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Understanding Employee Engagement: An Examination of Millennial Employees and Perceived Human Resource Management Practices

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Understanding Employee Engagement: An Examination of Millennial Employees and Perceived Human Resource Management Practices

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration
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ABSTRACT

Actively disengaged employees cost the United States an estimated $450 billion to $550 billion in lost productivity per year. When employees are engaged, organizations experience less turnover, fewer safety incidents, and increased profitability. An important employee segment is Millennials, who are predicted to comprise as much as 75% of the workforce by 2025.

This three-article dissertation examines employee engagement, focusing on how Millennials experience employee engagement and the impact of perceived human resource management (HRM) practices on employee engagement. The first article is a generational workplace engagement paper focused on Millennials. It introduces a variety of academic and practitioner information relating to Millennial disengagement in the workplace. The article addresses the question, “Are U.S. Millennials working in a corporate environment more disengaged than other generations?” Article two is a field-based case study with an accompanying instructor manual. A main focus of the study is to determine what HRM factors contribute to employee (dis)engagement at a financial services organization.

The third article discusses a quantitative study that examines the relationship between perceived HRM practices and employee engagement and job satisfaction with a focus on generational differences between Millennial and non-Millennial employees in the public education system. The study results indicate there is not a significant difference between the way Millennials and Non-Millennials experience engagement; it also found that perceived HRM practices impact how employees experience engagement. These findings can help inform managers about employee engagement strategies and give scholars new paths to research.
CHAPTER 1:
ARTICLE ONE
(See Appendix A)
CHAPTER 2:

ARTICLE TWO

(See Appendices B and C)
CHAPTER 3:
ARTICLE THREE

Introduction

The field of human resource management (HRM) has experienced a dramatic shift. HRM was once a support function in business; however, over the last few decades, it has morphed into a strategic function. This shift has broadened the focus of HR research from the micro analytic research that dominated the field in the past to a more macro or strategic perspective (John & Doty, 1996). Although the scope of HRM research has broadened, critical areas remain to be studied. One such area is HRM programs and how employees perceive these programs.

Businesses have responded to the broadening of the HRM field with increased leadership. Employment of human resource managers in the United States is projected to grow 7% from 2018 to 2028, which is faster than the average for all occupations (Human Resources Managers, 2019). With human resource management on the rise, it is important for human resource managers to understand how they can link HRM programs to employee attitudes (such as job satisfaction) and employee behaviors (such as employee engagement), thus having a positive impact on business results. Research has shown that positive worker attitudes depend on employees’ perceptions of how committed the employing organization is to them.

Important factors affecting organizational performance include positive work attitudes and discretionary behaviors (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). Also, employee engagement is an important concept to understand because it is estimated that actively disengaged employees cost the United States $450 billion to $550 billion in lost productivity per year (Sorenson & Garman,
2013). When employees are engaged, organizations experience less turnover, fewer safety incidents, and increased profitability (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016).

Similarly, job satisfaction is a common concern for companies and one of the most frequently studied variables in organizational behavior research; it has been connected to performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, absenteeism and turnover, and physical and mental health and other behavioral outcomes (Spector, 1997). According to Lange, Petrescu and Simmons, “It has been found that several HRM practices raise workers’ overall job satisfaction” (2008).

Though employee engagement has been studied widely, only a few studies examine the relationship between perceived human resource management (HRM) practices and engagement. No studies on this subject have been found that have a Millennial focus. By the year 2025, it is estimated that 75% of the workforce will be Millennials. Because of this estimation, it is important for managers to understand Millennial workplace perceptions, attitudes and behavior to drive business results. In addition, few studies have explored the relationship between the perceptions of HRM and job satisfaction (e.g., Guest, 2002).

In this study, we examine the relationship between perceived HRM practices and employee engagement and job satisfaction with a focus on generational differences between Millennial and non-Millennial employees.

**Perceived Human Resource Management Practices**

In the Human Resource Management (HRM) arena, a distinction exists between human resources functions and human resources practices. While functions are internal or outsourced activities, practices are HRM systems that impact employees and the company.
HRM practices have been the focus of numerous research studies. While some scholarship examines actual HRM practices within companies, an emerging body of scholarship focuses on employee perceptions of HRM practices, noting that employees interpret policies in various ways, leading to some unintended consequences (Den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2004; Guest 1999; Gerhart, Wright, McMahan, & Snell, 2000; Gratton & Truss, 2003; Gerhart, 2005; Conway & Monks, 2008; Kuvaas 2008 as cited in Alfes et al.); Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). The studies have sought to determine the relationship between employee HRM practices and such outcomes as employee behavior and attitudes (Khilji & Wang, 2006; Nishii et al., 2008, Guest, 1997). Ultimately, this research seeks to understand the ways in which employee perceptions of HRM practices impact important organization results, such as productivity and profitability (Arthur, 1994; Gerhart & Milkovich, 1990; Huselid, 1993, 1995; Terpstra & Rozell, 1993 as cited in Delery & Doty, 1996).

**Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction can be a challenging concept to understand due to its various definitions. However, Spector (1997) captures a simplistic yet accepted aspect of job satisfaction, noting that it reflects how an employee feels about a job.

Locke’s theory of affectiveness, a well-known job satisfaction theory, divides job satisfaction into four categories (rewards, other people, nature of work, and organizational context). According to Locke, job satisfaction is defined as:

the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values. Job dissatisfaction is the unpleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job values or as entailing disvalues. Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from one’s job and what one perceives as it is offering or entailing. (1969)
Job satisfaction remains an important factor in the workplace; therefore, it can benefit companies to monitor it among the employees. Assessments on job satisfaction are taken nationally. The most common assessment is the Job Descriptive Index, which is comprised of 72 questions that assess five facets of work: pay, promotion, supervision, coworkers, and the work itself in relation to job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Studies, however, also have demonstrated that single measures of overall job satisfaction correlated highly with multiple-item (or scale) measures of overall job satisfaction (Nagy, 2002).

In an effort to understand the effects of HRM practices on performance, researchers (Khilji & Wang, 2006; Walton, 1985) have shown initial support for job satisfaction mediating the relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance. Other researchers have shown that HRM practices improve organizational effectiveness by reducing turnover (Vandenberg et al., 1999), but suggest this relationship also might be explained through increased job satisfaction. Other researchers have shown that HRM practices improve organizational effectiveness by reducing turnover (Vandenberg et al., 1999) while suggesting this relationship might be explained through increased job satisfaction.

**Employee Engagement**

Kahn introduced the concept of employee engagement in the early 1990s (1990). It evolved from research on organizational commitment, motivation and employee involvement. When the positive psychology movement became popular in early 2000, the notion of employee engagement became important to researchers. The positive psychology movement focused on helping healthy people achieve happier, more productive lives and actualize their potential (Jeung, 2011) whereas previously, psychology had focused primarily on mental illness. As positive psychology gained momentum, it became increasingly popular to study positive human
functions and how they benefit individuals and groups of people in various ways, including biologically and relationally.

Kahn identified engagement and disengagement as psychological states describing self-in-role and referring to behaviors through which people bring or leave their personal selves during work-role performances. He defined personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (1990, p. 694). Additionally, he defined personal disengagement as the “uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). In his research, Kahn identified three psychological conditions that influenced engagement; they are meaningfulness, safety and availability.

Scholars added to the concept of engagement. Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) defined engagement as the opposite of burnout. They identified it as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). They described vigor as “characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to these scholars, dedication meant having “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). According to these authors, absorption reflected a “state of being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Employees experience work and job-related engagement when they believe their organization and supervisors support them (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).
Regardless of definition and measurement method, a significant amount of research shows that employee engagement positively impacts a company’s profit (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), retention (Oliveira & Silva, 2015; Rigoni & Nelson, 2016; Koppel, Deline & Virkstis, 2017), performance (Plester & Hutchison, 2016) and productivity (Plester & Hutchison, 2016; Carter & Baghurst, 2014). Several studies have investigated the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. A varied array of academic studies has shown positive relationships between (but not limited to) social networking (Koch, Gonzales & Leidner, 2012; Korzynski, 2015), flexibility (Pitt-Catsoupes & Matz-Costa, 2008), fun (Plester & Hutchison, 2016), emotional dissonance (Koch et al., 2012; Karatepe, 2011), servant leadership (Carter & Baghurst, 2014), internal branding (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016; Carter & Baghurst, 2014), job resources (Adkins & Rigoni, 2016; Karatepe, 2011) and employee engagement. Clearly, employee engagement is a concept over which managers have a significant degree of control, or better, influence; therefore, it can be enhanced through communication, trainings, incentives, and policies.

