Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: Is there a link between these Leadership Styles and Absenteeism/ Withdrawal Amongst Millennials?

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Abstract

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Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: Is there a link between these Leadership Styles and Absenteeism/ Withdrawal Amongst Millennials?

The aim of this study is to look at democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles against counterproductive work behaviour, specifically absenteeism/ withdrawal amongst the millennial cohort.

Counterproductive work behaviour results in a huge cost to the Irish economy on a yearly basis. Coming to work late, leaving early and taking longer than allowed lunch breaks result in a cost to the organisation. These are behaviours that most organisations, small, medium or large would experience at some level. There are a number of factors that attribute to counterproductive work behaviour such as stress, workload and personality.

This study identifies the leadership style of the respondent's manager against absenteeism/ withdrawal behaviour of the participant in order to identify if there a link. Furthermore, the study looks, within the parameters of the questions asked, what the most popular type of absenteeism is and frequency is. In addition, the study looks at which leadership style experiences counterproductive work behaviour most regularly.

Millennials as a cohort were chosen due to the size of this group currently in employment and at the right level to partake in the study.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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CWB – Counterproductive work behaviour

CSO - Central Statistics Office

1. Introduction

The research area of leadership is vast, leadership styles in itself returns results on numerous studies. However, leadership is intriguing, a skill not all possess but can be priceless when 62undertaken correctly within an organisation. Leadership is a process where a person can influence another to achieve the intention of the group or the organisation (Shackleton 1995). There is a difference between a good leader and a bad leader, the good leader encourages and motivates and a bad leader can create a negative environment, which can result in negative behaviour. Furthermore, good and bad leaders can have lasting effects on people.

As the world of work has evolved so have leadership styles which is representative in the amount of research undertaken in this area. For example, autocratic leadership is quite a strict leader and withholds information from the employee (Lewin et al, 1939), possibly to maintain the power. Some of the traits of the autocratic leader are quite dated for example, according to Fiaz (2017), this leadership style applies penalties when mistakes are made and ignores the employee in order to make them feel guilty for that mistake or encourages them with rewards. The democratic leader would be very different to the autocratic leader, this leader likes the group and encourages individuals creating a good sense of trust (Lewin et al, 1939) and then we have the laissez-faire leadership style, which is very hands off and offers freedom to the employee (Lewin, 1939).

How one responds to being managed is also a very interesting topic, and very vast with a number of variables to consider such as personality and stress. One leadership style may bring the best out in person but the worst out in another, which may result in counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). CWB can be described as the objective to damage or harm an organisation (Fox et al, 2001). CWB is a general term, which encompasses a number of behaviours such as bullying, sabotage and absenteeism. Taking just absenteeism into consideration, which also includes withdrawal, that being late or absent (Fox et al, 2012). This form of CBW occurs quite regularly and has a cost of €1.5 billion a year to the Irish economy according to Daly (2018) furthermore approximately 4 million days a year are lost due to this according to the Small Firms Association (2015). This a significant cost to the economy and businesses alike and an issue most companies would experience at some level and some frequency, either by employees coming late to work, leaving work early or taking extended lunch breaks without permission.

Millennials are currently the largest group employed in the USA, with approximately 56 million people falling into this category (Fry 2018), if we now consider Ireland with a population of 4.7million (CSO, 2017), a figure that has consistently increased since 1971 (CSO, 2017), the amount of millennials currently in employment is increasing. This is a powerful group that organizations can learn from, not just to attract talent but to keep talent, as this cohort knows what they want in an employer and will move jobs quickly to get it.

According to a report by IBM (2015) an inspiration leader was identified as what millennials want. This trait was chosen ahead of work life balance and innovation in the workplace. Understanding that the millennial is looking for can only but add to a business as it will create the environment a millennial wants to work in. Bringing us back to leadership styles and what type of leader offers the traits that the millennial is looking for. In order to support this, one considers if there is a leadership that does not meet the needs of millennial could that result in CWB and particularly absenteeism/ withdrawal behaviour?

This piece of research looks to use millennials as the cohort, the aim is to identify what leadership style the millennials manager is, autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire. It was decided to progress with these three styles of leadership as these three have been in studies since the 30's. In addition, the definition of each of these styles are easy to understand and there appears to be a clear boundary between each type. In order to identify the leadership style of the millennials leader, a multifactor leadership questionnaire (Northouse, 2011) was used in addition, a counterproductive checklist developed by Spector et al (2006) was also utilised in order to investigate the CBW of the millennial. The view was to identify if there was a link to CWB based on the leader style of the participant.

Based on the information provided by the participants, the results look at which leadership style experiences the most CBW, what is the most regular form of absenteeism/ withdrawal and if there is a link between absenteeism/ withdrawal and leadership style.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter looks at information on other studies related to this area. The chapter is divided in a number of subheadings as per title. As this study is looking at leadership styles and if there is a link with CWB using millennials as the sample, the literature review is based on these three main headings.

The chapter will initially look at millennials under the following subheadings: defining the age of the millennial, understanding the millennial, why millennials and millennials in the workplace.

The chapter then looks at leadership styles and is divided up based on the following headings: An overview, the Leadership styles, The Lewin, Lippit and White (1939) Study. The chapter will then move into counterproductive work behaviour (CWB), what it is and then CWB and leadership styles.

2.2 Defining the age of a Millennial

Smola and Sutton (2002) define millennials as those born from 1979 to 1994 and at the time that paper was published this cohort was entering the workforce. Kadakia (2017) defines millennials as those born between 1981 and 1996 whereas Weinbaum (2016) as part of a study with the National Defence defines millennials as those born between 1980 and 2004.

There is a slight discrepancy between the dates representing this cohort and so, for the purpose of this piece of research we will identify millennials as those born between 1981 and 1996 which would include individuals that were aged from 23 years old to 38 years old in 2019.

2.2.1 Understanding the Millennial

Wood (2019) writes an interesting piece on the millennial giving good insight into their behaviour, explaining how millennials were raised by baby boomers, which resulted in a parenting style that encouraged the millennial to give their opinion and be involved in the decision making process within the home. This behaviour is mirrored in a paper by Carter and Walker (2018), who outlines that the millennial employee wants, not only to be part of, but to be essential to the team. In short, the millennial likes to be involved in the decision making process and generally be involved. Wood (2019) further outlines how millennials, more often challenge authority and choose a specific type of employment to make them happy rather than just the salary, they are looking for the work life balance. This is further illustrated in a study undertaken by IBM (2015), which identified that millennials want an inspirational leader and they put this ahead of innovation and collaboration in the workplace. Both studies have the same theme running through.

Furthermore, Wood (2019) also discusses how millennials have a different view to money than other generations as they do not have the same economic security as their parents, resulting in them owning a home much later than other generations and having large debt.

This results in the millennial depending or needing support from their parents in the form of living with them for longer or financial assistance. Although the millennial wants a certain lifestyle, they are comfortable with debt and it is not uncommon for them to move around employment more freely than other generations.

2.2.2 Why Millennials

Millennials appear to be a very popular cohort to research, there is an overwhelming amount of publications, papers and reports on this group representing various interesting topics, indicating there is a pool of information to pull from.

According to Carter and Walker (2018) millennials represent the first group to grow up with the internet, technology and immediate access to news. The concept of immediate access to information has led researchers to take the view that millennials are different from other working generations that have gone before them, such as the Generation Xers - just before the millennials or the baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 (Smola and Sutton 2002). Which further makes this a very interesting group to research from the perspective of their needs and wants. Furthermore, according to Fry (2018) millennials are now the largest generation currently in employment in the US, equating to 56 million in this group, it is the largest generational section with 2.5 billion people (Weinbaum et al, 2016). In addition, according to Pfau (2016) at the time of that report, millennials made up the majority of the 30,000 employees at KPMG, which aligns to the prediction that 75% of the workforce would be millennials by 2025 (Deloitte, 2014). According to Zenger (2012) based on a database of 17,000 people worldwide who were undertaking leadership training, the average age of a supervisor was 33, which shows that millennials are also at management level and so would have the relevant experience to partake in this study. According to the most recent Central Statistics Office (CSO) census taken in 2016, the population of Ireland, at that time, was 4.7million (CSO, 2017). It can be assumed that this number has increased as based on research undertaken by the CSO (2011) the population in Ireland has continually increased year on year since 1971. In addition, according to the CSO (2020), the total number of people in employment in Ireland in quarter4 in 2019 was 2,361,200, with the overall employment rate of 70.2% for people aged between 15- 64 years old. From this, we understand that there is a large number of millennials currently in employment in Ireland.

These figures highlight the power of this group and the potential impact this group can have and so further encourages deeper understanding of this cohort. In addition, it also shows us how large this cohort is and highlights the sizable number that is in employment and who are within scope for this piece of study.

It also shows that there is a large enough group within the millennial cohort who are the correct level required for this study, that being the experience of having a manager. Furthermore, whilst researching the leadership styles and counterproductive behaviour (CWB) there seemed to be limited research/ studies which identified millennials as a specific cohort to study within this topic.

2.2.3 The Millennial in the Workplace

It is clear how large this group is and the power that the millennial has. Singh et al (2012) discusses the benefits of understanding what millennials are looking for in a workplace and how this information can be incorporated into the organisation strategy and core values. The benefit of implementing this information into the core of the organisation will interest and attract the millennial enabling the organisation to grow as it will be meeting the needs of the millennial.

According to the study undertaken by IBM (2015) which addressed millennials in the workplace, the research identified that millennials found that an inspirational leader is a necessity and the millennial put requirement ahead of innovation, work life balance and collaboration in the workplace. Wood (2019) further adds that millennials are looking for purpose-driven employment.

The IBM (2015) study also found that millennials favoured a leader who is ethical and fair along with being transparent and dependable, over a leader who recognises accomplishments. The importance of leader transparency is further reflected in a study undertaken by Zaharee *et al* (2018) in addition, poor management was cited as a reason for leaving an organisation. Interestingly Singh et al (2012) undertook a study on millennials to identify what they deemed important within the workplace, encouraging innovation and idea generation scored the highest. Interestingly, the IBM (2015) study also found that millennials change employers for the same reasons as other generations for example, career progression, money and passion for the work.

