



Peer-Review Report Form

Manuscript Title:	Leadership Practices of Generation Z Higher Education Office Heads in Promoting Organizational Success
Type of Article:	Original Article

FIRST ROUND

Editor

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The reviewers acknowledge the significance of your manuscript and recommend several revisions to further improve its clarity, coherence, organization, and overall scholarly quality. In addition, you are advised to thoroughly review and validate all references included in the manuscript. Please ensure that all cited sources are accurate, accessible, and retrievable through Google Scholar to uphold the credibility and reliability of the study. Additionally, make sure to include the DOI or website link for every reference to facilitate verification and accessibility of sources. Furthermore, only sources that are cited within the manuscript should appear in the References section, and all entries listed in the References section must also be cited in the text. For example, if 20 unique sources are cited in the manuscript, then only those 20 sources should be included in the References section. Please note that repeated citations of the same source within the text are counted as a single reference entry; therefore, the total number of references may be lower than the total number of in-text citations.

Reviewer 1

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The manuscript presents an exploration of Generation Z leadership within academic administration. The topic holds immense relevance for current academic governance. I see potential in this text. However, the manuscript requires substantial revision to meet the rigorous standards of an international journal. The methodology lacks deep theoretical synthesis, and the analysis stays at a surface level. The authors must elevate the academic rigor, enhance the thematic depth, and ensure the literature integration goes beyond mere description.

<u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u>
Title and Abstract: The title is clear but somewhat verbose. Consider a more concise formulation. The abstract identifies four leadership practices and four challenges. However, the abstract lacks a definitive statement of the novel contribution to theoretical knowledge. Provide explicit mention of the specific institutional context to clarify the boundary of the study.
Introduction: The introduction establishes the context well. The transition between the traits of Generation Z and the realities of academic administration needs better logical flow. The



literature review claims a scholarly gap but omits rigorous critical debate on traditional versus modern administrative paradigms. Expand the theoretical background with older, foundational management theories to show a comprehensive grasp of the evolution of the field.
Theoretical Lens: The inclusion of Mannheim and Homans provides a firm base. The application of these theories remains superficial. The text must explicitly show how these frameworks shape the interview questions and the data analysis. Do not merely summarize the theories; critique them in relation to modern academic paradigms.
Methodology: The selection of fifteen participants provides adequate data. The text mentions the use of artificial intelligence for thematic categorization. This reliance on artificial intelligence requires a much deeper explanation of human verification steps to ensure data integrity. The description of maximum variation selection lacks explicit details on the specific varied criteria achieved in the actual sample.
Results and Discussion: The thematic categories lack distinct generational specificity, as traits like communication and empowerment apply universally across all age cohorts. Categories such as collaborative participative leadership fail to establish a unique theoretical boundary for young leaders. The excerpts from participants are too brief to demonstrate deep phenomenological immersion. Provide longer, richer participant quotes to validate the thematic claims. The discussion relies heavily on confirmations of established literature. Point out contradictions or unexpected discoveries to enrich the academic discourse.
Conclusions and References: The conclusion repeats the results rather than offers a synthesized theoretical advancement. Elevate the conclusion by an explanation of how this work forces a reconsideration of current educational management models. The references appear robust, but ensure all citations in the text perfectly match the reference list.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
☐	Accept the manuscript for publication.
☐	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
☐	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

Reviewer 2

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
Overall, the paper has an interesting dataset, but the manuscript currently asks the data to support more than what the design permits. I encourage the authors to reconsider the central claim regarding organizational success, clarify whose experiences are actually being studied, align all research questions with the reported findings, justify the unusually restrictive participant criterion, and resolve the theoretical inconsistency. Addressing these matters can considerably improve the credibility and contribution of the paper.
<u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u>
My strongest concern is the use of "organizational success" as a central outcome of the study. The title itself states that these leadership practices are "promoting organizational success,"



and the abstract further claims effects on organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, participatory governance, and workplace relationships. However, I cannot find actual empirical evidence showing that organizational success was examined. There are no organizational performance indicators, employee outcomes, institutional records, or even data from followers to establish whether these leadership practices really resulted in organizational success. The study mainly collected the leaders' own descriptions of how they lead. The conclusion goes even further by stating that these practices contribute to employee commitment and improved organizational performance. I think this claim is too strong for the design. The authors need to make a major decision: either remove organizational success as an outcome and frame the study only around leadership practices and perceived effectiveness, or provide additional evidence showing how organizational success was actually determined.

There is also a serious inconsistency regarding whose lived experience is being investigated. The introduction states that the research seeks a phenomenological understanding "by exploring the lived experiences of instructors" and also discusses leadership strategies as experienced by organizational members. But the actual participants are fifteen Generation Z office heads themselves. These are two very different perspectives. Leaders describing themselves cannot provide evidence of how instructors or employees experience their leadership. This is important because self-description can naturally present leadership practices in a favorable way. The manuscript must consistently identify the real unit of experience and interpretation. If the intention is to understand how these leaders are experienced by employees, then instructors or subordinates should also be part of the data.

The research questions and reported findings are not fully corresponding. The manuscript presents four research questions: experiences and challenges, leadership strategies, factors shaping successful application, and insights for overcoming barriers. However, the results are organized only around leadership practices, challenges, and conceptualization of effective leadership. I do not clearly see an empirical analysis answering the "factors crucial in shaping successful application" or the "insights to overcome barriers." Some recommendations are later presented, but recommendations are not automatically findings. The authors should show clearly how every research question was answered by the data, preferably through a transparent connection among interview questions, codes, themes, and each research question. Otherwise, the research questions should be revised according to what was actually analyzed.

I also question the eligibility requirement that Generation Z office heads must be currently enrolled in a master's or doctoral program. I do not see a theoretical reason why graduate enrollment should define a Generation Z higher education office head. This criterion may substantially shape the findings because it selects leaders who are already pursuing advanced education, perhaps more academically motivated, professionally developing, or exposed to contemporary management concepts. Gen Z office heads who are not studying graduate programs are excluded even if they are equally relevant to the phenomenon. Therefore, the study may actually describe a very specific subgroup of Gen Z leaders rather than Gen Z higher education leaders generally. The authors need to strongly justify this criterion or substantially narrow the claims and population being represented.

There is an important inconsistency in the theoretical structure of the manuscript. The abstract states that the study is anchored on four theories: Mannheim's Generational Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Leader-Member Exchange Theory. However, the theoretical lens section explicitly says that the study is grounded in two key theoretical frameworks, Mannheim and Homans, and only these two are developed in that section. Later, Transformational Leadership and LMX are repeatedly used to interpret the findings. This makes it unclear whether these latter theories are genuine analytical frameworks



established before analysis or were introduced afterward because they conveniently fit the themes. This is not only presentation problem; it affects the logic of the interpretation. The authors should decide exactly which theories guided the study and maintain the same theoretical architecture from the objectives, methods, analysis, results, and conclusions.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
	Accept the manuscript for publication.
/	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

SECOND ROUND

<u>Decision</u>	<u>Editor</u>	<u>Reviewer 1</u>	<u>Reviewer 2</u>
Accept the manuscript for publication.	/	/	/
Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.			
Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.			