

## Exploring the leadership behaviors of millennial community leaders during the pandemic: The Case of the Science City of Muñoz in the Philippines

### *Menggali perilaku kepemimpinan pemimpin komunitas milenial selama pandemi: Kasus Science City of Muñoz di Filipina*

Olive Chester M. Cuya-Antonio<sup>1</sup>, Arneil G. Gabriel<sup>1\*</sup>, Corinthian M. Obispo<sup>1</sup>, Feliciano P. Jacoba<sup>2</sup>, & Sanjay P. Claudio<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Local Government and Regional Development Research Hub, College of Public Administration and Disaster Management, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

<sup>2</sup>Office of the President, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

<sup>3</sup>Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Address: <sup>1,2</sup>NEUST Campus, General Tinio St., Quezon District, Cabanatuan City, Philippines 3100

<sup>3</sup>PUP Campus, 1016 Anonas, Santa Mesa, Manila, Philippines 1016

E-mail: gabrielarneil77@gmail.com

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#### Abstract

Millennials are those born between the late 1980s and late 1990s. They are individuals who are comfortable in the use of technology giving them competitive advantage in the global workforce. Surprisingly, despite their significant number in the workforce, there is a dearth of study on millennial leadership styles. This study examines the millennial community leaders in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic. It employed exploratory descriptive-qualitative research method. Sixteen millennial community leaders in the Science City of Muñoz in the Philippines and twelve citizens and subordinates participated in the study. The basis of analysis is the Responsible Leadership for Performance framework. The findings showed that responsibility and accountability to their tasks and functions are common traits of millennial community leaders during pandemic. They are perceived to possess attributes such as: people-centered, honest, reliable, just, approachable, responsible, affirmative, pure-hearted, and hardworking during pandemic. The study confirmed that millennials' technological inclination, their ideals and aspirations are shaped by their socio-historical background. Though lacking of experience and resources, they compensate it with strong mind and heart to lead the community in its response to pandemic emergencies.

**Keywords:** leadership behavior; millennial leaders; COVID-19 pandemic; local community leaders; Philippines

#### Abstrak

Milenial adalah mereka yang lahir antara akhir 1980-an dan akhir 1990-an. Mereka adalah individu yang nyaman dalam penggunaan teknologi yang memberi mereka keunggulan kompetitif dalam angkatan kerja global. Anehnya, meskipun jumlah mereka yang signifikan dalam angkatan kerja, ada kelangkaan studi tentang gaya kepemimpinan milenial. Lebih banyak lagi perilaku para pemimpin politik milenial di masa pandemi. Penelitian ini mengkaji tentang pemimpin politik milenial di Filipina selama Pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif-kualitatif. Enam belas pemimpin politik milenial di Science City of Muñoz di Filipina dan dua belas warga negara serta bawahannya berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Penelitian ini menganalisis data menggunakan kerangka kerja Responsible Leadership for Performance. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tanggung jawab dan akuntabilitas terhadap tugas dan fungsinya merupakan ciri umum para pemimpin politik milenial di masa pandemi. Pemimpin politik milenial juga dipersepsikan memiliki atribut-atribut seperti: *people-centric*, jujur, dapat diandalkan, adil, mudah didekati, bertanggung jawab, afirmatif, murni hati, dan pekerja keras selama pandemi. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa kecenderungan teknologi, cita-cita, dan aspirasi kaum milenial dibentuk oleh latar belakang sosio-historis mereka. Meskipun kurang pengalaman dan sumber daya, mereka mengimbangi dengan pikiran dan hati yang kuat untuk memimpin masyarakat dalam menanggapi keadaan darurat yang disebabkan oleh pandemi.

**Kata kunci:** perilaku kepemimpinan; pemimpin milenial; pandemi COVID-19; pemimpin politik lokal; Filipina

## Introduction

Millennials are those born between the late 1980s and late 1990s. They are comfortable in the use of modern technology giving them competitive advantage in the global workforce. Millennials also bear the name Generation Y, the Digital Generation, Digital Natives, Generation www, Generation E, Echo Boomers, and N-Gens. Its lower limit “may be as low as 1987 while the upper limit may be as high as 2002, depending on the source” (Tolbize 2008). The 20th century is bookended by the millennial generation, born between 1981 and 2000, because they would first enter the workforce at the dawn of the new millennium (Maiers 2017). Because of the fast technologically-driven present world, this group of people is confronted with a rate of change that no one has considered. Millennials are exposed to a huge number of information based on facts that make them aware. Awareness comes from different books, entertainment shows, social media, and online games that aim to connect people or groups of people. Drastic advancements and innovations in technology and communications shape the behavior of this generation. They are described as being more comfortable with technology, multitaskers, and engaging in collaborative work (Murray 2011). Millennials consider their workplaces diverse, creative, flexible, collaborative, work-oriented, and fun.

Millennials are perceived as having great influence on the country’s politics and the potential to contribute to social transformation. Millennials are exposed to advanced technology, strong social connection and wide range of information. They tend to contribute to social change as good decision-makers and game-changers. A review of popular and sociological literature suggests that the world is entering into a ‘Millennial Moment’ – a phase in world history in which one generation will be the dominating economic, cultural and political force (Greenberg & Weber 2008). Placing millennials within political power structures is particularly important for exploring the mechanisms of leadership (Pfeffer 1981). It is, therefore, necessary to see how millennials see politics at present and the way they want it to be by joining politics and applying what they consider ‘ideal’ ways of leading people and creating social changes. Placing them within the realm of the formal structure of the government and power would create a possibility that they would apply timely and people-centered approaches to leadership. The technological advancement gave this generation easy-access to a lot of information as well as awareness to what the world is now and how it works. They have been shaped by forces providing the most radical social change in history stemming from the digital revolution and the advanced phase of globalization. Knowing the millennials’ aspiration, the way how they see the world, and what they want it to be, can create innovative and unified approaches to political leadership. Nevertheless, they are less interested in formal and institutional politics (Bray 2018, Zachara 2020), less trust in public authority and less active in social participation compared to previous age cohorts (Lawless & Fox 2015). Millennials value affiliation and achievement (Maiers 2017) while their predecessors are inclined to work for advancement, power, authority, and social positions. They tend to form groups of people having the same values, aspirations, experiences, and beliefs.

The spread of COVID-19 requires innovative ways of solving the problem and there is no one size fits all leadership style and behavior among millennial leaders in the Philippines that suit to the condition of health emergency. Social media in the Philippines are keen on the strategies of millennial Local Chief Executives, especially Pasig City Mayor Vico Sotto and Alaminos City in Pangasinan, Mayor Arth Bryan Celeste, who are showing executive prowess during the pandemic. Such examples of millennial leadership styles have to be uncovered to generate new knowledge. Nevertheless, there is an obvious insufficient number of literature on leadership styles of the millennial community leaders, particularly the barangay (the smallest political unit of government in the Philippines). The advent of the pandemic has made the people, especially the leaders, apply different leadership styles. Seasoned local political leaders may have used all their executive skills and experience, but the millennial community leaders are yet to show what they can do in these trying times.

