencies needed for leadership in the 21st century.

7.1   *Similarities found*

Millennials and older generation appear to have similar views, and similar arguments are discussed in the reviewed literature on 14 competencies for the 21st century.

- Adaptation and flexibility: to change one's approach and to identify the approach that best fits the situation, and to adjust quickly. This includes being able to use several leadership styles, depending on the situation and people's experience. It also entails being flexible and able to adapt to various working behaviours, for example, accepting that people work in different places and time frames.

- Values: to act and make decisions based on several essential values: trust, being active and dynamic, hard work, humility, socially responsible, taking risks, curiosity, transparency, authenticity and accountability. An additional requirement is that value is placed on the well-being of others, requiring honesty and moral virtue.

- Cognitive skills: the ability to use mental competence to process information, including conceptualising, reflecting, analysing and thinking. Skills include strategic and analytical thinking. Leaders should also have an entrepreneurial mindset and copious creativity.

- Transformational ability: to focus on inspiring others, and lead change. Also requires the ability to act as a role model, to provide meaning to work, and to display some form of charisma.

- Self-awareness: the aptitude to reflect on one's behaviour and on how one affects others. Requires the ability to assess how one is perceived by others. Leaders need to have a purpose and to understand their own needs and motives. A contingent aspect is that leaders are able to regulate their own emotions.

- Social skills: the ability to communicate and to interact with people, and to consider their feelings and overall context. This includes emotional intelligence and empathy, as well as the interpersonal skills needed to engage in meaningful relationships.

- Communication skills: the ability to exchange information orally or in written form with one person or a group of people. This also includes listening skills, being able to engage in a dialogue with others, using new media and virtual technology, and exhibiting literacy in digital tools and new technology.

- Human orientation: encompasses the ability to put people and their well-being first, the capability to pay attention to others' feelings, needs and well-being, and to care for others. It also can be demonstrated through mentoring and adapted feedback.

- Organisational skills: all the skills related to planning, organising work, providing direction, controlling work progress and providing feedback.

- Ability to handle complexity: the propensity to be at ease and to thrive in a complex and ambiguous situation, including the capacity to handle difficult external and internal environments. Being able to cope with contradictive impacts of decisions taken and to effectively navigate within networks.

- Knowledge and continuous learning: having the information, facts, know-how, mastery and expertise obtained through experience and education. Leaders should have proven track records, as well as a high level of expertise in their field. This also includes staying up to date with new knowledge, requiring continued learning and the sharing knowledge with others.

- Global leadership: the ability to function and thrive in an international context, demonstrated through skills, knowledge, ability and behaviours adapted to an international environment.

- Collaborative leadership style: requires leaders to thrive in an environment that does not rely on hierarchy, and be able to work in a team-based environment in which everyone's opinion is valued.

- Sustainability competence: leaders are expected to be socially responsible when they take decisions.

7.2   Differences between millennials and older generations

This study also shows that millennials and older generations have a difference of opinion on six leadership competencies. The first five competencies are either not discussed at all or adequately in the literature that looks at the millennial viewpoint. The last one is mostly addressed in the younger generation literature.

- Customer centric: is not much discussed from the millennial perspective, but rather by senior executives. It is described as the ability to make decisions that are favourable to customers, to be able to interact regularly with customers and to request regular feedback from them.

- Crisis management competence: like customer centric, this competence does not appear to be an important point in millennial leadership literature. In the older generations' literature, it is perceived as necessary for today's world. Crisis management competence considers the ability of a leader to understand the phases of a crisis and to deploy competencies required to manage them, such as: to collaborate with others or to communicate updates regularly.

- Competence in financialisation: scholars assessing the leadership competencies from the millennial perspective do not consider this competence. It is often covered in older generations' literature as the ability to master financial strategies, understand financial markets, focus on short-term gains, and requires the application of autocratic and coercive leadership styles.

