

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN YOUNG PEOPLE: A
PSYCHOANALYTICAL ANALYSIS OF UNCONSCIOUS DYNAMICS AND
CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES**

**O DESENVOLVIMENTO DE COMPETÊNCIAS DE LIDERANÇA EM JOVENS: UMA
ANÁLISE PSICANALÍTICA DAS DINÂMICAS INCONSCIENTES E DESAFIOS
CONTEMPORÂNEOS**

**EL DESARROLLO DE LA CAPACIDAD DE LIDERAZGO EN LOS JÓVENES: UN
ANÁLISIS PSICOANALÍTICO DE LAS DINÁMICAS INCONSCIENTES Y LOS DESAFÍOS
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ABSTRACT

The article proposes an integrative analysis of the development of youth leadership from a psychoanalytical perspective, considering the specific challenges faced by the new generations. Faced with a global scenario marked by intense connectivity, technological transformations and social instability, the importance of training leaders with emotional maturity, ethics and psychological resilience is highlighted. Psychoanalysis is presented as a valuable tool for understanding unconscious processes, identity conflicts and the formation of the self, which directly influence the exercise of leadership. The study aims to investigate the psychoanalytical bases related to leadership development, identify psychic competencies relevant to this process, analyze the difficulties faced by young people and explore intervention strategies. By considering the impact of social networks and technologies on the subjective and relational constitution of individuals, the article offers theoretical and practical contributions for professionals involved in training young leaders.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis; Youth leadership; Emotional development.

RESUMO

O artigo propõe uma análise integrativa do desenvolvimento da liderança juvenil a partir da perspectiva psicanalítica, considerando os desafios específicos enfrentados pelas novas gerações. Diante de um cenário global marcado por intensa conectividade, transformações tecnológicas e instabilidade social, destaca-se a importância de formar líderes com maturidade emocional, ética e resiliência psíquica. A psicanálise é apresentada como ferramenta valiosa para compreender os processos inconscientes, os conflitos identitários e a formação do self que influenciam diretamente o exercício da liderança. O estudo tem como objetivos investigar as bases psicanalíticas relacionadas ao desenvolvimento da liderança, identificar competências psíquicas relevantes para esse processo, analisar as dificuldades enfrentadas pelos jovens e explorar estratégias de intervenção. Ao considerar o impacto das redes sociais e das tecnologias na constituição subjetiva e relacional dos indivíduos, o artigo oferece contribuições teóricas e práticas para profissionais envolvidos na formação de jovens líderes.

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Palavras-chave: Psicanálise; Liderança juvenil; Desenvolvimento emocional.

RESUMEN

El artículo propone un análisis integrador del desarrollo del liderazgo juvenil desde una perspectiva psicoanalítica, considerando los retos específicos a los que se enfrentan las nuevas generaciones. Ante un escenario global marcado por una intensa conectividad, transformaciones tecnológicas e inestabilidad social, se destaca la importancia de formar líderes con madurez emocional, ética y resiliencia psicológica. El psicoanálisis se presenta como una valiosa herramienta para comprender los procesos inconscientes, los conflictos de identidad y la formación del yo, que influyen directamente en el ejercicio del liderazgo. El estudio pretende investigar las bases psicoanalíticas relacionadas con el desarrollo del liderazgo, identificar las competencias psíquicas relevantes para este proceso, analizar las dificultades a las que se enfrentan los jóvenes y explorar estrategias de intervención. Al considerar el impacto de las redes sociales y las tecnologías en la constitución subjetiva y relacional de los individuos, el artículo ofrece contribuciones teóricas y prácticas para los profesionales implicados en la formación de jóvenes líderes.

Palabras clave: Psicoanálisis; Liderazgo juvenil; Desarrollo emocional.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP: AN INTEGRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Fostering leadership skills in young individuals is a growing imperative in the complex fabric of contemporary society. As global interconnectedness thickens and socio-cultural challenges become more intricate, the demand for leaders who demonstrate effectiveness, ethical acuity, and psychic resilience takes on undeniable preeminence. This study proposes to address this crucial question through a psychoanalytic lens, exploring how the theoretical constructs and conceptual frameworks of psychoanalysis can uniquely elucidate the multifaceted process of leadership development, as well as the idiosyncratic challenges that are imposed on the current generation.

The intrinsic relevance of this thematic construct unfolds in multiple facets. Primarily, the early acquisition of leadership skills has the potential to significantly impact the personal success path and the professional trajectory of the subjects. In addition, the formation of a corpus of competent and ethically oriented leaders is a *sine qua non* condition for the prosperity and well-being of collectivities and social structures. Nevertheless, the contemporary generational cohort is confronted with a set of unique adversities that can, in a deleterious way, influence the maturation of these crucial skills.

The problem that catalyzes the present investigation emerges from the clinical and social observation that, despite the vast profusion of information and the multiple opportunities that present themselves to today's young people, many seem to struggle with basic issues of self-identity, oscillations in self-esteem and a notable difficulty in the ability to manage adversities. The recrudescence of narcissistic traits, a marked egoic fragility, generalized anxiety and feelings of insecurity are phenomena frequently outlined in the clinic and in the specialized literature. In addition, the impact of social networks and technological ubiquity in the construction of identity and complex interpersonal relationships establishes new paradigms that challenge the emergence of authentic and effective leaders.

Psychoanalysis offers a distinct and invaluable interpretive prism for understanding and intervening on these challenges. As elucidated by Zimmerman (2010, p. 45), "psychoanalysis provides a deep understanding of the unconscious processes that shape behavior and human relationships, including those that manifest themselves in the context of leadership". By peering into unconscious dynamics, early relational configurations, and the intricate ontogenesis of the self, psychoanalysis has the ability to offer profound insights into how to nurture leadership latencies from the earliest stages of life.

The general objective of this study is to proceed to the analysis, from a rigorous psychoanalytic perspective, of the mechanisms by which leadership competencies can be developed in

The specific objectives outlined for this study are:

- To investigate the core psychoanalytic concepts and theories that correlate with leadership development in young subjects.
- To identify the leadership competencies considered most pertinent for the healthy psychic development of young people, according to psychoanalytic epistemology. To analyze the specific difficulties that the current generation faces, under the aegis of the psychoanalytic perspective, with regard to the formation and maturation of leadership skills.
- Explore psychoanalytic strategies and interventions that can serve as a subsidy in the process of developing these skills.
- To evaluate the multifaceted impact of social networks and technological innovations on the configuration of leadership skills in young people, through a psychoanalytic approach.

