Jakub Bodnar

e-mail: bod.jakub@gmail.com

Wroclaw University of Economics and Business

Relation between Leadership Style and Personality Type of Zillenials, Based on The Myers-Briggs Model

Abstract: The paper examines the relationship between leadership styles and personality types among Zillenials, a microgeneration bridging Millennials and Generation Z. The primary goal is to determine whether a dominant personality type exists among Zillenials and to assess the presence of different leadership styles in their preferences. Additionally, the study explores whether individuals with similar personality traits tend to favour the same leadership style. To address these objectives, an online survey was conducted, which included demographic questions, statements about leadership styles rated on a Likert scale, and an externally sourced personality test based on the MBTI model. The findings suggest that leadership style preferences align more closely with generational characteristics than specific personality types. Transformational leadership emerged as the most preferred, while Autocratic and Laissez-faire styles received minimal support. The most common personality type identified was INFP, reinforcing Zillenials' emphasis on inclusivity, authenticity, and personal values. These insights contribute to understanding how personality and generational traits influence workplace dynamics, offering valuable implications for leadership development and organizational strategies.

Keywords: leadership style, personality type, Myers-Briggs, Zillenials

1. Introduction

This research examines the relationship between leadership styles and employee personality types, focusing on Zillenials, the microgeneration between Millennials and Gen Z. They are just entering the job market, so understanding them could be crucial to creating optimal future work environment for them. The study explores how personality type influences preferred leadership styles and aims to predict optimal leader-employee interactions. Through a theoretical analysis of leadership

styles, personality deconstruction, and a quantitative survey, the research seeks to identify dominant tendencies among Zillenials and the potential correlation between leadership preferences and personality traits to enhance collaboration and productivity.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Leadership Styles

Leadership is commonly defined as "the job of being in control of a group, country, or situation" (Cambridge University, n.d. b), or more broadly as "a process whereby an individual (leader) influences a group to achieve a common goal" (Cote, 2022). However, this process is more complex than these definitions suggest. To understand leadership better, it is essential to distinguish between styles, as each leader has a unique approach. This work focuses on six styles: transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, autocratic, democratic, and adaptive.

Transformational leadership. The main characteristic these leaders are that the seek to inspire their followers, inspire them to modify the beliefs and attitudes of the employees. They provide the employees with a vision and motivate them to achieve specific goals (Arenas, 2017). These goals relate to self-esteem and are often linked to higher needs. Leaders' efforts are aimed at enabling employees to reach their full potential. Four precise behaviours of transformational leader can be distinguished:

- Idealized influence – transformational leaders act in ways that depicts them as role models to the people, who trust and respect them. The leader is accountable when it comes to high standards of ethical and moral conduct. Resolves to the power only in the necessity (Avolio & Bass, 2002).
- Inspirational motivation – this behaviour concerns the way leaders inspire and motivate those around them by challenging and giving meaning to their work, strengthening team spirit. They set clear targets, commit to shared goals, and act in accordance with the organization's vision (Avolio & Bass, 2002). Leaders use three key triggers: motivation, evocation and transcendence. These are conveyed through effective communication, metaphors, vibrant rhetoric, and visionary thinking (Stewart, 2006).
- Intellectual stimulation is vital for leaders to foster innovation and creativity. They challenge assumptions, seek new solutions, and break traditional thinking patterns. A safe space for ideas, where mistakes are not criticized and diverse ideas are welcomed, is essential. Solutions are collaborative, and alternative approaches are embraced (Avolio & Bass, 2002). Key actions promoting intellectual stimulation include re-examining assumptions, seeking diverse perspectives, suggesting new methods, and rethinking previously unquestioned ideas (Arenas, 2017).

- Individualized consideration involves leaders acting as coaches or mentors, fostering learning and creating a supportive environment. Adjusting their approach, such as varying encouragement, autonomy, standards, or task structure, is key to this behaviour (Avolio & Bass, 2002).

Transactional leadership. This style was introduced together with the previously mentioned transformational style, mainly as an opposition. This type of leadership "is based on assumption that subordinates and systems work better under a clear chain of command" (Tavanti, 2007 p. 166) and occurs when the parties want to exchange valuable things that, in addition to punishment, are the main source of motivation, e.g. additional financial resources, support or perhaps some psychological values (Tavanti, 2007). As in previous case, the following dimensions of this leadership can be distinguished:

- Contingent reward that provides followers with resource and motivation to fulfil their obligations. The key aspect is clarification of effort-reward relationship. In the process, requirements are exchanged of and the expected reward is clarified when the required level of effort and performance is achieved (Camps & Torres, 2010).
- Management by-exception active – leader keeps checking on his followers' performance and gives directions when necessary. With a broader perspective the leader helps reduce deviations and errors by bringing them to the attention of employees as they occur (Hasija, 2019).
- Management by-exception passive – the leader usually intervenes only when standards are broken or failure appears (Arenas, 2017).