Signh et al (2012) outlines results from a study undertaken which highlights the type of employer a millennial would work for which include a humble leader, feedback, work as mentors and open and approachable.

We understand that the millennial is motivated and know what they want, according to a study undertaken by American Express (2017) from 2,300 millennials leaders and future managers surveyed from both Europe and the US 70% outlined that they aspired to work at a C-Suite level.

Although we have heard how different millennials are from other generations, interestingly their work needs are the same as the other generational employees - they will not stay in an organisation if they are not happy (Wood, 2019) which goes against Smola and Sutton (2002), this study outlines how different millennials are to generation Xers. In addition, Signh et al (2012) outlines millennials will leave an employer if the organisation exhibits a negative

working environment, toxic boss, work pressure or unfair treatment. Which is in line with the needs of the other working generations.

Carter and Walker (2018) outlines that the millennial employee wants to be essential to the team, a point that Wood (2019) mirrors, outlining that they want to be part of a solution. This is similar to Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) who discuss millennial workplace expectations and how millennials like open and regular feedback.

In addition, according to the study undertaken by Singh et al (2012) providing feedback is also highlighted as a value of a workplace, this point is further supported by Kadakia (2016) who backs the notion that millennials need more feedback from their manager.

Millennials are an interesting bunch, from research it appears they are not very different from the other cohorts; however, there are discrepancies between the research on this point. If they are not happy they will leave, they want an inspirational leader that is respected and who will provide feedback. Feedback with the intention to support and progress the millennial.

2.3 Leadership Styles:

There are some individuals who reflect on their working career and can identify specific leaders who have made a positive impact and those who have had a negative impact. A good leader can have long lasting positive effects on an employee, just as a bad leader can negatively affect an employee and the working environment.

Wu et al (2018) identifies a link between employees who experience destructive leadership and then adopt avoidant behaviour. Whereas Sulea *et al* (2013) undertakes a study with results that indicated employees who perceive their manager as abusive, are more likely to partake in CWB. Both these studies indicate there is a behavioural response from the employee due to leadership style. However, it must be taken into account that the sample used in both these studies were not millennials.

Leadership is an interesting topic to research as there is so much work on this area. Leadership theories have evolved and grown as the research has developed, moving from leader-centred approach to situational approach more recently. The main leadership theories include; The Great Man theories which is based on the idea that leaders are special people with intuitive qualities (Bolden et al, 2003), Trait Theories which relate to the traits/ characteristics of leaders (Bass, 1990), Behaviourist theories which relates to how the leader acts (Bass, 1981), Contingency theory, which looks at traits that identifies which style will work in a certain situation (Fiedler, 1967), Transactional Theory looks at the relationship between leader and subordinate as transactional in terms of recognition (Bass, 1990) and Transformational theory which identifies the leader as the person to implement a change (Burns, 2003).

The research has shown that millennials want an inspirational and fair leader who will give feedback, keeping them motivated. A good leader is key within an organisation. In order for an organisation to successfully implement its strategy and create a culture, it requires leaders.

The leader must understand the core values and beliefs of the organisation in order to align oneself and move with organisation and the strategy, whilst also encouraging motivation amongst employees. Motivation amongst employees is dependent upon the leadership style (Friaz, 2017). Dionne *et al* (2002) outlines how leadership is important to the performance and satisfaction of employees. Similar to George (1995) who identifies the link between a leader's positive mood and how this can predict group performance. A good leader can bring a group together.

The link between these papers relates to the leader being equipped to positively influence a group. The definition of leadership seems to have a number of slightly different meanings attached, the most common understanding is that leadership is a process where one person influences others to achieve the goals of the group or organisation (Shackleton, 1995).

Lewin et al (1939) developed what is now a well-known and established model of leadership that has been used repeatedly since its development and is regularly cited. The study highlighted three leadership styles which were autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire.

2.3.1 Autocratic Leadership Style

According to Lewin et al (1939) this is a strict leader who outlines the work, there is an element of unknown from the employee as this leader does not always give all the information and can be somewhat aloof with the employees. This is quite an interesting trait, this leader appears to withhold information, for the benefit of themselves, somewhat a power move (Lewin et al ,1939). The employee does not enjoy much freedom and this leader can have short-lived success in terms of productivity and discipline, which can disappear as this leader is not always present. Which may also affect the trust between leader and employee.

In addition, Fiaz (2017) further explains how this approach puts more emphasis on production and less on the employee, the concept based on the assumption that people are considered to be lazy and untrustworthy. Likert's (1961) management system describes autocratic leadership as an exploitative- authoritative structure where direction and power comes from the top, with poor communication and no regard for teamwork (cited in Fiaz et al 2017). Puni *et al* (2016) further adds, that the autocratic leader relies on authority and control and manipulation in order to complete the task or job at hand.

Through this systematic leadership approach penalties are applied when mistakes are made and sanctions can be made through making the employee feel guilty or withholding attention Fiaz (2017). The motivation from an autocratic leader is in the form of economic incentives based on performance and development comes from hard work (Fiaz, 2017). Interestingly according to a study undertaken by Signh et al (2012) if we consider some of the main themes identified from researching millennials in the workplace, feedback, inspirational leaders and

being part of the team were determined. It would seem that these traits would not be present in the style of an autocratic leader, in addition this leadership does sound somewhat dated.

2.3.2 Democratic Leadership Style

Lewin et al (1939) describes this leader as very much about the group and encourages group discussion and offers advice and alternatives, the employee does have freedom and is informed, which instils trust. There is a good relationship between this leader and the employees (Lewin et al, 1939). These are some of the key traits identified as attributes a millennial would look for in a leader.

Furthermore, Bhatti et al (2012) adds to this by explaining that there is more interaction within the group as there is more focus on people which is very different to the autocratic leadership approach. The democratic leader is more part of the group themselves. As previously cited, Carter and Walker (2018), outlined that the millennial wants, not only to be part of, but to be essential to the team.

Smolovic-Jones et al (2016) describes the democratic leadership style as based on the assumption that people are trustworthy and motivated and like responsibility which in turn creates teamwork and high performance and job satisfaction. This being the opposite of the autocratic leader. According to a study based on the workplace requirements of millennials, by Signh et al (2012) encouraging innovation and idea generation scored the highest, this is a trait that would be representative of a democratic leader. There appears to be key traits of this leadership style that the millennial would appreciate and thrive from.

2.3.4 Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

According to Lewin et al (1939), this style of leader gives a lot of freedom to the employee allowing them to make decisions themselves. The leader does not really participate and would not comment on employees activities unless asked – very much a hands off approach (Lewin et al, 1939).

Fiaz (2017) explains that the laissez faire leadership approach is not based on performance or people but on the assumption that people are uncontrollable and unpredictable and so why spend time trying to understand these habits. This leader keeps a low profile, stirs away from disruption and relies on a few loyal employees to complete the task or get the job done. The laissez faire leader works with whatever structure is in place and only enforces goals when required. It is no surprise to learn that development amongst employees is not of concern of the laissez faire leader (Friaz, 2017).

Diebig and Bormann (2020) further discusses how the laissez-faire leader is not present and so is not available to offer advice or guidance when the employee needs this, resulting in stress. Diebig and Bormann (2020) undertook a study around laissez-faire leadership and the effects of stress on the employee. In addition, the IBM study (2015) outlined that millennials look for a leader who is dependable.

There would be elements of this leadership style the millennial would appreciate such as the freedom to make decisions however there is a fundamental lack of leadership. A hands off approach may not provide the inspirational leadership style the millennial is looking for. In addition the lack of development support would not be in line with feedback the millennials want in order to progress.

2.2.5 The Lewin, Lippit and White (1939) Study

Lewin et al (1939) undertakes research on the three leadership styles and how the participants react to laissez-faire, democratic and autocratic with interesting outcomes. There are a number of thoughtful controls put in place for the paper.

The research found that hostility was 30 times more frequent in the group with the autocratic leader than the democratic leader. Furthermore, aggression was 8 times as frequent, interestingly the aggression was aimed towards other participants and not the autocratic leader. Furthermore, the research found that the majority of participants liked the democratic leader more than the autocratic leader, with a high number also liking the laissez -faire leadership approach (Lewin et al, 1939).

This is a really interesting piece of research that offers a basis to understand the leadership styles and how people respond to each leadership type. However, the participants involved in this study were children, and although a very relevant piece of research, it was undertaken during the 30's which is a very different cohort to our group - the millennials.

Fiaz (2017) also undertakes a piece of research based on the three different types of leadership style, the cohort in the study were high to middle level managers in the emerging economy of Pakistan. This study finds that the autocratic leadership approach has a negative link with employees' motivation, which would be in line with Lewin et al (1939). Interestingly, Fiaz (2017) found that the democratic leadership style did not have a positive impact on employee motivation which would be different to Lewin et al (1939), considering the traits of the democratic leader this outcome is interesting. Furthermore, the Fiaz (2017) study also found that the laissez faire leadership style approach had a positive impact on employee motivation, similar to Lewin et al (1939) where by the outcome was also positive towards the laissez-faire leader.

The discrepancies may be a result of the cohort sampled. The Fiaz (2017) study was based on a bureaucratic environment and so those sampled could not make decisions themselves. Interestingly Fiaz (2017) does highlight that there is a place for each type of leadership style approach.

Despite two completely different samples used in both mentioned studies, there are still similarities with the outcomes. Which is actually really interesting.

Since the development of the Lewin, Lippit and White Model of Leadership (1939), other researchers have further developed leadership theories and added to the three leadership styles. Cowen (2018) gives an overview of the now eight types of leadership styles, which include, pace-setter, autocratic, democratic, servant, transformational, transactional and charismatic however the article does not discuss the destructive leadership style.

For the purpose of this paper, we will concentrate on the leadership styles of laissez-faire, democratic and autocratic. The reason for this is that these three styles are the basis of leadership theories and there are clear definitions and explanations of each type. Furthermore the leadership styles which were developed later, appear to have very fine definitions dividing them, for example Frooman et al (2012), describes transactional leadership as encompassing four dimensions, which are individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and idealised influence.

Considering there is an understanding of what a millennial looks for in a leader, that being an individual that is inspirational, fair and provides feedback, there is the question as to what happens if the leader does not meet the needs or does not possess the traits required of the millennial.

