

Retaining Millennials in the Federal Workforce

A Rapid Evidence Assessment

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Abstract

Federal public sector organizations are confronted with human capital challenges notably, an aging workforce population, increasing Baby Boomer retirements, and Millennial federal employees who are exiting the federal workforce in increasing numbers. The most concerning among these human resource challenges is difficulty in retaining Millennial talents to fill the skill gap resulting from the “silver tsunami.” This paper explores questions such as “what work factors can be used to retain Millennials?” and “what are the reward schemes necessary to retain Millennials?” Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the reward strategies for retaining Millennial employees in federal organizations. Considering the urgency of the management problem, the author employed a rapid evidence assessment (REA) to identify, appraise, analyze, and interpret the data that addresses the study problem. Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory (1968) provided the theoretical explanation for federal organizations leveraging reward schemes to retain Millennials. A thematic synthesis method enables the author to identify and explain the unique and converging patterns of themes from the 20 selected studies. The review findings and recommendations are based on evidence curated from the methodical review of relevant literature. This paper offers implications for human resource practitioners and federal managers. The uniqueness of this paper resides in employing an expeditious and credible method to gather evidence that focuses on optimizing youth retention in federal public sector organizations. This study contributes to the global policy debate on total rewards and organizational competitiveness and success.

Keywords: Generation Y, federal public sector organizations, Millennials, rapid evidence assessment, reward schemes

Introduction

Federal organizations are confronted with a “Millennial problem,” which, if not addressed expeditiously will evolve into a “youth problem.” The participation of Millennials in the federal workforce is drastically declining and managers are concerned about the trend. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics report (2015) reveals millennials make up only 25.9 percent of government employees, compared with 37.8 percent in the private sector. Harrison, Mercier, Pika, and Chopra (2017) support this claim by asserting “the federal government is

losing its appeal as an employer, with current millennial employees “heading for the door” and reducing the “under-30” portion of the federal workforce to its lowest level in five years — at 6.6 percent” (p. 19). This situation undermines the modernization efforts by government agencies and departments.

United States federal organizations comprise departments and agencies which perform critical and strategic services. The generational demographic of the federal workforce comprises Traditionalists (1%), Baby Boomers (49%), Generation Xers (39%), and Millennials (11%) (OPM, 2015). In 2017, more than a fourth of the civilian federal workforce was 55 years old and workers below 35 years old constituted 17 percent of the workforce (Vinik, 2017). A report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) indicates that the active participation of baby boomers in the civilian workforce dramatically rose to 47.1 percent. Baby boomer participation in the labor force is expected to rise by almost 20 percent in 2024. Members of the Baby Boomers generation grew up in the post-Great Depression and World War II period (1946-1964) and currently make up the largest number of the federal workforce. Vinik (2017) attributes the federal workforce aging population to prolonged hiring practices and a delayed baby boomer retirement. He further contends that though federal organizations benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experience of the older generational workforce, an aging workforce can undermine productivity and be costly.

Closely associated with the aging Boomer workforce, is the tidal wave of Boomer retirement (Lewis & Cho, 2011). The “silver tsunami”- the aging and record number of Baby Boomer retirements will negatively affect federal public sector organizations’ overall performance because of the loss of institutional knowledge and experience. According to the United States (US) GAO (2017), approximately 34% of career federal employees are eligible for retirement by 2020. With 30% of Baby Boomer workforce projected to retire this year, the question that begs to answer is how federal organizations are addressing this problem of knowledge transfer given the low representation of Millennials in the federal workforce. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2016), federal agencies with a high rate of retirement eligibility are likely to have a low percentage of the Millennial workforce.

By 2025 Millennials may constitute up to 75 percent of the US workforce (Winograd & Hais, 2014). However, the representation of the Millennial Generation in the federal workforce is nothing to write home about. Federal public sector organizations are not only grappling with an aging workforce, “silver tsunami,” and skill diversity problem but also an employee mobility issue as far as millennial employees are concerned. Keller and Meaney (2017) mention there exists an increasing competition to recruit Millennial technical talents to replace baby boomers who are either exiting or will exit the labor force. However, the “job-hopping” activities of Millennials undermines this effort. The United States (US) Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) employee tenure summary reveals that the median employee tenure of Millennial employees is 2.8 years as opposed to Baby Boomers’ 10.1 years of tenure. The declining trend in Millennial employment tenure is further confirmed by figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report (2017) which showed the composition of the Millennial workforce in government employment at 25.9 compared to 37.8 percent in the private sector. The employee tenure summary from the United States (US) Bureau of labor statistics (2016) reveals that the median employee tenure of Generation Y (25-34 years) was four times less than that of older employees. Millennial employees had a median tenure of 2.8 years as opposed to 10.1 years of tenure by older employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Millennials also referred to as Generation Y (Gen Y), digital natives, the Dotcom Generation among others are those born between 1982 and 2002 (Strauss & Howe, 2000). The Generation Y cohort members are believed to possess certain characteristics and work values notable among them are social responsibility, public service motivation (PSM), the desire for career advancement, and job security. Interestingly, the afore-mentioned work values are an integral part of federal public sector organizations' reward programs; and speak to a broader fit between Millennial employees' work values and government jobs (Ng & Gossett, 2013). The rate of millennial turnover in public sector jobs signals that PSM is not enough to sustain the Millennial workforce's commitment to federal public sector organizations.