Laissez-faire leadership style translates to 'hands-off' and represents the absence of active leadership. It is characterized by leaders who avoid engagement, fail to address organizational issues, and often skip meetings and responsibilities (Avolio & Bass, 2002). It can be viewed negatively, citing a lack of positive input. However, laissez-faire can also be seen as a form of respect, allowing subordinates autonomy in decision-making and fostering an environment of free expression and innovation. This non-involvement may be strategic, enabling introverted leaders to thrive in dynamic settings, especially with proactive workers, encouraging collaborative processes and reducing bureaucracy (Yang, 2015). **Autocratic leadership** centralizes decision-making, limits staff input, and maintains distance from subordinates. While leaders may occasionally seek input, they dictate methods, assume full responsibility, and expect strict obedience, sometimes resorting to threats or punishment. This lack of autonomy can stifle innovation and hinder long-term development. Autocratic leadership is effective for short-term issues or when quick decisions are needed, particularly in unstable groups or under knowledgeable leaders. However, over time, it may lead to high turnover, absenteeism, and reduced creativity, harming morale and growth. Inclusive HR practices are essential to counteract these drawbacks (Chukwusa, 2019).

Democratic leadership is about group decision-making, active group members involvement and honest praise and criticism (Gastill, 1994). The leader focuses on giving useful information to the members or on broadening their knowledge. It plays important role in stimulating group discussion and decisions (Choi, 2007). Three primary functions of this leadership can be distinguished:

- Distributing responsibility aims at maximizing involvement and participation by spreading responsibility among team members. Even if one person is formally in charge, democratic leadership, through shared responsibility, reduces that perception (Choi, 2007).
- Empowerment is a way to foster development, such as decision-making skills, by encouraging group members to take responsibility. The leader plays a crucial role in supporting this development both directly and indirectly. Ultimately, this evolution can transform members from followers into leaders themselves (Gastill, 1994).
- Aiding deliberation. Deliberation, defined as "careful thought or discussion before a decision" (Cambridge University, n.d. a) is key to the democratic process. It thrives on constructive participation, facilitation, and healthy relationships. Constructive participation involves problem-solving, analysing, and gathering diverse viewpoints to find the best solution. Facilitation guides the group's thinking, reduces distractions, and clarifies complex ideas. Maintaining positive relationships is crucial, as it ensures a safe space for open discussion and effective deliberation (Gastill, 1994).

2.2. Personality Types

According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), "personality refers to the enduring traits and behaviours that define a person's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, values, and emotional patterns".

Various theories attempt to explain personality by categorising it through models like the Big Five (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism), the HEXACO model, or DISC framework (Frolova & Mahmood, 2019). This work focuses on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) due to its widespread use in professional and self-development settings. While not the most scientifically supported, it offers practical insights, especially in business and personal growth. MBTI is a model derived from Jung's theory of psychological types. The tool focuses on four major areas in the form of dichotomy based on respondents self-reported behaviour, preferences, and value judgments. The model was first developed by Katharine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers in 1942 (Stricker & Ross, 1962). The first and most important dimension of the Myers-Briggs model consists of the following.

- Extraversion-Introversion (E-I). Extraverts focus on the external world of people and things, while introverts turn inward, focusing on ideas and concepts. Accor-

ding to Jung, extraversion is a positive movement toward objects, while intro-version moves away from them.

- Sensing-Intuition (S-N) relates to how information is processed. Sensors focus on concrete details and present facts, while intuitive types explore possibilities, patterns, and future potential. The third pair,
- Thinking-Feeling (T-F), concerns decision-making. Thinkers rely on logic and objective facts, while feelers prioritise values, empathy, and personal considerations
- Judging-Perceiving (J-P), contrasts a preference for stru cture and planning (Judging) with a flexible, open-ended approach (Perceiving), allowing for adaptability to new information (Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d. a).

