A Millennial Leader's Behavior in the Organization:
A Descriptive Case Study

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Abstract – *Millennials are said to be the most misunderstood generation, with numerous negative stereotypes attached to them, especially in the workplace. Thus, this paper explored on millennial leader's work life in two levels of analysis of organizational behavior: individual and group. In the individual level, the subject's personality, his perception on generational differences, job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment were described. The subject's leadership style based on his Myer Brigg's personality type, what he thinks and what his colleagues think were also discussed. In the group level, teamwork, communication with his colleagues and conflict were also described. The subject is a millennial but feels that he worked like a veteran. He has an ESFJ personality, and he is satisfied with his job. Accessible location, benefits and security and his salary make him motivated. He sees himself retiring in the institution he is working for. He stays because of continuance commitment which means he is staying in the company because may not find a better job outside his current institution. considers himself as a leader by accident and uses democratic and laissez faire styles of leadership. One of the best things about him according to his subordinates is that he empowers his faculty members as he delegates tasks and gives them the freedom to decide. He hates politics, as well as conflict. His leadership style reflects what he wants to see in his leader. Based on the results, it can be deciphered that human behavior is indeed not based on age or generation.*

Keywords – human behavior in organization, organizational behavior, case study, millennials, leadership, job satisfaction, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Organizational behavior (OB) is a "field of study devoted to recognizing, explaining, and eventually developing the attitudes and behaviors of people (individual and group) within organizations" [1]. This definition of OB is also in accordance to Robbins & Judge's [2] as a field of study that "investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behavior within organizations, for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization's effectiveness". There are three levels of analysis in OB, individual, group and organizational. Schneider as cited Heath & Sitkin [3], discusses that the field of organizational behavior (OB) has emerged from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, political science, and economics. But, OB is primarily known with psychology concepts particularly in the individual level. It was argued that the current researches and definitions are limited only to the behavior and attributes of individuals and groups instead of focusing on the organizational aspects of OB. They termed it as "micro-OB". [3]

In this study, the researcher will focus on the work life of a millennial (born 1985) department head in a university, particularly his individual behavior inside the organization (individual level) and with his department (group level). This research will be limited to selected concepts per level of analysis.

In the individual level, the researcher will focus on personality, his perception on generational differences, job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment. Both an individual and leadership concept, the subject's leadership style based on his Myer Brigg's personality type, what he thinks and

what his colleagues think will be discussed. In the group level, teamwork, communication with his colleagues and conflict will be tackled.

SUBJECT'S BASIC INFORMATION

The main subject of this case study is a male of 31 years of age. All throughout the study, he will be called Peter. He is the fourth among five siblings but he is the first son in their family that is why, he was named after his father. He is married with three children. He is a department head in one of the undergraduate programs in a university. He's working for the institution for 10 years. Although teaching is not his first job, he considers it as his first formal job since his previous experiences before applying in the university are merely sidelines. He has been serving as the head of their department for two years. He is leading 12 people in their department, seven (7) of which are older than him. He is a millennial but he believes that he works like a veteran.

OBJECTIVES THE STUDY

The researcher aimed to describe the subject's individual behavior in terms of:

- a. personality;
- b. perception on generational differences;
- c. job satisfaction;
- d. motivation;
- e. organizational commitment
2. Subject's leadership style
   - a. according to his personality (Myer-Briggs Personality Type);
   - b. according to him;
   - c. according to his colleagues
3. His relationship, behavior & perception towards his department (team) in terms of:
   - a. level of teamwork;
   - b. communication;
   - c. conflict
4. Possible connections of the previous factors with each other

5. Possible connections of him being a millennial to his behavior inside the organization.

METHODOLOGY / METHODS

This paper is a qualitative research, specifically a descriptive case study of the behavior of leader/ a department head in a university. Case studies use "in-depth longitudinal examination of a single case or event" [4] that is why, it is the most appropriate methodology to use. In order to gather data, the researcher used unstructured interview and is conducted through an informal way, just merely normal conversations. At the same time, the subject was asked to answer some questionnaires to determine his personality type (Myer Brigg's), leadership style, level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. To validate the interview and questionnaires, his colleagues were also shortly interviewed individually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS

Individual Level
Personality: ESFJ type

Peter was asked to describe the three sides of his personality: what others know about who he is, what he perceives himself and his ideal personality. He believes that people perceive him as industrious and the happy-type person. The researchers also asked his colleagues about what they think about him and they all answered that Peter is the joker of the group. They collectively said that he is one of the jolliest and silliest in the university. When asked about this, he said that he does not know where it came, but definitely it's not hereditary since his parents are the serious type of persons.

If other people think that he is the industrious and happy-go-lucky type of person, he perceives otherwise. He thinks that he is lazy and serious. He did not deny that he is a joker, but he believes that the happiest persons are actually the ones who always think the deepest. According to him, the jokes are the defense

mechanisms of happy people in dealing with life's problems.

When asked about his ideal personality, he paused a bit, and he told the researcher that he does not have one. Yet, he mentioned two of his colleagues, saying that he wants to be as intelligent and as meticulous as them.

To verify these, Peter was asked to answer the Myer Brigg's Personality Test. The results showed that he is an Extraverted-Sensing-Feeling-Judging (ESFJ) type of person. Immediately after computing for the results, the researcher showed the full interpretation of ESFJ. He was amused since he said that he was totally the one being described. In general, ESFJs are people persons as they love mingling with people. Peter particularly loved the interpretation, "ESFJ's who have had the benefit of being raised and surrounded by a strong value system that is ethical and centered around genuine goodness will most likely be the kindest, most generous souls who will gladly give you the shirt off of their back without a second thought. [20]"

Generational Differences: A Millennials' Perspective

Peter teaches human behavior in organizations to second year students. When asked about individual differences, he reiterated the differences between generations that influences his leadership style. Seven of his subordinates are older than him, thus belonging to either the Gen X (born 1965-1980, currently 52-37) or the Baby Boomer Generation (born 1964-1946, currently 53-71) [5]. The remaining five of his subordinates are millennials.

The generational theory was popularized by Neil Howe and William Strauss in the 1990s in their book "Generations". The concept of generations may sometimes be controversial in nature, because "pop psychologists" as he terms it, overused these generation labels. Additionally, over the years, there are no studies to establish commonly accepted definitions of what generational theory is all about [6].

For the past years, the term millennial has been given imprecise and inconsistent definitions. In 1991, the pair coined the term "Millennials" to describe the generation born between 1982 and roughly 2005 [7]. In their book Generations (1991), people who were born between 1982 and 2000 can be called millennials. Most of the studies looked upon do not coincide with this definition. Millennial generation or Generation Y or Gen Y is defined as people born between 1981 and 1997 [8] & they were born between 1982 and 2000. In Bruce Tulgan's book Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage the Millennials, he defined two waves of millennials. The first wave or Generation Y were born from 1978 to 1989 while the second wave of millennials (Generation Z) were born 1990 to 2000. David Stillman defines Millennials as people born between 1980 and 1994. The people born from 1995-2012 were given a Generation Z label [9]. On the other hand, PricewaterhouseCoopers [10] defined millennials as the people born between 1980 and 2000.

Singal [11] argues that not all millennials possess the stereotypes given to them. This is because of the large range of ages defined as millennial. He defined two categories of millennials, the old and the new/young millennials. According to him, old millennials are those who were born around 1988 or earlier and they are probably 29 or older today) and young millennials were born around 1989 or later. These young millennials are said to be the "millennial generation" characterized as techy-savvy (millennial term for technology and social media addicts), entitled and the like.

