

Employee Engagement Among Millennial Cross-Cultural Ministers: Insights for Recruitment and Retainment

Michael Roy Martin

LCC International University

Western mission agencies are in a period of transition as baby boomers enter into retirement leaving personnel voids millennials and younger generations will need to fill. Millennial values and expectations are different than previous generations and these differences affect their level of employee engagement. Additionally, millennials have a reputation for being difficult to manage. As a generation though, they possess characteristics that would benefit cross-cultural ministry endeavors. Mission agency leaders need to understand their unique values and expectations affecting millennials' level of engagement in order to attract and retain them in cross-cultural ministry positions. Nine factors were gleaned from a literature review that significantly impact millennials' level of employee engagement. Method of Empathy-Based Storying (MEBS) was used to present a positive and negative scenario to existing millennial cross-cultural ministers (MCCMs). They were asked to rank these nine factors in order of importance as they saw them affecting the protagonist of the scenario's level of engagement. Forty-nine MCCMs took part in the survey. A statistically significant consensus was reached as to the level of significance four of the nine factors hold for MCCMs. Meaningful and challenging work and feeling valued and affirmed by leader was viewed as most important, and access to up-to-date technology and frequent feedback from leader was least important. These results can be used to gain insights for the recruitment and retention of millennials for cross-cultural ministry.

Keywords: *millennial, employee engagement, cross-cultural minister, job crafting, recruitment, retainment*

Introduction

We are in the middle of a crucial time in cross-cultural ministry recruitment and deployment (VanHuis, 2019). Increasingly baby boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964¹ are retiring from active cross-cultural ministry leaving personnel gaps that need to be filled by younger ministers. The millennial generation, those born between 1980 and 1996² is now the largest generation in our society (Cattermole, 2018; Fry, 2020; Vowels, 2014; Gong, Greenwood, Hoyte, Ramkissoon & He, 2018; Gerard, 2018; Rawlins, Indvik & Johnson, 2008) providing the greatest pool of potential replacements. Mission leaders will need to give more thought as to how they can recruit and retain younger generations like millennials in order to keep or increase current deployment levels.

Organizations seeking to survive what has been referred to as the “war for talent” (Plaskoff, 2017) have focused their attention on concepts such as employee engagement in order to recruit and retain millennials. Mission agencies are, and will be, in competition with those presenting other career options for millennial talent. A better understanding of the factors that affect levels of work engagement can be one key to win this “war.”

¹ Age range for baby boomers according to Gallup as reported by Wolf (2019).

² Age range for millennials according to Gallup, as reported by Wolf (2019)

According to research, higher levels of employee engagement have shown benefits for organizations and businesses. Highly engaged employees outperform disengaged ones by as much as 20 to 30 percent (Burnett & Lisk, 2019). Fully engaged employees are 50% more likely to exceed their employer's expectations (Goffee & Jones, 2013). Companies which have four engaged workers for every one disengaged worker show 2.6 times more growth in earnings per share compared to companies with one engaged worker, or less, to one disengaged worker (Choo, Mat & Al-Omari, 2013). Engaged workers help companies outperform companies with mostly disengaged workers on several metrics, including 89 percent better customer satisfaction and up to four times more revenue (Goffee & Jones, 2013). Burnett and Lisk (2019) in their research also found that highly engaged workers have better interactions with customers. Most importantly, employee engagement has helped organizations retain employees (Ma, Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018; Goffee & Jones, 2013) and has contributed to higher levels of commitment (Dagher, Chapa & Junaid, 2015; Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017; Burnett & Lisk, 2019).

Concepts such as employee engagement have become especially important in regards to millennial workers who appear uncommitted to long-term employment: fifty percent of millennials say they will be with another employer in a year's time (Wolf, 2019). Millennials are the least engaged generation. In 2016, Gallup found that only 29% of millennials surveyed were engaged with their current job, while 16% were disengaged, that is, actively seeking to harm their organization (Adkins, 2016a; Clifton, 2016). Millennials, more than any other generation, struggle to find jobs that engage them (Adkins, 2016b, Clifton, 2016). According to Barna Group, a faith and culture research agency, 9 out of 10 millennials expect to stay in their current job for only three years (When millennials go ..., 2016). However, some of this non-committal behavior may be a result of millennials entering a difficult job market brought on by the Great Recession at the end of the first decade of the 21st century (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Furthermore, some stereotypes about millennials may merely be unjust anecdotes lacking empirical backing (Wong, Gardiner, Lang & Coulon., 2008).

The author carried out research in an attempt to partially address the need for more millennial cross-cultural ministers (MCCMs) by studying factors that create higher levels of work and organizational engagement for millennials who are already working in an overseas context. The goal was to glean insights regarding work engagement that will have implications for better overall recruitment and retention strategies with millennials in mission service. A survey was performed by the author using Method of Empathy-Based Storying (MEBS), in which MCCMs were asked to rank nine factors according to their significance for higher levels of engagement. These factors were gleaned from an academic review of literature regarding work engagement factors for millennials in domestic job settings. An extensive list of engagement elements was refined from 19 to 9, grouping elements together according to similarity. This was done to limit the number of factors a survey participant would have to rank. It was determined that asking someone to rank more than nine factors would have been an overwhelming and complicated task. Persons born in or between 1980 and 1996, and currently ministering cross-culturally in a foreign country were asked to participate in the survey.

