

## ***The Transformational Leadership Influence on Millennials' Commitment and Intention to Stay***

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### **Abstract**

*This article analyzes the relation between transformational leaders and the commitment of Generation Y (or Millennials) team members. The research is quantitative in nature, carried out by means of a survey. Workers across Brazil answered the questionnaire, resulting in a sample of 732 valid responses. Hypothesis testing was performed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The study validated part of the proposed hypotheses, indicating the observed variables that may influence the Organizational Commitment of Millennial workers. Intellectual Stimulation and Idealized Influence stand out among the components of Transformational Leadership that correlated with Commitment. No correlations between the components Individualized Consideration and Inspirational Motivation with Affective Commitment were found, which suggests that leaders who treat each Millennial in their own individuality or communicate in a confident, thought-provoking, and motivating way do not necessarily strengthen the bonds of Millennials with the organization. The analysis of the relationship between the components of Commitment and high performance pointed out that Millennials who have a strong connection of sympathy and affection for the organization are interested in the company's future, take ownership of the organization's objectives, or treat the company's problems as if they were their own. These workers are the ones who claim to have a differentiated performance. However, no relationships were found between Millennial's superior performance and pride in belonging, finding personal meaning in working in the company, speaking positively about the organization to friends, inspiring the best of oneself, and identifying with the organization's values. The analyses suggest that organization leaders can promote a stronger bond between organization and Millennials when they act as role models, demonstrate their own commitment to the organization, and encourage their Millennial subordinates to seek innovative solutions.*

**Keywords:** *Organizational Commitment, Generation Y, Transformational Leadership, Millennials.*

## 1 Introduction

The direct supervisor is one of the main organizational mediators in forming bonds between team members and the organization. According to Eisenberger et al. (2010), theories about organizational behavior start from the premise that workers see their managers as organizational representatives, thus considering their promises as something made on behalf of the organization. Furthermore, the authors highlight that workers pay attention to the treatment given by their supervisors partly because, for them, it indicates their value to the organization. According to Bastos et al. (2014), the phenomenon of leadership stands out among the various factors that can influence the establishment of bonds because the leader is the mediator of organizational processes with their team and influences how the team member perceives the organization in which they work. It is up to the direct supervisor to translate organizational demands to seek greater adherence between the interests and values of both parties.

Research has been emphasizing the role and influence of leadership practices on the intrinsic motivation of teams (Al-Mansoori & Koç, 2019), the internalization of expectations (Duan et al., 2017), job satisfaction (Akdere & Egan, 2020), commitment (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014; Brewer et al., 2016), retention (Brewer et al., 2016), or performance (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Some of these studies consider the effect of mediating and moderating variables, among them the characteristics of the work itself (Gillet & Vandenberghe, 2014) or the relationship of trust (e.g., Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). However, few studies analyze the influence of leadership practices on different generations within the organization (Pereira Cavalcante Filho & Francisco, 2022). This research aims to deepen the understanding of the effect of leadership practices on the commitment of team members who belong to generation Y, also known as Millennials.

The topic is relevant considering the frequent complaints from organizations about the difficulty of retaining younger workers. In Brazil, a longitudinal study published by DIEESE (2016) shows that workers aged 18 to 24 have a higher turnover rate than those in older age groups, a consistent finding over an 11-year period. Younger workers possibly form fewer solid bonds with the organization and with people from other generations with whom they coexist in the workplace, suggesting generational behavior. According to Scott (2014), this coexistence considers the intricate dynamic characteristic of each generational group, formed from different social aspects and formative experiences over a temporal window in a specific location as part of a historical evolution, leading to a broader (and not simplistic) understanding of the aspects that mark each generation's worldview. This study does not aim to delve deeply into the concept of generations, thus temporal windows will be used for the practical delimitation of the generational boundaries of Millennials.

Brazilian Millennials represent approximately 39% of the employed workforce, a percentage slightly higher than the previous generation (Generation X) and three times greater than the following generation (Generation Z), according to data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey, published by IBGE (2022).

In this study, the transformational leadership approach was adopted to analyze the relationships between leadership practices and the bond of Millennials with the organization. Conceptualized by Burns (1978) and systematized by Bass (1985), the transformational leadership model is one of the most widely used approaches in scientific research in the field of organizational behavior and people management.

From a theoretical perspective, this study aims to fill the research gap by investigating how leadership practices can influence organizational commitment and, consequently, job performance of Millennials in the Brazilian context. By exploring this dynamic, the present study, through the transformational approach, contributes to a broader understanding of the relationships between leadership and organizational commitment, as well as to the evolution of this field of knowledge.

From a practical standpoint, this study offers valuable insights for managers and leaders facing challenges related to the retention and engagement of young workers, team cohesion, and synergy with workers from other generations in the workplace. Here, we will highlight three classifications of generations that coexist in the professional environment: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y or Millennials (Twenge, 2010; Unite et al., 2012). Twenge analyzed and compared a series of longitudinal studies on generations and proved the existence of generational effects on behavior and work-related values, such as the pursuit of more freedom, work-life balance, recognition, security, self-esteem, and assertiveness for Generation Y workers (Twenge, 2010).

These differences in values or traits can potentially exacerbate intergenerational conflicts. Leaders who can understand the different worldviews of generations and shape their actions accordingly can create more opportunities to strengthen Millennials' bonds with the organization and find more effective ways to motivate and inspire their team members.

By investigating how transformational leadership practices can help mitigate generational conflicts and strengthen organizational bonds, this study contributes, from a social perspective, to the creation of more harmonious, integrated, and collaborative work environments, given that Millennials represent a significant portion of Brazilian workers, coexisting with other generations.

In this context, the main objective of this article is to identify the influence of the immediate leader's transformational leadership practices on the formation of bonds between workers from the Millennial generation or Generation Y and the organization, and the correlations between their organizational commitment and differentiated job performance. To meet the proposed objectives, a quantitative approach was used, employing the survey technique.

In this descriptive study, the theoretical references of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), organizational commitment in its affective basis (Bastos et al., 2014), and the study of the generational characteristics of Millennials (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2010; Silva, 2013) were used and are detailed as follows.

## **4 Theoretical Framework**

The research hypotheses were constructed based on the analysis of the scientific literature on the constructs used in this work, namely, Organizational Commitment and Transformational Leadership. The following section will present key aspects highlighted in the scientific literature on these constructs.

### **2.1 Organizational Commitment**

Among the several types of bonds individuals may form with their organization, commitment has been one of the most frequently examined constructs in the study of organizational phenomena and is linked to the relationships between the actors involved around common goals, mission, values and objectives, motivation, and performance (Klein et al., 2013).

Armstrong (2011) indicates that workers from certain generations react differently to management practices, influencing how committed they feel to the organization. To advance the field of research on the degree of commitment, researchers have proposed various theoretical approaches over more than half a century of research. Klein et al. (2013) presented a mapping of eight main distinct types of conceptualizations of Commitment, as shown in Table 1.