Through this systematic investigation, it is intended to contribute to a more in-depth elucidation of the processes involved in the genesis of leadership in young people, and to provide insights for educators, parents, psychologists and other professionals engaged in the formation of the next generation of leaders.

The present research is justified by the pressing need to understand and address the idiosyncratic challenges that today's generation faces in cultivating leadership skills. In a global scenario characterized by dizzying technological transformations, economic instability and profound social reconfigurations, it is crucial to empower young people with the repertoire of skills indispensable for effective and ethically based leadership.

As Outeiral (2007, p. 78) points out, "the development of leadership skills is intrinsically intertwined with emotional development and the consolidation of identity, processes that psychoanalysis has exhaustively scrutinized". This perspective underlines the imperative of a holistic approach in the training process of leaders, which contemplates not only technical skills, but also emotional and psychological maturation.

The influence of social networks and technology on the construction of identity and on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships is another crucial vector that this study proposes to explore. As Nicolaci-da-Costa (2005, p. 51) points out, "the new communication platforms are profoundly reconfiguring the way young people relate to themselves and to others, which

has significant implications for the development of social skills and, consequently, for leadership".

By focusing on these themes, the present study aims not only to enrich the theoretical body of knowledge about leadership development, but also to offer practical guidelines for educators, parents, psychologists and other professionals involved in the monitoring of the next cohort of leaders. Ultimately, the purpose is to contribute to the development of more effective and holistic approaches to nurture leadership skills in young people, considering the unique challenges that challenge them in the contemporary scenario. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the formation of leaders who stand out for their resilience, ethical integrity, and the ability to proficiently navigate the complexities of the twenty-first century.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP

The psychoanalytic discipline, from its foundations conceived by Freud to the significant later elaborations of Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott, offers a wealth of insights of heuristic value for the elucidation of the process of development of leadership competencies in young subjects. This section will be dedicated to exploring the contributions of these three pillars of psychoanalytic theory, weaving an integration of their perspectives with a view to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in question.

2.1.1 Freud and the Development of the Ego and the Superego in the Genesis of Leadership

Sigmund Freud, the mentor of psychoanalysis, although he did not dedicate himself directly to the theme of leadership in his initial formulations, bequeathed a fundamental theoretical framework that allows us to infer the mechanisms by which leadership capacities emerge and are consolidated. His conceptions of the tripartite structure of the psyche – Id, Ego and Superego – prove to be indispensable for such an understanding.

In the work "The Ego and the Id" (1923/1996), Freud introduces the structural model of the mind, in which the Ego, in particular, plays a central role in the modulation of personality and, by extension, in the development of leadership skills. Freud asserts that "the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions" (p. 39). This intrinsic capacity of the Ego to act as a mediator between the instinctual pressures arising from the Id and the peremptory demands of external reality is axiomatic for the exercise of effective leadership. The ability to synthesize and rationalize

impulses, directing them towards constructive and realistic action, is configured as a pillar of the leader's authority and decision.

The Superego, in turn, constitutes the psychic instance that incorporates the moral precepts, the ideals of the self and the codes of conduct introjected from the sociocultural universe. Freud observes that "the superego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful the Oedipus complex and the faster it succumbs to repression, the more severe will be the domination of the superego over the ego" (1923/1996, p. 47). This introjection of social norms and values, built on the identifications with parental and authority figures, is crucial for the formation of a leader ethically marked and imbued with a sense of social responsibility. Leadership, from this point of view, transcends mere technical management, taking root in the moral structure of the individual.

In addition, Freud emphasizes the relevance of the Oedipus complex in the psychosexual development and psychic structuring of the subject, stating that "the Oedipus complex reveals its importance as the central phenomenon of the sexual period of early childhood" (1923/1996, p. 46). A successful resolution of this Oedipal phase, which involves overcoming ambivalences and internalizing boundaries and hierarchies, can be interpreted as a substantial precursor to the development of leadership skills, as it entails navigating complex interpersonal relationships and internalizing representations of authority figures.

In "The Discontent in Civilization" (2010, p. 57), Freud deepens his exploration of the dialectical tensions between the individual and the demands of culture and society, a theme of centrality for the elucidation of the phenomenon of leadership. He observes that "the development of civilization imposes restrictions on freedom, and justice demands that no one should escape these restrictions." This formulation resonates deeply with the dilemmas faced by leaders, who need to balance the idiosyncratic needs and collective desires of their subordinates with the imposing demands of social and organizational reality. The ability to deal with instinctual renunciation and to guide the group towards socially acceptable goals is a hallmark of the mature leader.

2.1.2 Melanie Klein and the Cruciality of Early Object Relations in Leadership Formation

Melanie Klein, with her innovative approach centered on early object relationships, offers a complementary and intrinsically enriching perspective for the intelligibility of leadership development. His contributions shift the focus to the more archaic dynamics of the psyche, establishing connections between childhood experiences and future relationship and management capacity.

In "The Psychoanalysis of Children" (1932/1997), Klein emphatically emphasizes the importance of primary object relations in the constitution of personality. She postulates that "the child establishes object relations from birth, the first object being the mother's breast" (p. 70). These original interactions, which involve fantasies and intense projections, form the fundamental matrix for the construction of all the individual's future relationships, including those established in the scope of leadership. The quality of these first interactions with the primary object (usually the mother or caregiver) influences the future leader's ability to bond, trust, and manage ambivalence in interpersonal relationships.

Klein introduces the concepts of schizo-paranoid position and depressive position, which prove to be crucial for the apprehension of emotional development and, by extension, the maturity necessary for leadership. She elucidates that "in the paranoid schizo-position, persecutory anxiety and the mechanisms of splitting the object into 'good' and 'bad' predominate. In the depressive position, there is an integration of the good and bad aspects of the object, accompanied by guilt and reparation" (1997, p. 120). The ability to integrate ambivalence, to endure the anxiety arising from the totality of the object and to deal with feelings of guilt and reparation is fundamental for a leadership that intends to be mature, capable of recognizing the complexity of the subordinates and of itself, and of promoting cohesion.