Studies suggest differences across generations with respect to work values, work-life balance, teamwork preferences, career expectations and leadership preferences (Lyons & Kuron 2004, Anderson et al.

2017, Sánchez-Hernández et al. 2019). The innovative and research-based approaches they apply may be based on their personal beliefs and aspirations and sociological exposure. Born and raised in the age of globalization and technological advancement, the millennials have unique personal aspirations. These events not only formed millennials as 'digital natives', 'tech-savvy' but also earned them the accolade 'quick learners' (Bennett et al. 2012). Thus, millennials prefer remote workplace style, flexibility, open and fun-oriented spaces, which hardly conform to hierarchical leadership and its structures (Bennett et al. 2012) a work attitude and leadership styles attuned to mitigating the effects of the pandemic.

To achieve productivity in an organization with millennial workforce requires creative leadership endowed with the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence, to deploy strategic goals in a manner that is sympathetic not only to the growth of the business but also promotes the wellbeing of the workforce (Ofori & Sarpong 2020). Youth leadership has quickly taken over older leadership (Luthfi et al. 2018). This generation, being exposed to the present world, are also the recipients of different public services so that they tend to see their efficiency and appropriateness. Sooner or later, they will also take the responsibility of leading the society and take part in the development of the nation with all the ways that they know, with all the connections that they are linked to, and with the resources that they have.

This study examined the leadership, characteristics, and the challenges of millennial community leaders during the pandemic. It described the profile of the respondents in terms of: Age; Sex; Civil Status; Highest Educational Attainment; Number of Siblings; Order of Birth Among the Siblings; Presence of Politicians in the Family; and Number of Years in Politics. It described the characteristics of a good leader as perceived by the millennial political leaders as well their leadership attributes/style. This study also explored the work attitude of the millennial political leaders, and their attitude toward their subordinates. Given their characteristics and attitude, the study determines how the millennial political leaders addressed the challenges they encountered during the pandemic. This study further provides recommendations based on the findings obtained and conclusion drawn from the analysis.

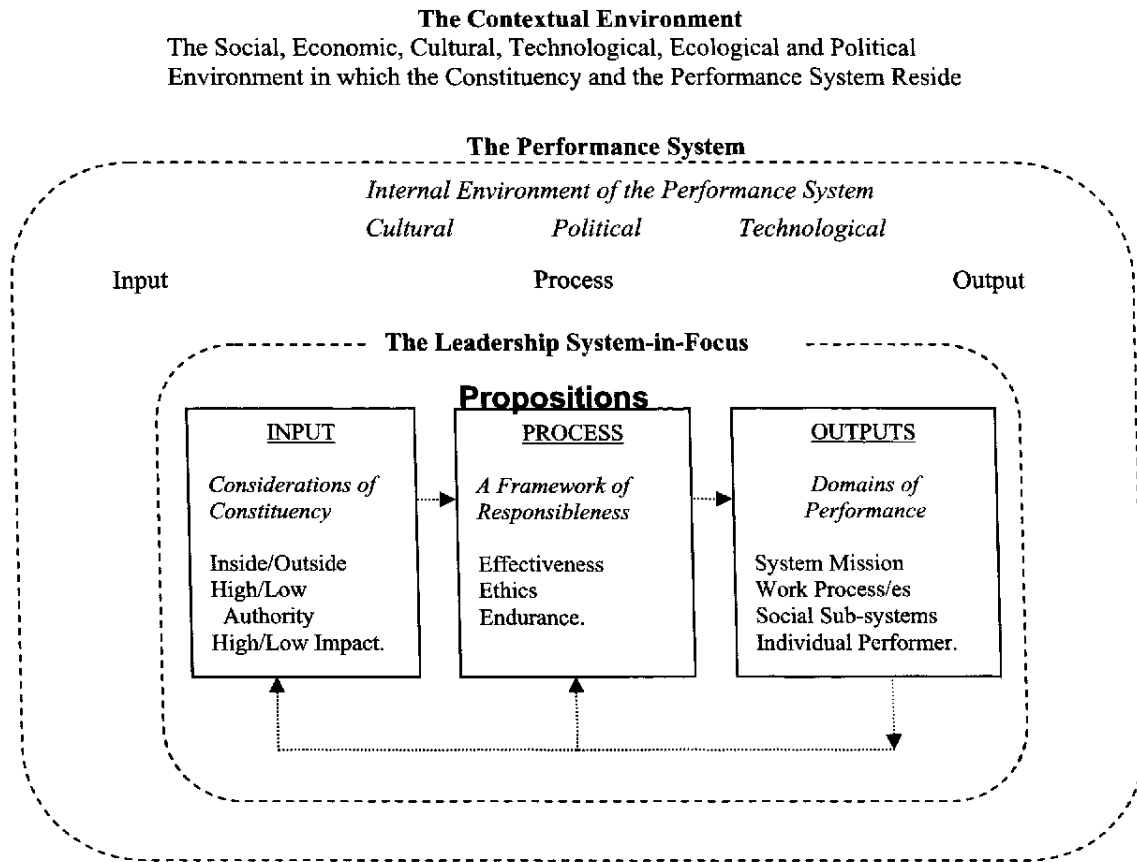
This study is enlightened by the Responsible Leadership for Performance (RLP) Framework by Lynham and Chermack (2006). The framework posits that leadership is not about the attributes of the leader only. It also involves a system of responsibility and reciprocity to the constituents toward achieving the goals set by the leaders (Koh 2014). The input or the Consideration of Constituency depicts the significance of the constituents in leadership. They are the different stakeholders that are within or outside the performance system. They either have high or low authority and impact over the leadership and performance system, so the leaders need to determine whose needs should be served first (Lynham & Chermack 2006, Koh 2014).

The process is where the Framework of Responsibleness lies. A responsible leader needs to be effective and ethical, as well as to maintain endurance to attain sustainability (Lynham & Chermack 2006, Koh 2014). The Framework of Responsibleness is being professional, careful, and reflective of which is the right response in a particular situation (Lynham & Chermack 2006). The diagrammatic representation of the theoretical framework is presented in Figure 1.

The outputs box on the figure contains the Domain of Performance which is the focus and outcome of leadership. The performance of a leader operates within the context of the performance system determined by the constituents (Lynham & Chermack 2006). While it is true that the millennial community leaders have their own styles and characteristics, its leadership performance will be affected by different factors as it operates within the system of Responsible Leadership.

