Factors Affecting Turnover Intentions among Millennial Public Relations Professionals. The Latin American Case

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As Millennials becomes the largest generation of the global workforce, it is vital that organizations understand their work values, motivational factors and expectations in order to adjust previous employee retention techniques. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the major factors that affect employee retention among Latin American Millennials working on the public relations industry. Additionally, we examine generational differences in work attitudes across three generations, with an emphasis on the nature of the similarities and differences of Millennials when compared to prior generations. Findings show a highly significant positive relationship among job satisfaction, trust in the organization, job engagement, excellent leader performance and supportive organizational culture and Latin American Millennials turnover intentions. Compared to Boomers and Gen Xers, Millennials reported lower levels of overall job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational trust.

*Keywords:* Employee retention, Employee engagement, job satisfaction, Millennials, Latin America, Public relations.

**Introduction**

The topic of the Millennial Generation in the workplace has gained momentum since the retention and turnover of younger employees have become a challenge for companies around the world (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Expectations of acceptable workplace behavior and performance differ across generational cohorts (Farrell & Hurt, 2014; Stewart, Oliver, Cravens, & Oishi, 2017). Understanding these differences could have major implications for the way organizations recruit, hire, train, reward, promote, and terminate their employees (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012). This is even more critical for the Public Relations industry, a knowledge-intensive field characterized by their focus on intellectual or human capital to produce their products and services (Blum & Tremarco, 2008).

While employee retention has been primarily explored within the business, human resources and management disciplines, public relations scholars and practitioners have recently shown a growing interest in understanding how generational attributes affect younger employees’ retention, job satisfaction, trust, and engagement (Galicano, 2013, Gallicano, Curtin, & Matthews, 2012, Fröhlich, 2013; Guo & Andersson, 2019; Meng & Berger, 2018; Meng, Reber, & Rogers, 2017; Moreno, Navarro, Molleda, Fuentes-Lara, 2019, Todd, 2014).

Previous research indicates that Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are significantly different in personality traits and motivational drivers, particularly in higher levels of self-esteem, assertiveness, and narcissism than previous generations at the same age (Deal, Alman, & Rogelberg, 2010). A review of the literature completed by Hutchinson and Longworth (2012), illustrated that Millennials are the most educated, materially obsessed and protected generation in history. Regarding work-related values and performance, this cohort is depicted as confident, goal-oriented, entrepreneurial, and high-achieving individuals (Smith & Nichols, 2015). Moreover, they enjoy working in teams, multitask better than any other generation, and have different values, communication styles, work habits, attitudes, and expectations for their work lives (Zemke et al., 2000). This generation has “broader, perspectives about the world marketplace, supervisor-subordinate relationships, cultural diversity, performance of tasks” (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 235).

Some authors support the notion that key differences exist in the work values and beliefs of employees from different generations. Failing to address these differences can lead to conflicts, misunderstanding and miscommunication, lower employee productivity, and poor employee well-being (Jurkievicz, 2000; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Yu & Miller, 2003). In contrast, empirical researchers suggest that generations are more similar than different, and the differences that do exist are inconsistent and tend to contradict generational stereotypes (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010). Jorgensen (2003) claims that current knowledge around generational characteristics has predominantly arisen from the qualitative experiences of the authors, with findings lacking the necessary rigor needed to base workplace strategies and practices on their conclusions alone.

Millennials are expected to make up 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025 (Deloitte, 2016), and they have already moved into leadership positions. Creating a retention- rich organization that attracts, engages, and builds lasting loyalty is a key to reduce the cost in resources, recruiting, and time when replacing open positions (Cloutier, Felusiak, Hill, & Pemberton-Jones, 2015; Devi, 2009). Public Relations agencies and departments may require more openness, flexibility, and good leader performance to adapt to the expectations of this generation of tech-savvy recruits, particularly when it comes to attracting, retaining, and training them (PwC, 2012).

Today, this generation accounts for more than 30% of the Latin American population. Millennials in this region show higher levels of empowerment and leadership than their peers in Europe and the United States, considering themselves prepared to take on future challenges (Gutiérrez-Rubí, 2016). Despite this interest, many of the publications on generational differences and their effects in the workplace are based on anecdotal evidence. To date, Latin American Millennial public relations practitioners’ work attitudes and career patterns remain unexplored.

Therefore, in this paper we seek to fill this vacuum by achieving a deeper understanding of the major factors that affect retention among Millennials working in the Latin American public relations industry. Moreover, we will examine similarities and differences found between Millennials, Gen Xers, and Boomers on job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational trust, and turnover intentions. This research will enable organizations to explore strategic approaches to attract, retain, and gain from this generation of communication professionals.

**Literature review**

**Millennial communication employee turnover.**

Employee turnover intent refers to the subjective estimation of an individual regarding the probability of leaving an organization within the near future (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006). While turnover might occasionally be a desirable outcome, it creates direct (recruitment, selection, training, replacement, etc) and indirect (e.g., lower productivity and lower morale) costs for organizations (Yalabik, Swart, Kinnie, & Van Rossenberg, 2017).