The empirical literature has established reward systems as one of the most effective factors impacting the motivation, retention, and intention to stay of employees (Bratton, 2007; Bussin & Toerien, 2015). In the literature, reward systems are sometimes referred to as reward schemes, reward strategies, incentive plans, total rewards among others used by organizations to influence the behavior of their workforce to achieve organizational goals. Reward systems consist of all the financial, non-financial and other forms of psychological payments that employers offer to employees to induce specific organizational outcomes such as productivity and retention (Bratton & Gold, 2007). The public sector offers intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to motivate and elicit attitudinal changes in its employees (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). Extrinsic rewards are tangible and monetary rewards include remuneration (pay and benefits) work-life balance and flexible work options, and good working conditions). Intrinsic rewards are intangible, non-monetary and psychological by nature and include employee recognition, mentoring, career development, job autonomy, work content, management support among others.

Accordingly, federal public sector organizations need not only to recruit millennial technical talents at the entry-level but also to retain them through responsive Human Resource Management (HRM) policies and practices. Particularly for federal HR practitioners, the challenge lies in using its current rewards program to retain Gen Y employees. Given millennials' peculiar generational needs, priorities in life, and interests, the question that begs to ask is whether the current intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (such as students' tuition assistance, performance-based bonuses, and non-competitive accelerated development program) are effective in retaining millennial talents. Evidence-based management practice requires that any managerial decision be based on the best available scientific evidence and business information. Therefore, to help management make informed decisions on the best practices for retaining millennial talents, it is imperative to conduct a REA, an evidence-based research methodology that facilitates the quality aggregation of empirical evidence of the topic of interest. Therefore, the question guiding this REA is: What reward schemes are effective to retain millennial employees in federal public sector organizations? The answer to this question holds significant managerial implications for federal public sector organizations. Addressing this REA question will help deepen managers' or HR professionals' understanding of the effective federal reward programs to leverage for Millennial employees' retention.

In view of the above, this paper seeks to examine effective reward schemes for retaining millennial employees. This topic is relevant and current because it highlights the following: (1) The generational diversity problem and skills gap confronting federal public sector organizations; (2) the multigenerational composition of 21st century federal workforce and how understanding and managing the diverse generational needs, work values, and workplace

expectations of the workforce will enhance employee work attitudes and the overall performance of the organizations.

Theoretical Foundation

The REA question is theory-based. The business case for rewards systems as the best practice for retaining millennials employees can be explained with Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (1968) which posits that certain work conditions or factors contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction and ultimately undermines employees' commitment to their organizations. The theory also posits that the presence of motivators, which are intrinsic and intangible by nature, (career advancement, fulfilling and challenging work, autonomy, responsibility, achievement, and recognition) elicits positive employee behaviors such as affective commitment to the organization, motivation, and increases retention. Inversely, the absence of hygiene factors, which are extrinsic and tangible (benefits, salary, working conditions, relationship with supervisors, work-life balance firms' policies and practices, etc.) causes dissatisfaction or demotivation. Motivators and hygiene factors are not opposites but distinct in the sense that the removal or absence of dissatisfaction factors do not necessarily enhance employees' motivation and satisfaction.

Theoretical Lens. The empirical literature has shown that hygiene factors such as compensation, benefits, remuneration, and location of organization undermine recruitment and retention of millennial talents (Mendis, 2017). Ruys (2013) countered Herzberg's claim that compensation is only a hygiene factor whose presence does not necessarily generate motivation, but only prolongs an individual's job satisfaction for a while. Ruys (2013) further argued that factors causing dissatisfaction among millennials leading to their high turnover include unacceptable pay rate, non-adaptive and weak organizational culture, unethical leadership and poor relationship with supervisors among others. He further argued that contrary to popularly