Since disengagement can have a significant negative impact on businesses, employee engagement is a key factor in the workplace. When employees are engaged, organizations experience less turnover, fewer safety incidents and increased profitability (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016). Unfortunately, six of 10 Millennials say they are open to different job opportunities, and only 50% plan to be with their company in one year (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016). These statistics are significant as Millennials are the largest share of the workplace and are continuing to enter the workforce. Organizations are concerned about the possibility that their largest share of the workforce and future of their workforce is disengaged as studies have shown that engaged employees are more productive and less prone to absenteeism. Therefore, it is essential to focus
research efforts on the Millennial generation and gain a better understanding of how to keep Millennials engaged in the workplace.

The Millennial Generation

As of 2019, Millennials – also known as Generation Y – are the largest living generation in the United States, surpassing the Baby Boomers. Aided in part by immigration, the Millennial population continues to grow, with its numbers expected to peak in 2036 at approximately 81.1 million (Fry, 2016).

When considering the relevancy of age to the employment experiences of a multi-generational workforce, four dominant paradigms of age exist: chronological age as an indicator of human development, generation as an indicator of historical and cultural influences on different age cohorts, life course experiences and transitions that may be connected loosely to age ranges, and career stages (Pitt-Catsouphes & Smyer, 2007).

Various definitions of the Millennial generation exist; the differences are explained below. The Census Bureau defines a Millennial as a person born between 1982 and 2000 (Census Bureau, U. S., 2015) while the Pew Research Center states a Millennial must be born between 1981–1997 (Fry, 2016). Varying birth years between sources can make reviewing literature and understanding the Millennial generation imprecise. Shared events and cultural realities in Millennials’ lives are globalism, the attacks on September 11, 2001, and the Internet Age (National Endowment for Financial Education, 2015). In this work, we refer to the Millennial generation as defined by The Census Bureau.

As we discuss the importance of clarifying our use of the term “Millennial,” we must pinpoint how we have chosen to use other generational terms throughout this study. The terms “Generation X” and “Baby Boomers” are similar to the term “Millennial” in that neither have
one clear, concise definition. The Pew Research Center (PRC) claims that Gen Xers (Generation X) were born between 1965 and 1980 while Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 (Fry, 2016). The U.S. Census Bureau identifies the same 18-year range for Baby Boomers, but states that Gen Xers were born between 1968 and 1979, which is a four-year difference compared to the PRC time span (Crowley, 2003). When referencing *Encyclopedia of Identity*, Generation X may span from 1961 to 1981 (2010). Since Generation X and Baby Boomer have varying definitions, they require direct references to their respective sources.

In 2015, Generation Y, or the subgroup better known as Millennials, became the largest share of the American workforce, surpassing all other generations (Fry, 2015). According to Gallup (2016), Millennial workers made up 38% of the U.S. workforce that year. Millennials have a distinct work style and belief system regarded as fundamentally different from any other group of young individuals in the past 50 years, or non-Millennials (O’Reilly and Vella-Zarb, 2000). Millennials have organized their lives in such a way that they are more likely to delay purchasing a house, getting married, or having children compared with their parents. Many business leaders misread or misinterpret the independent spirit of Millennials as a refusal to conform to societal norms. Nevertheless, this generation wants clear direction and management support, but it also requires flexibility and autonomy in performing job tasks and possesses a key advantage in that they are technologically adept and well educated (McGuire, Todnam By, & Hutchings, 2007).

Millennials are often perceived as rebelling against the overly structured lives of their parents and widely considered to be difficult to manage because of their short attention spans (Hill, 2002). Often, they are characterized as showing an unwillingness to dedicate themselves fully to
job tasks, lack of focus, lack of preparation for the workplace, neediness and entitlement (Stewart, Oliver, Cravens & Oishi, 2017).

As of January 2019, the youngest Millennials were only 18 years old; therefore, a large majority have not yet entered the corporate workplace. Thus, it is too early to gain a full picture of Millennials in the workforce, which is important because younger Millennials and older Millennials may have distinct differences in the workplace that could skew our current understanding of them. As stated previously, looking forward, it is predicted that Millennials will comprise as much as 75% of the workforce by 2025. This rapidly growing number of Millennials forces organizations to learn how to work effectively with, manage, and develop Millennials if they want to remain competitive, productive, and profitable in the years ahead.

Millennial Workplace Engagement

Even as the Millennial population continues to spike, it appears organizations have not yet devoted enough attention to their rising presence in the workplace. Recent non-scholarly studies, such as Gallup’s How Millennials Want to Work and Live (2016), report that Millennial engagement in the workplace is low in comparison to other generations. This report found that only 29% of Millennials are engaged at work compared to 32% of Gen Xers and 33% of Baby Boomers.

Given that Millennials comprise the largest portion of the workforce and the Millennial population in the United States continues to evolve, it is vitally important to add more research to current scholarship on this generation. As a generation, Millennials are defined by specific workplace expectations. One expectation is that all information should be shared with them, regardless of their position in the organization (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Often, members of this generation desire frequent feedback from peers and mentors (Hartman & McCambridge,
To these points, it would appear that Millennials may endorse the ideas that have been suggested by Rawlins (2009) and Robertson (2005) regarding information flow in organizations: organizations should facilitate the free exchange of ideas and information at work.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Scholars have identified social exchange theory as an important model in organizational behavior that helps to conceptualize how resources are valued and exchanged (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory involves voluntary actions, where social behavior results from an exchange process based on norms of reciprocity within social relationships (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It is argued that employees who receive economic or socio-emotional benefits from their organizations feel obligated to respond in kind (Saks, 2006). Prior studies have found that HRM practices (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; Wayne et al., 1997) may be perceived as valuable resources provided to the employee. Employees reciprocate by being engaged (Saks, 2006), which in turn may be manifested in increased job satisfaction.

Gould-Williams and Davies explain that social exchange theory impacts employee motivation, guides employee behavior by establishing social norms and standards of behavior, and can generate employee reciprocity (positive or negative) (2005). In fact, SET provides a theoretical foundation to explain why employees choose to become more or less engaged in their work and organization (Saks, 2006). Saks situates engagement in Kahn’s (1990) and Maslach et al.’s (2001) models as specific types of exchange resources within SET that impact employee engagement. Saks notes that when employees receive resources provided by human resource practices from their organization, they feel obliged to repay the organization with greater levels
of engagement. In terms of Kahn’s (1990) definition of engagement, employees feel obliged to bring themselves more deeply into their role performances as repayment for the resources they receive from their organization. When perceived human resource practices fail to provide the cognitive, emotional and tangible resources, employees are more likely to disengage from their roles. Thus, the amount of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources that an individual is prepared to devote in the performance of one’s work roles is contingent on the economic and socioemotional resources received from the organization (Saks, 2006).

The reciprocal nature of SET can be explored in employee perceptions of perceived HRM practices. In fact, a study on perceived organizational support (POS) notes the impacts on employee engagement:

…in the context of this study, it would appear that the caring and concern associated with POS creates a sense of obligation on the part of employees who reciprocate with greater levels of job and organization engagement. Thus, organizations that wish to improve employee engagement should focus on employees’ perceptions of the support they receive from their organization… (Saks, 2006).

A Unique Examination of Employee Engagement

Despite an increased understanding of employee engagement, few studies have incorporated both an important antecedent and consequence of employee engagement in a single study (Alfes, Shantz, Truss & Soane, 2012; Albrecht et al., 2015). In this study, we propose that perceived human resource practices as an antecedent is linked to job satisfaction through employee engagement. The choice for perceived human resource practices and job satisfaction is informed by the extant literature (Albrecht et al., 2015; Sparrow, 2014; Truss et al, 2013) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Prior studies have sought to determine the relationship between employee HRM practices and such outcomes as employee behavior and attitudes (Khilji & Wang 2006; Nishii et al., 2008; Guest, 1997). Similarly, job
satisfaction has generated an enormous amount of interest among organizational scholars because of its importance to job turnover and ultimately job performance (Spector, 1997). Finally, social exchange theory (SET)’s view of employment as a reciprocal exchange relationship based on trust (Blau, 1964; Levinson, 1965) that requires employees to respond positively to favorable treatment of the employer has gained currency in studies that examine how human resource practices can lead to enhanced performance in general, at the organizational and individual level.

We contribute to the literature on employee engagement in three ways. First, we study employee engagement in a not-for-profit context, a unique context that has received scant attention in the literature on employee engagement. Second, we offer insights into how Millennials differ from non-Millennials in terms of how they perceive human resource practices and how this perception affects their engagement and, in turn, job satisfaction. That is, we provide a contingency perspective in how generation, in our case Millennial vs. non-Millennial affects the relationships examined here. Given Millennials increased openness to changing jobs and because employee retention is a key strategic objective, this study can provide managerial guidance in how to engage Millennials to increase their job satisfaction, which would enhance employee retention. Third, we contribute to the HR-performance literature by unpacking the black box between HR and performance, in our case job, satisfaction as behavioral performance outcome.

