

**An Exploratory Study of Managers' Perceptions of
Millennials in the Workplace and the Introduction of
Workplace Initiatives to Retain Millennials**



MSc Human Resource Management

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Abstract

The modern workplace can have up to four generations working together but recent literature has shone a bright light on one generation in particular - Millennials. Despite the fact that there is a multitude of research already in existence on this topic, a gap in the literature was identified around manager's specific perceptions of Millennials in the workplace. It was also highlighted that Millennial staff turnover rates are rising and retention initiatives need to be put in place to counteract this. This research aims to explore manager's perceptions of Millennials in the workplace while discovering their opinions on the introduction of workplace retention initiatives. The findings presented in the research revealed an insight into managers perceptions of this generation in the workplace and their opinions of the use of retention initiatives. The findings strengthen the existing literature in relation to how managers perceive Millennials in the workplace while revealing mixed reviews on how retention initiatives aimed at reducing Millennial staff turnover rates are perceived.

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Chapter 1 – Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

Millennials, or members of Generation Y as they are also known, are a unique set of young people who are rapidly becoming the leaders and visionaries of our modern society (Weber and Urick, 2017). The definition of what makes a Millennial fluctuates in the literature, but the general consensus is that a Millennial is anyone born between 1981 and 2000 (Naim and Lenka, 2018). They are swiftly taking up the largest part of our workforce and according to Saxena and Jain (2012), will occupy fifty percent of workplace personnel by 2020.

Millennials have a very different outlook than that of their Baby Boomer parents on life, and the role work should play in it. They are typically dubbed as a 'snowflake generation' who are self-centred, lazy, entitled and who demand instant gratification (Migliaccio, 2018). However, some studies are now also recognising the creative side to this generation, noting their inspiring commitment to collaboration in many aspects of their life. (Hernandez, Poole Jr and Grys, 2018).

Regardless of these generic traits, it is well known that Millennials work to survive, not survive to work (Saeed et al., 2018). They see that life is for living, not just for working and strive to get the most from their position, moving on as soon as they get as much as they can from their role. This is why this generation is notoriously difficult to retain and a gap has been identified in the literature surrounding the need for continued research and efforts to identify a solution to this issue (Waikar, Sweet and Morgan, 2016).

Employers are aware that Millennials are increasingly unlikely to stay silent if workplace practices are not as they should be, if there is a lack of support and guidance in a company and that they will walk away if a job doesn't suit their lifestyle. Some changes have been made towards improving Millennial retention rates, however no 'one fits all' solution has been found as of yet (Campione, 2015).

Another gap has been identified in the literature surrounding the specific opinions managers have about this generation in the workplace and their opinions on the inclusion of workplace initiatives specifically aimed at the retention of Millennials.

1.2 Generational Differences

Over the past 15-20 years, changes have been seen in the workplace., and employers are noticing that their new employees are different to more established workers. This new group of employees seem to be less motivated by the same rewards which motivated their predecessors and this recognition of change has given way to numerous studies on this new generation and what exactly makes them tick (Arredondo-Trapero et al., 2017). Key characteristics, attitudes and perceptions which are used to define generational differences can often be shaped by life experiences a generation has been exposed to at various points of their development (Gong et al., 2018)

Millennials are no exception to this, and they have gained a strong reputation of being entitled and impatient opportunists who are constantly striving for better learning and development opportunities in the workplace which can cause them to frequently job hop (Naim and Lenka, 2018).

However, as more Millennials enter the workforce, it is becoming clear that they are lacking in many skills such as how to socialise in the workplace and how to negotiate their positions in the company which had been taken for granted in previous generations (Campione, 2015). The literature suggests that past generations gained such skills earlier in life which raises many questions around Millennial's place in the workforce, and how organisations can help them learn and build on these key skills as quickly as possible (Naim and Lenka, 2018). This research is focused on gaining an insight into how the Millennial generation fits into today's workplace.

Sinah and Kshatriya (2016) stated that employers have noted an increase in generational workplace stress and Millennials' approach to settling in and move up the ladder is starkly different to the way the older generation would

have behaved in these situations. These differences have been influenced by life experiences and realities seen from previous generations such as getting stuck in an unfulfilling job solely for the pay, or slaving at the feet of a company just to be laid off at a moment's notice (Weeks and Schaffert, 2019). The literature paints a dull picture for Millennials and considering what they have seen older generations go through could explain why they have adopted a new way of thinking and behaving in the workplace (David, Gelfeld and Rangel, 2017).

Over the years, literature and studies on generational differences have been criticised due to the lack of certainty around generational units, how they are measured, and if generational differences and similarities are even worth studying at all (Weeks and Schaffert, 2019)

Many publications outline the various differences between generations, the influences which may have caused such differences to occur and the effect they can have in the workplace. However, there is also a growing quantity of literature which aims to prove that generational differences do not hold any significance or influence over people born in various time periods, and that the traits which have been attached to each cohort have no bearing on how an individual acts, behaves or interacts with other colleagues in the workplace. Rudolph and Zacher (2018) argue that the idea of generational differences in the workplace is nothing more than a management fad used to categorise people based on their age rather than their abilities.

Stanton (2017) suggests that rather than studying generational differences and the methods which managers can adopt to cope with these differences in the workplace, they should instead focus on what motivates all of their individual employees. Studying individuals rather than generational groups can be very useful for improving workplace communication and cooperation between colleagues (Stutzer, 2019). Weeks and Schaffert (2019) note that generational perceptions can have a negative influence on collaborative work, stating that generational stereotypes can hinder the performance levels of members of a particular generation.

While some literature highlights weaknesses in the significance of studying generational differences, there is a much stronger body of research reinforcing the importance studying this area, arguing that they do have an influence on how employees behave (Akhavan Sarraf et al., 2017).

It is crucial that managers consider the generations they manage and find a way in which they can all work together harmoniously (Sinha and Kshatriya, 2016). In order to manage many generations in the workplace, it is beneficial to first understand each generation (Naim and Lenka, 2018).

1.3. Baby Boomers

As with any generation, there are variances in the literature surrounding its exact start and end date, but the general consensus for the Baby Boomer generation is anyone born between the years of 1946 to 1964 falls into this category (Migliaccio, 2013). Baby Boomers have a reputation of being a strong and optimistic generation as, for the most part, they were raised in a post-war society where things were looking up, markets were thriving and a strong education system was becoming more prominent and accessible (Hoolachan and McKee, 2018).

During their upbringing they witnessed many movements such as women's rights, civil rights and anti-war protests (David, Gelfeld and Rangel, 2017), and were widely known for expecting great things from the world, full of power, which built them to be one of the wealthiest congregations ever seen while in their youth (Jönson and Jönsson, 2015). At a young stage many Baby Boomers were lucky enough to afford their own homes, had good, secure jobs and had extra income which could be spend on luxuries such as travel which the previous generation simply would not have been able to afford (David, Gelfeld and Rangel, 2017). They valued an 'interesting job' and a 'happy marriage' contrasting with today's youth who value a 'meaningful job' and a 'fulfilling personal life' (Hennekam, 2016). Keeping up with their lavish lifestyles meant that long office hours and being a 'yes man' was the norm, however, as the war was a prominent feature in their past, Baby Boomers

tended to have a sense of distrust towards those in positions of authority and were the first generation who wanted recognition for their independent thinking and experience (Hennekam, 2016).

1.4. Generation X

The youth of Generation X was very different to their Baby Boomer predecessors as they were the first generation who was seen to have significantly less members (Cordeniz, 2002). Generally born between early 1960's and early 1980's, many members grew up in broken homes with parents who had gone through divorce, spending a lot of time going to childminders in their formative years, and often coming home from school to an empty house (Taylor, 2018). The influence of these factors in their early years made this generation very independent and self-reliant (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010).

They often went unnoticed and because of this, their values are very far from that of previous generations with young Generation Xers craving more of a work-life balance and beginning the revelation that work is not everything (Taylor, 2018).

Generation X were also the first generation who began using technology as a definite and pivotal part of their lives. The widespread introduction of computers and the internet revolutionised the way they viewed the world and how they were able to access information quickly and easily (Pekala, 2001)

Their distrust of those in positions of authority passed down from the Baby Boomer generation, combined with their access to information, resulted in a dwindling willingness to follow authority and a move for leaders to be transparent and to lead by example, both in the workplace and outside of it (Bristow et al., 2011). The need for early independence and self-reliance in their upbringing transferred to the workplace and Generation X are often described as being independent, reasonable, and generally lacking in good communication skills (Parry and Urwin, 2011).

1.5. Millennials

Millennials, or Generation Y are categorised as having been born between 1981 and 2000, and were raised mostly by Baby Boomer parents (Naim and Lenka, 2018). They were raised in a supportive, encouraging and secure environment where a heavy emphasis was placed on education and development (Gong et al., 2018). Their independent and confident personas grew directly from the praise and adoration they received from their parents since birth (Civelek et al., 2017). Their carefree behaviour and making frequent risky decisions could be directly linked to the fact that they were raised in a financially stable bubble and overly coddling environment created by their parents (Thompson and Gregory, 2012).

When researching the reasons why Millennials tend to exert certain characteristics in the workplace, it is beneficial to look at their core values and aspects of their personalities which impact how they behave (De Vaney, 2015). They typically place less interest and emphasis on the need to work hard and put more effort into their performance which shows that they place a higher value on a positive work-life balance than that of their previous generations (Saeed et al., 2018).

Many Millennials are not interested becoming involved in practices which could label them, such as marriage or religion until later in life if at all, and their optimistic views about the future seem to leave them wanting to keep all options open (Cutler, 2014). The strong emphasis which was placed on education during Millennial's formative years could explain why they tend to strive for the best in the workplace, seeking learning and development opportunities when they can, and simply walking away when their expectations are not met (Gong et al., 2018).

Millennials are also known to place high significance on extrinsic values such as compensation, titles, access to management and respect from colleagues, however in contrast to older generations, Millennials have been seen to examine such values in terms of individual goals rather than overall

organisational goals, viewing them as lifestyle aspirations, rather than strongly linking them to career ambitions (Campione, 2015).