Little was found during a literature review regarding MCCMs and work engagement. While Jolene Cassellius Erlacher in *Millennials in Ministry* (2014) provided invaluable insights into millennials in ministry regarding their values, expectations, and experiences, most of her study was based on interviews with millennial leaders in domestic home culture ministry settings. Proportionally, few of her interviews were done with MCCMs. Therefore, this research will have value for the broader understanding of millennials in ministry by focusing solely on MCCMs and what they need for better work engagement.

Research Hypothesis

The author proposes that millennials ministering cross-culturally will reach a consensus that some factors for better millennial work engagement are more or less significant in their cross-

cultural work scenarios overseas. The null hypothesis is that no consensus in the ranking exercise will be reached.

Literature Review

Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) described employee engagement as, “A positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption.” William Kahn (1990) found that people use varying degrees of their physical, emotional, and cognitive selves at different times in their jobs. Therefore, it is not reasonable to expect someone to be fully engaged at all times. Rather, we should learn to view an employee on a continuum between disengaged and engaged at different levels at different points of time (Wollard, 2012). With this in mind, employers need to ask, what components contribute to higher levels of engagement and what is the best way to keep employees engaged more frequently at higher levels.

Unfortunately, most strategies for achieving higher levels of engagement are based on old ways of thinking, starting with company needs instead of individual needs (Plaskoff, 2017). Human resources departments need to better align their overall practice with employee engagement strategies (Choo, et al, 2013) and one of the ways this can be done is to think about the worker’s condition more holistically; cognitively, emotionally, socially, politically, economically and physically (Plaskoff, 2017). This is part of a shift in focus away from what can be extracted from an employee, to what can be instilled in an employee (Goffee & Jones, 2013).

An important aspect of this shift toward employee investment is job crafting or job design thinking. Job crafting starts with the needs, wants, fears, and emotions of the employee, and focuses on designing a work experience, or “solution” with the employee’s participation (Plaskoff, 2017). This is a practice worth pursuing; job crafting has shown to positively affect organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), another element of employee engagement, especially among millennials (Gong et al., 2013; 2018).

Furthermore, a manager’s role and actions are paramount toward creating higher levels of employee engagement. Especially when managing millennials, organizations need to be careful to hire not only motivated and skilled managers, but caring managers who want to maximize each worker’s potential (Clifton, 2016; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Burnett & Lisk, 2019). Millennials expect managers to be coaches with whom they can be close (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015).

Generational Differences and Employee Engagement Strategy

For the first time in history, we have four distinct generations in the workforce (Plaskoff, 2017; Bennett, Pitts & Price, 2012; Hansen & Leuty, 2012; Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Generational cohorts differ from each other based on their life experiences, attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012; Glazer, Mahoney & Randall, 2019; Twenge, Campbell & Freeman, 2012). These shared identities are all very difficult to change (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Different generations see themselves as marked by different strengths and characteristics (Millennials: A portrait of ..., 2010). Subsequently, every generation tends to put down the next generation based on differing characteristics (Glazer, et al., 2019; Vowels, 2014). Each generation has different ideas about how to behave in the workplace and different ideas about what to expect from their employers (Glazer et al., 2013; 2019). It is important, therefore, to understand these differences and adapt accordingly, especially with newer generations entering the workforce.

Unfortunately, most leaders have taken a “wait and see” approach, anticipating that as younger workers grow older, they will adapt and fit in with what is expected of them (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Such leaders may soon be disappointed, for Hansen and Leuty found in their research that work values are influenced more so by their generational cohort than their age (2012). As workers age, they are unlikely to change in order to fit in or adapt to their employer's

expectations. The onus therefore, it would seem, is on managers and leaders of organizations to understand and know how to manage people from different generations with different values.

Millennials – Who are They?

Millennials are the largest living generation (Cattermole, 2018; Rawlins et al., 2008) and are expected to peak in the United States at 74.9 million people in 2033 (Fry, 2020). Millennials grew up with very different experiences as kids and youth (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). They were the most supervised generation (Vowels, 2014). They were raised by child-centric, high-performance parents (Glazer et al., 2013; 2019, Raymo & Raymo, 2014) and possess an intense drive to succeed because of the high expectations placed upon them (Erlacher, 2014). They were constantly told they were special and encouraged that they could do anything they wanted to which may have contributed to a sense of entitlement and narcissistic behavior (Erlacher, 2014; Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). They were encouraged in school to work together which generally makes them better team players than other generations (Vowels, 2014). Technology, which they are very comfortable with, was a present reality in their lives from birth (Vowels, 2014; Gerard, 2018). They were raised egalitarian, in that everyone got a prize just for simply participating (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012).