Empirical research on generations’ work attitudes is sparse and mixed. In accordance with the past literature, seven factors encourage employee retention among employees: challenging work, opportunities to learn, positive relationships with colleagues, compensation and appreciation of the work performed, recognition of capabilities, work–life balance and good communication (Walker, 2001).

Cross-sectional contributions have found that Millennials exhibit a higher voluntary turnover rate than Gen Xers and Boomers (Cassidy & Berube 2009), and Millennials and GenXers reported higher turnover intention than Boomers (Dudley, Burnfield-Geimer, & Erdheim, 2009). However, Pew Research (2019) found that Millennial workers are just as likely to stick with their employers as Gen X workers were when they were the same age. Roughly seven-in- ten each of Millennials’ ages 22 to 37 in 2018 (70%) and Gen Xers the same age in 2002 (69%) reported working for their current employer at least 13 months. Similarly, the Global Millennial Survey conducted by Deloitte (2020) reported that for the first time since asking the question in 2016, more Millennials said they want to stay with their employers for five or more years than leave within two years. These contradictory findings regarding turnover intentions suggest more research is needed (Kowske et al., 2010).

Research on Millennial employees working in full-service communication firms (Gallicano, Curtin, & Matthews, 2012) depicts a generation that enjoys positive relationships with their agencies but also expresses their frustration of a lack of empowerment, significant hierarchy, and distance from managers. One of the most comprehensive analyses of the factors affecting employee turnover in the public relations industry was conducted by Blum and Tremarco in 2008. According to these authors, causes of turnover in public relations firms include hiring practices, managerial style, lack of recognition, company culture/work environment, compensation, and organization instability (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000; Ongori, 2007).

Public Relations agency employee turnover spans between 20-30 percent, while some studies report the percentage to be closer to 50 (Goldberg, 2017). According to the PR Industry Turnover Report (Gould+Partners, 2019), the industry’s staff turnover rate is more than twice the average turnover for the professional services category. The characteristics of Millennials communication employees requires a focused response from employers.

**The role of job satisfaction, engagement, organizational trust, excellent leadership and stress on employee retention.**

Factors affecting employee turnover have received significant attention from academia and practitioners during the last decades. Through a meta-analytic review of organizational literature Cotton and Tuttle (1986) identified 24 variables impacting employee retention and classified them into three correlates: external, work-related, and personal characteristics. Meng and Berger (2019) also confirmed the strong impact that organizational culture and leader performance could have on public relations professionals’ work engagement, trust, and job satisfaction. However, what is not yet fully understood from the existing literature is that which specific variables have a significant influence on turnover in the public relations industry (Lwin & Zerfass, 2016; Macnamara, Lwin, Adi, & Zerfass, 2015, 2017; Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Verčič, & Moreno, 2010, 2014). Regarding job satisfaction, seven categories of stressors related to Millennial communication professionals have been found, including inadequate compensation, limited work-life balance, poor communication, low empowerment, high competition and tension, unethical practices, and hierarchical structure (Gallicano et al., 2012). In Europe, three-quarters of public relations practitioners claim to be happy at work (Zerfass et al., 2018). However, job satisfaction level has slowly declined over the last eight years from an average of 5.33 on a seven-point scale in 2010, then 5.27 in 2014, and down to 5.15 in the 2018 edition of the European Communication Monitor (ECM). Less than half of the communication professionals agree that their salary is adequate (48 percent), and that they have a good work-life balance (47.3 percent) and great career opportunities (38.1 percent). The ECM (2018) also found a strong correlation between job satisfaction and the willingness to leave. Professionals that want to move out of communications and change employers are the least satisfied with their job.

Similarly, work engagement, defined as ‘‘… a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption’’ (Schaufeli, Salanova, González- Romá, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74), is seen as a prerequisite for communication departments and agencies’ success. Employee engagement, often initiated through public relations practice and tactics, is often positioned as the primary facilitator of job performances and emphasize the ways in which employees can connect with both their positions, organizations and external stakeholders (Lemon & Palenchar, 2018). Those who are committed deliver superior service quality, as perceived by their customers, report fewer errors, show more innovative work behavior, and are better rated in terms of effectiveness and job performance than less engaged employees. Engaged communication professionals have less difficulties in handling the complex challenges of today’s volatile economic, political, and media environments.

In the same line, Meng and Berger (2019) claim that engaged communication practitioners view their organization’s culture as more supportive, rate leader performance higher, place greater trust in their organization and express greater job satisfaction. Work engagement also is associated with important areas of work-life, such as workload, control, recognition and reward, communication and social support, perceived fairness, and valued work (Maslach, Schaufelli, & Leiter, 2001).