Let us briefly describe the main constructs in the conceptual model. Perceived Human Resource Management (HRM) practices refer broadly to perceptions of practices such as provision of internal career, training opportunities, and employment security; performance appraisal; participation, job description, and profit sharing. How individuals perceive the
implementation of HRM strategies varies by the specific organizational setting and will be perceived differently by diverse employees (Edgar & Geare, 2005; Khilji & Wang, 2006; Kuvaas, 2008; Wright & Haggerty, 2005).

In this study, we adopt the definition of employee engagement as proposed by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (2002b, p. 74).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the second section, we present our conceptual model and develop the hypotheses. The third section describes the data, measures used and methods adopted to analyze the data. The fourth section presents the main results while the penultimate section elaborates and discusses the results and draws implications for practitioners and scholars. The last section offers the main conclusion of the study.

**Hypotheses**

HR scholars studying human resource best practices have argued that it is imperative to consider the cognitive and activated effects of HRM practices since these practices are designed to empower employees in the workplace (Vandenberg, Richardson & Eastman, 1999; Boxall & Macky, 2009). This work suggests a positive relationship between HRM practices and a behavioral outcome such as employee engagement, a construct that in Kahn’s (1990) and Schaufeli et al.’s (2002) conceptualization entails emotional, cognitive, and physical activation of one’s self simultaneously.

Again, the present study is informed by work conducted by Alfes et al. In their 2013 study, Alfes et al. created a moderated mediation model linking perceived HRM practices to organizational citizenship behavior and turnover intentions, drawing on social exchange theory. The researchers’ model theorized that the effect of perceived HRM practices on both outcome
variables was mediated by levels of employee engagement while the relationship between employee engagement and both outcome variables was moderated by perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange. The study of close to 300 employees in a service sector organization in the United Kingdom supported the model. The study suggested the enactment of positive behavioral outcomes as a consequence of engagement largely depends on the wider organizational climate and employee’s relationship with their line manager (Alfes et al.).

We draw upon Alfes et al.’s 2013 study, situating our study in the United States within the non-profit sector. We intentionally selected different perceived HRM practice and employee engagement scales in order to better understand the strength of the concepts when using a different scale since several exist for both constructs. For our study to examine the relationship between perceived HRM practices and employee engagement and job satisfaction with a focus on generational differences between Millennial and non-Millennial employees, we made the following hypotheses:

**H1:** *Employee engagement has a positive relationship to perceived HRM practices*

H1a: Generation moderates the relationship between employee engagement and perceived HRM practices such that the relationship is stronger for Millennials than for non-Millennials

**H2:** *Employee engagement has a positive relationship to job satisfaction*

H2a: Generation moderates the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction such that the relationship is stronger for Millennials than for non-Millennials

**H3:** *Employee engagement mediates the relationship between perceived HRM practices and job satisfaction*
**Study Methods**

Data for this study consisted of survey responses from 808 employees of the Manatee County School System (MCSS) in Florida, collected from April 15, 2019, to May 1, 2019, using the Qualtrics survey system. Data were cleaned and analyzed using R (Version 3.5.1). Sixty-five employees exited the survey before responding to any items while 147 employees provided incomplete responses to the survey (i.e., they left one or more items blank). A series of Fisher’s exact tests revealed the complete-response sample \((n = 596)\) and the incomplete-response sample \((n = 147)\) only differed with respect to generation (4-Category: \(p = 0.030\), Millennial/Non-Millennial: \(p = 0.026\)). No significant differences were observed among any other demographic characteristics. In other words, the complete-response and incomplete-response samples were relatively homogenous. The Millennial generation (defined throughout this document using the Census Bureau’s definition as those born between 1982 and 2004) were far more likely than non-Millennials (defined throughout this document as those born between 1930 and 1981) to provide an incomplete response to the survey; 24% of Millennials provided an incomplete response compared to 16% of non-Millennials.

A large drop in participation was observed following the demographic segment of the survey for Millennials and non-Millennials, a much higher proportion of Millennials left the survey after Q15 (the final demographic item). While all but one item (employment role) was supposed to be a forced response, this was not the case in practice. Fortunately, less than five missing values were observed for each item that was not set to forced response (among those who completed the survey but did not provide a complete response profile). Only employees with a complete response profile were used throughout this report. In other words, the listwise deletion method of
missingness handling was employed. Lastly, a 5% level of significance was used to determine statistical significance throughout this report.

**Study Assumptions and Limitations**

The assumption of honesty and accuracy in employee response had to be made when analyzing and interpreting the data and results of the current study. In general, this assumption is a necessary artifact of the self-report survey. For the sake of generalizability, it also was assumed the employees who responded to the survey did not differ significantly from employees who did not (i.e., those provided the opportunity to take part in the survey but chose not to do so). Any additional modeling assumptions or issues are discussed later. As mentioned in the previous section, the survey was intended to be almost entirely forced response. However, this was not the case in practice. Attrition appeared to be an issue, with a large proportion of employees choosing to exit the survey following the demographic items. In regard to sample size, while the total complete-response sample of 596 employees was sufficient for the overall mediation model, the complete-response Millennial sample only consisted of 126 employees, potentially rendering the multi-group mediation model less reliable than desired. Future research should include a push to include more Millennials in surveys relating to Millennial status.

This study was limited to the perceptions and feelings toward human resource management practices, employee engagement, and job satisfaction at one moment in time. These perceptions and feelings may change over time or with interventions institutional leaders may implement.
Descriptive Analyses

Employees

The sample used for the study consisted of 596 employees of the Manatee County School System (MCSS). Females outnumbered males roughly 2:1, with females representing 76% of the sample. A majority of employees were teaching professionals (58%), with non-teaching blue-collar and white-collar professionals accounting for 13% and 29%, respectively. Employees tended to hold either a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree (37% and 33%, respectively), with 23% holding a high school degree or less, and 7% holding a doctorate or specialist degree. Non-Millennials represented a large majority of the sample at 79%, with those born from 1930-1945, 1946-1964, and 1965-1981 representing 1%, 37%, and 42% of the sample, respectively. Of the 19% of the sample that reported having direct reports, 58% reported having 1-10 direct reports while 11%, 5%, and 26% reported having 11-20, 21-30, and over 31 direct reports, respectfully. Full-time employees represented an overwhelming majority at 96%. Thirty nine percent of the sample were dues-paying union members. School-based employees represented 80% of the sample, with 55% of such employees working in an elementary school, 19% in a middle school, 21% in a high school, and 6% at a technical college, respectively. Of the school-based employees, 39% worked for a Title 1 school; 38% of the respondents received a “Best and Brightest” scholarship bonus in the past three years. Fourteen percent of the sample reported working within the Manatee County School District for less than one year while 23%, 12%, 8%, and 44% of employees reported working within the district for 1-4, 5-7, 8-10, and 11 or more years, respectively. Lastly, 21% reported having been in their current role for less than one year while 36%, 12%, 6%, and 25% reported having been in their role for 1-4, 5-7, 8-10, and 11 or more years, respectively.
Employee Educational Level by Millennial Status

Educational attainment was significantly associated with Millennial status (Fisher’s exact $p < 0.001$), whereby Millennials were 61% more likely to have a Bachelor’s degree, 57% less likely to hold a high school diploma or less, 3% less likely to hold a Master’s degree, and 60% less likely to hold a doctorate or specialist degree. No significant associations were observed between Millennial status and number of direct reports, full-time status, union status, school-based employee status, school-type, Title 1 status, best and brightest status, or gender (i.e., all $p$ values were greater than 5%).

Measures

Human Resource Management Practices (HRM) were measured using 21 items that covered seven separate HRM practices. Response ranged from “Disagree strongly” to “Agree strongly” on a 7-point Likert scale. The HRM practices included internal career opportunities (Internal; 3 items), training opportunities (Training; 4 items), performance appraisal perceptions (Results; 2 items), employment security (Employment; 4 items), participation (Participation; 4 items), job description (Job; 3 items), and profit sharing (Profit; 1 item). Example items are shown below:

Internal career opportunity items:

- “I have a clear path within the organization” and
- “My career aspirations are known by my immediate supervisors”

Training opportunities items:

- “Extensive training programs are provided for individuals in this job” and
- “Employees in this job normally go through training programs every few years”

Performance appraisal perceptions items:
• “Performance is more often measured with objective quantifiable results” and
• “Performance appraisals are based on objective, quantifiable results”

Employment security items:
• “Employees in this job can expect to stay in the job for as long as they wish” and
• “It is very difficult to dismiss an employee in this job”

Participation items:
• “Employees in this job are allowed to make many decisions” and
• “Employees in this job are often asked by their supervisor to participate in decisions”

Job description items:
• “The duties of my job are clearly defined” and
• “My job has an up-to-date job description”

Profit-sharing item:
• “Individuals in this job receive bonuses based on the performance of the school and/or district”

Scores for each perceived HRM practice were obtained by taking the mean across all relevant items. An overall score was not available for this measure, so latent variable modeling techniques were employed for this construct. The distribution of each perceived HRM practice by Millennial status is provided in Figure 1 below, where Millennials and non-Millennials were relatively similar (with respect to their medians) for the internal, results, employment, and job practices. Millennials tended to report higher agreement than non-Millennials for the training and profit practices while the opposite was true for participation.