Millennials are confident and optimistic (Adkins, 2016b). When millennials were asked in a survey to agree or disagree with the statement, “I believe I can do something great,” 96% agreed (Vowels, 2014). They desire responsibility, even demanding it (Martin, 2005) and want to be included in decision-making processes (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013). Millennials expect to get rewards, development opportunities and promotions immediately upon employment (Cattermole, 2018).

One of the most defining characteristics of millennials is their use of technology (Millennials: A portrait of ..., 2010). The introduction of the internet during their youth has changed the way millennials “...interact, consume content, browse, buy and work” (Adkins, 2016b). Gordon, in her research into millennial librarians and their needs, states that millennials have learned to use technology as naturally as they have learned to speak their native language (2010). For this reason, millennials expect that all technology in their workplace will be up-to-date (Luscombe et al., 2013).

Millennials bring a lot of strengths, benefits, and positive values to the workplace. Millennials are stronger team players than most generations (Gordon, 2010; Cattermole, 2018). They desire collaboration (Martin, 2005), so offering opportunities to work in teams is one way to attract them into organizations (Bennett et al., 2012). As well, training and development are highly valued by millennials (Gordon, 2010; Glazer et al., 2019; Luscombe et al., 2013; Adkins & Rigoni, 2016). They expect that their work will be varied and include meaningful, challenging tasks which provide opportunity for growth (Kuitalahti & Viitala, 2014; Kuitalahti & Viitala, 2015). Providing opportunities to develop their skills creates ways for them to increase credibility with co-workers which in turn helps increase commitment (Gerard, 2018).

Millennials in Cross-Cultural Ministry

Millennials are needed in cross-cultural ministry. Leaders need to see millennials as the solution instead of the problem, and that they are needed to replace retiring baby boomers (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Much discussion to this effect is taking place in the business world, but unfortunately, not as much as it needs to be in ministry spheres (Erlacher, 2014). This is unfortunate, for millennials have shown more proclivity to service than other generations (Gong et al., 2013; 2018).

Millennials have other characteristics and values that fit well with cross-cultural ministry, which Vowels (2014) lays out:

- they are a high performing generation if managed properly
- they are optimistic and possess unfailing hope

- they have a holistic approach to ministry
- they consider other cultures as equal to their own
- they are concerned about alleviating human suffering

Erlacher (2014) adds that they were taught from an early age to value collaboration and teamwork, along with tolerance of differences and engage strongly with social justice issues which seem to be noble character traits of those seeking to minister cross-culturally.

Issues Managing Millennials

Millennials have been referred to as a generation “much maligned” (Cattermole, 2018, p. 290). Some see them as lazy and self-centered (When millennials go ..., 2016; LaCore, 2015; Rawlins et al., 2013/2008). Many people see them as entitled and narcissistic, making them difficult to please (Robison, 2018) and giving them an over-inflated view of themselves (Vowels, 2014). Being the most over-supervised generation ever makes many millennials seem emotionally needy (Luscombe et al., 2013) and often they project the role of parent onto their leaders causing extra pressure and frustration (Erlacher, 2014). Many millennials were sheltered growing up, making it harder for them to deal with disappointment (Erlacher, 2014). Gordon states that they have the reputation of being, “... a generation of needy adults who can’t think for themselves” (2010, p. 395). Millennials need constant praise (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012) and when there is an absence of constant affirmation, they begin to think that something is wrong (Erlacher, 2014). Furthermore, millennials can easily become bored as a result of being constantly occupied growing up (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). These supposed attributions may become a source of stress for managers working with millennials.

In regards to work engagement, millennials are the least engaged generation in the workforce today (Adkins, 2016a; Gong et al., 2013/2018). Many millennials struggle to find jobs that engage them making millennials appear notoriously non-committal (Clifton, 2016). This low level of commitment and psychological detachment from their jobs creates, by and large, a state of disinterest in long-term employment with their current employer (Gong et al., 2013/2018). However, this may be a result of the life-stage millennials are currently in, which could change as more get married and have families of their own (Glazer et al., 2013/2019). As well, some of this can be contributed to the job environment millennials found themselves in during the Great Recession (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010).

The Nine Factors for Better Millennial Engagement

While researching millennial values and expectations in the workplace, certain themes repeatedly came forward as important factors affecting millennials' levels of work engagement. As mentioned beforehand, these themes were condensed into a list of nine factors. These factors were later used in a survey given to MCCMs to determine which ones were most or least significant for them for increasing levels of engagement. These nine factors are as follows: frequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance (Cattermole, 2018; No accounting for taste ..., 2017; Martin, 2005; Gordon, 2010; Clifton, 2016; Luscombe et al., 2013), meaningful and challenging work (Luscombe et al., 2013; Gerard, 2018; Martin, 2005; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Glazer et al., 2013/2019; Vowels, 2014; Erlacher, 2014; Gong et al., 2013/2018, De Hauw & De Vos, 2010), feeling valued and affirmed by leader(s) (Luscombe et al., 2013; Gordon, 2010; Erlacher, 2014; Cahill & Sedrak, 2012), opportunities for growth and development (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015; Adkins & Rigoni, 2016; Glazer et al., 2013/2019; Gong et al., 2013/2018; Gordon, 2010; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010), collaborative team environment (Bennett et al., 2013/2012; Erlander, 2014; Vowels, 2014; Martin, 2005; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015; Gordon, 2010; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010), access and use of up-to-date technology (Martin, 2005; Luscombe et al., 2013; Millennials: A portrait of ..., 2010; Vowels, 2014; Erlacher, 2014), personal and open relationship with leader(s) (Robison, 2019; Clifton, 2016; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015; Martin, 2005; Cattermole, 2018; Erlacher, 2014; Bennett et al., 2013/2012; Cattermole,