- Digital competence: in addition to the relevance of communication using digital technology tools for all generations, research published on the older generations' goes much further, asserting that this competence also includes an aptitude for digital vision and strategy.

- Sustainability competence: Although the literature manifests no difference in terms of expressing the need for leaders to act responsibly, the more senior generations' literature includes additional capabilities in this competence, such as the ability to make decisions that are good for the environment, the company and society.

- Stimulate an enjoyable working environment: This competence is often associated with millennials' expectations and is not debated in the older generations' literature. Millennials are said to expect leaders to create and maintain a pleasant working environment, ensuring that employees enjoy coming to work and have a good time while doing so.

8   Discussion and conclusions

The review shows that generations are more similarities than different in their view of the needed leadership competencies for today's world. Indeed, out of the 18 leadership competencies provided by Ngayo Fotso (2021), millennials and older generations have similar views on 14. This finding does not support the claim that younger and older generations have vastly different perspectives on leadership (Weirich, 2017; Heynes et al., 2019). On the contrary, it provides more support to the scholars that claim that generations are more similar than different as far as leadership is concerned (Wang, 2020). Furthermore, the study does not provide evidence that there is such a thing as 'adult people' (MacNeil, 2006) leadership theories, as argued in the millennials' literature. The evolution of leadership theory bolsters the similarities between older and younger generations' views on required leadership competencies, indicating that factors other than generation are contributing to the ongoing changes in desired leadership competencies (Moorthy, 2014; Guzmán et al., 2020). For example, advances in technologies require the abilities to manage virtual teams and use new media for communication (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). As ever more information is made available at a faster speed, there is a need to have stronger cognitive skills in order to synthesise and analyse information (Chow et al., 2017). This also contradicts the claim made by scholars studying millennial leadership that older and younger generations live in two different worlds.

Many leadership competencies often associated with millennials and regularly attributed to their impact in the workforce were already discussed in previous studies before millennials were born. For example, the collaborative leadership style – a human orientation approach to leadership, necessitating the ability to allow followers to contribute to decision making and to give more autonomy and regular feedback – has already been suggested by the behaviourists as essential to better productivity, more job satisfaction and increased motivation (Likert, 1961). The request to work more in team-settings, regularly associated with millennials, was also already advocated for, whenever possible, by Blake and Mouton (1964), who claimed that the team approach generates a higher level of performance. In addition, the expectation expressed by millennials that leaders be authentic, trustworthy, committed to the general good, and inspiring, can be traced back to the servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977) and to the transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985). Recent publications on leadership competencies confirmed the perspectives described above and retrieved them from older publications (Guzmán et al., 2020; Voogt and Roblin, 2010). In addition, Tolbize (2008) claimed that all generations wish to have a happy work environment because of the positive impact it has on productivity, motivation and the reduction of stress (Yerkes, 1997). This conclusion shows that millennials and older generations expect the same from leadership, and undermines the argument that there is a need to adapt leadership practices solely to the needs of millennials, and rather, calls for an adjustment of leadership to suit all generations.

Another significant finding from the review is that there are few differences between the generations. However, contrary to what is argued in leadership studies on generational differences and millennials, older generations are distancing themselves from millennials by discussing the importance of additional competencies, such as digital competence and digital transformational business models, the ability to develop sustainable business models, crisis management, financialisation and customer centricity.

These 5 competencies are often mentioned by senior professionals in the leadership literature (Zanen, 2018). Thus, it could be asserted that the awareness of these five competencies and the ability to develop them can only be achieved by working for organisations. These competencies are infrequently mentioned in the millennial leadership literature because most of the studies are conducted with a sample of participants still in graduate school or not yet fully engaged in a professional career (Zanen, 2018).