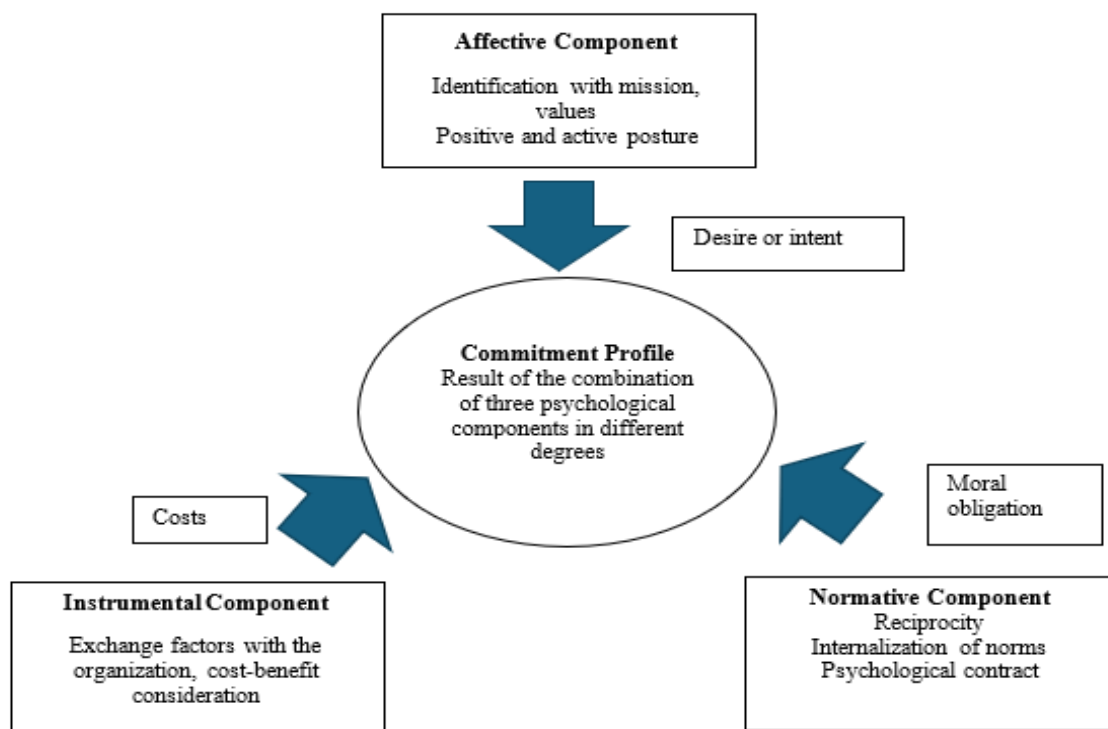
Table 1 — Conceptualizations Used to Define Commitment

<i>Conceptual approach</i>	<i>Definition</i>
As an attitude	Defined as the degree of orientation towards work or towards a particular vocation.
As a force	Psychological state or degree of attachment between the individual and a course of action relevant to one or more goals. It presupposes the existence of an intangible pressure created by the antecedents of the behavior that binds the individual to the object.
As a bond	Psychological state that reflects how much the individual is connected to the organization: career, union, work unit, work activities, team members, objectives, change movements or specific programs, among others.
As an investment and exchanges	Obligation of reciprocity for having received something of value or that the investments made would be lost if the course of action (side bet) is not maintained.
As identification or internalization	The process of identifying with a behavior, role, value, goal, or the institution itself.
As congruence	Sometimes described as the congruence of values and goals of the individual and those of the organization. Congruence is part of what characterizes or part of the process that creates Commitment.
As motivation	Willingness to make efforts over time or employ resources for the benefit of an organization, team or career.
As continuance	Desire or intention for continuity, to remain in a certain course of action or organization, or not wanting to deviate from that course or leave the organization.

Source: Content created based on Klein et al. (2013), pp. 8-16

Despite the significant volume of research work over decades, Bastos et al. (2014) recognize that among the models that have become references in the study of organizations, the three-dimensional model, consisting of affective, instrumental, and normative psychological components, proposed by Meyer & Allen (1991), continues to stand out, as presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 — Three-Dimensional Model by Meyer & Allen (1991)



Source: Content created based on Meyer & Herscovitch (2001)

Bastos et al. (2014) build on this model and propose a refinement of the construct, considering that the core of commitment should focus on the emotional and active bond of the individual with the organization, which, according to the authors, should be separated from notions of permanence, obedience, loyalty, passive acceptance, fear of not finding other opportunities, or moral obligation. To this end, the authors propose a unidimensional definition of commitment, focusing on the affective component of the three-dimensional model, which is adopted for this study:

“(…) a real involvement [with their work], through efforts for good performance, interest in the activities performed, and a desire for the development of the organization, which strongly coincides with the core of the definition of affective commitment.” (Bastos et al., 2014 pp. 291 - 292)

Thus, the construct is understood as Affective Organizational Commitment or simply Organizational Commitment. It is expected that people committed to the organization will display behaviors and make choices that are in the interest of the business. In this sense, researchers have identified consequences of organizational commitment that include reduced absenteeism (Sagie, 1998; Somers, 1995), lower intention of voluntary turnover (Guzeller & Celiker, 2019; Serhan et al., 2022), increased well-being (Chambel & Carvalho, 2022; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009), and overall performance (Loan, 2020; Suharto et al., 2019). Correlates to commitment include general job satisfaction (Chorddiya et al., 2017), motivation (Bytyqi, 2020), work engagement (Iqbal Khan et al., 2011), and career commitment (Bastos et al., 2014 p. 293).

From these points, the following research hypotheses can be constructed:

*H1. There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their efforts undertaken, desire of permanence, degree of satisfaction, effectiveness, and performance at work.*

- *H1a. A worker who is considered to be committed makes additional efforts.*
- *H1b. A worker considered committed wants to remain in the organization.*
- *H1c. There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their degree of job satisfaction.*
- *H1d. There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their level of job performance.*
- *H1e. There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their level of effectiveness at work.*

According to Eisenberger et al. (2010), theories about organizational behavior start from the premise that workers see their managers as organizational representatives and pay attention to the treatment they receive from supervisors as an indication of their value to the organization. In this sense, it becomes important to analyze the influence of leadership as a mediator of the relationships between the worker and the organization and its influence on Commitment.

## **2.2 Leadership**

In a world marked by constant change, it becomes important to develop the potential of teams to face competitive pressures (Avolio, 1994). In this sense, relying exclusively on transactional leadership exchanges between leaders and subordinates (based on stimulus and reward) may not be the best strategy to meet the challenges and transformations that organizations face (Bass & Avolio, 2004). It is not surprising that numerous scientific works have been conducted to identify leadership models that facilitate such movements of change in organizations. In this context, one of the leadership models that has become most popular since the 1980s is the Transformational Leadership (Northouse, 2019), accounting for a third of

leadership research according to the renowned journal *Leadership Quarterly* (Lowe & Gardner, 2000).

The term Transformational Leadership was initially proposed by Downton (1973) as a counterpoint to transactional leadership, which is based on exchange or stimulus-reward relationships. In a pioneering work, Burns (1978) formalized Downton's term Transformational Leadership as a theory, presenting it as a new paradigm in relation to transactional leadership (Bass, 2008). For Burns, a transformational leader differs from a transactional leader by not only recognizing the needs of associates but by trying to develop them to transcend their own interests and achieve higher levels of accomplishment and self-realization (Burns, 1978).