2018), good work-life balance with flexible schedule (No accounting for taste ..., 2017; Martin, 2005; Cattermole, 2018; Gordon, 2010; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2015; Erlacher, 2014; Hasen & Leuty, 2012; Rawlins et al., 2013; 2008; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Twenge, 2010), being involved in decisions (Luscombe et al., 2013; Cattermole, 2018; Vowels, 2014; Gordon, 2010; Martin, 2005).

Methodology

Data was collected in a survey using Method of Empathy-Based Storying (MEBS). MEBS has its roots in narrative inquiry and passive, non-active role playing (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). It came to be used as a substitute for deception used in experimental psychology (Wallin, Koro-Ljungberg & Eskola, 2019). The MEBS approach has been called “applied empathy” (Wallin et al., 2013; 2019) where a participant is encouraged to look at the scenario from the protagonist’s perspective. In this way, the participant reveals their own perceptions, reasoning, expectations and values by transposing them onto the character’s situation. In MEBS, participants are encouraged to imagine what the protagonist is thinking and feeling, thus creating a connection. MEBS is thus well suited to examine the unique motivators that engage millennials by providing a framed story with which they can relate and bring their own unique interpretation to it, thus revealing their own values and expectations in similar situations.

MEBS is based on framed stories which are presented to participants in two variations with a single changed element. In this case, one story is about a positive experience and one story is about a negative experience involving the same protagonist in an overseas mission context; One day Mel, who is a cross-cultural minister, comes home at the end of a day. Mel feels motivated, dedicated, invigorated and is absorbed in the ministry. It is nice to start each morning and Mel is always looking forward to the next day. Mel’s relationship with the organization is thriving and Mel enjoys the work. Why would Mel feel this motivated, dedicated, invigorated and absorbed with the ministry?

One day Mel, who is a cross-cultural minister, comes home at the end of a day. Mel feels tired, demotivated, disconnected and depleted. Mel feels drained and disconnected from the ministry. It is not nice to start each morning and Mel dreads the beginning of each new day. Mel’s relationship with the organization is distant and Mel does not enjoy work. Why is Mel unmotivated, not dedicated, invigorated or absorbed with the ministry?

The survey participants were then asked to rank the nine engagement factors for millennials, from most to least significance as they affected Mel’s experience in the different scenarios. A list of negative factors, for ranking was provided for the negative scenario and were the opposite of the positive factors:

- Infrequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance
- Boring routine tasks without meaning
- Doesn't feel valued or affirmed by leader(s) or team
- Lack of development opportunities
- Lack of collaborative team
- Distant and closed relationship with leader(s)
- No access to up-to-date technology
- Poor work-life balance with inflexible schedule
- Not involved in decision-making

Participants were sought through approaching different mission agencies, the leaders of which were sent a link to the online survey hosted by Survey Monkey. Leaders were asked to distribute the survey link to millennials in the specified age bracket who had ministered or were currently ministering in a foreign country and who had at minimum three months of experience overseas. Completed surveys were filtered to include only millennials born in or between the years

1980 to 1996 during data analysis. This age bracket was frequently used by Gallup in their millennial research and was therefore chosen as an age parameter for this survey. According to this criteria, 49 valid surveys were collected for analysis. Data was analyzed quantitatively using SPSS and analysis tools provided by Survey Monkey.