Having been surrounded with technology for the majority of their lives, Millennials naturally depend heavily on it both personally and professionally (Weber and Urick, 2017). As a rise in technology is seen in the workplace, Millennials are often considered the natural fit for technology focused positions, however, it is important that companies don't assume all Millennials know how best to use technology and that structured training and development programmes are provided for all in these areas (Charsky et al., 2009).

A core trait of the Millennial generation is the importance they place on being able to find meaning in their work (Naim and Lenka, 2018). Their desire to find interest and significance in their role stems from having talents in areas such as mediation and perseverance, which have previously been noted as skills that members of Generation Y tend to be lacking in (Behrens, 2009). This, combined with the fact that they are easily bored and quite entitled, can give way to high turnover rates of Millennials in the workplace (Campione, 2015). Their openness and readiness to share their views can often be misinterpreted as this generation demonstrating how entitled and unfocused they are when really, they are just seeking purpose and meaning in their work (Carter and Walker, III, 2018).

1.6. Millennials In The Workplace

Traditional workplace demographics are changing and now, up to four generations are working together in the one environment. As a result, management are under immense stress as motivating, organising and supervising employees with such diverse priorities and attitudes is not something that was required in the past (Heyns and Kerr, 2018).

When studying Millennials, it is crucial to examine how they interact and fit with older generations and particularly how more traditional styles of management suit this generation. According to a study carried out by Weber

(2017), Millennials place a heavier worth on competence values than those in managerial positions today who tend to place more significance on moral values. This study also noted that older workers are generally of the opinion that Millennials expect to be given greater responsibility in the workplace much quicker than had been done in the past. As has been noted in the literature, Millennials have grown up in a modern, instant, society and these expectations could be automatically carried through to their work. If these high expectations are not met, Millennial's workplace frustration may be displayed in ways such as impatient behaviour, and general unease when faced with self-reflection or a need for patience (Giambatista, Hoover and Tribble, 2017).

The amalgamation of generations in the workplace is rising and could give way to an increase in stress and adversity, especially where Millennials are concerned (Sinha and Kshatriya, 2016). In general, Millennials lead highly organised lives with a clear structure which could give way to management having to give more instructions than with older generations, however, as they have been exposed to more cultural experiences from a young age, they also tend to be more open and accepting of individual differences (Behrens, 2009).

Managers have noted that ensuring training is detail orientated and comprehensive and that an emotionally supportive environment is fostered throughout the workplace can play a vital role in how successful Millennials are in their positions (Behrens, 2009). A study carried out by Hoffman (2018), stated several key reasons given by Millennials for why they leave their jobs as a poor company atmosphere, lack of flexibility, lack of meaningful work, lack of learning and development opportunities and a lack of mentors and approachable senior staff members. Knapp (2017) also drew attention to similar reasons for Millennial job hopping, placing particular emphasis on the importance of including mentoring in the workplace to combat this issue. Mentoring has been found to enhance leadership qualities and improve company loyalty among millennial employees (Hernandez, Poole Jr and Grys, 2018). Research carried out by Molloy (2018) advised companies to manage Millennials by promoting a strong work ethic within the company, implementing coaching, training and mentoring from supervisors, and encouraging an open company environment and mindset. Chillakuri and

Mogili (2018) also noted the importance of providing a sympathetic and caring environment for the Millennial generation in the workplace, particularly stressing the importance for companies to support members of Generation Y in the hope that they will stay with the company.

A study by Baker Rosa and Hastings (2018), noted that those in managerial positions observed strong aspirations for workplace learning along with increased abilities and sense of enjoyment when teamwork was introduced by members of the Millennial generation. It is important that management take notice of this research and integrate the feedback received into their management styles and techniques when working with members of this generation (Kilber, Barclay and Ohmer, 2014).

Lyons and Kuron (2013) interestingly stated a critical flaw in the literature surrounding generational cohorts is the assumption that a particular group's generational traits will remain static for the duration of their working lives. This study criticises the oversight surrounding people's changing opinions throughout their lives, arguing that this oversight could give way to a false reports.

1.7. Retention Of Millennials

An organisation cannot function without employees and therefore, managers must look to implementing new initiatives to retain their staff (Campione, 2015). The perceptions employees' hold of their company or manager can heavily influence their attitudes and opinions towards work (Kwong, 2017). In the past, when jobs were scarce, it was easier to retain staff (Arredondo-Trapero et al., 2017). A study carried out by Pressley and Kennett-Hensel (2013) compared present college students to their 1985 counterparts and observed changes in their opinions. When asked if they felt that in order to get ahead in the workplace they had to take a 'winning is everything' approach, and that making money was the single most important thing in the workplace, Millennials noted that they didn't feel the need to step on another employee to get ahead, and that there are other valuable benefits from work than simply

money. The Millennial cohort of students' answers were starkly different to the original generation which shows the sizeable shift in common opinion on what work is about and how it needs to be approached.

According to a survey carried out by Deloitte in 2019 which gained the insights of 13,416 people across 42 countries, more than 43% of Millennials stated that they see themselves leaving their jobs within two years of starting and that only a further 28% of the same generation see themselves staying longer than five years (Deloitte, 2019). These statistics show that changes are required to help companies retain their Millennial employees.

The increase in the number of options available combined with the increase in education levels has resulted in a generation who can and will leave a position or company if it doesn't feel like a 'good fit' (McKeon Ramirez and Harrison, 2018).

The literature commonly notes that generations will make decisions based on the influences they have seen from older generations. Johnson and Johnson (2010) argue that the younger generation focus on a positive work-life balance because they witnessed their parents being laid off after years of service in a company and have learned from that experience. Lyons and Kuron (2010) state that there are too many inconsistencies and areas of dispute to place any value or worth behind generational stereotypes. In order to retain staff, it is more important that managers focus on who their employees are as individuals and what their personal work goals are, rather than honing in on what literature states an individual born in a particular year should want from their job or company (Stanton, 2017)

The literature surrounding Millennial retention varies slightly but the key themes that appear frequently are as follows:

1.7.1. Building new skills in the workplace - training and development

As Millennials want more than just a job which pays the bills and crave a position that will encourage their growth and development, job advertisements which are aiming to target Millennials should emphasise the prospect of

building new skills within the workplace (Arredondo-Trapero et al., 2017). Millennials seek a position in which they can mature and evolve, so providing employee training programmes to all employees improves the reputation of a company, increasing their chances of being known as an employer of choice (Glazer, Mahoney and Randall, 2019). 22% of Irish Millennials feel that their employer is not aiding in their professional development in areas such as problem solving, creativity and skills necessary to progress in their industry (Deloitte, 2018). A study carried out by Baker Rosa and Hastings (2018) stated that when asked, older generations in the workplace praised Millennials for their enthusiasm and willingness to continue learning into the workplace. Millennials' soft skills tend to be lacking so implementing initiatives such as mentoring in the workplace can be very effective as it builds relations and collaborative work among colleagues, while also helping employees to work together to build and develop their skills (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2018).

1.7.2. Teamwork

Millennials have been on more teams by the time they reach the workplace than any other generation and are often very comfortable working in a team environment (Karsh and Templin, 2013). According to the Deloitte 2018 Republic of Ireland Millennial Survey, 82% of Millennials feel that companies are more concerned with their own priorities than looking at the environment and the society around them. These figures are up 23% from the previous year which strongly suggests that companies are not listening to the feedback their target employee pool is providing them. Teamwork and collaboration between departments gives way to new ideas being sparked which helps individuals understand and get to know each other, making the workplace a more relaxed, productive and positive environment (Saxena and Jain, 2012). Millennials are good team players and they have a strong desire to have a positive influence on their organisation and the environment around them (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2018).

1.7.3. Technology

As this generation has been exposed to technology almost since the day they were born, it is easy to make the assumption that they are fluent in the language of workplace technology but this may not always be the case (Charsky et al., 2009). The introduction of e-learning and technology training can be greatly beneficial in the workplace (Silvestru et al., 2019). Providing training and learning programmes in technological areas can be helpful, and has been seen to help build a rapport between employees from different generations (Silvestru et al., 2019).

The advancements of technology in our modern world and its integration into our lives has somewhat blurred the line between work and personal life, particularly when focusing on the Millennial generation (Johnson, 2015). The ease of transition between work and play that technology has allowed us to experience means that less people are resenting one aspect of their life interfering with another because their work and personal lives have all merged into one (Johnson, 2015).

A Cisco Connected World Technology report in 2014 stated that over half of Generation Y will have checked their phones, emails and social media channels all before getting out of bed in the morning. That means that members of this population will very often have liaised with clients, responded to emails and checked their calendar before they even make it to the office and are comfortable using technology in such ways outside of the workplace.

1.7.4. Gratitude and Job Satisfaction

There is a feeling among older generations that an individual's motivation to work should come from their pay check received at the end of the month (Johnson, 2015). Therefore, it is understandable that older generations could be unimpressed that Millennials to want to be thanked and appreciated for everything they do in the workplace as well as being paid.

As there are a multitude of jobs available, the Millennial generation is not to be afraid to speak out about what they want in a position with gratitude and job satisfaction playing a large part in that (Johnson, 2015).

Millennials want to feel valued and acknowledged in the workplace, feeling like their work is making a difference in some way (Naim and Lenka, 2018). Management providing constructive feedback on areas for improvement or praising an employee when it is deserved can have a huge impact on members of this generation (Anderson, Buchko and Buchko, 2016). Supplying transparency throughout their work and giving feedback, can hugely impact overall job satisfaction noted by Millennials (Glazer, Mahoney and Randall, 2019). Heyns and Kerr (2018) note the important role management have to play in creating an overall motivational climate in the workplace, regardless of homogeneous groupings or generational categories.

According to the 2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey Republic of Ireland, members of this generation are recording a dying sense of loyalty towards the companies for which they work. Enhancing company loyalties as a means to retain Millennials should be a top priority for all companies in today's market (Glazer, Mahoney and Randall, 2019). The 2018 Deloitte Millennial Survey Republic of Ireland noted some suggestions for retaining Millennials as ensuring that company goals are aligned with the leaders who are physically implementing them, ensuring that there are learning and development opportunities available for staff and by focusing on using technology in a positive way.