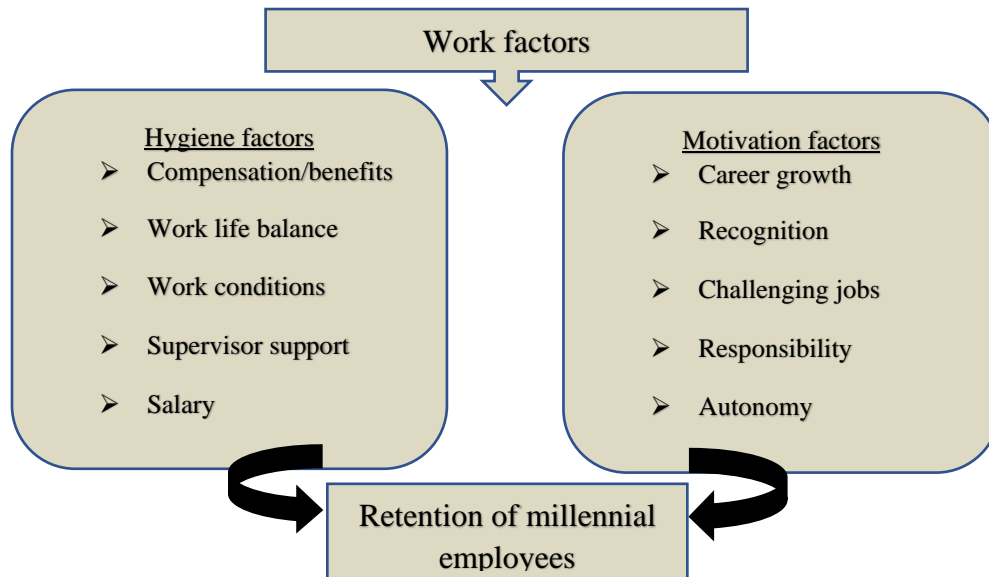


Figure 1: Conceptual model for the recruitment and retention factors.

Adapted from "One more time: How do you motivate employees?" by F. Herzberg, 1968, *Harvard Business Review*, 46(1).

held management views that compensation and benefits are hygiene factors, Millennials perceive them as motivators and critical to their retention (Ruys, 2013). Also, a combination of the two factors stimulates motivation and helps satisfy employees' diverse needs.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory provides contextual relevance to the millennial retention problem confronting federal organizations in the sense that one type of reward is insufficient to retain Millennials. Therefore, a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards, referred to as total rewards (Armstrong, 2002), should be used to motivate Millennials. Hygiene factors are equally key motivators to millennial job satisfaction as those factors focus on the actual job itself. To eliminate job dissatisfaction and ensure the retention of millennial employees, management should ensure that motivators are guaranteed, and hygiene factors are met. The conceptual framework below visually presents the relationships between millennial retention (outcome variable) and rewards systems (predictor variables). This conceptual model based on Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory (two-factor theory), offers insights into the motivating factors that organizations should leverage to retain millennial employees.

Methodology

Reviewing scientific literature on what they reveal about reward systems for retaining millennial employees requires the use of a systematic review (SR), the most authoritative review for addressing the REA question. However, due to time and availability of review experts' limitations, the REA is the most appropriate method of reviewing the scientific literature on the topic of interest. Unlike the SR which requires a team of experts (academic) who take months and even a year to conduct the review, the REA requires an expert or two who research for several weeks (CEBMA, n.d.). The REA follows the same methodology as the SR.

However, the REA also has limited scope in terms of the limitations on database for study search, the exclusion of unpublished research, limitation on the extraction of key data among others. Notwithstanding the threat of bias imposed by these limitations, the REA is the most suitable method of evidence summary to inform management decision making on the urgent millennial employee retention problem confronting federal organizations. The goal of this REA was to provide evidence of what is known in empirical literature about using reward systems to retain millennial federal employees. This assessment is important because a thorough review of empirical literature on organizational reward systems is critical to helping the United States federal organizations build a broad-based retention strategy whose implementation would be based on credible and reliable research data. Most importantly, this REA helps address the human capital problems in the federal workforce caused by the increasing retirement of the Baby Boomer workforce as well as the low representation of Millennial in the federal workforce (Government Accountability Office, 2016). Key aspects of this REA include methods for evidence identification (search strategy, eligibility criteria, study selection, and data extraction), critical appraisal, coding, evidence synthesis, and management implications.

Identification of Evidence

The databases used for the bibliographic search included ABI Inform (ABI), Business Source Complete (BSC), and Google Scholar (GS). Published studies were retrieved electronically from author's University library system. The studies retrieved were mainly peer-reviewed articles and some grey literature to avert publication bias. To ensure a transparent, reproducible and verifiable study search, combinations of search terms were used. The table below provides additional details on the study.