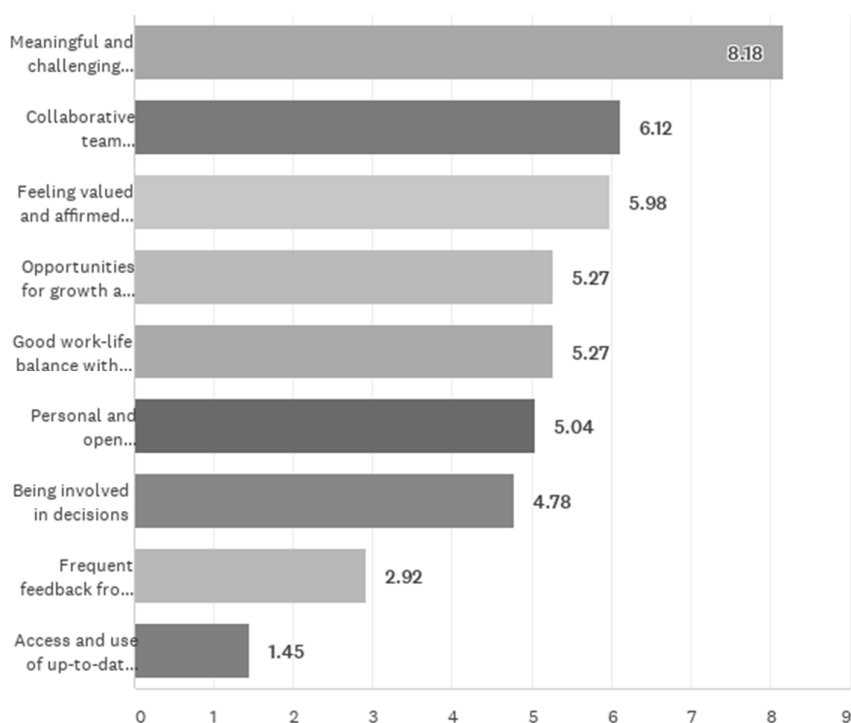
Results

In the survey, the participants ranked all nine factors from one to nine, one (1) being the most significant and nine (9) the least significant factor. Survey Monkey then inverted these rankings so that higher scores (i.e., 9) indicated higher significance and lower scores (i.e., 1) indicated lower significance.

For the positive MEBS scenario, the factor accorded the highest score (8.18 out of 9.0) was having meaningful and challenging work, indicating that participants considered this a very important factor affecting the protagonist's positive experience in cross-cultural ministry (see Figure 1). This factor was ranked number one by 63.3% (n=31) of respondents. Additionally, 22.4% (n=11) ranked *meaningful and challenging work* as either number two or three in significance, meaning 85.7% (n=42) ranked it as one of their top three most significant factors. Clearly, for most participants, having meaningful and challenging work was the most significant factor, or at least was a very important one for determining their level of engagement.

Two other factors rounding out the top three for importance were a *collaborative team environment* (score=6.12) and *feeling valued and affirmed by leader(s)* (score=5.98).

Figure 1 - MEBS positive scenario cumulative ranking scores

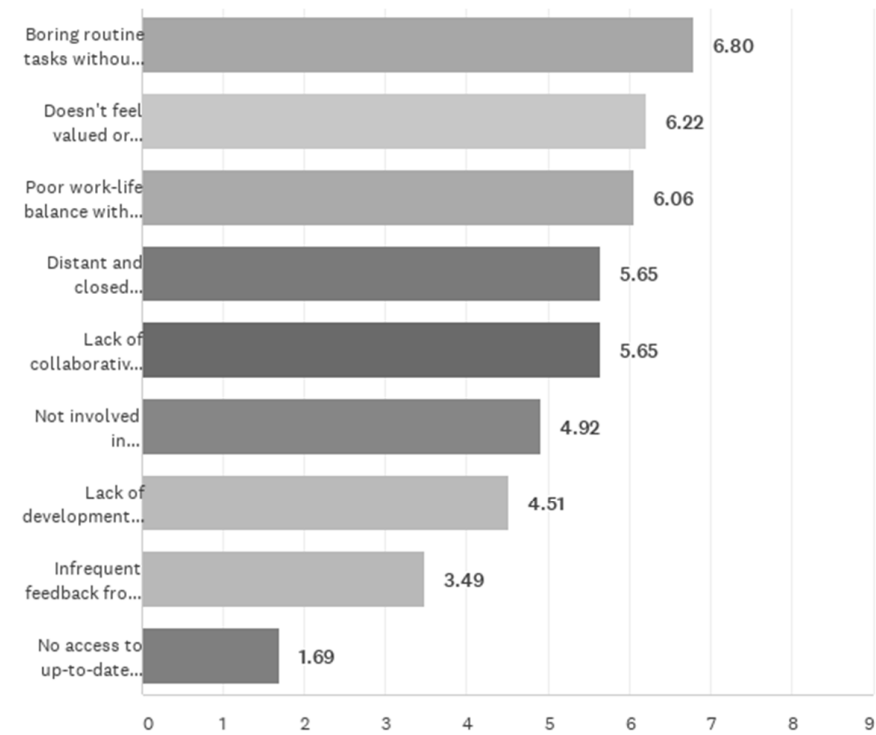


The lowest score, or that considered the least significant factor affecting the protagonist's positive experience was having access and use of up-to-date technology (score=1.45). Overwhelmingly, 75.5% (n=37) ranked it the least significant factor with 90% (n=44) of participants ranking it as number eight or nine. Up-to-date technology may be somewhat important for millennials ministering overseas for work engagement, but in comparison to the

other factors, this was overwhelmingly considered the least important. *Frequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance* was scored the second lowest (score=2.92). In contradiction to what other researchers have found important for millennials in the workplace, MCCMs seem to not consider these two factors significant for engagement.