2.4 Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

According to Coffin (2003) CWB, specifically theft and fraud costs US businesses approximately €50 billion annually whereas Currier (2018) outlines that absenteeism costs the US €225.8 billion annually. Mercer (2012) outlines that staff who come to work late costs the UK economy £9million annually.

Daly (2018) outlines that CWB, specifically absenteeism costs the Irish economy up to €1.5 billion a year, in addition, McCumiseky (2018) reports that approximately 11 million workdays are lost to absenteeism every year. Furthermore, according to a report undertaken by the Small Firms Association (2015), in 2014 €490 million is what absenteeism cost small business per annum, this equated to 4,052,222 working days lost in Ireland.

These figures show a significant impact and cost to the economy and highlights why this topic is of interest and of benefit in order to understand this type of behaviour with the intent to reduce if not eliminate it.

2.4.1 What is CWB?

Spector and Fox (2002) describe counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) as the intent to harm the organisation or other employees, this can include sabotage, theft, absenteeism and physical/ verbal hostility. Whereas Qui and Peschek (2012) describe CWB as intentionally undermining a group's effort, a definition which could apply to not only to an organisation but another group type. In addition, Chang and Smithikrai (2010) identifies CWB as intentional acts, which go against the interest of the organisation, furthermore, Fox et al (2001), describes CWB as the intent to have a harmful effect on the organisation.

Although there are slightly different understandings of the term CWB, there seems to be a common theme between these descriptions, that being intent or purpose with a negative effect on the organisation.

Spector *et al* (2006), suggests there are five types of CWB, abuse against others, theft, sabotage, withdrawal and production deviance. Sheaffer (2018) describes counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) as intentional negative behaviour within the workplace and can range from stealing to sabotaging or bullying.

Research could be undertaken on any of these CWB, for the purpose of this study we will concentrate on absenteeism. Absenteeism in itself is a large topic, absences can be allowed through approval from the manager or unauthorised by the employee taking time without approval from the manager. Furthermore, withdrawal which can be characterised as being absent or late (Fox et al,2012), this is further reflected as withdrawal behaviours can be characterised as absenteeism, turnover or lateness as each represents a physical removal from work (Johns, 2001).

Absenteeism and withdrawal can further be classified as coming to work late without permission or taking a longer than normal lunch without permission or calling sick to work when not really sick.

It is understood that there are a number of reasons as to why an employee may partake in CWB, such as stress there is also supporting research around the justification of CWB from the employees side, for example, Krischer et al (2010) discusses how CWB can be used to deal with stress within the workplace, essentially how an employee may show the signs of withdrawal in order to cope with the stress of the workplace. In addition Krings and Bollmann (2011), outline that some of the consequences of CWB on other employees include development of low job satisfaction, increased turnover and rates of absenteeism while Muafi (2011) identifies a link between employee's intent to quit and CWB, which ironically in turn can creates CWB. It is evident the impact CWB can have within the working environment. Considering the impact that CWB can have in the workplace, financial cost, theft and potential turnover as result of the impact on other employees, it is quite a volatile and expensive area. In addition, CBW can be the result of a number of factors within the workplace.

Good leaders influence and inspire employees to achieve a common goal and further support and encourage employees to go above and beyond. Poor leaders can have a destructive impact on the workplace and the employees resulting in turnover.

2.4.2 CWB and Leadership Styles

Puni *et al* (2016) undertakes research on the relationship between leadership styles, CWB and turnover intention. This study showed the cohort sampled were more likely to engage in CWB if they perceived their manager as autocratic as a result of being unhappy/ unmotivated in the workplace due to the leadership style. The results from the study also suggested that this cohort were less likely to not partake in CBW if the leader is perceived as a democratic leader, the study further discussed this is likely due to the traits of this style of leader. Traits such as championing high productivity and good work attitudes. The study relates this behaviour to the democratic leader creating a positive relationship with employees, reducing CWB (Puni et al 2016). Puni et al (2016) also look at laissez-faire leadership as part of the study. The results indicated that employees with laissez-faire managers were more likely to engage in CWB. The study further related this behaviour with conflict, uncertainty or doubt within the role resulting in CBW.

Frooman et al (2012) undertakes research on passive avoidant leadership (which is classed as laissez-faire leadership), transformational leadership and absenteeism. This study looks at the relationship between these two leadership styles and absenteeism that is illegitimate and legitimate, referring to absenteeism which has been signed off by the manager and not.

Frooman et al (2012) found that illegitimate absenteeism increased when the employee perceives the leader as passive avoidant (laissez-faire) and job satisfaction decreases, which would be similar to the results from the study undertaken from Puni et al (2016). Frooman et al (2012) also identifies legitimate absenteeism decreases when the leader is portrayed as passive avoidant (laissez-faire). So the employee chooses to come in when they are ill and stay away when they are not.

Mtimkula et al (2014) undertook a study which looks at leadership style and the impact on motivation, performance and absenteeism within hospitals in South Africa. The study focuses on autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. The study found that motivation and performance decreased and absenteeism increased when the leader was portrayed as either autocratic and laissez-faire style, which is in line with Puni et al (2016) and Frooman et al (2012), showing a link in behaviour. In addition, the results of the study (Mtimkula et al, 2014) identifies a direct link between absenteeism and leadership style.

From the desk-based research undertaken, there appears to be a relationship or link between leadership style and CWB. Similarities have been identified across a number of studies showing consistency in the results, however none of the studies concentrated specifically on millennials as a cohort to study, which results in a gap in the research.

We also understand what the millennials are looking for within employment, inspirational and present leaders that provide feedback, feedback that the millennial can use to grow and progress. The millennial will move easily from an employer that they are not happy with in order to get what and where they want as they are motivated.

3. Research Question

The aim of the research is to look at leadership styles, particularly autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire in order to see if there is a link between said styles and counterproductive behaviour, the cohort being samples are millennials

Research question:

'Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles: Is there a link between these Leadership Styles and Absenteeism/ Withdrawal Amongst Millennials?'

3.1 Sub Questions:

1) Does democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership style affect absenteeism /withdrawal in the workplace?
2) Is there a leadership style that experiences absenteeism / withdrawal more regularly?
3) Is absenteeism experienced across the three types of leadership styles?
4) What is the most common frequency in how regular respondents partake in absenteeism/ withdrawal?
5) Within the parameters of the questions asked, is there a common form of absenteeism/ withdrawal?

Aims:

The aim of this piece of research, within the parameters of the questionnaire are:

1) Identify if there is a leadership style that experiences absenteeism/ withdrawal more regularly
2) Identify if counterproductive behaviour is experienced in all three leadership styles
3) Identify what is the most common form of absenteeism/ withdrawal
4) Identify how regular the leadership styles experience absenteeism/ withdrawal

4. Methodology

4.1 Overview

This chapter looks at the methodology of how the study was undertaken and the thought process that went into it. The aim of the research is to identify the leadership style of each of the respondent's manager and cross-reference this information against the respondent's absenteeism/ withdrawal behaviour, as per their responses. The purpose of this was to determine if a particular leadership style experienced more absenteeism/ withdrawal. The cohort being asked to participate were millennials, those born between 1981 and 1996.

The methodology chapter is divided up in a number of subheadings in order to make it easier to follow. It starts with the delivery which gives a background on the steps taken to identify the process, the pilot approach and learnings and how the sample was identified. The chapter then goes into the process of the methodology which is broken down into three steps: confirming the sample, identifying leadership styles and finally the CBW checklist and how these approaches were chosen. There are also additional questions which it was felt were important to include, data protection and ethical consideration.

The total number of responses received was 47. Although not at the level intended, it was felt this was a good response given the current Covert-19 virus pandemic situation being experienced. In addition, the link to the questionnaire and checklist was only live for a 5 day period.

4.2 The Delivery

The original methodology was to conduct semi structured informal face to face interviews, with the intent of creating conversations around experiences. The interview scenario allows for clarity of terminology and gives the option to probe if required. It was felt at that time that approach would suit. However due to the current COVERT-19 pandemic, physically meeting with people was not an option. Although video calls could be arranged, through research it was felt this method would not necessarily obtain the information needed. An alternative was required in order to progress. In addition, it was important that a previous, tried and tested approach was favoured as not only was it something already tested but it was felt it would be the best option in terms of correctly collecting the data.

4.2.1 Pilot approach

An initial pilot questionnaire with a checklist was emailed to a test subject. The purpose of this was to ensure that the information being emailed was easy to understand, instructions were clear and respondents were correctly interpreting what was required of them.

It became evident that a slightly different approach would be needed. It was decided to make the questionnaire and checklist available through an online application called Typeform.

This also meant that additional questions could be easily added-in and free text boxes could be created if the respondent wanted to add anything. This change would make the process easier for the respondent to complete the form, as the platform was mobile friendly. The benefit of this would mean that no email address would be required in order to send the survey. A link could easily be sent to respondents who were within scope via text message, WhatsApp or other communication platforms. It was felt an online platform would best suit the tech savvy nature of millennials. In addition, the platform also made the data collection easier as all answers could be exported to an excel sheet.

Feedback from the pilot also highlighted the need for some questions to be restructured. The pilot approach was incredibly helpful in identifying areas of improvement.

4.2.2 Sample

The cohort of respondents required for this particular piece study were millennials. It was expected to recruit respondents through social media, small business association contacts along with contacts through alumni's. It was intended to sample 100 millennials, of any gender, from various employment sectors and employment levels ranging from small to large scale organisations. Sampling would be achieved through snowball sampling, encouraging respondents who complete the questionnaire to then send out to their circle. It was decided to use this approach, rather than going to an organisation as it was felt that individuals who volunteered to complete the questionnaire would more likely be honest in their answers. If an organisation had been approached to host the study, it was felt that the respondents may not be as honest or forthcoming with such information.

4.3 The Process

There were three steps involved in acquiring the information:

4.3.1 Step 1: Verifying the Millennial

Verifying the respondent fell within the scope of the research. As stated, for the purpose of this piece of research a millennial will be identified as a person born between 1981 and 1996 which would include individuals that are 23 to 38 in 2019.