A series of Wilcoxon rank sum tests revealed the only significant difference in perceived HRM practice by Millennial status was for profit sharing ($W = 26021$, $p = 0.031$). The median
profit-sharing score for Millennials was five while the median score for non-Millennials was four, indicating Millennials were more likely to believe individuals in their job receive bonuses based on the performance of the school and/or district. Each perceived HRM practice (more specifically, the scales associated with each practice) displayed adequate internal consistency or better: internal ($\alpha = 0.69$), training ($\alpha = 0.83$), appraisals ($\alpha = 0.93$), employment ($\alpha = 0.77$), participation ($\alpha = 0.89$), and job ($\alpha = 0.84$). See Figure 1 for results of distribution of perceived HRM practices by Millennial status.

![Distribution of perceived HRM Practices by Millennial Status](image)

**Figure 1.** Distribution of perceived HRM Practices by Millennial Status

Employee Engagement was measured using a 9-item version of the UWES Work & Well-Being Survey (UWES-9; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The Utrecht Work Engagement scale is a self-report questionnaire that includes the three constituting dimensions of work engagement based on Schaufeli’s definition: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The notion of the three-factor work engagement and its operationalization through the UWES is
popular and widely used. Originally, the UWES included 24 items, but after evaluation, it was reduced to 17 questions and is now nine questions.

Response options for each item ranged from 0 (indicating “Never”) to 6 (indicating “Always”). The overall scale consisted of three subscales: vigor, dedication, and absorption, with each subscale consisting of three separate items. Example vigor items included “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” and “At my job, I feel vigorous and strong.” Example dedication items included “I am enthusiastic about my job” and “My job inspires me” while example absorption items included “I feel happy when I am working intensely” and “I am immersed in my work.” Scores for each subscale were obtained by taking the average of their respective items while an overall score was obtained by averaging all nine items of the scale. The distributions of employee engagement scores by Millennial status are provided in Figure 2, where Millennials tended to score lower on the vigor and dedication subscales while the groups were relatively similar with respect to the absorption subscale and overall score. The mean vigor score for the entire sample was 3.97 (SD = 1.37) while the mean scores for Millennials and non-Millennials were 3.75 (SD = 1.29) and 4.02 (SD = 1.38), respectively. The mean dedication scores for the overall sample, Millennials and non-Millennials, were 4.52 (SD = 1.27), 4.45 (SD = 1.32) and 4.54 (SD = 1.25), respectively. Lastly, the mean absorption scores were 4.47 (SD = 1.10), 4.44 (SD = 1.13), and 4.48 (SD = 1.10) for the overall, Millennial, and non-Millennial samples. The subscales have been included for descriptive purposes only, as the total employee engagement score was used for all inferential analyses.

A series of Wilcoxon rank sum tests conducted on the subscales and overall score revealed that only the vigor score differed significantly between Millennials and non-Millennials (W = 33582, p = 0.020). The median vigor score for Millennials was 4.00 while the median score
for non-Millennials was 4.33. The subscales of this measure displayed adequate internal consistency or better: vigor ($\alpha = 0.86$), dedication ($\alpha = 0.86$), and absorption ($\alpha = 0.69$). The overall scale (consisting of all 9 items) displayed excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$). See Figure 2 for results of employee engagement distribution by Millennial status.

![Box plots for Vigor, Dedication, Absorption, and Total scores by Millennial status.]

**Figure 2.** Employee Engagement Scores by Millennial Status

Job Satisfaction was measured using a single item that read, “On a scale of 1-7 how satisfied are you with your job in general?” Response options ranged from “Extremely Dissatisfied” to “Extremely Satisfied.” See Figure 3 for job satisfaction results by Millennial status.
Figure 3. Distribution of Job Satisfaction Scores by Millennial Status

Summary statistics and a Pearson correlation matrix for all primary measures are provided in Tables 1 and 2 while a scatterplot matrix for all primary measures with points labeled red for Millennials and black for non-Millennials is provided in Figure 4.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for all Primary Measures and Subscales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample (n = 596)</th>
<th>Non-Millennials (n = 470)</th>
<th>Millennials (n = 126)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Med</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>4.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>4.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 2. Pearson Correlation Matrix for all Primary Measures (n = 596)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Employ.</th>
<th>Particip.</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Profit</th>
<th>EE</th>
<th>JS</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.24</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.14</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.27</td>
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<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Scatterplot Matrix for all Primary Measures (Millennials in Red, Non-Millennials in Black)

Inferential Analyses

Some notes on demographic recoding: Due to low counts in the categories of some demographic variables, certain classes were collapsed prior to inferential analyses. Educational attainment was recoded due to low counts at the extremes. As such, “Less than a high school
“diploma” and “High school degree or equivalent” were recoded into “High school degree or less” while “Doctorate” and “Specialist degree” were recoded into “Doctorate or specialist degree.”

**Table 3. Completely Standardized Multi-Group Mediation Model Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Variables</th>
<th>Non-Millennials</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>SE</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Engagement</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Engagement</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation ~~ Profit</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation ~~ Training</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training ~~ Results</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Results</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Profit</td>
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<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee Engagement</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As is to be expected with a sample size close to 600, all correlations were significant at the 5% level of significance. All correlations in Table 2 are positive, indicating that increases in each primary measure were associated with increases in each other primary measure. In the scatterplot matrix in Figure 4 we see that, with the exception of profit sharing and job satisfaction, all of the relationships appear to be approximately bivariate normally distributed. Further, there appears to be very few (if any) bivariate outliers among the measures plotted. To overcome potential issues relating to non-normality and heteroskedasticity, robust standard errors were utilized throughout the analyses to follow.

**Findings**

**H1: Employee engagement has a positive relationship to perceived HRM practices**

Our study found perceived HRM positively predicted employee engagement. However, we found that human resource management practices more strongly predicted job satisfaction. Alfes et al.’s study showed that perceived HRM practices are significantly related to employee engagement. Our study showed the same. This result points to the possibility that the relationship between perceived HRM practices and employee engagement is so strong that regardless of what established scale is used, a positive relationship exists. More research will need to be conducted in this area.

**H1a: Generation moderates the relationship between perceived HRM practices and employee engagement such that the relationship is stronger for Millennials than for non-Millennials**

This hypothesis was disproved. The distribution of each perceived HRM practice by Millennial and non-Millennial status was relatively similar. When looking at distributions, Millennials tended to report higher agreement than non-Millennials for the perceived HRM training and profit practices while the opposite was true for participation. A series of Wilcoxon
rank sum tests revealed the only significant difference in perceived HRM practice by Millennials was profit sharing.

**H2: Positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction**

Our study found more engaged employees tended to be more satisfied in their job.

**H2b: Generation moderates the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction such that the relationship is stronger for Millennials than for non-Millennials**

Although our research did not support this hypothesis, we did find that Millennials were less satisfied with their role when compared to non-Millennials. Although the employee engagement scales for Millennials and non-Millennials did not significantly differ, it was revealed that the vigor subscale significantly differed between Millennials and non-Millennials.

**H3: Employee engagement moderates the relationship between perceived HRM practices and job satisfaction**

Our study found that employee engagement can be considered a significant mediator for the relationship between HRM practices and job satisfaction.

**Discussion**

Overall, our results were consistent with social exchange theory supporting the notion that positive exchanges result in reciprocal individual responses.

To our surprise, Millennials and non-Millennials do not appear to differ in terms of how they perceive HRM practices and resources to stimulate employee engagement and, in turn, job satisfaction. This finding is important as it suggests that Millennials and non-Millennials appear to perceive the resources (cognitive, emotional, and physical) obtained from HR practices in exchange for stimulating their engagement with their job tasks to have similar impacts.
Another interesting, unexpected discovery emerged from this study. We found educational attainment was a significant control for perceived HRM practices to job satisfaction and employee engagement to job satisfaction. Those with a Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree, and doctoral/specialist degree tended to be less satisfied with their jobs. A 2013 Gallup study found that people with a high school degree or less are more likely to be engaged in their work than those with a college degree. Therefore, this result is neither intuitive nor what degree holders expect to experience. Our research and Gallup’s signal that more study in the area of college educated professionals’ job satisfaction and employee engagement should be conducted.

This finding is significant in regard to Millennials. Americans are attending college at higher rates than ever before. Approximately 90% of Millennials who graduate from high school attend college within eight years (although that entire population will not obtain a degree). In our study, Millennials were 61% more likely to have a Bachelor’s degree, 57% less likely to hold a high school diploma or less, 3% less likely to hold a Master’s degree, and 60% less likely to hold a doctorate or specialist degree.