Table 1 Search documentation

| Search | Search Terms | Database | Results |
|--------|---|----------|---------|
| 1 | ("retention incentives") OR (compensation) OR ("retention strategies") AND ("millennial worker") OR ("generation Y employee") | ABI | 81 |
| 2 | ("work benefits") OR ("retention programs") AND ("millennial workers") OR ("generation Y employees") | BSC | 83 |
| 3 | ("compensation and reward system") OR (incentives) AND (retention) AND ("millennial worker") OR ("generation Y employee") | GS | 3,648 |

Note. Peer reviewed, Scholarly journals, April 2018

The eligibility criteria involved set certain inclusion and exclusion parameters to help query the databases. The literature search was based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) publication date-2000-2018; (b) the publication language- English (c) population- millennial employees; (d) intervention- reward systems, retention strategies, and HR policies and practices; (e) outcome- retention of millennials and (f) context-federal public sector organizations; and (g) published studies should include scholarly articles and grey literature. Articles that did not meet the afore-stated eligibility criteria were excluded.

The study search resulted in 3,812 records. After removing duplicates 56 studies were identified for study selection. For the study selection process, the author conducted a two-stage screening process where the eligibility criteria were applied to selected studies titles and abstracts. Further during the second stage, the author assessed the relevance of each study to addressing the REA question. After an exhaustive study selection, 20 articles were found to be relevant, full-text articles were retrieved for data analysis. To effectively assess the quality and relevance of the studies, pertinent data such as publication data (author and date of publication) study objective(s), study design, main findings, and implication for practice were extracted. Focusing on these key data helped determine the following: whether research questions were effectively addressed; the appropriateness of the research design and approach in answering the research problem; the utility of the research findings to management policy and practice.

Given the data extraction involved analyzing the data, the author conducted the data extraction and critical appraisal simultaneously because both processes involved assessing and analyzing data. Consequently, the author employed the Rees (Glasper & Rees 2013) model for critiquing qualitative and quantitative research to assess the quality of the articles. This critical appraisal tool was appropriate because of its potential to balance the variances in research designs in the articles selected. Given the goal of the REA is to find credible evidence for an urgent management problem, the emphasis of the quality appraisal was based on the relevance of findings of selected studies to practice as opposed to their methodological soundness. Following the critical appraisal, the author conducted thematic coding to identify and extract themes and subthemes from the corpus of studies. The first and second coding resulted in six thematic

concepts namely mentoring, work-life balance and workplace flexibility, supervisor support, feedback system, training, and career development, and compensation and benefits.

Findings

Overall, this REA highlights the pivotal role reward systems play in the retention and intention to stay of millennial employees. The data analysis revealed the included studies examined the use of monetary and non-monetary rewards to retain Millennial employees' talents quantitatively and qualitatively. The REA sample consisted of six quantitative studies, 13 qualitative studies, and one mixed-method study. Monetary or financial rewards examined include remuneration (cash incentives) and benefits (health care insurance and education grants). Non-monetary rewards explored include work-life balance (flexible work arrangement), employee career development, supervisor support, and positive work culture. It is important to mention that to create a preponderance of evidence relative to the study findings, the discussion of the REA's findings and the themes involved stating the number of included studies that supported the themes and listing some sources that supported those findings.

While seven out of the 17 studies' findings focused on the use of non-monetary rewards as best practices to retain millennial employees (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Harrison et al., 2018; Kochanowski, 2011; Lowe, Levitt & Wilson, 2008; Loncarich, 2016; Miller, 2016; Naim & Lenka, 2018), the remaining 10 discussed the use of both monetary and non-monetary rewards to retain Millennials. Except for six studies (Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Pregolato, Bussin, & Schlechter, 2017; Loncarich, 2016; Johari, Yean, Adnan, Yahya, & Ahmad, 2012; Lowe & Levitt, 2008; Sajjadi, Sun, & Castillo, 2012) whose retention strategies were targeted at multigenerational employees including Millennials the remaining studies focused only on Millennial retentions strategies. Further, the data analysis revealed an associational relationship between Millennial retention and specific monetary and non-monetary rewards. More so, the examination of the articles revealed an associational relationship between retention and/or intention to stay and specific monetary and non-monetary rewards such as cash incentives, remuneration, performance bonuses, health benefits, tuition assistance (reimbursements), paid leave, mentoring, and training and development. Except for three studies (Brown-Crowder, 2017; Kochanowski, 2011; Sajjadi et al., 2012) whose findings did not report any association and/or correlation between the study intervention and outcome, the remaining 16 out reported a positive, direct and/or indirect association between a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards and millennial retention.

Notwithstanding the variances in our results regarding the type of association or correlation between reward systems and millennial employees' retention, the REA question was adequately addressed by the evidence presented; thereby leading our claim that the use of bundles of reward systems enhance the job satisfaction and motivation of Gen Y employees and consequently mitigate their intentions to quit and turnover. The thematic synthesis of the evidence allows the presentation of the evidence which is relevant to addressing the REA question as well as providing insights into the dynamics of the relationships among the themes from unique and sometimes overlapping perspectives.

