

The perceived role of coaching in enhancing millennial leaders' development in South Africa

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**A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and
Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of
Business Executive Coaching**

Johannesburg, 2019

ABSTRACT

One of the key strategies of maintaining organisational performance is investing in the development of leaders. Coaching is one of the instruments that has been used as a process to positively influence leader development. Coaching has been labelled as a process that assists leaders to modify behaviour and perspectives without sacrificing on competence and self-esteem. This study considered the rise of the millennial generation in the South African workforce, particularly in leadership positions across industries.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate and describe the millennial leaders' perception of executive coaching and its role in effectively advancing their leader journey. Millennials have been described as the latest generation to enter the workforce, which is inclusive of individuals born between 1980 and 2000. In 1990, the South African landscape changed, demanding an inclusive workforce, through ensuring a representation of race, gender and age. It is argued however that business has been slow to realise that the political changes influenced societal and behavioural trends and in turn the diverse make up and management of talent within organisations. This report therefore paid attention to the experiences leaders within South Africa had while being coached. This was done by looking at the challenges before engaging in the coaching process and the perceived value and impact that the leader derived from coaching.

The study assumed a qualitative design, using interviews with eight millennials in senior management positions. Interviews were then analysed thematically. The study suggested that the leaders perceived coaching as a process that had a significant impact towards their leader journey - one that has positive psychological effects in their work and home life. Furthermore, the study suggested that coaching millennials is not significantly different to coaching the generations before but that coaches need to be mindful of how the millennials prefer to be engaged.

The process of self-reflection was reported by most participants as the phase during the coaching process that allowed them to reach their best self as developed leaders. Therefore, one of the study recommendations is that

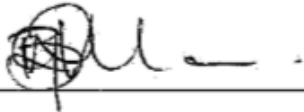
coaches, regardless of the coaching process used, must ensure that self-reflection is always one of the coaching instruments used during the coaching process - particularly when engaging with millennial coachees.

Keywords

Millennials, coaching, leader development, South Africa.

DECLARATION

I, Nobuhle Malunga, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Business Executive Coaching at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Signature:  _____

Signed at Durban

On the 18th day of June 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude and appreciation goes to the people who made the journey a manageable one in their own special way as follows:

- My supervisor, Dr Carol Mitchell for always making me see the light when it all became overwhelming. Your positive attitude and dedication to my study was of great motivation and inspiration to me. Your voice notes always made me smile and persevere.
- My husband, Mlungisi Malunga for always supporting me and believing that I can one day break the glass ceiling.
- My handsome boys, Ndumiso and Mangaliso Malunga for being my daily inspiration.
- My remarkable parents, Thulane and Nozipho Mthembu you started this. My mission is to carry your legacy forward.
- My incredible siblings Thabani and Nolwazi Mthembu for your continued love and support.
- All my family and friends who supported me during this journey.
- My heartfelt appreciation to all the respondents who allowed me to take time out of their busy schedule – this study wouldn't have been a reality without you.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Profile of respondents	42
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The good experience	46
Figure 2: Before and after coaching experience	51
Figure 3: Empowered leader	58
Figure 4: Summary of the study	71
Figure 5: Summary of findings	72

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DECLARATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Purpose of the study	1
1.2 Context of the study	1
1.3 Research problem	3
1.4 Research aims and objectives	3
1.5 Research questions	4
1.6 Significance of the study	4
1.7 Definition of terms	5
1.8 Assumptions	6
1.9 Delimitations	6
1.10 Structure of this report	6
1.11 Conclusion	7

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Millennials in the workplace	8
2.3 The challenge of different cohorts in the workplace	10
2.4 Coaching	12
2.4.1 Executive coaching	13
2.4.2 Coaching Leaders	14
2.5 Millennials	15
2.5.1 Millennial traits	17
2.6 Leadership	19
2.6.1 Leadership Theories	20
2.6.2 Leadership Development	23
2.6.3 Leader Development	25
2.7 Coaching in leader development	27
2.8 Coaching Millennials	32
2.9 Conclusion	33
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	34
3.1 Research approach	34
3.2 Research design	34
3.3 Data collection methods	35

3.4 Population and sample	36
3.4.1 Population	36
3.4.2 Sample and sampling method	36
3.5 The research instrument	37
3.6 Procedure for data collection	38
3.7 Data analysis and interpretation	39
3.8 Limitations of the study	39
3.9 Validity and reliability	40
3.9.1 Validity	40
3.9.2 Transferability	40
3.9.3 Internal validity	41
3.9.4 Reliability	41
3.10 Conclusion	41
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	42
4.1 Introduction	42
4.2. Description of the sample	42
4.2.1 Millennial N	43
4.2.2 Millennial S	43
4.2.3 Millennial St	43
4.2.4 Millennial No	44

4.2.5 Millennial J	44
4.2.6 Millennial B	44
4.2.7 Millennial Si	45
4.2.8 Millennial P	45
4.3 Themes	45
4.3.1 The good experience	45
4.3.2 Before and after coaching experience	51
4.3.3 Empowered leader	57
4.4 Conclusion	60
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	61
5.1 Introduction	61
5.2 Millennial leaders' experiences of being coached	61
5.3 The challenges before coaching and benefits of being coached	64
5.4 The impact of coaching	68
5.4 Conclusion	72
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	74
6.1 Introduction	74
6.2 Conclusions regarding millennial leaders' experiences of coaching	74
6.3 Conclusions regarding the value millennial leaders derived from coaching	75
6.4 Conclusions regarding millennial leaders perceived positive impact of coaching	75

6.5 Limitations of the study	76
6.6 Recommendations	76
6.7 Suggestions for future studies	78
6.8 Conclusion	78
References	80
APPENDIX A	84
APPENDIX B	85
APPENDIX C	86
APPENDIX D	87

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

This study explored the role coaching may have in enhancing the personal development of millennial leaders within the South African organisations that they work in. The study aimed to determine South African millennial leaders' experiences of previous coaching interventions and whether they believed these were useful for them and their career aspirations.

1.2 Context of the study

The nature of organisational dynamics requires an inclusive employee database in terms of race, gender and age. There is evidence that generational dynamics in the workplace may lead to communication challenges between colleagues (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). This study looked at the age dynamic with a particular focus on the millennial generation. Globally, the workplace has seen a culturally, ethnically and technologically diverse generation enter the workplace. In 1994, South Africa realised democracy, which called for an inclusive country across all spheres including the business world. While taking actions to enshrine individual rights and protect collective rights, the South African Constitution embodied a vision for the progressive realisation of human potentiality and the progressive transformation of South African society (Chidester, 2006). The latest generation to enter the workforce is known as the millennial generation and is inclusive of individuals born between 1980 and 2000. According to Ng et al. (2010) the impending retirement of a large group of the older generation (Baby Boomers) has unsettled organisations as they need to recruit the younger (millennial) generation. Millennials however, appear to hold different values, expectations and attitudes from that of the older generation that precedes them. According to Rodney and Wakeham Dr (2016), in 2012 the results by Statistics SA noted that two out of three South Africans are aged 30 years or younger, with nearly a quarter of the population deemed to be a member of the millennial cohort. The way the different generations view the social and particularly, the work world is largely different (Bartz, Thompson, & Rice, 2017; Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008).

Definitions of the different generations vary across societies and cultures. House, Javidan, Hanges, and Dorfman (2002) note that in all of history; politics, ethnicity and geography have been a major factor in the differences in groups. Murray (2011) expands on this by suggesting that each generation is largely defined by the changing events in society that occur during the formative years of the group. Pre 1994, the then governing party in South African segregated races and education along ethnic lines, creating world-class jobs and institutions which were reserved for White communities, while people of colour were left with inferior, under resourced jobs and education institutions so as to inconvenience non White South Africans (April & April, 2007). In 1990, the release of Nelson Mandela from prison profoundly changed the landscape of all spheres within South Africa. Martins and Martins (2012) argue that while the South African landscape has changed over the last 24 years, businesses have been slow to realise the political changes impacted on societal and behavioural trends and in turn the diverse make up and management of talent within organisations.

Generation grouping plays a role when conceptualising the changes in workforce behaviours, values, learning styles, practices, social networking, information processing and management challenges (Balda & Mora, 2011). Notably, the millennial generation is recognised as the most educated, technologically skilled and self-confident – and thus convey a sense of high expectations and accomplishments in the workplace (Bartz et al., 2017; Martins & Martins, 2012; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Murray (2011) also observed that millennials expect consistent, high quality and balanced feedback which often makes other generations (older than them) uncomfortable. This then creates disengagement and a perception of unmet expectations from all parties concerned. The biggest cause of conflict across the generations in the workplace is seen to be the differences in work ethic and work and family balance.

Millennials look for rapid advancements when it comes to salary and benefits, career advancements, interesting and challenging work, work life balance and making a positive contribution in the world (Frankel, 2016; Ng et al., 2010). In most instances there appears to be a misalignment between what this generation is capable of achieving and what it expects to achieve.

This research therefore has a bias on leader development as opposed to leadership development as it aims to investigate the role the development process has on an individual leader as part of a collective leadership.

1.3 Research problem

- Millennials tend to seek gratification for their hard work (Frankel, 2016; Ng et al., 2010). This research investigated South African millennials' experiences of whether and how coaching has assisted them with achieving their desired leadership journeys.
- Millennial leaders expect rapid career advancement even when they sometimes do not possess the necessary expertise for the senior or executive positions in their fields. This research investigated the benefit that coaching has had in assisting millennial leaders to advance as leaders.
- Millennials tend to undertake numerous activities simultaneously (Murray, 2011). This research investigated the role coaching has had in millennial leaders' management of their career development and goal attainment plans.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

The aim of this study was to investigate and describe the South African millennial leaders' perception of executive coaching and its role in effectively advancing their leader journey. In order to do this, the objectives of the study were to:

- Conduct scholarly analysis to describe the experiences millennial leaders have had with coaching.
- Interview participants in order to explore the ways in which coaching has had value towards their desired leadership journey.
- Explore the relationship between overcoming leadership related challenges and the impact of coaching on developing leaders.

Millennials are confident, achievement oriented and has high career expectations of themselves and the organisations they work for (Ng et al., 2010). As such, the traits and calibre of leaders is becoming more dynamic. This millennial generation seems to be fast dominating the leadership landscape resulting in the traits of leaders being more dynamic than before the entry of millennial leaders. This research aimed to explore the role of coaching in the progress of millennial leaders' development plans and or goals. Through this research, challenges experienced by millennial leaders in their roles and work environment were identified and a coaching program to assist this group is proposed.

1.5 Research questions

The research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are millennial leaders' experiences of being coached?
2. How does coaching contribute towards millennial leaders' ability to deal with the challenges experienced in their management leadership roles before coaching?
3. How has coaching impacted on the millennial leaders' development journey?

1.6 Significance of the study

Miscommunication and conflict across generations may cost companies financially due to staff turnover and non-productiveness (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007).

The millennial generation is one that has a large range of choice when selecting organisations to work for, and often the choice of employer decision is based on the working conditions, perceived flexibility of the employer, and the opportunities the position and the employer promises the individual (Ng et al., 2010). It is expected that over the next decade a large percentage of the workforce will be the millennial generation (Frankel, 2016). With the ongoing growth of millennials in the workplace, it is important that their leadership traits are clearly identified

and enhanced for the benefit of the organisations they serve. Those currently in leadership positions need to diversify and align their plans to accommodate the trends linked to this generation. Therefore, this research aimed to contribute towards the literature on understanding this generation and how they can best be developed and retained in their employment. It is of significance that organisations work towards attracting and retaining millennials as they currently have the highest human capital for the workforce (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016).

Unlike previous generations, there are many opinions about the millennial generation's characteristics and leadership trends. This research aimed to explore the leadership challenges as experienced by millennials which may impact on their development plans and or goals.

1.7 Definition of terms

The following terms are used frequently in this research:

Coaching: The guidance of another person's development in new and existing skills during the practice of those skills (Thomas, Thomas, & Firestone, 2010).

Millennial: Millennials are the latest generation to enter the workforce and have been grouped as individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015).

Leadership development: the process of preparing and creating an avenue for individuals to be best equipped to effectively engage in leadership interactions (Korotov, 2016).

Leader development: the process of the lifelong journey in which the individual interprets and makes meaning out of experiences that contribute towards enhancing the individual's understanding of leadership and self-development (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

1.8 Assumptions

One of the assumptions of this study is that coaching is a personal experience. The millennial generation has individuals born over two decades which does mean that there is a likelihood that these individuals are all in different phases of their careers, maturity and confidence. Understanding that each experience is specific to the individual, assumptions were made that each participant's contribution would be articulated at different levels, based on their individual experiences.

Considering the difference millennials have in values and beliefs relative to other generations, the coaching approach they experienced may be different to that of other counterparts in the generations before.

1.9 Delimitations

For the purpose of this research and in line with most literature, the millennial generation will be defined as individuals who were born from and including 1980 – 2000. The sample of respondents was representative of individuals who live in one of the two major cities in South Africa namely Durban and Johannesburg, who hold leadership positions. As experiences and challenges faced by employees may be different depending on the sector they work in, this research focused on individuals in the private and entrepreneurial sector.

1.10 Structure of this report

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter presents a literature review of previous research on coaching and leader development, with a particular focus on millennial leaders. Chapter three then describes the methodological process followed in the study. In chapter four the findings of the study are presented and organised in themes with excerpts from the respondents' narratives during the interviews included. This chapter is followed by a discussion chapter that interprets the results in chapter five utilising the literature reviewed in chapter two in an attempt to answer the research questions. In conclusion, chapter six reiterates the findings and discusses implications identified. The

limitations of the study are discussed and suggestions for future research provided.

1.11 Conclusion

The productivity and alignment of employees is important for the success of any organisation. To realise the aims of this study it is important to review literature that will provide insights in unpacking and answering the identified research questions. The next chapter therefore reviews literature aligned to the key areas relevant to the study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is guided by the research questions in chapter 1 and provides literature reviewed on the current discourses on the dynamics of and definitions around coaching millennial leaders. The literature begins by providing an outline of the current trends and perceptions on millennial leadership in the workplace. It then further expands on the available literature on leadership coaching and leader development.

2.2 Millennials in the workplace

As the representation of millennials grows in the workplace, so does the representation of the said generation in leadership positions. The millennial generation is perceived as more diverse and neutral in their leadership style as they embrace different people orientations (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016; Brack & Kelly, 2012; Meng, Reber, & Rogers, 2017). In South Africa, millennials have grown up in a different world than their parents. They are able to bring valuable knowledge that is crucial to organisational success (Martins & Martins, 2012).