Another factor of increasing interest to scholars for its positive influence on organizational and member outcomes is trust (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Tannenbaum, Beard & Salas, 1992). Trust in public relations has been conceptualized as an outcome‐based variable characterizing the relationship between two key organizational publics: organizational members and management (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Trust is considered an important enabler of successful relationships (Yuan, Feng, Lai, & Collins, 2018) and a resource to generate sustainable competitive advantages for relationship partners (Berger & Meng, 2019; Weber, Weidner, Kroeger, & Wallace, 2017).

On the other hand, Smith and Quinn’s (2012) study suggest that good leadership plays an important role in retaining Millennial employees. This generation prefer a leadership style that gives them purpose and expect communication with their boss to occur more frequently and to be more affirming and positive in nature than previous generations did (Hill, 2002; Marston, 2007). Organizational support is another key factor that help to build affective commitment among employees and strengthen their emotional connection with the organization, boosting the interest levels of employees towards their jobs, in turn, improving their productivity (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Finally, as multi-tasking facilitators within organizations, public relations professionals, four out of ten communication professionals (39.0 per cent) in Europe report feeling tense or stressed out during their working day and a quarter did not have the appropriate resources to manage the daily stress they experience. (Zerfass et al., 2018).

To create organizational conditions for Latin American public relations practitioners to succeed, it is necessary to determine how work engagement, trust, excellent leadership, organizational culture, and overall job satisfaction can reduce their turnover intentions. The Latin American context is particularly interesting due to the economic, political and social particularities (Molleda, 2001). Despite the numerous obstacles in the development of the PR industry, scholars and practitioners have tried to adapt the imported models to their own realities, focusing on the interests of their communities.

Recent years have seen a greater interest in public relations in Latin America as a result of the improved economic situation in the region, the effects of globalization and the strengthening of media systems in many countries. Numerous articles about public relations in different Latin American countries have been published during the last years (e.g., Molleda et al., 2018; Moreno, Navarro, Molleda & Fuentes-Lara, 2019; Sadi & Ramos Meneghetti, 2020). Since 2014, the Latin American Communication Monitor (Moreno, Molleda, Athaydes, & Suárez, 2015), linked to similar studies in Europe and Asia, enables the comparison of the practices and challenges faced by Latin American communicators with those faced by their counterparts around the world.

Based on the literature surrounding Millennials’ motivations and turnover drivers, the aim of this paper is twofold: (a) to explore factors affecting turnover intentions among Latin American Millennials working in the public relations industry, and (b) analyze similarities and differences between Millennials, Gen Xers, and Boomers on job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational trust, and turnover intentions. This paper focuses on two research questions and six hypotheses:

RQ1: What is the strength of the relationship between Millennial PR professionals and their employers in terms of relationship outcomes (job satisfaction, trust, job engagement, and employee retention)?

H1. Millennial PR professionals will report significant lower levels of job satisfaction, trust, job engagement and employee retention than Generation X and *Boomers*.

RQ2: Do additional sociodemographic factors, particularly gender, hierarchical levels and salary, affect the relationship outcomes of Millennial PR professionals?

H2a. Women report lower levels of job satisfaction, trust, job engagement, and employee retention.

H2b. Salary will have a positive impact on job satisfaction, job engagement and employee retention.

RQ3. Does job satisfaction have positive impact on Millennials employee retention?

H3. Perceived job satisfaction has a positive impact on Millennials employee retention.

RQ4. Does trust have positive impact on Millennials employee retention?

H4. Perceived trust in the organization has a positive influence on Millennials employee retention

RQ5. Does job engagement have positive impact on Millennials employee retention?

H5. Perceived job engagement has a positive influence on employee retention.

RQ6. Does increased level of stress has a negative impact on Millennials employee retention?

H6. Increased level of stress has a negative influence on employee retention.

RQ7. Does excellent leader performance has a positive impact on Millennials employee retention?

H7a. Excellent leader performance has a positive influence on employee retention.

H7b. Excellent leader performance will enhance PR practitioners’ perceived job engagement.

RQ8. Does supportive organizational culture has a positive impact on Millennials employee retention?

H8. Supportive organizational culture has a positive impact on Millennials employee retention.

**Method**

**Survey and data collection**

The research is based on a quantitative survey among communication professionals working companies, governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in Latin America. The survey delves into the world of leadership and organizational culture (Berger & Meng, 2014; Falkheimer, 2014), work engagement and trust (Bailey, Meng & Heyman, 2017), questions of working practice and stress experiences at work (Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Siegrist, 2010), job satisfaction (Chen & Arvey, 2016) and further exploration of the characteristics of what makes communication practitioners and departments excellent (Tench et al., 2017).