Based this definition of millennial, Peter is an old millennial since he was born in 1985. He was familiar about these stereotypes given to millennials. He is a millennial but he said that he feels that he worked like a veteran. He actually agreed that most, if not all, carries these stereotypes. Millennials according to him are idealistic, and self-entitled. If they work hard, they immediately look for the results. For them, working hard should always have a good result. If they do not get what they expect, they become demotivated easily. He also believes that maybe he is an old millennial that does not possess these characteristics. On the positive side, new millennials for him are much competent than

previous generations since they are exposed to technology, which is advanced. Since he is just 32 years old with majority of colleagues who are older than him, he said that millennials are easy to follow orders/more obedient than others. But then, millennials are described by him as lax workers.

Job Satisfaction: 6/10

One of the most common definitions for job satisfaction is it is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" [12] (p. 1304). Another author mentioned that this term can also be defined as the people's assessments about the extent they like (job satisfaction) or dislike about their jobs (dissatisfaction) [13]. Thus, these definitions point out to the concept of job satisfaction a personal judgment of one person towards his or her job. Job satisfaction is also defined as the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs [14]. According to them, it is a person's attitude or emotions in response to its tasks and also the physical and social conditions in their workplace. This definition also resembles Armstrong's [15] definition of job satisfaction as attitude and feelings people have about their job. He also emphasizes that this feeling or attitude is either positive or negative. Positive and favorable attitudes mean job satisfaction and negative and unfavorable attitudes towards the jobs means dissatisfaction.

In contrary to the notion that motivation is the same as job satisfaction, Mullins as cited in Aziri [16] argues that the job satisfaction, when compared to the motivation, is more of an attitude or an internal state towards his/her job. This is also in support to the previous definition that job satisfaction is an attitude or a feeling.

On the other hand, several authors point out that job satisfaction is a matter of expectations that are met such being contented to the rewards given [16]. Hoppock's as cited by the same author [16] defines it not just a psychological state (such as feeling) but also a combination with physiological and environmental circumstances including both external and internal factors.

The interviewer asked him to rate his level of job satisfaction from 1-10, 10 being the highest. He rated himself 6. According to him, if the researcher asks him again tomorrow, his answer may be different. That time he rated his stress level as 8/10 because of too much work.

The researcher asked Peter to answer a questionnaire, by classifying each job satisfaction factor from very unimportant to very important. Peter identified these factors as very important: respectful treatment of all employees at all levels, job security, communication between employees and senior management, management's recognition of employee job performance, teamwork within department/business unit, meaningfulness of job, relationships with co-workers, teamwork between departments/business units, communication between departments/business units and organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility. With exactly same factors, Peter was asked to rate his satisfaction of five-point-Likert Scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. He rated very satisfied with organization's financial stability only. His individual mean is 3.63 which means he is between neutral and somewhat satisfied. It is important to note that he rated 10 factors as very important but then he rated only one factors as very satisfied.

Motivation: Money is a good motivator but…

Motivation as the employee's willingness to perform something [17]. It is what drives people to act and accomplish. When asked what is keeping him motivated to work in the university, he simply said that he does not want to be called lazy or irresponsible. He loves his family especially his three kids that is why he is working hard for them. He admitted, that there are times when his only motivation to go to school is the chance to talk to his friends who can hear his rants about life particularly about work. At home, his wife hears him out but he feels that she cannot understand him fully since they are not working on the same organization. Also, he tells the researchers that sometimes, he just wants to go to university to play basketball with his workmates. As an instructor, what

keeps him going is seeing the students graduate every year with the feeling of pride that they are his students.

Peter listed three more things that motivates him: (1) Accessible location (2) Benefits/stability/job security (3) Salary. His home is 20-30 minutes away from the university that is why, he finds it comfortable. According to him, his security towards his job and the benefits given by the university, as a government institution is already enough him to stay. The third one is salary. According to him, money is a good motivator, but it is not everything. When asked about the three things that make or may make him demotivated, he thought a little longer than usual. He told the interviewer but his demotivator will never be on his immediate supervisor or boss. If he chooses to leave, the main reason will be finding 'greener pasture' or somewhere that may give him better benefits than his current job.