Millennial leaders often have a range of choices in as far as the selection of an employer is concerned. They are a generation that is weary of staying in the same position without growth. According to Ng *et al.* (2010), when placed in a position to make decisions about their careers and employers, this generation is most likely to choose making a life as opposed to making a living. Ng *et al.* (2010) further note that this generation will easily negotiate their conditions of employment, without fear of intimidation, to ensure that what they receive from the employer is aligned to their work-life balance requirements at all stages of their careers. Frankel (2016) argues that this generation is the most diverse generation to ever be a part of the workforce.

The traits of millennials are different from that of the previous generations in that: they are considered the most educated generation; they are most diverse in talents and are independent and not reliant on their seniors as far as their confidence is concerned (Brack & Kelly, 2012; Martin, 2008). Martins and Martins

(2012) suggest that South African millennials are more diverse than their global counterparts, with both Black and White millennials in South Africa having more in common due to global influences, something that was uncommon in generations before them. According to Frankel (2016), the millennial generation is one that has been least understood by co-workers of previous generations. This generation is often referred to as irresponsible, spoilt and unrealistic. It is thus of great significance to explore and maximise on the understanding of this generation so as to best identify the role coaching could have in the progress of the leader's development plans and their successful integration into the workforce. According to Martins and Martins (2012), South African millennials are impacted by difficulties where employment is concerned, as impacted by the social ills of previous inequalities, thus leading to a generation that is dissatisfied.

Understanding the millennial generation and their expectations is a strategic necessity for the current and future success of an organisation (Martin, 2008; Meng et al., 2017). The strong desire to make a meaningful impact leads this group to place a high value on professional progress which results in them taking on high impact assignments. It is to this end that some of this generation's members find themselves overwhelmed as they sometimes take on more than they can deliver. This research aimed to look at the role coaching can play as a process towards the development of millennial leaders.

While many definitions of coaching exist, this study uses Thomas et al. (2010) definition which outlines coaching as: the guidance of another person's development in new and existing skills during the practice of those skills.

Coaching places emphasis on performance improvement through skills based training, feedback and motivation (Thomas *et al.*, 2010). During the coaching process, leaders interrogate their challenges in a form of conversation with their coaches, the aim of which is to explore those issues with the assistance of the coach (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2011).

Robertson (2004) proposes that once leaders have undergone a coaching process they ought to become more confident, willing and able to coach and develop others - thus building the leadership capacity within their organisations.

Millennial leaders may be ideally positioned to utilise their behavioural traits to bring positive changes to the organisations they serve. Barbuto and Gottfredson (2016) argue that organisations would be best positioned to attract and retain millennials by training and promoting their leaders to become servant leaders. Avolio and Hannah (2008) foreground the responsibility that each individual leader has in terms of their own progress. If leaders actively participate in writing their own life narrative and developing their self-construct, then they will also have the leverage to determine how well and positively they write their own life story. Issues including skills, learning, experience and personality are vital to the notion of developing the expert leader (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014).

2.3 The challenge of different cohorts in the workplace

There are many factors requiring and forcing organisational changes including: an increasingly diverse workforce; the technological evolution; an aging workforce and the growing millennial population (Blancero, Mouriño-Ruiz, & Padilla, 2018). Leadership in any organisation and in society is of great importance in shaping the success of the group. Van Zyl and Dalglish (2009) argue that leaders can arise through career progression as they are allocated roles to lead business organisations. They further note that leadership is about the role, effectiveness and style of leaders. Some workforce members argue that the effectiveness of a leader is determined by the leader's development plan. Observing the age differences in the workplace particularly in the leadership circles of today, one can be led to assume that there would be observable behavioural and attitudinal differences in the leaders within organisations due to the generational gaps.

There are three generations that are currently represented in the workforce (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007). *The baby boomers (between the ages of 54-72)* currently have the biggest representation in the workplace and are the generation that does not look forward to retirement even though a large group of them have already retired. This group tends to remain involved in the workplace even post retirement age. Sujansky and Ferri-Reed (2009) note that baby boomers are advantaged in having the most work experience while the millennials are eager

and open minded to learning. *Generation X (between the ages of 40-53)* is the second generation in the workplace; this group is characterized as being the most skeptical and less loyal to employers than the generations before them but importantly more loyal than the generation that comes after them. The millennial generation is said to be the most demanding generation to date (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007). Brack and Kelly (2012) note that baby boomers and generation X employees seek structure and job security from their employers, while millennials look for flexibility and employability.

The millennial generation is fast growing in the workplace and currently forms the focus of most research as they bring a different dynamic to the workplace. This group brings with them a fresh perspective in comparison to the other generations. The generation before them often hold negative sentiments about this group in as far as their work ethic is concerned (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015). The different expectations from the different generations ought to be managed for the benefit of the organisation (Brack & Kelly, 2012). Assuming that coaching changes attitude and behaviour; coaching may have a role in correcting the perceived negative characteristics or even ensure that the millennial generation work positively towards their progress in their leadership journeys.

The issue of generational differences and conflict in the workplace is one of concern. Due to the observable differences in the generations especially in the daily multi-generational workplaces it is important that recruitment strategies are tailored for each generation and a blanket recruitment strategy is not utilized (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007). Organisations ought to employ segmented communication strategies to entice each generation accordingly. Smith and Clark (2010) suggest a different view of the workplace landscape by noting that while employees may be from different generations, they are likely to hold similar values but may simply differ in behaviours where those values are concerned. Murray (2011) notes that the characteristics, understanding and approach of the different generations on issues such as technology, collaboration and communication require management to ensure effective implementation of business objectives.

Murray (2011) observes that members of the millennial generation are increasingly holding positions of authority and are being represented in leadership positions. It is with this in mind and the identified and or perceived traits of this generation that this research explored coaching as a leader development process for the benefit of this generation as leaders.

2.4 Coaching

Coaching has been defined as a collaboration that facilitates the enhancement of life experiences, goal attainment and self-directed learning and performance in the coachee's personal and professional life (Grant & O'Connor, 2010). These authors further explain an effective coaching process as one that enhances motivation, increases self-efficacy for change, as well assisting the coachee to become closer to their goals and objectives.

The relationship between the coach and coachee is therefore a significant part of the coaching process. Nelson and Hogan (2009) identify three vital points in ensuring an effective coaching relationship:

- The coach must create an atmosphere of trust to enable the coachee's openness regarding their views and perceptions on the organisation and the coaching process,
- The coach must be knowledgeable about the organisation and is assumed to be an expert in the facilitation of change and business processes and lastly,
- The coach should be able to create an environment wherein the coachees feel understood and respected throughout the development process.

The term 'coaching' has been appropriated in many different ways for various purposes. It is beyond the scope of this study to include all of these definitions and operationalisations of the term. The distinctions provided are sufficient to fulfil the study aims and objectives. Executive coaching is relevant to this study and is described below.

2.4.1 Executive coaching

According to MacKie (2015), executive coaching is a lucrative industry that is becoming one of the dominant instruments for the development of leaders. Executive coaching has been likened to a business proposition where the coachee and the coach work together for the benefit of a third party, the organisation, and thus may be used to address a variety of leadership and working issues. Organisations and individuals seek executive coaching to enhance the effectiveness of leaders and to improve the performance of organisations (Nelson & Hogan, 2009). The benefit of executive coaching is that it provides executives with important feedback that they would normally not receive regarding their personal, career, performance and organisational issues (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999).

Understanding workplace contexts is important for any coaching relationship to be effective. As such, Scheepers (2012) recommend that an executive coach has a fair degree of insight into the executive's organisation, the organisation structure and the key drivers of the organisation. The coach should have an understanding of the coachee's job pressures which is often inclusive of team dynamics. Understanding organisational realities often assists the coach in navigating the coachee towards positioning themselves appropriately in the organisation (Scheepers, 2012).

Executive coaching, when implemented well, produces effective results in the coachee's wellbeing, performance, coping and skills (MacKie, 2015). Furthermore, executives appreciate the personal attention and the confidentiality that is awarded by the coaching session. According to Cox, Bachkirova, and Clutterbuck (2014) the three factors that need to be considered for effective executive coaching are:

- If the sessions are honest and objective, they tend to result in positive progress for the executives' career and personal development.
- The success of a coaching relationship is determined by the contracting and the goal setting process.

- The contract should specify the parameters and guidelines of the coaching period.

According to MacKie (2015) coachees engage with the coaching process already possessing motivation, ability and capacity to change. Like anyone else on a path to development and growth, leaders also need coaches who can support their developmental process (Katz & Miller, 1996). There is now an increased need to not only develop conceptual and analytical skills but reflective, emotional and creative capabilities for leaders (Karakas, Manisaligil, & Sarigollu, 2015). The evolving world and workforce dynamics demand a more holistic approach to leader and leadership development and coaching is arguably one of the successful processes to be utilised in the development of a leader.

2.4.2 Coaching Leaders

Robertson (2004) argues that leaders cannot be made, nor are people born leaders however effective leadership is a learned process that allows room for making leaders therefore leaders can in fact be made depending on the time and the leader's willingness. Leader coaching thus becomes an important process which enables continuous learning where effective leader practice is concerned. Coaching provides a structured approach towards providing opportunities and support to leaders (Robertson, 2004). The challenge in leader coaching is finding a balance in exposing leaders to new skills and behaviour traits without exposing their weaknesses to the outside workforce (Katz & Miller, 1996). Coaching therefore provides a supportive and confidential avenue to practice new behaviours before acting them out in a public space. With difficulties inherent in transferring learned skills, training alone does not lead to optimum performance, coaching does however assist in redressing the challenge of transferring of skills and knowledge (Bowles, Cunningham, De La Rosa, & Picano, 2007). Furthermore, coaching assists the leader's development by providing positive and sustainable outcomes (Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008).

Researchers have noted the significance of individuality when developing leadership expertise and skills as part of the leader development process. The

issue of metacognitive and cognitive skills also come to the fore as key elements in the establishment of a leader's potential (Day et al., 2014).

To promote change and the process of learning, coaches may engage in various coaching interventions, including: summarising what the leader shares, listening to the leader, paraphrasing, interpreting, providing feedback and discovering links and themes that come out during the coaching process (de Haan et al., 2011).

One cannot consider the advancement of organisational leaders without considering the growing diversity in organisations as being one of the issues facing business. How an organisation tackles diversity in its workforce will impact on the productivity, strategies and even turnover statistics among other elements (Katz & Miller, 1996). Understanding the employee and leader dynamics is therefore a critical part of the coaching process.

2.5 Millennials

Generational structures are determined by the set of values, beliefs, attitudes and logical processing which are adapted by members of that group to socialise, lead, and process information amongst other things (Balda & Mora, 2011). This understanding comes with the caveat that studies, on the characteristic traits of different generations, are often generalised observations that do not always apply to all individuals within that group (Murray, 2011). Millennials are the most recent generation group to form part of the generations within the workforce and continue to increase in representation (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016; Bolser & Gosciej, 2015; Martin, 2008). According to Rodney and Wakeham Dr (2016), in 2012 the results by Statistics SA noted that nearly a quarter of the population in South Africa is deemed to be a part of the millennial cohort.

The period within which millennials are categorised differs slightly between theorists. Bolser & Gosciej, (2015) and Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, (2009) outline millennials as those born between and including 1980 and 2000. Balda and Mora (2011) define millennials as those individuals born between 1980 and 1999. Murray (2011) broadens the age parameters and identifies millennials as those

individuals born in the late 1970s and early 1980s through to 2004. This study used the grouping of millennials as those born between and including 1980 to 2000 in line with majority of the literature. This generation was labelled 'millennials' in line with them being born from a period of a thousand years (Ng et al., 2010).

The characteristics that define this group include the need to want it all within a time frame that they set for themselves - often without regard for employer, organisational and external factors. These requirements include good pay, rapid advancement, benefits, interesting and challenging work, work life balance and the strong need to want to make a difference and or contribute to society. Brack and Kelly (2012) further note that the millennial generation want to add skill to their list of wants. For this generation work is not about the income they generate but more about their personal fulfilment and enrichment.

Collaboration is one of the important aspects of development to millennials. However, it is important to note that they will only look to collaborate with those colleagues and managers they respect, identify with and would like to have an association with (Ng et al., 2010). Millennials have therefore been identified as the generation that strives on having meaningful collaborations with their counterparts. While millennials are inclined to collaborate with their colleagues, the need to associate with those they believe to connect with is notable, as this generation is noted as one that has difficulty trusting the world around them thus resorting to creating their own world and lives with those they trust, and according to how the work makes sense in their eyes (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015). Brack and Kelly (2012) and Murray (2011) note that millennials are inclined to be more exposed to collaborating at work multitasking and having a more integrated view of the organisational hierarchy than their predecessors. It is also a generation that is most familiar with technology. The latter part of the twentieth century came with technological advancements which have, amongst other things, allowed societies to effectively and speedily learn from each other (House et al., 2002). According to Martin (2008) millennials are more talented than the generations before them, they are entrepreneurial, independent thinkers who expect to have a sense of accomplishment regularly in their work positions.

2.5.1 Millennial traits

This group possesses an attitude of making a difference and ensuring that the workplace acknowledges that they are part of the organisations they work in. They are expressive in their thoughts on how the organisations and the teams should perform; they flourish in challenging environments and enjoy flexibility at work – an indication that their employers trust them to deliver without micromanaging them (Frankel, 2016; Martin, 2008). According to Martins and Martins (2012), South African millennials are optimistic, self-confident, independent, goal driven, determined, success driven and mostly inclusive.

i) Collaboration

Murray (2011) notes that as a group, millennials are mostly motivated by opportunities at their disposal which includes opportunities to collaborate and make successful changes in their organisations and communities. Murray (2011) extends this view, adding that this trait may also be a cause of conflict in the teams they work with because the millennials form of collaboration is not the same as the organisations winning behaviours due to them only wanting to collaborate with individuals they believe are aligned to their beliefs and will frown upon collaborating with others. With the culture of collaboration being at the centre of organisational development, it is of concern that this trait is often a source of conflict as members of organisations may not be aligned with the progressive and winning organisational behaviours. DeVaney (2015) provides a view of millennial traits that is similar to previous authors and further introduces other traits attributed to this generation namely: their sense of entitlement; their optimistic view on life; and their civic-minded and team-oriented values.

ii) Techno savvy

Noting the increase of this generation in leadership positions means that change is required even in other team members. The way of doing business, and to a large extent of being led, will likely change to align to the traits of these leaders. Due to the relationship this generation has with technology, it becomes easy for them to make decisions and as a leader even engage their team members while on the go. This leadership strategy may not always yield positive results,

especially in the part of the leader maintaining a work life balance, as the team members will consider the leader as always available even during the time when the leader should be engaging matters outside of work (Murray, 2011).

iii) Self-care

Millennials grew up in different circumstances to the generations before them, they grew up observing and learning from their parents' mistakes, in as far as workplace compromises are concerned. This generation was brought up by parents who created a democratic upbringing for them and created a protective environment. Millennials are thus comfortable in creating their lives in accordance to the rules that best serves and makes sense to them (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015).