Turning to the negative scenario and participants' responses; the antithesis of *meaningful and challenging work*, that is, *boring, routine tasks without meaning*, was ranked as the most significant factor affecting the protagonist's negative experience as a cross-

Figure 2 - MEBS negative scenario cumulative ranking scores



cultural minister, receiving a score of 6.8 out of 9.0 (see Figure 2). Close to one-third of respondents, 32.7% (n=16), chose it as the most significant factor in the negative scenario.

Not feeling valued or affirmed by leader(s) and *poor work-life balance with an inflexible schedule* made up the remainder of the top three significant factors affecting the protagonist's negative experience with scores of 6.22 and 6.06, respectively.

As in the positive scenario, technology was considered the least significant factor affecting the protagonist's negative experience, scoring 1.69. Most respondents, 75.5% (n=37) of them, ranked it as the least significant factor. Also deemed of little significance, but with a slightly higher score of 3.49 was having infrequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance. The majority of respondents, 61%, ranked it either number six (n=10), seven (n=10), or eight (n=10), however, one respondent ranked it number one.

Statistical Significance Analysis of the Ranking Responses

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov, non-parametric test of the data found that five factors had higher meaning in their rank placement by the participants. Higher homogeneity in ranking ($p < .050$) was found for the following factors: *meaningful and challenging work* ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.52$, $p < .001$), *access to up-to-date technology* ($M = 8.55$, $SD = 1.00$, $p < .001$), *no access to up-to-date technology* ($M = 8.31$, $SD = 1.43$, $p < .001$), *frequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance* ($M = 7.08$, $SD = 1.51$, $p =$

.019) and *boring, routine tasks without meaning* ($M=3.20$, $SD = 2.31$, $p = .028$). With these factors, we can conclude there was a clear consensus among the survey participants as to their level of affect on feelings of engagement. The remaining factors failed to show any clear consensus as to their importance for the participants.

The factors were then combined with their opposing counterpart (e.g. “meaningful and challenging work” with “boring, routine tasks without meaning”) and tested for homogeneity of variance. Four pairs showed a higher level homogeneity ($p < .100$): *meaningful and challenging work/boring routine tasks without meaning* ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 2.06$, $p = .001$), *feeling valued and affirmed by leader(s)/ doesn't feel valued or affirmed by leader(s) or team* ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 2.24$, $p = .011$), *access to up-to-date technology/no access to up-to-date technology* ($M = 8.42$, $SD = 1.24$, $p = .035$), and *frequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance/infrequent feedback from leader(s) regarding performance* ($M = 6.80$, $SD = 1.73$, $p = .081$). Therefore, we can conclude that the survey participants reached a consensus as to the importance or unimportance of these factors and their affect on levels of engagement. The remaining paired factors achieved no clear consensus under statistical analysis as to their level of importance.

Discussion

From the survey results, we can see that there is a clear consensus that having meaningful and challenging tasks significantly affects work engagement levels for MCCMs. From previous research into millennial values and expectations, most millennials desire to work at something meaningful that provides them with purpose (Luscombe et al., 2013; Gerard, 2018; Martin, 2005; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014; Glazer, et al., 2019; Vowels, 2014; Erlacher, 2014; Gong, et al., 2018). That it was a top choice for MCCMs should not come as too much of a surprise. Someone who moves from what is familiar, their home country and culture, to a place that is unfamiliar and very different is not likely looking for an easy task. Furthermore, close to a third of the survey participants did not want to name the country they were in for security reasons, indicating another level of challenge beyond mere cultural adjustments. MCCMs seem ready to take on any challenge no matter where they go. There could be higher motivations, i.e., spiritual, involved here that seem to make the difficulties they face worthwhile and all the more purposeful.

The implication here is that providing work that challenges millennials will not deter, rather would more than likely attract them to ministering overseas. Mission agencies should keep this in mind when recruiting new talent. Potential candidates for cross-cultural ministry positions are looking for something that adds meaning to their lives and most likely will not be dissuaded if the path ahead is difficult. Furthermore, mission agency leaders could help retain their MCCMs by providing task variety and somehow intentionally keep MCCMs from falling into tasks that become boring and routine. Leaders of MCCMs could use tools like job crafting to create, with each millennial's input, positions that suit their unique desires and motivations and provide ongoing challenge and meaning.

There is also a clear consensus regarding the insignificance of access to up-to-date technology and its effect on levels of engagement. Perhaps this is because the majority of MCCMs' work is with people, involving social interaction, and they are not as dependent on technology in their profession as millennials would be in other lines of employment. The slightly higher score for this factor's significance affecting the negative scenario might be an indication that as long as technology is adequate, MCCMs will be satisfied. Perhaps this factor's level of significance can be better interpreted using Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg's motivation theory ..., 2018); while the absence of technology would be unacceptable, its quality, when needed, is not significantly important. The implication for mission agencies here seems obvious; using up-to-date technology most likely will not attract millennials to cross-cultural ministry, nor will it be an important factor in keeping them on board.

