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Generational differences at workplace: Followers' well-being trapped in either job distress or eustress when perceiving leaders' characters

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Abstract

This study investigated the predictive influence of generation X-leaders' characters on millennial-followers' job stress. Three hundred and sixteen (males = 67.4%; females = 32.6%, teaching = 71.5%; non-teaching = 28.5%) millennial-followers were participants. Ages of the participants ranged between 22 and 36 ($M_{age} = 30.53$; $SD = 3.84$). The test of hypotheses using multiple regression analysis indicated that leaders' interest and behavioural integrity produced perceived positive predictive influence on millennial-followers' job stress (distress) whereas humility is a non-significant predictor of millennial-followers' perceived job stress. On the contrary, forgiveness and gratitude negatively predicted millennial-followers' job stress (eustress). This study suggested socialisation hypothesis as framework for understanding perception of job stress by followers at workplace based on generational difference (millennials and Xers). The study spurs ideas on leadership and followership dynamics at workplace.

Keywords: character, distress, eustress, followers, leaders, millennials

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Introduction

The experience of work can be stressful and millennials at risk for job distress because they are in the period in which different perspectives on issues like work ethics, leadership, and authority can cause conflict, frustration, and misunderstanding if not managed well (Murphy, 2012). Worse still when leaders lack behavioural integrity, followers perceive and experience job as distressful (Simons, 2002). Indeed, job distress arises when there is psychological and or physical strain or tension resulting from work task, the workplace, the job characteristics, and role conflict between leaders and followers, or worker capabilities (Jou et al., 2013).

Millennials - those born between 1981 and 1999 (Meriacet al., 2010) and Generational X (Xers) those born between 1960 and 1980 (Crowley, 2003), were raised with very different technologies and lifestyles (Bolser et al., 2015), and they both were considered to have developed different characters and perspectives relating to work (Wils et al., 2011). In most educational institutions in Nigeria, millennials are mainly followers whereas Xers exert leadership (Anyaegbunam, 2017).

This study suggests that because of observed differences in character expression towards work; it is possible that millennials well-being could be trapped in stressful feeling at workplace as Xers are leaders within Nigerian educational institutions. In this study, the author coined Xer-leaders and millennial-followers for the purpose of distinction between Xers who exercise leadership from those who do not; and millennial who are followers at work from those who are not. From this point, Xer-leaders' expression of their work experiences could relate to perception of job as distressful or eustressful by millennial-followers who are not currently discharging leadership responsibilities.

Few studies (e.g., Antoniou et al., 2006; Harris-Boundy et al., 2010) have addressed generational differences and job stress in educational institutions. Further, the degree of job stress correlated with a person's perceived inability to deal with an environmental demand resulting from leaders' character relating to inconsistency in words and actions (Akoijam et al., 2011). Thus, this study was conducted in Nigeria of West Africa where Xers dominate in leadership positions and millennials are mostly followers in educational institutions (Anyaegbunam, 2017). This study considered the departmental heads, deans of faculty, directors, registrars, and vice chancellors as leaders if they aged 36 years and above and classified millennial as followers if they aged less than 36 years and not exerting leadership positions.

Other studies (e.g., Kooper et al., 2011) have addressed generational differences at workplace but not in relation to stress. Even as a study had addressed leaders' behavioural integrity and job stress (Ibrahim et al., 2017), no previous study has considered generational differences in relation to job stress due to followers' perception of leaders' characters in educational institutions. Thus, there is gap in knowledge on how leaders' characters could influence followers' perception of job stress due to generational differences. Therefore, the present study's focus on millennials' perception of their Xer-leaders character is a significant contribution to knowledge in job stress, generational differences and *followership psychology* - the emerging area of social psychology that focuses on leadership and followership dynamics.

Xer-Leaders' characters

Character refers to pattern of qualities of an individual, distinct from other human beings, that make up one's personality (Gilmore et al., 2015), and defined in interest, behavioural integrity, humility, forgiveness, and gratitude (Liborius, 2014). In work situations, leaders' characters have been shown to relate to followers' outcomes such as job

stress, affliction, and absenteeism (Liborius, 2014). There is no evidence of previous study, which investigated the predictive influence of leaders' characters on perceived job stress among millennials. Therefore, in the present study we investigated five dimensions of leaders' characters and their relationship with job stress.