Additionally, we found it interesting that a much higher proportion of Millennials left the survey after Q15 (the final demographic item). If we are to further study this generation, research to better understand Millennial survey preference is encouraged.

**Scientific and Practical Implications**

The results of this study have important theoretical and practical implications. Thus far, relatively few studies have focused on individual experiences of perceived HRM interventions; therefore, this paper contributes to our understanding of how employees’ perceptions of HRM practices are linked with employee outcomes (Alfes et al. 2013). Research on the effects of perceived HRM practice on employee attitude (such as employee engagement and job
satisfaction) is limited in that it has focused primarily on the experience of private sector workers, with the effects on public sector workers remaining largely unknown (Legge, 1995; Wood, 1999 as cited in Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005).

Our study, which was conducted in the United States, also found a strong link between perceived HRM practices and engagement. This finding is significant since Alfes et al.’s study and our study used different established tools for measuring perceived HRM practices and employee engagement, which reinforces the idea that perceived HRM positively predicts employee engagement, regardless of measurement tool (suggesting greater application).

Additionally, our sample, which consisted of all public sector employees, provides a unique contribution to current research on perceived HRM practices, employee engagement, and job satisfaction as most research reviewed used a private sector employee sample for their research.

Based on our findings that the distribution of each perceived HRM practice by Millennial and non-Millennial status were relatively similar and employee engagement scales for Millennials and non-Millennials did not differ significantly, it is recommended that practitioners reconsider their employee engagement strategies and the way they allocate resources if certain efforts are geared specifically towards Millennial employees. Our findings signal that managers and human resource management professionals should obtain buy-in and agreement on HRM practices from all employees equally to enhance employee engagement and job satisfaction. If managers do not get agreement from their employees around HRM practices, negative employee perceptions could lead to employee disengagement and job dissatisfaction.
Future Research

Considering the vigor subscale within employee engagement significantly differed between Millennials and non-Millennials, with Millennials feeling less engaged in this area, more research in this area is encouraged. As Cropanzano and Mitchell note, in relationship to SET, managers should understand that employee engagement is a long-term, on-going process that requires continued interactions over time in order to generate obligations and a state of reciprocal interdependence (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Thus, more research on employee engagement is needed, especially longitudinal research, which could help us understand trends. Future study could use different operationalization of the employee engagement scale to see how robust our findings are.

The distribution of each perceived HRM practice by Millennial and non-Millennial status was relatively similar. Although the employee engagement scales for Millennials and non-Millennials did not significantly differ, differences were noted with the perceived HRM category of profit sharing. Because we found that Millennials were less satisfied with their role when compared to non-Millennials, it is suggested that Millennial specific strategies are considered since our results are likely not generalizable to all organizational contexts. Future research in this area is needed.

Another area for future research is replicating our study in a for-profit environment and in non-US contexts. This approach is particularly important given the increased globalization of the workplace and differences that may exist across Millennial populations across countries. Finally, as mentioned in the discussion section, a higher proportion of Millennials left the survey after Q15 (the final demographic item). To further study this generation more effectively may require research to better understand Millennial survey preference.
Conclusions

Individuals with a positive perception of their organization’s perceived HRM practices are more likely to be engaged with their work and more satisfied. Therefore, organizations and managers should seek to understand more about employee perceptions of the HRM practices that they implement.

However, our study could not establish differences in the relationships examined between Millennials and non-Millennials. That said, we should note an underrepresentation of Millennial employees in our sample and the unique context in which the research was set, which precludes broad generalization. Furthermore, by the year 2025, it is estimated that 75% of the workforce will be Millennials. With the youngest Millennials just now entering the workforce, we need to continue to research them.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A:
ARTICLE ONE
(published in Muma Business Review)

Research Question Review Cover Page

Are U.S. Millennials Working in a Corporate Workplace Really More Disengaged at Work than Other Generations?

Tagline
Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations? This article reviews the evidence. Concepts covered include employee engagement and disengagement, generational differences and specifically millennial engagement and disengagement.

Keywords
Employee engagement, generational differences, millennials, workplace engagement, workplace disengagement

Executive Summary
Despite assertions from consulting firms and practitioners that millennials are more disengaged than other generations, the findings attained from the literature review indicate uncertainty about those claims. This article identifies a concerning number of gaps that prevent us from confidently answering the question, “Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations?” The main problems are that consistent definitions of “employee engagement” and “millennials” are not used, no comprehensive picture of the facts on the subject have been achieved, existing methodologies, questionnaires, and data are not accessible, practitioners tend to misunderstand the inconclusive nature of the research, and research solely on the United States, in particular, is lacking.
These findings have an economic impact on companies spending their employee engagement budget specifically on millennial employees. Further, the conclusions of this research may help to prevent unfounded beliefs about millennial employees that could lead to misconceptions and stereotypes.

This article explores the academic research, along with actions practitioners and scholars can take to start learning more about millennial engagement in the workplace. To jumpstart research efforts, whether in practice or in academia, it is recommended that the definition of employee engagement being used should be clarified and that qualitative research methods such as employee observations, interviews, and focus groups can be used to gain valuable insights into millennial engagement issues.
Research Question Review

Are U.S. Millennials Working in a Corporate Workplace Really More Disengaged at Work than Other Generations?

Introduction
Over thirty-five thousand articles, blogs, and practitioner studies of millennial engagement and disengagement are available on the web. A simple internet search shows article titles such as “Millennials are the Least Engaged Generation in the Workplace” and “The Scary Truth about Millennials Being Disengaged at Work” among the first results displayed. Yet despite the prodigious volume of discussion on the topic, it appears little academic research has been done in this area. The vast majority of information on millennial engagement is not scholarly and is made publicly available via media and consulting reports consisting of practitioner opinions, personal observations, and data, many of which don’t thoroughly disclose how the information was obtained.

The question that must be asked, then, is, “Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations?”

Today, millennials, also known as Generation Y, are the United States’ largest living generation, surpassing the Baby Boomers. As a result of immigration, the millennial population continues to grow. Its numbers are expected to peak in the year 2036 at approximately 81.1 million (Fry, 2016).

When considering age relevant to the employment experiences of today’s multi-generational workforce, there are four dominant paradigms of age: chronological age as an indicator of human development, generation as an indicator of historical and cultural influences on different age cohorts, life course experiences, and transitions that may be loosely connected to age ranges and career stages (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008). In this paper, when we discuss millennials, we are referring to a generation and not an age group or other category.

There are various definitions of a millennial, depending on the source. The Census Bureau, for example, defines a millennial as a person born between 1982 and 2000 (Census Bureau, U. S., 2015), while according to the Pew Research Center a person must be born between 1981–1997 to qualify (Fry, 2016). The varying birth years between sources can make reviewing literature imprecise. In this paper adopting a consistent definition of a millennial is impossible, thus it’s important for the reader to refer directly back to the source article for the appropriate definition.

In 2015, millennials became the largest share of the American workforce (Fry, 2015). According to Gallup (2016), millennial workers made up 38% of the U.S. workforce that year. Estimates predict that millennials will make up as much as 75% of the workforce by the year 2025. For organizations to remain competitive, productive and profitable in the years ahead, they must
learn how to effectively work with, manage and develop millennials. Non-scholarly studies, such as Gallup’s How Millennials Want to Work and Live (2016), report that millennial engagement in the workplace is low in comparison to other generations. This report found that only 29% of millennials are engaged at work compared to the 32% of Gen Xers and 33% of Baby Boomers.

Neither Generation X nor Baby Boomers have one clear and concise definition either, which contributes to the ambiguity of the literature review. The Pew Research Center claims that Gen Xers were born between the years 1965 and 1980, while Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 (Fry, 2016). The U.S. Census Bureau claims the same 18-year range for Baby Boomers, but states that Gen Xers were born between 1968 and 1979, which comparatively is a much shorter time span (Crowley, 2003). When referencing Encyclopedia of Identity (Jackson & Hogg, 2010), it seems that Generation X may span from 1961 to 1981 (2010). Just like the term millennial, both terms Generation X and Baby Boomer must have direct references to the source from which definitions are pulled.

**Employee engagement matters**

Although there are gaps in the research, there are also areas of consensus around employee engagement. For a start, there is no disputing the fact that employee engagement is real and important to the business community. It is estimated that actively disengaged employees cost the United States $450 billion to $550 billion in lost productivity per year (Sorenson & Garman, 2013). Six in 10 millennials say they’re open to different job opportunities, and only 50% plan to be with their company one year from now (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016). Organizations should be concerned about the possibility that their largest share of the workforce is disengaged as studies have shown that engaged employees are more productive and less prone to absenteeism. When employees are engaged, organizations experience less turnover, fewer safety incidents, and increased profitability (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016, August 30). Once we know the true impact of employee engagement on performance (e.g. productivity) we need to see what managers can do about it. In other words, employee engagement across generations has very significant managerial implications as well. It is a construct over which managers have a reasonable degree of control, and therefore can be enhanced through incentives, and other policies. It’s an important lever to drive overall performance (e.g. employee productivity, retention, reduction in turnover etc.) in the firm.