The data used for the study were gathered using an online survey designed in Qualtrics. The questionnaire was active from April to August of 2018 and was available in both Spanish and Portuguese. It was pre-tested with 37 communication professionals in 11 Latin American countries. More than 20,000 personal invitations were sent to communication professionals working in Latin American countries via e-mail, with three reminders. Assistance in the data collection came from a developed network of colleagues and a database of international communication professionals from trade associations. A total of 2,575 professionals from 19 countries started the survey and 1,229 of them completed. The data analysis and results excluded those participants who could not clearly be identified as part of the study population. Responses from participants that could not be clearly identified as part of the population were deleted from the data set. This strict selection of respondents set this study apart from other works that were based on snowball sampling or included students, academics, and people outside of the focused profession or region. The final evaluation is then based on the completed responses of 1,165 public relations professionals.

The LCM use a convenience sample because there is no information about the population of communication professionals in these geographical areas. The results can therefore not be considered as representative for the whole population of Latin American communication professionals. Nonetheless, the number of those surveyed provides a suitable basis for analyzing patterns in their responses corresponding to the practice of strategic communication public relations in Latin America.

**Participants**

The demographics show that 64.5 per cent (n = 493) of respondents are communication leaders: 31.4 per cent (n = 240) hold a top hierarchical position as head of communication or as CEO of a communication consultancy, and 33.1 per cent (n = 253) are unit leaders or in charge of a single communication discipline in an organization. More than half of the respondents were female (60.1 %, n = 700), and 39.9 % were male (n = 464), and the average age is 41.3 years. The majority of practitioners had more than 10 years of work experience (55.8 per cent, n = 650), followed by one group with six–10 years of experience (22.2 %, n = 258), and another group with less than five years of experience (22.0 %, n = 256). A vast majority (98.1 %, n=1,142) in the sample has an academic degree, and more than half hold a graduate degree (48.8 %, n = 568) or even a doctorate (6.7 %, n = 78). Most respondents (67.2 %, n = 783) work in communication departments in organizations (joint stock companies, 7 %; private companies, 20.1 %; government‐owned, public sector, political organizations, 24.2 %; NGOs, associations, 15.9 %), while 32.8 per cent (n = 382) are communication consultants working freelance or for agencies. Respondents were composed of 510 Millennials (44 %), 506 Gen-Xers (43.6 %), and 144 Baby boomers (12.4 %).

Most respondents (79.1 %, n = 921) came from South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela), followed by Central America (11.2%, n = 130, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and Dominican Republic), and North America (9.3 %, n = 108, Mexico). These geographic regions were derived from the Columbia Encyclopedia (2016b). The survey identified a total of 16.8 percent of excellent communication departments in Latin America.

**Measures**

The following paragraphs listed measures used in this study.

**Work engagement**. The widely used Gallup scale to measure employee engagement provided by Bakker and Leiter (2010, p. 16) was adapted and slightly modified for this study. The Gallup survey has been vigorously tested over several decades and refined to a limited twelve statements on employee engagement. In the development of the instrument, practical considerations regarding the usefulness of the Q12 for managers in creating change in the workplace have been the leading principle. The twelve items were measured using seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Trust***.* The organizational trust scale employed by Hon and Grunig (1999) identifies the key behavioral characteristics of the organization that lead to the development of evaluative trust‐based beliefs in the publics. The three dimensions of the scale are: (a) integrity, the belief that the organization is fair and just; (b) dependability, the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do; and (c) competence, the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do. Respondents chose a number from 1 to 9 to indicate the extent to which they agree that the item described their relationship with the organization.

**Job satisfaction***.* Participants were asked to rate in a seven-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) how satisfied are with their job.

**Leader performance**. To measure the leader performance, this study uses the leadership report card developed by Bruce Berger, Juan Meng and Bill Heyman for The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama (Berger et al., 2017). The research model measures six major dimensions of leadership: self-dynamics, team collaboration, ethical orientation, relationship building, strategic decision-making capability, and communication knowledge management capability. All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale.

**Organizational culture.** The survey explored the organizational culture. Participants were asked to rate a three-item scale using a seven-point scale in areas related to organizational culture, such as having an organization that values and practices diversity and inclusion; having an organizational that practices two-way communication with employees/members; and having an organization that shares decision-making power with employees/members.

**Turnover intention**. The answer to the question: “Please think about your career development within the next 12 months. Are you planning to …” was used to create two versions of the turnover intention variable. The available answer categories were (a) Stay in the current position with the employer; (b) Step up to the next promotion grade/level with the employer; (c) Move out of communications but stay with the employer; (d) Move out of communications and change the employer; and (e) Change the employer but stay in communications. Employees stating an intention to leave their job (d and e options) were coded as 1, whereas those indicating that they wanted to remain (a, b and c option) were coded as 0.

**Generations.** Generational cohorts give researchers a tool to analyze changes in views over time. A generational cohort is characterized as a group of people who were born during the same time period, who go through life together, and therefore, experience similar external events in their late adolescent and early adult years (Rahulan et al., 2015; Schewe & Noble, 2000). This study adopted adopt the Pew Research Center’s (2019) definitions of generations, including three generational cultures: Millennials as people born between 1981 and 1996, Generation X as people born between 1965 and 1980, and Boomers as people born between 1946 and 1964.

