WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to provide a firsthand understanding about work engagement level among Millennials, also known as Generation Y, currently working in Indian workforce mainly in Non-IT sectors using descriptive research design. Primary data is collected from 397 respondents using Utretch Work Engagement Scale (UWES). After ensuring the reliability of data, descriptive statistics is used to analyze the data and chi-square test is used to identify the association between variables. The result of the study reported that Millennials score higher on Dedication and lower on Vigor subscales of UWES. Downward trend in work engagement is also observed for sub-generations. They feel enthusiastic about their job, feel proud about the work they do, feel happy when they work intensely, can be easily detached from the job, don't get carried away by the job and they feel less energy at work. The study provides useful insights to HR Professionals, Line Managers / Management for aligning their work related processes and policies for attracting and retaining Millennial generation.

Keywords : Millennial, Generation Y, UWES, Work Engagement, Employee Engagement

1. Introduction

The Millennial generation, also known as Generation Y (born between 1981and1995), is occupying today around 47% of the workforce in India[1]. This generation is not only emerging as a big cohort of the workforce but also as a generation different from the earlier generations called Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and Baby boomers (born between 1944 and 1964). Millennial generation requires our attention not only because of their numbers is increasing at workplace but also because they are different from other generations. Attraction and retention of best of the millennials is critical for any business to sustain and grow in future. Numerous studies have identified theircharacteristics which make them different from other generations but hardly any empirical research is available which provides their work engagement level. Employee engagement ranked sixth in the list of twenty three priorities for CHROs and improving it remains one of their most critical issues as per a report published by Corporate Executive Board. The importance of engagement has further increased because 46% variation in employee performance can be explained by engagement (The Corporate Executive Board Company, 2011). On the other hand, employee engagement levels dropped by two points (from 65% to 63%) globally(Aon Hewitt, 2017). This clearly indicates that there is a need for understanding the work engagement level among Millennials.Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor,dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers toa more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particularobject, event, individual, or behavior(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

2. Review of Literature

A study (Cogin, 2012)reports existence of generational difference among four generations. The study was done on 407 respondents from five countries. It revealed that generational differences exist in terms of work values. It reported that the value placed on 'hardwork' showed a pattern of decline with younger generations. It relate with the popular belief that work ethic is declining in younger generations. It specifically reports significant difference for Generation Y. The most importantwork value for Traditionalists and Baby Boomers was 'hard work', while for Generation Xwas 'asceticism' and for Generation Y was 'leisure'. It also suggests that

[1]According to Census of India 2011, 25% of population is in the age group of 18 to 31.

Generation Y may respond more positively to receiving more regular feedbackand recognition; Generation Y does not equate 'hard work' to personal or professional success; a desire forliving in the present and gratification of immediate needs is higher in Generation Y compared to other generations; attaining work–life balance and flexibility is more important for Generation Y. This study is focused on work values and protestant work ethic (PWE) and is silent on their work engagement.

A study (Lyons & Kuron, 2014) critically reviewed the research evidences concerning generationaldifferences in a variety of work-related variables, including personality, work values, work attitudes,leadership, teamwork, work–life balance and career patterns. It reports few interesting findings like the importance of job security decreased through generations; leisurevalues increased with successive generations, whereas work centrality declined; the importance of extrinsicvalues was curvilinear, peaking in the mid-1990s; job entitlement (i.e., a belief that one who works hard in school isowed a good job) was higher for the younger cohort; a linear downward trend in job satisfaction with successive generations; an upward trend in intentions to quit among successive generations; increasing priority on work–life balance, both attitudinally and behaviorally in successive generations; successive generations were less likely to follow the "traditional" upward linear career path and were increasinglymobile in their careers, despite a desire for stability; increased job and organizational mobility in successive generations was also observed. The study is mainly focused on collating and summarizing existing literature and recommending further scope of research.

A study(Meier & et al., 2010) conducted on 85 respondents identified seventeen categories from their responses to two open ended questions in which they were asked to mention motivating/demotivating factors at work. Leadership, salary, interesting work and atmosphere emerged as the most influential factors to Generation Y. It also reports that Generation Y have higher expectations and radically different goals than Generation X.The study articulated the factors but has not thrown light on engagement level of Generation Y.