The millennial generation clearly defines what they expect from an employer and when they feel that this is not attended to, they will always seek other opportunities to advance themselves financially and professionally (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016). The self-view of most millennials may become a challenge as it may lead to them rating themselves higher than others do, they may overestimate their strengths and underestimate their weaknesses, all of which could adversely affect their leadership effectiveness (Day *et al.*, 2014). The self-reflection that comes with the coaching process may assist with this challenge but the effectiveness of the strategies employed is dependent on the leader's willingness to fully engage in the coaching process.

According to Brack and Kelly (2012); (Nolan, 2015) these are the characteristics millennials look for in their employers and the factors that would most likely influence the number of years a millennial stays¹ with an employer:

- Coaching: millennials expect to be given regular feedback and mentorship in the workplace.
- Collaboration: millennials strive in working in teams especially when they clearly understand the team's goals and purpose.

¹ Millennials are known to continuously look for new challenges which result in them changing jobs more often than their colleagues from previous generations.

- Motivation: millennials look for a comfortable work environment that will inspire them to contribute without fear of being victimised and or criticised.

The traits associated with millennials being perceived negatively by some and positively by others is not the concern of this study. The reality is that the representation of this generation is a growing demographic in the workspace. Consequently, organisations must adapt their culture and style to best compliment millennials' work styles (Nolan, 2015).

2.6 Leadership

The key to organisational excellence is admirable leadership with four values – peace, hope, joy and love (Shelton, Darling, & Walker, 2002). The current workforce environment requires a change in leading and management dynamics (Balda & Mora, 2011). The workforce, particularly leadership, requires an enhanced sense of relationship building, cultural awareness, openness to dialogue and collaborative and participatory engagements with employees.

There is an assumption that effective leadership development occurs through the development of an individual leader which then improves the operational and social effectiveness of the organisation (O'Flaherty & Everson, 2005). Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014) argue that the role of followers has often been neglected when studying leadership, yet followers are an integral part of leadership. They argue that when engaging the subject of leadership, there should be a focus on the relationship between culture and leadership and how their interaction influences the performance of the leader and the organisations they serve. According to Densten and Gray (2001), leadership is an influential relationship among leaders and followers, who have the intention of implementing changes that are reflective of their shared purposes.

Factors that contribute to making a leader are in part a subset of an individual's formative experiences that they have accumulated throughout their life and may position the individual as able to effectively assume leadership roles (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

2.6.1 Leadership Theories

Models and theories of leadership represent two views. The first being a traditional approach which has its focus on the leader as an individual with characteristics and managerial functions and tasks. In comparison the more recent theories focus on the interpersonal dynamics within the leadership process (Van Zyl & Dalglish, 2009). Below are Van Zyl and Dalglish (2009) six leadership theories:

i) Contingency Theory

This theory argues that effective leadership is highly related to a situation. The theory assumes that a leader's behaviour is related to a work situation, abilities and the characteristics of those they lead.

ii) Charisma

According to Van Zyl and Dalglish (2009) these leaders are usually part of society and tend to rise during a societal crisis. There are critiques however that charismatic leadership refers to attributes of the leader's extraordinary qualities and not necessarily how they lead during a situation (Van Zyl & Dalglish, 2009). These leaders are inclined to have a strong emotional connection with those they lead. Considering that millennial leaders are more adept in digital literacies than their predecessors, and considering the perceived impact of technology on easing business operations.

iii) Transformational

This type of leadership style is closely linked to millennials' attributes of wanting to make a difference in society and the organisations they serve. The transformational leader always looks to change the way things have always been done for the benefit of the organisation and the people they serve. Transformational leadership is intentional action aimed at improving the learning experiences of those one leads (Robertson, 2004). This requires reflective action from the leader and conscious changes to what is perceived as the 'normal' way of working.

Shelton et al. (2002) identified transformation strategies as:

- meaning through communication,
- trust through positioning,
- attention through vision and
- confidence through respect.

Leaders who utilize these strategies create high performing organisations with cultures of commitment and constant innovation (Shelton et al., 2002).

Van Zyl and Dalglish (2009) complement this view by noting that these leaders will make changes so as to align their objectives with their life purpose, and values of those they lead. Millennials, in line with their general attributes, will be eager to make perceived positive changes in the workplace. It is important for leaders to note that those they work with have to be convinced of the positivity that will come with the changes. Consequently, beyond the leader's eagerness and good intentions when driving change, the manner in which the changes are introduced to the team members must be considered and developed accordingly to ensure a positive work environment. According to Thompson and Gregory (2012) organisations and leaders who promote workplace relationships and the achievement of individuals' needs will most likely be in a position to retain and attract millennial employees.

To achieve transformational leadership, leaders require openness for observation, discourse, experimentation and reflection - coaching can provide a structured process for the development of those qualities (Robertson, 2004).

iv) Transactional

Transactional leaders often look to benefit from those they lead and in turn provide a reward. Millennials look to their employers to accordingly remunerate them for the work that they do. This means millennials will tend to engage in a transactional relationship with their leaders, it is not clear if they would be transactional with those they lead.

According to Ng et al. (2010), remuneration was found to be the main motivational element for millennials.

v) Servant Leadership

This style of leadership is one wherein the leaders focus primarily on the developmental and training needs of their team members - with their own needs and that of the organisation coming as secondary priority (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016).

vi) Authentic Leadership

This style of leadership is closely related with transformational leadership. While there are similarities, leaders who possess this style will always aim to focus on being true to themselves in all that they do and through all the engagements they have (Van Zyl & Dalglish, 2009). This leadership style is about how the leader behaves in situations in accordance to their self-knowledge and beliefs. This leadership style leaves room for significant ethical consideration as a person's authentic self may be unethically misaligned with the values of the organisations they serve (Van Zyl & Dalglish, 2009).

Due to their strong desire to make a difference in the world, millennials are most likely to have high expectations of ethical behaviours from their leaders and the organisations they work for (Ng et al., 2010).

The review of the above styles is of great significance in understanding millennials prior to engaging the development process. The authentic, transformational and transactional leadership styles seem to be the most appropriate when looking at millennial leader's traits and behaviours. Interestingly, leadership styles are not only evident in the workplace but in personal spaces too. Hence, for the benefit of a development plan, coaching should not only relate to an individual's behaviour in the workspace but also in their social spaces.

If organisations are to maximise on the potential of their workforce, the organisation's leaders ought to acquire new set of competencies for engaging

with the world of business – competencies which are inclusive of all generations that currently form part of the workforce. For many executives, the need to capitalise on diversity in the workplace becomes an issue of professional development and an organisational necessity (Katz & Miller, 1996).

2.6.2 Leadership Development

Leadership development has been defined as the practice of preparing individuals to actively engage in leadership interactions and interventions. This process is often associated with the advancement of those in management and or leadership positions towards an advanced state of executing their leadership role (Korotov, 2016).

Organisations often fail as they do not provide developmental support for their leaders based on the assumption that leaders, by virtue of their roles, are already fully developed (Katz & Miller, 1996). Most successful organisations overcome human capital challenges by linking succession planning and leadership development processes for optimal development of talent (Groves, 2007).

The approach used for the development of leaders is influenced by the leadership concepts the employer adopts. Employers look for certain traits in their leaders which they believe will align with the organisational culture. Whether the focus is on developing the leaders ability to implement their duties or developing the characteristics of the leader, will be determined by the organisational vision on leadership (Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006; Korotov, 2016). Leadership does not require one to be in a powerful position. There are individuals who are not in powerful positions, but are considered leaders because of their positive impact in their organisations (Boyatzis et al., 2006). The main emphasis in leadership development is on building on interpersonal proficiencies (Harrison, 2017). These include on the job training and skills training.

As optimistic individuals, the millennial generation strives on positive work experiences that will allow them to capture a positive work-life balance that does not place priority on their careers. They seek learning experiences from their employers (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015; Meng et al., 2017). The foundations of

organisational excellence are: leadership values, transformational strategies and quantum skills (Shelton et al., 2002). Successful leaders go beyond modelling positive attitudes and values; they further translate those values into transformational strategies that enable them to infuse their values to become an integral part of the organisational culture.

The current multi-generational canvas requires a new approach to leadership that serves, adapts, learns and creates (Balda & Mora, 2011). The entry of new generations should not pose as a threat to the workspace, but should possibly be identified as an opportunity, for both leaders and workplace teams, to learn and experiment with information and resources that come with the recruitment of the millennial generation.

Organisations should place more investment into human capital. This shift in human capital management will likely positively impact on the relationship between an organisational strategy and the actual implementation thereof (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016). Most organisations have realised that the organisational investment in leadership and leadership development serves as a vehicle for competitive advantage (Day, 2000; Leskiw & Singh, 2007).

Authors (Boyatzis et al., 2006; Day, 2000; Korotov, 2016) differentiate between leader development and leadership development. Groves (2007) however argues that organisations should focus on developing the leadership function and not the individual leaders.

The leader's ability to interact with others is of great importance especially at a time where the workforce is filled with millennials who seek constant feedback and interactions with their leaders. Boyatzis et al. (2006) argue that organisations should therefore have a focus on developing a *leader* as opposed to *leadership*. Through coaching and or developing a leader, one is best able to empower the leader to balance the challenging world. The advancement of an individual who is in a leadership position and the development of a collective development plan are often connected and equally important for the effective use of a leaders capacity and for the progress of an organisation (Korotov, 2016).

In leader development, the emphasis is placed on individual skills, knowledge and abilities as they relate to the identified leadership role. The development plan is generated in line with intrapersonal competence (self-awareness, self-regulation and self-motivation) – which a candidate can work on and establish an effective self-development plan that will allow the individual to best perform in leadership roles (Day, 2000). Leader development focuses on intrapersonal aspects, as such, it involves introspective reflection leading to the conclusion that developing leaders individually is part of the leadership development process (McDermott, Kidney, & Flood, 2011).

According to McDermott et al. (2011) leadership development is focused on social capital - which is reinforced by a relational model inclusive of conflict management and social awareness. Whereas leader development focuses on an individual base that is guided by self-regulation, self-awareness and self-motivation. Common to both development processes is the understanding that leaders can be developed.

2.6.3 Leader Development

One of the more common issues with leadership efficacy is the lack of skills education, that is necessary to the development of the leader (Perkins, 2009). According to Brack and Kelly (2012) millennials are concerned about whether they possess the necessary skills and training that is required to be a competitive contributor in the work place.

The development of leaders is a strategic objective for most organisations who invest in their human capital. Leader development focuses on intrapersonal skills and on developing individual leaders while the leadership development focuses on interpersonal skills and the development for multiple individuals (Day, 2000; Day et al., 2014). The leader development process is a lifelong journey in which the individual interprets experiences that contribute towards enhancing the individual's understanding of leadership and self-development (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). McDermott et al. (2011) further note leader development as an expansion of an individual's capacity to being effective in their leadership processes and role.

While investment may be set aside for the development of leaders, their willingness and readiness to be developed is the main determinant of the success of the process. Developmental readiness has been defined as the motivation and ability to be aware, make meaning of, and appropriate, the acquired knowledge into their individual long term memory structures (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Factors such as efficacy (a leader's level of confidence that they can develop a specific ability or skill in their respective leader role), metacognitive ability (the ability and skill to solve cognitive and social challenges) and self-concept contribute towards the level of 'readiness' a leader has to develop and or be developed (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

While there is limited literature on the effects personality may have on the leader development process, some studies have reviewed personality factors that enable a positive leader development outcome (Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011). Leader development involves changes in the motivation, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour in leaders in order to effectively assist the leaders in their roles (Harms et al., 2011). Developing individual leaders involves more than the establishment of leadership theories aimed at motivating the effective development of leaders. This is due to the complexities involved in human development that necessitates understanding (Day et al., 2014). Leaders with a higher level of developmental readiness will be in a better state to reflect and make meaning of events, opportunities and challenges - all of which have the potential to positively progress leader development (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

A variation of personality factors serve as significant moderators in the leader development process (Harms et al., 2011). These personality factors include: the leader should have a high sense of self control; the leader should have a healthy self-confidence to enable them to objectively receive feedback that is part of the leader development process; the psychological state of the leader influences the leader's views of their own emotions and that of those around them and under their leadership.

The demanding nature of leadership roles is an element that can lead to a loss of work-life balance on the part of a leader. The struggle for balance may lead to stressful and uncomfortable scenarios (anxiety and unfulfilled goals leading to

regrets) for a leader, and ultimately the relationship they have with their work and those they lead (McDermott et al., 2011). According to Pines, Neal, Hammer, and Icekson (2011), the importance of both work and a healthy functioning family has been well documented. It is assumed that satisfaction in the one is associated with satisfaction in the other, and stress in one is associated with stress in the other. Due to the need for competent and effective leaders; the frequently reported success of coaching has resulted in organisations choosing to adopt leader coaching as a leader development strategy aimed at improving leader performance. Coaching is recognised as a process that provides the leader with expertise and an objective view and interpretation of their personal leadership journey and goals (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

The growth and development support and coaching opportunities, provided to employees, all contribute towards an effective level of productivity (Nolan, 2015).