**Excellence**. Excellent communication departments were identified with the comparative excellence framework (Zerfass et al., 2014), which combines conceptual considerations with self-assessments of communication professionals and statistical analyses (Verčič & Zerfass, 2016). Excellence is based on the internal standing of the communication department within the organization (influence) and external results of the communication department’s activities, as well as its basic qualifications (performance). Each of these two components was calculated on the basis of four dimensions: the first on advisory influence (where senior managers take the communications recommendations seriously) and executive influence (where communication will likely become a part of senior-level meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning), and the second on overall communication success (where the communication of the organization is successful) and department competence (where the quality of the communication department is better compared to those of competing organizations). Only organizations clearly outperforming in all four dimensions (values 6 or 7 on a seven-point Likert scale) were considered as excellent in the benchmark exercise.

**Salary.** Participants were asked to rate using a seven-point scale the statement “my salary is adequate”.

**Sociodemographic and work-related information**. Sociodemographic and work- related variables were collected from participants. The sociodemographic variables of Latin American practitioners included age, gender, educational level and country of employment. Work-related information included, salary, job experience, type of organization and hierarchy level.

**Data analysis**

All statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were presented as frequencies and proportions for categorical variables. Depending on the variable type the results have been tested for statistical significance and (inter)dependencies (Chi², ANOVA/Scheffe Post-hoc-Test, independent samples T-Test, Pearson correlation and Kendall rank correlation). A probability of less than 0.05 was set for statistical significance.

**Findings**

The first research question explored the relationship between Millennial public relations professionals and their employers in terms of four work-related outcomes: job satisfaction, trust, job engagement, and employee retention. Results show that Latin American Millennials present significant lower levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and trust in the organization than Gen Xers and Boomers (p ≤ .05). When asked about their plans for the further development of their career, 45.3 percent of the respondents want to leave his or her current employer, compared with 35.4% of Gen X and 28.1% of Baby Boomers.

The overall work engagement index, based on the assessment of 12 different statements, shows that Millennials employees are less engaged at work, compared to their older colleagues. In fact, almost half of the participants in the survey (46.7%) show little engagement or even a complete disengagement. X-Gers and Boomers practitioners report a significantly higher work engagement (p ≤ 0.05). Similarly, findings indicate significant differences across generational cohorts regarding trust in the organization. 12.7 percent of the Millennials respondents report a low level of trust, compared to 10.3 percent of Generation X and 3.5 percent of the Boomers.

Table 1. Job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational trust and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Job satisfaction** | **Millennials** | **Generation X** | **Boomers** | **Total** |
| Not satisfied with the job \* | 9.8% | 7.9% | 5.6% | 8.4% |
| Neutral \* | 22.4% | 16.2% | 11.1% | 18.3% |
| Satisfied with the job \* | 67.8% | 75.9% | 83.3% | 73.3% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Work engagement** |  | | | |
| Actively disengaged \* | 11.0% | 10.1% | 6.3% | 10.0% |
| Not engaged \* | 35.7% | 32.2% | 27.1% | 33.1% |
| Engaged \* | 53.3% | 57.7% | 66.7% | 56.9% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organizational trust** |  | | | |
| Low level of trust \* | 12.7% | 10.3% | 3.5% | 10.5% |
| Neutral \* | 32.2% | 32.6% | 20.1% | 30.9% |
| High level of trust \* | 55.1% | 57.1% | 76.4% | 58.6% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Turnover intention** |  | | | |
| Don’t want to change the job \* | 54.7% | 64.6% | 71.9% | 60.8% |
| Want to change the job \* | 45.3% | 35.4% | 28.1% | 39.2% |

\* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05)

To address RQ2, we analyzed Millennials’ job satisfaction, work engagement, trust and turnover intention according to sociodemographic and work-related variables (Table 2). Significant differences were found between male and female Latin American public relations practitioners. Male Millennials are more satisfied in their job (73.6 percent), more engaged (59.7 percent), report higher level of trust (60.4 percent) and lower turnover intention (35.3 percent) than their female colleagues. Salary was a statistically significant predictor using t- tests (p < 0.05) of overall job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, but did not influence on engagement and trust. Moreover, practitioners working in excellent departments report statistically higher levels of job satisfaction (90.2 percent, p ≤ 0.05), engagement (88.7 percent, p ≤ 0.05), organizational trust (85.5 percent), p ≤ 0.05, and lower turnover intentions (32.2 percent, p ≤ 0.05). Thus, hypotheses 2a is supported and 2b is partially supported.