Based on the works of Burns, researchers Bass and Avolio proposed a measurement instrument called the MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire), which allowed for the operationalization of scientific research on transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio's instrument enables the comparison of the Transformational approach (broken down into four factors) with two other leadership styles: Transactional (broken down into three factors) and *Laissez-faire*, a passive or non-transactional style (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1989). They describe the four elements that comprise the Transformational component of the model:

- Idealized Influence, where the leader is perceived as someone who considers the needs of others above their own needs and avoids using power for personal gain, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct and being regarded by followers as a role model to be emulated (Bass & Avolio, 2004). According to research, Bass (2008) considers Idealized Influence a strong correlate of Charismatic Leadership, as the two factors could not be separated factorially (Hinkin & Tracey, 1999).
- Inspirational Motivation is related to the creation of meaning and challenge. The leader communicates to the team an attractive organizational future and what needs to be accomplished from that vision in an inspiring and encouraging manner, using symbolic language and influencing through emotions. In this way, the leader influences the group beyond their own interests (Bass & Avolio, 2004).
- Intellectual Stimulation promotes creativity and innovative thinking in problem-solving. Intellectual Stimulation assumes that the leader encourages followers to be innovative and creative, to question beliefs and assumptions, and to reframe problems to find new ways of delivering results (Bass & Avolio, 2004).
- Individualized Consideration considers each individual's achievement needs and growth aspirations, with the leader offering support as a coach and mentor. Followers are developed to successively higher levels of performance and self-actualization to reach their full potential in a one-on-one relationship involving delegation, empowerment, and open communication with group members (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

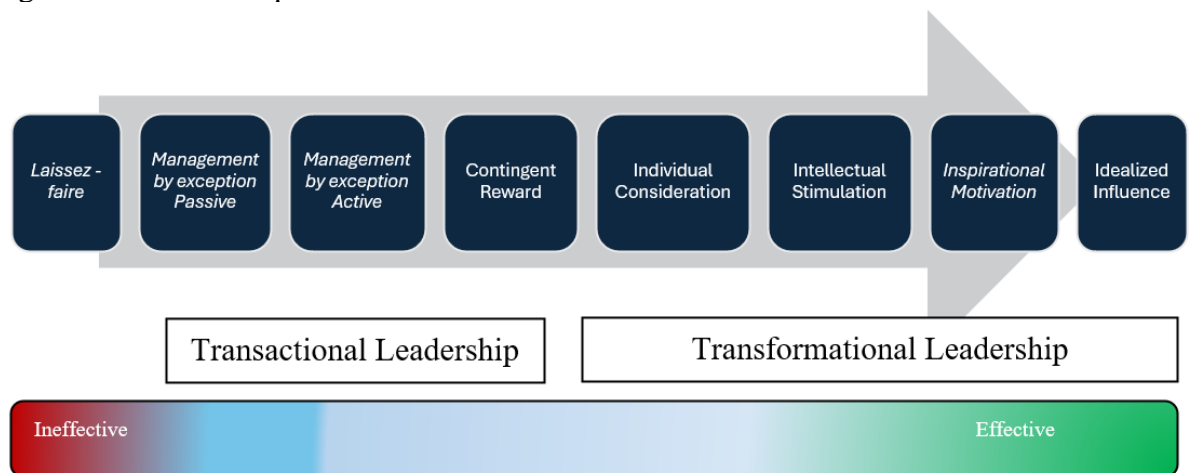
According to Bass & Avolio (1994), the Transactional part of the model can be understood from two components, Contingent Reward and Management by Exception:

- Contingent Reward: It refers to the leader's behavior of linking goals to rewards, clarifying expectations, providing necessary resources, setting mutually agreed-upon goals, and offering various types of reinforcers for expected performance (Bass & Avolio, 2004).
- Management-by-Exception: It may be active or passive. In its active form, the leader systematically monitors subordinates' work, observes deviations from rules and standards, takes corrective actions, and uses negative feedback when errors occur. In its passive form, the leader intervenes with responses that include punishment only after passively noticing the non-compliance with standards or when performance has not been minimally acceptable (Bass & Avolio, 2004).

Although other researchers have created their own versions of the measurement instrument (for example, Bycio et al., 1995; Podsakoff et al., 1996), for this study, the MLQ proposed by Bass & Avolio (2004) was used, as it is an instrument that can facilitate the comparison of results with the numerous studies that have used the same instrument.

According to Bass & Avolio (1994), leaders are not just transformational; they operate within a range of styles that encompasses Transformational, Transactional, and *Laissez-faire* components. In this model, called Full Range (Avolio, 2011; Bass & Avolio, 1994), Transformational Leadership is understood not as a counterpoint but as an extension of Transactional and *Laissez-faire* Leadership along a continuum. This continuum ranges from less effective leadership, with *Laissez-faire* as the most representative style, to more effective leadership, with Idealized Influence as the component of Transformational Leadership, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 — Leadership Continuum



Source: Based on Avolio, 2011, p. 66

Authors Bass & Avolio (1994) stated that Transformational Leadership can raise followers' awareness about the importance of outcomes and the path to achieve them. A transformational leader influences people to transcend their own interests in favor of collective or organizational goals, increasing awareness of the mission and significant values, providing a sense of purpose, and supporting a sense of responsibility.

Transformational leaders inspire and encourage others to direct their energies toward achieving a vision, stimulating participation, creativity, and initiative. Followers of the transformational leader feel confidence, admiration, and loyalty and respect for their leader and their qualities, which makes them willing to work beyond expectations (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). In this way, the leader likely instills a greater degree of commitment in the team, which suggests the following research hypothesis:

*H2. There is a relationship between Transformational or Transactional Leadership style practices and the degree of Organizational Commitment of workers who belong to Generation Y.*

Bass & Avolio (1994) highlight in the model what is called the Absence of Leadership, or *Laissez-faire*, to refer to situations where the leader abdicates their responsibilities and avoids making decisions. In the absence of Leadership, there are effectively no exchanges between leaders and subordinates, nor is there any effort by the leader in the development or support of the team. It is a “non-transaction”, the authors summarize. In this type of absence of exchanges, we can formulate the following research hypothesis:

*H2a. The absence of leadership — Laissez-faire has a negative relationship with the Commitment of Generation Y.*

Performance beyond expectations is an anticipated phenomenon: “Transformational Leadership produces more effects than Transactional Leadership” (Northouse, 2010, p. 179). Among various studies that corroborate this statement, the author mentions a study by Nemanich & Keller (2007) based on a research carried out with 447 workers from a multinational company during a moment of integration with a new organization in a merger-acquisition process. The leader behaviors of Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation were positively correlated with the acceptance of the acquisition process, job satisfaction, and performance.

A study involving 480 IT professionals from various companies empirically found the influence of Transformational Leadership on the Organizational Commitment of workers (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015). In a hospital setting, a study comparing the expectations of people from different generations regarding leadership behavior, using the MLQ instrument, found that Generation Y workers, compared to workers from other generations, have higher expectations of being led by a transformational rather than a transactional style and confirmed positive effects of Transformational Leadership on commitment (Huber & Schubert, 2019).

These elements contribute to the presentation of the following research hypothesis:

*H2b. Transformational Leadership has a greater influence on the organizational commitment of Generation Y than Transactional Leadership.*

In Brazil, a study with more than 100,000 respondents in 394 Brazilian organizations, conducted by researchers Silva et al. (2015), identified the perception of different generations in the workplace and their influence on organizational commitment, particularly its affective component. Among the various factors present in the organizational environment, the authors studied the influence of leadership and found that:

- 1) Generation Y in the workplace values skill development, learning, career growth prospects, and relationships with colleagues within the company and with people external to the organization more than workers from previous generations.
- 2) There is a notably positive relationship between the quality of relationships with coworkers and affective commitment for Generation Y, compared to Generation X and Baby Boomers.
- 3) When Generation Y employees evaluate their leaders positively, they tend to demonstrate less commitment to the organization. According to Bass (1985):

“This generation, characterized by demanding a protective and paternalistic relationship from leadership, certainly considers the relationship with the leader to be more affectionate than with the organization. Therefore, the HR department should be aware that a transformational leadership style may become essentially charismatic in the relationship between leader and subordinates.” (p. 22).

This research data results in the following hypothesis:

*H2c. The charismatic component of Transformational Leadership has a negative relationship with the affective organizational commitment of Generation Y.*

Next, aspects that characterize generational differences will be conceptualized, with an emphasis on behavior in the workplace, focusing on the object of this work, Generation Y.