In order to identify this information, all respondents will be required to confirm that they fell within scope. This will be confirmed by asking the respondent to agree or otherwise to a statement. This was the first question the respondents were asked. If the respondent falls out of scope, for example if they are younger or older these responses will not be included in the findings.

4.3.2 Step 2: Identifying Leadership Styles

Identifying the leadership style of the respondents manager/ lead. The respondent will be provided with a general overview on the three different leadership styles in order to give some understanding and background. This information was held on the landing page of the Typeform platform hosting the material. The respondents will then be requested to complete a questionnaire in order to identify which leadership style their managers fall into.

In order to verify this the respondent will be asked to confirm that they have answered the questionnaire based on the behaviour of their manager.

Bass and Avolio (1995) (cited in Seyal 2014), developed the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) which is an extensive questionnaire that identifies leadership types. This questionnaire has 36 items related to leadership styles and 9 items associated with leadership outcomes, the MLQ is made of 9 scales that measures if the individual is a transformational, transactional or passive/avoidant leader. The style of this questionnaire is very thorough and can be given to a group or an individual, in addition, it has been re-used and validated in other studies. The MLQ questionnaire is not only comprehensive but also has been utilised in other studies such as Seyal and Rahman (2014) and Mora and Ticlau (2012).

Although the MLQ has been extensively used in various studies, there are other studies which do criticise its conceptual framework (Northouse 1997). In addition, the MLQ relates to a different set of leadership styles (transformational, transactional and passive), and so did not fit the scope of this particular study.

Despite this, it was felt that the MLQ would be easy to send, easy to complete and straightforward in terms of identifying leadership styles based on the scoring. In addition, it is a tried and tested approach.

Taking these points into consideration, it was crucial to identify a similar questionnaire which was specific to the three chosen leadership styles.

The questionnaire identified to use for this study was developed by Northouse (2011). This questionnaire is shorter than the MLQ with 18 statements. The statements, structure and delivery are very similar to the MLQ. Based on this and the fact that the statements are framed in such a way to identify if the individual is an authoritarian, democratic or laissez-faire leader, it was decided to progress with the Northouse (2011) questionnaire, in addition the questionnaire was freely available online.

The statements were slightly reworded as they were phrased in a way that it identified the leadership style of the person completing the questionnaire, whereas the aim is to identify the leadership style of the millennials manager or leader.

The statements are put to the respondent who then has the choice to consider if they; strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or answer as neutral. The responses are scored from 1

(strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scoring approach suited this particular piece of research as it helped to easily break the results down to identify the leadership type.

The scoring is calculated in such a way that it identifies if the person is most dominant or least dominant within that leadership style.

The questionnaire will be sent to the respondents, along with a breakdown on what an autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leader is so that the subject can familiarise themselves with this information. The respondent will be asked to answer the questionnaire based on the behaviour of their manager. The purpose of this is to identify what type of leader each manager is or what leadership style is associated with that manager.

4.3.3 Step 3: CWB

The purpose of this step is to attempt to identify if CWB, specifically withdrawal / absenteeism is more prominent in either of the three leadership styles. It has been outlined the approach taken to identify the leadership styles, the next element is identifying CWB.

We have looked at what CWB is and the impact it can have on an organisation and team. We understand that there are different types of CBW and for the purpose of this piece of research we will concentrate on absenteeism, which includes withdrawal. As previously outlined, withdrawal can be characterised as absenteeism, lateness or turnover (Johns 2001).

Fox and Spector (2002) developed the counterproductive work behaviour checklist (CWB-C), which comes in two versions. There is a full 45-item which was created to score overall CWB or as two subscales that identifies CWB directed towards the organisation or the employees.

There is also a 32 - item version (Fox and Spector 2002), which provides 5 subscales of CWB, these can be broken down to theft, production deviance, abuse sabotage and withdrawal.

The instructions of the checklist shows what question relates to which CWB. In theory, one could remove the CBW questions that do not relate to withdrawal or absenteeism. However it was felt keeping them in would still offer an insight into CWB.

In order to identify the CWB type, respondents were presented with a statement. Once the respondent has considered the statement, they answer on a 5 point frequency scale of; never, once or twice, once or twice per month, once or twice per week or every day.

This type of scale assisted in identifying the frequency and analysing the data.

The type of scale used for the checklist is also very suitable for the study as it makes it easy to identify CWB type and analyse the findings.

This particular checklist has been used in a number of other studies (Bolton et al, 2012, Krischer et al, 2010). In addition, the CWB-C has also tested in cross-cultural settings to analyse how it translates, with positive results (Rauf and Farooq 2014).

Furthermore, the checklist was developed by Prof Spector who is an esteemed researcher in this area. For these reasons it was decided to use this tried and tested checklist for this study.

The checklist will also be sent to the respondent along with the leadership questionnaire and the breakdown of the traits of the leadership styles for completion. The respondent will be required to complete both the checklist and the questionnaire.

4.4 Additional Questions

Additional questions have been included for the respondent at the beginning of the study, these include:

Q: Can you confirm that you were born between 1981 and 1996

The purpose of this question is to ensure the respondent falls within the scope of this study and the parameters of what a millennial is as outlined and agreed for this specific study.

Q: I have identified another manager who showed signs of anther leadership style

The purpose of this question was to identify within the sample the potential of another respondent who could provide information on another leadership style. The intent here was not only to increase respondent numbers but also to cross-reference the respondent's behaviour against at least two leadership styles.

Q: I have exhibited counterproductive work behaviour in all employment settings

The purpose of this question it to identify if CWB is related to the personality and/or behaviour of the respondent

Q: I have exhibited counterproductive work behaviour as a result of my managers leadership style

The purpose of this direct question is to learn from the respondents side if they felt they're CWB was a direct result of their leader.

In addition a free text box has been included to give the respondent the opportunity to add additional information should they wish.

4.5 Data Protection

The identity of all respondents involved in this piece of research will not be captured. The cohort relates to age and nothing else and so personal information was not required and so there is nothing to be saved. Furthermore as the questionnaire and checklist was completed through an online platform no email addresses were required in order to send the link.

6.6 Ethical Consideration

All information captured is completely confidential and will be stored on a personal laptop that is password protected. The file that holds the checklist and questionnaire will be saved in a folder which is encrypted. There will be no identifiable information used when saving and storing the responses.

In addition the questionnaire and checklist used to collect the data were created and used by established researchers, there was a thought process taken when deciding this approach.

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to look at the three leadership styles and identify if there was a link between these and absenteeism/ withdrawal amongst millennials. In order to obtain this information, there were a number of steps which had to be undertaken. Firstly, to confirm the respondents were within scope of the study and were millennials. It has been identified for the purpose of this study a millennial is someone who was born between 1981 and 1996 and was 23 - 38 in 2019. The next step was to identify what leadership style the respondents manager/lead falls into; autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire. The leadership style was identified using the Northouse (2011) questionnaire. Next stage was for the respondents to complete the CWB-C checklist (Spector, 2006). This checklist was created to look at a number of different CBW, as this study is only looking at absenteeism/ withdrawal we only need to analyse the answers that relate to these statements. The point of this was to identify if the respondent partakes in absenteeism/ withdrawal and how regularly.

A number of studies were reviewed prior to undertaking this piece of research. There is a huge amount of information and research undertaken on the area of millennials in addition there is a breath of information around the many leadership styles and the various counterproductive behaviours. However, it was found that there was limited information which looked specifically at autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles and if there was a link to absenteeism/ withdrawal amongst the millennial cohort.

From reviewing other studies, there were a number of themes that began to emerge, for example what millennials look for in a leader, they want an inspirational leader that is respected and who will provide feedback. Feedback with the intention to support and progress the millennial. In addition, it was found that, similar to other working generations, if the millennials are not happy in the workplace they will leave.

Furthermore, it was also found that leadership styles resulted in different behaviours from subordinates, both studies undertaken by Fiaz (2017) and Lewin et al (1939) experienced a positive reaction to laissez-faire leadership and both studies experienced negative reactions or behaviours to leaders perceived as autocratic.

However, the outcomes of both studies were different when it came to democratic leadership, with Fiaz (2017) it was found that there was a negative impact on the employee with the democratic leadership. Whereas Lewin et al (1939) found this to be a positive experience. It has been outlined the limitations these studies have in comparison to this study, primarily the cohort being used in the studies.

5.1.2 Overview

The following chapter looks at the results of the questionnaire and checklist completed by millennials. The first part of the chapter divides the leadership style of the respondent's manager/lead and outlines the percentage response of autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire.

There is then a table for each leadership style and the percentage responses for each absenteeism/ withdrawal question. A recap of the key traits of each leadership introduces these tables. These findings are compared in order to identify common themes.

As there was an uneven number of participants per leadership type, the next part of the chapter looks at a smaller sample size to further ensure that the common themes are still plausible. These findings are presented in table and graph form.

The chapter then looks at the responses of the additional questions that were asked.

The total number of completed responses was 47.

From the completed responses, it was calculated that 47% had a laissez-faire manager, 34% had a democratic manager and 19% had an autocratic manager.

Table 1: Leadership Style Responses

Leadership Style	Response Total:
Autocratic	19%
Democratic	34%
Laissez-faire	47%

The questionnaire was designed in such a way to identify if the respondents manager/ lead scored high, very high, moderate, low or very low. It was then possible to further identify which leadership style the manager/ lead predominantly showed traits of. The majority of managers exhibited signs of a particular leadership style so it was very clear what style they were. The reason for this was because no respondents scored low or very low on the leadership styles element of the questionnaire.

The below table outlines the breakdown of leadership style and the scoring across very high, high and moderate. Interestingly it appears that laissez-faire leadership is the most dominant overall leadership style based on the respondents' feedback. Laissez-faire scored the highest in the very high and high categories, a combined score of 47%, excluding the moderate score.

This is followed by democratic leadership style, which had its highest scoring of 19% in the 'very high' category and 13% in high an overall score of 34%.

Autocratic leadership style interestingly scored highest in the 'high' category at 15% and 2.1% in 'very high' category. A total of 17.1%.