A clear consensus regarding the significance of feeling valued and affirmed came across in the factor rankings as well. Being valued and affirmed was firmly ranked as a top three significant

factor in both the positive and negative scenario. This provides us with an understanding how significant morale support is for MCCMs ministering in the places they live. Encountering discouragement and difficulty in a foreign country is more likely given the added challenges of cultural adjustment. Therefore, encouragement from leaders, in the form of affirmation and value placement, could play an important part in helping MCCMs continue in their work. For recruiters, perhaps an honest evaluation of a candidate's gifting and qualification, followed by acknowledgment of that in the form of affirmation would be a useful strategy to attract them to overseas positions. After successful recruitment, continually communicating to them their value to the organization and the ministry seems necessary.

Frequent or infrequent feedback regarding their performance received clear consensus as to its relative insignificance to MCCMs' level of engagement. This is a little bit surprising considering the number of times constant feedback appeared in the literature review, particularly given the research showing how annual reviews are no longer adequate for millennials and that they expect on-going, continual feedback. However, the low significance it held for MCCMs could be explained as a result of cross-cultural ministers needing to act more independently, being geographically distant from their leaders. Or it could be that leaders' feedback may be seen as irrelevant because their leaders are not actually in the field and lack the insight a cross-cultural minister has from their everyday experience. Whatever the reason for the low significance accorded to this factor, mission agency recruiters and leaders most likely will not need to focus on this in order to attract new millennials or retain their current MCCMs.

For the rest of the remaining factors, a clear consensus regarding their level of significance for engagement was not evident. This may not mean that they are insignificant or irrelevant for MCCMs. All we can conclude here, based on the present data, is that the remaining factors may or may not be important enough to those surveyed to be considered as valuable recruiting and retention tools.

Limitations To Research

The Covid-19 pandemic was spreading around the world as the data collection phase of this project was beginning. Mission leaders seemed preoccupied with this and perhaps not as many people were reached by the survey as could have had everything been running normally. A larger sample size would likely have provided more conclusive results. As well, an overwhelming majority of participants were ethnically Caucasian. Having more diversity in the ethnic make-up of participants would likely have offered better insights and would have better reflected the ethnical-diversity of the millennial generation as a whole.

Further Research

Further research could be made into what constitutes work that is meaningful and challenging for MCCMs as well as what being valued and affirmed looks like to them. Some more exploration into these two factors would be beneficial given the consensus that came from the data regarding their level of significance. As well, another ranking survey could be performed with the remaining five factors that did not produce a clear consensus as to their level of significance. Eliminating four factors might enable participants to differentiate better the level of significance, or insignificance, of these remaining factors.

Conclusion

A change in personnel is happening in mission agencies now. How well mission leaders address this transition, as one generation retires and another takes its place, will define what cross-cultural ministry looks like in the years to come. It is important, therefore, that leaders learn to adapt their strategies to not only accommodate the millennial generation, but also future generations to come. This research provides leaders valuable insight regarding what millennials consider important for enhancing their level of work engagement. It will be important for mission

agencies to provide millennials with meaningful challenges to attract and retain their presence in missions work. It will be important too that they continually affirm and communicate a sense of value for MCCMs and the work they are doing. If these two factors are kept in mind for recruiting and retention efforts, mission leaders will better navigate this significant personnel transition.

References

- Adkins, A. (2016a). *Millennials: The job-hopping generation*. Washington D.C.: Gallup. doi: <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/191459/millennials-job-hoppinggeneration.aspx>
- Adkins, A. (2016b). *What millennials want from work and life*. Washington D.C.: Gallup. doi:<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236477/millennials-work-life.aspx>
- Adkins, A., & Rigoni, B. (2016). *Millennial job-hoppers: What they seek*. Washington D.C.: Gallup. doi:<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236471/millennial-job-hoppers-seek.aspx>
- Bennett, J., Pitt, M., & Price, S. (2012). Understanding the impact of generational issues in the workplace. *Facilities*, 30(7), 278-288. doi:10.1108/02632771211220086
- Burnett, J. R., & Lisk, T. C. (2019). The future of employee engagement: Real-time monitoring and digital tools for engaging a workforce. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 49(1), 108-119. doi:10.1080/00208825.2019.1565097
- Cahill, T. F., & Sedrak, M. (2012). Leading a multigenerational workforce: Strategies for attracting and retaining millennials. *Frontiers of Health Services Management*, 29(1), 3-15.
- Cattermole, G. (2018). Creating an employee engagement strategy for millennials. *Strategic HR Review*, 17(6), 290-294. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/SHR-07-2018-0059>
- Choo, S. L., Mat, N., & Al-Omari, M. (2013). Organizational practices and employee engagement: A case of Malaysia electronics manufacturing firms. *Business Strategy Series*, 14(1), 3-10. doi:10.1108/17515631311295659
- Clifton, J. (2016). *Millennials: How they live and work*. Washington D.C.: Gallup. doi:Gallup <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/chairman/191426/millennials-live-work.aspx>
- Dagher, G. K., Chapa, O., & Junaid, N. (2015). The historical evolution of employee engagement and self-efficacy constructs. *Journal of Management History*, 21(2), 232-256.
- De Hauw, S., & De Vos, A. (2010). Millennials' Career Perspective and Psychological Contract Expectations: Does the Recession Lead to Lowered Expectations? *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 293-302.
- Devendhiran, S., & Wesley, J. R. (2017). Spirituality at work: Enhancing levels of employee engagement. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, 31(5), 9-13. doi:10.1108/DLO-08-2016-0070
- Erlacher, J. C. (2014). *Millennials in ministry*. Valley Forge: Judson Press.
- Fry, R. (2020). *Millennials overtake baby boomers as America's largest generation*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/28/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers-as-americas-largest-generation/>
- Gerard, N. (2018). Millennial managers: Exploring the next generation of talent. *Leadership in Health Services*, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/LHS-01-2018-0004>
- Glazer, S., Mahoney, A. C., & Randall, Y. (2019). Employee development's role in organizational commitment: A preliminary investigation comparing generation X and millennial employees. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 51(1), 1-12. doi:10.1108/ICT-07-2018-0061
- Goffee, R., & Jones, G. (2013). Creating the best workplace on earth. *Harvard Business Review*, Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2013/05/creating-the-best-workplace-on-earth>
- Gong, B., Greenwood, R. A., Hoyte, D., Ramkissoon, A., & He, X. (2018). Millennials and organizational citizenship behavior: The role of job crafting and career anchor on service. *Management Research Review*, 41(7), 774-788. doi:10.1108/MRR-05-2016-0121