9   Research contribution and recommendation for further research

This review of existing studies on generational differences and leadership contributes to the understanding of generational differences in leadership. Previous literature reviews on this topic have focused on leadership styles and behaviours preferences (Olsen et al., 2021), desired work values and work attitudes (Singh et al., 2020), admired leadership characteristics (Bayan, 2021), and leadership expectations (Keith, 2021). This review contributes to the research on leadership by showing that younger and older generations are much more similar than different in this matter while older generations are particularly effective in pinpointing specific new required competencies. They name these as: customer-centric, crisis management, competence in financialisation, digital competence, and sustainability competence.

First, the research on leadership and generational differences has relied on the generational cohort theory. This theory asserts that different generations, because of their birth date, have different life experiences, values, and expectations that shape their view on leadership. Failure to recognise these differences and act upon them leads to deteriorated working conditions with more generational conflicts and unsatisfied, unmotivated younger workers, consequently negatively impacting organisations' performance (Faller and Gogek, 2019). However, this theory is insufficient to explain why older and younger generations tend to mainly agree on the leadership competencies needed for today's world and why older generations shed light on additional competencies.

Second, the lifespan perspective is often considered an alternative to explain generational differences in leadership outcomes. It is based on the notion that as people mature and grow, age-related changes impact their attitudes, motivation, and behaviours as leaders (Rudolph and Zacher, 2017). Therefore, generational differences in leadership could be caused by age, work experience, and position (Real et al., 2010). However, the lifespan perspective has not yet been sufficiently used to investigate generational differences in leadership.

Third, few studies have discussed similarities among generations by focusing on generations' views on work values and expectations (Real et al., 2010). This review contributes to the research by addressing and showing that generations are also similar in their view of the needed competencies for leadership in the 21st century.

Fourth, scholars who have argued for a higher consideration of generational differences in leadership have relied on the contingency theory to provide solutions to organisations to help them address the challenges brought by the younger generation and the multigenerational workforce (Bayan, 2021). The contingency theory is based on the assumption assumes that leadership should be adapted to the context. Therefore, scholars have claimed that the 21st century brings a new context characterised by the

increased importance of globalisation, information communication technology, digital transformation, societal changes, and the sustainability agenda. To remain competitive and to ensure their survival, organisations should consider new leadership competencies and approaches to fit (Chambers et al., 2010). Aligned with the contingency theory, scholars of the work adjustment person-environment fit theory assert that fit is part of a work adjustment process by which people proactively or reactively try to adapt, develop themselves, and find means as their work environment changes under the pressure of external or internal factors, to maintain fit with their work environment and future career possibilities (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). This theory assumes that all generations are affected by the changes in today's environment, and all need to adjust, just as organisations have to. This assumption could explain why generations appear so similar in their view of leadership competencies for the 21st century. The work adjustment person-environment fit theory combined with the generational cohort and life span development theories can help develop a new framework to research generational differences and similarities in leadership.

Table 2   Questions for further research

Scope	Questions for future research
Generations and leadership competencies for the 21st century	1. Are leaders from different generations perceived to display the needed competencies for the 21st century by their subordinates?
	2. Are leaders from different generations perceived to display leadership skills for the 21st century by their own supervisors?
Generational differences, lifespan, and the work adjustment person-environment fit	3. What factors could help explain why the perception of generational differences is so strong in the scientific and in manager communities?
	4. What factors could explain the similarities and differences between older and younger generations on their view of the needed competencies for leadership competencies in the 21st century?
	5. In regards to the apparent similarities on the needed competencies for leadership, how do younger and older generations describe these competencies? Are the similarities still so significant?
Contextual perspective	6. Are the identified required leadership competencies relevant in different industries?
	7. Are the identified required leadership competencies relevant in other cultures than in the Western world?
Subordinates' attitude and work environment	8. To what extent do competent leaders in the 21st century impact subordinates' attitudes and work environment?

Our review of existing research provides valuable insights such as the influence of the generational cohort theory on current findings, the need to consider new theories or frameworks that could combine the generational theory, the lifespan perspective, and the impact of the context through the contingency theory in the form of the work adjustment person-environment fit theory. To expand the research on generational differences and leadership, I specify, in Table 1, research questions that can be used for new research.

