

Motivation and Work Engagement Of The Millennials in the Workplace: Youkang Company Experience

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Abstract

Organizations today are increasingly having a bigger proportion of millennial employees as part of their workforce. To be among others, millennial employees are competitive, civic-minded, open-minded on diversity, and achievement-oriented. They seek challenge, growth, and development; a fun work life and work-life balance. Like other generations, millennial employees need to be managed and motivated towards higher levels of performance and productivity.

This research aimed to determine the relationship between the level of motivation and the level of work engagement of the employees of Youkang Company.

This study used a descriptive correlational survey to collect data, with 79 millennials in the Youkang company as participants. In addition, the researcher conducted informal interviews with millennials in the Youkng company. Weighted mean, T-test and Pearson's test are some of the statistics techniques employed.

Through general findings of the study, more opportunities for interaction, design more training activities, develop a reward and recognition program, regularly provide positive feedback, continuously improve the work environment and considering the model of motivation and work engagement in designing future employee programs are recommended

Keywords: Millennial, motivation, work engagement

1. Introduction

Human resources are the main and most valuable source of the organization and hence their level of motivation has a significant impact on the organization's productivity as a whole (Bhazin, 2019).

The demographic profile of the human resources of many companies shows an increasingly high number of millennial employees. Being a generation that may be different from previous generations of employees, human resource managers as well as managers at the top levels of the organizational hierarchy need to ensure that their policies support the generational characteristics of the millennial workers. Specifically, they must be able to use systems and policies that can bring about high levels of motivation and work engagement among the millennials. This is a need that becomes even more critical given the competitive environment in the biotechnological industries. The nature of the biotechnical companies requires employees who can think innovatively and creatively, traits that millennial employees are expected to possess. Thus, companies must be able to create a work environment that motivates the millennial employees and retain them as well.

Work engagement is also another equally important factor in organizational performance. Work engagement is most often defined as “a positive, fulfilling, workrelated state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al.,2002) as cited by Bakker and Albrecht (2018).

Engaged workers are very much active in the activities of the organization and are one of the reasons for the productivity of the organization. Ryba (2021) cited a Harvard survey showing that 92% business executives believe that engaged employees perform better, boosting the success of their teams and the outcomes of their organizations.

Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel (2014) also concluded in their paper that it is desirable for public and private organizations to have highly engaged employees as engagement has been shown to correlate with high levels of creativity, task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and client satisfaction.

There have been studies done to see if there is a link between motivation and engagement and how strong it is.

Khan and Iqbal conducted a study on this association in 2013. Their findings revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic drive, as well as work engagement, have a strong positive association. However, the link between extrinsic drive and work engagement was higher than the link between intrinsic motivation and engagement.

While the relationship of motivation and engagement have been studied, this researcher did not see studies conducted on this relationship in China. The study thus fills a gap present in Chinese literature.

This research is also important because, as Kidwai noted in 2019, the Chinese Millennial Generation is said to be capable of transforming China. Thus, organizations that operate in a very tough and competitive environment, such as biotechnological enterprises, should pay special attention to the motivation and work engagement of Chinese millennial employees.

2. Methodology

This study used the descriptive correlational survey and questionnaire survey. The researcher e-mailed the electronic edition of the survey questionnaire to HR department of Youkang company on 29th August 2021. The head of the HR department printed out of specific quantities questionnaires to distribute them to respondents on 30th August and retrieved the answered survey forms on the same day.

The interviews were made on 6th September. The researcher personally went Youkang company and conducted face to face interviews with the Heads of HR department, laboratory department, production department, quality control department and marketing department in respectively. The researcher used the weighted mean to interpret the responses for the level of motivation as well as the level of work engagement. T-Test for independent samples for difference between levels of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation ANOVA for differences between three dimensions of work engagement Pearson's test of correlation.

3. Results and discussions

The following sections discuss the results of the survey. The discussions are in the order of the research problems.