Table 2. Millennials job satisfaction, work engagament, trust and employee retention according to demographic and work-related variables

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Gender |  | Salary |  |  | Excellence |  |
|  | Female | Male | Adequate | Neutral | Inadequate | Excellent  Department | Non-excellent  Department |
| **Job satisfaction** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Not satisfied with  the job \* | 10.3% | 8.8% | 22.2% | 3.1% | 2.3% | 0.0% | 11.5% |
| Neutral \* | 24.5% | 17.6% | 35.1% | 17.6% | 11.4% | 9.7% | 28.4% |
| Satisfied with the  job \* | 65.2% | 73.6% | 42.7% | 79.3% | 86.4% | 90.3% | 60.1% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Work engagement** |  | | | | | | |
| Actively  disengaged \* | 12.0% | 8.8% | 23.8% | 4.1% | 3,0% | 0,0% | 14,7% |
| Not engaged \* | 37.6% | 31.4% | 47.0% | 36.8% | 18.2% | 11.3% | 45.7% |
| Engaged \* | 50.4% | 59.7% | 29.2% | 59.1% | 78.8% | 88.7% | 39.6% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Trust** |  | | | | | | |
| Low level of trust \* | 13.7% | 10.7% | 25.4% | 6.2% | 4.5% | 3.2% | 17.3% |
| Neutral \* | 33.6% | 28.9% | 36.8% | 33.2% | 24.2% | 11.3% | 45.7% |
| High level of trust\* | 52.7% | 60.4% | 37.8% | 60.6% | 71.2% | 85.5% | 37.1% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Don’t want to  change the job \* | 50.2% | 64.7% | 37.3% | 59.4% | 72.7% | 67.8% | 49.2% |
| Want to change the  job \* | 49.8% | 35.3% | 62.7% | 40.6% | 27.3% | 32.2% | 50.8% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

There is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and the willingness to leave. Professionals that want to move out of communications and change employers are the less satisfied with their job (19.6 percent, p ≤ 0.05). Moreover, 83.7 of those reporting a high level of satisfaction want to continue with their current employer. Thus, H3 is supported.



Strong association between perceived trust in the organization and Latin American Millennials turnover intentions was also found. Hypothesis 4, which predicted a negative relationship between trust and turnover intentions, was supported. In fact, one-third practitioners reporting low level of organizational trust want to change employer, comparing with 20.6 percent (p ≤ 0.05) of those with a high level of organizational trust.

Table 4. Perceived organizational trust and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| High level of trust \* | 6.9% | 20.6% | 13.1% |
| Neutral \* | 27.2% | 43.1% | 34.4% |
| Low level of trust \* | 65.9% | 36.3% | 52.4% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

A significant relationship was found between work engagement and turnover intentions. Hypothesis 5, which predicted a positive relationship engagement and turnover intentions, was supported. 67.9 percent (p ≤ 0.05) of Latin American public relations practitioners who are engaged at work want to stay at their current job. Conversely, 66.2 percent

(p ≤ 0.05) of not engaged or actively disengaged, are willing to leave their employers.

Table 5. Work engagement and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Actively disengaged \* | 5.3% | 19.6% | 11.8% |
| Not engaged \* | 26.8% | 46.6% | 35.8% |
| Engaged \* | 67.9% | 33.8% | 52.4% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Findings did not show a significantly positive correlation between serious stress problems and turnover intentions (Table 6). Latin American Millennial professionals willing to change their employers exhibit average to slightly above average of serious stress problems. Hypothesis 6, which claimed a positive relationship between serious stress problems and turnover intentions, was not supported.

Table 6. Level of stress and turnover intentions among Latin American public relations practitioners.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| No or manegable stress problems | 61.0% | 57.4% | 59.3% |
| Serious stress problems | 39.0% | 42.6% | 40.7% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Regarding excellent leader performance, results show a significant negative effect on turnover intentions. Table 7 shows that Latin American Millennial professionals less willing to change their current employer report higher level of satisfaction (76 percent; p ≤ 0.05) with their leaders’ performance. Hypothesis 7 is supported.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 7. Excellent leader  public relations practitioners. | performance and turnover | intentions among | Latin American |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Bad leader performance \* | 10.2% | 22.1% | 15.6% |
| Neutral \* | 13.8% | 19,6% | 16.4% |
| Excellent leader performance \* | 76.0% | 58.3% | 68.0% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 8 illustrates the strong negative correlation between supportive organizational culture and turnover intentions was found. Almost 40 percent of those professionals reporting a negative organizational culture express their intention to leave the job. Hypothesis 8, suggesting that a supportive organizational culture has a positive influence on employee retention was supported.

Table 8. Organizational culture and turnover intention.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Negative \* | 13.4% | 39.2% | 25.1% |
| Neutral \* | 77,6% | 57.8% | 68.7% |
| Positive \* | 8.9% | 2.9% | 6.2% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

**Discussion and conclusions**

The present study explored the causes of Latin American communication professionals’ turnover intentions, not only because Millennials are the most recent generation to enter the workforce, but also because of the evidence that they are less committed to their workplace compared to older generations (Adkins, 2016; Giang, 2012). For this reason, it is essential to acknowledge the strategic importance of human capital, understand what motivates younger public relations practitioners and develop a work environment that addresses those needs. In the times of the pandemic, retention is more important than ever. As an employee leaves the organization when there is crisis like COVID-19 pandemic undergoing, it will be very difficult to recruit and train a new employee or difficult to ask other existing employees to overclock the vacant job role responsibilities (Arora & Dhole, 2019; Jayathilake, Daud, Eaw, & Annuar, 2021).