### **2.3 Generation Y**

Silva (2013) researched in his doctoral thesis about the existence of a Brazilian Generation Y, its characteristics, and delimitations. The author found evidence suggesting the



empirical confirmation of the existence of this generation in Brazil and delimits the emergence of this generation in 1986, differing from the demarcation commonly found in international literature. According to the author, these generational differences begin to emerge from the moment of the country's re-democratization.

For Silva, people born during that time grew up alongside the beginning of the internet and the increasing adoption of communication and information technologies. When entering the job market, they encountered a period of economic recovery around the early 2000s, which created competition for talent. This entire context contributed to shaping a set of values and attitudes of Brazilian Millennials.

Revisiting the dimensions of Transformational Leadership, it is possible to find clues on how to awaken motivation and manage the generations who are entering the job market or are still in the early days of their careers. Younger generations tend to be motivated by meaningful and challenging work (Wesner & Miller, 2008) and when they find potential for individual fulfillment (Twenge, 2010).

According to Anderson et al. (2017), these motivational factors for new generations may have synergies with the components of Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration, from which the leader can reframe the establishment of individual goals aligned with organizational ones. Zemke et al. (2000) suggest that individuals from Generation Y expect the leader to guide and protect them, always be available, and be a reference for organizational culture. These studies contribute to the presentation of the following hypotheses:

*H2d. The Intellectual Stimulation component has a positive relationship with the Affective Commitment of Generation Y.*

*H2e. The Individualized Consideration component has a positive relationship with the Affective Commitment of Generation Y.*

In summary, the hypotheses H2 formulated throughout the development of this work are:

*H2. There is a relationship between Transformational or Transactional Leadership style practices and the degree of Organizational Commitment of workers who belong to Generation Y:*

- *H2a. The absence of leadership — Laissez-faire has a negative relationship with Generation Y Commitment.*
- *H2b. Transformational Leadership has a greater influence on Millennial Engagement than Transactional Leadership.*
- *H2c. The charismatic component of Transformational Leadership has a negative relationship with the Commitment of Generation Y in the organization.*
- *H2d. The Intellectual Stimulation component has a positive relationship with Generation Y Impairment.*
- *H2e. The Individualized Consideration component has a positive relationship with Generation Y Commitment.*

To meet the proposed objectives, a descriptive study was conducted using a quantitative approach and the survey technique.

### **3 Method**

In order to meet the research objectives, a descriptive study using the survey technique was conducted by applying a questionnaire for data collection and subsequent quantitative analysis.

The research instrument was developed based on scales to measure the variables of Commitment and Leadership Style. To measure Commitment, the instrument systematized by Pinho et al. was used (2012). For this work, the one-dimensionality of the construct in its

affective focus was considered. Statements such as “A1 I feel proud to tell people that I am part of the organization where I work” and “A2 I really feel the problems of this organization as if they were my own” were used.

For the analysis of Transformational, Transactional, and *Laissez-faire* Leadership styles, the MLQ (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form) 5X scale was used, as proposed by Bass & Avolio (2004). This was obtained in the original version and the Brazilian Portuguese version through a license from Mind Garden, the distributor of assessment instruments that commercializes the copyright of the MLQ 5X. The MLQ covers the four components of Transformational Leadership, the three components of Transactional Leadership, and the *Laissez-faire* component.

Among the assertions of the MLQ, examples include “Does not act at the right time, but only when problems worsen”, “Makes clear what each person can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved”, and “Considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.” For each statement, participants chose their response using a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5, where 5 means that the behavior is frequently observed and 0 means that the behavior is never observed.

The statements related to the effects of leadership, as provided in the instrument, were maintained to measure Extra Effort, Effectiveness, and Satisfaction with Leadership. The control variables adopted were: Type of organization and participant data, such as year of birth, length of service, salary, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, number of children, if they are a PWD (Person with Disabilities), state of employment, position, level of education, intention to stay, and performance evaluation rating.

The data collection instrument was divided into three sections. In the first section, entitled “Your relationship with your immediate leader”, the 45 assertions related to the full range model measurement were presented, using the Likert scale provided in the MLQ, ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (frequently). In the second section, “Your relationship with the organization you work for”, 10 assertions were included to measure the Organizational Commitment variable using a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) as provided in the original instrument. In the third section, “About the company you work or have recently worked for,” multiple-choice questions were included to characterize the company. In the fourth section, “About you,” questions regarding demographic and personal data of the research participant were included.

Before conducting the survey, a pre-test of the research instrument was carried out with people from Generation Y who work in a startup company. With the feedback we received from these participants, we made an adjustment to some assertions that raised doubts of interpretation for greater clarity.

### **3.1 Sample and Data Collection Procedure**

To obtain a representative sample of Generation Y employees in Brazil, a partnership was established with *Cia de Talentos*, which operates nationally by providing services to companies that develop internship, trainee, and young professional programs.

Data were collected through an electronic form (using Survey Monkey) accessible via a link, sent by email to candidates who are part of the *Cia de Talentos* database. Additionally, the invitation to participate in the survey was sent by one of the authors through their personal social media pages: Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and directly to workers belonging to their personal contact network.

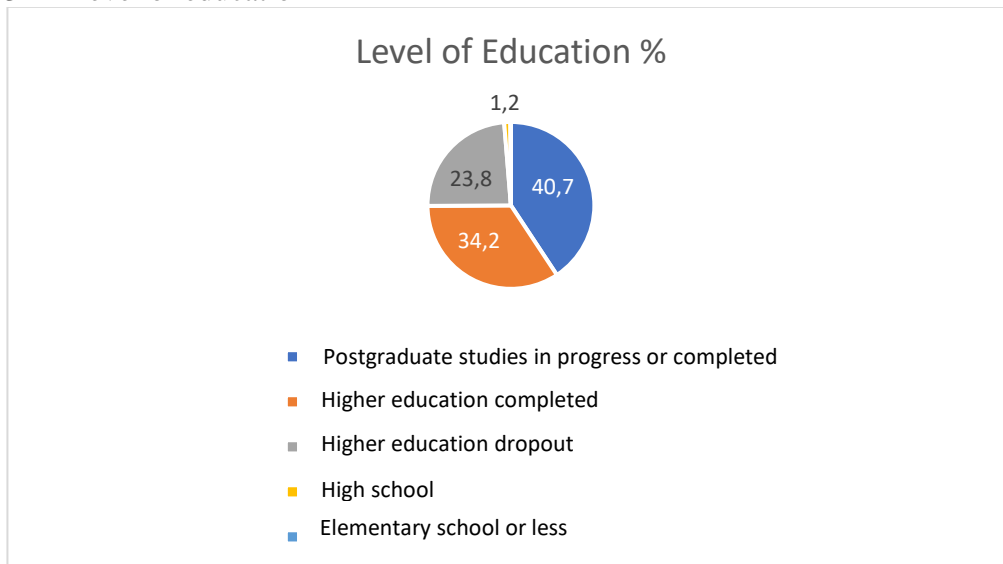
The survey was designed to allow responses to all questions for workers born from 1986 onwards and working in companies. If a respondent indicated a year of birth that did not belong to Generation Y, the form would skip to the end, with a thank-you note. Otherwise, the questionnaire included ethical considerations: guaranteeing the confidentiality of responses and

the non-identification of respondents. The instrument remained open for responses for 66 days. In total, 903 complete responses were obtained from individuals of Generation Y born from 1986 onwards, with at least one year of professional experience. After processing the database by eliminating responses concentrated at a single point on the Likert scale and responses from people with less than six months at their job, a total of 732 valid responses were obtained. The sample for this study is considered non-probabilistic and intentional. The *Cia de Talentos* candidate database comprises people interested in working or currently working in companies that offer professional development opportunities.