In "Envy and Gratitude" (1957/1991), Klein points out that "gratitude has its roots in the capacity to love and is essential for the establishment of good object relationships" (p. 242). The ability to experience and express gratitude, which springs from a genuine recognition of the good object, can be interpreted as an essential and ethical quality for the leader, since it promotes mutual recognition, strengthens group bonds and establishes a work environment based on reciprocity and appreciation.

On the other hand, the theorist also explores the pernicious role of envy in egoic development, noting that "excessive envy interferes with the development of the ego, disturbing the introjection of the good object and undermining the capacity to enjoy" (1991, p. 260). This observation acquires particular relevance for understanding the difficulties faced by developing leaders, who may be challenged by feelings of rivalry, jealousy or envy towards authority figures, peers or even subordinates. The constructive management of envy, both one's own and that of others, is a significant psychological challenge for the consolidation of an integrative leadership.

2.1.3 Winnicott and the Concept of "Potential Space" for Leadership Development

Donald Winnicott, with his emphatic appreciation of the enabling environment and the introduction of the concept of potential space, offers invaluable insights for understanding the process of maturation of leadership competencies. His formulations shift the focus to the environmental conditions that favor the emergence of creativity and authenticity in the individual.

Winnicott (1975, p. 142) introduces the innovative concept of potential space, asserting that "the potential space between the baby and the mother, between the child and the family, between the individual and society or the world, depends on the experience that leads to trust". This intersubjective locus, a domain of creativity and transitionality, can be conceived as the fertile ground where leadership skills can blossom. It is in this space that the subject allows himself to safely explore new roles, responsibilities and ideals, without the requirement of a rigid adaptation to external reality, but with the possibility of creating and recreating the world and himself.

Winnicott also emphasizes the cruciality of play in the process of psychic development, noting that "it is in play, and only in play, that the individual, child or adult, can be creative and use his integral personality: and it is only by being creative that the individual discovers the self" (1975, p. 80). This perspective suggests that creativity, cognitive flexibility and the ability to experiment and find innovative solutions, inherent to play, are fundamental elements for the development of authentic leaders, capable of innovation and genuine engagement. Leadership, therefore, is not a mere performance, but an expression of the true self.

Winnicott's construct of the "good enough mother" also carries profound implications for leadership dynamics. He defines the good enough mother as "the one who makes an active adaptation to the baby's needs, an adaptation that gradually decreases, according to the baby's increasing capacity to assess the failure of the adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration" (1975, p. 25). This concept can be analogously transposed to the field of leadership, suggesting that effective leaders should be able to provide the psychological holding and necessary support to their subordinates, but, at the same time, allow them to develop their own resilience, autonomy and ability to deal with frustrations and challenges. The "good enough" leader does not overprotect, but offers a safe environment for growth.

Winnicott (1990, p. 153) emphasizes that "the continuity of being is the basis of the ego's strength, while every failure in this continuity constitutes a weakening of the ego or a psychosis". This formulation underscores the relevance of a consistent, reliable, and predictable environment for the consolidation of resilient and emotionally balanced leaders.

A disintegrated or fragmented self can hardly sustain the complex psychic load required by leadership.

2.2 INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP

The integration of Freud's, Klein's and Winnicott's theories allows us to build a multifaceted understanding of how leadership competencies are generated and developed.

Freudian psychoanalysis, with its elucidation of the development of the Ego and the Superego, provides the theoretical basis for apprehending how future leaders acquire the ability to mediate between internal impulses and the demands of external reality, as well as internalize sociocultural values and norms. Klein's emphasis on early object relationships and primary emotional dynamics helps us understand how foundational experiences shape an individual's ability to establish healthy interpersonal relationships, manage complex affects such as envy and gratitude, and process ambivalence. Finally, Winnicott's concepts of potential space, play, and enabling environment offer crucial insights into how to instantiate the ideal conditions for the emergence of leaders who excel in creativity, authenticity, and emotional balance.

Converging, these theoretical perspectives suggest that the development of leadership competencies is a process of intricate complexity, which begins in the early years of childhood and unfolds throughout the life cycle. This process involves the maturation of a robust Ego and an ethically structured Superego, the ability to establish and maintain quality object relationships, the constructive management of ambivalent emotions, and the opportunity to explore and consolidate the authentic self in an environment that is both safe and enabling.

This psychoanalytic understanding of leadership development has significant implications for the way we conceive and support the training of future leaders. She points to the importance of family and educational settings that actively promote healthy emotional development, that offer spaces conducive to creative exploration and experimentation, and that provide leadership models that are guided by ethics, responsibility, and authenticity.

As we continue to research the development of leadership skills in young people, these psychoanalytic perspectives provide a fruitful theoretical basis for future research and the design of practical interventions. They remind us that leadership transcends the mere acquisition of technical skills or the accumulation of knowledge; It is deeply rooted in emotional ontogenesis and relational experiences that begin from the earliest days of existence.

Deepening the analysis of psychoanalytic theories on leadership, it is imperative to explore how these perspectives apply more specifically to the development of leadership skills in young people.

2.2.1 Freud and the Development of the Ego and the Superego in the Configuration of Leaders

The Freudian theory of the development of the Ego and the Superego offers valuable subsidies for the understanding of how the foundational structures of leadership are sedimented during childhood and adolescence.

The Ego, as a mediating instance between the injunctions of the Id and the constraints of external reality, is of primary importance for the emergence of leadership capacities. According to Freud (2011, p. 30), "the ego represents what can be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions". This ability to mediate, which implies the ability to postpone immediate gratification for the sake of long-term goals and to integrate diverse information to make thoughtful decisions, is critical for leaders who need to balance the needs and desires of their subordinates with the imposing realities and inherent limitations of the context.

The maturation of the Superego, in turn, is a *sine qua non* condition for the formation of leaders who operate under an ethical imperative and with a sense of social responsibility. Freud (1923/1996) observes that "the superego retains the character of the father, while the more powerful.