While Lipkin and Perrymore (2009) reported that Millennials were less dedicated to their employers and more likely to leave when conditions were less than perfect, Costanza et al. (2012), in a recent meta-analysis, found that generational differences in engagement were small to moderate, at best. This study tentatively acknowledges that generational differences, in fact, do exist. Overall, the results demonstrate the importance of considering differences across cohort groups. Latin American Millennial employees not only reported higher turnover intentions, but they also showed significantly lower job satisfaction, work engagement, and organization trust than their older generations. Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported.

These findings are somewhat inconsistent with previous research which suggests that Millennials have more similarities than dissimilarities to Gen Xers (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Kowske et al., 2010; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). One of the possible explanations about this is that job characteristics in the public relations industry is not compatible with work preferences of Millennials such as high pay and fulfilling work. Latin American public relations practitioners may have entered the workforce with higher expectations compared to professionals working in other fields.

In this research we may be witnessing a strong influence of gender on work attitudes and turnover intentions. Females report a significant higher willingness to leave their current employer than males, and lower level of trust, job satisfaction and work engagement. Even though female practitioners outnumber males, women are paid less than men in all positions and their distribution in the field is uneven and clearly defined by gender (Andsager & Hust, 2005; Zerfass et al., 2019). In fact, an analysis of annual results from European Communication Monitor from 2009 to 2015 disclosed that while practitioners firstly reported male dominance on higher positions, in subsequent years they reported glass ceiling when it comes to progressing to higher positions, then the lack of influence in departments, then better job security for men and finally, mentoring opportunities that then have a potential impact on leadership (Tench, Topic & Moreno, 2017). Higher turnover intentions may be influenced by these prejudices and discrimination towards women in the Latin American public relations industry.

Not surprisingly, Millennial communication practitioners working in excellent departments show lower turnover intentions, higher levels of job satisfaction work engagement and they trust their organization to a far higher extent. These findings are also compatible with results from the European Communication Monitor (Zerfass et al., 2018). Salary has a correlation with turnover intentions and satisfaction but has little or no effect on engagement and trust. Furthermore, the data strongly suggest a correlation between perceived job satisfaction, organizational trust, work engagement, excellent leader performance and supportive organizational culture with Millennials public relations practitioners’ turnover intentions. Interestingly, we found no significant relationship between stress level and the willingness to change employer. Overall, the results show that there is room for improvement on all factor influencing turnover intentions for those working in the field of strategic communication in Latin America.

**Practical Implications**

Reducing employee turnover rate has consistently been an imperative objective for most organizations. Since public relations is a service and relationship-based business, high rates of employee turnover can have a serious and profound impact on client satisfaction and retention, upon which an agency’s profitability − and survival − are contingent.

This study did demonstrate that certain work attitudes are influenced by perspectives unique to generations, specifically overall job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational trust and willingness to leave the job. According to these results, Millennials working in the public relations industry are less satisfied in these areas than previous generations, which may indicate that a change in basic assumptions is required.

This research not only informs supervisors about what they can do to motivate workers and provide for job satisfaction and retention but gives them insight into what type of leader’s Millennials may become based on what is important to them. Given that younger employees, especially Millennials, have lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intention compared with older employees, managers might need to consider developing corporate- wide strategies to address work–life balance. Overall, this study can be used to teach organizations to facilitate trainings, develop better leaders, create a culture that promotes job satisfaction, and increase the retention of good public relations Latin American Millennial employees.

**Limitations and Future Research**

The study has several limitations that require consideration when interpreting the findings. First, a large sample of professionals was approached, but a much small number initiated and completed the online survey. This resulted in the lack of representation of some countries in the continent. In the future, greater participation is needed to allow for a more comprehensive comparative analysis. Second, because of the possible systematic bias in the convenience sample as used here, the results of this research should be seen as a pilot study giving an indication of the distribution of the results in the entire population. Third, this study used a quantitative methodology, which can provide limited information about employee retention, and further qualitative research is necessary to identify contributors and inhibitors of turnover intentions. Fourth, as in any study using self-report measures, the results may have been influenced by participants’ acquiescence and need for social desirability.