In this study, the framework of RLP as the guiding principles of the millennial political leaders during the pandemic shall be put to test. The participants were subjected to qualitative research methods to determine whether they possessed the three characteristics of RLP, namely: responsibleness: effectiveness, ethics, and endurance. Part of the discussion is the measurement of the constituents in so far as leadership behaviors of millennial local leaders are concerned. The areas to be measured are the

impact of authority. Also is the potential influence of the exercise of authority of participants to the domains of performance such as: system mission, work processes, social subsystem and individual performer.



**Figure 1.**  
The theoretical framework of RLP  
Source: Adapted from Lynham & Chermack (2006)

## Research Method

This study examined how millennial managers manifest themselves as leaders by identifying the leadership style/s they use, exploring factors that influence their leadership, and determining how they manage and handle the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The methodology used for the study was exploratory descriptive-qualitative (EDQ) by conducting interview first, then validated through focus group discussion, and field observation. It aims to provide a holistic understanding and accurate descriptions of the interactions and relations between the participants being studied. “It is designed to illuminate how a phenomenon is manifested and is especially useful in uncovering the full nature of a little-understood phenomenon” (Hunter et al. 2018). These data collection tools were also employed for triangulation of data to increase confirmability of findings. The library research method and data mining were used to reinforce and countercheck the validity of the findings obtained from interviews and participant field observation. Based on the study of Dworkin (2012), qualitative studies involving in-depth interviews do not rely much either on hypothesis testing or in extracting explanations from a large population, rather on inductive and emergent processes and in exploring the lived experiences of the research participants.

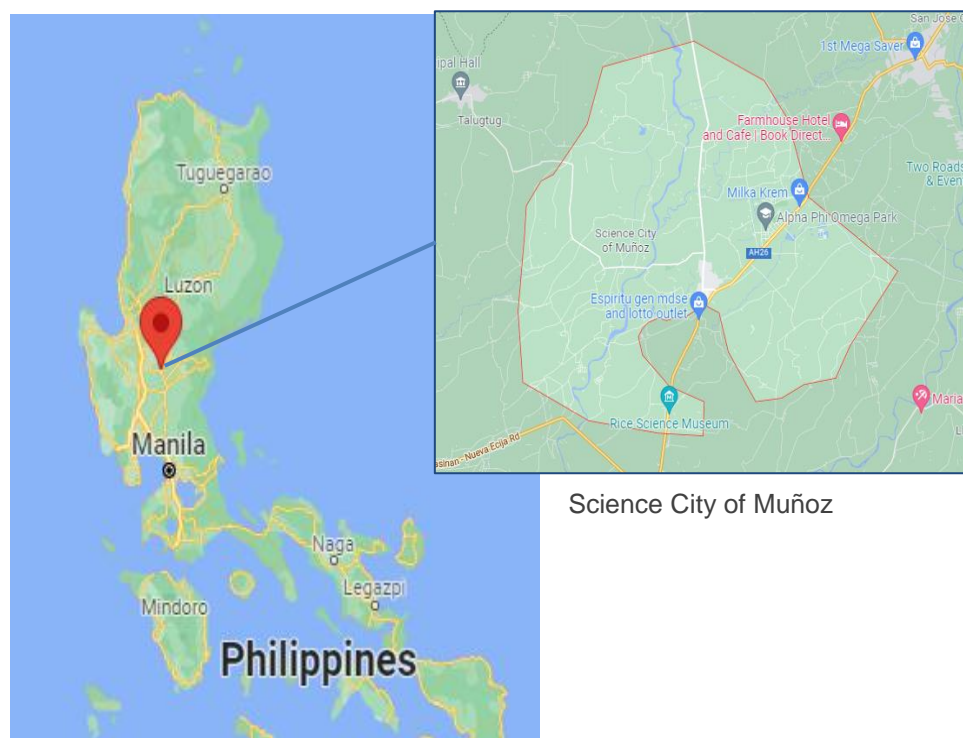
The suitability of qualitative method of research gives deeper meaning to the “lived experiences” of the millennial managers which could provide fresh theoretical insights on leadership skills and styles of

**Cuya-Antonio et al.: “Exploring the leadership behaviors of millennial community leaders”**

managers (Liamputtong 2013 as cited by Gabriel et al. 2020). Qualitative research involves a small number of participants who can provide accurate and quality information, and depth of the study on the meanings of their own social conditions, contributing to the general conceptual understanding of the topic (Babbie 2016, Hesse-Biber 2017, Denzin & Lincoln 2018, Gaudet & Robert 2018, Hanson et al. 2018, Gabriel et al. 2020).

In the analysis of the collected data, a mixture of descriptive and in vivo coding was used to generate the emerging themes. Manual writing and use of Atlas.ti 7.0 were utilized to organize the codes and the themes. A series of re-grouping and recoding were done to come up with the Thematic Map. The emerging themes coming from the political leaders were also validated with the answers and observations of the citizens and subordinates to strengthen the findings along with the triangulation using data mining technique.

The Science City of Muñoz is among the consistent awardees of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG), and is the first awarded Science City in the country (see Figure 2). With its progress and potential, its local political leaders need to be given credit as they are the responsible persons in the management of public affairs of the City. Aside from its Local Chief Executive, the community leadership of the barangay officials should be noticed, which is among the purpose of this study.



**Figure 2.**  
Study locale  
Source: Google (n.d.)

To elicit their responses and capture their surroundings and interaction with their subordinates and citizens, the data gathering was done personally. A hardcopy of the questionnaire with open-ended questions was given so they could write their answers at the same time they were being interviewed. The interviews for the political leaders were done in the last week of September 2021, after coding and initial analysis; this has been triangulated through a focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) of citizens and subordinates conducted in the third week of October 2021. It was also the time when the talk-back process was done to the millennial political leaders. During the interviews and FGD, field observation was also conducted. All these became possible during the pandemic with

the assistance of a key person working in the city government and a former millennial political leader also. Coordination with the Association of Barangay Captains Chairperson was done for the permission and ease of dissemination to the different barangays regarding the conduct of the study. Adherence to social or physical distancing was ensured with proper personal protective equipment during the data gathering. The talk-back, KII, and FGD were conducted with the assistance of the Association of Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), as most of the participants are SK Chairpersons and officials. Data mining of existing literatures was done to countercheck whether the data collected and the findings drawn concur or not with previous studies.

The data collection tools, the participants, and the manner and time of data collection were aligned with the strengthening of the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, while the researchers' objective analysis in the lens of the theoretical framework guides the reflexivity of the study. These are considered for the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Given the pandemic situation, the researchers adopted measures to minimize face-to-face interaction while following the ethical requirements in the conduct of the study. Formal request was ensured by the focal person to the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) and the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) prior to the conduct of the study. Moreover, an informed consent was obtained from the participants before the data collection. The confidentiality of data was assured, as well as their anonymity in the use of their provided information. The participants were briefed of their rights the moment they chose to participate in the study, and they were given the freedom to stop the data collection if they chose to discontinue.