3.1 Level of Extrinsic Motivation of the Millennial Employees

Extrinsic motivation refers to behavior that is pushed by external rewards. Table 1 shows the level of extrinsic motivation of the employees.

Table 1 :Level of Extrinsic Motivation of Millennial Employees

Factor	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Leadership styles of superiors	3.45	Very high level of motivation
2. Organization's commitment to professional development	3.44	Very high level of motivation
3. Comfortable physical work environment	3.38	Very high level of motivation
4. Compensation	3.33	Very high level of motivation
5. Opportunities for career advancement	3.26	Very high level of motivation
6. Job security	3.26	Very high level of motivation
7. Relationships with co-employees	3.23	High level of motivation
Section mean	3.34	Very high level of motivation

The millennial employees of Youkang company have a very high level of extrinsic motivation. This is seen in the over-all weighted mean value of 3.34. This means that the external factors provided by the company can strongly bring about very high levels of motivation to do work. This implies that the factors provided by the company are effective in motivating the employees. The very high level of motivation can be seen in the different work behaviors of the employees. The employees are seldom absent or tardy in coming to work.

Further analysis of the factors show that the leadership style of the management is able to produce the highest level of motivation. In the interviews conducted, the employees described their manager as knowledgeable, hard-working, and considerate. The managers act as coaches where they patiently teach employees how to do the tasks as needed. The managers practice open communication and the employees can approach them without hesitation and fear. They are confident of their manager's abilities to guide them so everyone can mutually share in the success of the department and organization.

The motivation is also very high with the organization's commitment to professional development. At Youkang company, employees are provided with opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills through attendance in conferences, seminars and workshops, and on-site training. These professional development activities help to

enhance if not maintain professional credentials such as academic degrees to formal coursework.

3.2 Level of Intrinsic Motivation of the Millennial Employees

Table 2: Level of Intrinsic Motivation of Millennial Employees

Factor	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. Feeling of competence for the work I do	3.40	Very high level of motivation
2. Recognition and feedback for the work I do	3.38	Very High level of motivation
3. Meaningfulness of the work	3.33	Very high level of motivation
4. Opportunities to use skills	3.32	Very high level of motivation
5. Pride in the work I do	3.29	Very high level of motivation
6. The challenge of the work itself	3.28	Very high level of motivation
7. Opportunities to do my work with autonomy	3.28	Very high level of motivation
8. Knowing I am able to contribute to the goals of the organization	3.21	High level of motivation
Section mean	3.31	Very high level of motivation

It can be inferred that the millennials of Youkang company have very high levels of motivation. This is shown by the section mean of 3.31 interpreted as very high level of intrinsic motivation. The work itself is capable of pushing them to work and accomplish tasks with high levels of energy, commitment, and enthusiasm.

Feeling competent in the work they do provide millennials with a very high level of motivation. This factor had the highest mean in the section. The employees of Youkang company feel competent because the Human Resource Policies ensure the best fit between the employee and the job. The feeling of competence is also reinforced by certification tests that the company provides. These tests measure the level of skills and knowledge the employee has about the task he is assigned to.

Feedback and recognition constitutes the factor with the second highest weighted mean. This factor motivates the employees to a very high level. In the Youkang company, feedback is given often by their department managers and these feedbacks add to the motivation of the employees.

Employees of Youkang company are very highly motivated by the meaningfulness of their work. The meaningfulness is derived from the knowledge that they produce supplements of infant formula. This is honorable work since children, the hope for the future, are their customers. The work is thus seen to have an impact on the community as well.

“Knowing I am able to contribute to the goals of the organization” had the lowest mean and is only able to bring about a high level of motivation. From the interviews with some employees, the researcher gathered that as the employees are not management staff, they feel that they are not in a position to directly contribute to the

goals of the organization. The mean of 3.21, however, puts the level of motivation near the range limits of very high level of motivation.