The sooner Oedipus succumbs to repression, the more severe will be the domination of the superego over the ego" (p. 47). This formulation suggests that early experiences with authority figures, and the way they are internalized, have a decisive impact on the consolidation of moral and ethical values that will guide the leader in his future praxis. The severity or flexibility of the Superego will shape the leadership style, influencing the capacity for self-criticism, the search for perfection and the relationship with authority.

Additionally, the Freudian concept of sublimation, thoroughly discussed in "The Discontent in Civilization" (1930/1996), offers a perspective on how instinctual drive energies can be transmuted and channeled into socially valued and culturally productive activities, including, most prominently, leadership. Freud states that "the sublimation of instinct constitutes a particularly evident aspect of cultural development; it is this which makes it possible for higher psychic activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important role in civilized life" (p. 103). This conception indicates that the development of leadership competencies can be apprehended as a form of sublimation, where psychic

impulses and energies are directed to constructive and beneficially oriented enterprises towards the collective.

2.2.2 Melanie Klein and Object Relations in the Genesis of Leaders

Klein's theory of early object relations offers a complementary and profound perspective on the development of leadership competencies, emphasizing the affective and relational dimension.

Klein (1991, p. 242) points out that "gratitude has its roots in the capacity to love and is essential for the establishment of good object relationships". These primary object relations, marked by the dynamics between the self and the first objects (partial or total), constitute the fundamental matrix for all future interactions, including those that take place in the complex field of leadership. The quality of these initial interactions can decisively influence a future leader's ability to build positive connections, inspire trust in subordinates, and orchestrate intricate interpersonal relationships. The ability to love and feel gratitude for what is received and for the efforts of others is a pillar for building alliances and maintaining cohesive teams.

The Kleinian constructs of the schizo-paranoid position and the depressive position also have significant implications for the maturation of leadership. Klein (1997) explains that "in the paranoid schizo-position, persecutory anxiety and splitting mechanisms predominate, which cleave the object into good and bad parts, avoiding ambivalence. In the depressive position, in turn, there is a progressive integration of the good and bad aspects of the object and the self, accompanied by a feeling of guilt and a tendency to repair" (p. 120). A leader's ability to integrate

and tolerating ambivalence (of oneself and others), of enduring the anxiety inherent in the perception of the total object (with its positive and negative qualities) and of undertaking reparative actions after conflicts or failures, is crucial for a leadership that intends to be mature, realistic and effective.

In "Envy and Gratitude" (1957/1991), Klein thoroughly explores how these fundamental feelings permeate and influence emotional development. She reiterates that "gratitude has its roots in the capacity to love and is essential for the establishment of good object relationships" (p. 242). The ability to experience and express gratitude, which manifests as recognition of kindness and help received, can be discerned as an intrinsic and imperative quality of leadership, fostering a positive, motivating, and constructive reciprocity work environment.

On the other hand, Klein (1991) warns that "excessive envy interferes in a deleterious way in the development of the ego, disturbing the introjection of the good object and undermining the ability to enjoy and benefit from the offers of the other" (p. 260). This observation points to the management of envy as a pressing psychological challenge in the process of developing leaders, especially in environments characterized by intense competitiveness. A leader who cannot deal with his own envy or the envy of his subordinates can sabotage projects, relationships, and the growth of the group.

2.2.3 Winnicott and the Potential Space in Leadership Development

Winnicott, with his exploration of potential space and the enabling environment, provides valuable insights into the conditions that are conducive to the flourishing of leadership competencies.

Winnicott (1971/1975) introduces the concept of potential space, asserting that "the potential space between the baby and the mother, between the child and the family, between the individual and society or the world, depends on the experience that leads to trust" (p. 142). This transitional locus, which lies between internal and external reality, can be conceived as the fertile field where leadership skills can be fully developed. It is in this space that the subject has the psychological freedom to safely explore new roles, experiment with responsibilities and manifest creativity, without the rigidity of external imposition, but with the support of a reliable environment.

Winnicott's emphasis on playing as a fundamental element for psychic development acquires particular relevance for the formation of leaders. He observes that "it is in play, and only in play, that the individual, child or adult, can be creative and use his integral personality: and it is only by being creative that the individual discovers the self" (1975, p. 80). This perspective suggests that contexts that stimulate creativity, cognitive flexibility, the ability to experiment with new solutions, and playful expression are crucial for the development of leaders who are distinguished by innovation, authenticity, and the capacity for genuine engagement. Leadership, from this perspective, is not merely pragmatic, but a manifestation of the integrity of the self.

2.3 INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVES FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

By integrating the perspectives of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and Donald Winnicott, it is possible to develop a richer, more nuanced, and multifaceted understanding of the development of leadership competencies in young people.

Ego Development and Leadership Ethics: Freud reminds us of the imperative of building a robust Ego, capable of effectively mediating between internal drive pressures and the demands of external reality, and of consolidating a Superego that incorporates a solid framework of ethical values. This implies that leadership development programs for young people should not be restricted to teaching merely technical skills, but should prioritize character maturation, moral judgment, and ethically based decision-making.

Object Relations and Emotional Intelligence: Kleinian contributions on early object relations and the management of complex emotions such as envy and gratitude are crucial for the development of emotional intelligence in the leader. This means that leadership development should include a substantial focus on cultivating interpersonal skills, empathy, and emotional self-awareness, enabling the young person to navigate the complex affective dynamics present in any group.

Potential Space and Innovative Creativity: Winnicott's theory of potential space and the centrality of play suggests that environments that promote safe exploration, inherent creativity, and authentic expression are crucial for the development of leaders with the capacity for innovation. This indicates that youth leadership programs should incorporate elements of playfulness, experimentation, and creative expression, allowing innovation to emerge from a more integrated self.

Enabling Environment for Growth: The perspectives of the three theorists converge in emphasizing the importance of a holding and supportive environment for healthy psychic development. This implies that leadership development in young people should not be seen as an exclusively individual process, but should actively involve the family environment, the context.

2.4 DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

2.4.1 The Formation of the Self and the Capacity for Leadership

The formation of the self is a core process in the development of leadership skills in young people. This process, intrinsically linked to the ability to lead, is influenced by a myriad of psychological and social factors, as elucidated by several exponents of psychoanalytic theory.