The respondents of this study are constituents and millennial political leaders in the Science City of Munoz, Nueva Ecija. A total of 28 participants cooperated in the survey, distributed as follows: Ordinary Citizens and subordinates- 12, millennial political leaders- 16. Participants were selected using convenience sampling for the citizens and subordinates while the millennial political leaders were selected through purposive sampling. The criteria employed for the political leaders are as follows: (a) currently elected officials of the city and/or the barangay, (b) has birth year of 1981 up to 2000, and (c) willing to participate in the research.

## Results and Discussion

The study attempted to describe and explore the leadership behaviors of millennial political leaders and the factors that shape and influence such leadership in the barangay or community within the context of the pandemic. The themes that emerged and recurring patterns are presented, discussed, and supported by actual data.

### Demographic profile

As the demographic profile shows, majority are ages 22 to 25 years (62.5%). They are considered millennials being born between 1981 and 1999. Most of the participants are college graduates (62.5%) while there are 18.75% who are still in their college level. Education is a significant factor to success. In the point of view of the millennial leaders, education is one of the agencies where information may be explored, acquired, and tested. Table 1 shows the gathered data from the field.

Generally, the participant millennials are new in politics. They are the only politicians (62.5%) in the family. They are interested in politics to hone their leadership skills and to be able to do something for the community. But despite their lack of experience and financial resources, they are still motivated to engage in public service for a purpose. According to JER who has been serving six years as community leader:

“One of the major reasons why I joined politics is because of my personal desire to serve the public. My leadership capability was once belittled because of the kind of life that I have and because I am from a poor family. I wanted to be a living proof that one's leadership capability is not based on money. A true leader knows how to stand on his own and can be honest at all times.” (Informant JER).

**Table 1.**  
Distribution of respondents by demographic profile

	N=16	Frequency	Percent
Age Group	22-25	10	62.5
	26-29	4	25
	30-32	2	12.5
	Total	16	100.00
Sex	Female	3	18.75
	Male	13	81.25
Civil Status	Married	1	6.25
	Single	15	93.75
Highest Educational Attainment	College	10	62.5
	College Undergrad	3	18.75
	High School	2	12.5
Number of Siblings	Vocational	1	6.25
	2	3	18.8
	3	6	37.5
	4	3	18.8
	5	2	12.5
Number of Years in Politics	7	2	12.5
	3 Years	12	75.0
	4 years	1	6.3
	6 years	3	18.75

Source: Primary data

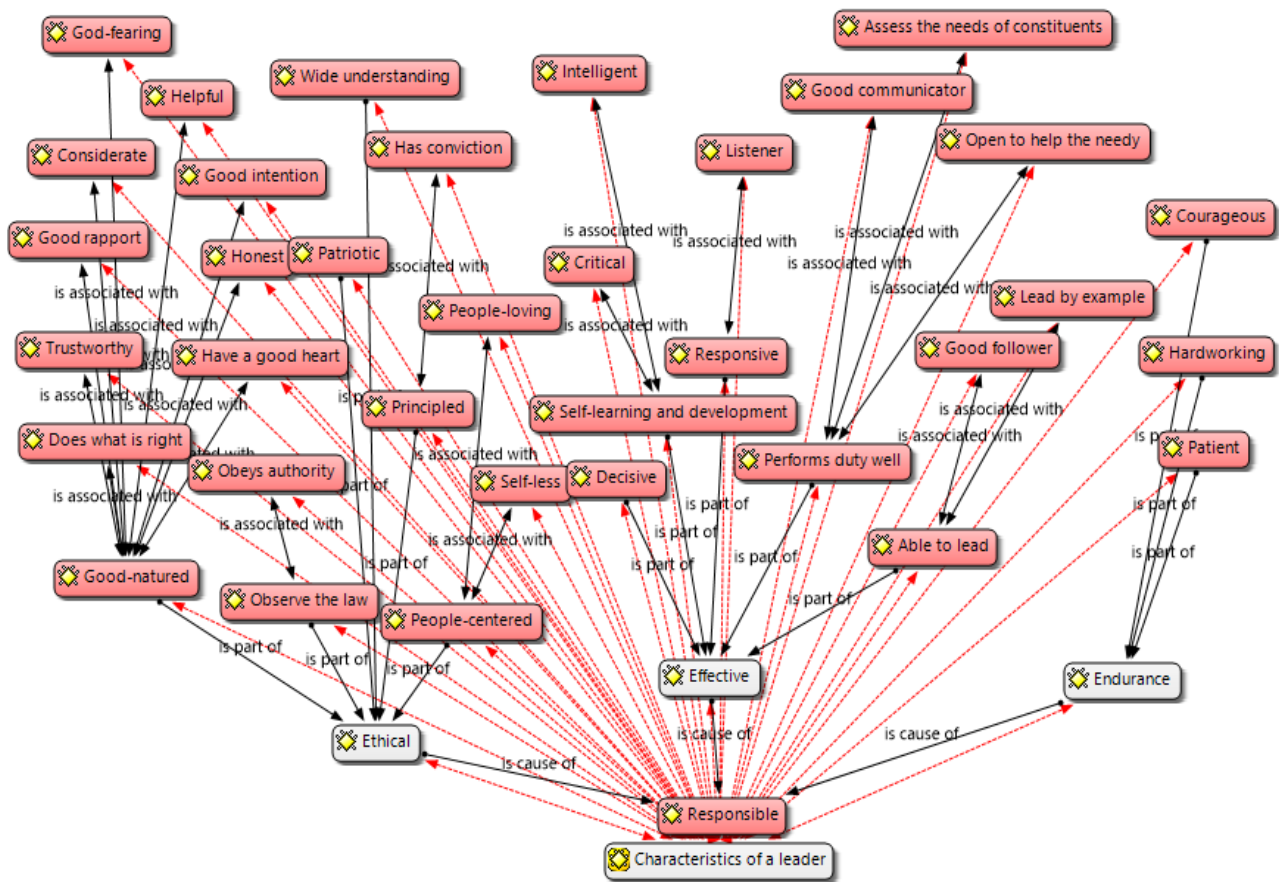
Majority are early entrants in local politics. The majority of the participants are merely 22 to 25 years old, showing in effect that they are idealistic and tech savvy. They started as young as eighteen years old. There are also six out of sixteen respondents (18.75%) who are already in their sixth year in politics, and there is one (6.3%) who now has four years as political leader. The number of years show the determination of the millennial political leaders to join the political race. This attribute is related to endurance which is among the characteristics of Responsible Leadership based on the RLP framework. To stay in politics, these millennial leaders need to endure and be diligent to perform, thus confirming the study of Mallory (2015) that millennials are interested in accomplishments and achievement, which gives them the opportunity to help others and make a difference.