3.3 Level of Work Engagement along Vigor

Table 3: *Level of Work Engagement along Vigor*

Behaviors	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	3.45	Very high level of vigor
At my work I feel like bursting with energy.	3.42	Very high level of vigor
At my job I feel strong and vigorous.	3.42	Very high level of vigor
I can continue to work for long periods of time.	3.39	Very high level of vigor
At my job, I am mentally resilient and can easily accept changes	3.39	Very high level of vigor
At my job, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	3.35	Very high level of vigor
Section mean	3.40	Very high level of vigor

Mean of 3.40 indicates that the millennial employees have a very high level of vigor. They manifest the behaviors that indicate energy and resilience all the time. This is a positive finding and it implies a workforce that is highly engaged in their tasks. They are thus able to help the company meet targets and goals.

Feeling like going to work when one gets up in the morning has the highest mean score of 3.45. This implies that work is attractive for the millennials of Youkang company that it is something they want to do. When they get up in the morning, the thought of going to work does not discourage them. A check of the Youkang company attendance table, would show that there are no absences at all and just 2 or 3 three people were late every month.

3.4 Level of Work Engagement along Dedication

Table 4: *Level of Work Engagement along Dedication*

Behavior	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Time flies when I am at work.	3.44	Very high level of dedication
I feel happy when I work intensively.	3.38	Very high level of dedication
I am immersed in my work.	3.33	Very high level of dedication
When I work, I forget everything else around me.	3.29	Very high level of dedication
I get carried away when I work.	3.21	High level of dedication
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	3.05	High level of dedication
Section mean	3.28	Very high level of dedication

Millennial employees of Youkang company have a very high level of dedication as indicated by the section mean of 3.28. Many of the behaviors associated with dedication are shown all the time.

Among the behaviors is being so engrossed in their task they forget the time. The Y millennial employees are not clock watchers who are forever looking at the clock to see if they can go on break or go home.

In fact, it is because of the relaxed and comfortable work atmosphere that employees said they can work without feeling pressured and without having to beat deadlines that they are able to enjoy doing the task they forget about time.

Nevertheless, there are also some behaviors that are shown only most of the time instead of all the time. “Getting carried away when I work” and “Finding it difficult to detach myself from the job” give an interpretation of high level of dedication only. Youkang company employees interpreted being carried away as going beyond the level of authority they have to make decisions on the tasks they do.

This behavior of taking responsibility for making some decisions on their own can be attributed to the millennial trait. Millennials are free thinking and creative. However, this trait is tempered by the nature of the Youkang company which somehow restrains the millennial free-thinking spirit.

3.5 Level of Work Engagement along Absorption

The results of the survey of the millennial employees of Youkang company reveal that they have a very high level of absorption.

Employees are inspired by their job. According to interviews, working in a biotech company that uses unique and sophisticated technology to produce specialty foods and infant formula is inspiring. The mission of the company to provide better nourishment to infants and children is enough inspiration for the employees.

3.6 Relationship of Extrinsic Motivation to the Dimensions of Work Engagement

The researcher used Pearson’s Correlation to determine if there is a relationship between extrinsic motivation and the different dimensions of work engagement.

Table 5: Relationship of Extrinsic Motivation and Dimensions of Work Engagement

Work Engagement	Extrinsic Motivation	Interpretation
Vigor	0.89	Strong relationship
Dedication	0.74	Strong relationship
Absorption	0.91	Very strong relationship

It can be seen that extrinsic motivation is positively correlated with all the dimensions of work engagement. The correlation is also strong to very strong. The null

hypothesis that there is no correlation between extrinsic motivation and work engagement is rejected.

The findings imply that the factors that cause high extrinsic motivation and high levels of work engagement are similar. The correlation is strongest between extrinsic motivation and work absorption. It can be recalled that the concern with professional development was a factor that resulted in high levels of extrinsic motivation. It could be that the same factor also explains the high levels of work absorption. The training that the employees get make them more enthusiastic and inspired in their work. Hence the same factors for motivation and absorption result in the strong relationship between the two variables. The correlation between extrinsic motivation and vigor, motivation and absorption are both very strong. However, the relationship between extrinsic motivation and dedication is just strong. Among the three dimensions, dedication had the lowest weighted mean score though it is still interpreted as very high level. In the findings for extrinsic motivation, employees were only highly motivated by job security. The factor of job security may explain the level of dedication in terms of detaching oneself from the job.