Donald Winnicott, in his seminal work "Playing and Reality" (1971/1975), introduces the constructs of the "true self" and the "false self", which prove to be crucial for the intelligibility of authenticity in the exercise of leadership. Winnicott asserts that "the true self is the inherited potential that is experiencing the continuity of existence, and acquiring in its own way and at its own pace a personal psychic reality and a personal bodily scheme" (p.

136). This notion indicates that genuine and authentic leadership emerges when the individual is able to operate from his true self, maintaining an intrinsic congruence between his actions, his beliefs, and his inner identity. The leader's performance, in this light, is not a mere façade, but an emanation of his essence.

Complementing this perspective, Heinz Kohut, in his work "The Restoration of the Self" (1977/1988), emphasizes the paramount importance of developing a cohesive self for the consolidation of leaders. Kohut argues that "a cohesive self is the basis for stable self-esteem, healthy ambition, and genuinely empathetic interpersonal relationships" (p. 185). This view is of particular relevance to leadership development, as it suggests that the ability to lead effectively is intrinsically linked to the solidity, integration, and vitality of the structure of the self. A fragmented or deficient self will hardly sustain the burden of leadership.

Erik Erikson, in "Identity, Youth and Crisis" (1968/1976), offers a developmental approach to the formation of the self and its deep relationship with leadership.

for effective leadership". This ability to mentalize, which allows the leader to infer and empathize with the intentions and emotions of the subordinates, is closely linked to the formation of a cohesive self and the ability to empathize projection, both crucial for transformative leadership.

2.4.2 The Imperative of Transference and Countertransference in Leadership Development

The constructs of transference and countertransference, which originated in the context of the psychoanalytic clinic, have major implications for the understanding and promotion of the development of leaders.

Sigmund Freud, in "The Dynamics of Transference" (1912/1996), conceptualized transference as "the unconscious tendency to re-edit, in the present situation, patterns of past relationships, especially those with parental or authority figures" (p. 109). In the leadership scenario, this implies that the subordinates, often unconsciously, project on their leaders expectations, fantasies and feelings that were formed from past experiences with authority figures or primary caregivers. These projections can be of idealization, distrust, rivalry or dependence.

Otto Kernberg, in "Ideology, Conflict and Leadership in Groups and Organizations" (1998), expands this conception to the organizational context, arguing that "transference in leadership environments can manifest itself as excessive idealizations of the leader, which elevate him to an almost omnipotent status, or as unjustified devaluations, which depreciate him and sabotage his authority" (p. 78). Understanding and, above all, managing these

complex transference dynamics is crucial for the practice of effective leaders, who need to discern between the real and the fantasized in group interactions.

Countertransference, in turn, refers to the emotional reactions, conscious and unconscious, of the leader to his subordinates and to their transferences. As Eizirik et al. (2015, p. 156) observe, "countertransference, when properly understood and elaborated, can serve as a valuable diagnostic tool to decipher interpersonal and group dynamics (countertransference) is crucial for leadership in contexts of change and uncertainty.

Zimerman (2004) adds that "the awareness of countertransference can help leaders to avoid impulsive reactions, to transcend unconscious prejudices and to make decisions that are more thoughtful, empathetic and aligned with the real needs of the group" (p. 472). This suggests that the development of leadership competencies must transcend the learning of technical skills, encompassing a deep understanding of the unconscious psychological dynamics that permeate the relationships between leader and subordinates.

Winnicott (1965/1990), in "The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment", offers an additional perspective with his concept of "holding". He posits that "just as a good enough mother provides a psychological and environmental holding for her baby, an effective leader must be able to contain the anxieties, anxieties of annihilation, and projections of his followers, offering a safe space for emotional expression and processing" (p. 44). This holding capacity can be understood as a highly developed form of transference and countertransference management in the context of leadership, allowing the group to feel safe to explore and develop its potential.

Bion (1961/1975), in "Experiences with Groups", extends this idea to the group context, proposing that "the leader must function as a container for the projections and anxieties of the group, transforming them from raw states (beta elements) into elaboratable thoughts (alpha elements) that the group can digest and use for growth" (p. 140). This function of containment, which implies a psychic ability to endure and metabolize the pain and confusion of the group, is essential for the development of leaders able to navigate the emotional complexities and unconscious impasses of groups and organizations.

The current generation is faced with a set of unique challenges in the process of developing leadership skills, many of which are closely correlated with the recrudescence of narcissistic traits and the observable fragility of the Ego. Such phenomena have been the subject of extensive discussions in the contemporary psychoanalytic literature and have significant implications for the genesis of leaders.

Lasch (1983) postulates that "contemporary society, in its incessant search for immediate gratification and self-affirmation, fosters a narcissism that weakens the individual's

ability to confront frustrations, tolerate adversity and persist in the face of obstacles" (p. 45). This finding is of particular relevance for leadership development, as the ability to face setbacks, deal with failure, and persist in pursuing goals is crucial for leaders who aspire to effectiveness and resilience.

Heinz Kohut (1988) offers a complementary perspective on narcissism, distinguishing between its pathological manifestations and healthy ones. Kohut argues that "healthy narcissism, which manifests as self-esteem, self-confidence, and constructive ambition, is essential to the vitality of the self; however, when narcissism is excessive, pathologically grandiose, or chronically unresolved, it can lead to a structure of the self permeated by fragility, vulnerable to any criticism or disappointment" (p. 187). This view suggests that the development of leaders should include a focus on cultivating a functional and healthy narcissism, which promotes self-confidence and initiative without derailing into arrogance, pathological grandiosity, or the inability to empathize.

Otto Kernberg, in his work "Severe Personality Disorders" (1984), deepens the discussion on the implications of pathological narcissism for interpersonal relationships and for the exercise of leadership. Kernberg observes that "individuals with pathological narcissism tend to exploit others as mere extensions of themselves, disregarding their subjectivities, and have a marked difficulty in establishing genuinely empathetic, reciprocal, and long-term relationships" (p. 264). This inclination can prove particularly problematic in the context of leadership, where the ability to empathize, build authentic bonds, and inspire collaboration are crucial characteristics for group cohesion and success.