Results of Thematic Synthesis

Theme 1: Mentoring. The data analysis revealed mentoring positively affects employees' retention or intention to stay. Forty percent (n=8) of the studies reviewed examined mentoring particularly reverse mentoring as a Millennial retention tool (e.g. Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Kochanowski, 2011; Lowe & Levitt, 2008; Mohamed-Padayachee, 2017; Naim & Lenka, 2018; Nolan, 2015; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013; Simmons, 2016). The reviewed studies discussed the traditional mentoring and contemporary mentoring approach (reverse mentoring) as being effective retention strategies for millennials because both approaches foster autonomy, deliver instant feedback, provide recognition and offer opportunities for millennial employees to share their knowledge and skills on technology. Reverse mentoring is highly favored by Millennials because it is known to promote millennial leadership, enhance intergenerational relationships and facilitates cross-training (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Simmons, 2016).

Theme 2: Work-life balance and workplace flexibility. Findings from 75% (n=15) of the included studies showed work-life balance interventions such as flexible work arrangement (FWA) positively impact retention and retention intentions (e.g. Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Campione, 2008; Ferguson & Morton-Huddleston, 2016; Harrison et al., 2018; Pregolato, Bussin, and Schlechter, 2017; Sajjadi, Sun, & Castillo, 2012). Regarding work-life balance, the preponderance of evidence indicates that not only did Millennial employees in the reviewed studies rank work-life balance as a top priority for their retention decision but also ranked workplace flexibility practices such as telework as one of the most preferred retention factors. This view is shared by Aruna and Anitha (2015) who stated that millennials love for leisure and the importance they attach to personal life than professional life make them more interested in work-life balance as their perception of a favorable work-family culture enhances their satisfaction with their jobs and commitment or loyalty to the organization and lowers their intention to leave. Harrison et al. (2016) underscore the benefits of the current federal work-life balance programs (which vary from substance abuse intervention programs to flexible work options, professional stress, and commuter benefits) for "maintaining a productive, engaged workforce" (p. 21).

Theme 3: Supervisor's support. Findings from 67% (n=14) of the included studies emphasized the effectiveness of positive relationships with management in retaining Millennials (e.g. Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Brown-Crowder, 2017; Harris, Hoffman, & Miller 2013; Loncarich, 2016; Mohamed-Padayachee, 2017; Naim & Lenka, 2018; Nolan; 2015; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013). The evidence showed that millennial employees are motivated and exhibited organizational citizenship behaviors when they perceived their supervisors to be concerned about their wellbeing. For instance, Harris et al. (2013) echo the views of study respondents by affirming "participants believed managers who engaged in advising and monitoring career development and career advancement of their direct reports were positive indicators of an organization in which leaders were sincere about creating a learning organization and developing future leaders" (p.58). The kind of relationship between supervisors and employees determined their level of commitment and job satisfaction.

Theme 4: Feedback system. Forty percent (n=8) of the included studies extensively examined feedback mechanism as an important Millennial retention factor (Aruna & Anitha,

2015; Harrison et al., 2016; Loncarich, 2016; Montana & Petit, 2008; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013; Sajjadi et al., 2012; Simmons, 2016). The evidence showed that providing millennial employees with constant, real-time and sometimes corrective feedback through methods such as coaching and mentoring and team collaborations increased their satisfaction and intention to stay with an organization. Harrison et al. (2016) assert “Millennials excel in providing feedback and owning the changes” (p.22) The authors, therefore encourage government leaders and managers to develop a vibrant and adaptive “feedback mechanism to encourage communication and increase retention” (p.22). An effective feedback strategy was one of the most preferred recruitment and retention factors because not only does it assess employees’ performance and help identify areas of improvement, it also serves as a tool for recognition where millennial talents are recognized for their work. Millennials’ need for constant real-time feedback reflect their penchant for instant gratification and recognition and emphasized the importance of psychological need by Millennials. This view is supported by Sajjadi et al. (2012) who explain Millennials prefer an informal feedback approach to the traditional approach mostly through monthly, quarterly, or yearly employee performance evaluation.