Interest describes caring about, having important and positive feelings towards something (Harackiewicz et al., 2010), and has been conceptualized into *individual* and *situational*: Individual interest is more enduring, and trait-like, and can be considered a disposition which individuals take with them from one context to the next. Interest of Xers regarding work were developed in the context the millennials are unfamiliar with, so expressing such interest at work in which millennial are involved, could be perceived stressful by millennial. On the other hand, situational interest is more momentary and situational bound and can be a specific reaction to something in a situation (Hidi et al., 1988; Renninger, 2000). Thus, interest is regarded as a function of both the person and the situation with interaction between the person and the object to determine the extent of interest development with knowledge, well-being or positive emotion, and personal value as determining factors (Hidi et al., 2006). Earlier research in interest have focused on process that contributed to learning and achievement (Harackiewicz et al., 2010); better performance and achievement (Hidi, 1990) and both situational and individual interest promote attention, recall, task persistence, and effort (Ainley et al., 2002; Hidi, 1990; Hidi et al., 2006). Thus, interest can be regarded more personal than collective and plays more pivotal or positive role at personal level.

Given that Xers developed interests based on their generational experiences, their interest had been shown to differ from those of millennial (Wils et al., 2011). Thus, the present study proposed that perception of Xer-leaders' interest by millennial-followers could as well predict perception of job stress among millennial-followers in educational institutions. At this point, the study examined how perception of Xer-leaders interest by millennial-followers would predict millennial-followers' job stress.

Leaders' behavioural integrity

Even as integrity of leaders has been of increasing concern within organizations (Kanungo et al., 1996; Parry et al., 2002), it should not be confused with leaders' behavioural integrity which refers to congruence between an actor's words and deeds (Simons, 2002; Palanski et al., 2007; Grahek et al., 2010). In a study, leaders' behavioural integrity relates with work stress (Ibrahim et al., 2017), and perceived leaders' behavioural integrity did not elevate followers to higher performance but rather, depending on the leaders' consistency in words and actions, lead followers to job stress and negative performance (Giampetro et al., 1998; Yukl, 1998). Leaders' behavioural integrity can be stressful to followers at work when there is mismatch between words and actions leaders espouse (Simons, 1999). Earlier, Giampetro et al. (1998) suggested that leaders mostly succeed in inspiring their followers if only their vision was greatly robust and they demonstrated characters congruent with their actions, which in turn may promote well-being of followers. Thus, Xer-leaders' behavioural integrity could have link with perceived job stress of millennial-followers in a situation of actions and deeds incongruence. To the best awareness of the researcher, no previous study has explored the link between Xer-leaders' behavioural integrity and millennial-followers' job stress.

Humility

Humility describes basic adjustment to leadership and life which includes effectively handling oneself in un-egocentric, positive, and offensive resistant manner (Grahek et al., 2010); and the positive characteristics that could affect the subjective well-being of an

individual (Elliot, 2010). Earlier, Tangney (2000) defined humility as being open-minded to new and different ideas whilst being aware of one's own mistakes and limitations, realistically evaluating success and skills, seeing oneself as a small part of the universe with comparatively low self-absorption instead of a grandiose attitude. While in work situation or social relationships, individuals who evaluate themselves with humility in their social environments are more qualitative (Peters et al., 2011). Regarding subjective well-being of an individual such as enthusiasm, high energy and cheer decrease with the negative feelings such as anger, revenge and blame and or stress experienced as a result of problems in interpersonal relationships (Sapmaz, et al., 2016); and the phenomenon may reflect in perception of Xer-leaders' humility by millennial-followers. Ideally, humble leaders provided positive workplace characters (Owens et al., 2012) which invariably provided less stressful situation to followers (Ou, 2012). Thus, this study argued that perceived Xer-leader's humility by millennial-followers would predict millennial-followers' perceived negative job stress. To this point, the present study examined if perceived Xer-leaders' humility would predict millennial-followers' job stress.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness involves granting pardon to those who have wronged us (Peterson et al., 2004), displacement of negative attitudes, such as anger and revenge towards damaging situations or people, with positive attitudes such as compassion and tolerance (Reed et al., 2006). Forgiveness is not only condoning, forgetting or ignoring a painful experience (Madsen et al., 2009); but extends to a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behaviour toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love toward him or her (Enright et al., 1996). Forgiveness related to life satisfaction, which is the sub dimension of subjective well-being (Thompson et al., 2005). No evidence has been provided on how perceived Xer-leader's forgiveness could predict millennial-followers' job stress. To this point, the present study explored how perceived Xer-leaders' forgiveness would predict millennial-followers' perceived job stress.