Table 2: Leadership Style Responses Breakdown

Leadership Style	Very High	High	Moderate	Total
Autocratic	2.1%	15%	2.1%	19%
Democratic	19%	13%	2.1%	34%
Laissez-faire	15%	19%	11%	47%

5.2 CWB

The CWB-C checklist (Fox and Spencer, 2002) captures information regarding CWB, as this particular study concentrates on absenteeism withdrawal, this specific data could be pulled from the responses. The checklist made it easier to identify this type of CWB.

Analysis from the CWB checklist showed that only 4% respondents had not engaged in any withdrawal/ absenteeism behaviour at all. These respondents identified that their managers showed traits of democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles, so there was no consistency between the styles. All other respondents outlined that they had engaged specifically in withdrawal / absenteeism despite leadership style.

Furthermore, the frequency options for absenteeism/ withdrawal were; never, once or twice, once or twice per month, once or twice per week and every day. No respondent selected every day for any of the statements, so this option has been removed from the tables below. We understand that the respondents are partaking in withdrawal /absenteeism as often as once or twice per week, one or twice per month or as irregular as once or twice or never.

5.3 Absenteeism/ Withdrawal: Leadership Style

5.3.1 Autocratic Leadership Style

We understand from the desk based research undertaken, an autocratic leader can be strict, they give work but they do not always give all the information to the employees, which can result in issues around trust. As a result of such traits the employees do not enjoy much freedom. Likert's (1961) management system (cited in Fiaz et al 2017) describes autocratic leadership as poor communication and no regard for teamwork. Fiaz (2017) outlined how this type of leader encourages incentives, which is in line with the below quote that was taken directly from the survey and the manager was identified as an autocratic leader.

" I have had many issues where I have been taken advantage of in the workplace under the premise of reward based systems which never were followed through on.

Taking into consideration the study undertaken by Signh et al (2012) if we consider some of the main themes identified from researching millennials in the workplace, feedback, inspirational leaders and being part of the team were determined. These favoured traits seem to not be aligned to the behaviour of an autocratic leader.

The below table is based on the response rate of 19%:

Table 3: Autocratic Leadership style: question breakdown

Statement	Never	Once or Twice	Once or Twice per Month	Once or Twice per week
Came to work late without permission	55%	11%	22%	11%
Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't	22%	78%	0%	0%
Taken a longer break than you were allowed to take	0%	88%	11%	0%
Left work earlier than you were allowed to	11%	78%	11%	0%

Respondents who identified their manager/ lead as autocratic seem to favour taking a longer break then allowed once or twice, not necessarily consistently. In addition these respondents chose once or twice most regularly with staying at home when not actually sick and leaving work early. Interestingly, the frequency of once or twice seems to be the most common scoring preference for all statements. Leading one to believe that this specific group partake in absenteeism/ withdrawal but not necessarily very often, such as once a month.

The next highest response rate was that respondents outlined that they 'never' come to work late without permission. Furthermore, these specific respondents identified the frequency of 'once or twice per week' as very low across all statements and also scored 'never' regularly across all statements.

This group appears to undertake absenteeism / withdrawal the odd time, for example once or twice but actually they do appear to partake somewhat more regularly as they do score once or twice a month regularly.

We understand that the autocratic leader is strict and does not always give the employee all the information, being somewhat aloof leading one to consider the trust between the leader

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and employee. Puni *et al* (2016) further adds that the autocratic leader relies on authority and control and manipulation in order to complete the task or job at hand.

The outcome is in line with the study undertaken by Puni et al (2016), who identified that employees were more likely to engage in CBW if they perceived their manager as autocratic which is also in line with the study undertaken by Mtimkula et al (2014) who found that employees were more likely to partake in absenteeism/ withdrawal if the leader is autocratic.

Regularity of once or twice per week is not selected that often, which is not surprising considering this type of leader is strict. However one or twice per month although selected more the numbers are low and a longer lunch break is the most common CWB for the autocratic leader.

5.3.2 Laissez-Faire Leadership Style

As previously outlined, the laissez-faire leader gives freedom to the employee allowing them to make decisions themselves. This leader does not really participate and would not comment on employees activities unless asked – very much a hands off approach (Lewin et al 1939). The laissez-faire leader only enforces goals when required and development amongst employees is not of concern of the laissez-faire leader (Friaz, 2017). Diebig and Bormann (2020) further discusses how the laissez-faire leader is not present and so is not available to offer advice or guidance when the employee needs this, resulting in stress.

There would be elements of this leadership style the millennial would appreciate such as the freedom to make decisions however there is a fundamental lack of leadership. A hands off approach may not provide the inspirational leadership style the millennial is looking for.

The below table is based on the response rate of 47%:

Table 4: Laissez-Faire Leadership style: Question Breakdown

Statement	Never	Once or Twice	Once or Twice per Month	Once or Twice per week
Came to work late without permission	59%	23%	18%	0%
Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't	55%	50%	0%	0%
Taken a longer break than you were allowed to take	14%	59%	23%	4.5%
Left work earlier than you were allowed to	45%	45%	9%	9%

Taking a longer than normal break appears to be the most common answer. The frequency of 'once or twice' is also the most common score statement. Never coming to work late without permission also scoring very high.

Staying home from work when you're not sick scored the next highest with a high regular frequency. This was followed by leaving work earlier than allowed to again scoring high in terms of frequency.

Interestingly this group appears to partake in absenteeism / withdrawal more regularly - scoring once or twice per week and once or twice per month more regularly.

Considering there the laissez-faire leader does give freedom to the employee these are interesting outcomes, particularly as these are unauthorised. If we consider Lewin et al (1939) who outlined that this leader is very hands off and only comments on employee's actions when asked, one could assume the employee may be more relaxed on the rules. In addition, Diebig and Bormann (2020) discusses the laissez-faire leader not being present to offer advice needed resulting in stress, one wonders if there is an element of retaliation from the employee through the act of absenteeism/ withdrawal.

In addition, this outcome is in line with the study undertaken by Punit et al (2016), the results indicated that employees were more likely to engage in CBW if they perceived their manager as laissez-faire. To further support this, Frooman et al (2012), identified that absenteeism increased amongst employees whose leader was laissez-faire this outcome is further reflected in the study undertaken by Mtimkula et al (2014) who identified a link between absenteeism and a laissez-faire leader.

<u>5.3.3 Democratic Leadership Style</u>

Based on the theory, the democratic leader meets the needs of the millennial most closely, as this leader is focused on the group, offers advice and encourages group discussion. Bhatti et al (2012) adds that there is more interaction within the group as there is more focus on people and the democratic leader is more part of the group themselves. The group, we have learned is important to the millennial as previously cited, Carter and Walker (2018), outline that the millennial employee wants, not only to be part of, but also to be essential to the team. In addition, the employee has the benefit of freedom but is informed, which instils trust which is in line with Lewin et al (1939), who outline that there is trust between the leader and the employee.

This behaviour is in line with the below quote which was taken directly from the questionnaire. This respondent's manager was identified as being a democratic leader:

"The core ethics and attributes of the company I work for endorsed traits such as mentorship and the success of each individual was determined by those around them"

The below table is based on the response rate of 34%:

Table 5: Democratic Leadership style: Question Breakdown

Statement	Never	Once or Twice	Once or Twice per Month	Once or Twice per week
Came to work late without permission	31%	44%	12.5%	12.5%
Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't	81%	19%	0%	0%
Taken a longer break than you were allowed to take	12.5%	62%	19%	12.5%
Left work earlier than you were allowed to	44%	38%	19%	0%

Interestingly, Never staying at home from work when you are not really sick is the overall highest score. However taking a longer than normal break with the frequency of once or twice is the highest score of withdrawal / absenteeism. Followed by coming to work late or without permission one or twice and leaving work earlier than allowed.

The frequency for this cohort scores highest for once or twice, however there appears to be a higher number opting for one or twice per month and also weekly, in comparison to the other two leadership styles.

The regularity of the frequency is very interesting considering this leader is all about the group. As previously discussed Lewin et al (1939) outlined that this leader gives freedom to the employee which creates trust and a good relationship, also if we consider the study undertaken by Fiaz (2017) who identified a positive link between this leader and the employee.

This outcome is interesting as according to the study undertaken by Puni et al (2016), the results indicated that those sampled were less likely to partake in CWB if they perceived their leader as democratic.

5.4 Additional Questions

Additional questions were included on the online platform for the respondents to complete, these questions were separate to the questionnaire and checklist. The aim of the 4 additional questions was to gain a deeper understanding of the information being provided.

Q 1: Can you confirm that you were born between 1981 and 1996?

Purpose: to confirm respondents are within the scope of the study

Outcome: all respondents confirmed that they fell within scope of the study

Q 2: I have identified another manager who showed signs of anther leadership style

Purpose: The purpose of this question was to identify within the sample if a respondent could complete the questionnaire and checklist again with the other leader in mind in order to increase respondent's numbers and also to cross reference the respondents behaviour against the two leadership styles.

Outcome: 60% of the respondents agreed that they had identified another manager who showed signs of another leadership style.

Q 3:I have exhibited counterproductive work behaviour in all employment settings

Purpose: Is to identify if CWB is related to the personality and/or behaviour of the respondent

Outcome: From this statement, 21% of all respondents, irrespective of leadership style, confirmed that they had exhibited CWB in all employment settings.

However the majority (79%) disagreed with this statement.

Q 4: I have exhibited counterproductive work behaviour as a result of my managers leadership style

Purpose: The purpose of this direct question is to learn from the respondents side if they felt that they partook in CWB was a direct result of their leader.