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Table 1. Job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational trust and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Job satisfaction** | **Millennials** | **Generation X** | **Boomers** | **Total** |
| Not satisfied with the job \* | 9.8% | 7.9% | 5.6% | 8.4% |
| Neutral \* | 22.4% | 16.2% | 11.1% | 18.3% |
| Satisfied with the job \* | 67.8% | 75.9% | 83.3% | 73.3% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Work engagement** |  | | | |
| Actively disengaged \* | 11.0% | 10.1% | 6.3% | 10.0% |
| Not engaged \* | 35.7% | 32.2% | 27.1% | 33.1% |
| Engaged \* | 53.3% | 57.7% | 66.7% | 56.9% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organizational trust** |  | | | |
| Low level of trust \* | 12.7% | 10.3% | 3.5% | 10.5% |
| Neutral \* | 32.2% | 32.6% | 20.1% | 30.9% |
| High level of trust \* | 55.1% | 57.1% | 76.4% | 58.6% |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Turnover intention** |  | | | |
| Don’t want to change the job \* | 54.7% | 64.6% | 71.9% | 60.8% |
| Want to change the job \* | 45.3% | 35.4% | 28.1% | 39.2% |

\* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 2. Millennials job satisfaction, work engagament, trust and employee retention according to demographic and work-related variables

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Gender |  | Salary |  |  | Excellence |  |
|  | Female | Male | Adequate | Neutral | Inadequate | Excellent  Department | Non-excellent  Department |
| **Job satisfaction** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Not satisfied with  the job \* | 10.3% | 8.8% | 22.2% | 3.1% | 2.3% | 0.0% | 11.5% |
| Neutral \* | 24.5% | 17.6% | 35.1% | 17.6% | 11.4% | 9.7% | 28.4% |
| Satisfied with the  job \* | 65.2% | 73.6% | 42.7% | 79.3% | 86.4% | 90.3% | 60.1% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Work engagement** |  | | | | | | |
| Actively  disengaged \* | 12.0% | 8.8% | 23.8% | 4.1% | 3,0% | 0,0% | 14,7% |
| Not engaged \* | 37.6% | 31.4% | 47.0% | 36.8% | 18.2% | 11.3% | 45.7% |
| Engaged \* | 50.4% | 59.7% | 29.2% | 59.1% | 78.8% | 88.7% | 39.6% |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Trust** |  | | | | | | |
| Low level of trust \* | 13.7% | 10.7% | 25.4% | 6.2% | 4.5% | 3.2% | 17.3% |
| Neutral \* | 33.6% | 28.9% | 36.8% | 33.2% | 24.2% | 11.3% | 45.7% |
| High level of trust\* | 52.7% | 60.4% | 37.8% | 60.6% | 71.2% | 85.5% | 37.1% |

**Turnover intention**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Don’t want to  change the job \* | 50.2% | 64.7% | 37.3% | 59.4% | 72.7% | 67.8% | 49.2% |
| Want to change the  job \* | 49.8% | 35.3% | 62.7% | 40.6% | 27.3% | 32.2% | 50.8% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

When exploring the factors affecting turnover intentions, resuls showed a strong correlation between job satisfaction and the willingness to change the employer (Table 3). Latin American Millennial professionals that want to move out of communications and change employers are the least satisfied with their job. A total of 83.7 percent (p ≤ 0.05) of those who want to stay with their employers report higher level of job satisfaction. Hypothesis 3, which posited a negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions, was supported.

Table. 3 Perceived job satisfaction and willingness to leave.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Not satisfied with the job \* | 2.8% | 19.6% | 10.4% |
| Neutral \* | 13.4% | 34.3% | 22.9% |
| Satisfied with the job \* | 83.7% | 46.1% | 66.7% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 3. Perceived job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Not satisfied with the job \* | 2.8% | 19.6% | 10.4% |
| Neutral \* | 13.4% | 34.3% | 22.9% |
| Satisfied with the job \* | 83.7% | 46.1% | 66.7% |

Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 4. Perceived organizational trust and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| High level of trust \* | 6.9% | 20.6% | 13.1% |
| Neutral \* | 27.2% | 43.1% | 34.4% |
| Low level of trust \* | 65.9% | 36.3% | 52.4% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 5. Work engagement and turnover intentions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Actively disengaged \* | 5.3% | 19.6% | 11.8% |
| Not engaged \* | 26.8% | 46.6% | 35.8% |
| Engaged \* | 67.9% | 33.8% | 52.4% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 6. Level of stress and turnover intentions among Latin American public relations practitioners.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| No or manegable stress problems | 61.0% | 57.4% | 59.3% |
| Serious stress problems | 39.0% | 42.6% | 40.7% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 7. Excellent leader  public relations practitioners. | performance and turnover | intentions among | Latin American |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Bad leader performance \* | 10.2% | 22.1% | 15.6% |
| Neutral \* | 13.8% | 19,6% | 16.4% |
| Excellent leader performance \* | 76.0% | 58.3% | 68.0% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).

Table 8. Organizational culture and turnover intention.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Don’t want to change | Turnover intention | Total |
| Negative \* | 13.4% | 39.2% | 25.1% |
| Neutral \* | 77,6% | 57.8% | 68.7% |
| Positive \* | 8.9% | 2.9% | 6.2% |

* Significant differences (ANOVA/Scheffe post-hoc test, p ≤ 0.05).