### Characteristics of a good leader

The leadership attributes defined by the millennial political leaders are analyzed, compared and contrasted to the existing studies and literatures. The themes that emerged are found to have semblance to the RLP framework that being a good leader requires one to be responsible. From this Responsible Leadership are the three frameworks: Ethical, Effective, and Endurance. All the emerging themes based on the interview with the millennial political leaders is supported by the RLP. Figure 3 shows the Thematic Network Map done using the Atlas.ti and the emerging themes from the interview with the political local leaders. From their descriptions of a good leader emerged the themes that follow.

Notably in Figure 3, most of the codes related to Ethical are categorized into “Good-natured,” “Observe the law,” “Principled,” “People-centered,” “Wide understanding,” and “Patriotic.” All the traits associated with these revolve around the attributes of a leader and his/her personality. The participants believed that for a leader to be good, it needs to be “People-centered” and “Good-hearted:” these are the most frequent traits mentioned. For the participants, a political leader must be reliable, sensitive to the needs of the constituents, approachable, and smart. The results affirm what Pfeffer (1981) postulated that having these people in power, there is a great possibility that they would apply timely and people-centered approaches of leadership. Placing millennials within political power structures is particularly important for exploring the mechanisms of leadership, as agent’s choices about when, where, why and how to lead are conditioned by the structure.

These traits of a good leader as described by millennial local leaders are most significant during the time of pandemic. Where constituents are faced by unknown enemies such as the COVID-19 and, therefore, can easily be afflicted. Leaders during pandemic are required to have a big heart as well as being agile and alert.



**Figure 3.**  
Thematic network map of characteristics of a good leader  
Source: Primary data

The next emerging theme for the characteristics of a good leader is “Effective.” The traits mentioned by the participants are associated with being an effective leader and categorized into the following: “Able to lead,” “Performs duty well,” “Responsive,” “Decisive,” and “Self-learning and development.” Here, the performance of the leader is being measured. The ability of the political leader to lead is measured on the ability to perform his/her duty well and to be able to respond to the needs of the constituents. Aside from these are the ability of the leader to be critically-minded in the affairs of the public. It supports the literature that, in the mind of the millennial leaders, is creative leadership endowed with the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence (Ofori & Sarpong 2020).

In the eyes of the millennial political leaders, a good leader is able to endure, confirming the RLP framework on assessing the leadership skills and performance. Based on the traits mentioned by the participants, endurance is associated with being “Patient,” “Hardworking,” and “Courageous.” It reflected also the attributes that separates the millennial political leaders to the seasoned politicians. When asked about the difference of the millennial political leaders to the seasoned political leaders, this is what ERW, now in his fourth year as community leader, had to say: “We have no fear, and we don’t just follow the streams of life. It is much easier for us to deal with situations whether we are living in the world full of technology or in the old times where there are no technologies yet.”



The traits of a good leader as perceived by the citizens and subordinates are comparable to those mentioned by the political leaders. The emerged theme from the interviews is leading closer to endurance. Endurance in a state of health emergency and uncertainty is of vital importance. They worked 24/7 to contain the spread of the virus and, at the same time, they need to adapt to and accept the fact that containing the virus is everybody’s problem. Relying only upon the leaders’ endurance, so to speak, they can sustain the needed interventions and energies to face the challenges of the pandemic until it ceases. Also, the presence of millennial leaders in the locality is also an advantage as they are young and in the prime of their youth, which makes them least vulnerable to COVID-19. They serve the community better compared to Gen X who at their age are now experiencing health issues due to declining health condition resulting from age. Table 2 presents the common themes, to wit:

**Table 2.**  
Characteristics of a good leader according to the citizens

Characteristics of a Good Leader (Citizens)
Reliable
Good example
Has conviction/resolve
Risk-taker
People-centered
Approachable
Pure-hearted/Kind-hearted
Able to lead people not manage people
Selfless
Reliable in time of need
Honest
Gives fair treatment
Gives support
Hardworking
Not corrupt

Source: Primary data

Both the community leaders themselves and their constituents mentioned the same characteristics such as people-centered, honest, reliable, just or gives fair-treatment, approachable, a good example, responsible, affirmative, and pure-hearted which they believe that millennial political leaders must possess. Such values reflect leaders that respect the people and honor good governance. The findings concur to the study of Ebro (2021) that millennials are active citizens of the country and “their values on democracy and good governance remains intact.” Therefore, their perception and the citizens’ perception of a good leader agrees with each other.

**Characteristics as a millennial political leader**

When asked about how would they describe their characteristics as millennial political leaders, they have answered the following (see Table 3). Most frequent in the answers of the participants are the good-natured traits of them as political leaders. Some of these attributes are the following: reliable, pure-hearted, approachable, smart, and hardworking. It was also mentioned the traits of being affirmative, honest, people-centered, responsible, ready to listen, selfless and has faith in God.

In comparison with how the citizens describe the millennial political leaders, the citizens’ most frequent answers are the following: “hardworking,” “reliable,” “people-centered or people oriented,” “just,” “sensitive,” “honest,” “selfless,” and “has good rapport. It confirms how the citizens and subordinates see their millennial political leaders is the same as how the leaders see themselves. It shows that the leadership style of the millennial community leaders is leaning toward being people-oriented. This is most prominent in transformational leadership style. A feature of Contingency Theory of Leadership (Vidal et al. 2017, Gabriel et al. 2020).

**Table 3.**

Thematic grid on the characteristics of the millennial community leaders		
Major Themes	Sub-themes	In Vivo Coding
Ethical	People-centered	"Loving and kind to every person in the constituency" "I am a leader who cares for others, and above all I am helpful, especially to those in need" "Treat and communicate well with people, obey the authority, and above all have the fear of God"
	Good-natured	"It is characteristic of the leader to do what is right and proper so as not to go wrong in everything he does" "Honest and Kind" "Kind, helpful, broad comprehension" "Selfless" "Caring and helping others" "We must follow what is right so that we do not have to be punished"
Effective	Performs duty well	"A leader who performs his duty to help young people" "Able to listen and fulfill the tasks that need to be done on time" "I know what my constituents need" "I should know what young people need. Can understand and get along with people"
	Self-learning and development	"I still have a lot to develop and shape" "I still need to be shaped"
Endurance		"Reliable"

Source: Primary data

The traits of MPL as perceived and described by the leaders themselves and citizens are apparently similar in most respects. This only affirms the observation that millennial leaders possess traits that are different from their Gen X predecessors in politics and government. It is consistent with the behavioral component of millennials according to Zachara (2020) who suggests that their value and life orientations differ from the established patterns recognized by their predecessors.