Outcome: From this statement, 36% of the respondents, irrespective of leadership style agreed with this statement however 49% disagreed with the statement.
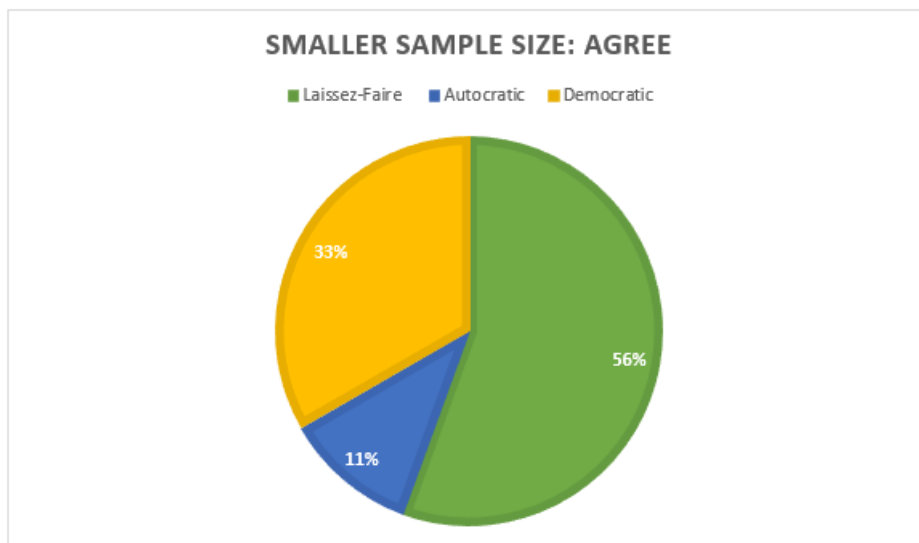
Table 6: Breakdown: Additional Question 4: Agree: Disagree

BREAKDOWN: ADDITIONAL QUESTION 4: AGREE: DISAGREE

N/A
15%

Agree
36%

Disagree
49%
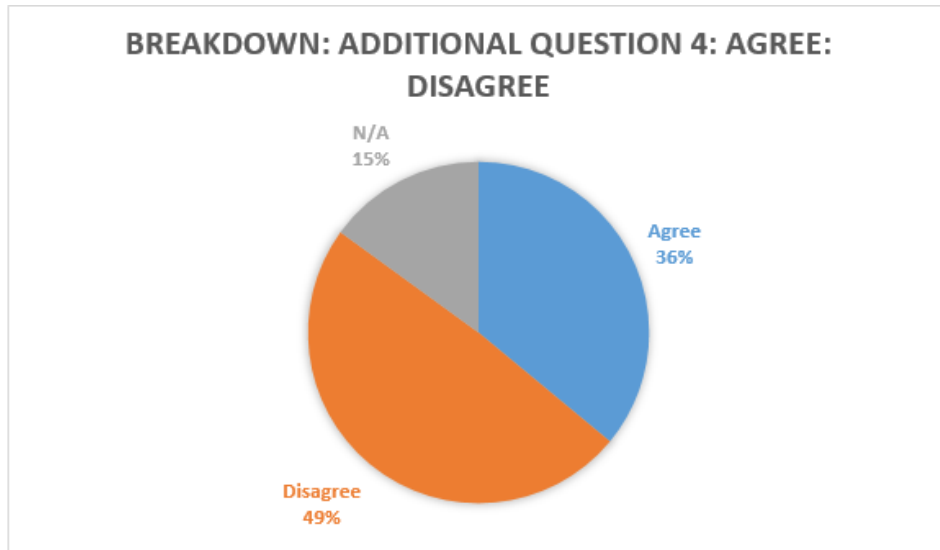
Due to the uneven number of respondents based on leadership style. It was decided to take a smaller sample size of 9 respondents per leadership style to further look at this specific question.

The below chart is based on a random sample size of 9 who agreed with this statement:

Table 7: Breakdown: Additional Question 4: Agree: Smaller Sample Size

SMALLER SAMPLE SIZE: AGREE

■ Laissez-Faire   ■ Autocratic   ■ Democratic

33%

56%

11%

The below chart is based on a random sample size of 9 who disagreed with this statement:

Table 8: Breakdown: Additional Question 4: Disagree: Smaller Sample Size
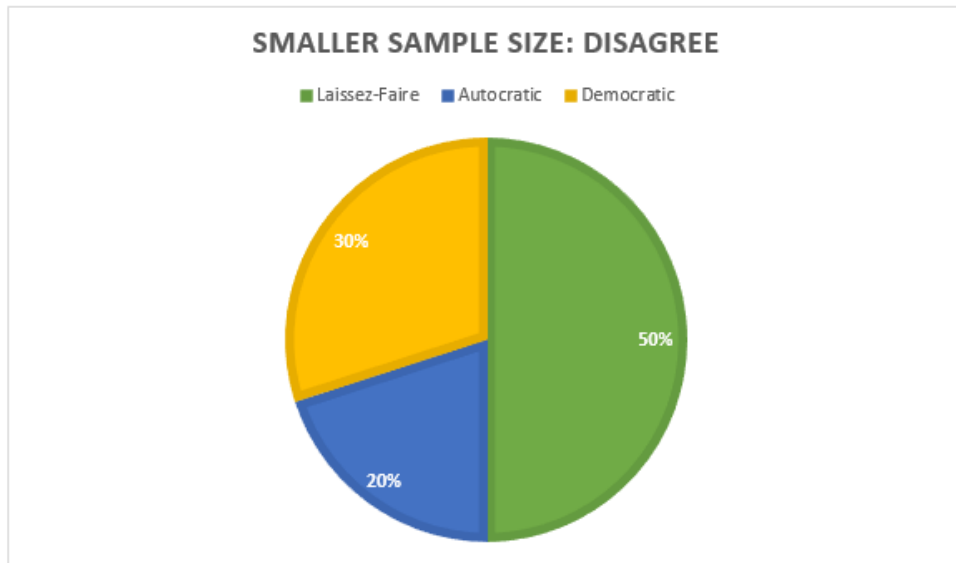
5.5 Sub Questions:

The below address the sub questions outlined in the research question chapter.

Sub Q: Does democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership style affect absenteeism /withdrawal in the workplace?

The results from the study show that all three leadership styles experience absenteeism/ withdrawal. Taking into consideration the additional question included in the form, which asked if the respondents exhibited CWB as a result of their managers leadership style, 36% of the total respondents agreed to this statement. From this, 29% perceived their leader as democratic, 65% perceived their leader as laissez-faire and 6% perceived their leader as autocratic.

The majority disagreed with this statement, with 44% democratic, 35% laissez-faire and 22% autocratic.

Sub Q: Is there a leadership style that experiences absenteeism / withdrawal more regularly?

Based on the information provided by the respondents, the results from the analysis indicated that the democratic leader experiences the most regular absenteeism/ withdrawal with once or twice a week. Interestingly, the democratic and laissez-faire leader scored equal in terms of frequency being one or twice a month, there is a commonality between both styles here.

Sub Q: Is absenteeism/ withdrawal experienced across the three types of leadership styles?

Based on the respondent's answers, it is clear that absenteeism/ withdrawal of some form is evident regardless of leadership style. The results indicate that this behaviour is experienced across the three leadership styles, with respondents confirming they partake in absenteeism / withdrawal. There was an exception of 4% of the participants who did not partake in absenteeism / withdrawal, interestingly there was no consistency in the leadership style of these participants managers.

Sub Q: What is the most common frequency in how regular respondents partake in absenteeism/ withdrawal?

Based on the results from the questionnaire and checklist, there was a clear consistency in relation to the most common frequency being once or twice. The below chart highlights laissez-faire as the most common leadership style that experiences absenteeism/withdrawal once or twice.

However, this table is representative of all respondents, as laissez-faire had the highest number of respondents in the study, it is not surprising this style scored the highest.

Table 9: Absenteeism/ Withdrawal V's Leadership Style: All Respondents
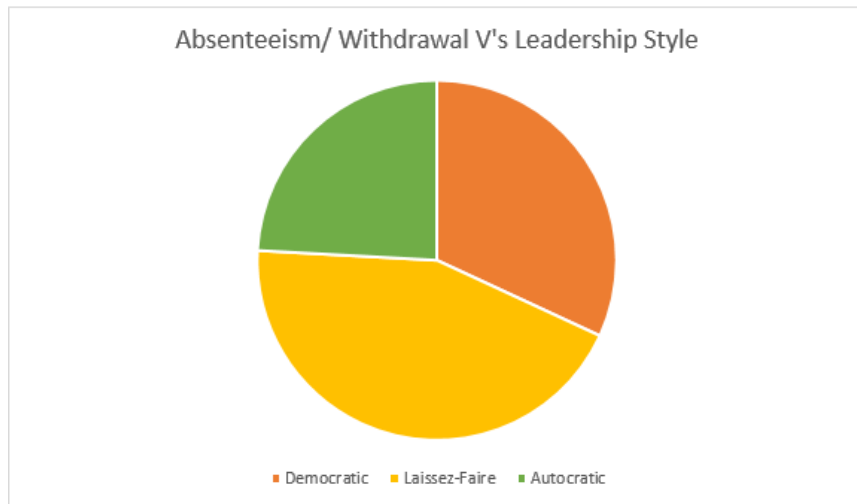
Smaller Sample Size - Test

As previously outlined, there was an uneven number of respondents per leadership style. In order to further analyse this question it was decided to review the results based on a smaller set size of 9 in order to see if the outcome is the same. Undertaking analysis of a smaller set resulted in a different outcome. The smaller set size of using 9 respondents per leadership style resulted in the autocratic leader experiencing once or twice most frequently.

Table 10: Absenteeism/ Withdrawal V's Leadership Style: Smaller Sample Size
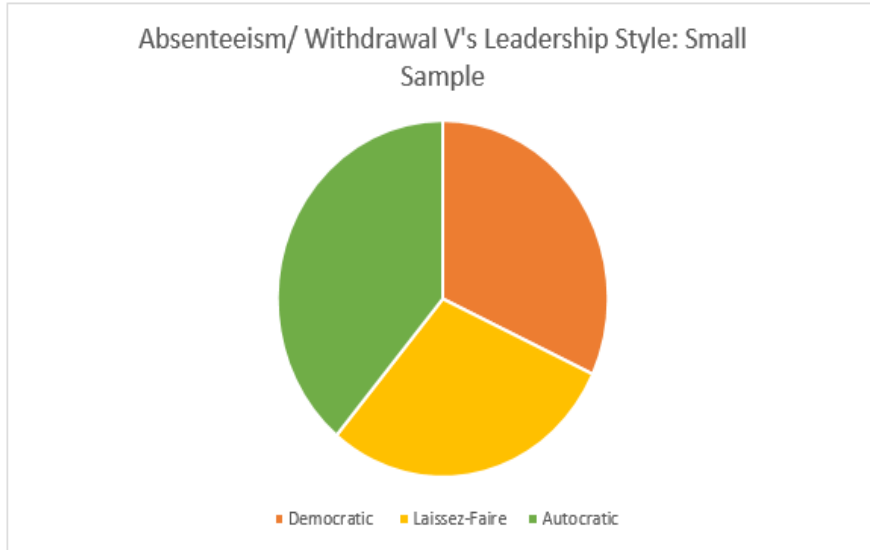
The smaller sample size is a more representative outcome as it is based on an even number of leadership styles. This outcome is also in line with findings of the other studies such as Mtimkula et al (2014), Puni et al (2016), Frooman et al (2012) and Fiaz (2017).