Ego fragility, closely correlated with pathological narcissism, emerges as another significant challenge facing the current generation. Oliveira (2017), in his study on narcissism and fragility of the Ego in the contemporary generation, observes that "the fragility of the Ego is exacerbated by the constant and compulsive need for external validation, a phenomenon widely promoted by social networks, with their culture of 'likes', 'shares' and 'followers', which create

Bauman (2003), in "Liquid Modernity", offers a sociological perspective complementary to this fragility. He argues that "the fluidity and ephemerality of social relations and identities in contemporary society contribute to a generalized sense of insecurity, vulnerability, and, consequently, egoic fragility" (p. 39). This social "liquidity" can make it difficult to build a stable, coherent and resilient sense of self, which is undeniably necessary for a leadership that intends to be effective and capable of offering holding in times of uncertainty.

3.2 ANXIETY AND INSECURITY IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY IN CONTEMPORARY YOUTH

Anxiety and insecurity represent prevalent affects in the current generation, often magnified by the social and economic pressures and volatility of the modern world. Such affective states can have a considerable impact on the development of leadership skills. Sigmund Freud, in his theorizations about anguish, provides a solid theoretical basis for understanding this affect. Freud (2014) argues that "anxiety is an inherent reaction to danger, whether it is of a real and external nature or of internal and fantasized origin" (p. 132). In the context of leadership development, this anxiety can manifest as a paralyzing fear of failure, an insecurity about one's abilities, or a difficulty in coping with the

responsibility inherent in the leadership position.

Beck (2013), an exponent of cognitive therapy, in "Anxiety and Phobias", points out that "anxiety, although it is an adaptive response to the uncertainties of modern life, can acquire a pathological character when the individual is unable to develop effective and adaptive coping and emotional regulation mechanisms" (p. 67). For leaders in the process of development, the ability to manage their own and group anxiety, and to build psychic resilience, is of paramount importance for maintaining functionality and decision-making.

Silva (2019), in his study on anxiety in youth, observes that "insecurity in the face of adversity is amplified by the lack of resilience and persistent dependence on external validation, which hinders the ability to face challenges autonomously and proactively" (p. 89). This observation underlines the importance of fostering self autonomy and inner confidence in young leaders, enabling them to act from a secure base rather than an incessant search for approval.

Bion (1991) introduces the concept of "negative capacity", which is particularly relevant for the management of anxiety and insecurity in leadership contexts. Bion defines negative capacity as "the ability to tolerate uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and chaos, without an irritable and premature search for hard facts or a conclusive reason" (p. 125). This ability, which implies a tolerance for frustration and ambiguity, is crucial for leaders who often have to make decisions in situations of radical uncertainty, where the absence of certainty cannot paralyze action.

The development of leadership skills in the current generation is faced with significant challenges, which include the resurgence of narcissism, the fragility of the Ego, the prevalence of anxiety and insecurity in the face of a volatile world. Contemporary culture, characterized by the relentless search for external validation and ubiquitous exposure on social media, can exacerbate such trends.

To address these challenges effectively, it is crucial to develop leadership programs that:

- Promote the development of a narcissism of a healthy nature, which balances self-confidence and ambition with the capacity for empathy, genuine consideration for others and reciprocity in relationships.
- Strengthen the egoic structure and the ability to tolerate frustrations, setbacks and adversities, building psychological resilience.
- Develop anxiety management skills, both individual and group, and foster the construction of psychic resilience.
- Cultivate the Bionian "negative capacity", that is, the tolerance of uncertainty, ambiguity and non-knowledge.
- Establish holding and facilitating environments that promote the development of a self secure, cohesive and able to operate autonomously and authentically.

By addressing these multiple aspects, we can empower the current generation to develop the leadership competencies necessary to navigate the complexities of the contemporary world. Is

4 IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND TECHNOLOGY

4.1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE VIRTUAL

Social media and digital technologies have a multifaceted and significant impact on the construction of individual identity and, therefore, on the development of leadership skills in young people. Nicolaci-da-Costa (2005, p. 51) argues that "new communication technologies are profoundly reconfiguring the way young people relate to themselves and others, which has significant implications for the development of social and leadership skills". The constant exposure to idealized personas and an incessant search for social approval in the virtual environment can generate a deep dissonance between the authentic self and the presented self, culminating in an identity crisis where the individual struggles to reconcile his multiple and sometimes contradictory representations.

Almeida (2018), in a meticulous study on the influence of social networks on the construction of identity, concludes that "continuous exposure to excessively idealized and edited lives on digital platforms can induce chronic feelings of inadequacy, deleterious social comparisons, and low self-esteem, making it difficult to build a solid, authentic, and resilient identity" (p. 134). This phenomenon has significant implications for the development of leaders, as authenticity, self-confidence, and stable self-esteem are crucial characteristics for

the exercise of effective and inspiring leadership. A leader who operates from a false self or a fragile identity will hardly be able to inspire trust and loyalty.

Costa (2020) observes that "the superficiality and ephemerality of online interactions, often reduced to mere 'likes' or concise comments, can induce a paradoxical feeling of isolation and emotional disconnection, even when the individual is constantly hyperconnected" (p. 78). This superficiality in digital relationships can hinder the development of interpersonal skills essential for leadership, such as the capacity for deep empathy, active listening, non-verbal communication and the construction of lasting and meaningful affective bonds which are conveyed through social networks.

Bauman (2003), in "Liquid Modernity", offers a complementary sociological perspective on the construction of identity in the digital age. He argues that "identity in contemporary society is a predominantly individual task, a project in constant construction and reconstruction, malleable and susceptible to incessant social transformations" (p. 91). This fluidity and mutability in the construction of identity can present considerable challenges to the development of a coherent, stable and resilient sense of self, attributes undeniably necessary for sustaining effective leadership in a volatile world.

4.2 TRANSFORMATIONS IN STRUCTURES ORGANIZATIONAL AND RELATIONS OF WORK AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS

The profound and accelerated transformations in organizational structures and labor relations also present unique challenges for the development of leaders in the current generation. Bauman (2003), in "Liquid Modernity", argues that "work, which once constituted the safe axis around which self-definitions, identities and life projects were articulated, can no longer offer such stability" (p. 160). This fluidity, precariousness, and instability in the world of work can make it extremely difficult to develop a sense of purpose, belonging, and a solid professional identity, elements that are crucial for effective and engaged leaders. The absence of a secure foundation in the career can reverberate in the leader's ability to offer security to the group.