The first letter (E or I) combines with the mental processes (S-N, T-F) to create the Dominant Process, which is the most developed and comfortable for individuals, forming the core of their personality (Myers & Briggs Foundation, n.d. b). This leads to eight dominant processes (Haas & Hunziker, 2006):

- **Extraverted Sensing (ESTP/ESFP):** people preferring this type of process focus on real-time data and experiences, drawing information from their environment. They thrive on sensory stimulation and practical action, excelling in hands-on tasks.
- **Introverted Sensing (ISTJ/ISFJ):** people representing this kind of process use detailed memories of past experiences to navigate current challenges. They bring with them structure, calmness, and valuable lessons from the past, which makes them reliable in professional environments.
- **Extraverted Intuition (ENFP/ENTP):** people using this process explore possibilities, connections, and patterns, often brainstorming and creating innovative ideas. They are great team players who can unite different perspectives.
- **Introverted Intuition (INFJ/INTJ):** people preferring this kind of process specialize in visionary thinking and internal brainstorming. Although the process can be difficult to explain, they excel at conceptualizing complex ideas.
- **Extraverted Thinking (ESTJ/ENTJ):** these people apply logic through external rules and try to organize their environment. They are strong decision-makers who thrive in structured settings but prefer established systems over innovation.
- **Introverted Thinking (ISTP/INTP):** people using this kind of process focus on internal logic and precision, solving problems systematically. They prioritise objective analysis and stability, often rethinking established ideas.
- **Extraverted Feeling (ESFJ/ENFJ):** people preferring this type of process harmonize with others by fostering interpersonal values and relationships, emphasising the well-being of the group and understanding social norms.
- **Introverted Feeling (ISFP/INFP):** representatives of this kind of process strive for inner harmony aligned with personal values, valuing empathy and sensitivity. They prefer one-on-one relationships, helping others with authenticity, patience, and sincerity.

MBTI utility and scientific validation. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is widely used, with around two million tests administered annually, especially by Fortune 100 companies for team development and career planning (Stein & Swan, 2019). Research links MBTI types to career and academic success, such as ESFJs excelling in psychiatry and INFJs being common at Harvard (Diah Sari & Bashori, 2020). However, scientific validation of MBTI is limited. Its reliance on Jungian theory and anecdotal evidence lacks empirical support. The model's assumption of fixed preferences is questioned, as personality traits can evolve due to culture or life experiences. Additionally, the MBTI's dichotomies, especially Thinking-Feeling, often overlap, and its self-reported data may lead to inaccurate results. Despite these issues, MBTI remains useful for casual self-exploration but should not be relied upon for precise predictions (Stein & Swan, 2019).

2.3. Zillenials

Zillenials, born between 1995 and 2006, are entering the job market, often while still studying or right after graduation (Suresh, 2022). Zillenials are tech-savvy, value teamwork (Suresh, 2022), and benefit from training and knowledge-sharing with older peers. Seeking development and rapid career progression, they strive for managerial positions, though they are sometimes considered to lack essential business skills. While ambitious, Zillenials prioritise work-life balance and prefer flexible, relaxed environments. Companies adapt to meeting their needs, recognising Zillenials as the future workforce eager to do meaningful work in their own way (Moffet et al., 2023).

3. Research Design

The goal of the research in general is to deepen the understanding of the behaviours of the newest generation on the job market. Those mostly students, working part-time or having their first full-time job, bring new approach to the subject of working. The microgeneration called Zillenials probably brings necessity of adjustment in the working environment.

Research questions are the following.

RQ1: *Is there a dominant personality type or dominant function in the target group?* In the example of Harvard students (60), being rather specific group, one type of personality was the most common, so the goal of this research is to check whether it is the same for Zillenials group. In the more restrictive approach, there would be two most common types with fairly similar characteristics.

RQ2: *Are all the leadership styles relevantly present in the preferences of the target group?* Relevant means, whether each of the five leading styles will have some group of supporters. Minimal significant group of supporters would be about 10-15% of all respondents.

RQ3: *Are the leadership style preferences uniformly distributed among particular personality types or dominant functions?* If the results of the personality type test contain similar characteristics, the preferred leadership style would be the same.

Questionnaire design. The survey had two main components: a questionnaire assessing leadership style preferences and a personality test based on the MBTI model. Leadership preferences were measured using a Likert scale, with average scores determining the dominant style. The MBTI test included 60 statements scored on a 7-point scale, covering the dichotomies of Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving 16Personalities (n.d.). Responses identified one of 16 personality types, presented with nicknames to simplify interpretation.

Demographic data such as age, sex, residence, education, and employment status ("studying", "working and studying", "working", or "unemployed") provided the context for linking leadership preferences to personality traits. The survey was distributed online via social media and student forums to reach a diverse audience.