3.7 Relationship of Intrinsic Motivation to the Dimensions of Work Engagement

Like the relationship of extrinsic motivation to the dimensions of work engagement, the r values also show that there is a very strong positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and the dimensions of work engagement.

The relationship is strong to very strong with all three dimensions. The hypothesis that there is no relationship is thus rejected. The very strong positive relationship implies that the factors that produce high levels of intrinsic motivation also produce high levels of work engagement along all three dimensions. When intrinsic motivation increases, the level of work engagement will also increase.

Table 6: Relationship of Intrinsic Motivation and Dimensions of Work Engagement

Work Engagement	Intrinsic Motivation	Interpretation
Vigor	0.90	Very strong relationship
Dedication	0.83	Strong relationship
Absorption	0.91	Very strong relationship

The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and work engagement. The finding is likewise corroborated by the study of Ghosh,

In this particular study, creativity can be enhanced in the intrinsic factors of opportunities to use skills, opportunities to do work with autonomy, and the challenge of the work itself. These factors were all able to produce very high levels of intrinsic motivation and are the same factors that produce very high levels of work engagement.

Work meaningfulness was one of the factors identified to bring about high levels of intrinsic motivation among the employees of Youkang company. As explained, the situation of working in a biotechnological company that provides quality food for among others, infants, make work meaningful and at the same time create the situation that allows high levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Sum up, through the study, we find out that the millennial employees of Youkang company have a very high level of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. There is no difference between the levels of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation among the millennial employees of Youkang company. The millennial employees of Youkang company have a very high level of vigor, dedication, and absorption. There are no differences among the levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption among the millennial employees of Youkang company. There is a very strong relationship between extrinsic motivation and the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption of work engagement and between intrinsic motivation and the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption of work engagement.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of the study will be useful for the management of Youkang company as it will provide information needed for formulating motivational systems for their millennial employees. The employees will also become more aware of their own motivation preferences which can help in the personal growth. The results of the study may also be used by other companies with millennial employees in the improvement of their own systems of motivation. The Youkang company can also be made more aware of the work engagement of their millennials, awareness that can be used in creating work environments conducive not only to motivation but to work engagement as well. In the competitive biotech industry, quality processes and operations are enhanced when employees are retained and work slowdown or stoppages due to employees leaving the company are minimized. The results of the study can be used to create an environment that can retain millennial employees more successfully.

The Youkang company is able to provide the factors and conditions that can bring about very high levels of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for the millennial employees. The environment, management, and conditions of Youkang company equally bring about the same level of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation for the millennial employees. Hence, there are no differences in levels of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. The Youkang company is able to provide the factors and conditions that create high levels of work engagement among millennial employees. The millennial employees respond in the same way thus showing the same level of engagement along all its dimensions.

Hence, there are no differences in levels of the work engagement dimensions. The factors that bring about high levels of motivation and work engagement are similar. Hence the increase in the level of motivation is accompanied by an increase in the level of work engagement.

The researcher suggests that as leadership is an important motivating factor, create more opportunities for manager-employee interaction so as to enhance even more their ability to sustain high levels of motivation in the millennial employees. Design more training activities that will enhance competence and which can also bring higher levels of satisfaction as they contribute more successfully to the goals of the organization. Develop a reward and recognition program that will identify highly engaged employees to inspire other employees to enhance if not sustain high levels of work engagement. Regularly provide positive feedback to enhance work engagement. Continuously improve the physical, emotional, and psycho-social work environment to enhance both motivation and work engagement. Consider the model of motivation and work engagement in designing future employee programs.

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