### 3.2 Respondent Profile

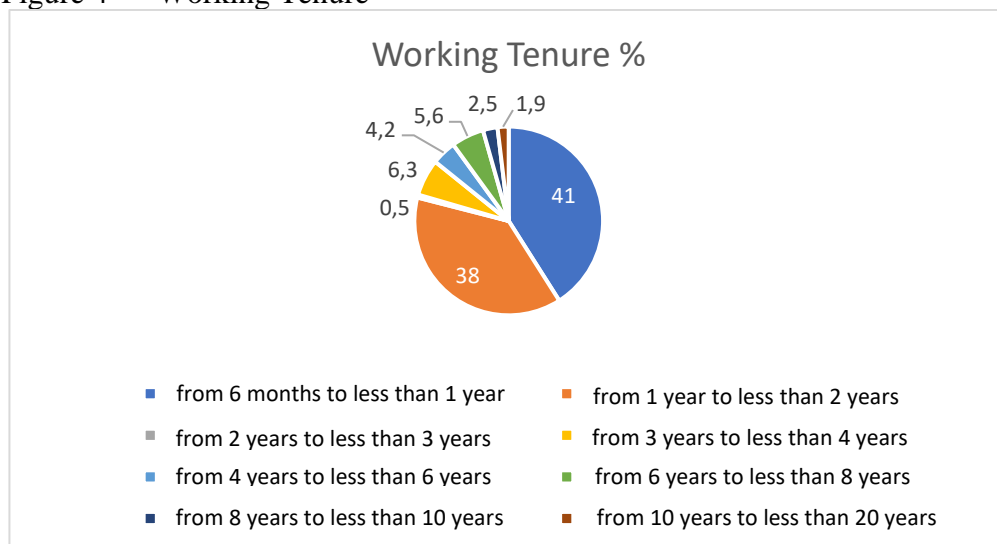
It was observed that 62.8% of the sample is female, less than 10% of the respondents have children, and just over 70% are single. Regarding geographic location, 81% of the sample is in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, or Minas Gerais. Additionally, 74.9% of the respondents have completed higher education or are in the process of completing or have completed postgraduate studies, and 79% of the participants have between six months and less than 2 years of work experience, as shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 — Level of education



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Figure 4 — Working Tenure

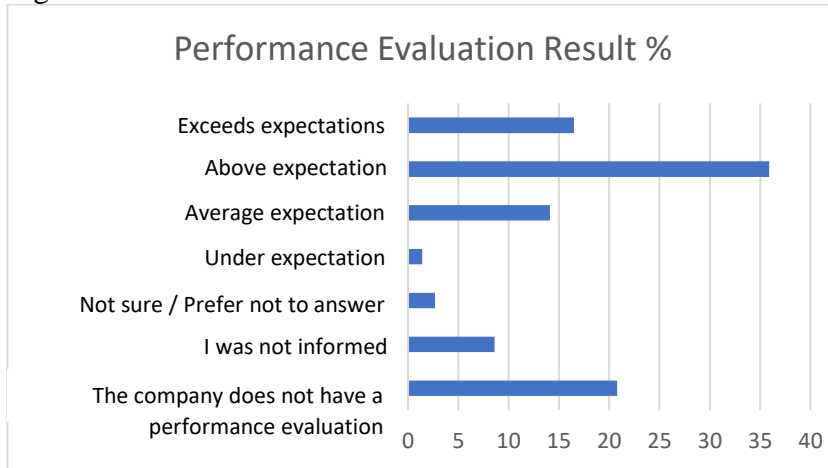


Source: Prepared by the authors

Less than 3% of the respondents are trainees, 17% are interns, about 10% work as coordinators, around 4% hold managerial positions or higher, and the rest work in technical, sales, or analyst positions. According to the data, almost half of the respondents work in the service sector, a quarter in industry, mining, or construction, 12% in commerce, and less than 4% in public administration. Additionally, 42.6% of the companies where respondents work have more than a thousand employees, and 72.5% of the respondents work as formal employees.

Regarding performance at work, Figure 5 shows that 50% of the respondents have performance evaluations considered above expectations or among the best in the company.

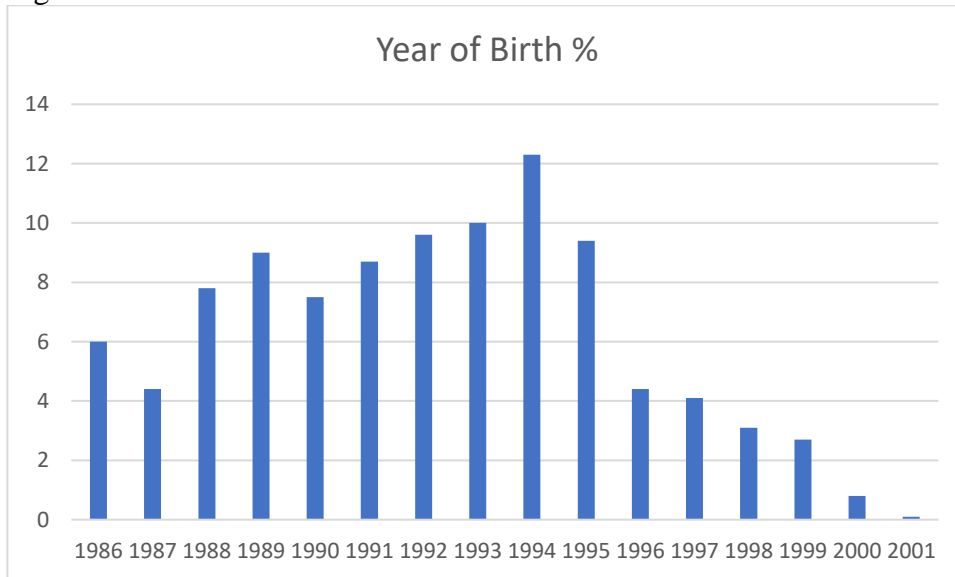
Figure 5 — Distribution of Performance Evaluation Results



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the year of birth, the distribution is concentrated between 1986 and 1995, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6 — Distribution of Year of Birth



Source: Prepared by the authors.

### 3.3 Statistical Analysis

After characterizing the sample, multivariate statistical techniques were used for data analysis through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM shows how measured variables come together to represent constructs and how the constructs are associated with each other.

These relationships are graphically demonstrated through a path diagram, where an arrow is drawn from latent constructs to the variables that are indicators of the constructs. Constructs are represented by ellipses or circles, and observed measured variables are represented by squares (Pilati & Laros, 2007). The model was structured based on the research hypotheses and populated with data obtained from the sample.