The first limitation for this study is that it is based on a non-exhaustive leadership literature. The second limitation is that the findings may not apply to emerging or

developing countries as the literature used are from western publications. Future research should therefore include quantitative and qualitative data from additional cultural contexts. Thirdly, it was beyond the scope of this paper to consider gender differences in perceived and actual leadership competences, a challenge that remains to be undertaken across generational groups in future studies.

10 Managerial application

With the younger generation in the workforce, managers in organisations have the challenge of getting younger and older generations to collaborate effectively, avoid intergenerational conflicts and tense work environments, and facilitate recruiting and retaining talented young workers. Scholars and mainstream media have recommended that managers and organisations adapt their leadership approach, work values, and HR practices and policies to the younger generation, based on the assumption that, as a generation cohort, they have different values, expectations, and preferences than the older generations.

However, this review reveals that in this fast-changing environment, older and young generations are much more similar than different on their views on the needed competencies for leadership in the 21st century, which has significant impact for mangers.

First, having so many similarities between younger and older generations leads to arguing that practitioners should avoid stereotyping generations, designing solutions, and implementing HR practices and policies that favour one generation over another. They should focus on appointing leadership roles professionals that display the set of required leadership competencies identified in this study. Such leaders will be fit for our fast-changing world, well-equipped to manage a multi-generational workforce, and able to maintain an agreeable work environment. For example, the review shows that the collaborative leadership styles and the ability to change a leadership style to the context or to people are seen by younger and older generations as essential competencies in the 21st century.

Second, practitioners could use the listed required leadership competencies presented in this review to change the culture, the HR practices and policies in their organisations. It could be beneficial not only to attract and retain younger professionals but also older professionals willing to join organisations where they believe leaders are capable and competent in the 21st century environment. For instance, practitioners can tie part of leaders' compensation to their ability to demonstrated in the job the needed competencies for leadership in the 21st century. The list of competencies could also be useful during performance appraisal so as to identify area of development and to tailor training programs to help aspiring managers and current managers develop the competencies they are missing. Practitioners could also incorporate them in the guiding principles or their organisations' as shared values for all and organisation culture change seminars for all employees.

Third, a few differences exist between younger and older generations. Indeed, the older generations argued in favour of key competencies that younger generations do not mention in the review. These competencies are: customer centric, digital competence, digital transformational business models, sustainable business models, crisis management and financialisation of the economy. As an example, the leadership literature often

mentions that younger generations are very savvy with new information communication technologies (Bresman, 2015). However, the review shows that they still need to learn how to use these new technologies to improve organisations' business models, value proposition and operations. This insight is useful for practitioners to avoid relying on the new technologies' capabilities of the young generation and to make sure that a specific training program is developed to help young professionals to further develop digital and digital transformation competencies. The training program could be done in the form of mentoring, or classic on-site or online training.

Fourth, the list of the required leadership competencies can be very useful to help professionals manage their careers and improve their employability because they have a better understanding of what is expected from them to be leaders adapted to the current time and can engage in training to bridge the gap with the competencies they are missing.

Fifth, the study can be used in academia for recruiting and the identified competencies can be incorporated in current curricula so as to develop a workforce that can respond to organisations' needs in our current fast changing environment.

Sixth, scholars have warned of the persistence of stereotypes and misunderstandings between older and younger professionals that could lead to generational conflicts in the work place (Forastero et al., 2018). In light of the significant similarities in the expected 21st century leadership competencies, managers could organise intergroup seminars with a series of activities by applying the intergroup contact methodology designed by Pettigrew (1998). The intergroup contact approach is proven to be successful in fighting stereotypes, bias, and discrimination. Its successful application depends on the integration of 6 fundamental principles during activities: younger and older generations should have equal status, share common goals, be placed in a situation of cooperation, sanctions should be applied when workers are reluctant to participate or to collaborate, time for cross-friendships should be made, and new behaviours and attitudes rewarded.

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