As a result of this literature review, it was identified that further research was required on managers' perceptions of Millennials in the workplace and their opinion on the introduction of workplace initiatives to retain Millennials.

Chapter 2 - Research Question

2.1. Research Area

As a result of studying the literature, it was identified that further examination into managers' perceptions of Millennials in the workplace and their opinion on the introduction of workplace initiatives to retain Millennials was required. Gaps were identified in the literature around how managers feel Millennials behave and connect in the workplace as well as a lack of understanding being shown around managers' opinions on retention initiatives which are specifically targeted at the Millennial generation.

2.2. Research Objective

The aim of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of manager's perceptions on the Millennial generation and the introduction of workplace retention initiatives to retain Millennials. The researcher aims to initially focus on gaining the perceptions of managers who manage multiple generations in their workplace, some of whom belonged to the Millennial generation and conducting interviews to gather primary data. The researcher then aims to focus on Millennial workplace retention initiatives, managers perceptions of them and whether there is a necessity to implement them in the modern workplace.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Subsequent to commencing a research project, a detailed and coherent plan must be articulated. Guishard (2018) note that negotiating around research methodology strategies can be difficult but that researchers must utilise skills and knowledge to put a careful, well-structured plan in place before undertaking a body of research. Similarly, DuBois, Strait and Walsh (2018) suggest that various methods can be utilised to analyse research, and it therefore is crucial that a research methodology is coherent with the research aim. A well structured methodology can aid the researcher in compiling and assembling accurate information which is the basis of any research project.

This chapter will summarise the research problem, the aims and objectives of the study, the design of the research, sampling and the selected method through which this research will be analysed. It was selected that this study would be analysed through Qualitative research methodology. Throughout this chapter the grounds behind the selection of qualitative research as a method of investigation will be illustrated to the reader.

3.2 Research Process

Having a stable structure in place can aid the researcher in completing the research in a timely and efficient manner. Weis and Willems (2016) propose that determining the appropriate research method must stem from the nature of the subject which is being studied, combined with the line of questioning being undertaken. Being able to understand the motives behind actions and decisions made reinforces the appeal behind selecting a qualitative research approach for many researchers (Najda-Janoszka and Daba-Buzoianu, 2018). Analysing qualitative data has been noted as the most challenging aspect of the research process due to its involvement with technical languages and arduous processes (Sechelski and Onwuegbuzie, 2019).

Using a qualitative method lends a pathway when analysing and recognising the themes which have become apparent through research with study

participants (Quartiroli et al., 2017). Rahman (2016), argues the significance of qualitative research as it does not have a clear theory or set of methods to stand by which would support an accurate research process. As a result of this, it is vital to look at the research as a whole, making well educated choices and decisions in order to build the research through the use of well-built methods.

3.3 Research Problem

One of the most vital aspects of research is outlining a specific problem which the research can be centered around. Williams et al (2016) suggest that more areas in which research is being undertaken should be influenced by the benefits it may produce for the user but that this is often not the case. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and consider the benefit a body of research may have on all stakeholders before it is undertaken.

The research problem which has been identified through the literature is a lack of understanding by those in managerial positions of the Millennial generation and a subsequent difficulty in retaining members of this generation as a direct result of the lack of understanding of this generation in the workplace. Thompson and Gregory, (2012) define Millennials as independent and carefree risk-takers. Migliaccio (2018) also noted that they tend to be self-centered, lazy and entitled. Up to four generations can now be working together in the one environment which is putting management under immense stress as these generations have varying needs (Heyns and Kerr, 2018)

The general lack of connection and understanding between generations in the workplace, in particular the Millennial generation, is causing tension in the workplace (Giambatista, Hoover and Tribble, 2017). As a result of this, the research is focused on discovering manager's views of Millennials in the workplace, and gaining their perspectives on the introduction of workplace initiatives to retain Millennials.

3.4 Research Philosophy

In order to conduct a well thought out and robust study, various research philosophies must be considered and understood. The research philosophy which is employed will be the foundation for the project and will influence further methods used throughout the research (Dougherty, Slevc and Grand, 2019). The researcher studied and considered the following philosophical methods before deciding on the method which would be best suited for this particular research project.

3.4.1. Positivism

An approach which believes that the only data which is credible is that which is gathered through observation and produces findings which are quantifiable (Hwang, 2019). It generally utilises large sample sizes and can be used during qualitative or quantitative research. Although this method is highly structured and is regarded as a reliable research method, the researcher felt it was not a suitable method to use in this instance as it supports disregarding emotions and behaviours displayed in responses and has a general lack of flexibility. As the aim of this research was to gain the perspectives of managers, the researcher felt that it would not be the best approach to use.

3.4.2. Realism

An approach which believes that the mind and reality are independent from each other and is built around the premise that a scientific method should be utilised when developing knowledge (Sobh and Perry, 2006). As this study was focused on gaining opinions of managers on their real life experiences, the researcher felt that the basis of this methodology was not in line with the aim of this study and so, the researcher chose not to use this approach.

3.4.3. Pragmatism

An approach which denotes that there are multiple views from which the data can be explained and examined and therefore, no one view can support a comprehensive perspective (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Although this approach is advantageous as it allows the study to be analysed through

multiple views, it can also lack structure and for this reason, the researcher chose not to utilise it.

3.4.4. Interpretivism

An approach which recognises the need for the researcher to separate humans and objects and combines human involvement in the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). This study will primarily gather primary data, therefore there is room for bias on behalf of the researcher in this method as the data is greatly influenced by personal opinions. As, this method also allows in depth study it tends to be valid and reliable. As this study is based on the perceptions on managers, the researcher has selected an interpretivist approach as the most appropriate method to utilise.

3.5. Research Approaches

Two research approaches were considered by the researcher - inductive and deductive. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), state that a deductive approach requires the researcher to have formulated a theoretical viewpoint before embarking on a data collection journey, whereas, an inductive approach is based on the premise that the data is collected and the theory is developed following on from this. Inductive research aims to gather an explanation from the collected responses and promotes flexibility throughout. The researcher appointed an inductive approach so as the data would be collected, and the theory would be built around this gathered data.

3.6. Research Strategy

Multiple research strategies were considered for data collection such as surveys, interviews or focus groups, examining case studies or completing action research. The researcher deduced that the most practical and productive strategy for this study would be to complete interviews with participants. The researcher felt that due to time constraints, physical location of participants, and gaining the most information from the participants, completing interviews would be the best approach to take.

3.7. Research Choices

The researcher studied three methods when aiming to determine which research method to utilise - Mono Method, Mixed Method and Multi Method. Both mixed and multi methods suggest that a phenomena is compound enough to examine it from various viewpoints and can encompass more than one research style (Sushil, 2018). A mixed approach usually utilises one qualitative and one quantitative approach whereas a multi approach can utilise as many qualitative and quantitative approaches as required. A mono approach solely uses either a qualitative or quantitative approach (Sushil, 2018). For the purposes of this research, a mono method has been selected as it was felt that adopting a mixed or multi method approach would not add to the study, or address the research problem to any further degree than a mono method would.

3.8. Research Objectives

1. To explore manager's perceptions of Millennials in the workplace and the differences between this generation and others in the workplace.

As the aim of this study is to gain an insight into the perceptions managers have of Millennials in the workplace, the researcher believed it was important to explore how managers perceived Millennials in their own right, and also in comparison to other generations in the workplace. As outlined in the literature, management are under immense stress as motivating, organising and supervising employees with such diverse priorities and attitudes is not something that was required in the past. Exploring the manager's perceptions of Millennials in the workplace and how these perceptions may differ from those relating to older generations helps to clarify how the Millennial generation are received in the workplace.

2. To investigate if managers have problems retaining members of the Millennial generation and the possible reasons why.

In the literature it is suggested that there are difficulties retaining the Millennial generation. The researcher felt that gaining an insight into whether retention of Millennial staff was an issue for the managers, while exploring the possible reasons Millennial staff may not be remaining in their roles was needed to develop a better understanding around retention of Millennials in the workplace.

3. To gain an insight into the areas in which managers feel could be utilised to retain Millennials in the workplace.

One aim of the research was to gain an insight into the perceptions of managers on the introduction of workplace initiatives to retain Millennials. The researcher felt it was crucial to explore the different areas in which managers felt could be utilised to retain members of the Millennial generation in the workplace.

3.9. Research Design

The researcher decided upon using an exploratory design as it was the most constructive and appropriate method for this study. This method allowed the researcher to explore the perceptions of the interviewees gaining more knowledge on their opinions of Millennials in the workplace while also exploring the area of retention of Millennials. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), the design by which a researcher selects to conduct a study is crucial in gaining the answer to the research question. Employing an exploratory research method is particularly useful if you are seeking to formulate a clear understanding behind a research question (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

3.10. Research Approach

In order to give a research study the best foundations, the correct research approach must be selected based on the formulation of the study. In this case, the researcher studied both qualitative and quantitative methods before selecting the most appropriate style of study to utilise. Barnham (2015) states quantitative research is practiced in order to quantify the research aim through gathering numerical data which is then modified into statistics used to present results whereas qualitative research is exploratory and is employed to grasp opinions, perceptions and rationale behind a problem.

3.10.1. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research requires the quantification of data and aims to gather results which amount something in numbers or statistics (Rahman, 2016). It produces standardised numerical data and focuses on elements which can be patterned rather than taking influence and building conclusions from individual's perceptions and interpretations of certain situations (Kellam and Cirell, 2018). Rahman (2016) outlines some advantages and disadvantages of employing a quantitative research approach:

Advantages

- ❖ Quantitative research tends to have large, randomly selected sample sizes, and therefore can portray results which are more reflective of a whole population.
- ❖ The analysis of quantitative data often uses software which makes it a much quicker process.

Disadvantages

- ❖ Quantitative research fails to include how social reality may be molded by people's experiences or actions.
- ❖ As this method of research is focused on numbers and statistics, it is often not able to back up it's findings with explanations or underlying reasons.