A study(Busch & et al., 2008)done on 128 participants from IT industry identified four areas and analyzed the differences across three generations – Baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. The four areas identified were *status* (e.g. issues relating tostatus); *need for recognition* (e.g. seeking praise andattention from colleagues and superiors), *commitment to the workplace* (e.g. expressing an interest inundertaking unpaid overtime) and finally *idealism*(e.g.

enthusiasm or ambition with regard to workplaceperformance).Key findings for each of the four area were – Generation Y is more passionate about their work, more idealistic about their workplace, more focused on formal recognition awards related to work achievements, less committed to learning in the workplace and have more idealistic views with regard tohow the workplace should be structured. The study was limited to IT domain and mainly focused on differences between Baby boomers and combined response from Generation X and Y. It had very less responses from Generation Y.

A study (Dulin, 2008) was conducted on 413 Generation Y respondents from Texas. It identified five leadership themes using focus-group interviews and then developed a structured questionnaire for survey. It reported that Gen Y employees may be very high tech, butthey want high touch in their relationship. In their early careers, this cohort wants mentors to help them around thetypical bureaucracies. Gen Y employees do not want to moveslowly up the career ladder. It also confirmed that Gen Y members may not thrive under a heavy, formal bureaucracy where it may be tougherto corroborate, share ideas, and communicate. It also confirmed that the Gen Y employee views learning asa life-long endeavor. For this cohort, learning is not onlyabout advancement; it is an avenue to keep them interestedin their chosen profession. The study focused on leadership preferences and has shed very little light on work engagement of Generation Y.

A study(Benson & Brown, 2011)conducted in a large Australian public sector research organization reveals that the Baby Boomers have higher job satisfaction and a lower willingness to quit than their Generation Xcolleagues. The study captured around 2765 responses but the study did not include Generation Y respondents.

A study done on 649 respondents from Greece who are in Millennial generation reveals that millennial-aged Greeks placemost importance on intrinsic and social aspects of work, and less importance onextrinsic and prestige values.

A study(Zopiatis & et al., 2012) conducted on 302 hospitality workers confirms the presence of inter-generational differences among three generations – Baby boomers, Generation X & Y. The study found 12 differences between Generation Y and Generation X and five differences

between Generation Y and Baby Boomers. It also suggests that Generation Y share a much different perception as to their own generation's work values and beliefs compared to Generation X and Baby Boomers, who seem to agree on this issue.

A study (Dalal, 2015) conducted on 89 working professionals in India endorses that generational diversity at work place can lead to conflict. It outlines few characteristics of Generation Y and provides suggestions for creating a better collaborative work environment at work place.

Above literature review clearly suggests the Millennials are different than earlier generations but hardly any study is available which describes the kind or level of their engagement especially work engagement and hence the current study will significantly add to the existing body of literature on Millennials.

3. Research Methodology

The study aims at understanding the work engagement level among Millennial generation.The target population for the study is people who are born between 1981 and 1995 and are working in any Indian organization. Estimated population of the study is more than 25 crore so sample survey method is used to collect samples from target population. Social networking apps and platforms/websites like Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp are used to select and invite age-appropriate respondents. A blend of non-probability sampling techniques namely snowball, judgment and convenience sampling are used to collect primary data. Responses are collected using tailor-made, structured questionnaire instrument. Variable work engagement is measured using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale having total 17 items with 3 subscales namely Vigor (6 items), Dedication (5 items) and Absorption (6 items). 5 point Likert scale was used to measure agreement level of the respondent to the given statement. Response code 1 indicated 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 indicated 'Strongly Agree'. Reliability of the instrument was validated. Table 1clearly indicates that reliability of each item of the instrument is quite higher than the acceptable limit or 0.70. This indicates that instrument is highly reliable for measuring work engagement. Cronbach's alpha for overall work engagement instrument was reported 0.90 and for three subscales - Vigor (0.76), Dedication (0.87) and Absorption (0.79) which are also quite higher than the acceptable limit of 0.70.