2.7 Coaching in leader development

According to Peterson, Taylor, Burnham, and Schock (2009) when coaching is part of an improvement plan, it becomes a powerful process in the coachee's career development. Effective leadership is the preferred end result of executive coaching (MacKie, 2015). Leader coaching is a timed process and or program that is constructed for a leader, with the objective of improving the leader's leadership skills by enhancing self-awareness. Coaching thus facilitates the acquisition of new skills and the enhancement of existing skills. It provides insight into the use of certain knowledge and tools necessary for leadership. Coaching does this through encouragement, support and feedback from the coach in an organisational context (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

The entry of the millennial generation into the workplace, together with societal changes, have resulted in a change in climate in organisations and coaching may assist millennials to understand aspects of the workforce environment. Robertson (2004) considers coaching as a process that assists leaders to understand their beliefs and values, while also getting to appreciate their true self

and interests as leaders. He outlines that coaching helps leaders understand how to best articulate themselves and their leadership interaction. Anthony (2017) further notes that leadership coaching is a partnership between a coach and the coachee that focuses on strengthening the performance, self-efficacy and ultimately improving the effectiveness of an organisation. Seemingly coaching is an effective method of leader development. de Haan et al. (2011) however, caution that coaching does not promise ready-made, instant solutions. For instance, Franklin (2015) found that when coaching millennials, coaches found themselves taking up the role of a mentor as opposed to a coach. These coaches also expressed a difference in expectation of the coaching sessions by millennial clients as opposed to the expectations of the coach in alignment to experience and exposure with pre-millennial generation clients. As a result, the participants reported having to change their coaching approach. Seemingly, coaching is not a quick-fix solution, instead it offers, as de Haan *et al* (2011) posit, a learning process which fosters change.

i) Coaching in Millennial leader development: Collaboration

Literature stresses the significance of ensuring that millennial leaders accept and respect organisational hierarchy (which literature, reference those works here). As mentioned previously, this group is most familiar with collaborative, group work where there is easy access to engage and negotiate with all members at a team member level (Murray, 2011). Bushardt, Young, and Bari (2018) argue that millennials may lack decision making and important communication skills. Millennials have further been attributed to possessing a trait of collaboration. Bushardt et al. (2018) note that decisions made by this generation tend to be more individualistic; driven by individual values and less by organisational values. This generation therefore has to be coached to become aligned to organisational trends in as far as the adherence to a structured organisational hierarchy is concerned, as this may become a contributing factor into the intergenerational conflict within a workforce. Coaching allows a leader to focus on their daily experiences and challenges through making use of the time to critically reflect on their practices in relation to identified matters (Robertson, 2004). Coaching has gained popularity as a choice process in leader development, because it assists

a leader to modify behaviour and perspective without sacrificing self-esteem and competence (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

As the workplace world changes so the entrants evolve. Millennials are eager to make a difference in the organisations they work for and while they bring with them a wealth of academic and technological knowledge, they still require more exposure. Murray (2011) notes that millennial leaders ought to recognize and appreciate the time, resources and effort necessary for a leader to effectively succeed without overwhelming themselves physically and emotionally. Coaching as a leader development process may be a mechanism to enable a smooth transition to the workplace where millennials are concerned. This approach however needs to consider that people will only work on the aspects of their lives depending on where they are in their life span (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Interestingly, if one of the millennial generation's traits is the ability to simultaneously address numerous milestones in their life, there is an assumption that coaching could then provide an all-round interrogation of a millennial leader's life.

ii) Coaching in Millennial Leader Development: Loyalty

Additionally, millennials are loyal to people much more than they are to companies (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Thus employers who recruit the millennial generation ought to remain mindful of this trait as it impacts on the time this generation will then spend with an employer before they leave to find other opportunities. The generational differences and challenges that show up in workplaces require leaders to actively tailor leadership tools and leadership strategies uniquely for each generation (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007).

The millennial generation wants guidance in their improvement journey - in their personal capacity, as well as in improving in their roles within the workspace (Martin, 2008). This generation is the most educated and views learning as a positive tool. In addition, while millennials enjoy flexibility and independence, they still look for clear goals and guidance from their leaders (Meng et al., 2017). Robertson (2004) notes that leaders who undergo the process of coaching become reflective, thus owning the ability to act with increased confidence in new

workplaces and situations, as they are more aware of their actions and decisions and the effects thereof. Coaching assists leaders to be reflective in action and for future actions (Robertson, 2004). The coaching environment offers leaders a chance to consider and reflect on issues that may be obstacles to the performance and effectiveness of a leader thus increasing organisational impact and delivery. Subsequently, the coaching process tackles previously difficult workplace challenges and allows organisational and leader goals to be achieved (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

Millennials want to take on leadership positions yet still be able to balance that with the other important aspects of their lives both personally and professionally (Barbuto & Gottfredson, 2016). Given this trait, it is important to consider that the leaders buy in to the coaching process is key to the success and effectiveness of the coaching (Korotov, 2016).

The millennial generation has been negatively labelled by some of their colleagues from earlier generations (Frankel, 2016). This generation is thus placed in a situation where, not only do they have to be aware of their changing surroundings, but most importantly be conscious of how they interact and engage their colleagues who arguably possess different traits, live by a different employee and organisational culture, and possess different beliefs. Millennials have to be mindful of their communication in the workplace thus allowing them the ability to break down barriers and be positively influential in organisational changes (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015).

Boyatzis et al. (2006), mention that research has proved that leaders who rose to the call and improved in their leadership roles had, in their careers, engaged a mentor, coach or both. Leaders can create either a negative or positive self-fulfilling prophecies for their own development (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). To assist the leader with the success of their development journey it is crucial that they have a coach who coaches with compassion which is likely to enhance the leader's personal growth sustainability. Within the leadership purview, conscientiousness, emotional stability and coachee's openness to undergo the coaching process have been linked to the responsiveness and effectiveness of leader coaching (Harms et al., 2011). Coaching provides a level of psychological

safety needed by leaders, which allows the individual to work on their established developmental plan in both their personal and work life (Korotov, 2016). Leader coaching aims to improve leader behaviour, leadership skills and the decision-making process in an evolving world. Through the improvement of these, a leaders social awareness and productivity are increased making the leaders more in tune with their interpersonal relationships (Anthony, 2017).

Effective leadership is the result of a meaningful learning process that requires a certain skill to bring about and maintain (Robertson, 2004). It is to this end that coaching is beneficial for continued leadership practice. Coaching allows for the learning process to be based on real experiences based on the leader's work and personal life, reflective observation of the experiences, reflection and analysis of the identified challenges and the development of solutions leading to a revived way of leading, rationalising and thinking. Self-reflection is the evaluation of one's metacognitive factors which include thoughts, behaviours, insights and feelings resulting in one understanding all these factors as they are vital to the process of directed and purposeful change (Grant, Franklin, & Langford, 2002).

Bloom, Castagna, and Warren (2003) argue that, coaching leaders is a worthwhile investment. Korotov (2016) notes the popularity of coaching as one that has increased as a leader development solution.

The benefits one may expect in coaching are as follows:

- Transference of knowledge
- Skill enhancement
- Increased self-awareness
- Enhanced motivation
- Increase in personal confidence and self-regard
- Improvement of well-being (Korotov, 2016; Passmore, 2015)

The objective of leadership coaching is to assist leaders to become better at people management, interrelations, prioritisation, goal attainment, productivity and communication (Korotov, 2016).

2.8 Coaching Millennials

The eldest age of millennials in 2018 was 38 years. Most millennials are at this point establishing themselves as leaders and some are in senior management positions. As coaching is a recognised process for development, it is useful to look into research where the coaching of millennial leaders is concerned.

Below is a compilation of literature on the studies that have been conducted on coaching millennials. These studies reiterate literature on millennial traits and their effect on the workplace and the benefits of coaching. The following studies were identified:

Bannon, Ford, and Meltzer (2011) conducted a study which aimed to profile millennials in the workplace and what this generation looks for from an employer. The study analysed research by seven (7) research bodies. One of the research bodies found that over 50% of millennials in the workplace favour being provided with opportunities to grow and to develop in their roles and for senior roles.

Thompson and Gregory (2012) conducted a study that suggested that an amendment in management styles may be the solution to leveraging on millennials talents in and for the workplace. As part of this study, the researchers explored existing literature review on millennials and provided an analysis of this generation. Thompson and Gregory (2012) recommended that coaching and development would be beneficial for organisations with millennial employees.

Franklin (2015) conducted a study of coaches who had coached millennial leaders. Franklin (2015) focused on researching participants' experiences from the participants' perspective. The study had a sample of four participants who belonged to pre-millennial generations, and had 7-20 years' experience as coaches. Franklin (2015) found that when coaching millennials, coaches found themselves taking up the role of a mentor as opposed to a coach. These coaches also expressed a difference in expectation of the coaching sessions by millennial clients as opposed to the expectations of the coach in alignment to experience and exposure with pre-millennial generation clients. As a result, the participants reported having to change their coaching approach.

Hamori, Koyuncu, Cao, and Graf (2015) conducted a study which intended to identify elements that millennial professionals look for from their employers. The participants in this study were highly skilled professionals from the millennial generation, a large percentage of whom had attained their Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and or other master's degrees. When engaging the issue of development practices, the study found that this sample rated coaching as the eighth most important talent development practice out of 14 practices.

In their study, Dyess, Sherman, Opalinski, and Eggenberger (2017) explored three coaching programmes for development of employees. The researchers identified the strength based approach as a coaching approach that is most attractive for millennial leaders. This coaching approach is more focused on helping clients discover and maximise on their talents and strengths as opposed to attempting to fix identified weaknesses.

2.9 Conclusion

There appears to be a growing database of literature on millennials in the workspace with some researchers being interested in how this generation should be engaged by their employers in order to manage the workforce. Leader development appears to be a concept that is embraced by this generation. As the aim of this study was to investigate and describe the millennial leaders' perceptions of executive coaching and its role in effectively advancing their leader journey, it was of value to conduct scholarly analysis to describe the experiences millennial leaders have had with coaching, interview participants in order to explore the ways in which coaching has had value towards their desired leadership journey, and to explore the relationship between overcoming leadership related challenges and the impact of coaching on developing leaders. The views of millennial leaders who had undergone coaching as part of their development process were therefore of significance in answering the research questions. The next chapter outlines the research methodology that was followed for this study.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach

This study aimed to analyse the experiences, value and results coaching has had in advancing the leadership journey. This chapter presents and describes the methodology that was followed in order to address the research objectives and questions, and the investigation and analysis framework of this study. The research methodology followed is discussed providing an explanation of the selected methodology as well as the strategies followed when collecting and analysing data.

3.2 Research design

The study utilised an interpretive, qualitative approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) provide an extended description of qualitative research where they note that the research design is one that involves a set of interpretive practices that bring meaning to the world as we know it. The approach enhances the view of the world as it is known, by collecting data in the form of conversations, interviews, recordings and notes of reflections.

With the interpretive method, the assumption is that the study will result in attaining knowledge through social constructions. The qualitative interpretative method emphasises that data analysis reflects and is presented from the sample's perspective (Golafshani, 2003; Rowlands, 2005). Charmaz and Belgrave (2007) further note that this method aims to capture the individual experience by analysing the feelings, thoughts, actions and situations as expressed by the participants. In order to explore how participants have made sense of their personal experience with coaching, this study followed an interpretative phenomenological approach.

3.3 Data collection methods

Data was collected via individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) which were audio recorded for transcription. The use of a semi-structured interview schedule was two-fold. One, the interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to provide as in-depth information on their reflection. According to Smith & Osborn (2004), the semi-structured interview allows the participant to take on the role of an expert of their life story (Smith & Osborn, 2004).semi-structured Two, a semi-structured interview allowed for a richer description of data to be collected as the researcher is able to further build on or interrogate participant responses during the interview.

The significance of this session being honest, open and a two way is invaluable. If the engagement does not reach the deep level of participation from both parties, the content will be minimal, thus compromising the findings and or conclusion of the study. Researchers should attempt as much as possible to enter into the participants social and psychological world (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Leadership development plans and set goals are often personal, which is why it will be important that during the interview sessions the participants feel safe and open to share information. The experiences and perceptions of coaching will most likely be diverse and this is what the research seeks to make an understanding of – the interpretation and perception of coaching as a process especially as each leaders experience will have a different meaning to that of the other leader (de Haan et al., 2011). As a coach, the interviewer used coaching skills to ensure that she created a connection with the interviewee even before the interview session begins. Patton's qualitative evaluation methods outlines the different types of research questions within an interview schedule (Byrne, 2001). The interviewer has to be actively present during the interview through listening and paraphrasing where necessary to ensure they generate substantial responses. The research design and the interviewer ought to be mindful that individual experiences and their interpretation of events and how they include their respective events in narratives depends on their existing self-constructs and the leaders readiness to open up and extract meaning from events (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

Smith and Osborn (2004) note the advantages of semi-structured interviews as the ability for the researcher to establish a rapport with the participant which allows flexibility during the interview thus leading for easy dialogue and ability to engage on novel areas which will ensure the collection of rich data in the part of the researcher.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 Population

Purposive snowball sampling was used to identify study participants. The participants were millennials who had previously undergone coaching. Considering that coaching is still a growing phenomenon, there are few individuals who have undergone the process. Purposive sampling is relevant for the studies wherein the study requires a sample from a population that is specific in line with the study (Neuman, 2013).

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

The study sample consisted of eight (8) millennials (those born between and including 1980 -2000) and was inclusive of both genders and all races. Participants were recruited through their coaches and leadership coaching structures. Participants were not recruited directly but through the identified structures. Coaches were identified through a coach database and an information letter with the research details was forwarded to the coach with a request to recruit their clients for participation. Interested coachees were requested to contact the researcher if they wanted to be part of the study. The final sample was inclusive of individuals from private organisations, in KwaZulu-Natal and Johannesburg, who have previously been coached and are currently in a leadership and or management position. The sample consisted of male and female participants with a higher representation of females. All the participants had been in management positions for a minimum period of three years. All the participants had a post-graduation qualification from different institutions within South Africa.

Interpretive research typically does not draw on large sample sizes. According to Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013), the sample size is dependent on what the researcher wishes to investigate and analyse, and what will ensure credibility of the study and most importantly the participant's accessibility.

3.5 The research instrument

The main instrument that was utilised for this study was a semi-structured interview (Appendix A). While the interview process was semi-structured, it was important that an interview schedule was created to ensure that the researcher covered all issues that will be beneficial to the study.

As mentioned before, coaching and personal development plans are both personal activities. It is therefore important that the manner of the questioning did not leave the participants intimidated and or feeling vulnerable, as Schwandt, Lincoln, and Guba (2007) caution that the rapport participants have with the researcher affects participant responses. In order to get as in-depth data from the participant, the researcher adapted the Smith and Osborn (2004) model for designing interview schedules.

General Questions

To encourage a relaxed environment and ease participants into the interview, the researcher started with asking general questions. These questions were based on getting to know the participant and building a connection with them. The purpose of these questions was to encourage easy response and to set tone of the rapport between interviewer and participant.

Subheading

Following the introductory questions these questions engaged the participant on their view on millennials in the workplace. This was done in an effort to fulfil the study aim which is to ascertain the role of coaching in a leader development plan.

Subheading

The third part of the interview focused on the role coaching plays in the leader development plan. It is important at this point to note that a leader development plan may be those developed by an employer post the identification of gaps that subsequently impact on delivery; or the plan could be self-generated in line with the individual's personal leader goals. The interview questions aimed to make a clear distinction between the two.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

The interview sessions took place at the participants' preferred location – a location that promises privacy and no interruptions. According to Blanche, Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006) the environment in which the interview is conducted is of great importance in ensuring the comfort and positive attitude of the participant. The interview sessions lasted an average of an hour.

Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and the study aims and objectives. Any information obtained in connection with the study has been disclosed with the participant's permission. Each participant was issued a letter of information and consent form (Appendix B).

The interview session was recorded via an audio recording and the researcher also took notes to ensure that all the important data was accurately captured particularly to record non-verbal cues such as body language. Audio-recording as a data collection method allows for repeated experience of the interview without altering the context of the questions or responses. Verbal permission to audio record each session was requested from each participant.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

In order to articulate an informed and most accurate description of millennial leaders' experiences of coaching in their leadership journey, an interpretive approach was used as the most appropriate method. This allowed the researcher to understand the participants' leader identity, including their beliefs.