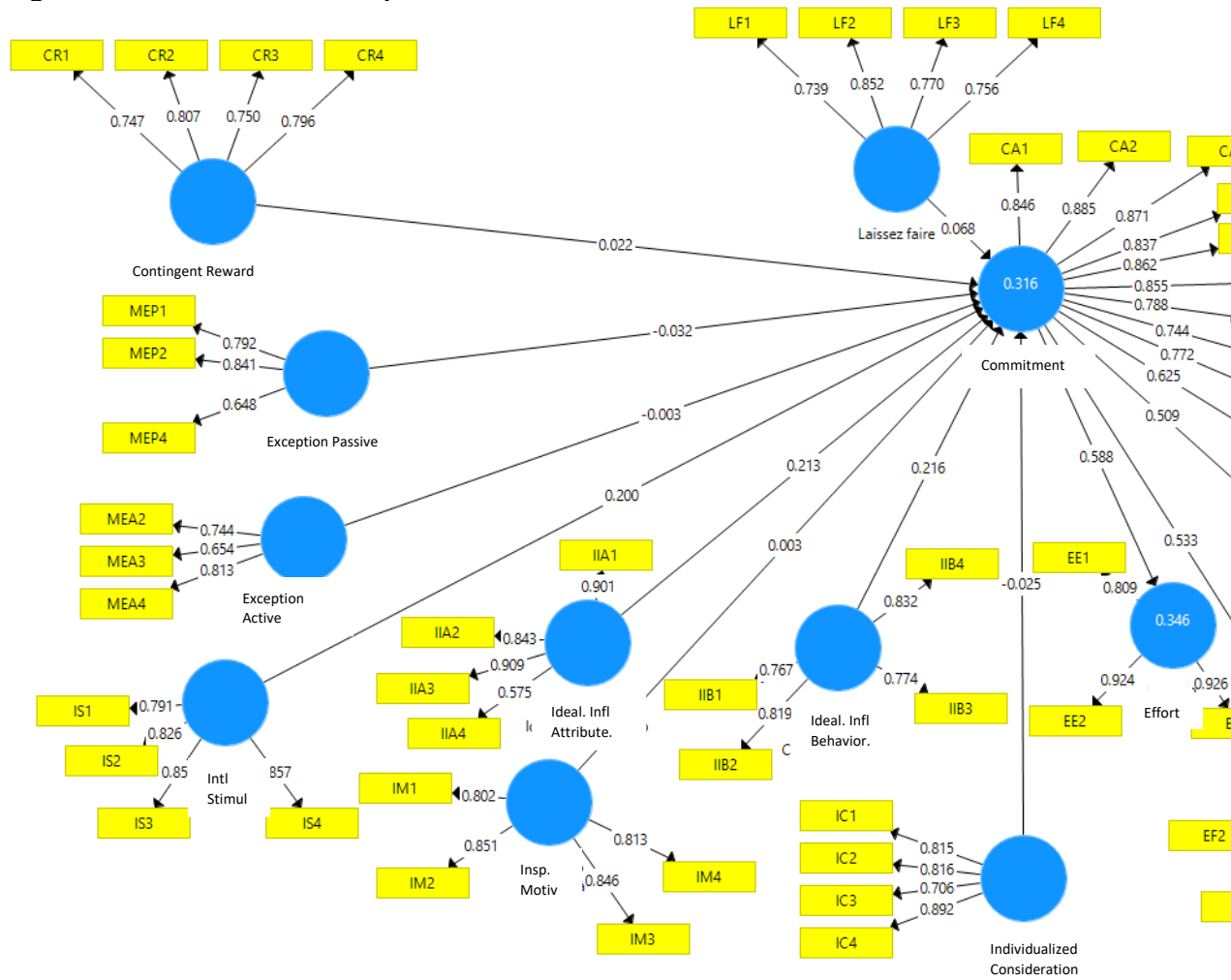
Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 3.2.8 software for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and SPSS 20 for statistical analyses, including t-tests and demographic variables, to verify the adequacy of the proposed conceptual model and address the research hypotheses. According to Ringle et al. (2014), the first step is to evaluate the measurement model, and, once the necessary adjustments are made, the structural model is evaluated. Initially, Convergent Validity is assessed, obtained through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Henseler et al. (2009) point out that AVE values should be greater than 0.50 because the AVE shows the data obtained by each construct, respectively, for their sets of variables. Thus, when AVEs are greater than 0.50, it is assumed that the model converges to an acceptable result (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE values for the variables Management by Active Exception and Management by Passive Exception were below 0.50; in these cases, according to Ringle et al. (2014), observed or measured variables (assertions) from constructs with  $AVE < 0.50$  should be removed. For the construct Management by Passive Exception, the variable MEP3 corresponding to the assertion “Demonstrates a strong belief in ‘if it ain't broke, don't fix it’” was removed. Similarly, for the construct Management by Active Exception, the variable MEA1 “Focuses attention on irregularities, errors, exceptions, and deviations from expected standards” was removed. These variables were removed from the model, and a new analysis confirmed that the variables had AVEs between 0.601 and 0.876, thus satisfying the Fornell & Larcker (1981) criterion.

This version of the Structural Equation Model, presented in Figure 7, was considered definitive and its internal consistency and statistical quality were analyzed. In the next step, the Cronbach's Alpha indicator was calculated to assess internal consistency, and the composite reliability indicator, appropriate for the structural equation model according to Hair et al. (2011). For models of this type, a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.60 is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2011), and it is also desirable that the composite reliability indicator is above 0.70 (Pereira et al., 2015).

Both criteria were confirmed for the model: Cronbach's Alpha was measured with values between 0.612 and 0.942 and the composite reliability index between 0.783 and 0.950. Next, the discriminant validity of the constructed model was evaluated, which indicates whether each construct is independent of the others (Hair et al., 2011). For this validation, the factor loadings of each assertion in relation to the constructs are analyzed to confirm independence; the loading of each assertion must be higher in its respective construct compared to the others (Chin, 1998). It was found that all analyzed assertions have a higher factor loading in their respective construct, which confirms the discriminant quality of the model through the criterion proposed by Chin (1998).

Figure 7 — Final Structural Equation Model



Source: Prepared by the authors.

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With discriminant validity confirmed, the structural model analysis (Ringle et al., 2014) was performed using Pearson's determination coefficients (R-squared). It was verified that all R-squared values are above 0.26, indicating that the R-squared effect is large according to Cohen (1988). The analyses using the variance inflation factor indicated the absence of multicollinearity, as the VIF (variance inflation factor) parameter was below 5. The predictive validity indicator Q-squared and the effect size f-squared were evaluated, followed by an analysis of the overall model fit indicator. In this model, the GoF (Goodness of Fit) calculation reached a value of 0.449, which is considered adequate as it is greater than 0.36 according to the criterion of Wetzels et al. (2009).

After multicollinearity and predictive validity analyses, a t-test was conducted to evaluate whether the causal relationships between the constructs are statistically significant. For the analysis of each weight, the p-value or probability of significance was considered separately for each weight or effect related to each construct. This weight is indicated in the final model graph by the indicative number next to the arrows. The objective was to identify whether the value found for the weight can be considered statistically significant to explain the degree of commitment.

#### 4 Results

Once the final version of the model was completed, the interrelationships between the studied variables were analyzed. In this sense, p-values were calculated for each of the hypotheses. Table 1 shows the statistical significance of each construct or latent variable based on the measurement of its weight or effect and the p-value.

Table 1 — P-values for the relationships between variables

Component	Casual relation	Weight	p-value
Transformational	Idealized Infl. Attribute → Commitment	0.213	0.002
	Idealized Infl. Behavior → Commitment	0.216	0
	Individualized Consideration → Commitment	-0.025	0.678
	Intellectual Stimulation → Commitment	0.200	0.001
	Inspirational Motivation → Commitment	0.003	0.953
Transactional	Contingent Reward → Commitment	0.022	0.721
	Mgmt. by Exception Active → Commitment	-0.003	0.921
	Mgmt. by Exception Active Passive → Commitment	-0.032	0.496
<i>Laissez-faire</i>	<i>Laissez-faire</i> → Commitment	0.068	0.163
Effects of Leadership	Commitment → Effectiveness	0.533	0
	Commitment → Effort	0.588	0
	Commitment → Satisfaction	0.509	0

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Based on these measures, it is possible to evaluate the research hypotheses by analyzing the statistical significance of the relationships between the constructs.