As a result of analysing the quantitative research process, the researcher decided not to employ this method. As quantitative research is mainly focused on numerical data and statistics, and this study is aiming to gain the opinions and perspectives of managers in the workplace, the researcher felt that it would not be harmonious with the research aim of this study.

3.10.2. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research encompasses analysing existing literature and gaining current information through various methods (Kilicoglu, 2019). It is descriptive in nature and involves processes such as reviewing literature, collecting and analysing data and compiling and reporting the findings of the study (Kilicoglu, 2019). Rahman (2016) outlines some advantages and disadvantages of employing a qualitative research approach:

Advantages

- ❖ Qualitative research aims to gain access to the participants feelings, emotions and opinions which can give way to detailed responses and an insight into why they have such opinions.
- ❖ As the common methods of qualitative data collection involve interacting with the participants, the resulting data is often very detailed and elaborate.

Disadvantages

- ❖ Qualitative research projects tend to have smaller sample sizes and can risk generalising a population based on the opinions and experiences of a select few.
- ❖ Due to the detailed responses which qualitative research receives, the analysis process can be lengthy and time consuming.

The researcher found qualitative analysis to be the most appropriate method of study to utilise in this instance as its approach was more suitable and would be compatible with the objectives of this research project.

3.11. Semi Structured Interviews

The researcher considered structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews during the research planning process. Structured interviews were eliminated as the researcher felt this approach would not give the participants enough room to express their opinions, and would not allow the interviewer to adapt the questions based on the participant's answers, should this be required. An unstructured approach was also ruled out as the researcher felt it would give way to a wide variation of unlinked responses from participants from which, no solid conclusion could be drawn. The researcher selected a semi-structured approach as it was deemed to be the most appropriate because of soft structure which guides the interview, while allowing more personalised and spontaneous questions to be added if required.

After consideration, the researcher choose to gather the results via face-to-face interviews or phone interviews if an in-person interview cannot be arranged. The researcher wished to complete all interviews in person but due to distance constraints, this could not be accommodated for all participants. Hawkins (2018) notes that completing face-to-face interviews is convenient and often fruitful as the researcher can gauge the participant's engagement level and add probing questions throughout if required.

In the absence of a validated set of interview questions, the researcher compiled a medley of closed and open-ended answer questions so as to give participants an opportunity to give the answer they felt best fitted the question asked. The participants were also be given an opportunity to add further comments at the end of the interview. The researcher was aware that not all answers would be analogous and so, a list of probing questions was developed to compliment each substantive question which could be used to draw the relevant information from the participant if the initial question failed to do so.

The researcher ensured that a neutral tone was used through all interviews and that no personal bias or opinion was made evident to the participants.

3.12. Sampling

To ensure the success of any research project, the research sample must be carefully selected. Singh, Hillmer and Wang (2011) note that often selecting a sampling method can make the size of data available much more manageable. Therefore the researcher selected the preferred sample before embarking on gathering the research, contacting all participants initially via email and securing nine individuals who were willing to take part in the study. These participants were accessed through their management positions within the organisation and contact details were obtained from the company website.

3.12.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was then chosen by the researcher to complete the sampling process. This method utilises a non-probability sample which is designated by the traits of a specific population and is often referred to as selective sampling and is very efficient (Ames, Glenton and Lewin, 2019). The researcher selected the following purposive sampling conditions:

In order to be eligible to participate in this study, you must be:

- ❖ Born on/before 1980 (i.e. not a member of the Millennial generation yourself)
- ❖ Managing members of the Millennial generation (anyone born between 1981 and 2000) and other generations in the workplace.

3.13. Theme Sheet

In order to conduct semi-structured interviews, the researcher compiled a list of key questions derived from the crucial themes of the overall research problem. This study was completed with an exploratory outlook and aimed to identify themes from the data collected. Understanding a data set as a whole comes as a result of viewing it as separate elements, which are examined in their own right before being pieced back in place so as the research can be

comprehended as one body (Roberts, Dowell and Nie, 2019). The below themes were identified.

Generational Differences
Millennials In The Workplace
Retention Of Millennials

Table 1. Theme Sheet.

3.14. Conduct Research

The participants were selected by the researcher and invited to take part in the study via email. As the invited managers were asked to express if they were interested in taking part in the study, participation was voluntary and all participants who agreed to complete the interview were female although the invited participants included a mix of genders. There was no specific reason behind this and was a result of chance. One eligibility criteria was being born on/before 1980 therefore all participants were aged 39 and above. All of the participants were managers who were responsible for managing at least one member of the Millennial generation along with other generations in the workplace. Once the participants confirmed their interest in the study, the researcher contacted them over the phone with further details on the requirements of the study. A consent form and further details of the study was sent to all participants which they were required to read, sign and return before commencing the interview. All interviews were completed either face-to-face or over the phone in a quiet environment to ensure confidentiality, and were recorded on the researcher's iPhone (interviews completed in person) or iPod (interviews completed over the phone) for transcribing purposes. All participants were aware that their interview was being recorded and were aware of how their data was going to be stored and how long it was going to be kept for.

All interviews were conducted over a three week period and transcribing took place during the following two week period.

3.15. Ethical Consideration

Ethics is defined as a body of standards for conduct that aid a researcher in distinguishing between suitable and intolerable behavior (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). When completing this study, the researcher was conscious that individuals may have varying opinions and perceptions and was continuously aware of the sensitive nature of such opinions throughout the data collection process. The importance that paying attention to ethical considerations during qualitative research is noted by Ngozwana (2018). The researcher reflected on this point and ensured to implement a code of ethics to avoid complicating the research process with ethical issues throughout the study.

Through careful consideration of the literature surrounding ethical consideration in qualitative research, the researcher selected methods of data gathering which would not be in breach of any ethical codes.

The researcher ensured that all participants were treated with respect, that privacy and confidentiality was ensured throughout, and that all participants were aware of how and when their data was to be stored and for how long. The researcher ensured that clarity and reliability was implemented throughout and that all findings were recorded accurately.

Carrying out the research in accordance to these guidelines allowed the researcher to complete the research in an ethical manner.

3.16. Data Analysis

The researcher selected a coding approach to data analysis for this research as it aided in highlighting key themes which appeared in the research and were relevant in answering the research problem. Content analysis was implemented in order to successfully code the collected data. Content analysis is an analytical technique which enables text to be summarised into clearer categories through implementing codes in the research. It is an

advantageous method as it relates the research in a simple manner which can easily be investigated by other researchers (De Hoogh and Den Hartog, 2008).

3.16.1. Coding

Implementing a system of coding is particularly constructive when aiming to highlight key themes throughout the research. Coding is a primary component of the qualitative research and is used to break down large data sets into more manageable and conductive themes (Elliott, 2018). Wang (2010) highlights potential disadvantages of coding data as it can be over categorised and selected categories can overlap which causes difficulties when compiling results. As a result of this, the research carefully compiled interview questions surrounding the research problem and were open to participants sharing their experiences of managing the Millennial generation. Relevant themes were carefully selected due to their relevance to the research aim an ability to produce significant analysis.

3.16.2. Assessing Credibility of the Research

The researcher will make any requested information about the study available upon request from a relevant party. All non-confidential information such as academic materials which were accessed and anonymised interview transcripts are included.

Chapter 4 - Results and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the findings of the data collected, analyse these findings and will present them in the form of themes and categories. Raskind et al., (2018) argues that data analysis is one of the more prominent features of qualitative research and yet is the least understood component of this research style. This analysis will be conducted on the data gathered from nine semi-structured interviews. These themes and categories will then be assessed, analysed and discussed with reference to appropriate literature.

4.2. Overview of Participants

All interview participation was secured on a voluntary basis, and participants were verbal throughout the interview, voicing numerous relevant opinions. Each participant was able to listen to the question being asked and to provide engaging information which was relevant to the topic being discussed. The researcher noted that shorter answers were being received from the participants whose interviews were being conducted over the phone and so, made use of the probing questions which were set out to encourage participants to get into more detail and share their experiences and/or opinions.

4.3. Main Research Objectives

The main objective of this research project was to gain managers' perspectives of Millennials in the workplace and on retention of this specific generation. Through completing this research, it is hoped that the information gathered will help shape management techniques used when working with Millennials in the future, and aid in the understanding, creation and implementation of retention initiatives designed to help reduce Millennial turnover rates in the workplace.

4.4. Sub Objective 1 - Generational Differences

To explore manager's perspectives on generational differences in the workplace. To gain their opinions on generational behaviour traits and to acquire information on their experience of managing multiple generations and whether this has an affect on the workplace.