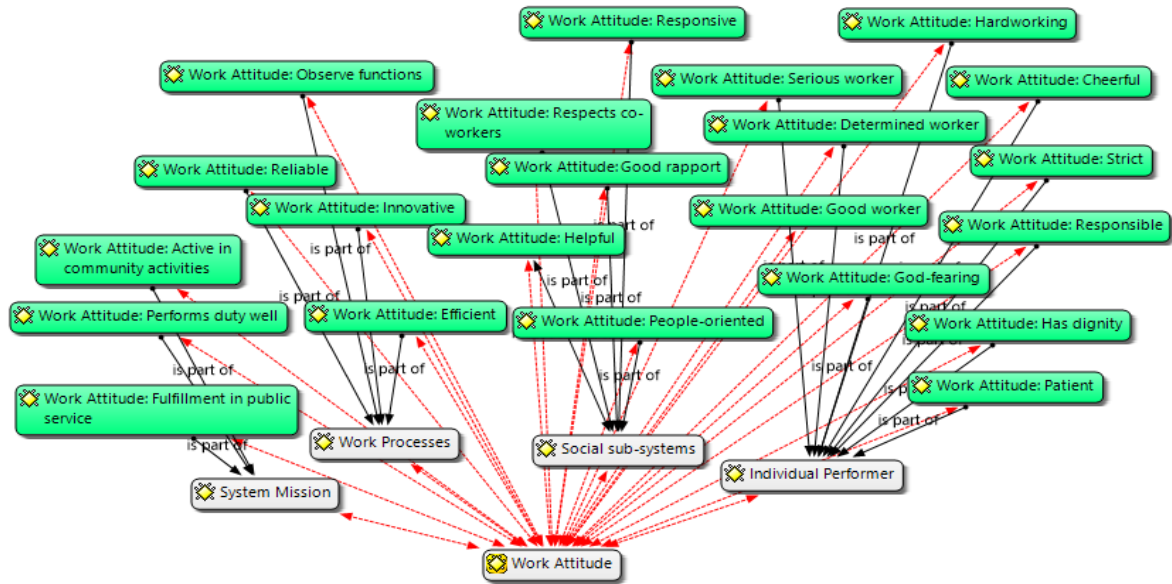
### Work attitudes of the millennial political leaders

The work attitude of the millennial political leaders is analyzed based on the output of the RLP framework or the analysis on the performance of leadership within the context of the performance system as determined by the constituents. It can be gleaned from Figure 4 that performance of the millennial political leaders based on their work attitude is categorized into four: System Mission, Work Processes, Social sub-systems, and Individual Performer. The System Mission indicates the work attitude of the leaders in achieving the goals and objectives of the organization. In this case, the achievement of the goals based on the function of the political leaders. Thus, it concerns the duty, activities, and the delivery of public service.

Meanwhile, the Work Processes is more on the implementation of the procedures within the political organization. In this case, the work attitude of the millennial political leaders with regard to the implementation of the process in the barangay. Their work attitude traits highlight their being "innovative," "efficient," "reliable," and "observing of their function." Through this, the attribute of the millennial political leaders of being innovative stood out. To achieve productivity in an organization with millennial workforce would require creative leadership. While still promoting the well-being of the people, working the millennial workers, especially leaders, would require beyond the relics of traditional management (Ofori & Sarpong 2020).

Being innovative is perhaps the hallmark of a leader who observes work processes as well as in realizing the system mission as well as social subsystem. Within the context of the pandemic, innovativeness is

what is required. Having an unknown enemy and the threats that it may bring, innovative strategy matters. The use of scientifically advanced technology like the use of computer with internet to distribute information and monitor compliance to quarantine requirements are just some of innovative ways they applied in their locality. Presented in Figure 4 is the thematic network map.



**Figure 4.**  
Thematic network map of work attitude of millennial political leaders based on RLP  
Source: Primary data

Meanwhile in the social subsystems category, it focuses on the work attitude traits of the millennial political leaders that are being responsive to their subordinates and constituents. In this category, most of the participants mentioned that they are “responsive,” they “respects co-workers,” they are “helpful,” and most especially the millennial political leaders are again “people-oriented.” This is consistent with the characteristics of Contingency Leadership theory, which highlights the flexibility and adaptability of leadership depending on what the situation warrants. Hence, it can be said that millennial political leaders also exercise Contingency Leadership theory, which is related to the outcome of Responsible Leadership of Performance.

The last category or emerging theme would be the Individual Performer. It shows the work attitude performance of the leader in the lens of its individual performance. As mentioned earlier, the framework works within a system and the performance of a leader does not only rely on its individuality but with the interaction of the different factors. In this part, the individual attributes of the leader are again highlighted, being “patient,” “responsible,” “God-fearing,” “serious worker,” “cheerful,” “strict,” “people-oriented,” and “hardworking.” These are individual attributes that are molded in the socio-historical and behavioral experiences of the participants.

