Millennials' Perspectives on Leadership and Fashion: The Role of Gender

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KEYWORDS: Millennials, leadership, gender, Bem Sex-Role Inventory

 The term "millennial generation," or "millennials," refers to individuals born between the years 1980 and 2000 (Smith &Nicols, 2015). This generation continues to be a mainstream in the workforce. Simultaneously, the generation's social power is expected to increase. Correspondingly, researchers explored millennials' salient attributions as distinctly differential traits compared to parents' generation. The most differential component is that millennials hold non-traditional, liberal, and broadminded values as distinct from older generations. These values function as contributing factors to millennials' expressing interest in gender equality (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy Jr, 2009). Additionally, the advancement of powerful female leaders in the 21st century led millennials to evaluate the concepts of femininity and masculinity (Broido, 2004). In response to such changing phenomenon, schools and organizations provided educational insight about gender sensitivity (Jeong & Lee, 2018). Therefore, millennials understand that leadership is not based on gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles. In this way, gender identity and leadership are differently understood concepts for the millennial generation.

 Previous research on leadership explored leadership power based on incongruent gender role theory. Specifically, researchers explored the leadership power of androgynous leaders. Leadership style is inconsistent with gender stereotype. Male benevolent leaders ranked high scoring ratings in terms of leadership power (Wang, Chiang, Tsai, Lin, & Cheng, 2013). By comparison, female autocratic leaders ranked lower ratings in that regard (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). This difference suggests that gender and gender roles affect leader evaluation. As society changed, leaders were required to utilize differential methods to elevate influential power. Relatedly, a measure that leaders choose involved managing appearance. Leader appearance works as a useful marketing strategy to convey leaders' positive impression to followers. In particular, fashion is used as a nonverbal cue to construct influential impressions (Sanghvi & Hodges, 2015). Ostensibly, the importance of managing appearance should be appropriately applied to both genders. However, female leaders are more likely to be evaluated by others on matters related to their clothing, accessories, and other externalities. Indeed, it is in these ways that their capabilities

are judged. It is a gender stereotype that females should manage their appearance to render their leadership capability (Mandziuk, 2008). However, given that millennials' gender consciousness may be different from their parents and teachers (Broido, 2004), it is important to identify and analyze millennials' perspectives on leadership and fashion. The purpose of this study aims to investigate whether gender and BSRI serve significant functions that pertain to millennials' diverse leader perceptions.

Data were collected by surveying a sample of 249 undergraduate students, who were born between the years 1990 and 2000. To access their perspectives on leaders, respondents were asked who they think is a contemporary leader. Then, they were asked to indicate gender, gender role (BSRI), leadership power, and image of the leader. Moreover, BSRI (Bem, 1974) was used to measure the gender role identity of the respondent. Respondents were grouped as feminine ($n = 56$), masculine (n = 52), androgynous ($n = 72$), and undifferentiated ($n = 62$) by a median split method. Further, SPSS 25 was used for statistical analysis.

Results indicated that respondents' BSRI grouping was not significantly related to gender. This finding supports prior research that indicated gender and gender identity (or role) as different concepts. Among leaders referred to by respondents, 41.4% identified as female. This result supports the claim that millennials are more exposed to gender equality. Respondents selected the same gender for their leaders ($\chi2 = 17.32$, $p<.001$). Male respondents were likely to select male leaders, and female respondents were likely to select female leaders. Overall, however, male leaders were perceived as more powerful than female leaders ($t = 2.41$, $p<.05$). Further, analysis of the masculinity and femininity scores of respondents and leaders revealed different gender perceptions of millennials, compared to previous generations. The respondents' femininity score was positively related to the leader's masculinity score ($r=.25$, $p<.001$). The respondents' masculinity score was positively related to the leader's femininity score ($r=.14$, $p<.051$). The leader's gender presented significant differences as regards the leader's femininity ($t =3.80$, $p<.01$). Significantly, the femininity score of male leaders was significantly higher than female leaders. Male leaders were perceived with high levels of masculinity and femininity. This result implies that millennials prefer androgynous male leaders compared to masculine female leader. To access interactions between the leader's gender and the leadership field, two-way ANOVA was conducted. To control for gender identity effect, leaders' masculinity and femininity scores were included as covariates. A significant interaction effect between masculinity and femininity scores was detected ($F= 4.89$, $p<.01$). Specifically, political leaders could be both female and male. Women were likely to be cultural leaders. By comparison, men were likely to be economic leaders. The study included the degree to which a leader's fashion was considered. Results indicated that the fashion of female

leaders was likely to be described (t=-4.91, p<.001); male leaders were likely to described with regard to their face. This result indicates that the stereotype of fashion is a gendered product. However, there was no significant correlation between fashion and leadership power.

This study revealed the dynamic role of gender perception in leadership and fashion among millennials. They favor androgynous male leaders and masculine female leaders. There was a tendency to prefer leaders of the same gender. Female prefers female leaders and male prefers male leaders. Leader's fashion findings denoted that female leaders are more often perceived with regard to fashion, compared to their male counterparts. This finding could be attributed to the trait of media because it focuses on the clothing of female leaders more frequently than thee clothing of male leaders (Hinton, 2010). Notably, leaders' fashion did not serve a significant role for leadership power. In general, given that gender-based differences of millennials can be interpreted from positive perspectives, millennials present a propensity toward gender equality and focus on the leader's salience when evaluating leaders.

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