This literature review provides an overview of the research stream on the topic of employee disengagement, with a focus on millennials. This paper focuses on what we know, what we don’t yet know and how the body of knowledge and our common understanding of millennial disengagement has evolved.

This article makes an important contribution to practitioners, most notably people managers and human resources professionals. Summarizing important scholarly insights not seen in articles that focus on day-to-day concerns, this article exposes practitioners to a different side of the conversation—that millennials may not be more disengaged than previous generations. The article concludes by encouraging practitioners to conduct their own qualitative research.
Literature Review Protocol
To conduct my review of the academic literature, I used a range of online databases such as Academic Search Premier, Access World News, Business Source Premier, JSTOR, ProQuest Dissertations, PsycINFO, Science Direct and Web of Science. 

Search terms for this literature review, in an effort to answer, “Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations?” consisted of “Millennial work engagement, millennial engagement in the workplace, millennial employee engagement, “millennial” AND “engagement” AND “workplace”, and generational employee engagement. I supplemented “millennial” with “Generation Y” and “engagement” with “disengagement” with all search terms. 

All searches were filtered for publication dates 2000-2018 from full text peer reviewed articles. I reviewed every article’s abstract and discounted studies that took place outside of the United States and that did not have a generational component comparing millennials to at least one other generational cohort. I also disregarded studies that did not take place in a corporate workplace setting.

Academic research on the topic of millennial employee engagement/disengagement is not well established. For example, when searching “millennial work engagement” and applying the appropriate filters (ex: date ranges, peer reviewed journals), only twenty articles came up, with only one study meeting my specific criteria (ex: relevance, conducted within the U.S. only, conducted in a corporate workplace). As another example, when searching “generational employee engagement” and applying the appropriate filters, fourteen articles were available, with only one study meeting my specific criteria.

I found all information on practitioners by using the databases listed above as well as the standard Google search engine.

Summary of Findings
Although the concept of employee engagement was introduced in 1990 (Kahn, 1990), the notion did not appear to start to take hold among researchers until the positive psychology movement became popular in the early 2000s. This movement focused on helping healthy people achieve happier and more productive lives and actualizing their potential (Jeung, 2011) whereas psychology had previously focused primarily on mental illness. Positive psychology is a term created by Martin Seligman, who wanted to steer psychology studies away from pathology, and focus instead on subjective individual happiness (2004). According to Chafouleas and Bray, Seligman suggests that positive psychology be studied “through three pillars: the study of positive emotion, the study of positive individual traits, and the study of positive institutions” (2004).

From a scholarly standpoint, I found two definitions of employee engagement that are well defined and have been adopted and frequently used (although there are several others). Kahn defined engagement and disengagement as psychological states describing self-in-role and referring to behaviors through which people bring in or leave out their personal selves during work-role performances. Kahn defines personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (1990). He defines personal
disengagement as the “uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend” (Kahn, 1990). In his research, Kahn identified three psychological conditions that influenced engagement. They are:

- **Meaningfulness** – “Sense of return on investments of self in role performances. Feel worthwhile, valued, valuable; feel able to give to and receive from work and others in course of work.”
- **Safety** – “Sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career. Feel situations are trustworthy, secure, predictable, and clear in terms of behavioral consequences.”
- **Availability** – “Sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances. Feel capable of driving physical, intellectual, and emotional energies into role performance.” (Kahn, 1990)

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) define engagement as the opposite of burnout: a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. They describe vigor as being “characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Dedication means having “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Absorption, for these authors, is a “state of being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Regardless of the definition and measurement method, a significant amount of research shows that employee engagement has a positive impact on a company’s profit (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), retention (Oliveira & Silva, 2015; Rigoni & Nelson, 2016; Koppel, Deline, & Virkstis, 2017), performance (Plester & Hutchison, 2016) and productivity (Plester & Hutchison, 2016; Carter & Baghurst, 2014). A varied array of academic studies has shown positive relationships between (but not limited to) social networking (Koch, Gonzales, & Leidner, 2012; Korzyński, 2015), fun (Plester & Hutchison, 2016), emotional dissonance (Koch et al., 2012; Karatepe, 2011), servant leadership (Carter & Baghurst, 2014), internal branding (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016; Carter & Baghurst, 2014) and job resources (Adkins & Rigoni, 2016; Karatepe, 2011). Although substantial research has been published, none of these individual concepts appear to have been investigated extensively enough to evoke a solid understanding of the relationship between these phenomena.

To systematically demonstrate a difference in workplace engagement between millennials and other generations, a researcher needs to show variation in a list of well-defined attributes of engagement for comparison. For there to be a difference in workplace engagement between millennials and other generations, millennials need to differ from other generations in a systematic way. A potential, but not exclusive list of attributes for comparison may include health, values, knowledge, and work attitudes (Hodgkinson, Ford, Lyons, & Kuron, 2014). Little scholarly research has been done on the topic of generational differences as it relates specifically to millennials.

Michelle Mary Murphy’s (2012) dissertation offers a noteworthy discussion of the topic. Murphy conducted a cross-sectional survey study that explored similarities and differences
among millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers in regard to work values, important manager behaviors, and manager behaviors that predicted work engagement. The following list summarizes some of Murphy’s most significant findings:

- Gen Xers value benefits more than Baby Boomers or millennials and convenient work hours more than Baby Boomers have.
- Baby Boomers have valued achievement, contribution to society, and meaningful work more than millennials and Gen Xers have.
- Baby Boomers have valued ability, ethics and integrity, and influence within organizations more than millennials do.
- Millennials and Gen Xers value advancement more than Baby Boomers have.
- Gen Xers and Baby Boomers have valued independence and influence in work more than millennials do.
- Participation and empowerment manager behaviors were most predictive of engagement for millennials and Gen Xers. (Murphy, 2012)

Only a handful of academic United States based studies have specifically focused on millennial engagement/disengagement in the workplace compared to other generations. Of the four relevant studies found and reviewed (see the table below), two found notable differences between generations, one found some differences between the generations and one did not find any differences.

It should be noted that all the research methods used below have shortcomings as they measure a point in time which doesn’t allow researchers to establish causal claims. Only well-designed longitudinal studies can show causality. Longitudinal studies are built to show change over time, as they can be conducted anywhere from the span of a day to several decades. Studying change over time is a drastic benefit, as it allows for examination of reasons behind changes occurring over time. In contrast, correlation analyses show quantitative trends between two or more variables, which allows researchers to relate variables to one another. The drawback, however, is that correlation between variables does not necessarily represent a cause-and-effect; correlation only allows researchers to go as far as predict causation rather than ensure it. Cross-sectional surveys are similar, as they represent correlative information rather than causal; additionally, cross-sectional surveys limits research and data collection on a population to a single point in time (Institute for Work and Health, 2015). Thus, longitudinal studies offer the greatest benefits among these research methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Questionnaire was given voluntarily to employees of 29 mid/upscale North American hotel properties owned by same company.</td>
<td>“Overall, the results suggest that employees in the older generations are likely to be more dedicated to, engrossed in, and even vigorous at work…Millennials were found to be a more distinct cohort from Gen Xers and Baby Boomers in terms of their level of work engagement as well as the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention.”</td>
<td>Park &amp; Gursoy, 2012.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between work engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among</td>
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### Cross-sectional survey exploring similarities and differences among millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers

The three generations valued work values, important manager behaviors and manager behavior differently.

Specific manager behaviors were identified that can be applied to each of the three generations to enhance work engagement.

“Multiple regression analysis found participation and empowerment manager behaviors were most predictive of work engagement for survey respondents overall. When generational samples were analyzed separately, participation and empowerment manager behaviors were most predictive of engagement for millennials and Gen Xers; fairness behaviors were most predictive for Baby Boomers. Findings contribute to literature on work engagement and generational management by identifying manager behaviors that can foster work engagement for all employees. Specific manager behaviors were also identified that can be applied to each of the three generations to enhance work engagement.”

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### An inquiry was conducted to understand why early-tenure millennials were leaving their organizations at higher rates than other groups of nurses. The goal was to identify root causes of millennial turnover and best practices to overcome them. Researchers analyzed nurse responses in the ABSS 2015 Employee Engagement Survey (EES) database.

“Researchers’ first finding was that millennial nurses are in many ways similar to their older peers. Their analysis of more than 50,000 responses in ABSS EES confirms that the top 10 drivers of engagement are the same for millennial nurses and nurses overall.”

They suspect the higher millennial attrition is because “…engagement is not a perfect proxy for retention for all groups of nurses. There are instances when a staff member is engaged but does not intend to stay at the organization.”