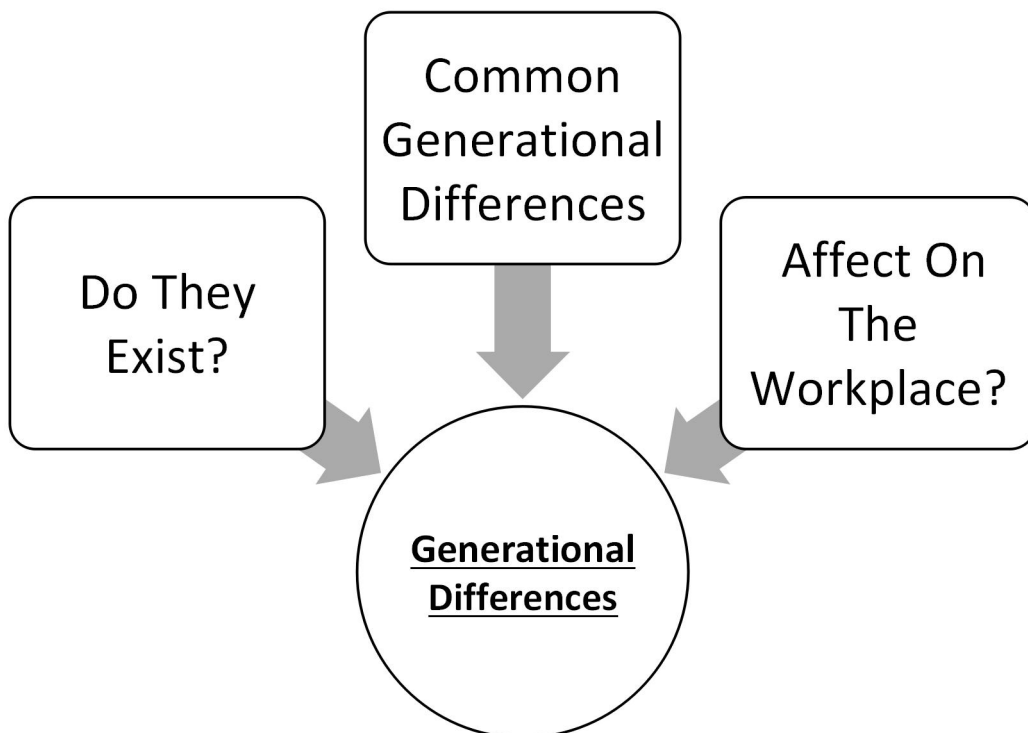


Table 2 - Sub Objective 1

4.4.1 Do Generational Differences exist?

Participants were initially asked if they manage different generations in the workplace to which they all indicated that they do. In the literature, there is conflicting evidence surrounding whether or not generational differences exist. Managers are exposed to a growing amount of literature surrounding how generations should be acknowledged in the workplace and if people should be managed in various ways based on the generation they belong to (Cucina et al., 2018). Therefore, participants were asked to outline their experience of

generational differences in the workplace with almost all contributors noting that generational differences are clearly evident in the workplace.

“I definitely have seen generational differences in the workplace. Habits we have and ways in which we approach work is all linked to the generation we belong to and the way we were raised. “

“Yes, there are differences between the generations which I notice every day such as their mannerisms, their attitudes and the way in which they approach their work. “

One participant expressed a lack of interest in observing generational differences, instead noting that all employees should be recognised as individuals regardless of their generation.

“people in the workplace need to be seen as the individuals they are. All staff conduct themselves very well, regardless of what generation they are from.”

Rudolph and Zacher (2018) argue that the idea of generational differences in the workplace is nothing more than a management fad used to categorise people based on their age rather than their abilities. The data collected through this research disagrees with this literature, denoting that generational differences do in fact exist in the workplace and that managers need to alter their management approaches to reflect the generation they are focusing on.

“you have to support your staff and if the management style you are using is not conducive to that, you must alter your approach to suit the generation - that is crucial”

Through the examination of manager’s perceptions of the existence of generational differences in the workplace, the research has found that variations between generations exist and that they are consistent with the generation to which an individual belongs. These findings are in line with

common literature which denotes the importance of studying and taking generational differences on board. Weeks and Schaffert (2019) criticised studies on generational differences due to the general lack of certainty surrounding this area, however this study has found that generational differences are evident in the modern workplace and that management recognise the need to adapt management styles in order to work with various generations.

4.4.2 Common Generational Differences

Participants were then asked to outline and give examples of some specific generational differences they have experienced in the workplace. The most common answer given was in relation to Millennial's advanced computer and IT skills. Managers noted that the younger generation were much quicker in this area and noted the fact that they have been surrounded by technology for the majority of their lives as a possible reason for this.

"a stark difference is computer literacy. Millennials have brilliant computer skills and can actually teach me stuff which is great, but the latter ages don't."

"The younger people are a lot more knowledgeable with all of the IT systems...whereas an older person is a lot more cautious."

One participant expressed concern around Millennial's use of technology and the influence it is having on their perceptions and their expectations in the workplace.

"Millennials are a lot faster in terms of IT skills but...tend to rush a lot and at times can make mistakes because they want to get things done quickly. I think this is because of the technology that they have grown up with, they expect everything to be instant."

Another common generational difference that was noted by managers was Millennials' positive attitude and ambition. Managers acknowledged that the

younger generation are more positive about the future than their older colleagues and that they are more adaptable and open to change.

“I find Millennials very very ambitious and are more inquisitive than the older generation.”

“Millennials tend to be more positive about the future and open to change than previous generations would have been.”

Carter and Walker, III (2018) add caution stating that Millennial’s openness and readiness to share their views and opinions can often be misinterpreted as this generation demonstrating how entitled and unfocused they are when really, they are just seeking purpose and meaning in their work. Millennial’s positive attitudes and ambition were commonly noted by participants as a positive generational trait not frequently seen in previous generations. This research finding agrees with the literature and denotes that Millennials are a positive generation who seek value and meaning in their work through positively seeking purpose and displaying strong ambition in the workplace. This research details that Millennials display independence and a strong drive for better in the workplace, something not seen as commonly in older generations.

A negative generational difference which participants discussed was Millennial’s use of their mobile phones during working hours and differences in behaviour and appropriate workplace etiquette. Managers noted a general lack of understanding among the Millennial generation on how to appropriately behave in the workplace, especially in relation to mobile phone use during working hours.

“Their phones! I have found that Millennial’s phones are almost permanently glued to their hands which isn’t the way it should be when at work.”

“One thing I find very strange is their use of their mobile phones while at work. I think it comes across as quite rude as far as the older generation would be concerned but it is just normal to them.”

Managers’ perspectives agree with common literature which raises questions around Millennial’s integrated use of technology in the workplace and in their personal lives and how this affects the workplace. Managers expressed concern around Millennial’s lack of understanding on the appropriate use of mobile phones and technology. Johnson (2015) argues that the advancements of technology in our modern world and its integration into almost all aspects of our lives has somewhat blurred the line between work and personal life, particularly when focusing on the Millennial generation.

4.4.3. How Do Generational Differences Affect The Workplace?

Managers were asked for their opinion on whether or not they felt that these generational differences had an influence on the workplace as a whole. All participants indicated that their experience of managing different generations in the workplace has been a positive.

“I find working with Millennials and having a mix of generations and talents in the workplace is great and I really think it is important...because there is a lot that both generations can teach each other. “

“The youth that the Millennials bring to the office is a very positive thing about their generation. The mix of generations brings an element of fun and banter to the office that would be missed if we only had people from an older generation. “

Other varying comments were added by two participants which suggested that although having different generations working together is positive because of what they can learn from each other, they felt that Millennials’ ambition and hunger to progress in their careers can cause workplace stress and tension.

“Millennials are very enthusiastic...about career progression but when they move up the ladder quite quickly I then have to deal with the rath of that for the people who are here long term. It causes huge resentment, stress and jealousy I suppose among older team members.”

“ To be frank, there is huge resentment. Particularly if someone has been here fifteen or twenty years and someone new comes in and three months later they are promoted. They feel like the company has been disloyal to them by promoting the young person first even though...they won't have even applied for the new job.”

Overall this research found that having a mix of generations in the workplace is positive. Participants voiced that Millennials bring youth to the workplace in the same way that older generations bring expertise and wisdom. It was noted that having a mix of generations in the workplace gives way to joint learning and collaboration. Campione (2015) argues that Millennials lack skills such as abilities around how to socialise in the workplace and how to negotiate their positions in the company which past generations had gained earlier in life. This research agrees with this literature, and suggests that a variation of skills in the workplace is positive as everyone can bring something new and learn from their colleagues.

Interestingly, this research raised another point which was also illustrated in the literature. Sinha and Kshatriya (2016) state that the amalgamation of generations in a workplace setting is rising which could give way to an increase in stress and adversity, especially where Millennials are concerned. Responses from participants in this research mirrored similar opinions. Two participants highlighted that stress and tension can be stirred in the workplace through Millennial's drive for career progression. A possible reason for this was highlighted as Millennials' quick tendencies to progress, leaves older team members feeling they have been overlooked, which causes resentment towards this generation to build.

4.5 Sub Objective 2 - Millennials In The Workplace

To explore managers' perspectives of Millennials in the workplace, how they have observed Millennials interacting with their colleagues and how they behave in a workplace setting.

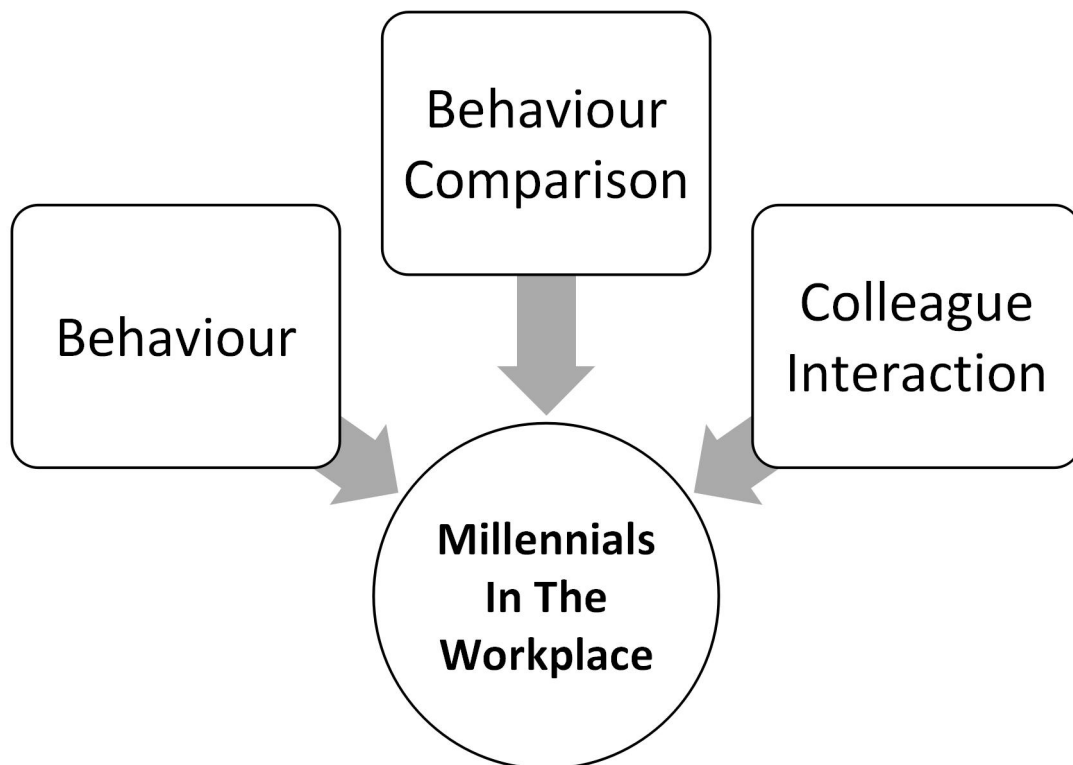


Table 3 - Sub Objective 2

4.5.1. Behaviour

The participants were asked how they have experienced Millennials behaving in the workplace, aiming to gain a more in depth understanding of how Millennials conduct themselves in a work environment. The theme 'behaviour' was selected as result of studying Millennials in various environments and how, in the literature, generational differences are said to affect how each generation's demeanor.