Regarding the first hypothesis, Table 1 shows that: (1) there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between Commitment and extra effort (weight 0.588,  $p < 5\%$ ), confirming hypothesis H1a – a committed worker makes additional efforts; (2) there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between Commitment and Satisfaction (weight 0.509,  $p < 5\%$ ), confirming hypothesis H1c – there is a relationship between a committed worker and their degree of job satisfaction; (3) there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between Commitment and Effectiveness (weight 0.553,  $p < 5\%$ ), confirming hypothesis H1e – there is a relationship between a committed worker and their level of job effectiveness.

The relationship between superior performance and commitment was verified. For this, the variable represented by the assertion “What was the result of your last performance evaluation or the last two feedbacks you received?” was considered, and the segmentation was

done for “Exceeds expectations”. The statistically relevant data, marked in Table 1 ( $p < 5\%$ ), suggest that workers who have an excellent performance perceive themselves with a strong sense of sympathy and affection for the organization (CA2), are interested in the company's future (CA8), are devoted to the organization's goals (CA9), and treat the company's problems as if they were their own (CA10).

However, no statistically significant correlations were found between Commitment and the variables associated with the pride of saying they are part of the organization (CA1), the personal meaning of working at the company (CA4), speaking well about the organization to friends (CA5), inspiring the best in themselves (CA6), and identifying with the organization's values (CA7).

Therefore, hypothesis H1d – there is a relationship between a committed worker and their level of job performance is partially confirmed by half of the variables that make up the Commitment construct. No correlation was found between the Inspirational Motivation component and Commitment.

The effects of demographic variables as moderators were studied. For this analysis, the t-test was used, and the p-value was calculated. The numbers indicate that only the company size moderator had a statistically significant influence ( $p < 5\%$ ) on the effects of *Laissez-faire* Leadership on Commitment. The other control variables, namely area of operation, position, geographic region, sector, or company size, gender, income, education level, and length of service, did not show a statistically significant effect.

The following is a summary table of the evaluation of research hypotheses H1 (Table 2).

Table 2 — Evaluation of H1 – there is a relationship between a committed worker and their efforts, desire to remain, degree of satisfaction, effectiveness, and job performance.

Hypothesis	Result
H1a – A worker who is considered to be committed makes additional efforts.	Confirmed through the t-test of the structural equation model
H1b – A worker considered committed wants to remain in the organization.	Confirmed according to ANOVA and post-hoc
H1c – There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their degree of job satisfaction.	Confirmed through the t-test of the structural equation model
H1d - There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their level of job performance.	Partially confirmed according to the t-test
H1e - There is a relationship between a worker considered committed and their level of effectiveness at work.	Confirmed through the t-test of the structural equation model

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Analyzing the second hypothesis, based on the data presented in Table 1, it was observed that: (1) It was not possible to verify a statistically valid correlation for the *Laissez-faire* component ( $p > 5\%$ ) with Commitment, which rejects hypothesis H2A – The absence of leadership – *Laissez-faire* has a negative relationship with the Commitment of Generation Y. (2) Transformational Leadership has three relevant and statistically valid components with effects on the degree of Commitment, although none of the components of the transactional model showed statistical validation with Commitment, which confirms hypothesis H2b – Transformational Leadership has a greater influence on the Commitment of Generation Y than Transactional Leadership. (3) The Idealized Influence component (attribute and behavior) has a statistically valid effect ( $p < 5\%$ ) on the degree of Commitment, which rejects hypothesis H2c – The charismatic component of Transformational Leadership has a negative relationship with the Commitment of Generation Y in the organization. (4) The Intellectual Stimulation



component has a positive and statistically valid relationship with Commitment, which confirms hypothesis H2D – The Intellectual Stimulation component has a positive relationship with the Commitment of Generation Y. (5) It was not possible to verify a statistically valid correlation for the Individualized Consideration component ( $p>5\%$ ) with Commitment, which rejects hypothesis H2e – The Individualized Consideration component has a positive correlation with the Commitment of Generation Y.

The following is a summary table of the evaluation of research hypotheses H2 (Table 3).

Table 3 — Evaluation of H2 – There is a relationship between Transformational or Transactional Leadership style practices and the degree of Organizational Commitment of workers belonging to Generation Y

Hypothesis	Result
H2a – The absence of leadership – <i>Laissez-faire</i> – has a negative relationship with Generation Y Commitment.	Rejected, it was not possible to verify the relationship using the t-test of the structural equation model.
H2b – Transformational Leadership has a greater influence on Millennial Engagement than Transactional Leadership.	Confirmed, some aspects of transformational leadership positively affect commitment – relationship verified using the t-test of the structural equation model.
H2c – The charismatic component of Transformational Leadership has a negative relationship with the Commitment of Generation Y in the organization.	Rejected, according to the results the influence is positive – relationship verified using the t-test of the structural equation model.
H2d – The Intellectual Stimulation component has a positive relationship with Generation Y Impairment.	Confirmed – relationship verified using the t-test of the structural equation model.
H2e – The Individualized Consideration component has a positive relationship with Generation Y Commitment.	Rejected, it was not possible to verify the relationship using the t-test of the structural equation model.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In summary, only hypotheses H2b and H2d were confirmed.

## 5 Discussion

This study aimed to identify the influence of Transformational Leadership on the level of Commitment among Generation Y workers. For this purpose, a sample of 732 valid responses was collected, consisting of workers born after 1986, mostly single (73%) and without children (92%), with a higher presence of women (63%) and individuals with higher education and income levels.

After characterizing the sample, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) was applied, constructed based on the research hypotheses and populated with data obtained from the sample. Subsequently, the model was tested and adjusted in its initial version. The analysis of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) identified two variables that did not statistically and significantly explain the observed phenomena and were removed to create the final version of the model, which had its internal consistency and statistical quality validated. The statistical analyses confirmed the validity and reliability of the research instrument used, allowing for the continuation of analyses to meet the other research objectives.

The analysis of the research hypotheses allowed for the conclusion of the main points presented below.

(1) Correlation of Inspirational Motivation with Commitment: An inspiring leader objectively articulates what is right and important, shows optimism and confidence in achieving goals, and communicates the organization's objectives in an engaging and motivating manner.

The lack of a correlation between the Inspirational Motivation component and Commitment may be related to the fact that this relationship has been proven indirectly, involving mediating variables (Ibrahim et al., 2014). This suggests that even though these individuals may be inspired by the genuine actions of their immediate leader, it does not imply that they feel more committed to the organization due to a perceived misalignment between the immediate leader's stance and the messages from top leadership, thus weakening the bond with the organization.

(2) Comparison of the Effects of Transformational and Transactional Leadership: Research data suggest that Transformational Leadership has a greater influence on commitment than Transactional Leadership, specifically in its components of Idealized Influence and Intellectual Stimulation, as predicted in the literature. No correlations were found between Transactional Leadership and Commitment.

(3) Effects of Idealized Influence on Commitment: It was expected that the essentially transformational leader would be seen as Charismatic and that when Generation Y employees evaluate their leaders positively, they would tend to demonstrate lower commitment to the organization (Silva et al., 2015). However, contrary to what was expected by the literature, Idealized Influence (the charismatic component of the model), related to creating a sense of purpose, sharing beliefs and values, inspiring a collective sense of mission, and being concerned with the ethical consequences of decisions, positively affects the Commitment of Generation Y workers, both in its attitudinal component, based on respondents' perceptions of the leader's attributes, and the behavioral component, based on the leader's behaviors.

A possible explanation, according to Bass & Avolio (2004), is that “the leader who is personally charismatic, interested in his ‘own agenda,’ is often associated with an idol, [but] not [seen as] idealized, and falls short of being considered transformational.” (p. 30), as they exhibit a posture perceived as someone merely interested in drawing attention to themselves. On the other hand, the Transformational Leader who is seen in an idealized manner exerts power and influence over their followers, so that they want to identify with their leader and his/her mission because they trust him/her and his/her promises. This type of leader generates pride in people for being close to him/her, demonstrates that his/her interests are directed towards the group's well-being more than his/her own, inspires trust and respect, and this possibly strengthens these people's Commitment to the organization.