Once the transcripts were recorded, the researcher identified six themes. The researcher had to read the transcripts numerous times before being able to adequately identify themes. Smith and Osborn (2004) note that as the researcher reads through the transcripts, they are likely to identify differences, similarities, contradictions and echoes in the participant responses.

Statements that described the same topic or train of thought were grouped together as a way of identifying themes.

The researcher utilised Braun and Clarke (2006) guidelines for identifying and presenting themes:

1. The researcher must be fully attentive enabling the captioning of themes in the responses of the participants.
2. Once all the themes have been identified, they need to be further analysed to ensure that no new information arises.
3. A report based on the data collected ought to be written to ensure capturing of all findings thus allowing an opportunity for further studies.

3.8 Limitations of the study

One of the study limitations was that including participants who have never attended coaching would have provided an interesting and dynamic view on coaching as a possible leader development process, however it would have meant that the study would be partly based on pure perceptions of coaching and not experiences. The views were therefore those of individuals who have undergone coaching.

The sample for this study was reliant on coaches (as a referral point) and the coachee's willingness to participate. The researcher did not have a database of previously coached leaders due to privacy attached to coaching.

Participants were volunteers, thus the study could possibly have attracted millennial leaders who possess similar traits and not attracted those who possibly have different traits.

3.9 Validity and reliability

According to Golafshani (2003), reliability and validity are factors of great importance for any research study. Golafshani (2003) argues that while the issue of validity and reliability may be of significance in quantitative designs, for qualitative research to determine the credibility of the study, the most relevant concepts are the research's reflexivity, credibility, consistency, applicability, dependability and transferability.

3.9.1 Validity

Validity is a measure to establish whether the research conclusion was able to reach the desired aim and if the mechanisms used to reach the conclusion of the study was accurate (Golafshani, 2003). Factors that impact on validity include evidence, truth, reason, fact, actuality, data collected and the measures used to analyse data. Validity is therefore an assessment of the research tools to establish whether they are credible, trustworthy and are correctly measuring what they intend to measure. The trustworthiness and validity of a qualitative study are questioned by some (Shenton, 2004). In approaches to qualitative research, the researchers use interpretive and theoretical frameworks to further shape the study (Lewis, 2015).

3.9.2 Transferability

External validity focuses on the extent to which the findings can be applied to different context and subjects (Shenton, 2004). This study, utilised various instruments to ensure that the findings are able to benefit leaders and

organisations alike in the future. As such, the researcher strived to provide the richest description of the research methodologies. It was therefore part of the researchers plan to ensure that a detailed description of the research process, context and data collection is documented.

3.9.3 Internal validity

To ensure internal validity, the researcher remained committed to engaging in peer review throughout the process.

3.9.4 Reliability

To ensure reliability, the researcher should be convinced or work towards ensuring that in the event that a different researcher were to investigate the same topic, using the same methods, with identical context, identical participants – similar results would be achieved (Shenton, 2004).

Every study has an objective, one that brings about new information and or reinforces standing information. It is therefore of great value to establish and maintain the quality of the research. Reliability is therefore a measure of whether the result can be replicated (Golafshani, 2003).

Reliability is especially important in qualitative studies. It is a contentious topic as students have argued that if reliability is used as a criterion, the lack thereof would mean that the study is not of substance (Golafshani, 2003). Shenton (2004) expands on this by stressing that the researcher should report in detail, thus ensuring that any future researcher wishing to study the same topic is able to generate similar results.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology employed to answer the research question. An interpretive qualitative approach was adopted with the data generated from the individual interviews analysed thematically. The participants were very interested in the research and some of them requested a debrief with the researcher once findings have been confirmed. The next chapter presents the findings of the study based on the engagements with the participants.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the findings as established through the data gathering and analysis process of this study. This chapter provides a brief summary of each respondent's background in as far as their leadership journey is concerned. Thereafter the results of the thematic analysis are presented.

4.2. Description of the sample

The study sample consisted of eight adults who are in leadership positions and are millennials. Table1 shows the study samples experiences with coaching and the years they have occupied leadership positions. To maintain confidentiality as per consent letter (Appendix B), participant names start with 'Millennial' followed by first letter of their names.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Participant	Year of birth	Years in leadership position	Duration of coaching	Coaching funded by organisation	Highest Education
Millennial N	1981	7 years	6 years	No	Honours
Millennial S	1983	11 years	1 year	Yes	Masters
Millennial St	1985	7 years	3 years	No	Masters
Millennial No	1980	10 years	2 Years	Yes	Honours
Millennial J	1985	6 years	5 years	Yes (Internal coaching)	Honours
Millennial B	1984	8 years	9 months	Yes (Internal coaching)	Masters
Millennial Si	1987	8 years	4 years	No	Honours
Millennial P	1983	6 years	1.5 years	Yes (Internal coaching)	Honours

4.2.1 Millennial N

Millennial N is a single mother born in 1981 who has been in a leadership position for seven years. Millennial N currently holds a role as Strategy Manager. She has had three coaches over the last six years with the longest relationship with a coach spanning over three years. Millennial N has always had coaches based on her own personal need and has never been referred to a coach by an employer. She has always paid for her own coaching. At the start of the interview Millennial N reported that she did not identify herself as a millennial however, as the interview session proceeded she reported relatedness to the millennial traits.

4.2.2 Millennial S

Millennial S is a mother and wife. Millennial S was born in 1983 and currently holds the role of Program leader and has been in various leadership positions for the last 11 years. Millennial S received coaching for six months as part of a leadership development program that had been identified and designed by her employer. Millennial S identifies herself as a millennial even as she does not identify with some of the traits. Millennial S refers to the use of technology, particularly social media, as a trait that she finds difficult to identify with, where millennials are concerned.

4.2.3 Millennial St

Millennial St is a founder and Managing Director of a foundation and a senior researcher. Born in 1985, Millennial St has been in management for the past seven years. Millennial St describes herself as a mother, wife, sister and daughter. She has had a business and leadership coach for the past three years, which includes structured coaching and periodic coaching for her business and her goals as a leader and employee. Millennial St identifies herself as a millennial and believes that the millennial generation is the generation that the world has been waiting for.

4.2.4 Millennial No

Millennial No is a mother and wife. Millennial No was born in 1980 and is currently a manager, a position she has held for the last three (3) years. In total Millennial No has been in management for ten years. Millennial No has had a coach for the last five years, the relationship with her coach started with a structured relationship as arranged by her employer as part of a development program, but she has maintained the relationship with her coach with sessions now being ad hoc. Millennial No reported that she was aware that she falls under the millennial group but does not identify herself as one, especially when she reflects on her traits against those of her younger brothers. As the interview proceeded, Millennial No identified herself more as a millennial.

4.2.5 Millennial J

Millennial J is a father and husband to two young children. Millennial J was born in 1985 and is currently an Executive director, a role he has held for eight months. Millennial J has been in a management position for over six years. Millennial J had a coach for approximately five years. The coaching process was identified by Millennial J's employer as part of a leadership development process. At the beginning of the interview Millennial J mentioned that while he knew that he formed part of the millennial generation, he did not feel like his traits matched that of a typical millennial. Millennial J identified with some, but not all, of the traits associated with millennials.

4.2.6 Millennial B

Millennial B is a mother of two young girls and a wife, born in 1984. Currently Millennial B holds the role of a manager, a position she has held for two years. In total Millennial B has been in a management position for eight years. Millennial B had a coach for an average of nine months as part of a leadership development process which was identified by the employer. Millennial B reported that she recognises herself as a millennial and identifies with all the traits of millennials, even the traits that are perceived as negative, which in her view are due to misunderstanding from other generations.

4.2.7 Millennial Si

Millennial Si is a new mother and wife, born in 1987. Millennial Si is currently a Managing Director; a position she has held for eight years. Millennial Si had a coach for approximately four years. Millennial Si identified the need for a coach when she started her company and has self-funded the coaching process. Millennial Si identifies herself as a millennial and is confident she will be amongst the group of millennials that change the world and the rules of engagement.

4.2.8 Millennial P

Millennial P is a mother of two, who was born in 1983. Currently Millennial P works as a Business partner and has been in management for six years. Millennial P has had a coach for two years and she refers to her coach as someone she engages at least once a month. Before the current coach, she had a coach as part of an employer identified leadership development program. Millennial P is aware that she is a millennial but is not comfortable with some of the millennial traits that she finds uncomfortable when she experiences them herself.

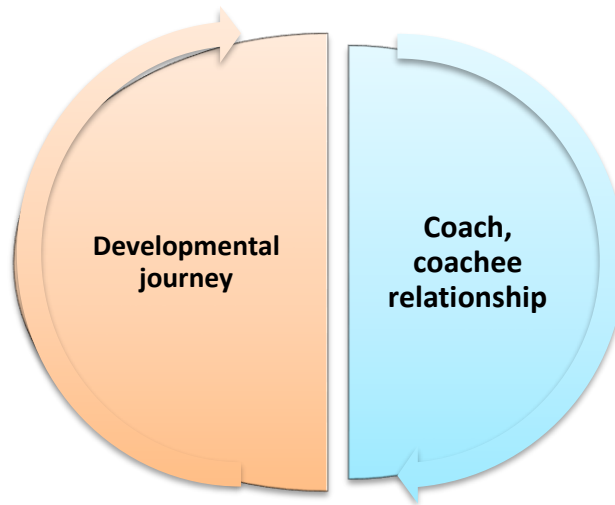
Millennial No, J, N and S did not initially associate themselves as fitting into the millennial cohort, with all of them quoting the perceived negative traits of millennials such as “know it all, obnoxious, don’t want to work hard, want things to happen for them”. It was interesting that as other millennial traits were discussed all of them identified themselves as millennials by the end of the session.

4.3 Themes

4.3.1 The good experience

While the experiences of coaching were individualised, there were notable similarities in the positive experiences that the millennial leaders had during their coaching period. There were two sub themes that were identified as integral to the coaching experience. They are noted in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: The good experience



i) Coach and coachee relationship

One of the emergent themes identified was the importance of the coach and coachee relationship. According to literature, the relationship between the coach and coachee is a significant part of the coaching process. Similarly, the role played by the coach-coachee relationship was highlighted by most respondents as a major factor in the success of the coaching process.

Millennial P: I think you definitely need to connect. It can't just be a transactional relationship. You need to connect, because this person needs to understand your personalityit will not be impactful because they will not understand you as a person and influences you to make certain decisions...so connection is key.

Millennial No expressed the role of chemistry and connection and the importance of these in a positive coaching experience.

Interviewer: ...do you think there is such a concept as perfect match between a coach and a coachee?

Millennial No: Yes. Firstly, I think there needs to be chemistry and a connection between the two parties. I think age also plays a big role...

because you are opening up to this person and you need to be able to trust the person.

Millennial St also emphasised being particular when one is selecting a coach.

Interviewer: ...do you think the kind of coach you have plays a role in the coaching experience?

Millennial St: You can't just take anyone. It's important. There are certain traits that you look at, something must attract you to a person that you want to coach you or be your coach.

Millennial P, No and St all spoke about the importance of a good fit between a coach and coachee. They used the words like “connect”, “chemistry” and “attract” to portray a good relationship. In this manner coaching is stressed as a collaborative process between a coach and their coachee.

It was interesting to note that participants who had been coached by internal coaches had a less positive experience than those participants who had external coaches. Coaching for leader development as an initiative by the employer may be implemented by an internal coach or an external coach. Three of the participants from this study had been coached by an internal coach. The internal coaches were employees of the organisations they work for, often employees who were senior to them. Millennial P, Millennial J and Millennial B, all had coaches who were internal. These co-workers were trained coaches.

Being coached by an internal coach was consistently reported as a challenge.

Millennial P reported that her coach was her superior who often made the sessions difficult as feedback sometimes felt uncomfortable and personal.

Interviewer: Did you experience any challenges during your coaching process?

Millennial P: ... the coach was our ...executive, it was very difficult, it didn't help...because it works better if you have got someone that you have no interaction with.

While all the millennial leaders who had undergone internal coaching highlighted coaching as beneficial for leader development, Millennial B expressed reservations about an internal coach for leader development. Millennial B also reflected on the effect having an internal coach had on her coaching experience as she was not able to be absolutely honest during the sessions.

Interviewer: What would you say were the benefits of coaching for you?

Millennial B: ... even though it was a safe space, but I wasn't as honest as I would be should I have had the session with an outsider. ... I felt that it wasn't building me to become a strong manager, because it was done by internal. I feel like it should be an external process.

Millennial J reported that having an internal coach did not give him the sense of objectivity from the part of the coach which made him conscious when engaging in his coaching process.

Interviewer: Do you think that you derived any benefit from coaching?

Millennial J: ... my coach was also my line manager. Now this is obviously a massive conflict... I think that was quite ineffective for quite a few years.

As part of the conclusion of the interview, the participants were requested to summarise their coaching experience and to share any thoughts they have on coaching. The issue of the right coach was highlighted by all participants.

Millennial P: Pairing is very important. You need to pair people correctly. You need to be a team at the end of the day. In as much as they [coaches] are helping you to be an effective leader, you are not only a leader in a work context.

Millennial St: You can't just take anyone as your coach. It is important. There are certain traits that you look at, something must attract you to a person that you want to coach you.

Millennial B: Coaching millennials, understand the millennial and then understand the person and then coach the millennial person. So the millennials is understanding what millennials are.

Millennial No: ... I think there needs to be chemistry and a connection between the two of you.

ii) *Developmental journey*

The participants reported that they outlined set objectives before engaging in the coaching process thus making the process of setting objectives one of the instruments used by their coach as a foundation for the coaching process.

Millennial N: ... I think that was basically the starting point. What do I want to achieve with the sessions, and how do I want to put in place things that will help me monitor my progress.

Millennial No: ... I think that was homework number one, actually.

Millennial B: Yes, we did. I was able to meet my personal objectives at that time. Also, I was able to meet my work objectives....

Millennial P: Yes, we definitely set objectives... where I am in my career , what am I doing, what are my challenges.

The participants reported that they set the objectives in the coach's presence during the first session which was before the coaching process. Participants used phrases such as "homework number one" to describe their set objectives. This indicates that self-reflection is in place from the first coaching session. It was also interesting to note that the objectives set required the millennial leaders to answer personal and work related questions. If objectives were set in the initial stages of the coaching process, the implication is that the coaching experience becomes

the narrative of the coachee from the beginning stages of the coaching relationship.

When responding to the coaching experiences, most participants referred to coaching initially being a scheduled, on-going journey. Later, it became ongoing and was influenced by needs that were identified by the leader, or in some cases the leaders' employer.