TABLE1 : Cronbach's Alpha for each item of the instrument

#	UWES Statement	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	V1-At my work, I feel bursting with energy	.899
2	V2-At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	.891
3	V3-When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	.891
4	V4-I can continue working for very long periods at a time	.893
5	V5-At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	.898
6	V6-At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	.898
7	D1-I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	.890
8	D2-I am enthusiastic about my job	.888
9	D3-My job inspires me	.887
10	D4-I am proud on the work that I do	.889
11	D5-To me, my job is challenging	.894
12	A1-Time flies when I'm working	.891
13	A2-When I am working, I forget everything else around me	.897
14	A3-I feel happy when I am working intensely	.893
15	A4-I am immersed in my work	.891
16	A5-I get carried away when I'm working	.897
17	A6-It is difficult to detach myself from my job	.896

4. Findings and discussion

The study used 397 valid responses received from target population. Table 2 given below gives summary for selected demographic and other variables and describes their frequency distribution, percentage representation in total population, mean score of work engagement (out of 5) and p-value indicating association between the variable and work engagement.It is evident from the Table 2 that except 'Level in Organizational Hierarchy' all other variables are not having statistically significant association with work engagement. The mean value of work engagement is observed higher for senior level employees compared to junior level employees. The primary reason for the same could be the autonomy enjoyed by senior people in decision making and in managing their work. Contrary to the conventional belief, the association of three sub-generation with work engagement is not statistically significant.

TABLE2: Summary of cross tabulation between selected variablesand work engagement

#	Variable Name (Frequency-%)	Mean	p-value	Interpretation*
1	**Gender**		.234	NOT significant
	Female (114-29%)	3.80		
	Male (283-71%)	3.89		
2	**Marital Status**		.666	NOT significant

#	Variable Name (Frequency-%)	Mean	p-value	Interpretation*
	Married (250-63%)	3.87		
	Single (147-37%)	3.85		
3	**Qualification**		.814	NOT significant
	Graduation or lower (101-25%)	3.83		
	Post-graduation or higher (296-75%)	3.87		
4	**Locational presence of Organization**		.286	NOT significant
	at Single Location (84-21%)	3.88		
	at multiple locations in India (166-42%)	3.89		
	at multiple location across the world (147-37%)	3.82		
5	**Level in Organizational hierarchy**		.031	Significant
	Junior Level (107-27%)	3.74		
	Middle Level (249-63%)	3.88		
	Senior Level (41-10%)	4.09		
6	**Work Week Type**		.877	NOT significant
	5 days a week (110-28%)	3.83		
	5.5 days a week/Alternate Saturday off (27-7%)	3.96		
	6 days a week (260-65%)	3.87		
7	**Year of Birth**		.769	NOT significant
	1981 and 1985 (133-33%)	3.88		
	1986 and 1990 (210-53%)	3.86		
	1991 and 1995 (54-14%)	3.83		

*Interpretation indicates that whether the association between given variable and overall work engagement is statistically significant or not using chi-square test / pearson chi-square.

As mentioned in the research methodology section, responses were collected on a five point Likert scale for each of the statement. Mean value was calculated for each statement, for each subscale i.e. Vigor, Dedication and Absorption and lastly for work engagement. Same is given in Table 3. It is evident from this table that Dedication subscale scored higher (4.13) compared to other two for Millennials which can be interpreted as they are feeling good about their jobs. On the other hand, Vigor subscale scored the least (3.71) which indicates that the drivers for going to job are not that favorable.

TABLE3 : Mean score of work engagement for each work engagement statement and subscales

#	UWES Statement	Mean (N=397)	
1	V1-At my work, I feel bursting with energy	3.47	
2	V2-At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	3.82	3.71
3	V3-When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	3.89	

#	UWES Statement	Mean (N=397)	
4	V4-I can continue working for very long periods at a time	3.82	
5	V5-At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	3.60	
6	V6-At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	3.63	
7	D1-I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	3.98	
8	D2-I am enthusiastic about my job	4.26	
9	D3-My job inspires me	4.13	4.13
10	D4-I am proud on the work that I do	4.26	
11	D5-To me, my job is challenging	4.02	
12	A1-Time flies when I'm working	4.17	
13	A2-When I am working, I forget everything else around me	3.60	
14	A3-I feel happy when I am working intensely	4.26	3.80
15	A4-I am immersed in my work	3.86	
16	A5-I get carried away when I'm working	3.45	
17	A6-It is difficult to detach myself from my job	3.44	
	Overall	3.86	