Theme 5: Training and career development. Ninety percent (n=18) of the studies underscored the relevance of career development and training as a key retention factor for millennial employees (e.g. Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Ferguson & Morton Huddleston, 2016; Harris et al., 2013; Johari et al., 2012; Kochanowski, 2011; Lonarich, 2016; Miller, 2016; Simmons, 2016; Naim & Lenka, 2018). Sajjadi et al. (2012) attribute Millennials' penchant for learning and acquiring new knowledge to their “inclination for rapid career advancement” (p 61). Miller (2016) highlights the relevance of career for those at the entry-level and recent graduates. The author underscores the benefits drawn from government careers development programs such as the Missile Defense Agency and rotational assignments offer a lot of opportunities Miller further explains “intentional rotation programs in different areas of government will help alleviate experience gaps... rotations support retention by keeping pace with the idea that younger generations long for more frequent career changes than older generations” (p. 51). Other studies also view training and career development through the lens of succession pipeline and believe offering Millennials career development and advancement opportunities is a way of grooming them for the succession pipeline and means to overcome the potential leadership and skills void caused by retiring Baby Boomers (Kochanowski, 2011; Ferguson & Morton-Huddleston, 2016; Harrison et al., 2013).

Theme 6: Compensation and benefits. Sixty percent (n=12) of the included studies examined compensation and benefits as important millennial employees’ retention factors (e.g. Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Harris et al., 2013; Johari et al., 2012; Pregolato et al., 2017; Montana & Petit, 2008; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013; Sajjadi et al., 2012; Simmons, 2016). These studies emphasized the effectiveness of performance for pay, paid vacation and annual leave, pay rate, health care benefits, and tuition assistance to enhance Millennials’ motivation and intention to stay. Sajjadi et al. (2012) supports this view and explains the importance Millennials attach to financial incentives including salary as a desire for financial security. The authors claim the importance of money to Millennial employees as a financial reward “demonstrates the level of the employees’ achievement both financially and socially. Salary and other financial benefits could also help the ambitious Generation Y to keep up with the far rapid pace of recent social

changes” (p. 61). Respondents in Harris et al.’s (2013) study affirm they chose a civil service career because it offered greater financial security.

It is interesting to note that only two studies (Henstra & McGowan, 2016 & Harris et al., 2013) discussed public service motivation as a driver of millennial employees’ retention. Henstra and McGowan’s study attempted to investigate why Millennials choose public sector careers. Some respondents indicated personal motivations such as the desire for financial and job security accounted for their choice of public employment. Further, the authors claimed, “public service work aligns with the Millennials’ passion to make a difference, and the opportunity it provides to be involved in projects that have a social impact” (p. 510). To some of these respondents, their choice of government work is sparked by an intrinsic motivation, which they believe can be nurtured in public employment. However, findings from the two reviewed studies evidence show different motivations other than high levels of PSM accounted for Millennials’ appeal for public employment. The authors mention that work factors such as opportunities for career advancement, training and skills development, and supervisor support are very important retention tools for millennial federal employees.

Taken as a whole, this evidence as presented in the paper’s findings points to six work factors that are not only important work values of millennial employees but also are crucial to their retention in government agencies and departments. The discussion of these REAs findings below is critical to helping HR practitioner and managers understand these findings and apply them to management practice.

Discussion

In today’s competitive innovative business environment characterized by war for knowledge workers, federal public sector organizations are not only competing among themselves but also with the private sector for the much-needed Millennial knowledge workers (Franzel, 2009). Research shows the Millennial generational cohort to be technologically savvy, change advocates, team-oriented, eager to learn, and sociable (Clare, 2009; Dahlroth, 2008). Most importantly, to effectively outperform the private sector in today’s talent war and retain federal millennial employees targeted talent management strategies that are consistent with the characteristics, work values, and workplace expectations are warranted. Accordingly, these REA findings have relevance for federal agencies and departments with generational and skills diversification challenges seeking to pursue and/or reinforce workforce and skill diversification through the retention of millennial employees.

One of the key insights from the findings is that a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards can be used to retain the Millennial workforce. The evidence further indicates no single reward is enough to satisfy the basic and psychosocial needs of Millennials. For instance, government jobs are known to ensure job and financial security and fulfill employees’ need for public service- all which Millennials value (Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2011). Particularly for PSM, previous research corroborates this paper’s finding Millennials with high levels of PSM choose public sector employment (Carpenter, Doverspike, & Miguel, 2011; Vandenabeele, 2008). Evidence from public administration support this paper’s finding that Millennials’ choice of a government job is driven by other motivators such as good pay, job security, and work-life balance (Vandenabeele, 2008). The evidence seems to suggest that the retention of Millennial federal employees is driven by both extrinsic and tangible motivations, where their careers offer them job security, financial security, and promotional opportunities; and intrinsic and intangible motivations, where they are offered opportunities to grow professionally

through training and skills development, job satisfaction from what they do, and opportunity to contribute to the society (Henstra & McGowan, 2016). Concerning compensation, particularly high salary, the findings support Srinivasan's (2012) view that compensation motivates millennial employees. Though the majority of the REA studies recognize the relevance of monetary rewards for retaining Millennials, some studies, while supporting the view, also countered that salary and other monetary rewards are not top Millennial retention factors (Aruna & Anitha; 2015; Campione, 2008; Sajjadi et al., 2012). The afore-cited authors further argue Millennials place more premium on the meaningful work environment, career advancement, and skills development and training than money.