As a research sampling method, non-probability sampling was used, it could be described as a combination of voluntary response and snowball sampling. The respondents were being searched through students forums on social media. Additionally, they were encouraged to share the survey with their peers.

Leadership styles items that were rated in the survey

Transformational Leadership (Jung & Sosik, 2002, pp. 331, 332):
- I prefer when my team leaders spend time teaching and coaching team members.
- It is important to have strong sense of purpose specified by my team leaders.
- It is important to have collective sense of mission created by my team leaders.
- I find it valuable that my team leaders set high standards.

Transactional Leadership (Mekonnen & Bayissa, 2023):
- I prefer when my team leader makes it clear what can be expected when performance goals are achieved.
- I find it valuable when my team leader expresses satisfaction when expectations are met.
- I prefer when my team leaders concentrate their full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures.
- I find it important that my team leaders provide the team member with assistance in exchange for their effort.

Laissez-faire leadership (Skogstad et al., 2007, p. 84):
- I prefer when my team leaders avoid telling me how to perform my job.
- It is better when my team leaders steer away from showing concerns about work's results.
- I prefer when my team leaders avoid making decisions.

- I believe it is good practice for my team leaders to postpone answering urgent questions.
  Autocratic leadership (Chukwusa, 2019; Syaiful Baharee Jaafar et al., 2021):
- I prefer not to be involved in decision-making process.
- I prefer when my team leaders tell me exactly what I must do and how it should be done.
- I tend to focus on team leaders' orders, and I am reluctant to discuss the topic.
- I prefer when decisions are made quickly, and efficiency is prioritised than building consensus.
  Democratic leadership (own work):
- It is crucial for me to be involved in decision-making process.
- I prefer when my team leaders delegate tasks to me and I have some degree of autonomy in executing my them.
- I prefer when team leaders foster collaboration and involvement.
- I prefer when consensus is sought.

4. Research Results

To address the first research question, as presented in Tab. 1, INFP emerged as the dominant personality type, representing 17% of respondents. This single type surpassed the combined representation of any dominant function pair. Interestingly, the Introverted Feeling function, part of INFP's profile, had no independent representation. The next most common functions, Extraverted and Introverted Intuition, tied at 16%.

Overall, the research sample leaned strongly toward Intuition, with 70% (48 of 69 respondents) favouring this dichotomy. The Thinking-Feeling pair also showed diversity, with 61% identifying as Feeling types, emphasising empathy and interpersonal connections. The remaining pairs showed minor differences, indicating no significant inequalities.

The prevalent mental process, "Possibilities for people", highlights a group preference for fostering relationships, encouraging personal growth, and creating inclusive, welcoming environments. This is in accordance with results of the research by Widawska (2021, p. 361), that generally the inclusiveness and overall well-being is crucial for them, but in the end the nuances are what distinguish them from two neighbouring generations – Millennials and Generation Z.

The answer to the second research question: as presented in Tab. 2, not all leadership styles are equally or relevantly represented in the preferences of the target group. Transformational leadership dominates, with 56% of respondents favouring it and the highest average score of 4.21/5. Its low standard deviation suggests consistency in preferences across respondents. Democratic (23%) and Transactional (19%) leadership styles follow, though with different patterns.

Table 1. Personality types of respondents

No.	Answer	General	
		n	%
1	ENTP	5	7
2	ESFJ	4	6
3	ISFP	0	0
4	INFJ	8	12
5	INFP	12	17
6	ESFP	1	1
7	INTJ	3	4
8	ENFJ	5	7
9	ISTP	2	3
10	ESTJ	3	4
11	ESTP	3	4
12	ISTJ	2	3
13	ENTJ	6	9
14	ENFP	6	9
15	INTP	3	4
16	ISFJ	6	9

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2. Appearances of leadership style as dominant for the respondents

No.	Leadership style	*n* = 69	%
1	Transformational	39	56
2	Transactional	13	19
3	Laissez-faire	0	0
4	Autocratic	2	3
5	Democratic	16	23

Source: own elaboration.

Democratic leadership showed balanced results across its components but was not as critical to respondents, as indicated by its higher standard deviation. Transactional leadership, however, showed strong support for specific behaviours, particularly clarity and reward systems, indicating these are essential to Zillenials.