"I find Millennials are very ambitious, and because of their ambition, are more inquisitive."

"Millennials are not afraid of anything. There is nearly an element of arrogance around them but in actual fact it isn't arrogance, it is just confidence."

Ambition was noted as a strong characteristic which the Millennial generation exert in the workplace, however one participant noted that their ambition was not always beneficial.

"I find that there is ambition among this generation in particular, however with ambition comes impatience and perhaps, not fully throwing themselves into the roles because they know they are going to be moving on sooner rather than later."

The participants praised how the Millennials on their team or in their department worked well and actively contributed to the overall workforce.

"I think the youth and energy that the Millennials bring to the office is a very positive thing about their generation."

"They are very open when it comes to taking on board new ideas or approaches because they are driven by career progression."

It is evident from this research that Millennials contribute well to the workplace and have a willingness to learn and progress their careers. Campione (2015) noted that Millennials tend to look out for themselves more than taking a team approach. This research provided contrasting results in this regard, with participants stating that Millennials work well with other generations and bring youth and energy to the workplace. However, Campione (2015) also argued

that Millennials place high value on extrinsic values in the workplace, a generational trait which was also identified by the participants of this study. This research found that Millennials are very ambitious and eager to progress which often results in this generation being resented by older generations because of the rewards they receive for being ambitious and going after what they want.

4.5.2. Behaviour Comparison

Participants were asked how Millennials' behaviour compares to that of previous generations. From reviewing the manager's perceptions of how Millennials behave in the workplace, it became evident that their experience of working with this generation has been mixed. From this, the researcher found that examining the correlation around how Millennials' behaviour compared to previous generations was a key theme which needed to be explored.

"I think Millennials are more innovative and have more of a hunger than the older generation and are more keen to take risks when it comes to their career."

"They are a lot more open and adaptable, probably because they have grown up in a fast paced, changeable environment. Someone from an older generation might struggle with change a lot more and it may take them longer to adapt to the changes being made."

Managers also noted some negative aspects of Millennials' behaviour in comparison to older generations. Participants went into great detail on positive and negative elements of this generation and did not require prompting from the researcher. It was implied that Millennials display an air of confidence which does not always bid in their favour.

“There is nearly an element of cockiness around them but in actual fact it isn’t cockiness, it is just confidence. I find Millennials are really not afraid of anything.”

“Millennials tend to lack confidence around asking questions. I think they don’t want to come across as being stupid...and this can affect them negatively.”

Participants noted a need to alter their management style to cater for various generations in the workplace. This is consistent with the literature as Kilber, Barclay and Ohmer (2014) argue that it is important that management take note of the research surrounding the adaptation of management styles to work with specific generations.

“With the older generations you have to be a lot more accommodating from a training point of view. Newer people tend to be a lot more open to changes and adapting to the way things are done.”

“Millennials are very well educated and are very good workers but it does take a bit longer for them to get into the swing of work and actually settle into their roles. As a manager you have to allow for this and help them to find their feet.”

The participants showed enthusiasm when discussing positive aspects of Millennials’ behaviour, however it became apparent that the participants felt that Millennials were lacking in a multitude of skills which previous generations displayed in abundance. It was noted that they lack experience in the workplace and would benefit from mastering one role, and learning everything they can from it before moving on to the next. This point was also illustrated throughout the literature with Campione (2015) noting that Millennials are lacking in many basic skills which are required in the workplace, and Naim and Lenka (2018) questioning the role of the organisation in helping Millennials to gain such skills that past generations gained earlier in life. It is evident from this research that although Millennials have many positive traits, they would benefit from mastering the basic skills

which are required to progress productively in the workplace before progressing to more senior roles.

“Millennials are quite impatient and want to progress and move up quickly...sometimes too quickly. Often they haven't mastered the post they are in before they are looking to move on to bigger and better things.”

“Millennials are not afraid to move on and don't have as much company loyalty as you would see with the older generation.”

4.5.3. Colleague Interaction

Participants were next challenged with thinking about how Millennials interact with their colleagues. Hints of this theme were suggested by participants in previous questions, however the researcher felt that it required further inspection and study. Some participants were able to provide detail on how Millennials interact with different generations in the workplace specifically while others failed to identify any specific ways in which Millennials communicate or cooperate with their work partners.

“Millennials can be slightly disengaged at times because of their focus and ambitions on moving forward and because of this, don't tend to get as involved in the workplace and with their colleagues as older generations may have done.”

“I find Millennials 'clickish'. I have found that the majority seem to click together regarding behaviours, social behaviours and the likes. They tend to go out together and not include others. “

The responses from this research suggest that Millennials can be removed from the workplace population and can tend to stick together. Millennials' desire to progress and move quickly up the ranks was suggested through the

literature as a possible reason for their general lack of deep engagement with colleagues. The research is in line with the literature, suggesting that older workers are generally of the opinion that Millennials expect to be given greater responsibility much quicker than had been done in the past which could give way to resentment.

This participant feedback contradicts the earlier feedback which stated that generations work well together in the workplace and learn from each other.

4.6. Sub Objective 3 - Retention Of Millennials

To explore managers' perspectives on retention of members of the Millennial generation. Exploring if they have issues retaining this generation, specific reasons they have experienced which could provide an explanation for this, and areas they feel would be useful to focus on when implementing a retention initiative specifically aimed at reducing turnover rates of this generation.

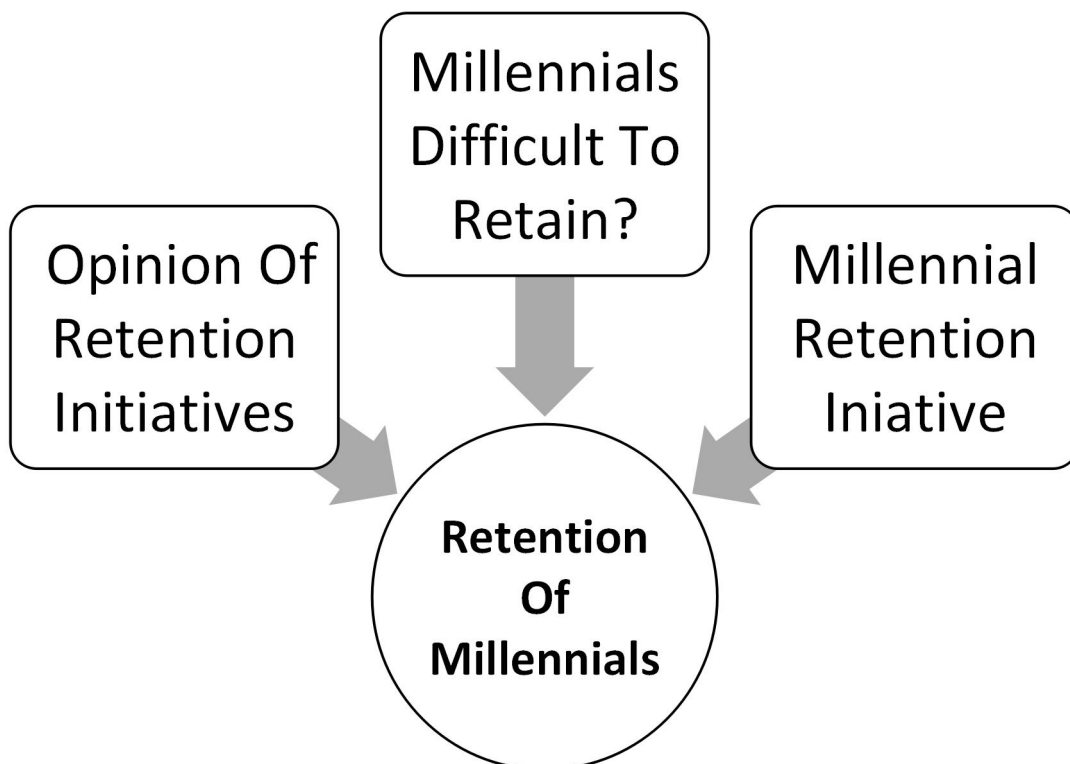


Table 4 - Sub Objective 3

4.6.1. Manager's Opinion Of Retention Initiatives

The opinion of the participants toward the use of retention initiatives was central to each interview. All of the managers illustrated their views on the benefits which retention initiatives could have on the staff turnover rates of their departments. Not all managers had previous experience implementing retention initiatives, however, all participants expressed that anything which could be introduced to discourage staff from leaving their positions would be a positive step. As all managers work in the public sector, concern was raised around the possible implementation of a retention initiative. Managers expressed that they don't always have the freedom to bring in changes and as a result, have not been able to employ programmes which may stop staff from moving on to another position elsewhere.

"I am all for anything that helps you to try and keep your staff!"

"I think it is absolutely vital! We are losing good staff all the time so retention initiatives are so important so we can try to keep them."

One manager expressed doubt around the use of retention initiatives, suggesting that they are only productive when the reward being offered to employees is great and this is not sustainable for many businesses.

"I think that retention initiatives only work when a company can offer a 'golden carrot' - something the employee cannot afford to turn down or walk away from which not many companies could afford to do."

There was a contrast in opinion, with a further two participants expressing doubt around the use of retention initiatives and questioning the benefit they

provide to the employee. It was implied that retention initiatives can be introduced but that they are not enough to retain all staff.