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### This study examines the differences in employee engagement across the three generations currently in the labor force-Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. Data were collected from published articles and a survey. The survey instrument was distributed through a

Research study concluded that age plays a role in certain aspects of employee engagement. Five out of fifteen practitioner created questions by SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management) posed were found to be dependent on age. Those questions are:

1. Frequently putting all effort into work

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Murphy, 2012.


centralized national company of smaller owned companies. A sample was drawn from a list of these companies. Statistical methods were applied to the results.

2. Feeling so wrapped up in work that hours go by like minutes
3. Having colleagues that quickly adapt to challenging or crisis situations
4. Having people that are always flexible in expanding the scope of their age in a work group
5. Being satisfied in the variety of the work

Limitations of This Review

The primary focus of this article was to review scholarly information on millennial disengagement in the US workplace to determine “Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations?” While sufficient time was spent researching in this area, a more limited literature review was conducted on the supporting concept of generational differences and employee engagement as a broad category. Antecedents of employee engagement and related constructs were not reviewed.

Discussion

There are a concerning number of gaps that prevent us from confidently answering the research question at hand, “Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations?” The main problems are that consistent definitions are not used, no comprehensive picture of the facts has been achieved, existing methodologies, questionnaires, and data are not accessible, practitioners tend to misunderstand the inconclusive nature of the research, and research solely on the United States, in particular, is lacking.

Consistent definitions are not used

Employers and consultants have created their own definition of “engagement.” A number of terms and related concepts are used interchangeably when they should not be. This dilutes and confuses the way they are understood. These terms include “motivation,” “job engagement,” “job satisfaction,” and “employee satisfaction.” Another challenge is that many practitioner articles do not clearly specify which definition of “employee engagement” they are using and how they are using the term. Macey and Schneider (2008) show in detail that both academic researchers and practitioners use “employee engagement” interchangeably to connote either a psychological state (involvement, commitment, mood), a type of behavior (performance, effort, observable behavior,
organizational citizenship behavior), a trait (disposition, positive affect characterized by feeling enthusiasm) or some combination of these. Macey and Schneider ultimately demonstrate that a consistent usage of the term “employee engagement” has yet to develop. To further add to the vagueness and confusion, many practitioner and scholarly articles do not define “millennials” when discussing millennial engagement. The lack of a consistently identified age range makes it difficult to compare studies with accuracy and to get a reliable picture of the situation.

Because consistent definitions are not used and because many terms and concepts are used incorrectly and interchangeably, accurately measuring employee engagement is a steep challenge. Nonetheless, a variety of measurement tools and assessments have been created and vetted that can help answer questions about employee engagement. On the downside, these tools also present challenges; a few of these tools include the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), the Gallup Q12, and the JD-R model.

The Utrecht Work Engagement scale is a self-report questionnaire that includes the three constituting dimensions of work engagement based on Schaufeli’s definition; vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Originally, the UWES included 24 items, but after evaluation, it was reduced to 17 questions and is now 9 questions. In a literature review entitled, “Do We All Agree on how to Measure Work Engagement? Factorial Validity of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale as a Standard Measurement Tool,” the author concludes with, “…This review indicates that, despite its popularity, the UWES is not an ideal tool for work engagement measurement. The notion of the three-factor work engagement and its operationalization through the UWES is popular and widely used; however, the results presented here suggest that it is far from perfect, and that the question of how to (properly) measure work engagement is still an open one (Konrad, 2017).”

Gallup created the Q12 which is a simple 12 question survey that asks employees to score the questions on a 1 to 5 scale. Gallup is a consulting company focused on research-based global performance management. They do not publicly post their engagement questions on their website, although the questions can be found on other websites, although there is no guarantee if they are correct or if they have changed. Although many companies use Gallup’s instrument, it has been disapproved by academics. Academics have argued that because the Q12 looks at work conditions and not the psychological connection with the performance of a work task, “employee engagement” is not being measured. The article “Conceptual Versus Empirical Distinctions Among Constructs: Implications for Discriminant Validity” written by James K. Harter from the Gallup Organization and Frank L. Schmidt from the University of Iowa (2008) gives more perspective on the subject. Practitioners have also voiced concerns with Gallup’s reporting as can be seen in Jack Zenger’s (2013) Forbes article “Why Gallup’s 70% Disengagement Data is Wrong.”

The JD-R model is a general “positive psychology” model that assumes all aspects in work environments can be categorized into job demands and job resources that either positively or negatively affect work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In the book Bridging Occupational, Organizational and Public Health: A Transdisciplinary Approach, in Chapter 4, Schaufeli and Taris (2014) report that although their research findings support the model, “there are still several important unresolved issues regarding the JD-R, including the model’s epistemological status, the definition of and distinction between “demands” and “resources,”
the incorporation of personal resources, the distinction between the health impairment and the motivational processes, the issue of reciprocal causation, and the model’s applicability beyond the individual level.”

In summary, uncertainty exists regarding the employee engagement tools currently used today which makes conclusively answering questions about millennial engagement impossible. When using these measurement tools (or others) it is important to ensure that a given tool measures the employee engagement in the sense that is being studied and that the pros and cons are understood.

There is no full picture

When reading studies on millennial engagement, it is vital to remember that as of January 2019 the youngest millennials were only 18 years old and therefore many have not yet entered the corporate workplace. It is thus too early for a full picture of millennial engagement and disengagement to exist. This is important because younger millennials and older millennials may have distinct differences in terms of disengagement in the workplace which could skew our current understanding of them.

Limited access to practitioner methodology, questionnaires, and data

Consulting firms such as Gallup and PricewaterhouseCoopers conduct their own employee engagement surveys and have their own data, but at times do not release certain pieces of information as it is proprietary. As a result, the general public, including academics, are not privy to their full methodology, questionnaires, and/or data. Without access to this information, academics and practitioners alike cannot ask questions, poke holes in the research, validate the information or form educated opinions.

Another challenge is that much of the practitioner literature does not compare other generations to millennials, and instead reports only on millennial disengagement, making it impossible to determine if millennials are, in fact, more disengaged than other generations.

Practitioner misconceptions

One of the factors that contribute to practitioners believing they thoroughly understand millennial disengagement is the sheer volume of practitioner articles, blogs and studies on millennial engagement and disengagement that do exist. What many practitioners do not realize is that many of the articles written on the subject rely on the same few studies and data points. Because of the abundance of articles available, a human resource professional, for instance, who reads four different articles a month on millennial disengagement may believe there is a plethora of supporting information showing that millennial disengagement exists. But if this same human resource professional checked the resources and surveys used to support
the article’s claims, they would realize that no data or the same core data and studies are being used time and time again.

**Limited U.S. focused data**

Many studies on both the practitioner and scholarly sides around generational differences and specifically workplace disengagement combine millennial feedback across countries. That being said, it is hard to know whether U.S. millennials are uniquely disengaged and whether cultural differences exist among the millennial generation depending on location.

**Limited research methods used**

One research method limitation is the scarcity of longitudinal studies. The majority of research methods include correlative analyses and cross-sectional surveys. While these do well in displaying relational data, they lack the ability to showcase any true cause-and-effect data between variables. For example, in 2012 Park and Gursoy (2012) used correlation analyses to examine the relationships between work engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover intention among millennials, Gen Xers, and Baby Boomers. While they were able to find that millennials had drastically different levels of each above category compared to other generations, what could not be found were reasons behind why levels varied so greatly. Displaying reasons behind certain trends is essential, and thus large scale, longitudinal research methods will provide much more significant data.

Research methods have been limited to mostly quantitative measures. What becomes necessary is qualitative research and bringing to the forefront the influences behind millennial engagement in the corporate workplace. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the last of the millennial generation potentially joined the workplace just over a year ago (in 2018). This means that of the scope of millennials ranging from 1982-2000, the amount of years in the workplace spans from 19 years to one. This creates a limitation on longitudinal studies, as the entire millennial generation has yet to experience at least five years in the workplace. While longitudinal studies may still be conducted, the limitation of the age of millennials across the generation must be taken into consideration. Generations that come before millennials, such as Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, have entirely joined the workforce, and therefore collecting employee engagement data over time can be conducted without the variable of years within the workplace.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the research question “Are U.S. millennials working in a corporate workplace really more disengaged at work than other generations?” has yet to be definitively answered. Although reaching an agreement through this literature review would have been preferred, it’s important to ask if knowing this information would matter. If millennials were in fact found to be more disengaged than other generations, could that simply be a factor of life stage and age rather than a factor of generation? For example, Baby Boomers when at the age of a current millennial (18-37 years old) may have been just as disengaged as millennials, but we will never
know this as the concept of employee engagement has only been around since the 1990’s and minimal generational studies and no longitudinal generational studies on employee engagement have been conducted to the best of my knowledge. It’s also significant to ask if the potential employee disengagement differences amongst generations is significant enough to make a difference on employee engagement strategies.