(4) Effects of Intellectual Stimulation on Commitment: Intellectual Stimulation relates to the leader's attitude in encouraging problems to be viewed from different angles, questioning the status quo, provoking the search for innovative solutions, questioning one's own beliefs and assumptions to make decisions (as they may be outdated for current problems), and suggesting new ways to perform tasks (Bass & Avolio, 2004). A leader perceived this way by subordinates achieves greater creativity and innovation in problem-solving and less dependence on direct involvement. It was empirically proven that this type of behavior positively influences the degree of Commitment of teams, which aligns with the findings of Lemos Filho et al. (2015) about increasing team members' perceptions of their own ability to solve problems when their opinions are taken into account by the leader, based on a study involving young people in the high-tech industry.

(5) Effects of Individualized Consideration on Commitment: Individualized Consideration involves the leader's action as someone who invests time in developing the team so that each person reaches their maximum potential. In this aspect, the leader treats each person as an individual with different needs and aspirations (Bass & Avolio, 2004). The lack of a confirmed relationship between this component and Commitment may be because this individualized treatment may create a higher degree of personal commitment to the leader rather than Affective Commitment to the organization.

Northouse (2019) adds that the leader can exercise Individualized Consideration by treating each team member in different ways: “For some, the leader may offer strong affiliation;

for others, the leader may provide specific guidelines with a high degree of task structuring.” (p. 171). A possible interpretation of this fact is that even if the leader makes efforts to treat each person as an individual and acts to help each reach their maximum potential, this may not necessarily be perceived as fully meeting the expectations of Generation Y members.

(6) Correlation of Commitment and Its Effects: The data show that Committed workers make additional efforts, find satisfaction in how they are led, wish to stay longer in the organization, and feel that they and the team are more effective compared to less committed individuals. However, while the degree of Commitment is associated with Additional Effort, Generation Y workers who show superior performance are associated with half of the indicators that measure Commitment, related to having a strong bond of sympathy and affection for the organization, being interested in the company's future, appropriating the organization's goals, and treating the company's problems as if they were their own. These aspects can be developed or stimulated, among other ways, by the transformational action of immediate leadership, as workers see their managers as organizational representatives and thus consider their promises as something made on behalf of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010).

On the other hand, no correlation was found between excellent performance and the other half of the assertions that measure Commitment: The pride in saying one is part of the organization, finding personal meaning in working at the company, speaking well of the organization to friends, inspiring the best in oneself, and identifying with the organization's values. In these cases, the employee may be making additional efforts more focused on the impact on their career development rather than necessarily reflecting this effort as a sign of commitment to the organization. However, this does not mean that these are not elements to be valued in conjunction with the leader's actions and people management policies, as they impact the quality of the employee experience and consequently the perception they form about the employer brand (Morgan, 2017).

(7) Negative Influence of the Absence of Leadership on the Degree of Commitment: It was not proven that the so-called “absence of leadership” or *Laissez-faire* presents a negative correlation with the Commitment of Millennials, as the theory predicted. Northouse (2019) argues that the *Laissez-faire* style should not be understood merely as a lack of leadership. Instead, the leader may have used this style as a strategic option to recognize people's abilities, reduce dependency, and increase self-determination, competence, and autonomy. This leadership style would not necessarily be detrimental to mature and self-motivated teams, whose workers already have sufficient experience to dispense with closer supervision and who, therefore, may indeed demonstrate commitment precisely because they do not require stringent supervision. This aligns with a delegating leadership style that offers more autonomy and less contact with subordinates, either to direct or support, as provided in the situational leadership approach (Blanchard et al., 1985).

Additionally, the only statistically relevant moderator found in this relationship was the size of the company. This may suggest that larger, more established companies tend to have Millennials who are already mature enough to value a delegating leadership style.

## **6 Conclusion**

This study sought to understand the effect of transformational leadership practices on the degree of organizational commitment of Millennials in the Brazilian context, presenting some practical and theoretical contributions and advancing the field of Human Resources Management for a topic that is under-researched in Brazil. The theoretical contributions are related to a deeper understanding of the Idealized Influence component of the Transformational Leadership model for Millennials, who are able to discriminate between a charismatic leader who is only interested in manipulating subordinates to focus on their own agenda (Bass &

Avolio, 2004, p. 30) and an idealized leader who is seen as an example and influences subordinates with their own commitment to serving the organization above their needs.

The research revealed that the Inspirational Motivation component does not correlate with Commitment for Millennials. Even though Generation Y may be inspired by an immediate leader who presents an optimistic and thoughtful vision of the future, demonstrates enthusiasm about challenges, and confidence in achieving goals, this apparently does not imply feeling more committed to the organization.

As practical Contributions for Leaders to Strengthen Organizational Commitment:

(1) Leaders should intellectually stimulate each team member to question the *status quo*, think of unconventional solutions, not conform to how things are done, and be open to hearing suggestions and reviewing their own beliefs in light of new ideas. Millennials will benefit from a leader who challenges them to find new ways of doing things, which will likely be perceived and appreciated as an opportunity for development.

(2) Leaders can encourage people by influencing them to see how important they are to the organization's mission and future, demonstrating a vision beyond the boundaries of their own work area, and creating a sense of collective purpose. This will be perceived as a demonstration of the leader's own commitment to the organization's well-being.

(3) Leaders who try to inspire Millennials by presenting an optimistic and stimulating vision of the future, enthusiasm about challenges, and confidence in achieving goals do not necessarily strengthen their bonds with the organization, perhaps because Millennials do not recognize the same stance in top leadership.

(4) Leaders should value workers who likely demonstrate additional effort, intention to stay, satisfaction with how they are led, and a sense of individual and collective efficacy (Bastos et al., 2014) as evidence of their commitment to the organization.

(5) Leaders should identify aspects found in high-performing workers, such as having a strong bond of sympathy and affection for the organization, being interested in the company's future, being devoted to the organization's goals, and treating the company's problems as their own. This observation can also be conducted through quick surveys.

(6) It is important to note that committed workers who report pride in belonging, finding personal meaning in working at the company, speaking well of the organization to friends, inspiring the best in themselves, and identifying with the organization's values were not necessarily evaluated as top performers. This finding suggests that the organization's efforts to project a favorable employer brand image (Employer Branding) or efforts in values-based hiring, while valid and important in Strategic Human Resources Management, may not necessarily attract only workers who will demonstrate superior individual performance.

By choice of the researchers, this study did not anticipate comparing career profiles of individuals from different generations or evaluating differences between generations. Future studies on the topic may consider comparing these effects with other generations, a possible avenue for new findings on the influences of transformational leadership. Additionally, the sample of Millennials studied was not random; it was a selection of workers with a good level of education and active in the job market. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results presented in this study to all Brazilian Millennials. However, the workers in the sample, a segment of Millennials with a differentiated level of education and performance, possibly represent those workers organizations seek to attract and retain in their workforce.

Other possibility for future studies is the qualitative interpretation of the obtained results, both to confirm the previously raised hypotheses to explain the findings and to identify other factors that may or may not contribute to the occurrence of commitment, not necessarily present in the chosen leadership model to support the analyses. Future studies may include

Generation Z, which comes after the generation studied in this article and has distinct characteristics.

By means of empirical and contextual analyses, other researchers can reproduce parts of this study in different contexts, analyzing similarities and differences with the findings obtained for Brazilian Millennials. This study contributes to expanding the body of knowledge about the Brazilian Generation Y.

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