Laissez-faire and Autocratic leadership styles were the least preferred, with 0% and 2% dominance, respectively. While some Laissez-faire behaviours like granting autonomy were appealing, other aspects were rated poorly. Similarly, while specific

Autocratic behaviours like clear directions were valued, the style overall had low appeal, with preferences showing high variability.

In conclusion, not all styles are equally relevant. However, elements from less favoured styles, such as autonomy from Laissez-faire and clarity from Autocratic, could be integrated into adaptive leadership approaches to better meet employee needs.

The third question: leadership style preferences are not uniform across personality types, despite the dominance of Transformational leadership overall. No type with more than two representatives exhibited consistent preferences. For example, ISFJ respondents were mostly aligned with Transformational leadership, except one, while ENFJs showed 80% preference for Transformational and one for Democratic leadership.

Some assumptions were partially supported. For instance, Extraversion appeared linked to Transformational leadership in five out of eight cases, aligning with expectations. Similarly, the Democratic style was observed among introverted types, notably INFPs, whose traits as 'Mediators' align with fostering inclusion and understanding.

However, other assumptions were not confirmed. Sensing and Thinking types did not consistently prefer Transactional leadership, with only one ESTP showing this tendency. Autocratic leadership was rarely favoured and showed no consistent correlation with Judging types. Laissez-faire also showed weak and inconsistent patterns.

Overall, preferences varied significantly, reflecting a general tendency toward Intuition and Feeling over other traits. Low scores for Autocratic and Laissez-faire styles suggest these are less desirable across types.

5.   Conclusions and Recommendations

Psychology plays a vital role in our lives, especially in the workplace, where understanding psychological models can significantly improve dynamics. Utilising personality insights improves communication and team building, as grouping complementary types fosters collaboration and success. Balanced teams outperform homogeneous ones, as different types excel in distinct tasks. The MBTI framework highlights strengths and areas for growth. Self-awareness allows individuals to harness their strengths and address weaker traits, boosting confidence and career direction. Employers can use this knowledge to align roles with employees' capabilities, supporting development. Generational traits also shape workplace interactions. Zillenials, represented by the dominant INFP type in this study, value empathy, inclusion, and authenticity. They thrive in collaborative environments where their voices are heard, and genuine relationships are prioritised. Their preference for intuition (70%) and feeling (61%) aligns with these characteristics, underscoring

their inclination toward inclusiveness. Leadership preferences reflect this ethos. Transformational, transactional, and democratic styles dominate, emphasizing inspiration, efficiency, and active participation. However, certain elements of less popular styles, like autonomy from laissez-faire or clear directives from autocratic, also resonate. The best approach may be adaptive leadership, combining preferred traits from multiple styles to suit diverse team needs. This flexibility ensures optimal team performance by tailoring leadership to varied preferences. The results cannot be generalised to the entire population, because the sample size was too small, and sampling method is unsuitable for making observations for the entire population.

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Relacja między stylem przywództwa a typem osobowości Zillenialsów na podstawie modelu Myers-Briggs

Streszczenie: Autor analizuje relację pomiędzy stylami przywództwa a typami osobowości wśród Zillenialsów – mikropokolenia łączącego Millenialsów i Pokolenie Z. Głównymi celami badania są ustalenie, czy wśród Zillenialsów dominuje określony typ osobowości, oraz ocena, czy preferencje dotyczące stylów przywództwa są równomiernie rozłożone. Ponadto badanie ma na celu sprawdzenie, czy osoby o podobnych zestawach cech osobowości skłaniają się ku tym samym stylom przywództwa. W celu uzyskania odpowiedzi na te pytania przeprowadzono ankietę internetową, która obejmowała pytania demograficzne, ocenę stylów przywództwa w skali Likerta oraz zewnętrzny test osobowości oparty na modelu MBTI. Wyniki wskazują, że style przywództwa mogą być silniej powiązane z ogólną charakterystyką pokolenia niż z konkretnym typem osobowości. Najczęściej wybieranym stylem

okazało się przywództwo transformacyjne, podczas gdy style autokratyczny i leseferystyczny cieszyły się minimalnym poparciem. Najczęściej występującym typem osobowości wśród respondentów był INFP, co podkreśla znaczenie inkluzywności, autentyczności i wartości osobistych dla Zillenialsów. Uzyskane wyniki pozwalają lepiej zrozumieć, w jaki sposób cechy osobowości i uwarunkowania pokoleniowe wpływają na dynamikę środowiska pracy, dostarczając cennych wskazówek dla rozwoju przywództwa i strategii organizacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: styl zarządzania, typ osobowości, Myers-Briggs, Zillenialsi