Interviewer: ...have you been through coaching?

Millennial St: I have. I believe it's an on-going continuous development process.

Millennial N had more than one coach. The first coach was for a period of one year where they met at least every second week. She then stopped the coaching journey but later realised that she needed assistance with her goals and because her previous coach had relocated, she found a new coach.

Interviewer: ...have you undergone coaching. How long was your coaching?

Millennial N: I did in 2013 and 2014...it did help a lot that process ...and then again in 2016 and part of 2017, I started coaching again with someone else. I had different issues.

Millennial No reported on the positive experience she had with her coaching process. She believed that her coach is a big part of her on-going self-development as a leader.

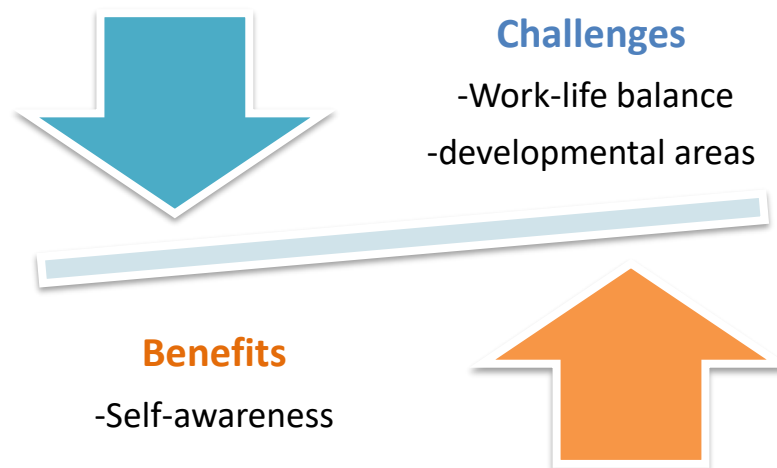
Interviewer: ...if you can tell me about your coaching experience...

Millennial No: The structured coaching was about six months and then we do it now as and when needed, so it is sporadic....

4.3.2 Before and after coaching experience

The challenges and benefits experienced by the participants were aligned with those noted in the literature on millennial leader's experiences with coaching. When looking at the challenges participants experienced before coaching and the benefits derived from coaching, there were three sub themes identified, namely work-life balance, acceptance of self and development areas and self-awareness as a coaching benefit.

Figure 2: Before and after coaching experience



The participants stated work-life balance and acceptance of self and developmental areas as the challenges they experienced in their leadership roles - particularly prior to engaging on the coaching process. The challenges expressed were areas that the millennial leaders felt they needed coaching to be able to manage. Interestingly, most participants reported self-awareness and the space to truly reflect on personal developmental areas as a direct benefit to the challenges.

i) Work-life balance

The challenges that the participants experienced in their leadership roles were of a personal nature but there was a common thread. The issue of work-life balance was evident in the responses in this study, whereby most of the millennial leaders

interviewed mentioned work life balance as a challenge they experienced in their leadership roles. For example, some of the responses were as follows:

Millennial N: ... I think I was struggling with striking a balance at work, at home and my life...

Millennial P: ... when you are present at work but absent at home, you don't strike a balance and you end up being miserable....

Millennial B reported that while she struggles with work-life balance, she also finds herself asking 'what is balance'.

Millennial B: but...what do we define as a balance, because one minute you are flourishing here, the next minute you are moving downhill here...

Millennial P and N reported that through coaching they had benefited with their personal work life balance dynamics. Millennial P mentioned that she has now learnt to "switch off completely" from her work dynamics when she is at home. Furthermore, Millennial N mentioned that through coaching she is now able to "strike a balance, being able to work but also being able to attend to personal issues".

ii) Developmental areas

Notably, most of the challenges reported by the millennial leaders in this study were personal and less work related. These were challenges that they expressed prior to undergoing coaching and which they took into the coaching session for assistance with.

Millennial Si, Millennial P and Millennial J reported that one of the main reasons they had coaching was to work on themselves to ensure alignment with the roles they had and the leaders they aspired to be.

Millennial J: ... what should I be doing, where should I be going, have I reached a plateau.

Millennial P: ...me basically ... going through my personal work, the power struggle balance, how to project myself, going through my challenges

Millennial Si was venturing into a different role and a business venture. She reported that she felt she needed the coach to assist in preparing her for the new leadership venture.

Interviewer: ...so the reason you approached her...?

Millennial Si: ... what can I do to bridge that knowledge ...am I in the right career or am I wasting my time with this thing?

Millennial No reported that her challenge was facing her truth where her weaknesses as a leader were concerned.

Millennial No: mainly it was facing the truth, accepting my weaknesses in my development areas.

iii) Self –awareness

The benefits of coaching varied for each participant, largely because each millennial leader engaged the coaching process with a personal objective. The participants' responses were a report on how the reflection process during coaching served as an active tool towards self-awareness for development.

Millennial P reported that her coaching included psychometric assessments which were part of the instruments the coach used to get to know her better.

Interviewer: What were the benefits of coaching for you?

Millennial P: I learnt about myself, about my developmental areas, how I can work on them and how I can engage effectively with people around me.

While Millennial No reported that she did not go through psychometric assessments as part of the coaching process, she also reported that the initial coaching process allowed her a better view of herself.

Interviewer: Were there any benefits to the coaching for you..?

Millennial No: Definitely ... it forced me to face certain aspects of my life that I was avoiding and to answer some of the questions that I have been again avoiding. It was beneficial in the sense that I got to know myself better.

Millennial Si, reported self-actualisation as the main benefit to her coaching process.

Interviewer: Would you say there were benefits throughout your coaching process...?

Millennial Si: there were absolute benefits in my coaching process. One benefit was the state of self-actualisation. I think self-actualisation is a luxury for most people. The idea that you can have time to think about yourself and reflect on who you are and what you are about and operates from that space was very important, because I think that is where my self-esteem and confidence came from.

Millennial Si: ... two was helping me to set goals and deliverables for myself.

Millennial St, reported that her first encounter with a coach was when she was in grade 11, and she has always called a coach as and when she needed to develop a certain aspect of her life. As an employee and employer, Millennial St reported that she has had both leadership and business coaching.

Interviewer: ...would you say coaching assisted you ...

Millennial St: I think it was very beneficial...coaching played a role in shaping me for my role in the workplace and business.

Often leaders get caught up in delivering on their mandate and coaching allows them the time and space to stop and review. This was the case for Millennial B

who reported that even as she did not deem her coaching process as impactful, she did realise a few benefits from the process.

Interviewer: What would you say were the benefits of coaching for you?

Millennial B: The benefit was to go through the reflection process....

Interviewer:did we mention benefits?

Millennial B: ...the benefit was understanding the role of a manager in such an organisation....

For Millennial N, coaching also provided a space for reflection. She reported that coaching allowed her to reflect on her childhood - giving her insight on some of the influences that shape the type of leader she is today.

Interviewer: ...What were the benefits of coaching?

Millennial N: What I really like about the sessions was that we were dealing with issues now and when she would help me to go back to things that I never thought would have an impact and now I am more aware that it is all linked, how a certain behaviour now would link to things that happened a long time ago or as a kid...

Interviewer: ...it unearthed issues, for lack of a better word?

Millennial N: Issues and things that I needed to be aware of and I think you begin to realise that we never take a stand back and look at our work and the things that we do and pat ourselves on the back and say "you are actually doing well than you think" and with coaching you start to realise that...

Millennial S also reported the space to reflect as the most beneficial part of her coaching process.

Interviewer: What were the benefits of coaching for you?

Millennial S: coaching is an objective space where you can self-reflect.

Millennial S:Coaching allowed me to self-reflect which got me to make certain decisions where my life and career choices are concerned.

For Millennial J, coaching also provided him the space to review his then life and career choices in line with where he wanted to be.

Interviewer: Do you think you derived any benefit from coaching?

Millennial J: I did, definitely

Interviewer: Can you tell me?

Millennial J: ... it was only after I had this new coach that I started thinking outside of my job and what should I be doing, where should I be going, have I reached a plateau...she got me thinking about things that effectively eventually make the decision to look outside and I've got absolutely no regrets having left.

Most of the millennial leaders mentioned the reflection process as being the most influential part of the coaching process that mostly led to the positive experience of the coaching process. The participants also spoke to the reflection process as being a "difficult but worthwhile" process.

As this study aimed to explore perceptions of coaching millennials as a leader development process, it was important for the researcher to not rely on assumptions based on responses. It was therefore necessary to ask the participants if they would recommend coaching as a leader development tool. All the participants reported that they would undoubtedly recommend coaching. Millennial N, P, S, J, Si all indicated that they would recommend coaching.

Millennial B, Si and No gave justifications to why they would recommend coaching.

Interviewer: Would you recommend coaching to a leader who has identified leadership development?

Millennial B was particularly passionate about leaders being coached for their betterment as leaders, and not for their betterment for a position.

Millennial B: ...Millennials that are in management positions should definitely go for coaching but the coaching should also speak to the individual not to the organisation first...

In response, Millennial Si and No presented that coaching does not only assist leaders develop in work related aspects but also in life aspects that somehow impact on how one is as a leader.

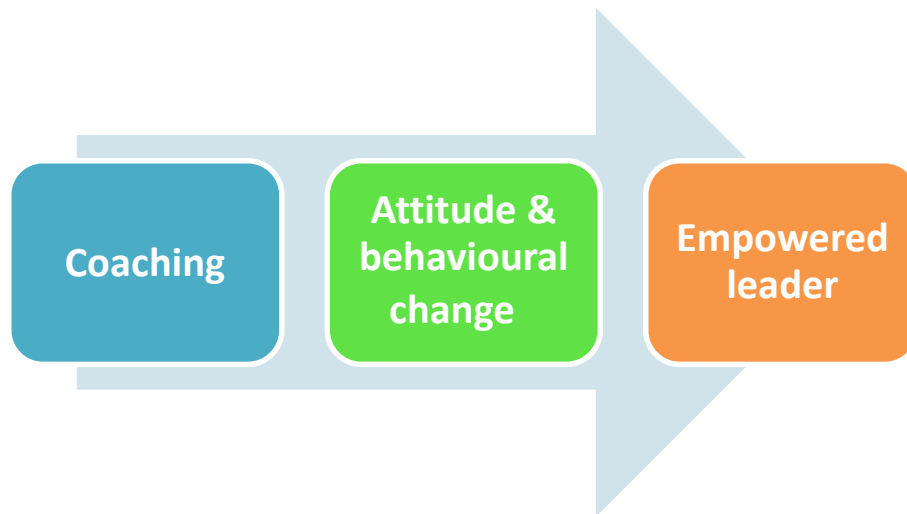
Millennial Si: Yes, definitely... for various reasons...

Millennial No: I would say it is extremely important. Firstly, because you get to know yourself in order to be able to lead other and you need to know who you are first...

4.3.3 Empowered leader

The participants reported that coaching impacted on their attitudes and behaviours, as leaders, which enhanced their leadership journey. Literature as well as the results of this study emphasise the coaching process as a journey with the impact on leader development being hugely influenced by the leader's commitment and willingness towards the process.

Figure 3: Empowered leader



Millennial Si reported her coaching journey as having changed her life. She reported that it has left her feeling empowered.

Interviewer: How has coaching impacted on your role..?

Millennial Si: ...it has really changed my life. I would have been a completely different person had I not done the coaching. I like it transformed the way I think about work, business and clients, and how to continue in that journey.

Millennial Si: ... it has kept me rooted firmly in the ground in knowing who I am and what I am about, but at the same time it has allowed me to sway my branches like a tree, so if things are going this way I am able to quickly pick that up and navigate them without losing myself. It has empowered me in terms of my business.

For Millennial No, coaching also resulted in her being more aware of her weaknesses and or challenges as a leader. She reported that the awareness and the process allowed her to work on those traits which were negatively impacting on her as a leader.

Interviewer: How would you say coaching impacted, if at all, on your role..?

Millennial No: Firstly, because I knew myself better, I was more assertive.

Interviewer: You knew yourself better post the coaching?

Millennial No: Yes, more assertive, more confident and I was able to approach certain issues in a different way, more beneficial to myself and to the stakeholders that I was dealing with.

Sharing a similar review of her coaching experience, Millennial N also reported to being more assertive post her coaching journey.

Interviewer: How has coaching impacted on your role..?

Millennial N: ... it has taken me to a point where I am clear, I can help you if I can, but that's it. So it has made me more assertive.

Interviewer: So I can say, you are now more assertive and you manage boundaries?

Millennial N: Yes, I have built those boundaries, healthy boundaries.

Millennial P reported that through coaching she is now more aware of how she projects herself, which has impacted on her engagements and appreciation of her team and how she deals with them on a daily basis.

Interviewer: How did coaching impact on your role in the workplace?

Millennial P: It changed the way I think. For me, it was always about what do I want to say and what do I want to achieve and I would not think of the other party that is listening to me and who is receiving my messages, so it helped me to strike that balance and to think of that for whatever engagements that I have. I am now very conscious of what am I trying to achieve and how am I going to project myself, how am I going to be received and how will I know that my message was received or impactful.

Millennial S reported that coaching made her a more conscious leader.

Interviewer: How did coaching impact on your role in the workplace?

Millennial S: the coaching and the reflection process made me change as a leader.

The participants reported that the coaching process left them feeling empowered; more aware of their areas of development but also aware that those could be converted to strengths. The participants used words such as “more assertive, it really changed my life” when reflecting on the impact coaching has had in their development. They all reflected on being different in their leadership roles in different ways but through coaching.

4.4 Conclusion

The millennial leader’s narratives outlined their personal experiences with the coaching process and the benefits and impacts of the process. While some of the experiences were not entirely positive, the view of coaching as a tool was generally viewed in a positive light. Those leaders that had challenging experiences reported their views of the possibility that the experience would have been different had the coach been different. At this point it is important to highlight that a leader development is a lifelong journey in which the individual interprets and makes meaning out of experiences that contribute towards their leadership journey.

The participants reported that the coaching experience was personal for each individual but was mostly influenced by the coach-coachee relationship as well as the developmental journey that a leader goes through. It must be noted that the benefits participants received from the coaching process, were a result of self-reflection and not as a result of the coach giving supervisory advice. The study also showed a leaders’ development as a journey, one that goes through self-awareness, behavioural and attitude change. The following chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research aims and questions.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an interpretation of the findings of the study in relation and in comparison to the studies literature review.

The research questions are listed as follows:

1. What are millennial leaders' experiences of being coached?
2. How does coaching contribute towards millennial leaders' ability to deal with the challenges experienced in their management leadership roles before coaching?
3. How has coaching impacted on the millennial leaders' development journey?