Gratitude

Gratitude has been conceptualized as feeling grateful for a good or kind behaviour from person (Froh et al., 2007); provide benefit for other people in form of motivation (Homan, et al., 2014; Wood, et al., 2010); and a genuine caring attitude toward the followers and being grateful for more than just a successful result at work (Liborius, 2014). According to Autry (2001), leadership is not about controlling people but rather caring for people and being a useful resource for people. Studies have shown the influence of leader's gratitude on their followers (e.g., Conger et al., 2000; Gillspie et al., 2004). Gratitude has been reported to promote well-being and general positive functioning, for example happiness and negative feeling of stress (Emmons, 2008; Ki, 2009; Sheldon et al., 2006) and decreased personal depression and stress (Seligman, et al., 2005) and increased life satisfaction (McCullough, et al., 2002). Thus, it is possible that gratitude expressed by Xers at work could be perceived as stressful or not by millennial-followers. To this point, this study explored if perceived Xer-leaders' gratitude predicted millennial-followers' job stress.

Millennial job stress

Stress describes psychological and physical strain or tension generated by physical or emotional, social, economic, or occupational circumstances, events or experiences that are difficult to manage or endure (Colman, 2003). Job stress refers to an extension of general

stress, specifically as a result of work task, the workplace, the job characteristics, role conflict, or worker capabilities (Jou, et al., 2013). At workplace, stress can be classified as distress or eustress. Distress describes negative job stress whereas eustress refers to positive stress (Villines, 2022). Studies have addressed generational differences in stress among primary and high school teachers (Antoniou, et al., 2006); stress and work life balance among millennial faculties of management institutions (Saxena, 2018). Further, few studies have examined the followers in which prevalence of negative health effects, individual job performance, organizational performance, and work/family relationships among workers have been reported (Whitman et al., 2008); and the degree of stress correlated with a person's perceived inability to deal with an environmental demand (Akoijam et al., 2011).

According to socialization hypothesis, characters and values of each generation change in line with the conditions that prevailed during their formative years (Inglehart, 2008; Wils et al., 2011). Follower's preferences for particular kind of leadership may be determined by group differences (Hohm, 2022). This may be more glaring in terms of generational differences; for example, Millennial and Xers. Millennials' perception of past generational leaders' characters at workplace have become eminent since their entry into work force (Harris-Boundy et al., 2010). For examples, Xers tend to seek personalized careers and recognition from others (Saks, 2006). They also adapt easily to different learning methods (Howe et al., 2007), are proficient multitaskers (Bennett et al., 2008), and have advanced visual memory and processing skills (Tapscott, 2009). On the other hand, millennials have shown to integrate technology into their lives and expect accommodations by organizations because of experiences, needs, and desires (Hershatter et al., 2010). They also exhibit self-important, impatient, and disloyal (Hill, 2008; Howe et al., 2007); demonstrate ambition, value organizational training and development, prefer meaningful work, and seek for more personal fulfillment compared to Xers on the jobs (Hauw et al., 2010; Loughlin et al., 2001; Rawlins et al., 2008). Many physical factors have been implicated in job stress, for example money, transport, stable home, and nonphysical factors such as time, knowledge, energy, health, employment, social support (Villines, 2022).

To the best knowledge of the researcher, previous study has not explored whether Xer-leaders characters defined in interest, behavioural integrity, humility, forgiveness, and gratitude would predict millennial-followers job stress at workplace. Thus, in this study we explored if Xer-leaders' characters expressed in their interest, behavioural integrity, humility, forgiveness, and gratitude could predict job stress among millennial-followers in educational institutions. Therefore, the present study provided answers to the following questions:

1. Will perceived Xer-leaders' interest predict perceived job stress of millennial-followers in educational institutions?
2. Will Xer-leaders' behavioural integrity predict millennial-followers' perceived job stress in educational institutions?
3. Will Xer-leaders' humility predict perceived job stress of millennial-followers in educational institutions?
4. Will Xer-leaders' forgiveness predict perceived job stress of millennial-followers in educational institutions?
5. Will Xer-leaders' gratitude predict millennial-followers' perceived job stress in educational institution?