“they can be very positive, but an awful lot are a bit of a ‘box-ticking’ exercise for companies which doesn’t benefit the worker. But I think they are great as long as they are equal and fair to all employees. “

“The grass will always be greener on the other side for many people so no matter what retention initiative you put in place you wont be able to keep everyone.”

From this data, it can be denoted that managers have a positive opinion of retention initiatives as long as they are designed and implemented correctly, and that there is a place for the introduction of such initiatives in the workplace. McKeon Ramirez and Harrison (2018) caution that an increase in the number of options available combined with the increase in education levels of the Millennial generation is resulting in a generation who can and will leave a position or company if it simply doesn’t feel like a ‘good fit’. Participants reiterated this point, noting the importance of retaining good staff but suggested that care is required with retention initiatives as they can be a ‘box-ticking’ exercise for many companies which is not beneficial for staff.

4.6.2. Have Managers Experienced Difficulty In Retaining Millennials?

As a key theme of the research surrounds the retention of Millennials, participants were asked to provide details of their own experience of retaining staff, in particular members of the Millennial generation. Mixed views were presented with the majority noting that there have been multiple promotional opportunities recently which has caused difficulty in retaining staff.

“Yes, massive problems! Lately we have had huge promotional opportunities, which is great...but I have to deal with the rath of that for the people who are here long term.”

“Absolutely because we are losing good staff all the time, in particular those from the Millennial generation because of the increasing number of promotions available.”

However, not all participants noted problems retaining Millennials. Some managers noted positive aspects of the job which they feel are strong factors which help to retain young Millennials who may be saving for a mortgage or starting a family.

“I don’t have problems retaining Millennials because the fact that there is huge job security and a stable pension in most of our jobs as a big plus when it comes to retaining staff.”

“we don’t have a massive problem retaining Millennials unless they are in on a temporary contract and may move in order to get a permanent job within the organisation.”

These split opinions on the retention of Millennials provides a contrasting view than that shown in the literature. A survey carried out by Deloitte in 2019 which gained the insights of 13,416 people across 42 countries, found that more than 43% of Millennials seen themselves leaving their jobs within two years of starting and that only a further 28% seen themselves staying longer than five years (Deloitte, 2019). These statistics denote that large scale changes are required in order to retain Millennial staff. However, participants did highlight that the company provides good job security and pension benefits which could serve as the main reason these managers have not all experiences similar issues to those illustrated in the literature.

Participants who indicated that they have issues retaining Millennials were then prompted to provide specific detail on the reasons they felt they were experiencing difficulties in this area.

“I think companies need to start zoning in on the Millennials and make them feel valued, but also learn to work with them and not judge them.”

“They are very ambitious and want to move up the ladder. We can’t always facilitate that as quickly as they would like and they end up moving on as a result.”

Their responses mirrored the literature which also suggested that an increase in the number of choices available has resulted in a generation who has the option to leave a position or company if it simply doesn’t feel like a ‘good fit’ (McKeon Ramirez and Harrison, 2018).

Interestingly, one participant highlighted their thoughts on faults lying within the recruitment model which their company utilised. They outlined that individuals apply and if they are successful, they are placed on a panel. Once a job becomes available, it is offered to them but because of this, many people do not have a say in the department or area in which they are working. This participant noted that this is a reason for the high turnover of Millennial staff - they do not want to work in the areas in which they are placed and end up leaving as a result. Issues with the recruitment process was not identified as a possible reason for high Millennial staff turnover in the literature.

“I think rather than setting up a retention initiative, although they are very beneficial,...it would be better to look into different ways of recruiting...and hopefully we would retain more staff that way because in my opinion, the recruitment process is very flawed.”

4.6.3. Millennial Retention Initiative

Finally, participants were asked to provide suggestions for Millennial retention initiative designs. The most common suggestion was a retention initiative in the area of training and development. Managers noted that Millennials lack the basic skills which would have been seen in previous generations such as communication and people skills.

“I think I would look at development and training the Millennials...they can often lack the basic skills that are needed in the workplace such as proper communication and professionalism so implementing some sort of a personal development course would be great I think.”

“looking at the area of training and development in core skills would be great. Also being able to give people freedom in their work as long as it obviously ties in with the goals of the department of workplace.”

These suggestions are also reflected in the literature. Arredondo-Trapero et al., (2017) argue that Millennials want more than just a job which pays the bills and crave a position that will encourage their growth and development. Participants highlighted the area of training and development which further strengthens the requirement for companies to roll-out training and development programmes as a means of retaining staff.

Another area which was suggested was the design of a performance-related pay increase scheme. Managers noted a lack of review of employee's performance and noted that the introduction of a scheme such as this would help Millennials, to take pride in their work as it was more likely to be recognised.

“introducing something along the lines of performance related pay schemes would be great because we definitely loose people, particularly Millennials because the ambition is there and they want to move up but they end up moving on because they can't get a pay rise.”

“Introducing a performance review system where employees are acknowledged for the work that they do, rather than how they come across on one day of an interview would be brilliant because it would instil more pride in everyone's work if they felt it mattered.”

Further suggestions were made in the form of the possibility of introducing a staff rotation scheme. As previously mentioned, managers have expressed their discontentment with the recruitment process which is used throughout the company. Suggestions were put forward about the possibility of introducing a rotation scheme where staff could get experience in various departments with the hope that they would find an area which suited them and be able to move into working there while staying within the company.

“the introduction of a rotation scheme could be positive as it would incentivise people to join the organisation.”

“Introducing some sort of retention initiative where you could assess people abilities and interests and allowing a rotation into other roles and areas that would suit that individual’s skills, I think that is the only way to achieve retention of staff. “

Finally, participants expressed the need to implement training for managers in order to retain members of the Millennial generation. Participants noted that through a lack of understanding of how to properly manage this generation, managers may be the reason they are leaving.

“providing training for managers in relation to how to deal with this generation is something that could be looked at as a way to retain Millennials!”

“providing training for management would be an important retention initiative because a lot of managers don’t see that supporting staff through the likes of that is their role.”

Chapter 5 - Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results outlined in the previous chapter, aiming to further delve into the reasons behind the results highlighted through the research and the implications they could present for the future. This will be achieved by analysing the gathered responses and discussing their meanings further.

5.2 Objective One Discussion

The first objective of this study was to look further into generational differences in the work place, examining whether managers feel they exist, and to investigate the influence they have on the workplace. In the literature, there are varying opinions on the significance and existence of generational differences. Naim and Lenka (2018), and Campione (2016) both indicate that generational cohorts exist and that differences can be seen throughout groupings in the workplace based on the generation they fall into. Rudolph and Zacher (2018) argue that the idea of generational differences in the workplace is nothing more than a management fad used to categorise people based on their age rather than their abilities.

This research denoted that generational cohorts exist as managers have experienced behaviour differences in the workplace between employees from one generation to the next. As participants outlined their experience of generational differences, they were then asked to give examples of areas in which they felt a large disparity between generations was visible. Their suggestion the Millennials' enhanced IT skills, dependence on technology, and positive attitudes and ambitions are the prime generational differences experienced were in line with the literature. The literature also illustrated that Millennials differ from other generations in these areas. The fact that Millennials depend heavily on technology stems from their upbringing and the fact that they were surrounded by it for most of their lives, while the research

suggests that their ambition stems from generally being raised in financially stable homes with overly supportive parents.

The research points out that generational differences affect the workplace in a positive way. Participants mentioned the importance of mixing generations as they all bring something different to the workplace and can all learn from each other.

These findings demonstrate how management need to approach different generations in varying ways. The adaptation of management techniques when focusing on a specific generation is crucial and will benefit both the organisation and the employee. Focusing on up-skilling Millennials in the areas which the research has illustrated they are lacking in would also be beneficial for employers. This study also highlights the importance of mixing generations in the workplace and how they can learn from each other.

5.3. Objective Two Discussion

The second objective of this research was to explore how participants have experienced Millennials behaving in the workplace, in a bid to discover more about how Millennials conduct themselves in the workplace. Feedback from managers was positive, with participants highlighting that Millennials are ambitious, that they work well in a team setting, and that they have a strong will for learning and progression. These results are crucial to recognise in this study as they mirror the literature. A study by Baker Rosa and Hastings (2018), illustrated that Millennials have strong aspirations for workplace learning, with increased abilities and sense of enjoyment being noticed during teamwork tasks.

It was interestingly noted in the research that Millennials' ambition, although positive, can sometimes contribute negatively to this generation's reputation as they can come across as arrogant and disengaged due to their will to up the ladder.

This research produced mixed reviews when participants were asked for their view on how Millennials' behaviour compares with that of previous generations, and noted that Millennials were lacking in basic communication and understanding of IT and computer skills which wasn't seen with older generations.

Again, this is coherent with the literature as Naim and Lenka (2018) questioned the role of the organisation in helping Millennials to gain such skills that past generations gained earlier in life.

Participants were also asked to expand on how they have experienced Millennials interacting with their colleagues. Responses centered around Millennials being slightly removed from the workplace population and their desire to progress and move quickly up the ranks. It was interestingly observed that these responses contradict the earlier feedback which stated that generations work well together in the workplace and learn from each other. The literature demonstrates that Millennials' confidence and independence has developed as a direct result of the praise they received from their parents (Civelek et al., 2017), with Thompson and Gregory (2012) also supporting this correlation between workplace behaviours and Millennial's overly sheltered upbringing. It is key to consider Millennials' formative years when studying their workplace behaviours, linking key developmental factors to characteristics they exert in a working environment.

5.4. Objective Three Discussion

The third objective of this study was to explore managers' perspectives on retention of members of the Millennial generation, examining issues around retaining this generation, and specific reasons for this requirement. Overall, the response from managers on the use of retention initiatives was positive, with a hint of scepticism from some who voiced concerns over the legitimacy of such initiatives and others raising concern around how they benefit the employee more than the company. Overall the data was in line with popular literature which states that managers must look to implementing new

initiatives to retain their staff (Campione, 2015), as the perceptions employees hold of their company can heavily influence their attitudes and opinions towards work (Kwong, 2017).

Interestingly, managers did not all express difficulties with retaining staff but noted that this is related to the security their company offers their staff which is rarely seen elsewhere. These findings slightly contradict the literature which strongly states that companies are struggling to retain Millennials. A Deloitte study in 2019 highlighted that over 43% of Millennials seen themselves leaving their jobs within two years of starting and that only a further 28% see themselves staying longer than five years (Deloitte, 2019). These statistics denote that large scale changes are required in order to retain Millennial staff. However, this research did not fully reflect this literature. Participants suggested areas for company improvement with a view to help retain Millennials as implementing a retention initiative in the area of training and development which was also reflected in the literature as Arredondo-Trapero et al., (2017) argue that Millennials crave a position that will encourage their growth and development. Participants also highlighted performance related pay schemes, and a staff rotation scheme as possible methods to retain Millennials which were noted by the researcher as very specific suggestions for the particular company in which the participants were employed.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the conclusions drawn from the research completed through this study. This will be completed by analysing all of the gathered information from the previous chapters and the literature review to find an overall conclusion of the study. Recommendations for further research will be determined which will outline areas for further examination in the area of Millennials in the workplace and retention of Millennials.

6.2.1. Objective One Conclusion

Generational differences exist and have a positive influence on the workplace

From examining the primary research, the researcher noted that generational differences exist and that they have a positive influence on the workplace. It became clear that participants felt that generational differences exist among their multi-generational team as they gave their personal opinion on which areas they felt generational differences are most visible. They noted advanced computer and IT skills within the Millennial generation as the most common generational differences they have experienced. Millennials' positive attitude and ambition was also frequently noted. Managers acknowledged that the younger generation are more positive about the future than their older colleagues and that they are more adaptable and open to change. Over the years, literature and studies surrounding generational differences have been criticised due to the lack of certainty around whether generational differences and similarities are even worth studying at all (Weeks and Schaffert, 2019). Rudolph and Zacher (2018) argue that the idea of generational differences in the workplace is nothing more than a management fad used to categorise people based on their age rather than their abilities.

It became clear from this research that participants felt that generational differences do exist in the workplace.

Participants were also asked to reveal their experience of the affect that generational differences have on the workplace. All responses were positive, but interestingly, some varying comments were added by two participants which suggested that although having different generations working together is positive because of what they can learn from each other, they felt that Millennials' ambition and hunger to progress in their careers can cause workplace stress and tension. Sinha and Kshatriya (2016) made reference to this point also noting that the amalgamation of generations in a workplace setting is rising and that this could give way to an increase in stress and adversity, especially where Millennials are concerned.

From this data, the researcher has concluded that it is important that managers who are responsible for multi-generational teams take into account the generational differences which they may experience and how the implications of these differences may influence management styles and techniques they need to use.

6.2.2. Objective One Recommendations

As this research has shown that generational differences exist, it is recommended that managers study the generations in their department and use the noted traits of these generations to adapt management styles and techniques to suit their employees. It is also recommended that managers look at the benefits which can come from integrating generations in the workplace and consider mixing employees so they can learn from each other.

From this conclusion, it is recommended that organisations begin to consider giving managers time to study the management styles they currently use, the generations they have in their department, the varying traits which are aligned with these generations, and to work towards adapting management techniques to best manage their employees.

It is recommended that this process takes place over a one year period. During the initial three months, managers should receive two days off from their usual schedule per month to study generational traits and to consider the management styles which they are using. Following from this, it is recommended that managers roll out an initial six month trial period during which management styles are altered to fit various generations in the workplace. After this six month trial, employees will be asked to email feedback on the changes in management styles to their managers. Changes should be made based on this feedback to further alter and customise management styles to suit the employee population in each department. The final three months will see the amended management styles used throughout the work environment and again, employees will be surveyed after this period to measure the results of this pilot project.

For the organisation, implementing these recommendations will incur some costs. Firstly, allowing managers two days per month for three months to study generational traits and management styles will cost the organisation €85 per manager per day. Therefore, if the nine participants of this study followed through on these recommendations, the cost to the organisation would amount to €4,590. The suggested recommendations should not result in any further costs to the organisation. It is anticipated that the implementation of these recommendations should result in higher staff retention rates as employees should feel valued and more satisfied with their positions which were highlighted in the literature as possible reasons why it is difficult to retain staff.

6.3.1. Objective Two Conclusion

Millennials bring positive elements to the workplace and interact well with colleagues

From examining the research gathered through this study, the researcher concluded that Millennials contribute positively to the workplace and that they

interact well with their colleagues from other generations. It was noted that Millennials are very ambitious, flexible and they embrace change. Managers noted the youth and energy that Millennials bring to the workplace and welcomed their fresh approaches and ideas. However, it was also highlighted that Millennials can lack confidence and their ambition can cause them to be impatient and not willing to stay in a position long enough to fully master it before moving on.

Respondents revealed that Millennials can be quite tightly-knit and, at times, tend not to mingle with other generations. Millennial's ambition and strong desire to progress their careers was stated as a possible reason for their disengagement by participants

From this study, the researcher has concluded that Millennials are valued and valuable in the workplace, and possess positive traits from which other generations can learn. It is important therefore, that Millennials are given the opportunity to stage these positive traits in the workplace and are encouraged by management to interact and engage with their co-workers.

6.3.2. Objective Two Recommendations

From the research it has become evident that Millennials bring positive aspects to the workplace and that they blend well with colleagues from older generations. Therefore it is recommended that managers take note of the positive influence that Millennials can have in an organisation and value their presence in the workplace.

This conclusion leads to recommendations that organisations should promote positive attitudes towards Millennials and should subscribe to the benefits this young generation can bring to the workplace. It is recommended that this is achieved through the circulation of emails from the organisation to managers shining a light on the positive aspects of having Millennials in the workplace. It is also recommended that a one day training day is made available to all managers who have Millennials on their team to educate them on the general traits of this generation, how they behave in the workplace, the positive

elements they can add to an organisation and ways in which managers can get the most from their Millennial employees.

For the organisation, implementing this course will cost €250 per head so carrying out training for the nine study participants would amount to €2,250. It is hoped that from this training course, managers would gain a more in-depth understanding of the Millennial generation, the positive elements they can bring to the workplace and details on how they interact with their colleagues. This would benefit organisations by having more educated, understanding and supportive managers, a lack of which was noted as a possible reason why Millennials move on in their careers.

6.4. Objective Three Conclusion

Managers are having some issues retaining Millennials and have mixed views on the benefits on the of introduction of retention initiatives

From studying the research, it was clear that participants had varied views and opinions on this research objective. Around half of the participants noted that they are struggling to retain Millennials and suggested a recent internal recruitment drive which provided multiple opportunities for staff within the organisation to progress their careers as a possible reason for this. It is important to note that the managers who indicated that they did not have problems retaining Millennial staff, also made reference to the recent recruitment drive but seemed not to consider staff leaving for internal promotional opportunities equal to staff leaving for various other reasons.

When asked about their perceptions of retention initiatives, again the responses were varied. Some participants expressed their willingness to the idea, stating that anything which could be utilised to retain Millennial staff would be a positive improvement, while others expressed their distaste towards initiatives such as this, describing them simply as an organisational

'box-ticking' exercise. Overall, the perceptions expressed in relation to the introduction of a Millennial focused retention initiative were mixed.

Managers suggested the implementation of performance related pay schemes, job rotation schemes, training for managers on how to work with Millennial staff, and training and development programmes for Millennial staff in the areas of communication and professionalism skills as possible Millennial retention initiatives.

As the results in this section were quite varied, the researcher has concluded that further research into this area is required.

6.4.2. Objective Three Recommendations

This research has shown that managers are experiencing some issues retaining Millennials. Managers who indicated that they do not have problems retaining Millennials highlighted that they felt this was due to the security which their company offers workers. Therefore, it is recommended that managers who work in organisations that do not offer job security to employees and are experiencing issues retaining Millennials consider implementing initiatives such as performance related pay schemes, job rotation schemes, training for managers on how to work with Millennial staff, and training and development programmes for Millennial staff in the areas of communication and professionalism skills in order to retain Millennials.

It is recommended that organisations implement trial Millennial retention initiatives over an initial six month period. It is suggested that Millennials will be surveyed before the initiatives are introduced to identify areas they feel organisations are falling down and could cause Millennials to leave their positions in order to customise the initiative to each department. After the initiative, Millennials would be surveyed again to get their opinions on how successful/unsuccessful the initiative was and if it would contribute to their decision on whether or not to stay with the company. If the results are positive,

it is recommended that the initiative is introduced as a more permanent feature of the company, and if the results are negative, it is recommended that the programme is altered in line with the results in order to be more successful.

It is recommended that the company hire a retention initiative expert whose responsibility it will be to research, design, implement and review this initiative. This is foreseen that this cost the company €42,000 to employ a new staff member for one year at the same rate as that of an existing senior officer. This project is estimated to take place over one year and is hoped to benefit the company by seeing a direct reduction in Millennial staff turnover rates as a direct result.

Chapter 7 - Personal Learning Statement

7.1. Personal Learning Statement

Through the completion of this thesis and indeed, the completion of all other elements of this course, I have learned a lot and grown in many ways. I feel that committing to a full time Masters course while working full time was a steep learning curve for me. I will admit that I underestimated the amount of time and effort this course would demand and as a result of this, my organisation and time management skills were tested. I feel like the hardest element for me was going back into full time study after finishing my undergraduate degree almost two years prior to commencing my studies with NCI. During this break I was removed from studying and had to train myself to get back into the flow of research and academic writing which was difficult.

If I was to complete this course again, I feel that I would reduce my working hours in order to have more time to study. I now realise the importance of time and being able to complete my work in an organised manner. If I was to undertake this thesis again, I would aim to have my interviews completed earlier in the process as I now see that this would have helped me to have a clearer structure and focus for the remainder of the research. I would also aim to complete all interviews face-to-face instead of over the phone as I previously mentioned, phone interviews required more probing questions to be used which resulted in a much longer interview process.

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