Sub Q: Within the parameters of the questions asked, is there a common form of absenteeism/ withdrawal?

Based on the information provided by the respondents, taking a break longer than allowed is the most common form of absenteeism/ withdrawal.

The below diagram outlines the responses of each of the four absenteeism/ withdrawal questions against each of the leadership styles. Identifying question 3 (taking longer breaks) as the most similarly answered statement across the three leadership styles.

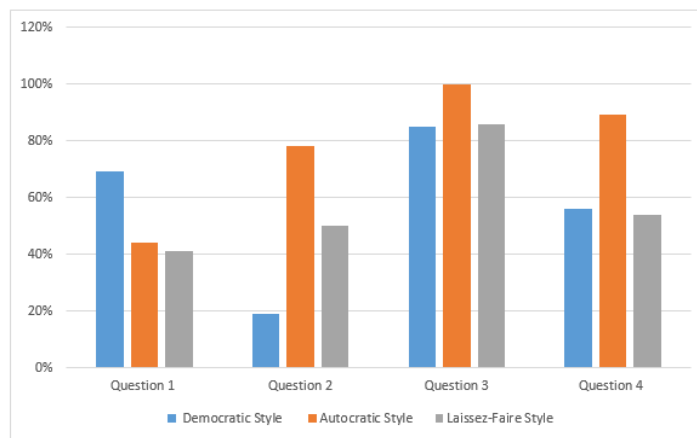**Table 11: Common Form of Absenteeism/ withdrawal**

Figure 1: CWB Questions and leadership Style

Smaller Sample Size - Test

As there was not an even number of respondents per leadership style, it was decided to review the results based on a smaller set size of 9. The point of which was to further analyse the outcome and to ensure the results were the same from the larger sample and smaller sample.

The sample size of 9 was chosen as this figure represents the total number of respondents whose managers displayed traits of autocratic style.

Table 12: Common Form of Absenteeism/ withdrawal: Smaller Sample Size
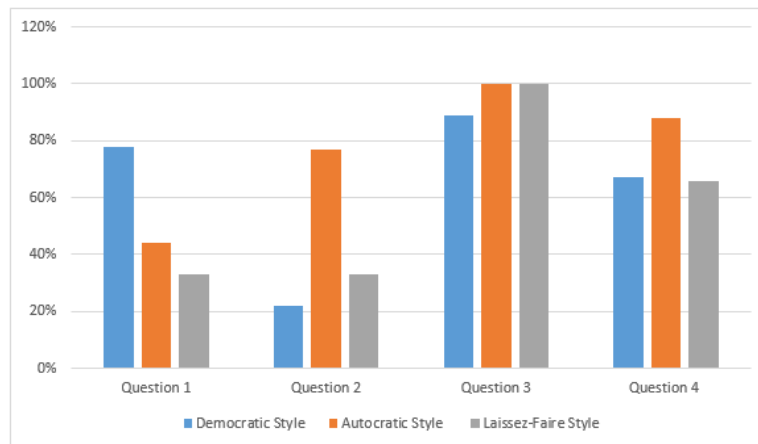
The above chart, with a smaller sample size of 9 still identifies the third statement of taking longer breaks as the most common form of CWB amongst the leadership styles. In addition, the frequency of one or twice is still the dominant outcome.

5.6 Similarities from Results

There appears to be similarities between the laissez-faire, autocratic and democratic leadership style. These being the frequency of once or twice when taking a longer break. Interestingly, the democratic leader seemed to stand out in terms of frequency, respondents were more likely to regularly partake in absenteeism/ withdrawal with this type of leader.

In addition there are similarities between the results irrespective of leadership style:

- Absenteeism/withdrawal is evident regardless of leadership style
- Once or twice is the most common frequency regardless of leadership style
- Taking a break longer then allowed to is the most common form of absenteeism/ withdrawal
- Leaving work early without permission is common

5.7 Outcomes

When comparing all three leadership styles and percentage responses against frequency, there were interesting outcomes:

- Democratic leadership scored the highest in terms of frequency (once or twice a week) for absenteeism / withdrawal
- Democratic and Laissez-faire scored equal in terms of once or twice a month for absenteeism/ withdrawal
- Autocratic leadership scored highest in terms of once or twice (not that often) for absenteeism/ withdrawal
- Laissez-faire leadership experienced the highest amount of absenteeism/ withdrawal

Although not in scope of this study, micro managing was also identified as a theme from the respondents. This management approach was irrespective of leadership style.

Below are some direct quotes taken from the free text box from the questionnaire:

"Micromanaging creates a very bad atmosphere and moral amongst staff" (laissez-faire leadership style)

"Current manager micromanages which makes performing tasks very difficult at times and slows down procedures, is a lovely person but management style varies each week" (laissez-faire leadership style)

"Current manager micromanages which makes performing tasks very difficult at times and slows down procedures, is a lovely person but management style varies each week" (laissez-faire leadership style)

5.8 Limitations

From analysing the findings, it was clear that there were a number of limitations associated with the study.

The intention was to secure a sample size of 100 participants, unfortunately this was not achieved. The sample size that was secured was 47 respondents all of whom were in scope for this piece of research. The link to the questionnaire was live for 4 days. It was felt that if it had been available longer that the original sample size of 100 applications would have been achieved. The smaller sample made it more difficult to give a clear and representative outcome. A larger sample size would have provided a more robust and thorough outcome.

Furthermore, there was not an even number of respondents per leadership style and so a smaller set size was used making the sample size even smaller and so not giving a clear indication of the results. On reflection it would be beneficial to have secured a sample with an even number of respondents to represent each leadership style. This would have shown a clearer representation.

The study did not take into consideration personality type or any external factors which may cause an employee to act out in the workplace such as stress. Other studies have looked at absenteeism/ withdrawal alongside other variables. Such variables would take into consideration other limitations, which would influence an outcome. Again showing a clearer representation of the cohort. In addition, the type of working environment has not been taken into consideration, at the time of this study the world was in midst of a pandemic with many people working from home. This may have affected the results, some feedback from the study outlined managers micromanaging; this could be a result of the current situation, as these details were not captured. It would be interesting to undertake a research on virtual leadership particularly at this time. In addition, participants' bias towards their managers/ lead was not taken into consideration and this could have affected the outcomes.

Interestingly, feedback from one respondent was that some of the statements in the questionnaire were dated. This may have affected the results if the respondents could not relate to statements. On further considering this point, the respondents bias if any to their manager was not taken into consideration.

6. Discussion

The aim of the study was to look at autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles to identify if there is a link between these styles and absenteeism/ withdrawal amongst millennials. The leadership style of the respondent's manager/ lead needed to be identified using the leadership questionnaire. This information was then used against the CWB checklist, concentrating on absenteeism/ withdrawal. The aim of this was to identify if a leadership style experienced a higher level of absenteeism /withdrawal. Research undertaken for this study identified key attributes or traits associated with each leadership style.

The findings have shown that absenteeism/ withdrawal are present amongst millennials regardless of the leadership style of the manager, showing there is a link between styles and this form of CWB. To further support this, 36% of respondents directly agreed that they partake in CBW due to the leadership style of their manager. This outcome would be in line with other studies that identified negative behaviour towards different leadership styles (Puni et al, 2016, Frooman et al 2012, Mtimkula et al 2014). The difference between the studies referenced and this study is the cohort used. However, although the studies referenced all used a different type of cohort there is still a consistent theme that the millennial is the same. This notion is in line with the paper undertaken by Wood (2019), which outlined the needs of the millennial are the same as those of other generations.

In addition to this, feedback, part of the group and an inspirational leader were also themes identified as a need from the perspective of the millennial. A point that was echoed in a number of papers (IBM 2015, Zaheree et al 2018 and Singnh et al 2012). These attributes would be in line with the democratic leadership style. However, the results from this study indicated that the democratic leader experienced the highest levels of frequency being once or twice a week and also scored the same as laissez-faire in terms of frequency of once or twice a month.

Interestingly, this leads to the leadership style that experiences the most absenteeism/ withdrawal which was the laissez-faire leader. The characteristics of this leader allows for freedom and is not always present (Lewin et al, 1939, Diebig and Bormann 2020). In terms of the wants of the millennial some elements of this style may suit but they also want dependability and feedback (IBM, 2015). Features that a non-present manager can fulfil and so the results were somewhat not surprising.

An interesting theme that did emerge was that taking a longer lunch break than allowed was the most popular form of absenteeism/ withdrawal across all three leadership styles.

6.1 Future Research

1) As both the checklist and the questionnaire used was developed pre millennial time, feedback from some of the respondents indicated that the wording and statements used in the questionnaire was somewhat dated. Taking this into consideration it would be worth reviewing the questionnaire to bring it up to date.

2) It would be interesting to look more in-depth at the respondents who had identified another manager with a different leadership style. In order to undertake a comparative study to see if the respondents behaviour varied between the two leadership styles.

3) Some feedback from the free text box indicated that some managers were micromanaging. It is unknown if this is due to the current situation (COVID-19) or if the manager usually manages like this, as this specific information was not captured. It would be interesting to undertake research on virtual leadership particularly during this time.

4) Micromanaging, although not in scope, was identified as a theme within the free box section of the questionnaire. Interestingly, 3 separate respondents made reference to micromanaging. Upon analysing, it was found that the three had a laissez-faire manager who is usually hands off unless. It would be interesting to look further into this.

6.2 Recommendations and Implications

The results suggest that absenteeism/ withdrawal are apparent regardless of leadership style amongst millennials, with the level of frequency being the most obvious difference. This behaviour is costing the organisation and the economy money and could be reduced. Trust is something that has come up a number of times and something that could be worked on.