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 316 university (males = 67.4%; females = 32.6%, teaching = 71.5%; non-teaching = 28.5%) millennial-followers were selected. Ages of the participants ranged between 22 and 36 ($M_{age} = 30.53$; $SD = 3.84$). Participants were all Africans.

Instruments/Measures

Participants completed the 7-item Perceived Leaders' Interest Questionnaire (PLIQ: Anyaegbunam, 2017), Perceived Leaders' Integrity Scale (PLIS: Craig et al., 1998), Humility Scale (HS: Elliot, 2010), Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS: Thompson, et al. 2005), and Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ: McCullough, et al., 2002). The participants were also told to complete Perceived Stress Scale (PSS: Cohen, et al., 1983) and finally provided data on their demographics such as age, gender (male or female), and staff status (teaching or non-teaching).

Perceived Leaders' Interest Questionnaire (PLIQ): The PLIQ is a 7-item questionnaire that assessed interest about leaders. Samples item includes - *Mounting checks on workers' performance and output*. Participants responded on 5-point option format (strongly disagree = 1 through undecided = 3 to strongly agree = 5). The Cronbach alpha for score from the PLIQ for this study was 0.85. **Perceived Leaders' Integrity Scale (PLIS):** The PLIS is a 30-item questionnaire assessing perceived behavioural integrity about leaders. Sample item includes - *Ridicules people for their mistakes*. Participants responded on 5-point option format (strongly disagree = 1 through undecided = 3 to strongly agree = 5). The Cronbach alpha for score from the PLIS in the present study was 0.80

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS): The HFS is 18-item instrument assessing people's levels of forgiveness in three dimensions: Forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. Each sub-scale has 6 items developed for self-report measures. However, the instrument was modified in this study to assess followers' perception of their leaders' forgiveness. For examples, the former items which were personalized for use as self-report measure were modified to suit perception of others' tendency to forgive self, others, and situations. The sample items and their modifications are; *I hold grudges against myself for negative things I've done* which was modified to read, *My leader holds grudges against himself for negative things he has done*. *I continue to punish a person who has done something that I think is wrong*, was modified to read, *My leader continues to punish a person who has done something that he thinks is wrong*. And, *When things go wrong for reasons that can't be controlled, I get stuck in negative thoughts about it*; was modified to read, *When things go wrong for reasons that can't be controlled, my leader gets stuck in negative thoughts about it*. This study adapted total measure of the scale in which the higher the score from the HFS, the higher the individual indicates higher levels of forgiveness and the vice versa. Participants responded on 5-point option format (strongly disagree = 1 through undecided = 3 to strongly agree = 5). The Cronbach alpha for score from the PLIS in the present study was 0.92

Humility Scale (HS): The HS is a 13-item instrument, which assessed humility of persons. The scale was a self-report measure of humility but was modified in this study for perception of leaders' humility by millennial-followers. For example, *I am usually quick to rationalize my failures*, was modified to read, *My leader is usually quick to rationalize his mistakes*; *The challenges ahead of me cause me to feel overwhelmed*, was modified to read, *The challenges ahead of my leader often cause him to feel overwhelmed*. Participants responded on 5-point option format (strongly disagree = 1 through undecided = 3 to strongly agree = 5). The Cronbach alpha for score from the HS in the present study was 0.66.

Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ): The GQ is a 6-item self-report measure of gratitude about individuals. In addition, the questionnaire was modified to assess perception of leaders'

gratitude by their followers. For examples: *I am grateful to wide variety of people*, was modified to read; *My leader is grateful to wide variety of people*. Participants responded on 5-point option format (strongly disagree = 1 through undecided = 3 to strongly agree = 5). The Cronbach alpha for score from the GQ in the present study was 0.69.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS): The PSS is a 10-item questionnaire assessing perceived stress about the employees. Sample item includes: *In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed*. Participants responded on 5-point option format (0 = Never, 1 = Almost Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly Often, 4 = Very Often). The Cronbach alpha for score from the PSS in the present study was 0.76.