Colour Legend

Mean values ranked 1,2,3 (top three)
Mean values ranked 4,5
Mean values ranked 13,14
Mean values ranked 15,16,17 (bottom three)

A comparative analysis is carried out within Milleannialgeneration by further segregating it into three sub-generations; that is respondents having birth year 1981 to 1985, 1986 to 1990 and 1991 to 1995. It is known fact that India introduced Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) policy from 1991. It is assumed that, just like other geo-political phenomenon, this also have impact on generational difference and particularly Millennial generation. As per Table 2, association between these sub-generations with work engagement is not statistically significant but the trend values of overall work engagement is found decreasing from 3.88 to 3.83. Moreover, difference is also found in the statements with highest and lowest mean values. Two statements from Absorption subscales (A5 and A6) scored least mean value (3.38) for 1981 to 1985 cohort but for 1991 to 1995 cohort, it was fifth statement from Vigor subscale (V5) with (3.37) mean value. The color coding of the values makes these differences visually evident as well.

TABLE4 : Mean score of work engagement for each work engagement statement and subscales

#	UWES Statement	1981-1985 (N=133)	1986-1990 (N=210)	1991-1995 (N=54)
1	V1-At my work, I feel bursting with energy	3.53	3.44	3.46
2	V2-At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	3.83	3.88	3.61
3	V3-When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	3.93	3.90	3.78
4	V4-I can continue working for very long periods at a time	3.87	3.78	3.85
5	V5-At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	3.68	3.60	3.37
6	V6-At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	3.64	3.61	3.69
7	D1-I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	3.90	3.99	4.11
8	D2-I am enthusiastic about my job	4.23	4.28	4.24
9	D3-My job inspires me	4.17	4.10	4.11
10	D4-I am proud on the work that I do	4.32	4.26	4.17
11	D5-To me, my job is challenging	4.03	4.00	4.09
12	A1-Time flies when I'm working	4.12	4.21	4.17
13	A2-When I am working, I forget everything else around me	3.64	3.60	3.52
14	A3-I feel happy when I am working intensely	4.36	4.22	4.19
15	A4-I am immersed in my work	3.99	3.81	3.72
16	A5-I get carried away when I'm working	3.38	3.48	3.50
17	A6-It is difficult to detach myself from my job	3.38	3.46	3.50
	Overall	**3.88**	**3.86**	**3.83**

Colour Legend

Mean values ranked 1,2,3 (top three)
Mean values ranked 4,5
Mean values ranked 13,14
Mean values ranked 15,16,17 (bottom three)

5. **Conclusion, implication and limitation**

The study clearly identified the work engagement levels in Millennial generation by drawing mean value for each UWES statement and giving ranking to them. The findings substantiates that the generation have unique characteristics for work engagement. The statements which are in top three clearly indicates that Millennials feel enthusiastic about their job, feel proud about the work they do and feel happy when they work intensely. Bottom three statements indicate that Millennials can be easily detached from the job, they don't get carried away by the job and they feel less energy at work. It can be inferred from this finding that Millennials have more

avenues/options for getting distractions at work. The reasons can range from access to social media, nature of job to the vary nature of the generation which demands variety. Dedication subscale score highest mean value (4.13) which indicates that they are completely dedicated towards what they do but the flip side is they don't want to continue doing the same thing for longer time. This is clearly substantiated by the lowest mean value (3.71) to Vigor subscale. It implies that Management of the organization, Line Managers and HR team have to relook to the jobs being done by this generation at workplace. They need to review the job rotation, transfer and promotion policies and make them more agile and flexible to accommodate the need of this generation. It can also be implied that this generation is keener to learn new things so more focus to be given to Learning & Development processes and methods.

The study collected 397 responses. This number is good for such descriptive kind of research but the number is not good enough for population size. Moreover, samples are drawn using non-probability sampling method. Due to these two things, sample cannot be considered as representative sample of the population and hence findings of the study cannot be generalized to target population. As the objective of the study was to find out engagement levels of Millennial generation, it didn't explore any comparison with other generations or causal relationship with other generations.

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