Despite these, he sees himself still working in the university for the rest of his life. At his young age, it seems that he has already achieved the highest need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is self-actualization. But, he said that, this is correct, but maybe he is just in the first level of activating that need. When asked to rank the four needs according to McClelland, he prioritizes the need for affiliation, first. This is in accordance with his personality of being a people person. His least priority is power.

Organizational Commitment: Seeing himself retiring in his current institution

There are three kinds of organizational commitment, namely the affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. An employee has an Affective commitment if he / she stays because of an emotional attachment or positive emotions felt in the organization. Continuance commitment on the other hand, is basically staying inside the company because he/she cannot afford to leave. This may be considering the costs associated with leaving the company such as the anxiety that the employee cannot find any other job when he leaves. And the third one is normative commitment where the employee stays for moral

or ethical reason or a feeling of obligation to stay. This may be a sense of debt or "*utang na loob*" as they say, to his or her co-worker or to the company itself [17, 18].

In order to know what type or commitment he has, Peter was asked to answer a questionnaire, adapted from Allen & Meyer [19]. The results showed that Peter stays in the company because of continuance commitment which means he is staying in the company because may not find a better job outside his current institution. The researcher discussed with Peter about this and he agreed that it is true. Although he is just 31 years old, he said that he is too old to find a company that will accept him. It is expected of him that he already established his career given his age.

Leadership Style
A Leader by Accident: His POV

Peter considers himself as a leader by accident. He was forced to become a department head because no one wants to get the position. He said that he was unprepared that time, but his predecessor was given a university designation so he had no choice but to do the responsibilities of a head.

Leadership is defined by as the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals [2]. In competitive situations, leadership spells the difference between success and failure. That's why, leadership style is important to know how a leader reacts or acts towards guiding and influencing his subordinates [17].

The researcher asked Peter what is his leadership style. He said that he is not strict and imposing. He is a lenient/lax type of leader. His style is basically reflected on the type of leader he also looks for in a leader. As he further explains his style, he said that a he does not feel the need to be coercive. If his subordinates follow him, it is a sign of respect. According to him, he is a democratic type of leader where everyone is encouraged to suggest and participate in decision making. Definitely, he cannot consider himself as an autocratic leader. His ideal leader is the one who compromises himself for the common good. An ideal leader for him is one who earns the respect of his

subordinates. Along the interview, he opened that he already signified his intention of not renewing his designation as department head. If he would in any way, it only means he was forced to. When asked why, he said he wanted to look at the perspective of a plain faculty so when he goes back, since he's not closing doors to headship, he knows what to improve in himself.

The researcher asked Peter to answer three questionnaires of what type of leader is he. The first two questionnaires determined if he is a democratic, autocratic, laissez fair or situational leader. The third questionnaire determine if his leadership tendency, if he is a facilitating, coaching, delegating or directing leader.

According to the first questionnaire, his most dominant style is democratic and the next dominant style is laissez faire. This is in accordance to what he thinks his style. In the second questionnaire answered, results show that Peter is a situational leader which means, his style may vary based on the situations. This approach is where a leader attempts to adapt how he behaves according to the needs of each situation, or depending on the type of people he mingles with. The democratic leadership came second most dominant.

In the third questionnaire, he is a facilitating leader which means, he involves staff in decision making which may affect their work. He also drives out fear, making employees feel that they are free to ask questions. Facilitating leaders also hold frequent meetings. This leadership tendency also listens to staff problems and concerns without criticizing or judging.

His Leadership Style: Colleague's POV

To validate the interview done with Peter, the researcher interviewed five of his faculty members, individually, regarding to their perception of what kind of leader he is. Collectively, Peter is a joker by nature, thus, according to them, he makes stressful conditions light. One of the best things about him is he delegates tasks, empowers his faculty members, and gives them the freedom to decide. They believe that he trusts and always encourages his people. He also 'walk the talk' as he leads by example in terms of work. They mentioned that Peter is undeniably one of the most committed persons in the university, one of them rated his commitment as 12/10.