Procedure

Permission to carry out this study was granted by the local authority through the university research and ethics committee. The questionnaires were administered to the university staff in one of the faculty and departmental board meetings, which hold once every month, and to non-teaching staff in their usual monthly meeting by the researcher and research assistants under guide, after obtaining their consent and explaining to them the purpose of the study. Upon satisfying all relevant procedures, participants were encouraged to be as explicit and completely cooperative as possible. Further, assurances were also given regarding confidentiality of participants' responses, and they were specifically instructed to be anonymous. The questionnaires were self-administered and completion of questionnaire took 30 minutes on the average.

Design/Data Analysis

The study was a cross-sectional design, by means of which I drew a sample from a population at a particular point in time (Shaughnessy et al., 1997). First, demographic variables were correlated with the perceived leaders' characters. Second, because leaders' characters produce expected correlation, multiple linear regression analysis was performed to predict perceived millennial-followers' job stress from perceived Xer-leaders' characters (interest, behavioural integrity, humility, forgiveness, and gratitude). Positive predictive outcome was classified as distress whereas negative predictive outcome defined eustress. The linear regression analysis adopted was the simultaneous method as no theoretical reason was proposed to warrant the use of other regression methods.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. The intercorrelation analysis results revealed that millennial-followers' perception of job stress positively related with their perception of Xer-leaders' interest ($r = 0.49, p < 0.001$). Also, the millennial-followers' perception of Xer-leaders' behavioral integrity positively related with the millennial-followers' perception of job stress ($r = 0.70, p < 0.001$), and millennial-followers' perception of Xer-leaders' humility has low positive relationship with perceived millennial-followers' job stress ($r = 0.33, p = 0.001$). And, millennial-follower' perception of Xer-leaders' forgiveness had low positive relationship with millennial-followers' perception of job stress ($r = 0.29, p < 0.001$) and millennial-followers' perception of Xer-leaders' gratitude has low relationship with perceived millennial-followers job stress ($r = 0.45, p < 0.001$). Further, when controlled for demographic data, millennial-followers' job status ($r = -0.04, p > 0.05$) and gender ($r = -0.08, p > 0.05$) related negatively with millennial-followers' perceived job stress. However, age related positively and but not significant with perceived job stress ($r = 0.05, p > 0.05$).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations for Xer-leaders' characters and millennial-follower's job stress

Source variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Stress	33.34	6.98	-								
2. Interest	23.66	4.34	0.49*	-							
3. Integrity	100.53	14.07	0.70*	0.64*	-						
4. Humility	46.78	6.31	0.33*	0.44*	0.61*	-					
5. Forgiveness	63.83	8.07	0.29*	0.61*	0.65*	0.75*	-				
6. Gratitude	17.71	4.32	0.45*	0.27*	0.62*	0.37*	0.18*	-			
7. Staff status	1.28	0.45	-0.04**	-0.16***	-0.04**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-		
8. Gender	1.32	0.47	-0.08**	-0.02**	-0.08**	-0.01**	-0.00**	-0.06**	-0.04**	-	
9. Age	30.53	3.84	0.05**	-0.07**	-0.03**	-0.02**	0.08**	0.07**	0.04**	0.04**	-

Note. *N* = 316; * = coefficients are significant at $p < .001$; ** = coefficients not significant; *** = coefficient significant = .004 (2-tailed)

Predicting millennial-followers' job stress from perceived Xer-leaders' characters (interest, behavioural integrity, forgiveness, humility & gratitude)

Table 2 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis which predicted millennial-followers perceived job stress from Xer-leaders' characters. Xer-Leaders' interest, integrity, forgiveness, humility, and gratitude were regressed on millennial-followers' perceived job stress. The equation model was significant, $F(5, 315) = 76.96, p < 0.001, R = 0.74$, with 55% variance accounted for by the predictor variables. The results further showed that Xer-leaders' integrity predicted millennial-followers' perceived job stress most strongly $t(311) = 11.63, p < 0.001$, next were interest $t(311) = 3.48, p = 0.001$, and forgiveness $t(311) = -5.26, p < 0.001$. Humility $t(311) = -0.52, p = 0.61$ and gratitude $t(233) = -1.19, p = 0.23$ least predict job stress of the millennial-followers.

