Impact of Social Work Characteristics on Turnover Intention of Millennials

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Abstract: Organizations are still grappling to understand the nuances of working of millennials so that HRM practices can be upgraded to handle their attraction and retention more effectively. There is an increased interest among practitioners and scholars to understand the impact of social work characteristics on various employee lifecycle touch points in order to make organizations more appealing to young employees. This study aims to empirically test the impact of social work characteristic on turnover intentions of millennials. The study was conducted in a manufacturing company which has various production facilities and sales branches across India with a sample size of 268 respondents. The study uses four social work characteristics – (i) Social support, (ii) Interdependence, (iii) Interaction outside the organization (iv) Feedback from others as antecedent constructs on turnover intention of millennials which is the out-come construct. The findings of the study are consistent with the results of previous researches with significant managerial implications

Keywords :Millennials, Social work characteristic, Turnover intent,

INTRODUCTION

Over the period of time, there have been a huge influx of millennials in the workforce in India and all across the world which has resulted in a paradigm shift of workforce dynamics (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). In India alone, there are around 464 million millennials, which is 35% of its population, that comprise the active young work force who are predominantly below 30 years of age (Rajendram, 2013). Millennials are highly skilled, equipped with unique talents and contributions (Castleberry 1990). Moreover, millennials are innovative, tech-savvy, dynamic and they are required to make sure that the organization always stays on the cutting edge (Dayan 2005).

In the work place, millennials are considered to be more agile; they are ambitious in their career, express high level of creativity; they are goal oriented in their work performance and show strong confidence in their own capabilities (Twenge, 2010). They are bubbled with high levels of self-aspiration, optimism, collaborative approach, and self-esteem (Martin, 2005). Due to high shortage of professional workforce and to leverage their unique agile skills, industry engages millennials at large numbers.

The engagement of millennials into the workplace throws new challenges in the industry. They are considered to be the most advanced generation with high proficiency in digital skills and not too much dependent on organized jobs for their survival, hence they expect a different work culture and social support system in the work place (Buehrer 2001). The millennials, who is entering the workforce, have new and different expectations from work that results in certain level of turmoil affecting the existing HRM process and methods. Though there are changes in employee demographics due to introduction of millennials as employees, the existing HRM practices remain the same and they are less appealing to young employees, causing high level of attrition (Davidson et al., 2011).

The retention tools have to be different and unique for millennials due to their work behaviours which are radical and challenging to the current norms that were established by the existing generation of Baby boomers and Gen X. Since millennials are the largest available pool of work force, organizations cannot avoid recruiting and retaining them for future. Hence all HRM practices that touches employee life cycle of millennials, especially their retention, are highly discussed among HR practitioners and is of highest priority for organizations. Though there are studies which focus on different facets related to retention of young employees, the relationship of social work characteristics on the retention of young employees have not been fully understood by both practitioners and scholars. (Morgeson & Campion, 2003; Seers & Graen, 1984). Hence, more understanding of social characteristics may help organizations and supervisors to manage retention of millennials.

Many organizations are exasperated with the new way of working of the young employees and managers are finding it difficult to manage this younger workforce and ensure their retention (Thompson and Gregory 2012).

The current study addresses the need for further empirical research on impact of social work characteristics on retention of millennials and reorganizes the organizational talent management practices to manage employee retention of millennials (Gelens et al., 2013).

Millennials are the 1990s dot-com stars. The definition of millennials generally refers to the younger employees, generally less than 30 years and includes all those born from 1980s to 1990s (Levenson, 2010). Millennials are brought up during the times of economic advancement and prosperity, and they have been told that they are capable of doing anything which in turn instils confidence among them on their skill sets .

This leads to various work related behaviours such as they are highly techno- savvy, prefer to have an inclusive management style and cultural diversity in workplace; have their own unique ways of interacting in work place- prefer collaboration and open communication, highly self-motivated to exhibit their potentials, avoid micro management and slowness in decision making and yearn for instant feedback on their performance (Naim, 2014, Naim and Lenka, 2017) . These work behaviours are new to the organizations; which bring a unique work culture and the existing HRM practices are not fully equipped to handle such new situations.

The entry of millennials into the workplace brings opportunities as well as challenges to organizations and HRM process. To achieve their best   performances, millennials need to put into challenging jobs that match their unique skills. They have radical expectations from their work environments and tend to quit the organization in case they are not satisfied with the job or work environment. Since retaining millennials is a challenge, companies are using different methods to understand and craft unique ways to capture their perspective of work characteristics. There are evidences that work characteristics impact job satisfaction; influence employee performance in the job, reduce psychological health risks and stress, ensure better employee retention. Researchers try to understand supportive work characteristics of millennials and develop unique methods to address retention concerns of young employees. (Morgeson & Humphrey 2006).

According to (Morgeson & Campion, 2003), there are 3 major categories of work characteristic 1) motivational, 2) social 3) contextual. The first category, motivational work characteristics, is highly studied in the literature and there are evidences about its influence on overall work complexity and employee behaviours in the work place. The second category – social work characteristics – explains the nuances of work performances within the broad social environment and this has not been extensively in the context of work behaviours of millennials. The third category – Contextual work behaviours – explains the impact of physical and environmental context on employees work behaviours. From the literature the social work characteristics have been studied less than the motivational aspects (Morgeson & Campion, 2003; Seers & Graen, 1984), even though social work characteristics impact heavily on work design (Trist & Bamforth, 1951), influence all touch points of employee life cycle and work aspects (Stone & Gueutal, 1985). Hence, the proposed research attempts to study the impact of social work characteristics especially social support, interdependence, interaction outside organization and feedback on the turnover of the millennials.

Social Support

Social support is explained as the degree to the extent the employee expects advice and assistance from others in the organization. It also encompasses the co-operation from supervisor and co-workers in addition to the perceived friendship opportunities at work place (Houtman, Bongers, & Amick, 1998. Previous researches support that social support has a direct positive influence on job satisfaction (Jones, 1989; Limbert, 2004), employee efforts to achieve excellent performances, organisational commitment (Furnham & Walsh, 1991) and even the general well-being (Thompson, 2005). The higher job satisfaction and mental well-being reduce the attrition among employees (Buunk & Verhoeven, 1991). From the above research evidences, it can be reasonably concluded that social support will help the millennials to remain with the organization.

Hypotheses 1: Better social support will negatively influence turnover intentions of millennials

Interdependence

The concept of 'Interdependence' is being explained as the degree to which employees perceive that to complete their job responsibilities they depend on other co-workers and vice versa. Interdependence also refers to inter connection of works i.e connectedness between jobs. There are two types of interdependence – 1) Initiated interdependence - explained as the degree to which work flows from one job to other jobs – 2) Received interdependence – explained as extent of employees' perception where his job is affected by the work from other jobs (Kiggundu, 1981). The millennials tend to collaborate in their work environment as part of learning more and interdependence will ensure team spirit among team members and loyalty to the team. There are research evidences that loyal employees seldom leave the team and organization (M Naim & Lenka 2018). Hence we can reasonably conclude that interdependence will positively influence retention of millennials

Hypotheses 2: Greater Interdependence will negatively influence the turnover intentions of millennials

Interaction outside the organization

The construct Interaction outside the organization is explained as the degree to which employees perceive that they need to interact and communicate with external stake holders as part of their job requirements. The external stake holders can be customers, consultants, suppliers, vendors or any other outside entity. The construct "dealing with others" is similar to the concept in discussion while it solely focusses only on customer interactions that are outside the boundaries of the organization (Sims et al., 1976). Similarly, the concept of "serves the public", proposed by Stone and Gueutal (1985) is also similar to the construct in discussion where it deals with job related interaction with external stake holders. Millennials learn more by interacting with all the stake holders and they crave for opportunities for interaction outside of the organization. Hence we can reasonably conclude that better interaction outside the organization will reduce turnover intentions of millennials

Hypotheses 3:Better interaction outside the organization will negatively impact turnover intentions of millennials

Feedback

Millennials expect continuous and constructive feed-back not only for enhancement of their job performances but also as a timely recognition of their contributions. Feedback is explained as a process whereby employees get timely information about performances of their job, areas for improvements and opportunities for career progression (Hurst and Good, 2009). Initial conceptualization of feedback is more focused on information about job performances (Oldham 1975) but lately the scope of feedback is extended to the inputs not only from superiors but also from others in the team (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Constructive feedback is considered to be the developmental tool that is appreciated by the millennials because they constantly desire for personal and professional development. Hence it can be construed that greater opportunity for feedback from others will reduce turnover intentions of millennials

Hypotheses 4 - Greater opportunity for feedback from others will have negative influence on turnover intentions of millennials

Research Design and Methodology

This research was conceived as a descriptive empirical research and the empirical evidence was gathered using quantitative methods. Empirical research is defined as any research where conclusions of the study are strictly drawn from concretely empirical evidence, and therefore "verifiable" evidence. Quantitative research methods are used to gather information through numerical data. It is used to quantify opinions, behaviours or other defined variables. These are predetermined and are in a more structured format. The goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Therefore, observation and survey tools are often used to gather data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The researcher has employed appropriate quantitative methodologies to test the proposed hypothesis, which were deducted from the existing theories and earlier research works.

Sampling Techniques

This study was conducted in a Manufacturing Company in India which has 6 production units and 154 sales offices across India. Out of 4000+ employees in both production and sales departments, 900 employees represent millennial employees. The researcher used stratified random sampling as the sampling strategy because the company had separate production units and sales function as two distinct groups. Using stratified sampling, the researcher extracted a proportionate representation of the population from the production and sales function (Reynolds et al, 2003). The responses were gathered from 268 millennials within Sales and Production function under the current study, which is approximate 30% of the total millennial strength of the company. Responses of the millennials forming the sample were obtained by administering a carefully designed questionnaire

Dependent and Independent Variables

For the study, the employee turnover intention is considered as the dependent variable and social support, interdependence, interaction outside organization, feedback from others are independent variables

Questionnaire

The researchers used the questionnaire that was developed by Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006 to capture social support environment in the current study. The questionnaire contains 6 items pertained to social support, 6 items pertained to interdependence, 4 items pertained to interaction from outside, 3 items pertained to feedback from others. The employee turnover data were gathered using 4 items from the questionnaire which was developed by (Kelloway et.al., 1999). The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Analysis and Results
Reliability of Scales
There are five constructs in the current study– (i) Social support, (ii) Interdependence, (iii) Interaction outside the organization (iv) Feedback from others. The reliability of scales is conducted using Cronbach's alpha statistical tool before initiating the testing of hypothesis and further analysis. The Cronbach's alpha score is considered to be highly recommended statistical tool to test reliability of scales (a quantitative measure of internal consistency of items within a scale). The Cronbach's alpha score ranges between 0 and 1 and any score which is 0.70 or more are widely accepted in natural science research (Nunnally 1978).

Table 1 Reliability Analysis

Construct	No of items	Cronbach's alpha
Social Support	6	0.737
Interdependence	6	0.762
Interaction outside organization	4	0.860
Feedback from others	3	0.702
Turnover intention	4	0.815

The reported Cronbach's values of the five constructs are more than 0.70 that indicate high degree of internal consistency among items.

TABLE 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-Correlations among Key Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender [b]	0.04	0.19	-									
Age	32.93	7.42	0.10	-								
Education [c]	0.39	0.49	0.11	0.06	-							
Tenure	6.84	6.44	0.16	0.79*	-0.17	-						
Location [d]	2.92	1.76	-0.17	0.01	0.27*	0.22*	-					
Social Support	3.07	0.67	-0.21	-0.05	-0.14	0.06	0.05	-				
Interdependence	4.41	0.42	0.08	0.13	0.18	0.11	0.09	0.18	-			
Interaction outside organization	1.74	0.64	-0.02	-0.18	0.14	0.22*	0.20	0.25*	0.14	-		
Feedback	4.45	0.40	0.07	0.17	0.18	0.14	0.14	0.09	-0.02	0.73*	-	
Turnover Intention	3.75	0.78	-0.31*	-0.338	-0.04	0.28*	-0.01	-0.07*	-0.02	0.05*	-0.02*	

[a] N = 268
[b] 0 = Male, 1 = Female
[c] 0 = Bachelor's degree or lower, 1 = Master's degree or higher
[d] 1 = Chennai, 2 = Perambra, 3 = Pune, 4 = Kalamassery, 5 = All other locations
* p < .05

Hypothesis Testing
Hypothesis 1: Social support negatively impact turnover intentions of millennials
Based on the Pearson's correlation coefficient (r - 0.07, p<.001), it was concluded that there is significant negative relationship between Social support and turnover intention of millennials. Hence we can conclude better social support will reduce turnover intention of millennials employees. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2: Interdependence negatively impact turnover intentions of millennials
Pearson's correlation coefficient (r= -0.02, p=.667) shows that there is no significant negative relationship between Interdependence and turnover intention of millennials . Therefore, hypothesis 2 is not supported

Hypothesis 3: Interaction outside organization negatively impacts turnover intentions of millennials

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r= -0.05, p<.001) shows that Interaction outside organization and employee turnover intentions are negatively significantly correlated. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported.

Hypothesis 4: Feedback from others is negatively related to turnover intentions of millennials
Correlation coefficient is found to be (r= -0.02, p<.001). This means that there is a significant negative correlation between perception for Feedback from others and turnover intention of millennials. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is supported.

DISCUSSIONS
The aim of the current study was to investigate the relationships between social work characteristic which is manifested by social support, interdependence, interaction outside organization and feedback from others and turnover intention of millennials .
The previous researchers have reasonably conclude that social support system from team members was found to be more important than support from the supervisor in retaining young employees (Ganster et al, 1986; Moyle, 1998). In line with previous research, the current study empirically establishes that the social support in the working environment will help the retention of employees especially millennials.
Previous research indicates that the work interdependency will create team bonding and ensure social work environment, hence more chances of retention of employees (Thompson& Gregory 2012). However, the current study could not establish any significant negative relationship between interdependence and turnover intention. The reasons could be sales jobs are more independent and need not have much dependency on other team members.
One of the characteristic of millennials is the aspiration for self-learning & development and they value continuous learning opportunities offered by the organisations as well as external agencies (Lub et al., 2012). In line with previous researches, this study establishes that the interaction outside organization helps the retention of employees.
Previous researches reasonably conclude that young employees strongly look for immediate feedback about their performance and timely recognition of their contributions (Hurst and Good, 2009; Martin, 2005). The feedback is critical component to ensure job satisfaction of millennials and will reduce turnover intentions. In line with previous research, this study establishes that feedback given to employees help their stay with the organization.

Managerial Implications
First, managers should be aware of the influences of social work characteristic of millennials on their decision to stay with the organization. The manager needs to focus continuously on the social parameters such as feedback, social support system to ensure young employees are involved and engaged with their work and stay with the organization for long. It also amplifies the need of managers' sensitivity while ensuring employee retention and maximise their potential.

Limitation
The study considered only one part of work design questionnaire, developed by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) to understand responses of millennials and correlate with their turnover intention. There are other factors which affect employee turnover intention which is not considered under the current study. Though there are many connected variables, the researchers used only limited construct in the current study. In future, more studies are required to test these additional and complex theoretical relationships with more related variables, using the above-mentioned framework as a starting point. A longitudinal approach is better method to overcome these limitations, which may be planned later. However, since most of our results are in line with theory and the total pattern of relationships holds true, results of the current study are noteworthy despite the limitations.

CONCLUSIONS
In line with conventional wisdom and previous research evidence, the study empirically tested that the social work characteristics such as social support at work place, interaction outside organization, receiving feedback from others have negative relation with millennials turnover intent. However, the interaction outside organization could not prove any significant influence on millennials turnover intention.

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