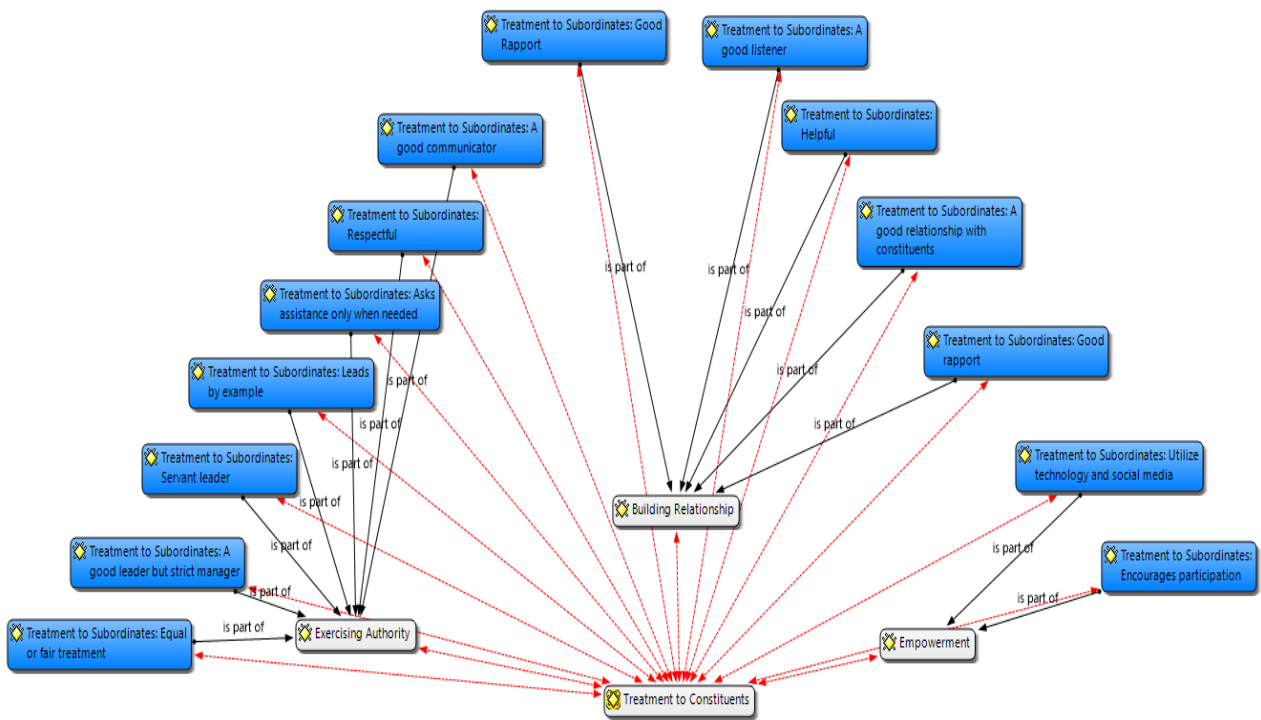
The most frequently mentioned work attitude that a millennial political leader must possess is hardworking. Aside from being technologically inclined, the millennials work hard since individual advancement is their priority (Gabriel et al. 2020). This group of people is in between Generation X, which values workplaces that are positive, fun, efficient, fast-paced, flexible, informal, and have access to leadership and information, and Generation Z, which is motivated by security, competitive, wants-independence, will multi-task, more entrepreneurial, wants to communicate face-to-face and truly digital. Thus, their attributes are almost a mixture of the two generations. The results also affirm what Pfeffer (1981) postulated that, having these people in power, there is a great possibility that they would apply timely and people-centered approaches of leadership. Placing millennials within political power structures may change the political landscape. On the other hand, the citizens and subordinates also

described the work attitude of the millennial political leaders as almost the same as how the leaders described them. They mentioned “hardworking,” “people-oriented,” “perform his/her duty well,” and “reliable,” which validates the response of the millennial political leaders.

Therefore, it can be surmised that, in terms of work attitudes, the perceptions of millennial community leaders, constituents as well as their subordinates, are complementary. These are all work attitudes that are necessary and compatible to the demands for creating appropriate response to the pandemic. Millennials during the pandemic are intergenerational leaders who need to prove themselves as they are being tagged as ‘inexperienced.’ However, their nature of being collaborative (Murray 2011), flexible, and quick learner (Bennett et al. 2012) seemed to fit during crisis leadership like the pandemic.

**Attitudes/treatment toward constituents/subordinates**

Treatment of the millennial political leaders toward their constituents suggests the considerations that they need to make in order to perform well as a leader. Based on the emerging themes in Figure 5, treatments of the millennial political leaders show their Exercise of Authority, Building of Relationship, and Empowerment of Constituents.



**Figure 5.**  
Thematic network map of treatment to subordinates/constituents of millennial political leaders  
Source: Primary data

In the exercise of their authority, the millennial political leaders exhibit “servant leadership” traits as well as “leadership by example,” “equal and fair treatment,” being “respectful” of their constituents, and being a “good communicator.” Meanwhile in building relationship, the millennial political leaders are showing “good rapport,” being “good listeners,” being “helpful” and all about “establishing good relationship” with their constituents. While in the third emerging theme, the Empowerment, the leaders “encourage participation” of the constituents. At the same time, they utilize technology to heighten their communication, and the transparency in communication, thus, empowering the constituents.

They are found to be respectful in words and deeds thereby create good relationships with the constituents (Cox 2016, Nye 2017). They are described as being more comfortable with technology,

multitaskers, and engaging in collaborative work (Murray 2011). The millennials, being engaged in collaborative work, are also good listeners and sensitive to their constituents’ needs (Billups 2016). Also, having these ways on dealing with their subordinates, they appear to be good examples to the people around them. The use of media of communication is also associated with millennial leaders, which is among the advantages of their generation. According to Murray (2011) millennial leaders are technologically inclined. This trait of millennials is shaped by advancement and development in information technology.

Among the responses given by the constituents with regard to the treatment of the millennial community leaders toward them, being “approachable” and “respectful” are the most frequent words. Moreover, being a “good example/model,” “a good listener,” and being “sensitive to what their constituents need.” Being sensitive requires being a good listener. The leaders must know what is going on the ground. Successful managers all tend to be enthusiastic listeners who have been genuinely concerned and who invest in the overall conclusion of the conversation (De Janasz et al. 2009). The centrality of considerate listening to powerful leadership is highlighted by Henrico and Visser (2012) who conclude that managers are expected to be sensitive and genuinely informed about the feelings and emotions of their staff in an attempt to be truly productive leaders. During this time of pandemic, being sympathetic toward the wellbeing of the constituents is magnified as the character of the millennial community leaders which is, according to Ofori and Sarpong (2020), beyond the vestiges of traditional leaders.

### **Challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic and how to address it**

The leadership of the millennial political leaders is now tested during the pandemic. Therefore, it would be significant for the millennial political leaders as well as the different stakeholders to analyze their way of dealing with the impact of pandemic. Based on the response of the millennial political leaders in Figure 6, one of the difficulties encountered during the pandemic was the constituents being infected. One of the interventions applied was adhering to policies, particularly the IATF protocols. Having the constituents being infected, seeking for financial help, losing job and difficulty looking for job are next challenges for them. Despite of having insufficient budget coming from the higher government units, they made ways to at least extend a ‘little help’ to those in need. Another difficulty encountered was the slow procurement of supplies for the ‘ayuda’ or government provisions to the COVID-19 positive. What the three millennial political leaders did was to prepare the pertinent requirements once they heard that budget would soon be given to them.