The results further revealed that Xer-leaders' interest was a significant positive predictor of millennial-followers' job distress ($\beta = 0.30, R^2 = 0.55$), Xer-leaders' integrity was significant positive predictor of millennial-followers job distress ($\beta = 0.42, R^2 = 0.55$), and Xer-leaders' humility was nonsignificant positive predictor of perceived millennial-followers' job distress ($\beta = 0.04, R^2 = 0.55$). Forgiveness ($\beta = -0.32, R^2 = 0.55$) and gratitude ($\beta = -0.10, R^2 = 0.55$) were negative predictors of millennial-followers' job distress (eustress).

Table 2

Summary of multiple regression analysis of Xer- leaders' characters predicting millennial-followers' perceived job stress

Characters	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Constant	5.00	2.28		2.19	0.02	0.518	9.486
Interest	0.30	0.09	0.19	3.43	0.001	0.130	0.467
Integrity	0.42	0.04	0.84	11.62	0.000	0.347	0.488
Humility	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.52	0.61	-0.099	0.169
Forgiveness	-0.32	0.06	-0.37	-5.26	.000	-0.441	-0.201
Gratitude	-0.10	0.09	-0.06	-1.19	0.23	-0.274	0.067

Note. *N* = 326; *R* = .74; *R*² = .55; LL = lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the prediction of millennial-followers' job stress from Xer-leaders' character. The study's finding showed that Xer-leaders' interest and integrity predicted job distress of millennial-followers. When another person's interest especial the Xer-leaders' interest is imposed on millennial-followers by the Xer-leaders at work situation; perception of job stress ensues. This outcome may be explained given that Xer-leaders' interests differ from millennial-followers' because of differences in work perspectives. This is plausible given that Xer-leaders and millennial-followers were raised with very different technologies and lifestyles (Bolser et al., 2015); they both have different work behaviours. The implication being that Xer-leaders' pursuit of group interest without considering the millennial-followers' circumstances could result to perception of millennial-followers' feeling of job distress since degree of stress correlated with a person's perceived inability to deal with an environmental demand (Akoijam et al., 2011). Thus, at workplace leadership should pragmatically pursue collective interest putting into consideration the millennial-followers' circumstances, and not Xer-leaders' personal interests alone.

Similarly, the study found that Xer-leaders' behavioural integrity predicted and influenced job distress of millennial-followers. Previous study reported that perceived leadership integrity may not elevate followers to higher moral but rather, depending on the leaders' vision and personal motivation, lead followers in negative, unethical, and immoral directions (Giampetro et al., 1998; Yukl, 1998). In addition, when leaders lack behavioural integrity, that is not matching action with words, job distress would ensue (Simons, 2002). This implies that leaders used in this study lack behavioural integrity and inflicted job distress to the millennials thereby lowering their well being. In educational institutions, the vision and personal motivation of the Xer-leaders seem incongruent with the millennial-followers' aspiration, thereby influencing greatly the perceiving job as distressful for the millennial-followers. A mismatch between the leader's integrity and his real behaviour in work situation could result to millennial-follower's confusion, frustration and culminate in job distress. When a leader exhibits integrity without absolutist behaviour, the followers are bound to feel confused and perceive their job as distressful.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that perceived Xer-leaders' humility was a positive, though non-significant predictor of perceived millennial-followers' job distress. One would have expected perceived Xer-leaders' humility to produce entirely perceived negative job stress or eustress on millennial-followers. However, the observed outcome could be explained from the fact that the Xer-leaders' expressions of interest and integrity which stem from different work behaviour, ethics and lifestyles may have

suppressed the expression of their humility from manifesting fully as to be correctly perceived by the millennial-followers. When a leader is truly humble, he would espouse characters typical of un-egocentric, positive, and offensive resistant manner (Grahek et al., 2010) and positive characteristics that could inspire subjective well-being of followers (Elliot, 2010), thereby making it possible for followers not to perceive job as distressful. Thus, humility as a character would not be considered as a source of job distress except if it were overshadowed or inhibited by the expression of leaders' interest and integrity, a situation that may need further investigation.

The finding of the study further showed that perception of Xer-leaders' forgiveness did not predict millennial-followers' perceived job stress. Therefore, forgiveness can be regarded as a promoter of positive stress otherwise called eustress. The finding can be explained by the fact that forgiveness being a sub-dimension of subjective well-being (Thompson, et al., 2005), produces life satisfaction devoid of followers' perception of job distress. The implication here is that perception of Xer-leaders' forgiveness by millennial-followers makes them (millennial-followers) to feel comfortable, warmly accommodated and accepted by their Xer-leaders at work.