**Moving forward**

Now that some of the misconceptions around generational workplace engagement have been demystified, practitioners should make efforts to continue to bridge their knowledge gap and broaden their perspective — but ensuring this is done with inquisitiveness and skepticism. Given that it remains unknown whether millennials are more disengaged than prior generations, it is also recommended that practitioners reconsider their employee engagement strategies and the way they allocate resources, especially if certain efforts geared towards millennial employees are based on the existing practitioner and scholarly literature alone. The most important conclusion to draw from this literature review is the need for a call to action; for both practitioners and academics, to conduct more research. Further research needs to specifically focus on generational differences in the workplace. In 2013, an informative literature review in the Journal of Organizational Behavior entitled “Generational differences in the workplace: A review of the evidence and directions for future research” was published (Hodgkinson, Ford, Lyons, & Kuron, 2014). The authors conclude that generational differences do exist in the areas of personality, work values, attitudes, career expectations and experiences, teamwork, and leadership. But they also note that, depending on which factor they explored, evidence was at times sparse and inconsistent. The authors concluded, as I have, that because of variations in methodologies and reporting, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions and called for researchers to continue research in this area. Their work makes it clear there is a specific need for generational workplace engagement research. Practitioners, for their part, should conduct internal research to better understand the similarities and differences among generations for workplace engagement in their unique environments, rather than relying solely on secondary information and tools. To jumpstart research efforts, whether in practice or in academia, one should first clarify the definition of employee engagement being used. Rather than conduct surveys to better understand millennial engagement, I would advocate using qualitative research methods such as employee observations, interviews, and focus groups to gain insights into millennial engagement issues. Nowhere in my literature review did I find a meaningful qualitative research study focused specifically on millennial engagement in the corporate workplace. We need to get a better understanding of millennials’ engagement from their viewpoint. How do they define engagement? What does disengagement mean to them? A proper definition should also lead to a more sophisticated measurement instrument. A proper scale for employee engagement that is employee-driven would be a major contribution to the field. Introducing a specific measurement instrument for employee engagement will be essential in conducting large-scale, longitudinal studies.
Research efforts may also go in the direction of clarifying the relationship between employee engagement and measurements of performance, ranging from employee and firm performance to productivity and turnover. Here, the importance of longitudinal studies comes back into play, as it will be important to not only witness relationships between certain variables, but to examine the causes behind such relationships as well. In clarifying the relationship between engagement and performance, research must focus on whether or not it is a direct relationship or a much more complicated process.

Related research questions that emerged from this literature review include: If millennials are disengaged in the U.S. corporate workplace, why is this the case? What strategies can help increase millennial engagement in the U.S. corporate workplace? The existing literature suggests that there are a variety of positive relationships involved in employee engagement, which signals the potential for developing a better understanding of millennial disengagement in the workplace and for identifying strategies to increase engagement.
References


Danielle Clark has over 10 years of leadership and human resources experience working with Fortune 500 and family-owned companies in a variety of roles. She is a Life & Career Coach, HR Consultant and College Educator. Danielle holds a full-time business teaching appointment at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa Florida and part-time business teaching appointments at Becker College and Northeastern University in Massachusetts. Danielle holds a BSBA, MBA and MSOL. She has successfully completed her Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) dissertation requirements at the University of South Florida and will graduate in December 2019.
APPENDIX B:

ARTICLE TWO PUBLICATION ACCEPTANCE LETTER

From: NACRA 2019 Annual Meeting <onbehalfof@manuscriptcentral.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 15, 2019 at 11:11 AM
Subject: NACRA 2019 Annual Meeting - Case Acceptance (NACRA-032-2018)
To: <danielleclark319@gmail.com>, <Danielle.clark@nichols.edu>

15-Jul-2019

Dear Dr. Danielle Clark:

I am pleased to inform you that your case, "Aspire Financial: Refocusing on Talent Management," has now been officially accepted for the program of the North American Case Research Association (NACRA)! Reviewer scores and comments can be found at the bottom of this email. You are highly encouraged to revise your case in response to reviewer comments.

Unless I direct you otherwise, submit your revisions to me by September 6th, 2019 (five weeks prior to the conference). This will give me time to distribute the cases to the Roundtable participants, and time for the participants to review your case prior to the conference. When your revision is complete, please send it directly to me. ScholarOne is not set up to accept cases revised after acceptance.

The case Roundtable discussion sessions will be held on both Friday and Saturday mornings. At least one case author is required to participate in all Roundtable discussions on both days. You can expect to discuss approximately half the cases on Friday and the remainder on Saturday. I will let you know the order in which we will discuss the cases. Please note, an absence from one of the days can result in the case not being included in the conference proceedings. I ask that you confirm your attendance directly with me prior to the conference so the track may be planned as necessary.

I will be assigning you to a specific table for case discussions. Your case and instructor's manual will be presented along with those developed by other authors assigned at your table. Each author at the table is required to read and review each case assigned to her/his table. This is necessary for case discussions and for providing other authors at your table with your valuable comments that will help them move their case toward publication. As such, please be sure to conduct a thorough review of each case assigned to your table.

To gain the greatest benefit from the meeting, advance preparation is necessary. Please read the handout "How to Get the Most Out of the Case Discussion Sessions" that outlines the Roundtable roles, procedures, and expectations for participants. A copy can be downloaded from the conference website on the tab "New to NACRA or the Conference". With your effort and assistance, we will have very interactive sessions and you will obtain helpful suggestions for refining your case.
PLEASE NOTE: If you require a letter to obtain a visa to travel to the conference, please contact Eric Dolansky, VP Programs at edolansky@brocku.ca as soon as possible.

Also, if you have not yet registered for the conference or made your hotel and travel arrangements, please do so right away. You can make your hotel reservation here (https://gc.synxis.com/rez.aspx?Hotel=12318&Chain=15564&arrive=10/10/2019&depart=10/12/2019&adult=1&child=0&group=2UD87W) or by calling the Tempe Mission Palms at 800-547-8705.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me. I look forward to seeing you at the conference!

Sincerely,

Dr. John D. Varlaro
Johnson & Wales University
NACRA Track Chair, Organizational Behavior/Human Resources
APPENDIX C:

ARTICLE TWO DESCRIPTION

DANIELLE CLARK, HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Danielle Clark (student author)
Anne Lawrence (faculty supervisor)

ASPIRE FINANCIAL: REFOCUSING ON TALENT MANAGEMENT

CASE OBJECTIVES AND USE

This field-researched case targets undergraduate and graduate level courses in Human Resources and/or Organizational Behavior. The issues addressed in this case include talent management challenges, and high employee turnover rates as the company undergoes a platform migration. Several issues exist within this migration both internally and externally, such as mandatory overtime work, minimal employee training opportunities, and an increased amount of customer complaints.

In preparing and discussing this case, students will learn how to examine the role of human resources within talent management and further investigate talent management issues as they relate to employee attrition, employee engagement and other employee attitudes and behaviors. Students will be able to define employee engagement, as well as pinpoint its antecedents and catalysts. Finally, students will learn how to identify opportunities to improve workplace conditions, which in turn will help them create a basic action plan to improve talent management for an organization.

CASE SYNOPSIS

Founded in 2002 by Pete Kirtland, Aspire Financial Services LLC in Tampa FL was created to provide 401k plans through a transparent lens, making the retirement process simple for consumers. By 2010, Aspire broadened their scope and added 403(b) and 457(b) plans. Suzie Skiratko was hired as the Human Resources Director for Aspire in 2011. In 2015 Aspire needed to undergo a platform migration with InvestLink – the proprietary customer data platform that presented retirement plans, investment options and pricing in a simple and easy-to-navigate way.

Skiratko was tasked with the duty of employee engagement over the course of a long and disruptful migration. It was her job to ensure that employees supported the migration, which meant hiring new talent, minimizing employee turnover, and promoting good morale and productivity levels. Implementations to address business and employee needs during this time included cutting down time spent on training initiatives, removal of a strict dress code, and introducing employee-led activity committees. While these additions were beneficial, Aspire still faced high employee turnover rates, especially in 2018.
With the migration almost complete, Skiratko and Kirtland hope to focus more of their time on the employees; Kirtland wants his employees to feel empowered and valued. Skiratko wants to ensure that the future involves more employee engagement initiatives, because a focus on the needs of people who work for Aspire means providing them with care and satisfaction that will drive success for the company. Skiratko and Kirtland are at a point where they need to figure out what the main employee concerns are and how to move forward to increase engagement and minimize turnover.

The author developed the case for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of the situation. The case and teaching note was anonymously peer reviewed for presentation at the NACRA 2019 Conference, Tempe, AZ, October 10-12, 2019. © 2019 by Danielle Clark. Contact person: Danielle Clark, Hillsborough Community College, Dale Mabry campus 4001 W Tampa Bay Blvd, Tampa FL 33614, 978-614-5711, danielleclark319@gmail.com.