More so, this paper's themes support the evidence that the use of rewards systems has a greater impact on millennial workforce retention and intention to stay. The evidence further suggests combinations of rewards positively impacts employees' job satisfaction, improved their commitment to their jobs and their employers, decreased turnover intentions, and ultimately increase their job retention (Pregolato et al., 2017; Johari et al., 2012; Nolan; 2015; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013). The key message for managers and HR practitioners is that to motivate and retain young employees, they should adopt a broader look at the strategies for motivating and retaining them by using total rewards (Mohamed-Padayachee, 2016).

Another insight from the study findings is about the similarity between millennial reward preferences and those of the previous generations. The author purposely selected multigenerational studies on employee retention preferences to determine whether differences exist between reward systems used as retention strategies for Millennials and other generations. Findings from seven studies reveal that millennial employee retention factors are like those of other generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X) (e.g. Arrington & Dwyer, 2018; Brown-Crowder, 2017; Pregolato et al., 2017; Johari et al., 2012). The findings show that Millennials and the previous generational workforce share similar work values such as job security, good pay, promotional opportunities, and meaningful jobs. The only distinguishing difference is the priority Millennials place on certain retention factors than others. More so, the findings revealed certain work factors are highly valued by Millennials more than the previous generations. For instance, most of the respondents in the included studies indicated a flexible work environment is one of their most important work factors because of their desire for work-life balance. Work-life balance and workplace flexibility are top priorities of Millennials, but this may not be so for the previous generations because of workforce generational-specific values, attitudes, and needs. Given the uniqueness of each generational cohort's work values and work expectations, it is imperative for federal HR professionals and managers to customize reward systems to suit the needs of the federal multigenerational workforce (Strauss & Howe, 2000). This finding reinforces the idea of customizing reward systems to suit the needs of employees and validates the rejection of the traditional "one-size fits- all" way of addressing the human resource needs of employees. The findings also underscore the customization of rewards systems to suit the characteristics of Millennials (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Campione, 2008; Pregolato et al., 2017; Simmons, 2016) and reflects the no "one size fits all" notion that the offer of non-monetary and monetary rewards should be contingent on factors such as the profile of millennial employees (gender, marital status, professional status, etc.).

Insights from the findings are that organizations with adaptive and strong cultures -that promote a participative management style, a positive and stimulating work environment, organizational learning, and support a work-life integration, are more likely to retain Millennial employees. Regarding the work environment, the evidence indicates Millennials' workplace

expectations include increased social media presence, team culture, and a vibrant corporate social responsibility culture, robust mentoring programs, especially reverse mentoring. The evidence also showed that the key to retaining millennial employees includes providing them a flexible, unconventional, and fun work environment characterized by colorful and luxurious open workspaces that encourage teamwork, creativity, the sharing of ideas, and a technologically conducive workplace that promotes the use of social media as a form of communication. These elements underscore the relevance of the physical and social environment of workplaces in the retention of millennial employees (Aruna & Anitha, 2015; Nolan, 2015; Ramesh & Vasuki, 2013). This view confirms findings from previous studies that organizations with adaptive work cultures that foster a positive management-employee relationship, organizational learning, and development, a participative style of management, and encourage millennial employees to exercise job autonomy attract and retain millennial talents (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012; Catano & Morrow-Hines, 2016).

Millennials' penchant for change can be attributed to their desire for adaptive work culture. Unfortunately for the federal government, efforts to retain its millennial talents has been fraught with challenges notable among them is its current mechanistic and hierarchical culture which is antithetical to employee autonomy and participatory management style and therefore, not in congruence with the values of millennial employees. This finding holds critical implications for federal public sector organizations. To attract, recruit, and retain younger generational workforce, federal agencies and departments should consider organizational structural and/or organizational culture changes including evolving from mechanistic and vertical structures to flatter and organic organizational structures. In doing so, federal public sector organizations are not only incorporating, the values and needs of the 21st-century workforce but also re-establishing itself as the employer of choice for the younger generation (Harrison et al., 2018).

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory provides the appropriate explanation for the REA's findings. The evidence indicates that the presence of motivators, which are intrinsic and intangible by nature, (mentoring, training and skill development, feedback, and supervisor support) elicit positive employee behaviors such as affective commitment to the organization, motivation, and increases retention. Inversely, offering Millennial employees hygiene factors, which tangible by nature (compensation and benefits, work-life balance and workplace flexibility) does not enhance their motivation. Thus, explaining why even with good pay and benefits such as health insurance, education grant, and work-life options, Millennials leave federal employment for private-sector jobs. The 21st generational workforce is known to be intrinsically motivated (Thibault-Landry, Schwyer, & Whillans, (2017). Job satisfaction is a core determinant of millennial employees' retention and intention to stay (Campione, 2008; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013; Twenge, Campbell, & Hoffman, 2010). It is therefore incumbent on federal government managers and HR professionals to ensure that motivators are guaranteed, and hygiene factors are met.