Antunes (2018, p. 27) argues that "the growing flexibility and instability inherent in new forms of work organization can erode character, making it difficult to sediment virtues such as loyalty, long-term commitment, and mutual trust". To address these psychosocial challenges, it is crucial to design and implement strategies that promote the development of psychic resilience, authenticity of the self, and the consolidation of robust interpersonal skills in young leaders. Some multifaceted approaches may include:

- Holistic Leadership Development Programs: It is imperative to create

concrete opportunities for young people to take on leadership roles in real and challenging contexts, allowing them to develop practical skills, test their authenticity and build a sense of personal effectiveness.

- **Psychoanalytically Oriented Mentoring and Coaching:** It is fruitful to establish mentoring and coaching programs that connect young leaders with experienced professionals and based on an understanding of psychoanalytic dynamics, offering personalized guidance, positive models of identification and a space for reflection on one's own unconscious dynamics.
- **Focus on Deep Emotional Intelligence:** It is imperative to develop programs that emphasize the paramount importance of emotional intelligence, which encompasses self-awareness, the ability to empathize, emotional regulation, and the ability to build and maintain healthy and meaningful interpersonal relationships.
- **Cultivating Psychic Resilience:** It is crucial to teach effective strategies to deal with failure, uncertainty, frustration, and constant change, elements that are inevitable in leadership and contemporary professional life. The ability to get back on your feet after adversity is a pillar of leadership.

The development of leadership skills in the current generation is faced with significant challenges, which include the pervasive impact of social networks and technology on the construction of identity, the superficiality of online relationships, and the dizzying transformations in organizational structures and work relationships. These challenges are magnified by the resurgence of narcissism, the fragility of the Ego, the prevalence of anxiety and insecurity that characterize many aspects of contemporary society.

However, these challenges also present unique opportunities for the emergence of more resilient, adaptable, and emotionally intelligent leaders. By consciously addressing these issues in leadership development programs, we can empower the next generation of leaders with the psychological and practical tools they need to effectively navigate the complex and volatile social and professional landscape of the twenty-first century.

4.3 THE ALIENATION AND SUPERFICIALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Parallel to the transformation in the construction of identity, social networks and technology have had a marked impact on the nature of interpersonal relationships, often culminating in feelings of alienation and an increase in superficiality in bonds.

Costa (2020, p. 78) observes that "the superficiality and depersonalization of online interactions can induce a paradoxical feeling of isolation and deep emotional disconnection, even when the individual is constantly hyperconnected and surrounded by a myriad of virtual 'friends'". This disconnect in the midst of hyperconnectivity can greatly hinder the development of interpersonal skills crucial to leadership, such as the ability to empathize genuinely, assertive communication, effective collaboration, and the building of bonds of trust and loyalty.

Bauman (2003) discusses the nature of relationships in liquid modernity, stating that "human relationships are increasingly characterized by fragility, ephemerality and transience, devoid of permanent ties" (p. 112). He introduces the concept of "liquid love" to describe the volatile and disposable nature of contemporary relationships, where commitment and depth give way to convenience and the search for immediate gratification. This fluidity in relationships can represent a significant challenge for the development of leaders, as the ability to build and maintain solid, authentic and long-term relationships is fundamental for a leadership that is intended to be effective and capable of inspiring and mobilizing a group.

Nicolaci-da-Costa (2005, p. 235) deepens this discussion, arguing that "we are witnessing a cultural transition from a culture that valued intimacy, depth, and authenticity in relationships to a culture that prioritizes simulation, the representation of idealized personas, and the performance of the self for the audience". This paradigmatic shift can negatively impact the development of leadership skills that intrinsically depend on authentic connections, genuine communication, and the ability to establish deep and meaningful bonds with those they lead hinder the development of a stable and integrated sense of self, and the building of deep and lasting interpersonal relationships. On the other hand, the digital environment provides unique opportunities for the exploration of identity in different contexts, the expansion of contact networks (networking) and the development of collaborative skills on a global scale.

To address these challenges effectively and to fully take advantage of the inherent opportunities, it is crucial to develop strategic approaches that:

- Promote critical digital literacy and reflective thinking about online interactions, empowering young people to discern and manage the risks and benefits of the virtual environment.
- Foster the development of an authentic and cohesive identity that can transcend idealized and often distorted representations of the online environment.

- Encourage a healthy balance between online and face-to-face offline interactions, aiming at the development of robust interpersonal skills and the ability to build meaningful relationships in both areas.
- Use digital platforms constructively and intentionally to develop leadership skills, such as collaborating on virtual projects, communicating effectively in multiple formats, and managing distributed teams.
- Address the risks of alienation, isolation, and social anomie, promoting the construction of meaningful and deep connections, both in virtual and real space.

By integrating these considerations into leadership development programs, we will be able to empower the next generation of leaders to effectively navigate the complex digital landscape, developing authentic identities and robust leadership skills that are relevant and effective in both the virtual and real worlds.

5 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS IN THE LIGHT OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

The analysis of contemporary challenges for the development of leadership in young people, compared with classical psychoanalytic theories and their reformulations, reveals an intrinsic interconnection between unconscious psychic dynamics and sociocultural phenomena.

Freud's theory of the development of the Ego and Superego provides valuable insights into how the foundations of leadership are laid in the early stages of life. The Ego's ability to mediate between the demands of the Id (impulses and desires) and the constraints of external reality is crucial for thoughtful decision-making and for regulating the leader's behavior. As Freud (1923/1996) asserts, "the ego represents what can be called reason and common sense, in contrast with the id, which contains the passions" (p. 39). This capacity for mediation, combined with an ethical and well-internalized Superego, is fundamental for leaders who need to balance the heterogeneous needs of their subordinates with the objective demands of the environment and with moral imperatives.

According to Klein, early object relationships offer an invaluable perspective on the development of interpersonal skills, which are crucial for effective leadership. Klein (1932/1997) emphasizes that "the child establishes object relations from birth, the first object being the mother's breast" (p. 70). These primary object relations, with their dynamics of introjection and projection, form the matrix for all future interactions, including leadership relations. The quality of these early interactions significantly shapes a future leader's ability

to establish authentic connections, to inspire trust, to manage ambivalence and interpersonal conflicts, and to foster group cohesion.