They affirmed that he is a democratic type of leader as he is lenient and does not impose anything in his department. He also lets them do things on their own, showing some characteristics of a laissez faire leader. But, this style does not work to everybody, as one of his colleagues said. He/she said that Peter's habit is to say "*Marami tayong gagawin pero di ko muna sasabihin. Saka na lang.*" They believe that he was used to immediate, and rushed works but his colleagues are not, needing some ample time to do things. Not everyone of them likes this absolute empowerment. One of them said that she wants full guidance from Peter.

On the negative side, as he is the happy-go-lucky type and delivers almost everything in a joke, the interviewed colleagues said that they are not sure if he is already serious. One of them said, he is insensitive since some of these jokes are already offensive. One of his major weaknesses is that he compares everyone with himself. He thinks that everyone is the same as him. In OB, this is a shortcut in attribution called projection. It is defined as attributing one's own thoughts, feelings or motives to another. Peter thinks that all of them must have same motivation as him.

In average, they rated him 7/10, mainly because the three or two-point difference from 10 is for improvement. He is not perfect either so, they believe that he still needs to improve as a leader.

His Leadership Style: According to his ESFJ Personality

In leadership ESFJs naturally organize people and situations but may not intentionally seek out leadership positions [20]. This affirms Peter's statement that he does not want the positions, at first.

Group Level

Teamwork: 6/10

As the department, he was asked to rate the level of cohesiveness or teamwork of his department. He rated it 6/10. When asked why, he said that most of the employees do things for compliance. They do things for their own benefit. No one from the department has volunteerism whenever there are jobs. He recalls one of the advices he gave to one of his faculty members, *"Kung di tayo ang pinakamagaling at pinakamatalino, dapat tayo ang pinakamasipag".* This literally translates that if you are not the best and the most intelligent, atleast you should be the most persistent and most industrious. This may be because of age since most of the faculty members of his department are older than him, he cannot absolutely impose that everyone should cooperate.

Communication: Kapag may usok, may apoy

As a leader, he handles miscommunication by hearing both sides of the story. He communicates with his department through Facebook chat & group text message. He frequently communicates informally through stories inside the faculty room. With his methods of communication, he is exhibiting the characteristic of millennials of maximizing technology to communicate. When asked about grapevine, he believes it is important and useful but it is not always reliable. He explained, *"Kapag may usok, may apoy"* which literally means where there is smoke, there is fire. Something will not be talked about if it's not somewhat true.

Conflict: People answer to argue not to understand

As much as Peter hates politics, he also hates conflict. His colleagues describe him as someone who does not start fights or fight back. She said that "*Di siya 'yung nagsisimula ng away o pumapatol. Pangiti-ngiti lang 'yan. Pero 'pag sumagot, tagos sa buto*.". He believes that people just answer to argue not to understand.

CONCLUSION/MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This descriptive case study focused on Peter's work life revolving on the two levels of analysis in organizational behavior namely, individual and group. As a millennial and younger than most of his colleagues, Peter finds it hard to impose something on his department. This leads us to the lesson that democratic or laissez faire leadership style is not always the best technique to use. He needs to be more assertive and probably exercise his legitimate power to influence his colleagues. Managers may have different styles, but it is safe to use a situational approach, by tweaking their styles based on given situations and types of people they handle. To foster teamwork, the leader, for that instance Peter, will play a big role in uniting his team. In terms of motivation, the organization plays a big role in satisfying their employees. Proper motivation tools to cater individual differences should be used.

Based on the results, Peter's leadership style reflects what he wants to see in his leader. And lastly, it is important to note that behavior is not based on age or generation. Peter is a millennial, but his commitment and work ethics may resemble with a veteran. He may be young, but his leadership style may be the same with other generations. But then, a part of his millennial personality is also dominant in terms of communication as he utilized technology in reaching out with his colleagues.

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