The implications from the study are unpacked and in addition, a set of recommendations are presented.

5.2 Millennial leaders' experiences of being coached

Individuals and employers invest in executive coaching with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of leaders (Nelson & Hogan, 2009). Throughout the engagements with the participants, it was interesting to note that while most of the participants did not, at first, identify themselves as millennials, they all identified differences in themselves as leaders in comparison to their colleagues from pre-millennial generations. Leaders from the millennial generation ought to be conscious of how they interact with colleagues who arguably possess different traits (Bolser & Gosciej, 2015) .

When discussing coaching, the participants were mostly positive about the process. Most of the participants went through the coaching process due to a planned employee development program paid for by their employers. Three of the participants had however undergone the coaching process as a result of a personally identified need for coaching and self-funded the coaching process.

Reporting on why they felt it important to financially invest in coaching, the participants noted that they had identified a need to work towards the development of their weaknesses in order to enhance their leadership journeys, and they believed that coaching would be a result-oriented solution. A leader development plan is created in line with intrapersonal competence which includes self-motivation, self-regulation and self-awareness (Day, 2000).

The participants had all been in management positions for a minimum of three years, and had grown in their careers over the years but still aspired to grow further. Their reasons for engaging in the coaching process were indeed leader development in nature. These ranged from wanting to understand themselves for the job, wanting to go through the process of overcoming challenges, wanting to enhance the self as a leader through continuous development and looking for an objective space to work on a developmental plan. According to MacKie (2015) coachees engage with the coaching process already possessing motivation, ability and the capacity to change.

It was evident from the participants' responses that the coach-coachee relationship is a vital element in the leaders' perceived value of the coaching experience. The relationship between the coachee and the coach is a significant part of the coaching process (Nelson & Hogan, 2009). The participants reported having enjoyed a resource who listened to them without judgement, and whose mission was their personal development. It can be said that coaching allows a leader to focus on their daily challenges and experiences, by using the time to critically reflect on their daily practices (Robertson, 2004).

In ensuring an effective coaching experience, coaches engage with various coaching interventions including listening to the leader being coached and sharing themes that come out during the coaching process (de Haan et al., 2011). One of the participants reported to being surprised by the themes that the coach provided to her as feedback - themes that gave meaning to her frustrations in the workplace and frustrations raised by her team where her leadership style was concerned. Coaching has gained popularity as a process towards leader development. This is a result of its ability to assist leaders in modifying behaviour

and perspectives without sacrificing on competence and self-esteem (Kombarakaran et al., 2008).

The experience of coaching for leader development was described by the participants as a journey. The growth and empowerment of a leader is a pathway, and therefore, leaders require coaches who will be available to support the development process (Katz & Miller, 1996). The leader coaching process is timed and structured with an objective of improving the leaders effectiveness and behaviours (Kombarakaran et al., 2008). Most of the participants reported to having engaged a coach on a set contractual term but not cancelling the relationship post-coaching. This allowed them to engage their coaches as and when they identified new coaching needs. Some of the participants mentioned that when they feel that they have lost a sense of control in their life balance or in cases where they have to make certain decisions about their lives, they began to revisit the coaching process as this gives them a sense that they will make empowered and informed decisions. Korotov (2016) noted that coaching is a process that provides a level of psychological safety needed by leaders, which allows the said leaders to effectively work on their established development plan in both work and personal life. As indicated by Day *et al.* (2014) leaders must actively participate in their life's narrative and development construct in order to realise the best results.

When engaging further on the coaching experience, it was noted that even the participants who engaged coaches via their employers, ended up having personal contracts with their coaches. These contracts were directly between the coach and the leader and outside of the employer initiated contracts. Grant and O'Connor (2010) defined coaching as a collaboration that facilitates the enhancement of life experiences, goal attainment and self-directed learning and performance in the coachees' personal and professional life. The participants' responses were in agreement with this view of coaching as they reported to being clearer about their life experiences and how the past impacted on their present experiences. Most of the participants reported to making decisions post the coaching process, decisions that allowed them to achieve their goals and or

moving closer towards their goals by learning skills they did not possess prior to the coaching process.

5.3 The challenges before coaching and benefits of being coached

As highlighted in the previous discussion, the participants noted challenges that were related to the development of themselves in their individual space and not in their employment space. It appeared that the participants were not looking at coaching as a tool to develop them for the roles they were in, but to equip them in being leaders for any role and or employer. This can be linked to literature that notes millennials are a generation that shies away from being in positions that do not grant them leadership growth (Ng *et al.*, 2010).

Bushardt *et al.* (2018) identified millennials as being individualistic in their engagements in that they are mostly driven by individual values and less by organisational values. It must be noted that those participants that had the challenge of assessing their self-alignment to the roles they were in, did not necessarily look to develop that area for the betterment of their leadership role, but rather as a means to ensure that the roles they had ventured into served their goals and purpose. Millennials have been noted as being independent thinkers who strive on the possibilities of regular accomplishments in the positions they hold (Martin, 2008). Other traits attributed to millennials include optimism, entitled, impatient and multitasking (DeVaney, 2015).

The first stage of a coaching process is the rapport building between a coach and the coachee. Second to that is identifying the challenges as experienced by the coachee, the identification of these is often in coach-coachee conversation; with the aim of exploring those challenges with the assistance of the coach (de Haan *et al.*, 2011). The coachable challenges presented by the participants included:

- The need to learn more about the self and the value one has in relation to the organisations they serve and the outside world.
- Low self-esteem.
- Lack of confidence.

- Work-life balance.
- Accepting weaknesses and developmental areas which have come up from performance appraisals.
- Knowing the self to enable life changing decision making.

Some literature has argued that millennial traits are a weakness and a hindrance to them positively adapting to the workforce and being recognised by colleagues from pre-millennial generations. Brack and Kelly (2012) noted millennials have the most diverse talents; are independent and do not rely on their superiors to establish self-confidence. Some of the participants reported being vocal to their seniors about issues that their colleagues from pre-millennial generations would shy away from raising. They mentioned the need to have uncomfortable conversations with their seniors for the benefit of the organisation. One of the millennial traits raised in studies (Frankel, 2016; Martin, 2008) is that this generation is expressive of their views of how organisations and the teams they lead (and sometimes are not part of) should perform. Two of the participants reported that this trait has made them somewhat unpopular within their work teams but that did not have an effect on them as they knew it was for the benefit of the organisation.

For participants, the issue of work-life balance and the leaders' development areas and or weaknesses stood out as the most common challenges before coaching. All the participants were parents, and each of them reported viewing their families as their life priority, and how most of the decisions they make, including work related decisions, are influenced by the desire to ensure a work-life balance. Millennial P and Millennial St reported that their family life extends to their parents and the extended family. This is a characteristic that is familiar to South African communities due to the country's history. The cohort that is faced with this family dynamic is termed the "sandwiched generation," which is consist of individuals who care for both children and aging parents (Pines et al., 2011). Franklin (2015) mentioned work-life balance as one of the well-publicised values and challenges experienced by millennials. The self-view of millennials may be a challenge for the leader development as some of these leaders may be inclined to overestimate their strengths and underestimate their development areas,

which then negatively impacts on the efficacy of their leadership roles (Day *et al.*, 2014).

Work-life balance is an issue of great importance to this generation. The participants all wanted a life outside of work that does not negatively impact on their careers and their career aspirations and growth. The participants viewed work-life balance as something that the employer should offer to them, not as an incentive but as a necessity. According to Pines *et al.* (2011), the importance of both work and a healthy functioning family has been well recognised as it appears that satisfaction in one sphere of life enables satisfaction in the other, and stress in one is associated with stress in the other. Bolser and Gosciej (2015) enforce this view by observing that millennials strive for a positive work experience that affords them a positive work-life balance.

Integral to a leader's journey is the teams they lead. Therefore, it is important that leaders are aware of how the team receives them. One of the participants reported that the team had experienced her as being unapproachable, an issue she had dismissed, but through coaching had come to appreciate and become conscious of. A leader's ability to interact with others is of importance which is why organisations should invest in developing leaders as opposed to leadership (Boyatzis *et al.*, 2006).

The benefit of executive coaching is the provision of objective feedback relating to their personal and career performance and related issues (Hall *et al.*, 1999). The participants spoke of uncomfortable feedback provided to them by their coaches based on their areas of development. The respondents spoke about how in most cases they were aware of the trait brought up by the coach but had mostly shied away from objectively engaging with the issue for their development. Furthermore literature notes increased self-awareness and personal confidence as some of the benefits one may expect in coaching (Korotov, 2016; Passmore, 2015).

Some of the benefits derived from coaching included:

- The ability to understand 'the self' better.
- Reflection assisting with self-actualisation.
- Discovering the type of leader one is and how the team receives them as a leader.
- Confronting the past and dealing with its impact on their current life and who they have become.

Most respondents spoke to the benefit of reflecting during the coaching process. Karakas et al. (2015) identified an increased necessity to give focus to the reflective, emotional and creative capabilities of leaders. Most of the participants reported self-reflection as a difficult but beneficial process that yielded results for them inside and outside their coaching environment. Avolio and Hannah (2008) noted that leaders who have a high level of readiness for their development journey will be in a positive state to reflect and make meaning of events and challenges which have potential to affect their development journey. One of the participants spoke of the reflection during her coaching as a process that allowed her to deal with past experiences and events. The participant noted that initially she was not aware that these had an effect on her leadership journey and the decisions and behaviours she presented as a leader.

The coaching process offered leaders an opportunity to consider and reflect on issues that may have been obstacles to their effectiveness as leaders (Robertson, 2004). Kombarakaran et al. (2008) noted coaching as a process that provides leaders with expertise and objective assessment and interpretation of their leadership journeys. Furthermore, Grant and O'Connor (2010) noted that coaching allows for the learning process to be based on: the leader's real experiences with their work and personal life; reflective observation of the experiences; reflection and analysis of the identified challenges and the development of solutions leading to a revived way of leading; and rationalising and thinking.

When talking about the benefit of reflection during the coaching process, the participants reported learning about themselves and also the kind of leader they

are. This allowed the participants to be appreciative of their weaknesses; of how to deal with challenges; and to identify careers that align to their true self. Robertson (2004) considered executive coaching as a process that assists leaders to better appreciate their values and beliefs while acknowledging their true self and interests as a leader.

Day *et al.* (2014) noted the success of self-reflection in coaching as one that is dependent on the leader's willingness to fully participate in the holistic coaching process.

5.4 The impact of coaching

MacKie (2015) referred to the desired end result for executive coaching as leadership effectiveness. A leader's development journey prepares and empowers leaders to be best positioned to engage in leadership interventions (Korotov, 2016). The participants all reported that the coaching process had allowed them to be more aware of themselves; their strengths and weaknesses in their personal and leader space. The sense of self-awareness contributed to their attitude and behavioural changes towards becoming more effective leaders. Shelton *et al.* (2002) noted that successful and effective leaders actively transform themselves in a manner that empowers them to positively becoming an integral part of the organisations they serve. Leader development results in changes in perceptions, motivations and patterns of behaviour in leaders (Harms *et al.*, 2011).

When reporting on the impact coaching has had on their leader development journeys, the participants reported a sense of evolution as the main outcome. They reported to having transformed in:

1. How they engage others.
2. How they think and their decision making process.
3. Their confidence and being content with the self and capabilities.
4. Becoming conscious leaders, by gaining an ability to listen more and better.
5. Self-actualisation.

6. Gaining an empowered approach on life by knowing how to build healthy boundaries and the ability to strike a sustainable work-life balance.

Leader coaching aims to improve leader behaviour, leadership skills and the decision-making process. Through the development of these, a leader's social awareness and productivity are increased making the leaders more in tune with their interpersonal relationships (Anthony, 2017).

Millennials have been noted as being inclined to have transformational leadership traits as they look to transform themselves and their organisations for the benefit of their teams and the organisations they serve (Van Zyl & Dalglish, 2009). In their responses, participants spoke of coaching as having made them more assertive, and conscious as leaders. Robertson (2004) argued that leaders who go through the coaching process become reflective thus possessing the ability to act with increased confidence in workspaces and situations.

McDermott *et al.* (2011) outline leader development as a process focused on an individual, which is supported by self-motivation, self-awareness and self-regulation. It is important that self-motivation comes into play as one has to consciously make changes with the self to enable positive change. The participants spoke of their coaches giving them "homework" to reflect on their coaching objectives indicating that the coaching process is an individual's process with the support of the coach.

Coaching allows for the learning process to be based on real experiences; reflective observation of the experiences; reflection and analysis of the identified challenges and the development of solutions. This leads to a revive way of leading, rationalising and thinking (Robertson, 2004). When engaging in coaching as a transformation tool, it was of interest that the participants noted that the transformation made them more in touch and rooted in who they are. The participants also reported to having learnt to move around to accommodate situations within their leadership journeys without ever losing their sense of self. The participants reported that coaching enabled them to appreciate their environment and the dynamics around them, while equally learning to work with the social and workspace dynamics without losing their sense of self. Brack and

Kelly (2012) argued that if coaching is a process that changes attitude and behaviour, coaching may then have a role in correcting the perceived negative characteristics or even ensure that millennials work positively towards their progress in their leadership journeys.

Once leaders have been through the coaching process they are likely to be more confident in their representation as leaders. Coaching for leader development is an impactful process which enables continuous learning for effective leaders (Robertson, 2004). It must be noted that the success of coaching is in most part dependent on the coachee's commitment to the process (Avolio & Hannah, 2008).

Coaching was summarised by some of the participants as an empowering tool. Through coaching, the participants reported gaining confidence to approach matters and people in a manner that is beneficial for the individual leader first - without sacrificing others. Through coaching one is able to become an empowered leader who is able to balance the demands of the world (Boyatzis et al., 2006).

Figure 4 below provides a summary of the study and figure 5 provides a summary of the findings.