- Gordon, S. (2010). Once you get them, how do you keep them? millennial librarians at work. *New Library World*, 111(9/10), 391-398.
- Hansen, J. C., & Leuty, M. E. (2012). Work values across generations. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20(1), 34-52.
- Herzberg's motivation theory – two factor theory*. (2018). Retrieved from <https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2018/04/herzbergs-two-factor-theory/>
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692-724.
- Kuitalahti, S., & Viitala, R.L. (2014). Sufficient challenges and a weekend ahead – generation Y describing motivation at work. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 27(4), 569-582. doi:10.1108/JOCM-05-2014-0101
- Kuitalahti, S., & Viitala, R.L. (2015). Generation Y – challenging clients for HRM? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 30(1), 101-114. doi:10.1108/JMP-08-2014-0230
- LaCore, E. (2015). Supporting millennials in the workplace. *Strategic HR Review*, 14(4) doi:10.1108/SHR-06-2015-0046
- Luscombe, J., Lewis, I., & Biggs, H. C. (2013). Essential elements for recruitment and retention: Generation Y. *Education + Training*, 55(3), 272-290. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911311309323>
- Ma, Q. K., Mayfield, M., & Mayfield, J. (2018). Keep them on-board! how organizations can develop employee embeddedness to increase employee retention. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, 32(4), 5-9. doi:10.1108/DLO-11-2017-0094
- Martin, C. A. (2005). From high maintenance to high productivity. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 37(1), 39-45.
- Millennials: A portrait of generation next*. (2010). Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf>.
- No accounting for taste: Problems in hiring and retaining millennials*. (2017). *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 25(3), 30-32. doi:10.1108/HRMID-03-2017-0044
- Plaskoff, J. (2017). Employee experience: The new human resource management approach. *Strategic HR Review*, 16(3), 136-141. doi:10.1108/SHR-12-2016-0108
- Rawlins, C., Indvik, J., & Johnson, P. R. (2008). Understanding the new generation: What the millennial cohort absolutely, positively must have at work. *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 12(2), 1-8.
- Raymo, J., & Raymo, J. (2014). *Millennials and mission*. Pasadena, California: William Carey Library.
- Robison, J. (2019). *What millennials want is good for your business*. Washington D.C.: Gallup.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A confirmative analytical approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71-92.
- Twenge, J.M. (2010) 'A review of the empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes,' *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25: 201-210.
- Twenge, J.M., Campbell, W.K., and Freeman, E.C. (2012). Generational differences in young adults' life goals, concern for others, and civic orientation, 1966-2009. *Personality Processes and Individual Differences*, 102(5), 1045-1062.
- VanHuis, M. R. (2019). *Attrition study research report*. Missio Nexus.
- Vowels, M. C. (2014). *Millennials: Why the next generation will change the way we do missions*. Bob Jones University.
- Wallin, A., Koro-Ljungberg, M. & Eskola, J. (2019). The method of empathy-based stories. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 42(5), 525-535.
- When millennials go to work*. (2016). Barna Group. Retrieved from <https://www.barna.com/research/when-millennials-go-to-work/>

- Wolf, R. (2019). *Wellbeing by generation: Where some thrive, others struggle*. Washington D.C.: Gallup.
- Wollard, K. K. (2011). Quiet desperation: Another perspective on employee engagement. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 13(4), 526-537.
- Wong, M., Gardiner, E., Lang, W., & Coulon, L. (2008). Generational differences in personality and motivation. Do they exist and what are the implications for the workplace? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 878–890.