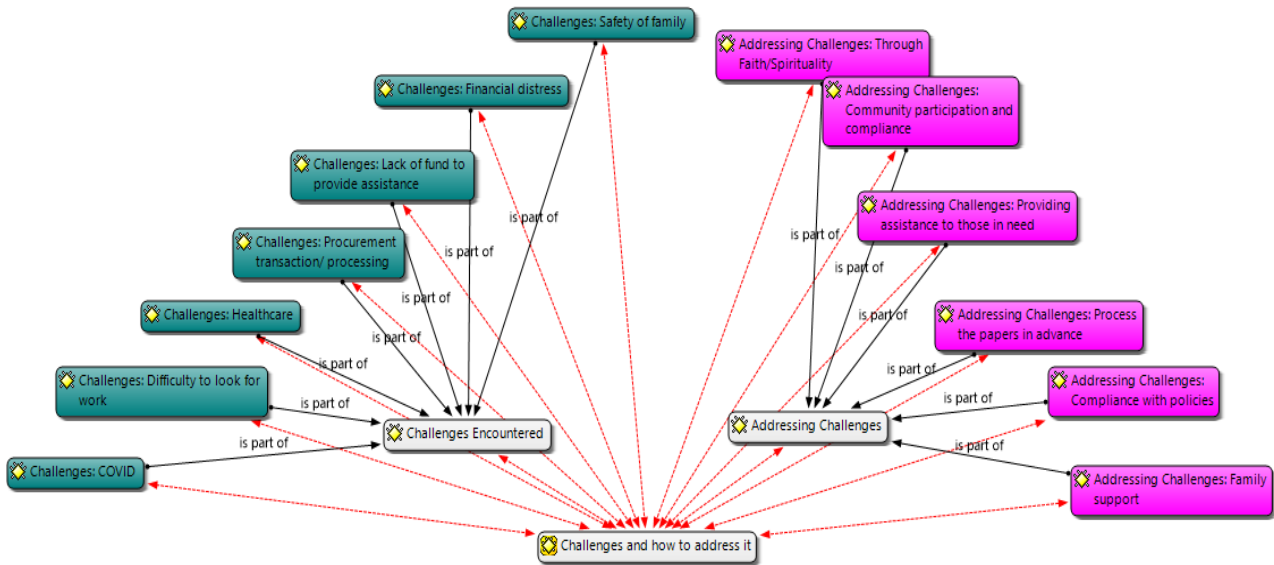
Other ways of addressing the challenges for the millennial political leaders are strengthening their faith, strengthening community participation and compliance, and through their family support. Given it is the barangay unit and the millennial political leaders lack the authority over the financial resources, they are devising ways to help the community to address the impact of the pandemic. At the same time, while they are also affected, they are strengthening their faith and their inner strength to cope with the impact brought about by the pandemic. When asked what difference did they make for the community during the pandemic that would show their unique leadership as millennials, JER answered:

“Demonstrating the ability to forget one's own health and the courage of a young person to serve with one's own life. I am a COVID-19 survivor and I am not regretting what happened to me because I know I fulfilled my duty while fulfilling my own wishes and dreams as a student, child, and serving the country.” (Informant JER).

With this statement, it magnifies the unique ideals of the millennial political leaders despite their lacking in terms of resources, they cover it up with their physical and emotional strength.

The data from the constituents likewise indicate what they have experienced because of the pandemic. It was mentioned that they lost their job. What they did was to look for other source of income. Because of the risk of being infected, what they did was to get vaccinated. Another difficulty was different quarantine classifications. Aside from the fact that other people lost their job and, therefore, got hungry because of the quarantine, two of the participants got infected with the virus. What they did was to

adhere to IATF health protocols. For the record, the Philippines has been considered as the worst performer in COVID-19 prevention and economic recovery in East Asia and the Pacific, with the largest number of cases, largest percentage of active cases, lowest percentage of recovery rates, the highest COVID deaths per million population, and one of the countries in ASEAN experiencing negative growth in the first quarter and strong economic collapse in the second quarter of 2020.



**Figure 6.**  
Thematic network map on challenges encountered by the millennial political leaders during the pandemic and how to address it  
Source: Primary data

The data from the constituents likewise indicate what they have experienced because of the pandemic. It was mentioned that they lost their job. What they did was to look for other source of income. Because of the risk of being infected, what they did was to get vaccinated. Another difficulty was different quarantine classifications. Aside from the fact that other people lost their job and, therefore, got hungry because of the quarantine, two of the participants got infected with the virus. What they did was to adhere to IATF health protocols. For the record, the Philippines has been considered as the worst performer in COVID-19 prevention and economic recovery in East Asia and the Pacific, with the largest number of cases, largest percentage of active cases, lowest percentage of recovery rates, the highest COVID deaths per million population, and one of the countries in ASEAN experiencing negative growth in the first quarter and strong economic collapse in the second quarter of 2020.

**Recommendations on how to enhance their leadership capabilities**

Based on the millennial political leaders’ recommendations on how to enhance their leadership capabilities, it is notable to see that the most frequent answer is to take care of the youth, to listen to what the people are saying or knowing what they need. Further is to work hard and do not get affected with hearsays and to begin with identification of problem, to self-care, to be honest, to broaden the mind, and to have faith in God.

Meanwhile, regarding the citizens’ recommendation on how to enhance the millennial political leaders’ leadership capabilities, notably, the most frequent answers are to work hard, to be a very good listener, and to be honest. Mentioned further is to apply modern leadership approaches, listen to what people are saying, have faith in God, be a good example, be humble and be patient. The recommendations of the ordinary citizens complement the recommendations of the millennial political leaders namely: have faith in God, be honest, and work hard.

## Conclusion

To understand the millennial political leaders and the manner they exhibit and perform their roles as community leaders in times of pandemic is very important to understand as they will be dominating the political and bureaucratic landscapes in the present century. The characteristics that millennial political leaders must possess based on the lens of the millennial political leaders themselves are aligned with the framework of Responsible Leadership for Performance. This is anchored on three traits: Ethical, Effective, and Endurance. Good leaders imbibe responsibility. It will reflect not only in the personality of a leader but in how they reciprocate and become accountable in performing their functions and accomplishing them with considerations of the constituents and the different stakeholders.

As mentioned by the participants and the citizens, a good leadership is people-centered. Based on the lens of the citizens, it reveals that the most frequently mentioned characteristics that a political leader must possess is being honest, reliable, just, approachable, people-centered, good model, responsible, affirmative, sensitive, and kind-hearted. Both the political leaders themselves and their constituents mentioned the same characteristics which confirms the lens of the Responsible Leadership Framework. The millennial political leaders may be young in age and experience and lack of resources but they have the creative and innovative ideas and the advantage of technology.

It is recommended that the millennial community leaders must engage themselves in continuous professional development (CPD) such as masters' degree or diploma related to public administration and disaster management. They must also engage in leadership training, conflict resolution, disaster management, and many more. Likewise, they may also attend trainings and programs sponsored by the National Government Agencies, particularly the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Civil Service Commission. The Department of Interior and Local Government must study the leadership styles of these millennial political leaders as they may have potential influence of the emergency response programs of the Local Government Units. Moreover, the Department of Interior and Local Government must tailor-fit its training programs to the millennial political leaders since they have unique needs and leadership styles, hence, they must be capacitated on leadership individually. Future researchers may consider studying millennial political leaders in the different levels of government such as provincial, municipal/city, and other barangays as well.

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**Cuya-Antonio et al.: "Exploring the leadership behaviors of millennial community leaders"**

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