In sum, these REA findings address the urgent management and organizational question in terms of what effective rewards can be used to retain federal millennial employees. The study findings also offer managers and HR professionals deeper insights into why it is important to allocate rewards based on Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory.

Managerial Implications

The generational personality of each federal generational workforce is such that Millennials may possess unique work values and motivations and so may have different work expectations as to the work factors that motivate and demotivate them (Strauss & Howe, 2000). Millennials are advocate of change and for federal public sector leaders, their ability and willingness to leverage this core Generation Y value [change] is critical to retaining Millennials and potentially attracting a younger generational cohort (Generation Z). In this regard, this REA's findings offer a blueprint for the retention of Millennial talents in federal employment. The offer of monetary and non-monetary rewards to millennial employees should now be considered broadly through the lens of total rewards. Managers and HR professionals from federal agencies and departments should leverage all federal rewards program to their strategic advantage (Wang, 2012). Bundle of federal rewards including remuneration, benefits, flexible work arrangements, performance recognition, development, and career opportunities should align with the values and needs of the intended recipients. Further, the findings provide federal managers with deeper understanding on how they can ensure compatibility of organizational reward systems with the work values and expectations of Millennial employees.

More so, considering the multigenerational nature of the federal workforce, the REA findings will reinforce awareness of workplace generational diversity and how human resource actions should be based on a differentiated approach. HR professionals and managers should ensure that organizational talent management strategies are tailored to fit the characteristics, needs, and work-related preferences of each generational workforce (Seipert & Baghurst, 2014). It is important to mention that adopting a total rewards approach should be guided by the key principles of Herzberg's two-factor theory. Within the context of motivation and hygiene theory, different needs have different impacts on the motivation at the workplace. Therefore, no one category of motivating factors can be offered to satisfy millennial talents needs. Organizations can ensure the retention of millennial talents through the combination of the two factors (motivator and hygiene) that stimulate motivation and help satisfy millennial needs. The findings further showed that human resource actions alone cannot motivate and retain Millennials. The government can embrace change and leverage Millennial retention by taking steps to remove all those structural bottlenecks which have a chilling effect on the engagement and commitment of Millennial employees. The government should do its best to move towards an organic organizational structure whose key elements, including employee autonomy reverse mentoring, decentralized decision-making process, are in congruence with the needs and values of the Millennial workforce. An organizational structure and culture change will surely boost Millennial retention in federal public sector organizations. The insights from this paper's findings provide a basis for the following actionable recommendations:

1. Set a proper structural context (e.g. flat hierarchies, organic organizational culture) that aligns with the values and needs of Millennials. The change in structural design would create a vibrant culture that allows for autonomy, flexibility and boosts millennial participation, engagement, and retention.
2. Establish a 360-degree feedback system that allows millennial employees to evaluate managers and leaders on how leadership style from the top

impacts the culture.

3. Institute an effective real-time feedback mechanism as part of the onboarding process and for mentoring and training sessions.
4. Set up expedited leadership and skills training as part of succession planning programs.
5. Organize quarterly or bi-annual employee career development review where employees are provided the status of their career progression plan and the availability of and eligibility for promotional opportunities.

Conclusion

Over the next two years, the U.S. federal public sector organizations will confront a lot of Baby Boomer and possibly, Generation X retirements from the federal workforce. This problem is compounded by a diminishing Generation Y role caused by the record number of Millennial migrations from the public sector to private sector employment. In this highly competitive and organizational environment, the government can maintain its competitive edge with the help of a "tech-savvy" and adaptive millennial workforce. Given the urgency and gravity of the problem, this paper investigated the reward schemes that may help boost millennial retention. A rapid evidence assessment was used to identify and gather evidence to address the research question. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory provided the theoretical rationale for this paper. The data analysis resulted in identifying six thematic concepts that were fully discussed. The findings as presented in the REA revealed that for federal public sector organizations to enhance the retention of its Millennial workforce, the allocation of reward packages should include the following monetary and non-monetary rewards: (1) mentoring opportunities; (2) work-life balance and flexible work environment; (3) managerial engagement/ support; (4) frequent real-time feedback (5) career development opportunities, and (6) financial incentives and benefits. The findings also show the retention of Millennials is constrained by organizational structure. Thus, explaining why an organic organizational structure may enhance the retention of Millennial employees. These REA's findings provide a unique contribution to public administration research on millennial retention.

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