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that the team including the manager undertake a team building challenge in order to work on trust and get the team away from the usual work environment. It is not recommended to do a night out that includes alcohol. The suggestion would be an activity where the team works together to solve something or overcome a challenge. There are virtual team building options available (COVID-19) but also experiences that the team physically go somewhere for a couple of hours. The cost of which depends on the numbers but for 6 people approximately €400 depending on the activity.

It is then recommended that this is followed by a brainstorming activity around what the team wants to achieve over the next 6 months and how to get there, setting out a plan and identifying how to move forward and what could be holding them back. The aim of this is to build on the trust and work together. It is suggested that this is undertaken off site so would involve the cost of renting a business suite in a hotel.

Recommendation 2

Depending on the size of the organisation, it is recommended that managers complete the leadership checklist as this is freely available online with no cost associated. The idea would be if the managers understand their leadership style they will be more aware of their strengths and weaknesses as a manager. This would make the manager more aware of the skills that they need to develop or lack at.

In addition and depending on the size of the organisation personality tests can also be provided to staff. These are freely available online and can be downloaded, handed out and completed. The benefit of these is that not only do they identify personality type but also how other personalities work making employees aware of others and equipping employees with knowledge about themselves but also others.

If there is a Learning and Development department, there may be scope for budget to undertake additional training, such as communication skills at least or leadership training.

Implications

There is no cost associated with this recommendation and is an exercise that can be very quickly organised and completed. However, it could result in managers requesting additional training which could result in a cost

Recommendation 3

Training is recommended as another option and an option which would probably be most beneficial as further training and education is always a good thing. There are a number of courses that could be recommended such as communication skills, this could be pitched for managers but also for employees. Generally these types of courses would include topics such as difficult conversations which would give managers the tools to deal with such conversations and from the other side enable the other employees to communicate clearly any issue

Management training would be beneficial to any organisation that is supporting employee growth. Depending on the size of the organisation and the number of people that require training. This is something that can be organised internally, a professional coming in to train a group of staff members or externally where the employees are sent out to a training course. Both options offer different experiences.

Implications

IBEC provides many different types of training at approximately €800 for a foundation course or €1800 for a 4 day course for leaders on the rise. There are other courses available that are QQI recognised that would be approximately €500 for a 4 day cost. Furthermore there are the option of online virtual courses, which can be undertaken through LinkedIn learning or the Open University for approx €400.

The organisation may agree to pay a certain percentage of the course to assist the staff member which shows, with the stipulation that the staff member stays for at least 2 years or else pays back the organisation. Assisting with the cost of a course shows investment and commitment to the employee.

Recommendation 4

Review and update the employee handbook, concentrating on the absenteeism/ withdrawal behaviour. Depending on the level of CWB that the organisation is experiencing, the policy may need to change to incorporate a penalty such as a warning if an employee continues such behaviour more than a certain number of times.

Implications

There is no cost associated with reviewing a policy, unless the handbook needs to be printed, however most likely it is emailed to the workforce.

The employee may become annoyed at this change and so it would need to be communicated clearly the reasoning why this step is being undertaken.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to look at autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles and identify if there was a link between these leadership styles and absenteeism/ withdrawal amongst millennials. This piece of research was undertaken, as although there are a number of studies that have looked at leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour, there appeared to be limited research undertaken specifically on these three leadership styles, absenteeism/ withdrawal and using millennials as the sample cohort.

The results of the study identified that there is a link between leadership styles and counterproductive work behaviour such as absenteeism/ withdrawal. These findings are in line with other studies researched (Puni et al 2016 and Frooman et al 2012). However, other studies were based on different cohorts of people.

It was also found that absenteeism/ withdrawal was evident regardless if the respondent's manager was a democratic, autocratic or laissez-faire leader. The findings were restricted due to the framework of the questions that were related specifically to absenteeism/ withdrawal. Based on these restrictions, there were some interesting findings and themes, for example taking a longer lunch break than allowed was the most popular form of absenteeism/ withdrawal, scoring the highest across all leadership styles.

The frequency was also another interesting finding, with respondents outlining that they partake in absenteeism/ withdrawal once or twice. However the democratic leader scored the highest as this leader experienced absenteeism/withdrawal most regularly of once or twice a week. This outcome was very interesting, as the traits of this leader were in line with the wants of the millennial and so this outcome was surprising. Furthermore, although the autocratic leader was the strictest, the results of the study identified that this leader experienced absenteeism/ withdrawal the least, which may be as a result of being rigid.

Interestingly there seemed to be a close relationship between the democratic and laissez-faire leader in terms of experiencing absenteeism/ withdrawal monthly.

It is clear that there are a number of limitations associated with this piece of research however it is also a study that could be undertaken on a large scale in order to identify clearer themes, relationships and outcomes particularly as there does appear to be limited research undertaken that attributes specifically to these three leadership styles, absenteeism/ withdrawal amongst the millennial cohort.

In addition what is clear is that employees partake very regularly in absenteeism/ withdrawal regardless of the leadership style, some leadership styles experience more than others. Furthermore considering the cost of absenteeism/ withdrawal and CWB as whole to the organisation and the economy it is worth additional research and investment.

8. Reflection

I found the process of writing a dissertation intimidating and difficult to start. I have always been very interested in leadership styles and behaviour between people in groups so I knew that I wanted to undertake something in that area. I did find it difficult to identify a specific area within leadership as this is an extensive topic with so many views and opinions.

From a personal point, I have worked with managers that have not been good and managers that have been amazing, both having an impact on me, how I work and the atmosphere in the office.

One of the biggest personal challenges for me was changing my methodology to incorporate the checklist and statement. I had originally wanted to do face to face interviews however due to COVID-19 and from research I realised that was not the correct way to obtain the information I needed and so I had to relook at my approach and make the decision to change. I felt comfortable with the decision once I changed and I think it was for the best.

In terms of undertaking the dissertation more effectively, I would have begun the data collection element sooner as I could have left the online platform live for longer which could have generated a larger pool of respondents. I also would have tried to manage the respondents tighter in order to get a more even number per leadership style. In addition the longer time frame would have allowed for a cross reference analysis of those respondents who had identified another manager with another leadership style. It would then have been possible to see if the respondent partaking in CBW due to the leader or not.

I am very pleased that I completed the dissertation and something I feel very proud I have achieved.

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Appendix 1

Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) (32-item)

How often have you done each of the following things on your present job?	Never		Once or Twice		Once or Twice per month
1. Purposely wasted your employer's materials/supplies	1	2	3	4	5
2. Purposely did your work incorrectly	1	2	3	4	5
3. Came to work late without permission	1	2	3	4	5
4. Stayed home from work and said you were sick when you weren't	1	2	3	4	5
5. Purposely damaged a piece of equipment or property	1	2	3	4	5
6. Purposely dirtied or littered your place of work	1	2	3	4	5
7. Stolen something belonging to your employer	1	2	3	4	5
8. Started or continued a damaging or harmful rumor at work	1	2	3	4	5
9. Been nasty or rude to a client or customer	1	2	3	4	5
10. Purposely worked slowly when things needed to get done	1	2	3	4	5
11. Taken a longer break than you were allowed to take	1	2	3	4	5
12. Purposely failed to follow instructions	1	2	3	4	5
13. Left work earlier than you were allowed to	1	2	3	4	5
14. Insulted someone about their job performance	1	2	3	4	5
15. Made fun of someone's personal life	1	2	3	4	5
16. Took supplies or tools home without permission	1	2	3	4	5
17. Put in to be paid for more hours than you worked	1	2	3	4	5
18. Took money from your employer without permission	1	2	3	4	5
19. Ignored someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
20. Blamed someone at work for error you made	1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5
21. Started an argument with someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
22. Stole something belonging to someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
23. Verbally abused someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
24. Made an obscene gesture (the finger) to someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
25. Threatened someone at work with violence	1	2	3	4	5
26. Threatened someone at work, but not physically	1	2	3	4	5
27. Said something obscene to someone at work to make them feel bad	1	2	3	4	5
28. Did something to make someone at work look bad	1	2	3	4	5
29. Played a mean prank to embarrass someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
30. Looked at someone at work's private mail/property without permission	1	2	3	4	5
31. Hit or pushed someone at work	1	2	3	4	5
32. Insulted or made fun of someone at work	1	2	3	4	5

To score the CWB-C, sum responses to each item for the particular subscale as shown in the table below.

Subscale	Items to sum
Abuse	8, 9, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23-32
Production deviance	2, 10, 12
Sabotage	1, 5, 6
Theft	7, 16, 17, 18, 22
Withdrawal	3, 4, 11, 13
Total	All items

(Fox and Spector, 2002)

Appendix 2

Leadership Style Questionnaire based on Northouse (2011)

According to your manager, employees need to be supervised closely, or they are not likely to do their work

Your manager includes you in the decision-making process

In complex situations, your leader lets you work problems out on your own

Your manager believes that it most employees in the general population are lazy

Your manager provides guidance without pressure

Your manager stays out of your way to do your work

Your manager believes rewards or punishments motivate you to achieve organisational objectives

Your manager provides frequent and supportive communication

Your manager allows you to appraise your own work

According to your manager; most employees feel insecure about their work and need direction

Your manager encourages you to accept responsibility for completing your own work

Your manager gives you complete freedom to solve problems on your own

According to your manager, they are the chief judge of the achievement of the members of the group

Your manager has helped your find your 'passion' or has tried to

According to your manager, in most situations, workers prefer little input from the leader

Your manager is effective as he/she gives orders and clarifies procedures

According to your manger, people will do a good job

Your manager generally leaves you alone

Appedix 3

Additional questions asked:

Please answer the following questions:

1) Can you confirm that you were born between 1981 and 1996? (Please circle)

Yes   No

2) I have based my answers on my manager's behavior:

Yes   No

3) I have identified another manager who showed signs another leadership style:

Yes   No   N/A

4) I have exhibited counterproductive work behavior in all employment settings:

Yes   No

5) I exhibited counterproductive work behavior as a result of my managers leadership style:

Yes   No   N/A

6) Is there anything you would like to add: