

Investigation on Career Development, Work-Life Balance and Workplace Design Towards Millennials Work Engagement in India: Post-Pandemic Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between career development, work-life balance, and workplace design, with a particular focus on millennials' work engagement. This study aimed to examine factors that engage millennial employees, who work in the private sector in India during the post-pandemic phase. A quantitative research design was used in this study and primary data were gathered using an online survey questionnaire. A random sampling method was adopted for data collection and 133 respondents were gathered. Findings revealed that while there is a positive relationship between millennial employee engagement with career development and workplace design, the association between work-life balance and millennial employee engagement was found to be insignificant. As the subject of study is still new, this study would contribute to the existing literature and the theories of millennial employee engagement in the Indian setting. It is, however, essential to note that the findings are based on limited responses and hence there cannot be any generalisation. Focusing on developing a strategy to promote engagement amongst employees at the workplace, especially after the post-pandemic amongst the millennials to enhance their work engagement.

Keywords: *Work Engagement, Career Development, Work-Life Balance, Workplace Design*

1.0 Introduction

In the modern and progressive workplace, three generations of the workforce, i.e., Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y have established their footprints with significant impact on almost all industries. With baby boomers' retirement and Gen X inching towards retirement, the Gen Y, otherwise known as the Millennials, are taking over. Therefore, it is an utmost importance to understand the differences between generations and the distinct ways of engaging them. Otherwise, misunderstanding of behaviour and thought patterns can be very detrimental to employee performance and organisational growth.

Past studies have investigated the relationship between millennial employee engagement and career development, work-life balance, and workplace design (Patil & Peshave, 2020;

Waworuntu, et.al., 2022; Alam, et.al., 2019). However, there is still a dearth of literature on millennial employee engagement in the post-pandemic phase. This study was intended to fill the gap by examining factors that can keep millennial employees consistent in working with an organisation, even in the context of changing corporate scenarios post covid. Findings from this study will aid managers, specifically in the HR department with an understanding of how millennials have influenced the disciplines of management and are becoming the cause of a full-scale overhaul in traditional approaches.

1.1 Millennial Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the extent to which employees are committed to their organisation, how hard they work, and how long they stay in the organisation, because of the commitment (Hurtienne et.al., 2021). Engagement occurs when employees are willing to contribute their effort which drives them toward attaining organisational goals (Kwon & Kim, 2019). Engaged employees are more diligent, highly motivated, and fully immersed in their jobs (Ana, 2021).

The level of engagement among Gen Y arouses many concerns, especially in the context of the observed tendency to give up jobs (Rahmawati & Antonio, 2022) and this is becoming increasingly significant because Gen Y employees' engagement is low, and they lack motivation for hard work (Mendryk, 2018). There is a higher possibility for millennials who display their innate phenomenon of hopping jobs frequently, to cooperate with their colleagues and co-employees and are looking forward to spending quality time, if they are well engaged (Pandey, 2019). A study by Na-Nan (2021), found that there is a positive interaction between employee engagement and commitment to the organisation.

Ramli & Soelton (2019) claimed that millennials focus on a career that provides them not only flexibility in their day-to-day life but also contentment in performing a job. In addition to that Emilisa (2022) found that employees feel engaged and committed to the organisation only if there is a prospect for self-development and career development. While on flexibility, Mahmoud (2021), reported that millennials have purportedly seen their boomer and Gen X parents work long hours, only to fall victim to corporate downsizing, frequent layoffs, and a high divorce rate. As a result of this, Puspitasari and Darwin (2021) discovered that millennials are more prone to negotiating the terms under which they work, and demand work-life balance at every stage of their careers.

1.2 Characteristics of Millennial Employees

Millennials are labelled as flexible, adaptable, and most tech-savvy among the current generations in the workplace (Haasan, et.al., 2019). Digital natives as the millennials are otherwise known, are influenced by external factors including culture, education, and political and legal elements while the internal factors consist of family background and social interactions which are both distinct and different from the previous generations (Pasko, et.al., 2020). Millennials are increasingly interested in looking at the company's values and mission and want to work for those firms that go beyond simply making money.

The millennials are a generation that has witnessed their predecessors - the baby boomers and Gen X experience utmost burnout and subsequently, stress because of work pressure. With regard to this, they are more likely to negotiate the terms under which they work and demand work-life balance at every stage of their careers (Waworuntu, et.al., 2022). A high turnover in millennial employees is evident where 70% change their job within two years after joining (Aponsu, et.al., 2021). Millennials are easily dissatisfied with their work but are extremely tough to be engaged.

Additionally, they do not like to be directed have a low tolerance for less-than-challenging work, and often perform poorly in high-volume and non-stimulating work (Sessoms-Penny, et.al., 2022).

As for the Indian setting, the millennial employees at the workplace are different from their previous generations and are more concerned about their personal growth along the corporate ladder (Bhatia, et.al., 2022). In a country like India, the imminent retirement of many boomers is leading to a crisis of employees in most organisations, requiring employers to recruit and engage the younger generations who hold significantly different values and expectations of the generation of workers that preceded them. Also, some studies argue that Indian millennials expect their employers to judge them based on their skills and creativity and prefer doing tasks by themselves (Menon & Paul, 2019). Indian millennials expect their organisation to make full use of their skills and they prefer to get their job complete the task on their own rather than having to collaborate.

1.3 Post-Pandemic Phase

Some major changes were brought about with regard to the conventional approaches in the workplace in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Work from home took over the traditional methods, with many work processes occurring through the internet and digital means (Gangwar & D'costa, 2021). Work from home has become mandatory overnight with little or no preparation given to employees. Software and applications such as Zoom, Skype, and MS Teams have replaced physical workspaces, face-to-face interactions, and collaborations (Rakovic. et.al., 2022).

This drastic shift in work paradigms evolved as an overwhelming change for most employees that led to a significant impact on corporate cultures. While the progressive workplace did have a digital workspace in place even pre-pandemic, their use and acceptance were considerably limited only to a handful of organisations.

In the wake of post-covid, organisations are now vigorously required to focus on hybrid modes to deliver digitally so that time and place do not constrain the employees as the accelerated digital trends and accessibility that were developed during the pandemic (Trenerry, et.al., 2021). This phenomenon forms the contemporary work culture in the post-pandemic phase. The shift from traditional to unconventional approach is substantially evident in the private sector in the Indian context with significant advantages and challenges. Practices that were once debated and considered to be employee-friendly policies such as work-from-home, virtual teams, and collaborations became mandatory practices causing overwhelming anxiety to the unequipped employees (Andrade & Lousa, 2021).

This phenomenon only added to the existing challenges of engaging millennial employees. Even in the post-pandemic phase, employee engagement was found to be steadily decreasing (Surma, et.al., 2021), with many employees refusing to resume onsite work instead of hybrid and online methods (Uru, et.al., 2022).

2.0 Methodology

The motivation of the study is to investigate the post-pandemic employee engagement among millennial employees within the Indian private sector. Primary data was gathered through a survey questionnaire which was circulated to the respondents through the internet and electronic media. A total of 133 responses were gathered and the respondents were between the age range of 25-42 years old. Predictors used in this study were career development, work-

life balance, and workplace design, to predict employee engagement amongst millennials in India.

To measure the predictors, i.e., career development, work-life balance, and workplace design 5 items were used. There were also 5 items used to measure employee engagement. All the measurements were taken through a 5-point Likert scale. Items for career development were adapted from Brusoni (2012) and items for work-life balance were adopted from Swarnalatha (2013). While items for workplace design were adopted from Sultan, et.al., (2016) and items for employee engagement were adopted from Mohsen (2016).

Probability techniques were employed in this study. As such, the survey was conducted using a simple random sampling. This technique gave an equal chance to the target population to be selected, in completing the questionnaire. This technique has helped to obtain valid and reliable information from the respondents as there was no selection of respondents to give a manipulated response.

3.0 Findings

For the demographic profile, out of the 133 respondents, 74.4% of the respondents were from South India while 25.6% were from North India. 63.2% were male while 36.8% were female. On age statistics, 23.3% were between the range of 25-29 years old, 22.6% belonged to the age range of 30-34 years old, 25.6% belonged to 35-39 years old, and 28.5% belonged to the age range of 40-42 years old. For the statistics on work experience, 14.3% of the respondents had less than 3 years of experience, 13.5% had 3-5 years of experience and 72.2% had more than 5 years of experience. For the designation in their current organisation, 12% of the respondents did not answer while 21.1% belonged to junior management. 33.8% belonged to mid-management, 27.8% belonged to senior management and 5.3% belonged to specialists.

A reliability test was conducted on the data to ascertain the internal consistency of scale with the samples. Findings from the reliability test showed that the Cronbach Alpha for the dependent variable – millennial employee engagement is 0.900 which indicates good internal consistency. As for the IVs, the Cronbach Alpha of career development is 0.868, work-life balance is 0.309 and workplace design is 0.923 which shows a reasonable consistency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

A correlation analysis was conducted to analyse the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the predictors and dependent variable (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017). The results are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis

		Correlations			
		CD	WB	WD	ME
CD	Pearson Correlation	1	.057	.492**	.655**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.513	<.001	<.001
	N	133	133	133	133
WB	Pearson Correlation	.057	1	-.056	.085
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.513		.520	.330

	N	133	133	133	133
WD	Pearson Correlation	.492**	-.056	1	.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.520		<.001
	N	133	133	133	133
ME	Pearson Correlation	.655**	.085	.550**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.330	<.001	
	N	133	133	133	133
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Gogtay & Thatte (2017) defined the scale of the correlation coefficient as follows –

- 0 to 0.19 – Very Low Correlation
- 0.2 to 0.39 – Low Correlation
- 0.4 to 0.59 – Moderate Correlation
- 0.6 to 0.79 – High Correlation
- 0.8 to 1.0 – Very High Correlation

From the above table, the correlation coefficient between career development and millennial employee engagement is seen to be 0.655 indicating a strong correlation of 65.5%. As the p-value is <0.001 which is less than the significance value of 0.05, the correlation is statistically significant. Similarly, the correlation coefficient between work-life balance and millennial employee engagement is 0.085 indicating a weak and low correlation of 8.5%. Moreover, as the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, the correlation is not statistically significant. Likewise, the correlation coefficient of workplace design and millennial employee engagement is 0.550 indicating a moderate correlation of 55%. As the p-value is <0.001 which is less than 0.05, the correlation is statistically significant.

A multiple regression analysis was also conducted to examine the relationship between variables used in the study and estimate the extent to which variables are related to each other (Uyanik & Guler, 2013). The R-Square results are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.709 ^a	.503	.491	.53474
a. Predictors: (Constant), WD, WB, CD				

Results for the R-Square indicated a value of 0.503. That means a 50.3% variation in millennial employee engagement is explained by career development, work-life balance, and workplace design in the Indian private sector in the post-pandemic phase. The remaining 49.7% variation may be explained by other factors or predictors that have not been used in this study.

The model fitness test for this study resulted in an ‘F’ value of 43.475 and the p-value is <0.001 which is less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the fitness level is adequate as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Model Fitness Value

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.294	3	12.431	43.475	<.001 ^b
	Residual	36.887	129	.286		
	Total	74.181	132			
a. Dependent Variable: ME						
b. Predictors: (Constant), WD, WB, CD						

Table 4: Beta Results of the Variables

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.490	.401		1.220	.225
	CD	.488	.070	.499	6.965	<.001
	WB	.095	.080	.074	1.184	.239
	WD	.324	.075	.309	4.308	<.001
a. Dependent Variable: ME						

From the above table, it was found that millennial employee engagement is explained by career development and workplace design favourably while work-life balance is only explained at a minimum towards millennial employee engagement.

As shown in Table 13, the Beta value of career development is 0.488 and the p-value is less than 0.001 which is less than the significance value 0.05. It can therefore be said that the relationship between career development and millennial employee engagement is positive and statistically significant. Additionally, the Beta value of workplace design is 0.324 and the p-value is less than 0.001 which is less than the significance value of 0.05. Therefore, the relationship between workplace design and millennial employee engagement is positive and statistically significant. However, the Beta value of work-life balance is 0.095 and the p-value

is 0.239 which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Hence there the relationship is weak and not statistically significant.

4.0 Discussion

The results from the study indicated that career development and workplace design are positively correlated with millennial employee engagement in the Indian private sector proved by the Beta (β) standardised coefficient value. The findings support the hypotheses that career development and workplace design influence millennial employee engagement in the post-pandemic phase in the Indian private sector. However, a low correlation exists between work-life balance and millennial employee engagement which is also seen from the Beta (β) standardised coefficient value.

One of the reasons why career development is a positive determinant of millennial employee engagement is that it facilitates greater opportunities for millennials to go up the corporate ladder (Mayangdarastri & Khusna, 2020). As millennials are continually seeking opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities for holistic self-development through the mode of career development (Chatterjee, et.al., 2021); career development will enhance their satisfaction and trust thereby propelling their engagement (Friar & Mulyani, 2018).

Similarly, workplace design is also a positive determinant of millennial employee engagement. This is because a workplace that is decent and accommodates all the needs of millennials ensures millennials are engaged and motivated in attending and completing the tasks assigned (Surma, et.al., 2021). As millennials are easy to get bored and extremely tough to be engaged, a workplace fulfilling both ergonomic and work-related needs is important. Employees who work in such workplaces have been found in this study to be more engaged.

However, a low and weak relationship between work-life balance and millennial employee engagement indicates that there is little or no influence of work-life balance on millennials in the post-pandemic phase. This shift in paradigm as opposed to the pre-pandemic times is a result of the evolution of hybrid work modes and virtual methods that are propelling flexible work conditions (Roslee, et.al., 2021). Moreover, work-life balance is an absolute measure rather than relative because of personal perceptions and ideas about distinguishing personal and professional life (Kumar & Velmurugan, 2018).

5.0 Conclusion

With the greater involvement of millennial employees in the workplace, augmented levels of employee engagement are imminent for any organisation. It is only when organisations have engaged employees, will they remain competent, effective, and sustainable on the corporate deck. India is one of the emerging economies of the world with the majority of millennials entering the corporate arena and revolutionising the marketplace. Therefore, keeping them engaged at work is necessary as diligent employees contribute more to the organisational objectives, which in turn contribute to the nation's economy. As opposed to the previous generations that have worked, the millennial generation aspires to the advancement of career opportunities, conducive workplaces, and a harmonious personal and professional life.

This study, therefore, focused on the factors that influence engagement among millennial employees in the private sector in India. Through comprehensive investigation, analysis, and discussion of the findings, the study revealed that career development and workplace design have a higher advocacy toward millennial employee engagement than work-life balance. With the shift from total onsite work to hybrid modes in the pandemic-driven corporate world, the idea of work-life balance has turned around. Hence managers, organisational leaders, and even

academicians must identify and understand the factors that would encourage and incentivise millennial employees.

6.0 References

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