Winnicott's (1971/1975) concept of potential space provides insights into how to create the ideal conditions for the development of creative and authentic leaders. Winnicott asserts that "it is in play, and only in play, that the individual, child or adult, can be creative and use his integral personality: and it is only by being creative that the individual discovers the self" (p. 80). This perspective suggests that environments that encourage creativity, playful experimentation, and genuine expression of self are crucial for the development of leaders who are innovative, adaptable, and able to find original solutions to complex problems.

The resurgence of narcissism in contemporary society, as discussed by Lasch (1979) and Kohut (1971), presents significant challenges for the development of leaders. Lasch (1983) argues that "contemporary society promotes a narcissism that weakens the individual's ability to deal with frustrations, to tolerate waiting and to persist in the face of adversity, fostering an excessive dependence on the admiration of others" (p. 45). This suggests that the development of leaders should include a focus on cultivating a healthy narcissism that promotes self-confidence without incurring pathological grandiosity, arrogance, or fragility in the face of criticism. The prevalence of anxiety and insecurity in the current generation, as observed by Beck (2013)

and Silva (2019), underlines the pressing need to foster psychic resilience in future leaders. Beck (2013) states that "anxiety, although it is a natural response to the uncertainties of modern life, can become pathological when the individual is unable to develop effective coping and emotional regulation mechanisms" (p. 67). This implies that leadership development must integrate strategies for managing anxiety (own and group) and building resilience, enabling the leader to operate in environments of high uncertainty.

The ubiquitous impact of social networks and technology on the construction of identity and interpersonal relationships, as detailed by Almeida (2018), presents idiosyncratic challenges for the leadership development. This suggests that leadership development should include a focus on building an authentic, resilient, and cohesive identity that can transcend the superficial representations and idealized performances of the online environment, allowing the leader to be genuine in multiple contexts.

These findings and their discussion in the light of the reviewed literature and psychoanalysis suggest that the development of leadership competencies in young people in the current era requires an intrinsically holistic approach, one that considers deep psychological development, emotional dynamics, relational processes, and social

configurations, as well as the unique challenges presented by contemporary society and the ubiquity of digital technology.

Effective leadership development programs, therefore, must address not only technical and management skills, but also the maturation of the Ego, the building of healthy and empathetic interpersonal relationships, the promotion of creativity and innovation, the cultivation of a healthy and adaptive narcissism, the development of psychic resilience in the face of adversity, and the construction of an authentic and integrated identity in an increasingly digital and volatile world.

5.1 CONCLUSION

The psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and Donald Winnicott offer an extraordinarily rich conceptual framework for in-depth understanding of the development of leadership competencies in young people. They remind us that leadership, at its deepest core, is not restricted to the mere acquisition of technical skills or the accumulation of pragmatic knowledge; It is intrinsically rooted in the subject's emotional development, complex early relational experiences, and the ability to navigate the intricate unconscious psychological dynamics.

By applying these psychoanalytic perspectives to the process of leadership development in young people, we can design and implement more holistic, integrative, and effective approaches that, in addition to cultivating practical and instrumental skills, promote the deep emotional development, ethical insight, and creativity indispensable for effective leadership in the complex and multifaceted landscape of the contemporary world.

This psychoanalytic understanding of leadership development has significant implications for educators, parents, and professionals engaged in the formation of future leaders. She points to the importance of creating environments that actively foster healthy emotional development, that offer abundant opportunities for authentic exploration and creative expression of the self, and that provide models of leadership identification that are guided by ethics, social responsibility, and personal integrity.

As we continue to explore the development of leadership skills in young people, these psychoanalytic perspectives offer a fruitful theoretical basis for future research and for the design of practical, clinically informed interventions. They invite us to consider not only what young leaders are capable of doing or accomplishing, but, crucially, who they are becoming as unique individuals and as interconnected members of their communities.

The formation of the self and the development of leadership capacity are intrinsically interconnected and mutually influential processes. A cohesive, authentic, and resilient self

provides the fundamental substrate for effective leadership, while understanding and appropriately handling the dynamics of transference and countertransference enable leaders to proficiently navigate the complexities inherent in interpersonal and group relationships, transforming tensions into opportunities for growth.

To develop leadership competencies in young people, it is crucial to establish environments that foster the consolidation of an authentic and cohesive self, while providing opportunities for experiential understanding and practice of handling transferential and countertransferential dynamics. This may involve implementing educational programs that prioritize in-depth self-knowledge, critical reflection on the complexities of interpersonal relationships, and offering practical leadership experiences in supervised and psychologically safe environments.

As today's generation is faced with unique challenges, including the pervasive influence of digital technology and social media, it becomes even more imperative to equip young leaders with the psychological tools they need to navigate these complexities. The psychoanalytic understanding of the development of the self and the dynamics of transference and countertransference offers valuable and indispensable insights for this process, allowing the cultivation of more resilient, empathetic, authentic, and effective leaders for the future.

As robust suggestions for future research in the field, we could propose:

- **Multigenerational Longitudinal Investigations:** A longitudinal study that follows the development of leadership competencies from childhood to adulthood, considering the specific psychosocial challenges of each stage of development and adaptive and maladaptive responses.
- **Cross-Cultural Leadership Studies:** In-depth research on how cultural differences and sociopolitical contexts influence the development of leadership competencies and the manifestation of the psychopathological challenges identified in this study (e.g., narcissism, anxiety) in diverse societies countertransferentials in cyberspace.

In short, developing leadership skills in young people in today's era requires a deep understanding of the underlying psychological processes and idiosyncratic challenges faced by this generational cohort. By integrating insights from psychoanalysis with an accurate understanding of contemporary challenges, we can develop more effective, ethical, and holistic approaches to nurturing the next generation of leaders. It is crucial that we continue to research incessantly, adapt our pedagogical and therapeutic strategies, and create environments that support the healthy and integral development of young leaders,



empowering them to navigate with success and integrity in the complex and dynamic landscape of the twenty-first century.

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