Finally, the study observed negative predictive influence of Xer-leaders' gratitude on the millennial-followers' perception of job stress. This implies that gratitude has the capacity to produce eustress in millennial workers in educational institutions. The finding can be explained by the fact that gratitude could promote well-being and general positive functioning, for example happiness and negative feeling of stress (Emmons, 2008; Sheldon et al., 2006; Ki, 2009) and decreased personal depression (Seligman et al., 2005) and increased life satisfaction (McCullough et al., 2002). Thus, this depicts that Xer-leaders expression of gratitude to the millennial-followers is capable of inflicting feeling of distress reduction in millennial-followers working in educational institutions.

The ways expression of leaders' characters will predict followers' job stress within the purview of followership psychology is crucial for both leaders and followers in educational institutions. The findings demonstrate the roles of leaders' characters (interest and behavioural integrity) in predicting job distress. While humility was non-significant positive predictor, forgiveness and gratitude were negative predictors of millennial-followers' job stress.

Besides theoretical contribution to understanding generational differences, within the purview of followership psychology, these findings have practical implications for Xer-leaders, professional psychologists and followers. Xer-leaders should be aware that some aspects of their characters, for examples interest, integrity, humility, forgiveness, and gratitude matter to the millennial-followers' perception of job stress. In designing training programmes, it becomes imperative that millennial-followers in educational institutions are integrated. Moreso, professional psychologists should consider differences in issues of work perspectives, for examples, work behaviour, ethics, experiences, leadership and authority, resulting from differences in generational values to reduce millennial-followers' job distress and promote eustress at work.

In general, thinking of the prevalence of observed job stress of millennial-followers, this study suggests that Xer-leaders and organizations should properly manage issues of differences in work perspectives to accommodate millennial-followers for future organization's use, by not holding tenaciously on interest and integrity. While leaders' expression of characters may be crucial in educational institutions, caution should be taken to avoid inflicting negative psychological conditions such as distress on the millennial-followers. Thus, in this context the present research strongly suggests that consideration of

issues of Xer-leaders' characters in workplace to accommodate millennial-followers is warranted

Strength of the Study

This investigation represents a unique and important contribution to the literature on millennial relationships in workplace in particular and emerging followership psychology in general. This study also sheds light on empirical evidence on the millennial-followers' perception of their Xer-leaders' characters in the followership psychology. In addition, this is the first study to examine how Xer-leaders' characters predicted perceived job stress among millennial-followers.

By addressing these issues, this study spurs literature on how well-being of millennial can be trapped in job stress following generational differences at workplaces. Particularly, it sheds lights on the experiences of millennial-followers by pointing out the role of Xer-leaders' character expression on millennial-followers' job stress in educational institution.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has a few limitations. First, the study did not determine why and when Xer-leaders characters could produce millennial-followers job stress. Other limitations of this research involve correlational nature of its data and one-time method of data collection characteristic of common method error. The design of the study precludes drawing causal inferences at the individual level of analysis. In addition, the study used a general measure of perception of job stress that did not measure distress and eustress as different variables.

The study raises questions regarding the importance of Xer-leaders' characters on the psychology of millennial-followers. Future studies may wish to explore when and why Xer-leaders' character could predict millennial-followers' job stress. There is also a need to study distress and eustress as different construct in different context. Further studies may adopt a stronger design such as longitudinal design particularly in light of potential relationships between Xer-leaders' characters and millennial-followers' job stress. Studies may further look into the possible psychological interventions necessary to reduce job distress of millennial-followers at work.

Conclusion

While both perceived leaders' interest and integrity by millennial-followers influence greatly their (millennial-followers') perception of job distress, perceived Xer-leaders' humility has low and infinitesimal influence on millennial-followers' job distress. The perceived leaders' forgiveness and gratitude resulted to millennial-followers' perception of negative job stress or eustress. Overall, perceptions of Xer-leaders' characters – interest and integrity were found to be factors predicting millennial-followers' perceived job distress while humility, forgiveness, and gratitude are negative predictors of perceived job stress. The findings have both theoretical and practical implications by contributing to literature in well being, followership psychology and providing insights into accommodating millennials at work in general and educational institution in particular. Leaders should not hold their interest tenacious and should ensure that they match action with words to arouse eustress in the millennial-followers.

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