Figure 4: Summary of the study

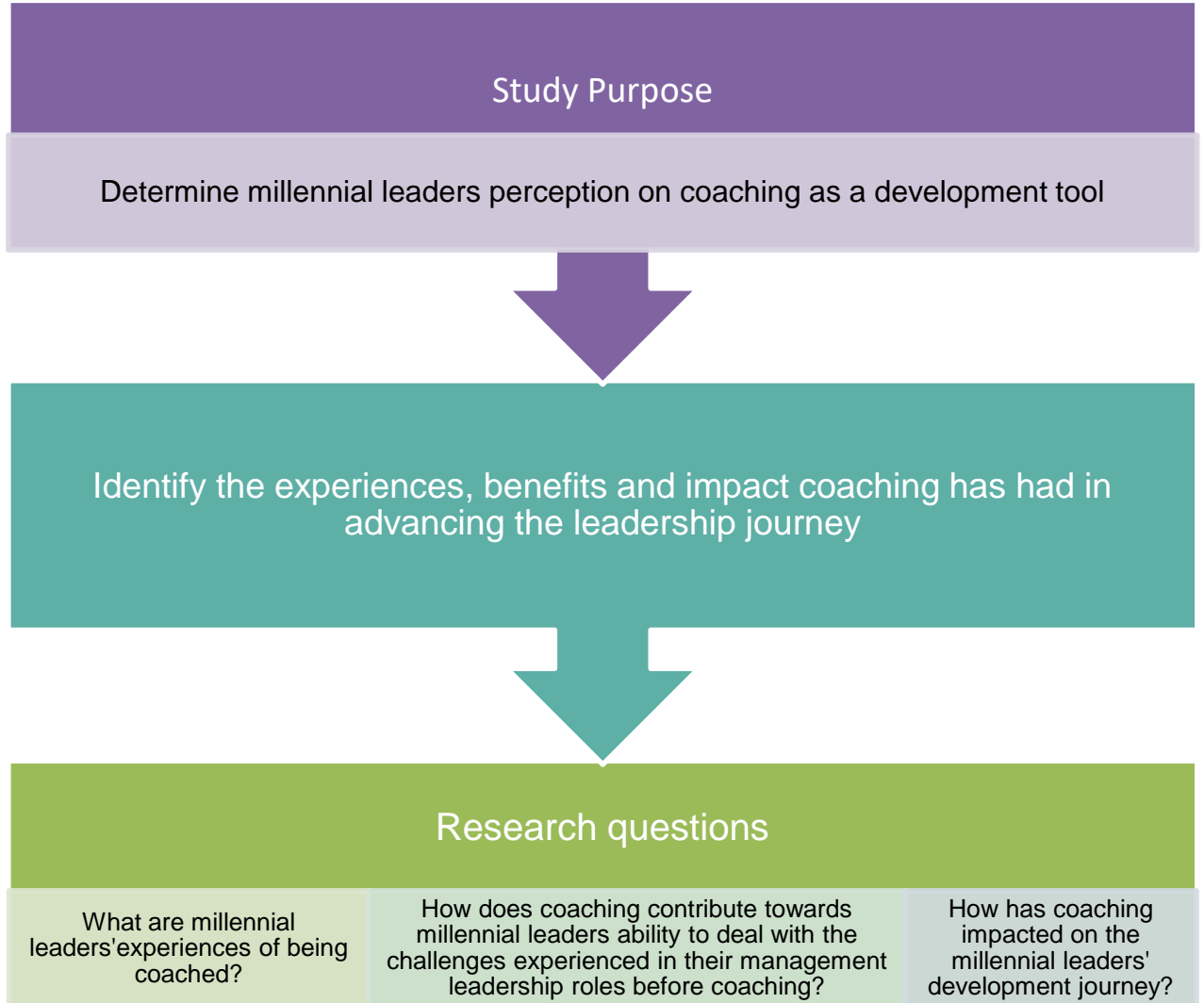


Figure 5: Summary of findings



5.4 Conclusion

Coaching and a leader's developmental journey are an individualised process, which requires conscious commitment on the part of the leader in order to be a success. The participants had a positive experience with their coaching process and each mentioned the process being beneficial process - even though they reported to not having realised the impact immediately. The millennial generation is known for having high academic qualifications and more talent than their colleagues from generations before. The assumption then is that the skills are not a developmental requirement but that the psychological dynamics of the

leader are what requires development. The challenge in most cases is to develop this generation in their leader capacity. Coaching is presented as the ideal tool for this as it allows them to invest time and resource in transforming themselves to being more conscious, present leaders.

The participants in this study highlighted that they did not need to be coached for a position or for an employer but that they needed to be coached towards being empowered leaders who can withstand challenges. This may be attributed to the trait that this generation is not loyal to employers but to changing the world. Coaching is considered a costly investment. Employers must keep this in mind considering that this generation is not likely to be with the same employer for a long time. However, millennials are the current generation in the workforce and investing in them is critical for the long term sustainability of the workforce and country.

It is important to note that coaching was identified as the second practice with the biggest gap between what the employer offers to employees and what the employees would like to see as a development practice and or tool. The difference in coaching millennials is the manner in which this generation wishes to be engaged by their coaches. They desire flexibility and often want technology to be part of the coaching process.

Recommendations derived from this study include:

- Continued attention to the evolving dynamics within the workspace.
- The need for those currently in leadership to ensure that the workspace evolves, not for the benefit of one generation, but for the benefit of the world around us that is changing.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 provides a summary in relation to each research question, followed by recommendations. The limitations of the study and future research suggestions are presented in closing.

6.2 Conclusions regarding millennial leaders' experiences of coaching

The participants' reflection on their experience of the coaching process revealed that the leader's willingness to develop together with the coaching dynamics have a role to play in the overall experience of the process. It would appear that these two factors have a huge significance in the success or failure of coaching. The reflection process that leaders undergo during the coaching process enables the leader to realise positive and impactful results from his or her coaching.

On the issue of the coach-coachee dynamics, most participants reported on the significant role of chemistry, between the coach and coachee, in the coaching relationship. Some of the participants reported on the need for the coach to know and appreciate the millennial traits in order to have a successful coaching relationship with a particular millennial. One of the participants extended this view by saying that coaches should know and appreciate millennial traits first before aiming to understand the person being coached.

The participants reported coaching as a process that not only provides a leader with positive feedback, but that also provides constructive feedback on areas of personal and professional development. Therefore, this coaching dynamic requires the individual leader (coachee) to be ready for development which enables them to positively take the feedback provided by the coach and constructively use this feedback for their development journey. In addition, the coaching process allows for a leader to continuously develop as they evolve in their work and social environments.

6.3 Conclusions regarding the value millennial leaders derived from coaching

The findings indicate that coaching, as a tool for a leader's development, can be one of the elements that positively contribute to an outcome of an empowered leader. Furthermore, the process towards self-actualisation and self-awareness can be achieved through self-reflection, a positive attitude and a safe space that the coaching environment provides. Most of the participants described the coaching environment in particular, as being an unthreatening space that allowed them to be vulnerable and accept the areas of development presented to them during the coaching process. The exceptions were those whose coaches were internal to the organisation, and with whom they had a subordinate relationship.

Achieving self-awareness during the coaching process became an empowering tool for the leaders. According to the participants, the coaching process allows leaders to consciously work on their development plan with an appreciation of physical and psychological challenges to their success.

It was of great interest to observe that all participants acknowledged the coaching process as their own narrative and journey with the coach only being the support structure within the process. The participants reported the coach as being the support structure that ensures the leaders were accountable to their development plans.

6.4 Conclusions regarding millennial leaders perceived positive impact of coaching

The combination of motivation and ability to change is seen as a prerequisite for effective engagement in the leadership development process. The participants reported coaching as a difficult but necessary and impactful process that every leader should go through. The participants reported that the process of learning about themselves as individuals was sometimes a challenging one which meant that they had to accept how others experience them. This acceptance led the leaders towards becoming conscious decision makers, who have a progressive engagement protocol, and an approachable presentation of self as leaders.

From the participants' responses it was noted that their coaching experience did not only impact on them as leaders in the work context but also as leaders in their personal lives outside of work as well. Other participants reported coaching as an eye opening experience. To this end, this study's conclusion is that coaching as a tool for leader development is an impactful instrument that empowers leaders in all spheres of their lives.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The average age of millennials in 2018 was 38 years old. The expectation was that while coaching is a relatively new phenomenon, it would be easy to source millennial leaders both male and female who had been through a coaching process. However, the researcher experienced difficulties in securing millennial participants who had been through leadership development coaching for a period of three months or more. This was particularly true for male participants, as it appeared that most coaches had not had millennials as clients over the years and those that had, the clients were not readily available to participate in this study. The study sample was majority female - with male participants being in the group that was not readily available.

As the research objective was to engage millennial leaders who had experienced coaching, the study could not ascertain the view from those who had not been through coaching, thus not being able to detect reasons why the number of millennial leaders who had experienced coaching was arguably low.

6.6 Recommendations

South African millennials, like their global counterparts, set high standards for themselves and their employers. They will switch employers with the intention of exposing themselves to something different. They will tend to get frustrated leading to high levels of stress, if they believe they are not achieving their desires

from the employers. These can impact negatively on a leader's development which coaches should be mindful of when coaching this generation of leaders.

In addition, South African millennials are not only affected by global and technological trends but largely political and social dynamics and the history of the country which impacts on how this cohort thinks, behaves and makes decision.

The process of self-reflection was reported by most participants as the phase during the coaching process that allowed them to reach their best self as developed leaders. Therefore, one of the study recommendations is that coaches, regardless of the coaching tool used, must ensure that self-reflection is always one of the coaching instruments used during the coaching process - particularly when engaging with millennial coachees. Millennials have been identified as a generation that overly asserts their strengths and less of their areas of development. It is assumed that through self-reflection, this cohort of leaders would be in a position to best achieve self-actualisation for their benefit as leaders.

In addition, coaching is an important tool used towards a leader's development yet in many cases employers do not readily select it as an improvement tool initially. In a holistic manner, it would be recommended that employers look to invest in this tool to ensure the empowerment of leaders in their respective leadership roles psychologically as well as in their roles outside the workspace.

Lastly, of interest was that two participants reported having observed a coaching process that did not yield positive results due to the coachee's lack of commitment to the process. The leader's negative attitude towards the development process in its entirety was attributed as being the reason for the process failure, and in turn, the limited learnings on the side of the coachee. The recommendation therefore is that leaders should take ownership of their development and ensure a positive attitude when engaging the development process to assist them in achieving positive results.

6.7 Suggestions for future studies

Hamori *et al.* (2015) provides results of coaching as one of the tools for development that leaders wish to engage in but find that it is one that has the most gaps in as far as the employers contribution is concerned. It would therefore be useful to ascertain the employer's perception of coaching and why there is no match between the leader's requirement of coaching and the employer's willingness to invest in coaching.

The study investigated millennial traits from the perspective of millennials. The participants justified these traits as the way the generation has evolved in line with the societal evolution. It would be of interest to investigate the employer's willingness to evolve and the role coaching may play in ensuring a multi-generational efficient workspace.

The participants reported to being empowered, conscious leaders post their coaching process. It is recommended that a study on the impact and effects that a leaders coaching has on the teams they lead and their experience of the leader, is undertaken. This will provide an inclusive understanding of the phenomenon of coaching and the nature of millennial developmental traits.

Noting that most of the male respondents cancelled meetings, it would be on interest to study the male leaders' perception of coaching for development.

6.8 Conclusion

While experiences of the millennial leaders interviewed for this study differed and were determined by the individual experiences, commonalities in the experiences and perceived benefits and impact of coaching were noted. The study noted that coaching millennials is not significantly different to coaching pre-millennial generations; millennial leaders enjoy feedback that constructively builds them towards their better self, however millennial leaders have a different expectation in terms of being engaged by their coaches as they look out for coaches who are

technologically and socially diverse. It was noted that South African millennials are very family centric and can become frustrated with their employers if they feel their needs in the workplace are not met. This does require employers to constantly ensure that their retention and attraction strategies aimed at this generation are aligned with the engagement needs of this cohort.

Martins and Martins (2012) argue that understanding South African millennials would enable pre millennial colleagues and management to better connect and get the most out of the members of this generation as the future of business is arguably dependent on the millennial generation. The study reflected a positive perception of coaching as a development tool, but it is advised that organisations consider the impact of utilising internal coaches in the leader's development process.

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APPENDIX (A) Ethical Clearance



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Reference: Ms Jennifer Mgolodela
E-mail: jennifer.mgolodela@wits.ac.za

18 October 2018
Person No: 1772329
PAG

Mrs N Malunga
11 Trochail Road
Sarnia
3610
South Africa

Dear Mrs Nobuhle Malunga

Master of Management: Approval of Title

We have pleasure in advising that your proposal entitled *The perceived role of coaching in enhancing millennials' leadership development* has been approved. Please note that any amendments to this title have to be endorsed by the Faculty's higher degrees committee and formally approved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Bosman'.

Mrs Marike Bosman
Faculty Registrar
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

APPENDIX (B) Declaration of Consent

I (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I desire.

Signature of participant

Date.....

Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

University of the Witwatersrand

APPENDIX (C) Supervisor's permission to submit



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
FACULTY OF COMMERCE, LAW & MANAGEMENT

CERTIFICATE TO BE SIGNED BY SUPERVISORS OF HIGHER DEGREE CANDIDATES

Buhle Malunga and 1772329 candidate for the Master of Management in the field of
(student's name) (student number) (degree) Business Executive Coaching

has today submitted his/her thesis/dissertation titled:

The perceived role of coaching in enhancing millennial leaders' development

A) Has his/her thesis / dissertation been submitted with the acquiescence of the supervisor?

Yes Yes No _____

B) To the best of your knowledge are you able to verify that the candidate has acknowledged wherever any information used in the thesis or dissertation or other work has been obtained by him or her while employed by, or working under the aegis of, any person or organisation other than the University or its associated institutions?

Yes Yes No _____

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Dr Carol Mitchell

SIGNATURE: *Carol Mitchell* DATE: 25.03.2019

NAME OF ACADEMIC HEAD / RESEARCH DIRECTOR: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

APPENDIX (D) Instrument

The perceived role of coaching in enhancing millennial leaders’ development

Interview Guide

Good Day, my name is Buhle Malunga. Thank you for taking time to talk to me today. We should take an hour. We will talk about your coaching experience in relation to your personal leadership development.

This discussion is confidential – your personal details and your responses will be kept at the most confidence.

Please note that there are no wrong or right answers – it is therefore important that your answers are clear and are not based on your perceptions of what you think I want to hear.

Please note that this discussion will be recorded for research noting purposes but will not be distributed to any parties without your consent.

The questions are as follows:

Section A

1. What is your name?
2. What is your birth date?
3. What is your current job position?
4. How long have you had the position for?
5. How long have you been in a management position?

Section B

1. What do you know about the millennial generation?

2. Would you consider yourself a millennial? Why /why not?
3. Do you identify yourself in any of the following “millennial traits”? (List traits not already mentioned)
4. What is important to you in work and in life?

Section C

1. Have you ever undergone a coaching process?
2. Tell me a bit about your coaching: (Gather information regarding coaching: what kind, how many sessions, over what period, completed/ongoing)
3. Did you have set objectives when you engaged the coaching process? If yes, do you believe that these were met?
4. What were the benefits of the coaching for you?
5. What were the challenges you experienced in the coaching process?
6. How has coaching impacted on your role in your workplace?

Section D

1. Would you recommend coaching to a leader that has identified a development need?
2. Would you like to share any other thoughts that you have on your coaching experience, coaching in general or ideas on how coaches should work with you and your peers? **Thank you**